Chronotopos

Judy Wakabayashi

Time Matters: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations in Translation Timescapes

Abstract

Time is a fundamental concept and context in translation history that merits more specific consideration than it has generally been accorded by translation scholars. This paper examines conceptual issues surrounding time, such as culture-specific time consciousness and teleological, linear and circular concepts of time, as well as change and continuity. It also explores some methodological issues relating to the treatment of time when writing translation histories, with a special focus on the principles and problems of periodization and how to structure narratives, including non-periodizing principles. Fernand Braudel's three timescales of historical analysis are considered in terms of translation history, and the affordances of digital history in relation to time issues are also introduced. The paper concludes with a brief cautionary note about anachronistic interpretations and the compression of time when studying recent history.

Key words: translation history, temporality, periodization, teleology, timescales

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Time is a fundamental concept and context in translation history that merits more specific consideration than it has generally been accorded by translation scholars. This paper examines conceptual issues surrounding time, such as "culture-specific" time consciousness and teleological, linear and circular concepts of time, as well as change and continuity. It also explores some methodological issues relating to the treatment of time when writing translation histories, with a special focus on the principles and problems of periodization and how to structure narratives, including non-periodizing principles. Fernand Braudel's three timescales of historical analysis are considered in terms of translation history, and the affordances of digital history in relation to time issues are also introduced. The paper concludes with a brief cautionary note about anachronistic interpretations and the compression of time when studying recent history.

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Culture-specific notions of time

Historical time (as distinct from abstract, formal time) is a mental construct that has been experienced and expressed differently over time and across cultures. In India, for instance, Hindu and Buddhist perceptions of time were founded on cyclical notions (TRAUTMANN 1995: 171), while in ancient Greece and Rome and in the late Middle Ages in Europe, a dominant conception was that of a *decline* from a superior past (KIDAMBI 2016: 251). In premodern China, too, a narrative of decline – "from ancient simplicity to hollow rhetorical flourish" (OWEN 2017: 17) – prevailed in cultural and literary history.

Ways of demarcating calendrical time also vary, and they carry religious and political associations, with Mayan calendars, Hindu calendars, the Persian solar calendar, the Islamic (Hijri) lunar calendar and the Hebrew lunisolar calendar offering examples of alternatives to the Gregorian calendar. Although the latter now provides a common world-wide framework, it is based on Christian distinctions and is regarded by some not as a neutral statement of the system used but as imposing hegemonic

(chrononormative) values and symbolizing modernity while obscuring the cultural implications of the systems it replaces.[1] To preserve a measure of temporal sovereignty, some cultures adopt multiple chronologies (e.g., Thailand's simultaneous use of the Buddhist calendar, the name of the king reigning at the time of an event, and the Gregorian calendar), each expressing a different understanding of time. If the historian uses a non-Gregorian system (as is common, for instance, in discussions of pre-1873 Japan), it is helpful to add Western equivalents and a note about different conventions (e.g., *the fifth month* on a lunar calendar refers to a different time than *May*). The age of historical figures might also need adjustment because of the use of different methods of reckoning ages. Failure to do so can lead to misinterpretations on the part of readers.

Teleology, linearity and circularity

Western understandings of history have long tended to be implicitly or explicitly teleological, regarding it not as contingent and open-ended but "a manifestation of God's plan" or "an inevitable progression toward communism" (HOWELL & PREVENIER 2001: 120) or unavoidably "leading up to the Western endpoint of capitalist modernity" (HOBSON 2004: 10). In the Judaic and Christian traditions, historical time was seen as underpinned by divine providence, but from the Enlightenment to the beginning of the 20th century it came to be regarded in Europe as "a marker of the unfolding story of human progress and the inexorable triumph of reason" (KIDAMBI 2016: 252), with increasing emphasis on a linear and secular sensibility of time. Teleological beliefs persist, but world wars and other events of the 20th and 21st centuries have problematized any idea of history as "the ineluctable unfolding of human progress" (KIDAMBI 2016: 254).

