



What Is Translation?

Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions

DOUGLAS ROBINSON



What Is Translation?

TRANSLATION STUDIES

ALBRECHT NEUBERT, GREGORY M. SHREVE, AND KLAUS GOMMLICH, SERIES EDITORS. GERT JÄGER, EDITOR EMERITUS

- 1 Translation as Text
Albrecht Neubert and Gregory M. Shreve
- 2 Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writing, 1783–1823
Edited by Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney
- 3 Pathways to Translation: Pedagogy and Process
Donald C. Kiraly
- 4 What Is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions
Douglas Robinson

Translation Studies is the successor of the German language series *Übersetzungswissenschaftliche Beiträge*, published since 1978 in Leipzig, Germany.

What Is Translation?

*Centrifugal Theories, Critical
Interventions*

Douglas Robinson

The Kent State University Press

KENT, OHIO, AND LONDON, ENGLAND

©1997 by The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio 44242
All rights reserved
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 97-11216
ISBN 0-87338-573-X
Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Robinson, Douglas.

What is translation? : centrifugal theories, critical interventions / Douglas
Robinson.

p. cm. — (Translation studies ; 4)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-87338-573-x (cloth : alk. paper)∞

1. Translating and interpreting. I. Title. II. Series.

P306.R64 1997

97-11216

418'.02—dc21

CIP

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication data are available.

Contents

Editors' Foreword	vii
ALBRECHT NEUBERT AND GREGORY M. SHREVE	.
Foreword	ix
EDWIN GENTZLER	
Preface	xix
PART 1: REMAPPING RHETORIC AND GRAMMAR	1
1. The Renaissance: FREDERICK M. RENER, <i>Interpretatio</i>	3
2. The Middle Ages: RITA COPELAND, <i>Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages</i>	11
3. The Colonial Impulse: ERIC CHEYFITZ, <i>The Poetics of Imperialism</i>	18
PART 2: INSIDE SYSTEMS	23
4. Many Systems: ANDRÉ LEFEVERE, <i>Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame</i>	25
5. Personalizing Process: ANTHONY PYM, <i>Epistemological Problems in Translation and Its Teaching</i>	43
6. Pain and Playfulness: SUZANNE JILL LEVINE, <i>The Subversive Scribe</i>	56
7. The Translator-Function: MYRIAM DÍAZ-DIOCARETZ, <i>Translating Poetic Discourse</i>	61

PART 3: EMBRACING THE FOREIGN	79
8. Foreignizing Experience: ANTOINE BERMAN, <i>The Experience of the Foreign</i>	81
9. Foreignizing Fluency: LAWRENCE VENUTI, <i>The Translator's Invisibility</i>	97
10. Foreignism and the Phantom Limb	113
11. (Dis)Abusing Translation: PHILIP E. LEWIS, "The Measure of Translation Effects"	132
Conclusion: Neural Networks, Synchronicity, and Freedom	179
Notes	193
References	203
Index	211

Editors' Foreword

Albrecht Neubert &
Gregory M. Shreve

Douglas Robinson's *What Is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions* is the fourth volume of the Translation Studies monograph series. The basic editorial strategy of the series is to present a broad spectrum of thinking on translation and to challenge our conceptions of what translation is and how we should think about it. We have included *What Is Translation?* in our series to quite deliberately push the envelope of translation studies as far as we can. We want the series to open up our readers' minds to the different forms of scholarship that can emerge in translation studies.

Douglas Robinson is a dynamic figure in a rapidly emerging "American" school of humanist/literary translation theory. He is a provocative writer, with a style that combines erudite historical and literary scholarship with highly personal, often anecdotal, argumentation. As Edwin Gentzler points out in his excellent introduction, Robinson is a unique and valuable voice in modern translation theory, difficult to categorize, impossible to ignore.

The purpose of our series is to present as many voices as possible, including those with whom we might disagree on important issues. We, for instance, continue to challenge Robinson's apparently deep-seated conviction that outside of the pantheon he cites in his preface and throughout the volume (Venuti, Levine, and Lefevere, among others), very little of value has been done to "open up" translation theory beyond the confines of its linguistic origins. There is still a tendency to center his conceptions of "translation theory" on developments within a rather restricted circle of activity in literary translation and writing about literary translation. Everything outside of this circle is not actually dismissed, but mostly ignored, as prescriptive and slavishly linguistic. This constriction of the range of translation theory is a flaw in his work, even

though, in this volume by opening up to the polysystems theorists and the *skopos* school, Robinson is inviting in more of the wide world of modern translation theory to inform his own perspectives. Nevertheless, the purpose of this foreword is not to grapple with Douglas Robinson over issues with which we disagree. The purpose is, instead, to present to you, the reader, an opportunity to hear a unique voice in translation studies, a voice that boldly explores the cultural significance and personal meaning of the act of translation itself.

