Editors' Introduction
Collectors of Worlds: Translators, History and Fiction

What happens to translators when these agents of representation become themselves objects of representation? This is the question that underlies the present issue of *Dedalus* journal and to which our contributors attempt to respond based on case studies from different literary traditions and chronologies and through the lens of history or historiography. It has been prepared as an output of the *MOV. Moving Bodies: Circulations, Narratives, and Archives in Translation* research cluster hosted by the Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon, whose ultimate mission is to give voice and visibility to translators from multiple epistemological and interdisciplinary approaches. Through this special issue of *Dedalus*, it is our purpose to explore the compelling connections between fiction, translators and translation, and history.

Dedicated to *Collectors of Worlds: Translators, History and Fiction*, the issue's title is culled from Iliya Troyanov's *The Collector of Worlds* (2008). The novel is based on the biography of Sir Richard Francis Burton and revolves around his adventures in British (West) India, Arabia, and East Africa. A British colonial officer and explorer, Burton (1821-1890) entered history not only as the first westerner to complete the hajj to Mecca and Medina under the name of Mirza Abdullah, but also as a writer (of his pilgrimage and travels) and a translator – most notably of *The Kama Sutra* (1883) and the *Arabian Nights* (1885), and even of Camões' epic *The Lusiads* (1880). Although the title of Troyanov's novel resonates immediately with the Burton explorer, it also says much about translators, particularly literary translators, who impersonate and collect the worlds contained in the texts they translate.

The novel dwells in Burton's love of languages, which is inextricable from the places where he was stationed. As a fictionalized biography of a colonial officer and translator, it gives visibility to his adventures through the languages that he learned and translated and, in this sense, it exemplifies a historical fiction of a translator.

As with any literary work, fictions of translation and translators – or transfictions[1] tout court – are culturally embedded and informed, since they are created within a sociocultural-historical frame, situated in a tradition or canon, and produced by a creative agency that is in turn shaped by personal experiences, readings, and memory (transtextual in particular). When studied these fictions will in the least be framed within their historical context of production; on this matter of historical framing, Teresa Seruya reminds us that

> the historical viewpoint responds to readers' expectations: be it a case study or a theoretical discussion, some historical background is inevitably demanded by generally accepted academic standards. It is part of a required context. As a construction, a context always includes a factual and diachronic dimension in addition to evoking the synchronies deemed necessary.[2]

To some extent, since texts do not travel, and are not analysed, out of context, any study of a fiction of translation and translator will always engage with history at least through the expected exercise of contextualization of the fictional object of study. Pushing matters further, Seruya rightly notes that history, in the words of Portuguese historian José Mattoso, is "rather 'a representation of representations' as historical knowledge has at its base documents that in turn constitute representations."[3] As such, fictions *of* translation and translators are modes of representation of translation and translators, as much as they are statements *on* translation, itself a mode of representation – of a previous textual body and its foreignness.

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[1] In Klaus Kaindl's words, a transfiction corresponds to "the introduction and (increased) use of translation-related phenomena in fiction" (Kaindl, "Going Fictional!", 4).

[2] Seruya, "Doing Translation History", 1.

[3] Seruya, "Doing Translation History", 9.

In his charting of the so-called field of translator studies, Andrew Chesterman divides the field into three strands of agent-oriented research – cultural, cognitive, and sociological. The last strand encompasses not only translators' networks but also public discourses by and on translators, these discourses including fictional representations of translators.[4] A similar argument is made by Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman in "Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation". Apropos a fictional turn in translation studies, the scholars highlight that

> most of the texts sampled in these collections [anthologies and discussions of historical statements on translation] are non-fictional and non-narrative pieces (e.g. essays involving description, exposition, argumentation, instruction, philosophical speculation, etc.). The current trend of studying fictional representations of translation could be construed as a perfectly logical extension of this type of study. The underlying argument remains the same – in our study of historical concepts and practices of translation, statements about translation are no less valid documents worthy of research than the translations themselves – but it is simply spilling over from text-types that are not primarily narrative or not fictional, into those that are.[5]

Fiction as a mode of representation and meaning-making about translators and translation provides precisely the rationale for this issue. If translators' statements on their craft (usually contained in prefaces, interviews, letters, memoirs, or essays) have traditionally been used as valuable sources for translation theory and history, why not posit fictional translators' statements on a par with flesh-and-blood translators' statements? Our interest is not in drawing the boundaries between history and fiction, or fiction and historiography. Rather, our attention lies in the ways both discourses – historiographical and fictional

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[4] "The sociology of translators also covers the public discourse of translation, i.e. evidence of the public image of the translator's profession, as seen e.g. in the press, or in literary works in which one of the central characters is a translator or interpreter (see e.g. Maier 2006, Kurz/Kaindl 2005)" (Chesterman, "The Name and Nature", 16-17).

[5] Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction", 29.

