INTRODUCTION

Inside the Kaleidoscope: Translation's Challenge to Critical Concepts

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In 1965, Hans-Georg Gadamer's assertion that "jede Übersetzung ist . . . Auslegung" ("every translation is . . . an interpretation"; *Wahrheit* 362; *Truth* 384) was a minority opinion, its implications largely unexplored.[1] To think of translation as interpretation is to see it as tricky, variable, multifactorial, and generative of new ideas. But in practice most readers and scholars, including literary specialists who might agree with Gadamer's assertion in principle, use translations as if they were stable, straightforward reproductions of foreign language texts. A common practical assumption is that a translation, if deemed good, will provide a fluent substitute and faithful transfer of content from the prior foreign texts or originals. Today most specialists in translation studies reject these common assumptions, as well as moralistic phrases like "fidelity to the original" and concepts such as substitution and seamless transfer (inter alia). Instead, many translation studies specialists assume that translations do many more interesting things than replicate their prior foreign text(s) (an impossibility anyway[2]); that translation unsettles the idea of "originality" and many other critical concepts; that there is more to literary works than their content; and that the divergences between a translation and its prior text(s), like divergences among different translations of a work, are not problems but interpretive opportunities. Furthermore, translations constitute points of cultural and historical contact too generative to ignore. Hearing this and more from specialists, general readers and users of translations might still protest that expecting a translation to be a faithful substitute text in a language they can read is not unreasonable.

Not unreasonable, but uncritical and damaging. Such beliefs have proven to be a pernicious knot in literary studies, a tangle that the

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translation theorist and translator Lawrence Venuti has rightly deplored, although perhaps too much dignified, as the "instrumental model" of translation, as opposed to a "hermeneutic model" (*Contra Instrumentalism*). Instrumental readings assume two stable texts (a translation and an "original" or source) comparable to each other without first interpreting each in its own right and without reading each in terms of its incommensurate, independent contexts. Instrumental readings do not factor in semantic and material-textual instabilities or cross-cultural, translingual incommensurabilities as default conditions of literature. They do not acknowledge that interpretation necessarily grounds any ensuing conclusions. Nor do they consistently register that the translingual is always the transcultural. In other words, literary-cultural work aiming at the analysis of alterities too often falls into instrumentalism when treating translation. Under even basic scrutiny, then, what may seem a reasonable readerly position—expecting a faithful substitute for an original text—shows its reliance on untenable assumptions.

The instrumental model dominant outside translation studies persists even inside this large, varied, and colorful field, albeit to a lesser degree. But unexamined beliefs about translation, regardless of who holds them, entail frictions, misapprehensions, and other ill consequences for all our fields. Some of the damage is professional, evident in the conditions of labor, advancement, and uneven privilege explored in some essays in this issue (such as those by Emmerich; Merrill).[3] Some damage relates to the theory-praxis division inside translation studies: although many (perhaps most) contributors here are also working translators, and several essays address the issue (Glover; Hanes; Pym), the pervasive commitments to praxis that distinguish our field have not yielded a unified theory or criticism (explored in the sections "How Did We Get Here?" and "After DTS: Contextualizations, Turns, Postcolonialisms" below). But the greatest damage to literary studies from uncritical views of translation is intellectual, leaving crucial epistemological and interpretive factors misunderstood, illegible, or missed entirely. This special topic itself saw gentler

versions of such frictions, misunderstandings, and divisions; you may still discern them between certain essays here.

The benefits of a better-informed, critical or "hermeneutic" view of translation would accrue not only to translation studies specialists. The field has made significant gains by examining and revising mainstream assumptions about translation, but too much scholarship (within translation studies and without) elides these gains, missing their relevance to all literary-critical studies. In literary studies, meanwhile, what is casually, habitually called "cultural and historical context" often omits any treatment of the roles translation plays and has always played in any literary tradition. Even the basic translation studies idea that the translingual is always transcultural, if well and fully applied in literary studies and among general readers, would change many pictures. (The idea would also threaten many current institutional structures, from departments and hiring to library-catalog terms to fellowship and grant categories.) That nonspecialists frequently rely on translations makes translation studies approaches all the more salient, and the need to understand them the more pressing. It is not that one must become multilingual or work in translation studies to benefit. As I suggest below in the section "Translation Studies and Literary Studies," every MLA member, every *PMLA* reader, and every scholar in every subject area and subfield of the MLA has compelling intellectual reasons to take translation into account in comprehensive and incisive ways.

If translation studies specialists need to try harder to explain and demonstrate our work and our own divided positions to other literary and language scholars, then the essays here certainly make a start. In this introduction I aim only to expose some of what translation studies has to offer literary studies, to note how some of the disciplinary misalignments developed between them in the West, and to contextualize the forty essays in this special topic issue for the very broad audiences of *PMLA*. And I add my "translation studies for all!" refrain to this issue's small exhortatory chorus, which includes Anthony Pym, who advocates translation

literacy; Remy Attig, who connects translation studies and social justice; Michael Cronin, who links translation studies and our inflamed planet; Paul F. Bandia, Kaiama L. Glover, and Vanessa Lopes Lourenço Hanes, who each demonstrate how translation helps us think about hemisphericity and the Global South; Chana Kronfeld, who explains how and why to go "beyond untranslatability"; and Karen Emmerich, who proposes thoroughgoing, specific changes in literary studies and beyond.