Foreword

Edwin Gentzler

For a practicing translator and/or translation student, the veritable explosion of new theories regarding translation must appear bewildering. There are new university programs being established in the United States—at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, to name just one—in addition to fine existing programs at Columbia, Iowa, Kent State, Arkansas, Pennsylvania State, and the State University of New York, Binghamton. Internationally, the field has exploded with programs in Leuven (Belgium), Tel Aviv (Israel), Warwick (United Kingdom) Turku (Finland), Salamanca (Spain), Göttingen, Leipzig (Germany), and Vienna (Austria) leading the way. Increasingly important research is being conducted in “postcolonial” countries, including Minas Gerais (Brazil), Montréal (Québec), Santiago (Chile), and Beijing (China), that merits serious consideration by all scholars. New journals are springing up, such as *Target* (Belgium and Tel Aviv) and *The Translator* (United Kingdom); major publishers and university presses are starting new book series, including Routledge (United Kingdom and United States), Rodopi (Holland), Göttingen (Germany), and The Kent State University Press. Important international conferences are being established, such as the joint Maastricht (Holland)–Łódź (Poland) colloquium on “Translation and Meaning,” now held every five years, or the “Scandinavian Symposium on Translation Theory,” now having met four times, with their massive proceedings. With all this material on translation being generated, it may seem at the moment impossible for any one person to keep up.

In *What Is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions*, Douglas Robinson provides both a useful survey of recent developments and insight into some of the problems facing the field of contemporary humanistic/literary translation studies. With intelligent, critical readings, he covers the most influential books to appear in the field in the last decade.

In part one, titled “Remapping Rhetoric and Grammar,” Robinson discusses Frederick Rener’s *Interpretatio* (1989), Eric Cheyfitz’s *Poetics of Imperialism* (1990), and Rita Copeland’s *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (1992), the selection of which may seem slightly surprising in a book on contemporary translation, considering their concern with rhetoric, grammar, and hermeneutics. In this historical section, however, Robinson traces common assumptions, held by theorists from Rome through the nineteenth century, about how language functioned. Although most contemporary scholars discredit the importance of such ideas, Robinson argues that they remain in the “collective intellectual operating system,” albeit unconsciously, and therefore need inclusion in the new translation studies models.

In part two, “Inside Systems,” Robinson confronts perhaps the most substantial theoretical development in the field, that of polysystem theory, a model for studying the position of translated texts within cultural systems posited by Israeli scholars Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. The theory has been embraced by a whole generation of Dutch and Belgian scholars in addition to postcolonial studies students looking at the role of translation in “emerging” cultures. The texts Robinson covers in this section include André Lefevere’s *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992), Anthony Pym’s *Epistemological Problems in Translation and Its Teaching* (1992), Suzanne Jill Levine’s *Subversive Scribe* (1991), and Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz’s *Translating Poetic Discourse* (1985). Despite advances, however, systems theory has certain flaws, such as its advocates making certain claims of their “objectivity” when analyzing translated texts, which Robinson is quick to point out. In part three, “Embracing the Foreign,” Robinson focuses more in depth on one form of the new translation studies, one that embraces what might be called “strategies of resistance,” that is, strategies frequently employed by marginalized groups in any given culture. Texts chosen for inclusion in this section are Antoine Berman’s *L’Épreuve de l’étranger* (1984) [translated as *The Experience of the Foreign* (1992)], Lawrence Venuti’s *Translator’s Invisibility* (1994), and Philip Lewis’s article “The Measure of Translation Effects” (1985). Robinson intervenes at this point, providing both a critical reading and constructing his own metaphorical narrative, one that provides an opening for highly original insights. In his conclusion, “Neural Networks, Synchronicity, and Freedom,” Robinson surprises his reader with a turn to developments in machine translation, making a startling suggestion connecting postcolonial theories of translation to reasons why Robinson feels that a quality machine translator will never be built.