Translation historians need to be wary of evolutionary assumptions that past ideas and practices were necessarily more primitive and less innovative than those that came later.[2] Change over time does not necessarily equate with improvement. In-

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[1] Modernity is an important concept in translation historiography, as translation has been widely used as a tool to achieve modernization by importing texts and ideas from more 'advanced' societies. Miyoshi (1989: 146) suggests that "the signifier 'modern' should be regarded as a regional term peculiar to the West", both in its shifting timeframe—post-Renaissance, post-1800, post-1900, the present—and what it refers to (e.g., capitalism, urbanization, individualism, secularization, industrialization, bureaucratization, the nation-state, democracy, privileging of scientific knowledge). As Howell and Prevenier (2001: 121) point out, "the rest of the world is evaluated in terms of its similarity to or distance from these characteristics". Alternative understandings of modernity include, for instance, the concepts of a Hindu revival, Islamic revival and Confucian capitalism.

[2] Cho (2016: 15–16) notes that under a progressivist assumption, all the partial translations, unfaithful appropriations, and creative summarizations that were prevalent in early twentieth-century Korea become examples of improper and immature translating practices. This teleological perspective erases all the diverse experiments and accomplishments that do not correspond to the standard of translation current in our contemporary society. […] This underlying assumption

deed, how justifiable is it to speak of 'progress' in translation practices, ideas or values, particularly when generalizing across time or space rather than examining specific contexts? Have *other* directions of change occurred (e.g., stagnation, decline, regression)? Is there any objective basis on which a given change can be evaluated as a 'development' or a 'retrograde' step? Although it is problematic to project later understandings of translation onto earlier practices and concepts, certain ideas and practices of translation in, for instance, medieval Europe and premodern Asia (e.g., the blurring between original writing and translating; collaborative translation) have postmodern or contemporary analogs (transcreation; team translation), suggesting that the Romantic ideas and practices still influential in current understandings of translation (e.g., views on originality) might have constituted a relatively short-term 'deviation' or even aberration.

From a teleological perspective, source texts might in fact be counter-intuitively regarded as 'mere' precursors to the translations that constitute a subsequent stage in their evolution, although this has been far from the dominant view, despite Walter Benjamin's notion of translations as an 'afterlife' of the original. Instead, much of modern translation theory has epitomized the *inverse* – what Cordingley (2013: 3) describes as a "teleological reading of translation as the quest to attain oneness with the original and its author". Despite the growing influence of more 'resistant', deconstructive approaches, translations often remain tainted with a perception of belatedness (temporal displacement and derivativeness in relation to the original), at least in Western cultures. A teleological perspective also has implications when considering causality (KOSKINEN 2010: 180) and questions of influence. Belle (2014: 45) notes that

> *Nowhere is the rejection of a teleological approach to translation history as clear as in the recent debates on the issue of retranslation, as Antoine Berman's initial hypothesis of a gradual progression towards a fuller and more faithful rendering of literary texts through their consecutive translations (Berman 1995, 2009) has been replaced by theories stressing the multiplicity of human, historical, social and material factors involved in the retranslation of a given text [...]*

Teleological thinking is also evident in the primacy accorded to modernity over tradition, overlooking tradition's ongoing entanglement in modernity. What if we were to seek insights from traditional practices and concepts as we move into the future, or if we adopted a view of history as multiple (overlapping) temporalities with converging and diverging paths? Walkowitz (2015: 174) notes that

> *translated books insert rival temporalities into established histories. Translations remind us that books can begin more than once, and that literary traditions are regularly interrupted, transformed, and initiated by the circulation of works into and out of many languages and many versions of languages.*

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validates and reinforces the degradation of both Korean literature and translation as imitation, which is always only getting close to Western literature and 'the original,' respectively.

The longstanding Western assumption of "a single flow of time or historical move-ment" (Mak 2006: 158) overlooks the possibility of superimposed, conflicting trends (e.g., sacred and secular time; indigenous forms of time vs settler colonialist tempo-rality; feudal or colonial legacies coexisting with modern aspects), each with their own rhythms and durations.[3] It also ignores alternatives to linear (cumulative, irre-versible) change, such as cyclical or regenerative change.