There is more in this issue than electrifying exhortation. Sixteen long essays and two dozen shorter special features essays, addressing fifteen languages in all, illustrate a range of translation studies methods and theories that open up the translingual and transcultural engagements of even apparently monolingual literatures. The sixteen long essays have been organized not according to period or language but in loose clusters of shared concerns relevant to translation studies. First, three essays focus on translation and materiality; the set includes biblical, nineteenth-century, and modern cases in Hebrew, Portuguese, Spanish, and English (Hendrickson; Goldfajn; Galvin). The next five essays explore translation and (trans)nationhoods, articulating specific sociopolitical consequences of translation in British, Chinese, Czech, American, and Greek contexts (Lee-Lenfield; Lai-Henderson; Schormová; Lott; Van Dyck). Each essay in the third grouping takes a distinctive approach to reiterative translations of several kinds among a half dozen languages, with cases ranging from the sixteenth century to the present (P. M. Johnson; Harrison; Venuti). Essays in the final set treat literary matters such as poetics, genre, narrativity, and "world literature" from Homer to Han Kang, using an array of languages including Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, and Korean (Tageldin; Yeung; Gullander-Drolet; Klein). The final essay calls for actions that every critic, teacher, writer, and reader—not only translators—can take: "Translating for Language Justice, across the Disciplines" (Emmerich).

If applied widely, a critical or "hermeneutic" model of translation studies promises benefits by reorienting attention—and approaches—to all sorts of previously elided translingual (always transcultural) alterities. As background to this issue, I mention only a few developments in translation studies. By "translation studies" I actually mean here "Western translation studies": this small, Eurocentric sketch of a much larger global history of developments is necessarily limited to my own fields of expertise, omitting most of the world's rich history of developments in translation. Like Brian James Baer ("On Origins"), I call for scholars with broader expertise to create a comprehensive, non-Eurocentric world history of translation studies. I accept the risk that specialists will find this introduction too familiar, simple, and general, yet still incomplete; this is only one scholar's limited sampling of a vast, complicated field. What follows sketches in part how translation studies reached certain present misalignments and later suggests how we might best recalibrate them for our collective benefit.

How Did We Get Here?

Successive movements in Western translation studies have shifted the questions we now ask about translation and translations. An ancient multidiscipline with a long history, translation studies has changed rapidly since about 1970, when, in successive waves, new approaches overturned prior assumptions about how translations signify and why they matter. The old-philological emphasis on fidelity to a source, the expectation of equivalence between a text and its translation, the evaluative impulses of nineteenth- and earlier-twentieth-century translation scholarship, and subfield-specific paradigms such as the premodern *translatio studii* or the modern "anxiety of influence" have been shown, in translation studies at least, to have limited analytic value for treating translations.[4]

The moralizing concept of verbal fidelity had been a straw-man problem for translators and those seriously studying translations in the West even before Horace (65–8 BCE) and Jerome (ca. 342/347–420 CE), who poked at the concept but in no way unseated it. Horace's *Ars poetica* famously dismissed word-for-word translation: writers may win acclaim only "si . . . / nec verbo verbum curabis

reddere fidus / interpretes" ("if they do not seek to render word for word with the care of a faithful translator"; lines 131–34). Jerome, the patron saint of translators, despite his guiding theological imperatives, later quoted Horace in the famous letter to Pammachius and extended a loosened fidelity to his own Bible translation, the Vulgate, saying that he tries "non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu" ("not [to express] the word from a word, but to express the sense of a sense"; col. 0571).[5] Translators themselves always knew fidelity as a false flag, though many flew it disingenuously (Robinson; Rhodes et al.). Medieval and early modern translators across Europe, for instance, used fidelity topoi, conventional statements asserting their fidelity to a text or an author, as a means of enhancing their own *auctoritas*. That concept, a prime desideratum for writers in the West, signified authority, authorship, and credibility. But medievalists have established these key statements as conventional, effective cover for all sorts of rhetorical and interpretive alterations in translated texts (Copeland; Minnis; Minnis et al.; Stahuljak), and early modernists have historicized visible translator claims, demonstrating their fungible cultural capital in economies of literary value, particularly with respect to *imitatio* and *aemulatio* (Hosington; Smith and Wilson; Belle and Hosington, *Thresholds*).

Rhetorical and opportunistic, or not, fidelity norms and their enmeshed instrumental model persisted. By 1680, Dryden had marked three distances from fidelity: metaphrase, paraphrase, imitation. Going too far from these, he said, "would lose the name of translation" (Ovid [A8r–A8v]). Even after 1813 and the new angle available in Friedrich Schleiermacher's binary, positing dual impulses in translation—the ethnocentric (bringing the source text home to the reader) and the ethnodeviant (sending the reader abroad), now called "domesticating" and "foreignizing," respectively—many readers and critics continued to expect a faithful, substitutional relationship in a translation pair. Many also continued to expect equivalent content transfer (ignoring the fact that what we usually term "content," if separated from form, style,

sound, or epitext, is only part of what makes literary meaning and value), and to evaluate translations based on fidelity to the prior-language text (if they were able to do so) and on fluency in the new language. These expectations are understandable, but translation studies specialists, perhaps especially those of us who also translate, instead tend to expect difference in translations and to regard those evaluative marks, fidelity and linguistic fluency, as opposing chimera. In other words, if any historical or cultural distance is involved, as is inevitable in translation, a choice toward replicating the older text may not sound verbally fluent, but choices toward "domesticating" fluency may not register historical or cultural distances well enough for some readers. Greater distances exacerbate this tension. Attention to fidelity and fluency obfuscates more important issues; they are among the least interesting aspects of any translation, despite their persistence in the nonspecialist understanding.[6]

The Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) movement of the 1960s and 1970s can be viewed as a major early disruptor of the fidelity fixation. In a rough parallel to descriptive linguistics, DTS work sought to circumvent stalled evaluative and prescriptive discussions by describing the norms and processes of translation and by establishing critical frameworks for a functionalist translation analysis (Toury; Holmes; Nida). Gideon Toury's concepts of "adequacy" and "acceptability" described the relation between the translation and the source text. To explain variance or "shift" in translations with ideas like "dynamic equivalence," figures associated with DTS expanded the questions one might ask of translations (such as, What norms and principles explain how they work?), while still examining an axis of similitude and difference.[7] "Dynamic equivalence," for instance, a concept still operating today, acknowledges the validity of common desires for a reliable text that one cannot otherwise read. More significantly, DTS and functionalist work also pried open the possibility that a translation's divergences from its prior text were to be investigated instead of moralized.

