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This slender book is primarily the work of Michel Ballard, the late and much missed author of numerous important works on the history of translation, and, as one would expect from such a scholar, it is a delight even at its small size. In just over a hundred pages it deals with several thousand years of translation history of multiple cultures and societies. Yves Chevrel and Christian Balliu are to be highly commended for working on this and bringing it to publication.

The book contains an introduction and eight chapters, seven of which are on cultures or periods: Egypt; Mesopotamia; Classical Greece; Ptolemy and the Septuagint; Rome and the origins of Latin literature; Roman translation from Cicero to Boethius; and Christian translation. The eighth chapter is the only one nominally dedicated to a single author, Saint Jerome (although it does talk about other translators as well).

The introduction acknowledges the polymorphic nature of translation before pointing out that as an activity translation revolves around the need to transfer a linguistic object from one language to another – the activity and object of translation may alter, but still the fundamental aim remains true (11). Chapter one on Ancient Egypt deals with translation from the perspective of interpretation and the Egyptian consideration of other peoples as barbarians, before moving to Joseph as an interpreter of language and dreams – reminding us that interpretation comes in many forms (15), and, finally, to Herodotus. After that, it turns to the tablets of El-Amarna from the 1300s BCE, which closes out the chapter. This is a huge amount to cover, and it is done in a brisk but generous way. The other chapters repeat this strategy in an impressive fashion. The second, on Mesopotamia, introduces the reader to the Assyrians and Sumerians before spending several pages on intertextuality as a product of translation. This last, and largest section, deals with the Old Testament as a series of texts that incorporates and changes other material from various cultures of the ancient Near East, including stories of the Flood. Although all the topics are dealt with in a few pages only, the broad reach allows the reader to see the interconnectedness of these cultures and linguistic spheres in a panoramic perspective, which the reviewer found refreshing and a good springboard to thinking about how later forms and modes of translation repeat (or not) earlier traditions.

The third chapter on Greece brings the reader to the Classical world, but arriving at this culture from chapters on the Ancient Near East provides a different perspective, and thus Ballard reminds the reader that Greece is not the first non-translating culture in the Mediterranean world that has more of an impact. In other words, one sees Greek rejection of translation as an example of parallel evolution. The chapter briskly touches on Homer's use of *barabaphonos* (barbarian speech) to describe the languages of other people and then on Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, before dealing with the reverse (and rare from Greeks) perspective in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Crito* and Herodotus. The chapter closes by widening

the perspective of translation from a purely linguistic activity to interpreting oracles and writing on language.

Chapter four brings us to the Ptolemies and the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Ballard approaches this translation not as something unique but through a discussion of Ptolemaic adoption and adaptation of Egyptian religion and gods by several Ptolemaic rulers, and the Rosetta Stone. There is relatively little space dedicated to the Septuagint itself, given its importance and the legends surrounding its creation, which was a little disappointing, especially because later chapters do not adequately consider Jewish translation practice.

The next two chapters are dedicated to non-Christian translation in Rome, starting with the creation of Latin literature based on a Greek model, though cleverly it does so by examining it first through Propertius and Virgil, before moving back in time to Rome's expansion through military conquest and early encounters with Greek culture in the South of Italy. The rest of the chapter deals with various translators from Livius Andronicus onwards, and includes instances of Romans speaking Greek. Perhaps because this is my area of interest, I felt like too often the discussion took the Romans at their word when talking about, for example, the poverty of the Latin language, but it still is an admirable summary of a vast range of translation activity. The same feelings were present for the next chapter on the period from Cicero to Boethius, which could have taken into account more of its complexities. That said, the chapter does provide an admirable introduction to a vast range of translation activity by Cicero and others including Quintilian, Pliny the Younger, Seneca the Younger, and Aulus Gellius. In addition, the closing of the chapter makes the reader aware that translation was occurring across a vast array of genres and for vastly different audiences by looking at translation of scientific literature as well as more well-known genres such as historiography and theatre. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of Christian translation, providing a bridge to the final two chapters which are dedicated to that subject.

In these final two chapters I did feel short shrift was given to translation in Palestine outside of Christianity, and would have welcomed more complexity and discussion of Jewish translation culture in particular, before moving on to Christianity. Leaving out Josephus' use of Aramaic and self-translation with assistance of his works into Greek is particularly glaring here, as does the omission of discussion of conversion to Judaism among the Romans and other peoples in the Mediterranean, especially given that there were Greek translations of Jewish texts in circulation. However, the author does touch on translation of Christian texts into languages other than Greek and Latin, and seeing the wide array of translations being performed during the early years of Christianity was well received by the reviewer. The final chapter deals with Jerome and the works of a number of other Church fathers, concluding with the Latin Vulgate.

Overall, this is an excellent introduction to a vast array of translation history, practices, and practitioners. Although specialists will likely quibble with some of its decisions and omissions (as I did with Josephus and Jewish translation above), I think that they will find it a useful book because of its breadth of reach and how its overview sparks thoughts about parallel evolution of translation practices or rejection of translation. I would happily assign it to students interested in a panoramic view of translation in the ancient world, even if they had limited knowledge of French – the layout and the language would ensure that they still could gain important insights from it. For those teaching the history of translation in French or in a bilingual society like Canada it will be a most welcome addition to their bibliographies and courses.