Some historians have espoused "a variant of the cyclical conception of historical time – albeit one divested of the decisive role of fate in historical causation" (Kidambi 2016: 251–2) (e.g., Toynbee's *Study of History* [1934–61]). In his study of world "macro-history", Snyder (1999: 1) hypothesized a basic historical cycle consisting of "reforming, reorganizing, consolidating and disintegrating phases", with disintegra-tion as a prerequisite to the next formative stage. Can cyclical patterns be detected in translation history? Is a period dominated by literal translations, for example, inevi-tably followed by a 'backlash' in the form of free translations – in turn leading to a further backlash? Even if certain approaches recur, they are not necessarily a repeti-tion in terms of their exact nature and circumstances; nor do they necessarily appear at *regular* intervals.

The adoption of Western Translation Studies by many non-Western scholars today arguably exemplifies one view of "the paradigm of progress" (Belle 2014: 45). Non-Western translation cultures have not, however, necessarily followed the same histor-ical trajectories as those of Western cultures, which are by no means 'natural' or uni-versal. Rather than lagging behind the West, other cultures might simply be following a *different* path. One question worth pursuing is whether cultures dislodged from their historical paths of translation on encountering the West have subsequently fol-lowed similar trajectories – either to the West or each other.

The penultimate section of this article discusses anachronistic/presentist modes of historical narrative.

Change and continuity

An important aspect of historiography involves explaining change – its causes, as well as its "scope, intensity and duration" (D'hulst & Gambier 2018: 102). Even studies focusing on a moment in time assume change by highlighting the distinctive-ness of the practices described and how they came into being (Howell & Prevenier 2001: 120). Systems-based theories emphasize historical *laws* behind change (neces-sary conditions, such as technological expertise), but most historians emphasize junc-tures where *choices* were made (e.g., closing or opening up a country) (Teune 1990: 57). Teune adds that "[t]he 'in-between' position is that there are historically neces-sary 'sequences', but variations on what specifically follows." Owen (2017: 15) sug-

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[3] Morris (2004: 258) suggests that "academics have become skilled at reminding each other on principle that there are 'different' and 'multiple' temporalities, and that history moves at 'variable' paces and in an 'uneven' way. But it is not especially easy to make this theoretical recognition *work* in a practical way in spatially or geopolitically defined analyses of cultural life."

gests that "[i]f we look at shorter spans of a few centuries, we are on safer grounds if we identify 'differences' rather than 'changes.' These differences might possibly be historical change, but we cannot discount regional differences, differences of scribal convention, and other factors."

Michel Foucault (1971) critiqued continuity – a concept that elides "conflicts and suppressed alternatives" (KIDAMBI 2016: 256) – and instead emphasized contingency and rupture, a concept that accords well with periodizing distinctions. Specific examples of discontinuities are presented in the section on periodization below. Wilkens (2012: 254) suggests, however, that

> We have, by working of necessity with very few texts and constructing highly detailed accounts of their particular differences, perhaps allowed ourselves to see period differences […] as more far reaching than they really are. This isn't to say that [such] differences […] don't exist but only that they may consist in small but important variations on larger underlying continuities.

One might argue that such variations are *not* significant if they do not change the "underlying continuities", but it is important to pay attention to the micro picture as well as the macro perspective so as not to homogenize details that give substance and texture to the historical account.

Harlaftis, Sbonias and Karapidakis (2010: 5) define continuity, micro-change and macro-change respectively as persistence, momentum and turbulence, while Frank (1998: 347) asserts that

> a continuous process can – and apparently usually does – contain periods of acceleration, deceleration, and also temporary stability […] pulsations are not indications of discontinuity in the system and processes. Instead they can be manifestations of the internal structure and dynamic mechanism that maintains the system and propels its continuity itself. The question becomes whether the apparent pulsations are really in fact cycles.