Other movements followed, trying other ways to untangle what was not yet called the

instrumentalist knot. The functionalist concept of *skopos* has been useful since 1978 in further challenging fidelity-equivalence assumptions and making translation difference a starting point. *Skopos* theory made the purposes and aims of the translation toward its new readership central to analysis (Vermeer; Reiss and Vermeer 103–11; Nord 26–37). When asked to recommend "best translations" of a work, don't we often give answers rooted in a readerly version of *skopos* theory? Let's take Dante's *La vita nuova* (*The New Life*): do you want the translation for pleasure reading? Or do you love the Pre-Raphaelites and want to see what Dante Gabriel Rossetti did with it? Is it for a valentine, or to teach a class? And is that a first-year intro to premodern poetry or a graduate seminar in the history of poetics? These situations need very different translations. But I always prefer facing-page translations: supremely ethical, illuminating objects, they invite and reward hermeneutic scrutiny of the translator's moves, displaying the particulars that constitute alterity encounters. As Emmerich and Michelle R. Warren each advise in this issue, and as Matthew Reynolds and his coauthors propose in "Prismatic Translation," I too recommend using several translations of any passage under consideration, and not only in the classroom. Among other things, doing so raises questions of how *skopos* and linguistic (always cultural) difference may each shape the translator's work. *Skopostheorie* and the wider functionalist movement that developed alongside it let us understand translation divergences in terms more fruitful than the evaluative or proscriptive.[8]

Taking a different functionalist direction, and radically multiplying Ludwig Wittgenstein's remark about translation as a "cluster concept," Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory does not limit itself to literature. Best known from a special issue of *Poetics Today* in 1990 (Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies*), polysystem theory was actually introduced by Even-Zohar in 1973 and is linked to DTS ("Relations"). Translation analysis based in polysystem theory understands translations in terms of their participation in textual and other kinds of systems, and not just in relation to the prior foreign text

or the new readership. Polysystem analysis "attempts to formulate rules regarding the diachronic as well as the synchronic relations within the system . . . the semiotic system itself should be seen as a heterogeneous, open system" (Codde 92). If all texts participate in complex systems, translations necessarily participate in at least two literary systems and two cultural systems, and they also create the intersectional nodes where systems touch. Used outside the fields of translation studies and world literature, polysystem theory "became a comprehensive model to explain the relationships among various cultural systems as well as among the different subsystems of any particular cultural system" (Codde 92). Polysystem theory's inclusion of transtemporality makes it especially advantageous for literary historians; its expansive heterogeneity makes it advantageous for cultural studies critics. Although some translation studies specialists have used it well (Hermans, *Translation*), and although in my own subfield of early modern studies it explains a great deal about, for instance, English literature with respect to Europe (Coldiron "Babel"), polysystem theory seems even now an underutilized asset in translation studies and general literary studies alike.

Meanwhile, from the 1990s into this century, Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* was raising awareness and making waves across translation studies. Assumptions about a translation's fidelity, fluency, substitution, and equivalence have reinforced a view of translation as secondary and of translators as subordinate and invisible. Implicit hierarchies still operate to devalue translators' labor, the instrumental model's tautologies have become entrenched, and Venuti theorized it all as an interconnected problematic. Between its initial appearance in 1995 and its most recent editions in 2008 and 2018, Venuti's book influenced several sorts of awakening in translation studies. Not only has it given translators some voice in asserting their rights with publishers, it has given specialists a rationale and a vocabulary, effectively validating both translators and translation studies specialists, a surprising number of whom live in the same body. An intriguing offshoot of *The Translator's Invisibility* are minimovements such

as those focusing on translation ethics (Pym, *On Translator Ethics*; Tymoczko, "Translation"; Polezzi), on translatorial visibility as an index to historical norms (Coldiron, "Visibility Now"), and on "translauthorship" (Çulhaoğlu). Many premodern translators, for example, had star power whose visibility enhanced books; translators depicted in portraits and paratexts enjoyed authorial status and agency (Reid, "Serious Play"; Belle and Hosington, *Thresholds*; for modern cases, see Batchelor, *Translation*). Essays in this issue likewise treat contemporary, high-visibility translators (Attig; Gullander-Drolet; Walkowitz). Under *Invisibility*'s influence, the translator's invisibility in the West is now increasingly questioned as a norm, although it remains a tough string in that knot of damaging assumptions about translation.

After DTS: Contextualizations, Turns, Postcolonialisms

The translation studies cultural turn has been extremely productive; it expanded the historicism that has been common since the 1980s in translation studies and in premodern literary studies (Brisset; Burke et al.; Lefevere).[9] These directions in translation studies, the cultural and the historical, share a tendency to read a translation's divergences from a prior text or texts as microcosmic indicators of broader ideological pressure points. And cultural translation studies usually assumes translation to be a textual encounter site like what Mary Louise Pratt called in 1992 a "contact zone" (6). A preexisting engagement with political and social movements is not surprising in translation studies, where alterity analysis is a staple (Rafael, "Betraying Empire"); that engagement coanimates other literary subfields, as witnessed, for instance, in a 2021 special issue of *American Quarterly* devoted to "the politics of language, translation, and multilingualism" in American studies (Rafael and Pratt 419). Many essays here explore how translation shifts deracinate, in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's sense of *déterritorialisation*, a prior text for a receiving culture and how they may also irritate the receiving culture's complacencies. Overall, the best cultural

translation studies work de-emphasizes expectations of fidelity, equivalence, or substitution.