The texts Robinson selects for discussion are indeed “new” in every sense of the word. A paradigm is shifting; two thousand years of transla-

tion studies based upon the faithful versus the free axis is being unseated, and the field will never go back. The contemporary explosion in literary theory, with all the postmodernisms, poststructuralism, postcolonialisms, has also led to a boom in translation theories. Translation, perhaps because it has always been concerned with the recovery and representation of meaning (or the impossibility thereof), has much to contribute to ongoing discussions of literary and cultural studies. Despite the newness and theoretical difficulty of much of the material he covers, Robinson presents his arguments in a user-friendly, thoroughly accessible style. As a result, cultural studies students, practicing translators, professional literary scholars, and translation theorists will find this book highly informative and provocative.

Robinson's thinking about translation has always been extraordinarily original. In 1991 his book *The Translator's Turn* hit the field like a shot from a loose cannon. Its hermeneutic approach reminded some scholars of George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975), from under whose shadow "the new translation studies" had been trying to escape for years. Robinson's subjective prose style, range of ideas, tremendous erudition, and proposed pragmatics did not seem to fit in any particular school of thought—not a traditional Anglo-American literary translator approach, nor a modern linguistic approach, nor any of the trendy literary critical approaches, and certainly not a Low Countries' "Manipulation School" approach. Adjectives attempting to describe the book ranged from "idiosyncratic" to "mystical," but no one knew how to categorize, control, or make use of the ideas in the book.

In *What Is Translation?* Douglas Robinson continues to defy traditional conceptual thinking about translation. I think he likes it that way. He takes aim at some of the most prominent theorists, indeed, some of the people I most admire, including the North American scholar Lawrence Venuti and the late Belgian theorist André Lefevere. Robinson reads such theorists symptomatically for the "schools" they represent, pointing out his disagreements with some of their underlying assumptions. For example, when Robinson reads Lefevere's work, he raises questions regarding the emphasis upon codification of poetic norms and the theorization of literary systems. Whenever Lefevere writes, "Once a poetics has been codified" or "codification takes place at a certain time," Robinson asks questions such as what happens to translation *practice* in the process of codification? Does it get lost in some middle ground between system and nonsystem? Does not practice always already precede theory? And if so, does "presystem" belong to "system"? Even those theorists Robinson most admires, such as the Australian theorist Anthony Pym or the Chilean feminist theorist Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz, do not escape his critical aim.

Robinson has an uncanny ability to get right to the root of certain problems and lay them out on the table. One of the critiques Robinson raises concerns a contradiction in the very way translation studies came into being. On the one hand, recent scholars argue that the field has been marginalized by literary and linguistic studies in general, and that it should be considered a legitimate academic discipline with all the methodological rigor of any other academic field. One is reminded of the difficulty of the emergence of many new academic fields in the humanities. Until quasi-scientific methods of study are established, it is very difficult to convince deans, provosts, and chancellors to support new disciplines, especially with the new departments they often require. The proponents of successful new translation studies programs in Europe and in the United States have been forced to argue the systematic rigor and research possibilities of the discipline. On the other hand, the new translation studies is also defined by rethinking translation in a counterhegemonic fashion. Thus the new scholars almost by definition oppose traditional methodologies for studying translated texts. Scholars entering the field seem actively involved in attacking those very institutions—the publishing firms, the literature programs, and the linguistics departments that support translation—from which they derive their livelihood. Robinson is clearly aware of the catch-22 that envelops his project as well; wishing to be included in the progressive wing of the field, he aims his heaviest artillery at the very figures who have been instrumental in putting translation studies on the map.

Clearly Robinson's work does not fit easily into any pre-established category. But if we were to attempt to place his work along an axis, with "systematic" (read structuralist) at one end and "personal" (read poststructuralist) on the other, Robinson's work would fall somewhere in between, yet more closely allied to what he terms the personal. Not surprisingly, those whom he most criticizes (Lefevere, Venuti) he locates in the systems theory camp, and those he seems to most admire (Díaz-Diocaretz, Pym) fall into the personal camp. Indeed, Robinson often adopts an anecdotal, subjective rhetorical style in his writing, the self-consciousness of which suggests poststructuralist sympathies.

Robinson's most significant contribution to the field is his courageous ability to ask the tough questions about *everyone's* work. For example, when discussing Antoine Berman's *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* [translated *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (1992)], a text that has influenced a whole generation of North American scholars (including Philip Lewis and Lawrence Venuti), Robinson is not afraid to ask about the connection of strategies advocating "foreignizing" methodologies to rising feel-

ings of nationalism. For many who admire Berman's work, such questions may seem unfair, and the charges of "elitism" and "nationalism" may seem unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, the connections among radical translation practices, modernism, and nationalist movements, although troubling for some of the more "progressive" scholars, need serious consideration. Without agreeing with all of Robinson's conclusions regarding the political implications of those who advocate foreignizing strategies, I welcome the debate that will no doubt ensue.