Sudden breaks or upheavals do help identify "moments when cultures or parts of cultures are reactionary, when they resist innovation" (HOWELL & PREVENIER 2001: 127). Focusing on non-change (norm-*observance*) "invites assumptions of social unity and homogeneity", whereas focusing on change (norm-*breaking*) raises questions about power and social tension (PYM 1998: 111). Both change and what remains or has even been lost merit attention, "since we are interested in knowing why people may wish to preserve forms of knowledge in the face of changing objects of knowledge no less than in knowing why they may be prepared to change them" (POLLOCK 2007: 4). Did a given culture emphasize continuity and preservation in terms of translation practices and thinking—or did it emphasize superseding and improving? What characteristics of each broader historical context fostered these dynamics? Did an emphasis on change lead to tension with forms and concepts supported at other times?

A *diachronic* (trans-periodic) approach that involves comparing a specific past with the present can highlight not only the characteristics of that past period but also *con-*

temporary features. In addition to diachronic succession or divergence of translation practices or concepts, another possibility is *synchronic* divergences, which might be of even greater significance. The two aspects are not mutually exclusive. Some other change-related questions that warrant examination by translation historians include the role played by governments or other mediating agencies in instigating change (e.g., institutional encouragement to adopt foreign norms) and how translators and related stakeholders initiated or responded to changes. Did they immediately abandon existing modes? Did different segments of the culture (e.g., readers, critics) react differently? More broadly, what was the impact of wider historical circumstances not directly related to translation?

Periodization

Periodization, whereby periods are conceptualized, characterized and narrated in terms of a certain unity bookended by crucial transformations, is a key form of historical argument that situates events in "a larger or more meaningful context" (STALEY 2007: 81), although there is not always consensus over particular periodization parameters.

> *[…] identification of coherent periods of history involves much more than the simple discovery of self-evident turning points in the past: it depends on prior decisions about the issues and processes that are most important for the shaping of human societies, and it requires the establishment of criteria or principles that enable historians to sort through masses of information and recognize patterns of continuity and change* (BENTLEY 1996: 749).

There are different organizing principles for periodization, with varying degrees of relevance and persuasiveness for translation history. The choice of where to begin and end a period depends not only on the research question but also the underlying master narrative (e.g., decadence, Enlightenment, modernity)—and in turn this choice has implications for the historical narrative. Periodization clearly has its uses (e.g., systematization; providing an interpretive frame and a shared reference point), but unexamined schemas can imply or impose homogeneity, overlooking internal contradictions and changes within that timeframe. Owen (2017: 23) notes that a received periodization "structures our attention to certain authors, works, and genres rather than others. It is an essentially conservative force that foregrounds one story while blurring others." It can also inaccurately suggest "radical discontinuities"—e.g., "between labile manuscript and stable print, between a culture of patronage and privileges and one of commerce and competition, between the authority of books and that of specialist journals" (FRASCA-SPADA & JARDINE 2000: 8). Translation historians need to interrogate the different grounds for slicing up time (criteria that are often mixed even within a single study), rather than adopting them unthinkingly.

In terms of continuous dating, *centuries* are a commonly used caesura, and the turn of a century has a collective psychological significance to those experiencing it. Nevertheless, century markers rarely coincide with decisive historical breaks—hence the

notion of "long" and "short" centuries (e.g., the long eighteenth century, variously dated as 1678 to 1791, 1688 to 1815, or 1660 to 1830). Decades and years likewise have meaning to those experiencing them but might be less relevant cut-off points from a long-term perspective than other factors relating more directly to the specific object of study. Fink (2005: B13) asks "Does a moment or event in 1958 have less intellectual kinship with one in 1961 than an event in 1969 does? If not, what justifies our conventional categorization by decades and our preoccupation with *fins de siècle* or new centuries?" Even if decades are used as the unit in a historical corpus study, for example, the starting point does not have to end with 00. McEnery and Baker (2016: 29) suggest a *sliding* ten-year window starting in consecutive years as one possible way of exploring changes (e.g., in collocational usage) over time.