The cultural turn since the 1980s and 1990s has created a wide, varied subfield, in which I include the identity-interrogating, sociological, transnational, and postcolonial movements that have come to characterize much translation research. Unfortunately, some of these studies still fall into uncritical assumptions about translations: assuming likeness between divergent cultural systems and languages, moralizing translation shifts, and failing to read translations as interpretations. In the worst cases, primary foreign materials—even historically distant materials—are read, quoted, and analyzed in modern English translations, treating the modern English translation as if it were the foreign culture's own artifact, or a replica of it. With no translation analysis, no attention to historical distance, and no acknowledgment that language conveys rich information essential to any valid cultural analysis, such translation-related failures are at best naive. So even on this "cultural" side, where translation studies and literary studies have been in more frequent conversation, there is room for improved connection. If using the foreign works themselves is impossible, hermeneutic translation studies approaches to the necessary translations, like consultations with foreign language speakers and translation specialists, can help.

Successful, often intersectional cultural translation studies approaches, such as feminist translation studies (Simon; Kenney; Flotow; Flotow and Kamāl; Chamberlain; Bassnett 59–80), are variously showcased in this issue, particularly in Luise von Flotow's "Feminist Translation and Translation Studies in Flux toward the Transnational." Perhaps less prominent until recently, disability translation studies (Marschark; Marschark et al.) is represented here by Robert G. Lee, Elizabeth A. Winston, and Eileen M. Forestal's essay. An active and activist queer translation studies segment, often called LGBTQ+ translation studies, has good momentum (Baer, *Queer Theory*; Spurlin), represented in this issue by Eric Keenaghan's "Liberation's Love Language: The Politics and Poetics of Queer Translation after Stonewall." Race and ethnicity translation studies

has also flourished (Arrojo; Baker, "Concept" and "Rehumanizing"; Rosenblatt), as they do in this issue in several directions. Here, for instance, Glover's evocative "Toward Afrofluency" writes of intersectional identity and the practice of translation; Nicholas T Rinehart's "Necessity Is the Mother of Translation" explains relations among Black translation poetics, archive, and canon. Certainly, translation studies knowledge matters for activists (Baker, "Translation") and for anyone writing about alterity-rooted topics like gender, race, or ethnicity. A hermeneutic translation studies approach to these topics is potentially revolutionary (see Bandia's essay in this issue), enhanced by the traditional translation studies focus on inscriptions of linguistic difference and their wider effects.

Postcolonial translation studies has been especially prominent and widely known (among many others, Bassnett and Trivedi; Tymoczko, *Translation*; Tymoczko and Gentzler; Spivak; Cheyfitz; Niranjana; Batchelor, "Literary Translation" and *Decolonizing*). This line of work interrogates asymmetries between prior texts and translations and shows how translations may expose real-world colonizing power relations. Postcolonial translation studies is represented in this issue by several essays. Nedda Mehdizadeh introduces an eighteenth-century colonizer's translation summary of a Persian-language folktale in the Folger Library archives. Hanes explains the living postcolonial legacies vibrant in Brazil today in translation studies, in education, and in the Portuguese language itself. Bandia's "Translation, Postcoloniality, Literary Multilingualism" examines "the writing and translation of African European-language literature in terms of the reality beyond the postcolonial—that is, in the light of the essence of an emerging post-postcoloniality or metacoloniality." Bandia's vivid examples invite us—and demonstrate how—to read African poems and translations on their own terms and not only from the European perspective that has too often dominated.

Several other essays here address the important, sometimes paradoxical role of translation in nationhood, nation formation, and nationalization. Leah Middlebrook's "Amphionic Translation" succinctly historicizes competing translations in the early modern Hispanic world in terms of nationhood and a translational poetics of form. Middlebrook shows how different translations reconstruct key ideas about Spain and Spanishness, and how "Amphionic translation generates one world as it eclipses or destroys another." Karen Van Dyck's innovative analysis of Greek literature in "*Xenitia*, the Nation, and Intralingual Translation" retheorizes inter- and intralingual translation in full ideological, transhistorical, and translinguistic contexts, with broad, new implications for studies of language, exile, migration, and nationhood. Cold War national contexts come up in several essays here. Františka Schormová's "Tractors and Translators: Langston Hughes in Cold War Czechoslovakia" delves into Czech translations of Langston Hughes, their Soviet-era publication contexts, and some telling ideological shifts on macro and micro levels. Olivia Lott takes up Juan Gelman's Cold War pseudotranslation (that is, a text that pretends to be a translation but is not), *The Poems of Sidney West*, finding that this pseudotranslation "illuminates two revolutionary potentialities for translation . . . [and] undercuts the perception of translation as neutral mediator, revealing it instead as a space of competing ideological interests."

Clearly, the decades-long cultural turn in translation studies can richly benefit other disciplines. Critical translation analysis permits supranational and cross-cultural proofs of concept. It lets scholars test the validity of their thinking outside any one linguistic culture—and therefore outside and against any one culture's submerged assumptions. That testing—that exposure of implicit, monocultural assumptions—usually takes place at a greater level of specificity in translation studies by a direct engagement with versions of a work in more than one language. For anyone interested in nation, in postcolonialism, in queerness, in gender and transgender, in disability, in Blackness, or really in any topic or theme, translation analysis provides both greater precision and, by challenging any one culture's implicit assumptions, a necessarily wider epistemological frame.

Materiality and Media

In another mode, the recent material turn in translation studies and the related medial or "media" turn offer other connections between literary studies and translation (Littau, "Translation in the Age"; Cronin, Response and *Translation*; Pym, "What"; Armstrong; Reid, "Materiality"; O'Sullivan, "Rethinking" and *Translating*). Drawing on insights from the new book history and textual studies (McKenzie), many translation studies specialists now agree that material textuality co-constructs meaning in translation (Belle and Hosington, "Translation as 'Transformission'"). Outside translation studies, Jerome J. McGann, a literary scholar and book historian, developed an anti-hierarchical theory of textual variants that may be usefully applied to translation "shift" or variance (*Radiant Textuality* and "Rationale"). Inside translation studies, Marie-Alice Belle and Brenda M. Hosington's new model subsumes and expands Robert Darnton's book-history-based model of the communications circuit (Darnton; Belle and Hosington, "Translation, History, and Print"); Emmerich devotes the introduction to *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* to translation as editing (1–36); and Karin Littau's forum in *Translation Studies* exemplifies the field's ongoing attention to materiality ("Translation and the Materialities").