Many of the questions Robinson raises will have implications for the future development of the field of translation studies as well as repercussions beyond. For example, how anyone can ever access "the other" is an epistemological question that troubles scholars in many fields, including the new literary translation studies. Despite disclaimers, Eric Cheyfitz's book *The Poetics of Imperialism* (1992), for example, tries to understand the other (this time, the perspective of certain Native Americans). Cheyfitz attacks traditional methods of translation, viewing translation as another kind of colonizing tool in the imperialist project of the European colonizers. Cheyfitz's work has had enormous influence on new historians working in translation and on postcolonial translation theorists. The contradiction that troubles Robinson is that while attacking traditional methods of translation, Cheyfitz actually *depends* upon those very methods, for Cheyfitz does not speak any Native American language. Indeed, he offers re-versions of the "colonized" versions without access to the source text. While trying to give voice to that which has been silenced or repressed, Cheyfitz uses an interpretive hermeneutic very similar to the traditional translation hermeneutic he criticizes. Robinson asks, How does one understand the position of the other without speaking the other's language? What kind of "authority" does Cheyfitz, or any other Western postcolonial scholar, invoke in such instances? How should bilingual translators, who have spent much of their careers living in "other" language and cultural systems, react to some of the prescriptions of the new historians?

Trying to categorize Robinson's position in this veritable explosion of theories is difficult, given the range of his erudition. Yet the questions mentioned above implicitly reveal one location from which his position derives: that of the practicing translator. Although Robinson is clearly well read in theory, and often makes suggestions and contributions of his own, *What Is Translation?* is primarily written from the perspective of the practicing translator—one well versed in both literary and technical translation. Some of the most delightful passages begin with Robinson's checking of theoretical claims against "the time I was translating a chainsaw operation manual into Finnish" or "when I was working on drafts of Finnish poems." He also talks about his moods—for example, his "arrogant

moods,” when he would rather be flashy while translating—that are yet to appear as factors in any translation theory I have seen, but which no doubt all practicing translators have experienced.

According to the most established scholars in the field, research in “the new translation studies” purportedly is proceeding along three lines of investigation: (1) theory, (2) history (often called descriptive studies), and (3) practice. Ideally, scholars in all three branches should exchange ideas and mutually help one another as the field as a whole develops. When translation studies was born as a discipline, which most agree was over twenty years ago at a 1976 colloquium at Leuven, Belgium, scholars suggested that before anyone begin making claims about theory, more “empirical data” documenting what practicing translators actually do in specific situations needed to be collected. Although descriptive studies has made progress, only the tip of the iceberg has yet been revealed. At the same time, theories have proliferated, often with little connection to or regard for empirical research. The most disturbing lack of mutual interaction has been between scholars in the theory and practice branches. Practicing translators have tended to reject developments in theory as highly prescriptive, that is, academics telling translators how they should translate. Scholars in the theory branch have been equally indifferent to contributions of practicing translators, finding most essays highly subjective, that is, translators making claims to justify the particular and often idiosyncratic strategies employed by the translators themselves.

One of the significant contributions of *What Is Translation?* is that Robinson opens a dialogue between the practicing translators and the theoreticians. Part 3, “Embracing the Foreign,” could be described as an extended response to claims posited by three leading translation theorists: Antoine Berman, Lawrence Venuti, and Philip Lewis. For example, in his prodigious *Translator’s Invisibility* (1994), Venuti traces the history of literary translation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Anglo-American cultures, arguing convincingly that the dominant trend has been for translators to use methods that conform to the dominant poetics of the receiving culture. Against this, however, he juxtaposes another translation history he calls “foreignizing translation,” one in which translators refuse to conform to the dominant poetics by developing affiliations with strategies employed within marginalized literary movements. Borrowing the term “abusive fidelity” from Philip Lewis’s article “Vers la traduction abusive” (1980) [translated “The Measure of Translation Effects” (1985)], Venuti argues convincingly for the importance of this other history for signaling difference, for revising the canon, and for importing new literary devices and techniques. In short, in terms of the politics of translation, Venuti is convincing in suggesting that traditional translation

in Anglo-American cultures has tended toward the conservative, conforming to both the dominant poetics and political norms, and that foreignizing translation has tended toward the progressive, opening spaces for new ideas, concepts of alterity, and literary innovation.