Non-continuous bases for periodization include *dynasties*, *reigns* and *eras* (in Japan, era names did not coincide with reigns until 1868). Divisions such as ancient (Antiquity), medieval (the Middle Ages), early modern and modern (with further subdivisions, such as the Late Modern Period) are unstable, ambiguous and not necessarily relevant across cultures.[4] Another approach ties periodization to broad *cultural history* (e.g., Humanism, Renaissance, Baroque, Rationalism) or "ages", such as the Age of Discovery or the Golden Age, or to more specific cultural movements such as vernacularization (e.g., the emergence of a native script and vernacular genres), *literary* currents (e.g., Romantic, Victorian, Realist, Naturalist), or the origin and development of genres (e.g., neo-classical drama). Another time regime is that of *generations*, such as the literary generations of roughly thirty years suggested by Moretti (2005). Alternative approaches link periodization to transformative moments in *national history* (e.g., wars;[5] reunification of a nation) or *political events* such as new models of government or colonization (with 'precolonial', 'colonial' and 'postcolonial' constituting ideologically laden terms that blur chronology and epistemology, as well as differences across place and in trajectory).[6] Other possible bases include *religiously* marked periods (e.g., the Muslim period in India from the twelfth to mid-nineteenth century, which brought with it new sources of texts for translation). Further possible demarcators include *mechanical technologies* (e.g., the invention and spread of paper, printing or computers), *social technologies* (e.g., literacy; the Internet), and *economic* events (e.g., the Great Depression; a boom in the publishing industry).

These are not autonomous or mutually exclusive approaches, as literary history, for example, can be influenced by political history. In addition, the valences assigned to different period labels can vary across cultures. For instance, in Southeast Asia "the

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[4] Howsam (2006: 53) notes that "the useful term 'premodern' increasingly supersedes the strict break between medieval and early modern." It refers to any period before about 1800, when the industrial revolution started to have an impact.

[5] In her study of languages in war situations, Footitt (2012: 222) found that a military periodization (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) made more sense than "imposing a pre-determined languages framework on war".

[6] See, for example, Bastin's periodization for translation in Hispano-America (2006: 124), which begins with the conquest by Columbus.

'post-classical' period was not regarded as an unmitigated 'decline into the medieval' as in South Asia, but instead as a time which witnessed a series of variable, but progressive economic and social developments." (ALI 2009: 8). Moreover, Love (2003: 53) cautions that "taxonomic distinctions of the kind represented by a division of history into communication ages, even if defensible on a heuristic basis for specific, carefully framed enquiries, must never be mistaken for agencies of causation."

Such periodizations are often not only culture-specific (rightly so, hence they should not be unthinkingly extrapolated to other cultures), but also not necessarily *directly* relevant to *translation* history. External events (e.g., social upheavals) indisputably affect translation to varying degrees, but their timing does not necessarily *coincide* with the ensuing impact on translation, and landmark translations can themselves even affect larger cultural forces. Periodizations of translation can usefully be based on changes (in processes, products, attitudes, events) directly germane to translation. Although source culture phenomena have an impact, translation periodization preferably emphasizes the situation in the *target* culture and processes of cross-cultural interaction (e.g., trade, mass migration). The turning points might be based on *quantitative criteria* (e.g., shifts in the number of translations from different languages) or *qualitative criteria* (e.g., changes in the role[s] of translators; changes in the quality of translations or the kinds of texts translated;[7] changing attitudes toward free translation or relay translations; whether verse was predominantly translated as verse or prose; the origin and development of particular *translation* genres; the emergence of translations as models for original writers; the advent or decline of influential theories, paradigms or norms; the development of an analytical framework and vocabulary for critiquing translations) or *events* directly related to translation, such as the establishment of translator training programs and Translation Studies as an academic discipline or the introduction of dubbing or subtitling.[8] At the level of biographical studies of individual translators, a periodization might be based, for instance, on the translator's encounter with given authors or translation approaches.