This issue of *PMLA* represents these directions: authors here show how the media and materiality of texts play out in translation and how translation may differently draw on their affordances. Meaning is made not only in the words: Joshua Reid's "Translation in the Flesh" implores us to factor in material textuality when analyzing translations: to "move beyond the lexical procrustean interpretive bed" and attend to aspects of materiality such as the "seemingly innocuous *mise-en-page*" in, for instance, Robert Pinsky's *Inferno*. Longer essays here examine other aspects of materiality in translation. Tal Goldfajn's "Tanga, Tunic, Cleaver: On Things in Translation" takes thing theory as a point of departure and demonstrates that culturally specific material objects are more than impediments to translation praxis, as is often assumed. In her

transhistorical analysis, material sites of revaluation and reimagination defy older senses of "untranslatability" (on that contested term, see Kronfeld in this issue, and elsewhere Cassin; Apter; Foran; Large et al.). In another vein, both Rachel Galvin's "Mónica de la Torre, Self-Translated" and Janet Hendrickson's essay on Mario Ortíz's *Cuadernos de lengua y literatura* (*Language and Literature Notebooks*) treat distinctive cases in which the cocreative powers of translation and materiality are integral to self-construction.

Intersemiotic analysis, a method related to the material and media turns, is not new in translation studies, but several essays here offer lively new examples. Katherine Gillen and Kathryn Vomero Santos update insights from their convention roundtable on the politics of global "tradaptations" of Shakespeare. Sara Kippur's "Translating for TV: Ionesco's 'Hard-Boiled Egg' for American Audiences" treats a mid-twentieth-century transcreation with culinary, feminist, and media studies implications. Rebecca L. Walkowitz excavates the embedded subtleties and subtitles of contemporary multilingual film. Katherine Kelp-Stebbins illuminates "heterotopic materiality" and *mise-en-page* in translation in recent trilingual comics (Arabic, French, and English) published in the Middle East. This already copious issue could not include some submissions on translation AI, game design, and computational or machine translation, where translation-related controversies often flare. But the essay here by Belle, who heads a large, multiyear, international digital translation project funded by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, provides an account of translation studies and the digital turn in the humanities that is at once theoretical, pragmatic, and forward-looking.

Translation Studies Concepts, Experiments, Reiteratives

Specialized subjects in translation studies, such as exophony, untranslatability, and several kinds of experimental and reiterative translation, receive fresh treatment here. In addition to Lott on

experimental pseudotranslation and Galvin on exper-imental self-translation, Anthony Cordingley brings a new approach to an important self-translator, Samuel Beckett. Two treatments of exophony (that is, writing in a language that is not one's own first language) address another translation studies favor-ite, Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*. Keith Leslie Johnson's "(M)Other Tongue; or, Exophony" and Penny Yeung's "'No More Translations': Uncounting Languages in Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*" take usefully divergent approaches to the material. In another vein, Chana Kronfeld's tour de force, "Beyond Untranslatability," reminds us that "[v]iewed through cultures of commentary, . . . translation emerges as a salient, necessary intertextual practice that embraces mediation, secondariness, and process, and does not mournfully yearn for some unattainable originality."

If translation has suffered from being mistaken as derivative and secondary, all the more so retrans-lation (making a new translation of a work that has already been translated), relay translation (translat-ing from a translation, also called indirect, mediated, or mediating translation), and back-translation (a kind of relay that starts from a translation and retranslates it "back" into the language of the prior or first text). Until recently these reiterative kinds were rarely discussed outside evaluative frames or as phenomena in their own right (an attitude related to what has been a thorny term for translation stud-ies, *original*). Several essays here showcase what older views of translation have missed in these top-ics, such as Paul Michael Johnson's "Errant Translation; or, Lin Shu's *Don Quixote* and the Paybacks of Back-Translating." This fresh look at Cervantes's culture-crossing novel incidentally reveals that in Chinese and "back"-Spanish versions, Don Quixote rides no bony, ambling Rocinante, but a racing stallion. What might that detail mean for the respective audiences' understanding of quest, of impossibility, of narrative motion and pace, of protagonist masculinity, or any number of other things relevant to the novel? Such "shifted" or vari-ant details, unknown and unavailable if reading only inside one language, are available to all in critical translation studies work. Telling details in Haun

Saussy's "Translating from Translations, As One Does" debunk old dismissals, proving relay transla-tions' independent value and shedding light on all literary relations, translated and not. From a dif-ferent angle, Venuti presents an exposé of other prejudices and psychologies shadowing retrans-lation: "On a Universal Tendency to Debase Retranslations; or, The Instrumentalism of a Translation Fixation." These new views join recent work (Armstrong et al.) that revalues mediated or indirect translation and other complex, sometimes recursive patterns of translation outside the basic L1-L2 dyad, or first- and second-language pair. And they fit with translation studies claims that translation can be seen as a special kind of intertex-tuality, or rewriting, or commentary: by variously lodging prior texts in new texts, translation poses some of the same literary issues as quotation, allu-sion, homage, parody, and exegesis (in this issue see especially essays by Kronfeld; Lee-Lenfield; Middlebrook; Yeung).

Interpreting (oral translation), artificial intelli-gence, machine translation, cognitive linguistics, translation and warfare, translation praxis and ped-agogy, poststructuralism, ecocriticism, and an array of other foci have undoubtedly been important in translation studies, but they exceed our space here. Corpus linguistics, for instance, has been an impor-tant research line with much to offer literary study (Baker, "Corpus Linguistics" and "Réexplorer"). This brief account, obviously neither definitive nor comprehensive, captures only selected develop-ments driving the rapid growth of translation stud-ies since about 1970, only some of the frictions inside translation studies and between translation studies and literary studies, and a few potential realignments. I turn now to some further advantages that a critical or hermeneutic translation studies offers the MLA's literary subfields.