Although Robinson seems to admire Venuti's work, especially for the liberating effect on constraints imposed upon translators (such as its quasi-slavish demand of fidelity to the source-language text), he questions the progressive nature of the latter part of Venuti's theory. Showing that Venuti's theory is not that "new," indeed, pointing out that foreignizing strategies date back as far as the development of Roman culture, Robinson takes a hard look at assumptions underlying some of the new translation studies theories, including the assumption that traditional, transparent translation is conservative and weak, and that the new, "abusive fidelity" translation is innovative and strong. Robinson articulates his reactions to Venuti's theory in the form of a series of questions: Who is abused in such a translation situation? The source-language author, the source-language text, or the source-language culture? Perhaps, poses Robinson, it is actually the target-language reader, text, and culture being abused. Indeed, Robinson often reverses Venuti's terms, suggesting that conservative translators who uncritically adopt norms underlying "traditional" translation may be equally, if not more, "abusive" than translators who use strategies endorsed by the new translation studies theorists. Again, Robinson's questioning destabilizes many translation studies scholars' definitions of literary and cultural norms. If certain structures of physical and emotional abuse (think in terms of a feminist critique of the family or workplace) are refigured in theory to be normative or ordinary, then the abusive behaviors become precisely those of subservience/faithfulness that do not deviate from the (hidden) abusive norm. Opening up room to think about what often takes place out of sight, both socially and linguistically, Robinson lays bare a system of theory that uncannily reinforces a kind of patriarchal system whose victims have remained silenced. In Robinson's words, this section of the book explores the "ordinariness of abuse, the usualness of abuse," and its repercussions.

Whether right or wrong, Robinson's work pushes both the theorists' and the practitioners' thinking on translation. During the course of his meditation on abuse and translation, Robinson asks probing questions about violence in language and the social and psychological effects such strategies have on the reader (victim?) and translator (perpetrator?). Most important, his thinking is not mere abstract philosophical musing; as mentioned above, he always checks his findings against his experience as a practicing translator. While engaging Berman, Lewis, and Venuti in dialogue in part 3, for example, Robinson continually back-translates his

more abstract ideas and compares them with his own translation of *Huojuva talo* (“Tottering House”), a stage adaptation by Maaria Koskiluoma based on Maria Jotuni’s 1936 novel. The play, about a man who batters his wife and children, was successfully staged at the Southern Theatre in Minneapolis in March and April of 1994, and both the translation and the production received fine reviews. Ironically, Robinson employed several strategies in his translation that are endorsed by those very scholars he is critiquing in this section. For example, Robinson adopts such “foreignizing” strategies as maintaining foreign word order and translating idioms in a word-for-word fashion rather than searching for the English equivalent. Although Robinson was nervous about whether his translation would be acceptable, the actors loved it. The stilted and disturbing foreignized version actually worked. From the first reading, everyone—directors, actors, and writers—knew they had a play on their hands.

Robinson does not refer to his translation of “Tottering House,” however, in order to congratulate his abilities or to illustrate someone else’s theory. Instead, in what I find the most complex and strongest section of his book, Robinson refers to this translation in order to perform a kind of double writing, both questioning the theories upon which the new translation studies is based and drawing analogies to a culture of abuse present in both Finnish culture at the turn of the century and North American culture today. As Robinson spins his argument, he pulls threads from translation theory, from translation practice, and from a form of close reading that perhaps only a translator could realize. Here he creates a kind of allegory in which the translator becomes one (or several) of the abusive characters in the play. At first sight, it may appear that Robinson is setting up a rhetorical device in order to abuse Venuti and Lewis, but the matter is not that simple. Robinson also implicates himself (and all translators) in his construction. As the web grows larger and Robinson makes connections to the source-text culture, the source-text author, the target-text reader, and, interestingly, the source-text reader (seldom factored into translation theory), we find ourselves in the middle of a compelling narrative sequence, not itself an argument, but one with important theoretical implications. As Robinson’s fiction plays itself out, multiple twists and surprises arise that will challenge all readers’ thinking, regardless of their familiarity with the field.