Existing examples (not necessarily ideal models) of translation periodizations include those for Estonia (Ploom 2011: 215, based on the interaction between language and "cultural and ideological discursive practices"), the broad four-part periodization presented by Steiner (1992: 248–50) (implicitly for Europe) and the somewhat more detailed proposal by Dollerup (2007), the periodization for 17th-century France in

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[7] For instance, in terms of the kinds of texts translated in different periods, as well as their number and impact, Trivedi (1996: 46) asks "(i) whether broadly the same kind of texts continue to be translated in postcolonial times as in the colonial times but as a recognizably distinct project, (ii) whether quite different kinds of texts now begin to be translated instead or as well, and (iii) whether the balance of payments (or indeed the balance of cultural power) between the former colony and the metropolis is in any significant way altered in terms of the quantum of translations transacted between them, and in terms of their respective reception and impact."

[8] Tracking changes in variables (e.g., volume and types of translations [not] produced during a particular period, their source cultures, the main authors translated) helps identify "ascending/stable/descending forces" (CHEVREL 1995: 20) – new, mainstream and previous generations of norms (which might co-exist).

terms of minor thematic 'units' (e.g., translation in administration, translation in the colonies, reception of European literature) presented by Vega and Palido (2013: 59), and the five waves of translation in China (Lın 2002; based on the nature of the main texts translated at different times). The periodization in a project on translation history in Finland used the development of the literary language as its criterion—Old Finnish, Early Modern Finnish and Modern Finnish, "which respond roughly to external, political or religious, turning points in Finland's history" (Paloposkı 2013: 230). Nornes (2007: 177–178) presents a tripartite periodization for subtitling based on the differing translation approaches, while recognizing their imbrication.

My ongoing research on the history of translation into Japanese was initially influenced by existing periodizations relating to Japanese history, literature and translation. As research proceeded, it became apparent that these required refinement and elaboration to better match the realities and structure the narrative. Diverse criteria and delimiters emerged in a back-and-forth process between time-specific historical facts and time-spanning thematic categories. They include the arrival of significant new religions, nationalities or source languages; material changes such as the introduction of a new script or printing technology; changes in translation approach or norms (e.g., *kanbun kundoku*, libertine, artistic, foreignizing, adaptation; retranslation boom); changing emphases on different source genres (e.g., classical vs vernacular Chinese works; religious vs secular works; different literary genres, such as poetry, political novels, children's literature); *non*-translation of certain genres (e.g., sutras); national and external events (e.g., wars; the Occupation; changes in the relative status of different source cultures; copyright legislation;); conversely, the impact of translations on the Japanese language and various aspects of society; changes in output format, such as newspaper serialization; professionalization, institutionalization (including creation of official translation bureaus), commercialization, and popularization; terminological standardization; the location and identity of particular groups of translators (e.g., Nagasaki *tsūji* vs Edo scholar-translators; the emergence of women translators and the later feminization of the profession); outstanding individual translators and theorists; and the appearance of a discourse on translation and shifts in thinking about translation. This illustrates the complex and overlapping nature of periodization schemes, as well as the imbrication of chronological and thematic approaches.

Pym (1992: 4) maintains that "periodisations based on numerical majorities" fail to capture historical change adequately, because historical change is "habitually motivated by discontent minorities". The importance of not marginalizing minorities or exceptions, to counterbalance the homogenizing that can result from a focus on the majority, is widely recognized today (although not always actualized), but Pym does not offer suggestions on how to link this to a more inclusive periodization. One start would be to consider whether the overall periodization makes sense from the perspective of more specialized histories, such as a history of women translators or a history of a culture's translations from a given source culture.

In the context of literary history, Hayot (2012: 161–162) has suggested four innovative approaches to creating periodizations:

1. Conceive periods organized around times that cross or combine our existing ones.
2. "Develop periods specifically designed to cross national boundaries", using a non-national principle of social or cultural coherence (e.g., capitalism, feudalism, city-states).
3. "Imagine periods as they might look from some moment other than the present". For instance, "What happens if we conceive of modernism as lying at the historical midpoint of a longer period that includes it? Or as lying at the beginning, or end, of a longer period that begins or ends with it? What would such a period be called? What kinds of work would find themselves umbrellaed by such a concept?"
4. "Support periods using telescope models that lead from the small to the large, rather than the reverse." E.g., focus on a single year before examining larger periods.