Translation Studies and Literary Studies

"Translation is the engine of literary history, not the caboose," as Walkowitz says in *Born Translated* (5). Any national literature—or any literature in a given language, whether that language has a fully

developed nation attached to it or not—has nearly always been shaped in some way by multilingual, textual contact with other traditions; to study a national literature without studying that as well is to miss significant constructive effects. And in certain places and times, great numbers of translations have made a huge difference in a receiving literary culture. A typical example is "English" Renaissance literature, a familiar corpus, or so we thought. But from the translation studies view, so pervasive and thoroughgoing are the effects of translations on literary culture that it is better understood as "Englished" literature, built on the foreign (Barker and Hosington; Coldiron, *Printers*; Rhodes et al.). Even in eras without such high-volume translation, it is the rare literary culture that has not been affected by incoming translations, and likewise that has not sent out translations to intervene in other literary histories.[10] The study of translation reveals—in detail—literary history not as a matter of linear, vertical influence inside a "pure" monolingual genealogy, as it has usually been written; but rather as messily hybrid, happily miscegenated, mingling, moving mixtures: uneven, multifactorial, reticulated, and recursive.

One implication of translation's kinetic agency in literary history is that it also thereby challenges one of the organizing categories of our disciplines, the idea of national or single-language literature. Nationalities organize most literary study and teaching (in departments, job postings, library call numbers, curricula, and more), but the monolingual study of literature, as much translation studies scholarship shows, is at best incomplete and at worst ignorant (Rafael, "Translation"; Baker, *Critical Readings*; Gruesz; Boutcher). Recent "transnational" criticism too rarely includes hermeneutic translation studies theories, methods, or insights, but those would enhance the work considerably with literary examples well analyzed. A hermeneutic model not only provides nuanced views of the varied foreign elements embedded in any single-language literature or national literature; it also permits the interrogation of the very category "national literature," as several essays in this issue show (Van Dyck; Lee-Lenfield; Middlebrook).

Translation also challenges other, related categories such as authorship and periodization, as well as movements and themes, literary values like originality, and literary subjects like form and genre. A flourishing scholarship following Venuti's *Translator's Invisibility* has considered the authorial position and agency of translators, effectively enlarging Foucauldian author functions in the process. For instance, the "Translauthors" conference of 2015 coined a term still in use for intersections of authorial and translatorial functions (Hancisse and Vanasten; see also Çulhaoğlu). Reacting in part to *Translator's Invisibility*, some in translation studies now also see translation as an inherently collaborative form of authorship, whether or not distanced by time and space (Bistué; Jimenez-Crespo; see literal cases in Rulyova; Stocco; Zwischenberger). Why rethink the category of authorship by means of translation studies? Reason enough would be the frequency with which "major" authors who have shaped canons and literary histories have done so through translation, either directly or indirectly (Stahuljak; Warren; in this issue, Klein; Lee-Lenfield; Saussy). Many self-translators and exophonous writers create landmarks outside their biographical birthplaces, but are uncanonized for it. The first single-author lyric sequence in English, for example, was written by a self-translating (and in a few poems, exophonous) Frenchman circa 1440, but the significant English poetry of Charles d'Orléans lay largely unacknowledged until the 1990s. Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, and Joseph Conrad are well known, but there are more such translauthoring disruptors than we may admit, perhaps precisely because they challenge our familiar categories. In another way, because a majority of contributors to this special topic are both working translators and working scholar-critics, you will find here hints that authoring is an action that can take many forms. In one sense, translators, like authors, write new words that make new meaning for new audiences and thus should be understood accordingly as authorial.

One current criterion of valid authorship, "originality," has proven to be historically contingent as a literary value; like the idea of "genius," a word whose

very meaning changed in the eighteenth century, the literary value "originality" has changed radically over time (Greene) and across cultures (Devy). In another vein, we can see "translation as a continual reconfiguration of a work by recognizing, not eliding, the instability of so-called originals" (Emmerich 31). For authors like Octavio Paz or Jorge Luis Borges, originality can be considered an accident of chronology: "the original is just one version—that happens to be the first in a series" (Davies 143). Lloyd Davies describes how Borges and others would, when dealing with a translation of their own prior work, return and make changes in the prior-language version, as the translation had evoked something new that the "original" needed (148n10). Of course, "Western notions of originality along with Western aesthetic categories more generally simply do not apply to the long-established multilingual Indian context" nor to other non-Western literatures (Devy, paraphrased in Bassnett 38). Even within "Western literature"—both words marking unstable, contingent categories—the same inapplicability operates between and among, say, French and English, or German and Russian, traditions, as polysystem analysis makes obvious. Categories such as authorship and supporting values such as originality have been so dominant in structuring modern literary studies that the interrogations of them ongoing in translation studies are well worth the attention of literary scholars.