Whether Robinson’s *What Is Translation?* will be understood as theory, criticism, or creative writing, I am unsure, but that is clearly also part of his project. In the space between theory and practice, between criticism and creative writing, Robinson has found room to raise questions and challenge our thinking. Some may argue that this book is a mere metaphorical construct divorced from concrete concerns in the field. I find

his meditation in this in-between space a fruitful one that allows new and insightful perspectives on some of the most difficult problems facing translation theorists and practitioners today. Problems of fidelity, voice, and agency continue to haunt translation theory, despite attempts to “get beyond” them. With *What Is Translation?* Douglas Robinson solidifies his presence in the field in a genre unique unto itself, one that not only enables new insights to appear but also allows him to slip away from falsifying conceptual categories.

Preface

This book was born out of excitement, a sense that some new and enormously productive things were happening in translation studies in the late eighties and (especially) early nineties, things that were radically centrifugal to the study of translation as it has long been conceived. To be centrifugal is of course to flee the center, to spin off wildly from a nice, tidy orbit in tangential directions—and that is what I felt these new theoretical interventions were doing. The postcolonial studies of translation published by Vicente Rafael, Eric Cheyfitz, and Tejaswini Niranjana from 1988 to 1992; the feminist studies published by Carol Maier, Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz, Lori Chamberlain, Susanne Lotbinière-Harwood, Barbara Godard, Nicole Brossard, Suzanne Jill Levine, Sherry Simon, and others from the early eighties on; Lawrence Venuti's insistence on tying ancient literalisms or romantic foreignisms not to a cultural elite but to left-leaning dissident practices, beginning with his path-breaking essay "The Translator's Invisibility" in 1986; the quirky and always brilliant ruminations of Anthony Pym; the list goes on and on. In 1987–88, when I was writing *The Translator's Turn* (Robinson 1991c), I felt as if I were the only one who was disenchanted and even disgruntled with what had been done in the field to date, who felt boxed in by unspoken assumptions about the proper limits to theoretical discourse on translation and wanted to bust out. Ironically, even as I worked on that book, feeling cut off, a groundswell of the new work was already beginning to appear—and I missed it, and didn't go back and read it until my own book was published in late 1990. By the next year, 1991, the groundswell had turned into a flood. This book is about that flood.

Celebratory as I imagine the book to be, however, it is also, indeed primarily, critical. The new work on translation was pioneering, which was cause for enthusiasm; but like all pioneering work it was also fraught

with complex methodological and ideological problems. Eric Cheyfitz's book *The Poetics of Imperialism* (1991) burst through so many closed doors that my head spun as I read it, but it also remained trapped in disturbing ways in its own negative critiques. If Cheyfitz is right about the colonizing impact on Native Americans not only of translation but of translation theory as well, how can his book hope to be anything but more of the same? Lawrence Venuti's work opened radical new perspectives on the foreignism urged on all translators by the German romantics; but didn't he too remain trapped in the same cultural elitism that he deconstructs in them? And what alternatives to elitism are there in a foreignizing project? Is there some way of getting past the domesticating/foreignizing dualism as Venuti and his romantic and postromantic precursors envision it, while still retaining the full force of his assault on the assimilationist cult of fluency?

And so on. Each of the new books seemed full of new possibilities—and bound up with new (and some old) problems. Each seemed more like an interim report back from an ongoing project than like a *summa translologica*; more like a transitional statement that was struggling valiantly with the new as it remained partly caught inextricably in the old. And as I read these books I wanted above all to jump into the trenches with each author, to help push the theoretical envelope just a bit farther—to critique them, certainly, to analyze their weaknesses, to deconstruct them, but entirely in the service of advancing the project at hand.

Hence the largely essayistic nature of this book. Rather than launching a systematic general theory of translation of my own (which in any case I had done in *The Translator's Turn*) and taking these new books to task for falling short of some imagined universal ideal, I determined to delve deeply into each project, each theoretical intervention, one at a time—launching, in fact, my own critical interventions into theirs. This I wanted to do as much in the spirit of each project itself as I possibly could, without imposing my own notion of the “right” way to theorize translation, but at the same time without simply celebrating or summarizing this work. One of the most useful books to appear in the field in recent years has been Edwin Gentzler's *Contemporary Translation Theories* (1993), which takes a far broader view than I do here, examining whole schools of thought about translation in the historical context of the past three or four decades; invaluable as that book is, however, I envisioned a different sort of project. I wanted to move past where these theories have been and what they are now to where and what they might be in the near future. It therefore seemed essential to stay in process with the books I was reading, to inhabit methodologically the same difficult transitional space with

them, to slog ahead in that uncomfortable position between the mud and the roots and the boulders of the past that would hold them back and the imagined freedom of movement that they project into the future, and try to take a few encumbered steps myself in their tracks. This meant reading the books critically and disruptively, trying wherever possible to smash unwieldy syntheses, poke mercilessly at problematic idealizations, turn the writers' critiques back against them, and generally wreak havoc in what are by and large unsettled and unsettling texts to begin with. This approach may occasionally make my readings seem like a slash-and-burn crusade; I hope, however, that my more negative critiques and deconstructions will be taken in the spirit in which I wrote them, as a participation in the individual projects, not as attempts to dismiss or destroy them.