Theories or concepts related to translation might have their own periodization. For instance, Macfarlane (2007: 11) dates the start of "self-consciousness concerning originality" in England to 1859, ending its examination in 1900 (dates that would obviously differ across cultures), and Chesterman (1997: 20) presents eight major ahistorical and overlapping stages in the evolution of translation theory.

The circumstances surrounding turning points yield particularly rich insights, and transitional phases merit examination of their causes and significance. Here the narrative is one of disjuncture, triggered by competing norms, for instance. A single translation (or group of translations) that breaks with tradition might be accorded canonical status precisely because of its innovative character. This can lead to a shift in criteria for canonicity and to an alternative continuity (possibly to the neglect of translations that exemplify earlier approaches).[9] Turning points will often, however, be somewhat ill-defined, as change is usually an ongoing process.

In terms of structuring history into a narrative, making a time-line from all the source materials helps in understanding the chronography of events but is not necessarily the most insightful approach to presenting the narrative. Curthoys and McGrath (2009: 142) note that "strict chronology must at times be disturbed—to make different connections across time, to draw attention to contemporaneous histories, to deal with disjunctions and discontinuities. Sometimes you need, in filmic terms, a flashback." They recommend identifying any parallel timelines and different timescales (141). Similarly, Kidambi (2016: 256) suggests "documenting the multiple narratives of the past that exist within a society at any given moment in time."

An alternative is to adopt a broad chronological structure but to organize much of the material *thematically* within that structure (CURTHOYS & MCGRATH 2009: 142).

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[9] Le Goff (2015: 2) argues that "when change is sufficiently far-reaching in its effects, a new period represents a repudiation of the entire social order of the one preceding it." Ginzburg (1993: 19) suggests, however, that "innovations, in fact ruptures with the past, make headway by means of the reaffirmation of a certain continuity with what has gone before." His comment was made in the context of changes within academic institutions, but we could likewise argue that new translation periods marked by a rejection of earlier translation regimes nevertheless retain a certain continuity with their predecessor (even if only in the yin-yang sense of the *absence* of its distinguishing characteristics, although it makes more sense to think that earlier attributes are unlikely to disappear abruptly and completely).

The structure in Delisle and Woodsworth (1995) is based on the *roles* of translators throughout history (e.g., in the development of national languages, the emergence of national literatures, the dissemination of knowledge, and the spread of religions). Other non-periodizing concepts include, for example, genre, gender, ethnicity, and "poetic features […] or other newly described or invented features of rhetoric, narrative, or form" (HAYOT 2012: 153).

Coexisting and interacting units of analysis

The French historian Fernand Braudel (1949) argued that "historical time had different layers, each with its own specific temporal duration and rhythm" (KIDAMBI 2016: 254). These consist of the following:

1. the *long-term*-e.g., geographical and climate changes (deep time) and long-term structural and institutional aspects (e.g., stable legal and political structures; an ongoing need for translations). Braudel regarded the *longue durée*, with its emphasis on continuities, as the most meaningful framework for examining history.[10]

2. the *medium-term* (periods of decades or a century or so)—i.e., social and economic changes. An example would be mid-term needs such as the establishment of a written vernacular.

3. a fast-moving succession of events with little or no structure (*short-term* periods of a decade or less). Sometimes triggered by political or diplomatic events (e.g., wartime censorship of translations), here the focus is on events and individuals' actions.

It is important to choose a scale appropriate to the research aims. Historical processes on these three scales are often interrelated,[11] but focusing on different scales brings out different aspects (not just a more, or less, detailed picture of the same aspect).

> *Combining these three levels of analysis not only enables one to situate translators within their immediate 'universe of discourse' (Lefevere 1992), but also allows one to perceive the way in which they construct their own relationship with received discourses and practices as observable over the middle or long term. In particular, the analysis of both micro- and macro-historical contexts is essential in order to identify moments of crystallisation or transformation of translation tropes. (BELLE 2014: 58)*

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[10] Le Goff (2015) acknowledges criticisms of the idea of a *longue durée* on the grounds that "it has the effect of blurring periods, if not actually erasing them" (114). In his view, however, "there is no contradiction. Not only is there room for periods in the long term, they are a necessity—for the attempt to explain events that have both a mental and a physical dimension, as historical events inescapably do, requires a combination of continuity and discontinuity." (114–115).