Likewise, translation necessarily enlarges our ideas about forms and genres in ways that other kinds of study cannot. The novel, say, or the sonnet, or the epic, will never occupy the same position, act the same way, or mean the same thing in two different traditions (McMurran; Ramazani); narratological concepts, too, look different in translation analysis (Baker, "Reenquadrando" and *Translation*). As comparatists have long known, one cannot study any literary element in more than a localized way without studying more than one tradition. A hermeneutic translation studies provides heightened interpretive power: not assuming fixed or stable comparables but rather comparing the uneven, unpredictable ways in which contacts through translation have tended to remake forms, genres, and other literary elements as they move between and among language traditions. Sometimes translation introduces forms or genres that do not catch on or that spin off in new and unexpected ways, as Shaden M. Tageldin's "Hugo, Translated: The Measures of Modernity in Muḥammad Rūḥī al-Khālidī's Poetics of Comparative Literature" explains in this issue. Also considering the effects of translating forms, Spencer Lee-Lenfield's "Victorian Poetry and Classical Verse Composition: On Translation as Affiliation" shows how a set of translation procedures used in English education since the sixteenth century relocated certain forms for new purposes, with striking canon-forming and societal effects in the nineteenth century and after. And Lucas Klein's essay explains how translation created the genre of the prose poem in China, exposing and addressing the problem that "[t]he Hegelian take on history is nowhere more wrong than in literary history." Other essays on poetry and poetics in this issue offer persuasive reasons for literary critics and scholars to read translations hermeneutically rather than instrumentally (Rinehart; Middlebrook; Keenaghan; Saussy). Noninstrumental approaches in these essays add specificity and nuance, opening new ways of discussing forms, genres, and other literary features, and expanding what we know about them.

Because translations contain specific indexes to historical and cultural distances otherwise too often elided, and because no two given literary histories will proceed at the same pace or in the same ways, translations may challenge accepted literary periodizations. For instance, as David Wallace says, "No magic curtain separated 'medieval' London and Westminster from 'Renaissance' Florence and Milan" (*Chaucerian Polity* 1), nor, I would add, from "Renaissance" Blois or Augsburg or Antwerp, each culture defying the Burckhardtian period wall with different pacing and direction (see also Cummings and Simpson; Morse et al.). The literatures of medieval Kyoto or early-Ming Yingtian or Beijing would much further reset the terms. While we literary scholars may accept this basic premise from translation studies—that literary change varies in kind and pacing across the polysystem, and that translations often reveal the variation—it might or might not factor into our own work. But it should, and

translation-sensitive literary histories (such as Wallace's *Europe: A Literary History*) exemplify how to spotlight period-redefining or -demolishing aspects of the polysystem that are invisible without attention to translation. Nowhere will the general idea of pluralized, networked, incommensurate literary histories be better illuminated or more colorful than in translations between and among such place-times; nowhere better to challenge a periodization mark for the distorting, arbitrary convenience it may be than in translation.

Some essays here consider other challenges to the organizing categories and concepts of literary study. Any idea of singularity or exceptionalism in literary-cultural studies—sometimes allied to nationalism—becomes, with translation in view, less blinkered, more hospitable. A hermeneutic approach to translations will almost always stimulate adjustments to *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, enlarging what we know about the reception of any work or figure translated (as Schormová on Langston Hughes, Paul Michael Johnson on Cervantes, and Cordingley on Beckett do in this issue). Insisting on more-than-monolingual inquiry will necessarily yield literary criticism at once more precise and more expansive. Literary-cultural specialists who ignore translation, or who treat it instrumentally, do so at their peril, missing the bigger picture.

Translation Studies and the MLA Fields, Tomorrow

Venuti's recent manifesto, *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (2019), issues five "provocations" followed by a succinct rationale and proposals for a new hermeneutic movement in translation studies. Perfectly apposite to literary studies, Venuti's provocations bear quoting in full here, in their original *mise-en-page*:

> STOP treating translation as a metaphor.
> START considering it a material practice that is indivisibly linguistic *and* cultural.
> STOP using moralistic terms like "faithful" and "unfaithful" to describe translation.
> START defining it as the establishment of a variable equivalence to the source text.

> STOP assuming that translation is mechanical substitution.
> START conceiving of it as an interpretation that demands writerly and intellectual sophistication.
> STOP evaluating translations merely by comparing them to the source text.
> START examining their relations to the hierarchy of values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving culture.
> STOP asserting that any text is untranslatable.
> START realizing that every text is translatable because every text can be interpreted.   (ix–x)

The provocations gather some of the field's best innovations since DTS to expand the commonplace "every translation is an interpretation" into a full program. The provocations can realign translation studies and literary studies under a hermeneutic banner. For any inside translation studies who have not already "stopped" and "started," they provide real methodological progress. The five suggestions signal embedded alterity and variability as our bedrock preconditions. These are the less obvious bedrock preconditions of literary studies as well, related to what Paul Zumthor long ago called "mouvance" in medieval French literature (the term means "textual mobility," "instability," or "variability"; see Zumthor 65–75, 507). But we need to acknowledge a key difference between translation studies and other literary studies. In translation studies, our objects of study are always in motion, but they are doubled from the start, always transtemporal, and often also polychronic. We track recombinant, colorful bits of literature as they layer and re-layer cultural materials, form and re-form literary modes—and as they then recompose the larger wholes of which they are part. How can I put this? Kaleidoscopic change is where many translation studies scholars live and work. Instead of binary, instrumentalist gray scale, with unworkable criteria like *fidelity* or *originality*, a critical, hermeneutic translation studies offers colorful, complex motion: ever-transforming and transformative.

Translators—formerly invisible, often damned as copyists, turncoats, consorts of colonizers, *belles*

infidèles, and worse—always enable cross-cultural contacts not otherwise possible, across a range of ethical valences. And as Borges famously said, "el original es infiel a la traducción" ("the original is unfaithful to the translation"; 109), suggesting that a closer look at translation challenges temporal hierarchies and dismantles fictions of fidelity and fetishes of originality, potentially remaking and enlarging other accepted literary categories and concepts. That translation makes an admittedly problematic "world literature" possible?[11] That translation connects those who would otherwise remain separated? Optimistic truisms, but no less true. Susan Choi's recent, poignant essay on monolingualism admits that "we're always divided from the past, whether we speak one language or all of them. The imperfections of translation, fantasy, and memory will have to suffice" (934). I would add that even the polyglot condition leaves us most divided from those least like us, whom we most need to understand. Imperfect translation, if critically investigated, lets us understand more than one small patch of the world and its literatures, and more than one narrow slice of the past.