The essayistic nature of the book also means that you can start reading just about anywhere and proceed from there at will, following your interests. The book might be read as a series of introductions to individual authors and texts, or to groups of texts and issues; and there is no reason why those introductions need to be read in precisely the order I've given them here. If I were picking this book up in the bookstore or library, for example, I would probably turn first to the two last essays, on phantom limbs and abuse; putting them last reflects my assumption that the book more or less culminates in these two essays, a positive and a negative take on the present and future of translation. I would then go back and finish the foreignism section, then read the chapters on Pym, Cheyfitz, and Díaz-Diocaretz. And I freely encourage you to chart your own path through the book as well.

The book's loose essayistic structure does not mean that it is unstructured, however. The three parts into which I have divided the chapters reflect my sense of the larger groups of issues that individual books deal with—especially, perhaps, the first and third parts, which are more tightly and coherently organized than the second. In fact, only the third part deals with anything that might be considered a coherent “school” or “camp” in the field of translation studies; the authors discussed in parts one and two will most likely be surprised at whom they've been grouped with, since the organizational principles I've used there reflect topics (rhetoric and grammar in part one) and methodologies (systemic and anecdotal in part two) that are not commonly used to group translation theories. To me they seem not only crucial but much more telling than the usual groupings: Cheyfitz, for example, usually thought of as a postcolonial theorist (which he undoubtedly is), is much closer in his conception of the topics and issues at hand to Renner and Copeland than he is to, say, Rafael or Niranjana, other postcolonial theorists of translation.

Part one, “Remapping Rhetoric and Grammar,” showcases three very different takes on the importance of that ancient division for the study of translation. It is astonishing to me now that it should have come as such a surprise that the tensions between rhetorical and grammatical approaches to language were historically formative for the study of translation, and they remain extremely useful today as well. But until the appearance of Frederick Rener’s *Interpretatio* in 1989, Eric Cheyfitz’s *The Poetics of Imperialism* in 1990, and Rita Copeland’s *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* in 1992, it had never occurred to me. This recovery of rhetoric and grammar in a field long dominated by segmentation theories (whether to translate sense-for-sense or word-for-word) is so critical that its importance cannot be overstated. Even while disagreeing with and largely disapproving of Rener’s approach, for example, as I read him I kept feeling the salutary force of his emphasis on grammar and rhetoric—hence his inclusion here.

Part two, then, delves into an important methodological tension I continue to feel in these centrifugal theories between systemic and anecdotal approaches, between scientific and personal approaches—between on the one hand large-scale abstractions, which have the virtue of covering more ground both historically and geographically, of explaining local details by reference to systemic descriptions; and on the other of full-bodied local explorations, which have the virtue of filling in the experiential details that the more global approaches ignore. Both approaches are concerned with what happens in translation—specifically, in the work I’m interested in, what happens socially in translation—but they conceive the nature of social “happening” in very different ways. I will be taking André Lefevere’s book *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992a) as an example of the view from above, the attempt to rise to a high enough level of abstraction that specific translational details (of which his book is appealingly full) make an immediate global sense. And I will be taking three books, Anthony Pym’s *Epistemological Problems in Translation and Its Teaching* (1992), Suzanne Jill Levine’s *The Subversive Scribe* (1991) and Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz’s *Translating Poetic Discourse* (1985) as examples of the view from within: the individual theorist’s attempt to explore his or her own actual experiences of translating (and of reading translation theory) fully enough to generate an expanding ripple of turbulence in the surrounding systems, so that his or her discussions of other people’s systemic theories of translation are always tested back against what it feels like to translate, to be a translator.