[11] Commenting on Braudel's time levels, D'hulst (2010: 402–403) says "All three coexist in time in the same object, i.e., translational ideas and practices and there is an essential dynamism in their interplay, which could help to escape periodizations simply borrowed from the history of litera-ture or from the history of ideas".

"Immobile" history—changes that occur "so slowly that they […] become visible only in retrospect" (HOWELL & PREVENIER 2001: 126) – is arguably of special interest to the study of translation *thought*.

Digital history (data mining and big data approaches to the study of history) offers new analytical possibilities for translation historians (see Wakabayashi forthcoming). Robertson and Mullen (2017: 20) suggest that "For certain questions pertaining to highly complex systems over long periods of time, for example, computing affords a view of the *longue durée* otherwise obscured by individual examples", with the potential to "problematize existing periodizations" (16). Large data sets might indicate fewer or alternative differences than those commonly assumed between traditional and modern thinking and practices or between pre-war and post-war translation in a particular culture, for instance. At the other extreme, the time- and date-stamping of digitally created documents allows "a new form of temporaneous comparison and analysis" (WELLER 2013: 8), such as in examinations of successive drafts of a translation.

Anachronistic (hindsight) interpretations and compression of time

One challenge is how to evaluate historical practices, thinking and documents "from within", drawing on *past* categories and concepts. D'hulst (2010: 403) argues that "it is sheer illusion to imagine that we can […] 'move' to the past. On the other hand, there would be a danger to use in a straightforward manner modern translational categories for the analysis of historical translations and translation processes." There is a risk of projecting present ('modern') notions of translation (e.g., feminist views, or even the very importance of translation itself) onto the ('premodern') past, where the multiple forms of engagement with texts did not necessarily coincide with contemporary forms.[12] Howsam (2006: 55–56) cautions against presentist impulses whereby, for instance, assumptions "that reading was for improvement and its effects were modernizing […] go hand in hand with similar assumptions about the technology of printing."

A related aspect is recency bias, whereby periods seem to become shorter and events more frequent as we move closer to the present, amplifying its importance. Possible reasons include "a pragmatic response to historical increases in density of information" and "chronological narcissism" (HAYOT 2012: 157).

Studying recent history – defined, for instance, by Romano and Potter (2012: 3) as "events that have taken place no more than forty years ago" – presents challenges, such as imperfect visibility, a lack of historical perspective, and underdeveloped historiography (POTTER 2012: 3), as well as "positionality, the difficulties of crafting narratives in the absence of any clear moments of closure, and the specific challenges that arise when working with new kinds of sources", such as translators' blogs and websites (POTTER 2012: 5). The events and phenomena under study might even be

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[12] For instance, the distinction between translation and commentary was not deemed relevant in medieval Europe and India.

ongoing at the time of writing, although Romano and Potter note that this "can serve as a reminder that all narratives and endpoints are constructed to some extent, chosen by the historian in ways that affect interpretation" (POTTER 2012: 10). Recent history also offers the potential *reward* of examining untouched archives (e.g., publishers' archives), opportunities for oral histories from people who experienced the events, and the possibility of commenting on or even intervening in issues of contemporary concern (e.g., interpreters in conflict zones, translators' working conditions).

Conclusion

Matters of time *matter*, meriting greater consideration by translation scholars with an interest in history. Translation historians can undoubtedly benefit from existing thinking on time by specialist historians, but they also need to consider these insights critically in terms of their relevance to *translation* history, which is both part of broader history and has its own distinct features that call for more targeted examination. Explicitly considering issues of time, notably periodization, throughout research projects on translation history – at the outset and most likely with modification as the research proceeds – is preferable to unthinkingly accepting inherited or culture-specific attitudes or adopting a largely intuitive or somewhat mechanical approach to partitioning masses of unstructured historical data.

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