Translation is at work in literature whether you are reading a translation or not. And you do not have to learn more languages (though that is always a good thing). Specialists in any MLA field can treat their objects of study much more skillfully, either by using critical translation studies methods for their own interlingual work, or in their monolingual work, by using and citing hermeneutic translation studies scholarship. Although one could certainly ignore the mutable, illuminating views from translation studies, every reader, and especially every literary theorist, critic, and scholar, has worlds to gain from those views. Paul Ricoeur wrote of translation as welcome, as hospitality to the stranger; welcome, *PMLA* readers, to the kaleidoscope.

Notes

This special topic, the first devoted to translation, arose from discussions in the MLA forum TC Translation Studies and its convention sessions in 2020 in Seattle: "Rethinking Translation, Origination, Originality" and "Translatability and World Literature." Thanks to my fellow Translation Studies forum members, particularly Dima Ayoub and Sherry Roush, for their collegial, polyglot work together in the forum. This issue incorporates the judgments of hundreds of peer reviewers, most of them MLA members, who offered their expertise, care, and suggestions. I thank all the reviewers, and I thank the MLA for its continuing commitment to working across and among cultures, literatures, and languages. Barbara Fuchs, a recent MLA president, noted that "in truth, the MLA is less English-based than members might imagine," enumerating the many respects in which the MLA already works across languages ("Multilingual MLA"). Finally, many thanks to Nicholas Crawford, Jennifer M. Keith, Brent Hayes Edwards, Karen Van Dyck, and Lawrence Venuti for comments on an early draft of this essay.

1. Translations of Gadamer's statement illustrate and may expand the point: one could also translate his full statement, "jede Übersetzung ist daher schon Auslegung," as "any translation is therefore already an exegesis," emphasizing instead that a translation is from the start a kind of analytic commentary on a prior text. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

2. The replication of a text in another language is generally understood to be a moot impossibility because of linguistic and cultural differences and because of a Heraclitean transtemporality: even a monolingual text is not the same among new readers in new historical moments.

3. Some typical consequences of instrumental or uncritical assumptions about translation, which complicate the related theory-praxis division inside translation studies, include the following: translations are not "original work" and thus often do not count toward tenure; studies of translations do not treat "original" work so are less valuable; translation studies work itself is not accurately legible to colleagues who do not realize that every text we treat must be seen in the at-least-doubled contexts of the other language(s) and that this kind of analysis takes longer; and translation studies scholars often struggle semicloseted in foreign language, comparative literature, or English departments. Many translation studies scholar-critics omit their own translations from CVs or publish them under pseudonyms, knowing the work will be disparaged, especially outside elite institutions.

4. Limited, that is, often historically or culturally. For previous challenges to ideas of fidelity and replication, see Baker, *Critical Readings*; Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader*. "Anxiety of influence" usefully describes some responses to modern translations, but in premodern translation studies, highly valued *aemulatio* and *imitatio* norms fueled different dynamics (Greene). In another way, the *translatio* served fictions of empire, but the early print record makes it plain that patterns of transmission and translation largely defied a Roman historiographic model of the *translatio imperii* (in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* [*Catiline's War*]) and its uses in Tudor, Valois, Medici, and Hapsburg empire promotional efforts (Coldiron, *Printers* 20–22, 243–45). On complicating the idea of fidelity as thematized in *La princesse de Clèves* (*The Princess of Clèves*), see Harrison's essay in this issue.

5. Although this passage is usually translated as "not word for word but sense for sense," Jerome's prepositions "e[x]" (out of or out from) and "de" (of, about, from) do make a difference: his point is that taking a word out of or from ("ex") a word in the text, in a process of lexical-unit-based extraction, is unlike expressing the sense of ("de") a sense in a more loosely derivative process. Paradoxically, this analysis depends on both the former (hard reading of prepositions) and the latter (holistic reading of phrasal relations).

6. In this regard, linguistic fluency is entirely unlike the cultural conversancy and flexibility of the intellectual "Afrofluency" that Glover's essay in this issue proposes. I omit here for reasons of space much Western theory in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries from writers such as Madame de Staël, Arthur Schopenhauer, Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ferdinand de Saussure, Walter Benjamin, Roman Jakobson, and Vladimir Nabokov; excerpts from most are in Robinson or in Venuti's *Translation Studies Reader*.

7. Most translation studies theorists allow that mistranslations or unmotivated errors occur, even in recognizing them not as moralized infidelities but on a continuum of shifts; analogies in the field of composition pedagogy derive from Shaughnessy. Some do not closely associate Eugene Nida, a biblical-translation scholar and linguist, with DTS; he nevertheless wrote of correspondences and "dynamic equivalence" (144).

8. Developing from DTS or functionalism, the "manipulation" school of the 1980s likewise took variance or "shift" in translation as an investigative opportunity rather than a fidelity-problem (Hermans, *Manipulation*). A translation's divergences from prior text(s) can often be seen as motivated, particularly as part of wider aesthetic, social, or political agendas. Like some cognitive linguists (Sperber and Wilson; Wilson and Sperber) or reader-response critics, translation studies specialists tend to assume that meaning is made in the manipulated interactions of language and context.

9. This connection between historicism in translation studies and other fields extends most notably throughout medieval, early modern, and eighteenth-century studies; modeling some realignments and applications suggested here are Copeland; Warren; Stahuljak; Coldiron, "Toward"; Boutcher; Fuchs, *Mimesis*; Tylus and Newman; and McMurran. Similar interfield connections appear around other "great ages of translation," for example in nineteenth-century studies and modernist studies.

10. One translation studies topic not discussed here that general literary studies could fruitfully explore is directionality—that is, whether translation is incoming to or outgoing from a given culture, and what the ramifications are of those directions, considering the relative states of literary culture in the two places under discussion. Directionality is a topic well suited to polysystems work.

11. Problematic not least because it too often ignores translation's agency; see Apter, whose objections I generally grant. See also Ramazani; Grootveld and Lamal.

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