

Preface

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.66.o1pre>

Pages ix–xi of

**The Turns of Translation Studies: New paradigms or
shifting viewpoints?**

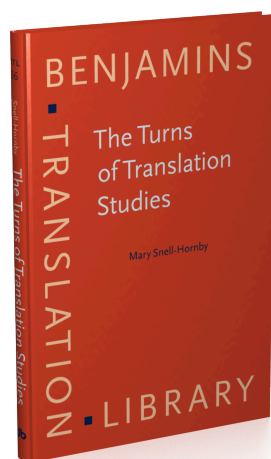
Mary Snell-Hornby

[Benjamins Translation Library, 66] 2006. xi, 205 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights



Preface

When I was asked by John Benjamins a few years ago whether I would consider presenting the book *Translation Studies. An Integrated Approach* (1988, 1995²) in a third revised edition, I spontaneously answered that I would rather write a completely new book. So much had meanwhile changed in Translation Studies that a revision would even then have been completely inadequate. Up to the mid-1980s, when the volume was compiled, the study of translation was still widely seen as a concern of either linguistics or literary studies, and my “integrated approach” set out to overcome the divisions between them and to present Translation Studies as an independent discipline. The response to that volume indicates that it served its purpose.

Seen from today’s viewpoint, it seems that most accounts of the study of translation in those years were one-sided or fragmentary, mainly because what have meanwhile proved to be seminal works were often barely accessible: the conference papers of James Holmes are an outstanding example. In the meantime the discipline now institutionalized as Translation Studies has branched out in several directions, and a new perspective is needed to do it justice. This present book sets out to offer a critical assessment of such developments, concentrating on the last twenty years and focussing on what have turned out to be ground-breaking contributions (new paradigms) as against what may be seen in retrospect to have been only a change in position on already established territory (shifting viewpoints). Obviously, the borders are hazy (as in the earlier book we shall be thinking in terms of prototypes and not in rigid categories), and much is controversial, depending on the viewpoint of the scholar or reader: my aim is to stimulate discussion and to provoke further debate on the current profile and future perspectives of Translation Studies.

While endeavouring to view the discipline in the broad international perspective of today, I am aware that my viewpoint is a European one, and that any conclusions must by necessity be relative. The same however goes for any study of such a complex subject, even those which claim general – or global – validity. And here the use of English as a world-wide language of publication presents problems: there has been a disquieting trend in recent years for English to be used, not only as a means of communication, but also as part of the object of discussion (see 4.2.3). English publications frequently have a clear Anglo-American bias, and

what are presented as general principles of translation sometimes prove to be limited to the area under discussion and to be caused by the specific status of English (cf. 4.3). Conversely, contributions written in languages other than English and on topics outside Anglophile interests tend to be ignored or over-simplified. The same goes for schools of thought or even entire traditions. After living and working in German-speaking countries for over forty years, I have become very aware of the complexity and wealth of the German tradition in translation over the centuries, also of the part played by the German-speaking scientific community in Translation Studies over the last twenty years, and of how inadequately all this is treated in the English-speaking Translation Studies debate. The only work I have read in English which does justice to the historical German tradition is André Lefevere's 1977 volume *Translating Literature. The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*, which is taken here as our starting-point. No discipline (or school of thought or individual scholarly investigation) arises in a vacuum, and it is often overlooked that much of the new paradigm of Translation Studies was (re)oriented against the older tradition (two names, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Walter Benjamin, were to be rediscovered in the US debate via English translation). A similar fate has befallen much work written in German – and languages other than English – over the last twenty years: when included in the English-speaking discussion, it is often over-simplified or the selection is limited to isolated work which happens to be available in English translation. This present profile of Translation Studies aims at correcting that deficit and will highlight such contributions alongside those more familiar through English publications. Every effort is made to situate all contributions in their specific historical or cultural context, and as far as possible the scholars concerned are cited in direct quotation, where necessary alongside the English translations (these, unless otherwise indicated, are mine).

This book is envisaged as a continuation of *Translation Studies. An Integrated Approach* (1988, 1995²) in that various issues are taken up from there, expanded and traced in their later development. Some sections take up topics and use material I have published elsewhere, but set out to bring it up to date with present developments. The book addresses a broad international readership of students, teachers and anyone generally interested in this challenging discipline, and it is written in a style of English that, as far as possible, attempts to be jargon-free and accessible for the non-specialist.

Many of the ideas presented here go back to long discussions made possible by inspiring and dedicated colleagues, mainly in institutions they themselves have created or events they organized: Susan Bassnett and colleagues at the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Warwick (with many outstanding conferences and seminars); Justa Holz-Mänttari and colleagues from the Institute of Translation Studies, University of Tampere; Heidemarie Salevsky

and her research seminars at the Humboldt University of Berlin; Christina Schäffner and her CILS seminars at Aston University Birmingham – to name but a few. My thanks go to them all, also to all those scholars who, before the days of sponsored and funded exchange, came to Vienna for our “Translation Summits” (notably Hans Vermeer, Paul Kussmaul and Hans Hönl) – leading to the foundation of the European Society for Translation Studies in 1992. Thanks too to Michaela Wolf for many hours of animated and stimulating discussion, to Mira Kadrić, here for help with the index, but especially for her loyal support through difficult times, to my former students of the University of Vienna, whose research is documented here – and then of course to Tony Hornby and Astrid, for all these years of patience, help and understanding.

And finally, my sincere thanks go once again to John Benjamins Publishing Company for their efficient and friendly cooperation.

Mary Snell-Hornby

Vienna, December 2005