Part three is my second sustained attempt to come to terms with foreignism—my first being the long third chapter of *Translation and Taboo*. My inability to let go of this particular approach to translation is probably

due to Larry Venuti, since his tenacious advocacy of foreignizing or “visible” or nonfluent translation quickly became (and has remained) for me a kind of burr under my saddle, at once fascinating and irritating—something that has both attracted and dismayed me, so that I haven’t been able to leave it alone. Larry is one of the most intelligent and sophisticated new centrifugal thinkers about translation, well read in critical theory, a meticulous researcher of a given historical or cultural scene, and willing to take great argumentative risks to make a bold and transformative point—and yet he begs so many interesting questions that I find it difficult to keep up with all that he *isn’t* saying. And I’m still not satisfied: every time I read through the pieces I’ve written about his work and the work of people he admires (Schleiermacher, Benjamin, Berman, Lewis) I see more that needs to be explored, worked out, developed.

The two discussions in the book that do not directly address specific theoretical works published on translation from the mid-eighties to the mid-nineties are chapter 10 on phantom limbs and the conclusion on neural nets. The main impetus behind chapter 10 was in fact a book that had nothing to do with translation, Oliver Sacks’s 1985 *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*, a wonderful *tour de force* of neurological grotesqueries that immediately struck me as an infinitely productive set of heuristics for new thinking about translation. I offer it here as a tentative solution, or pathway toward a solution, to the narrow dualizing of the foreignizers: foreign or domestic, visible or invisible, strongly abusive or weakly assimilative. The conclusion was similarly born out of my reading in a book unrelated to translation, William Allman’s *Apprentices of Wonder* (1989), about neural network technology, which got me to thinking in new ways about machine translation and its implications not only for the study of translation, but for the future of the human race as well.

A word about inclusions and exclusions. I have attempted to include for discussion works published between 1985 and 1995 that are representative of what I take to be new and centrifugal approaches to translation—but that is a complexly and problematically tendentious category that by necessity excludes works published in the same period that seem to this writer (a) more “centripetal,” more typical of traditional approaches to translation, or (b) less representative of the exciting new approaches than the ones I have chosen. There is an inevitable subjectivity about all such choices, which I deplore as much as any reader who protests the exclusion of theorists X, Y, or Z; but I do not see any principled escape from it. I am told by linguistic scholars of translation that the new work in that branch of the field is excitingly innovative and moves decisively past the old paradigms; from my admittedly biased point of view, however, this new linguistic work seems very much in the same theoretical mold as, say,

Catford and early Nida, and thus more typical of traditional approaches. Similarly, I have chosen to highlight the feminist work of Suzanne Jill Levine and Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz, thus neglecting or excluding—and tacitly seeming to dismiss as uninteresting—interesting work by, say, Carol Maier, Lori Chamberlain, Susanne Lotbinière-Harwood, Nicole Brossard, or Barbara Godard. In these cases and others like them, I apologize for any implied or inferred slights, and hope that someone else will give the theorists I've excluded the attention they deserve.

Other exclusions have more to do with my own failings than with my understanding of what's "old" and what's "new" in the field. I have read Hans Vermeer and Justa Holz-Mänttari in German, slowly and laboriously, given the lamentable state of my German; since Justa was my colleague in the translation studies department at the University of Tampere in Finland, and I met Hans several times through her, I have also had long discussions of the *skopos* and *Handlung* approaches to translation with their prime movers, and consider those approaches unquestionably part and parcel of the "centrifugal theories" and "critical interventions" I explore here. Unfortunately, my German isn't up to the kind of close critical reading that I have sought to give the other texts I've studied here. I once translated into English twenty or so pages of Justa's book *Translatorisches Handeln* (1984) and her comment on my translation was that my misunderstandings were so serious as to make the translation not worth editing. I have, consequently, been chary of tackling either that book or Reiß and Vermeer's *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (1984) here. The "translation as cannibalism" approach of the de Campos group in Brazil also interests me enormously, from what I have read about it; but since I have no Portuguese, I will have to wait for an English translation.

Finally, after much thought I decided not to include a discussion of Tejaswini Niranjana's 1992 book, *Siting Translation*, because I have written on her at length elsewhere¹ and did not want to repeat myself here.

My debts in the book are many. Most of the people whose work I write about have responded to it, by letter, by fax, by phone, or face to face at conferences; thanks especially to Frederick Rener, Rita Copeland, Eric Cheyfitz, Anthony Pym, Jill Levine, and Larry Venuti, whose comments on my comments have in many cases led to substantial reformulations of my responses. Thanks also to the editors who originally solicited or accepted for publication some of the essays that appear here (substantially revised for continuity): Stuart Gillespie and Bob Cunningham at *Translation and Literature* (chapters 1 and 3), George Lang at *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (chapters 2 and 8), Susan Green at *Genre* (chapter 6), Marilyn Gaddis Rose in *Translation Spectrum II* (chapter 10),