– conflate or complement one another, and fictions of translation and translators humanize translators.[6]

Studied in the longue durée and encapsulating possible truths and meanings about the past, present and even future of translation, these fictionalized statements or discourses may reveal tendencies not only in social perceptions, thinking and even criticism about translation but also in the representation of translators, as well as commonly accepted views of what translation is or should be, of translators' status, agency and subjectivities, expected or dominant norms when reading translations or, on the contrary, possibilities for their subversion. Departing from Paul Ricoeur's theory of mimesis, Klaus Kaindl makes the point that "there is a constant exchange between the knowledge base about translation and the other cultural, political and social knowledge bases of a given society, which in turn leads to changes, reassessments and reinterpretations of the shared knowledge about translation."[7] By dealing with "the conflicting forces of fact and fiction"[8] and taken as empirical responses to sociocultural phenomena, especially "developments, changes and upheavals" in society,[9] fictional representations of translation and translators can thus play a documentary role of a sociocultural imaginary and historical memory without, however, overriding texts' aesthetic appeal. Delabastita and Grutman rightly highlight that these fictions "also provid[e] a comment about our socio-cultural values and the state of the world we live in."[10] In the world we live, the authors of these fictions are first and foremost readers of translations, who sometimes translate out of professional necessity, for pleasure or creative experimentation; and those whose works circulate in translation may even be familiar with the meanders of the professional field by negotiating the translation rights of their works or accompanying their translation into languages that they master.

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[6] Pym, "Humanizing Translation History".
[7] Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality", 165.
[8] Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality", 163.
[9] Kaindl, "Going Fictional!", 4.
[10] "Introduction", 14.

Since Else Vieira's equation of a fictional turn in translation studies[11] and Rosemary Arrojo's full embrace of it particularly with her *Fictional Translators* (2018), the field of translation studies has shown a growing interest in how fiction (literary, cinematic, theatrical, operatic, pictorial, etc.) depicts or reacts to translation and cultural mediation phenomena, such as migration or globalization.[12] This interest has been on a par with the plea for writing more micro-histories of translation and translators,[13] which are themselves discursive formations put together through narrative writing (i.e. fictional) devices and which rely on biographical data collection as well as data obtained from accessing archives or from examining the traces left behind in the translated text by the underlying creative process.

It goes without saying that there can be no translation history without theory and vice-versa. Translation history can be most obviously inquired through the lens of fiction at least on four levels that are not always clear-cut and tend to overlap: *topoi*, use of historical data, metaphors, and characters' characterization.

In terms of *topoi*, translators' performance has been historically defined by their invisibility or liminal position. For some reason Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) is subtitled *A History of Translation*. Despite its focus on Anglo-American culture, it questions the marginal position traditionally played by translation, which entails the marginalization and neglect of the translator – that is, the translator's invisibility. Fictions of translation and translators help overcome that invisibility by empowering translators through the creation of a space where they become tangible and visible to readers. This *topos* is addressed in this issue in a set of articles[14] from different angles (Pinto; Kripper; Holloway). Marta Pacheco Pinto examines the

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[11] Vieira, "(In)visibilidades na tradução".

[12] See, for example, Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies*; Kaindl and Spitzl, *Transfiction*; Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*; Woodsworth, *The Fictions of Translation*.

[13] See, for example, Adamo, "Microhistory of Translation"; Pym, "Humanizing Translation History"; Munday, "Using Primary Sources".

[14] The editors thank the reviewers who kindly accepted to comment on the manuscripts submitted to this special issue.

causes and consequences of that invisibility, which pushes translators into finding rescue in the fluid matter of the sea or river in search of an ethical escape or (self-)reparation from a world that is perceived as hostile. Pinto combines the analysis of three literary works that foreground the double impossibility of being invisible and of dealing with visibility. Denise Kripper explores paratexts as loci for visibilizing (fictional and real) translators' praxis and simultaneously as metadiscourses that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Translators' namelessness (Pinto) or presentation as absent characters (Holloway) are other symptomatic features of their invisibility. Olivia Holloway brings in a case study in which it is the real translation embedded in the fiction and the act of reading that translation that drive the plot forward; yet, the fictional translator is only cited when remembered from afar, and the real translator (the author) is narratively invisible. Whereas the former is an incorporeal figure that lives in characters' memory and imagination, the latter holds a paratextual existence that renders her, the author, into a prosthetic character of her own fictional work.

Along with invisibility, trust is also a defining *topos* in the history of translation. Trust in translation history ranges from trust in the mediator, and consequently in the translated message, trust in historians and their testimonies to trust in an interdisciplinary translation history.[15] Breaches of trust specifically in the translator pervade some of the literature on translators and translation; this is here best exemplified in the case studies provided by Mourinha and Bucaioni, without the characters in need of translation apparently noticing them. If characters are not aware of the breach, is then there a real betrayal of trust? While the possibility of this breach unveils the mediator's privileged power position, it likewise empowers the translator, who is in control of the communication flow.

Some articles in this issue focus on fictions that use historical data (material) and thus openly dialogue with history by elevating translators as historical subjects, and vice-versa, or by illustrating discourses on history and historical conflicts (Reggiani; Gelmi;

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[15] Rizzi, Lang, and Pym, *What Is Translation History?*

Mourinha; Costa). James St. André makes this point in his entry on "History of Translation" for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*: "While many would think of history as primarily the telling of a story situated in a particular time and space, and therefore concerning unique actions, translation scholars often use historical material as case studies in order to advance a general theoretical point."[16] Nicola Reggiani looks accordingly into historical sources, Greek papyri from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, to investigate translation as a social practice of Graeco-Roman daily life. The activities embodied by the so-called ἑρμενεῖς (translators/interpreters), who concentrated the roles of linguistic, cultural, and diplomatic mediation between Greeks and Egyptians, are put on a par with literary translators' self-presentation when claiming authorship over other forms of translation, namely the translation of religious texts from Egyptian to Greek. Following up on this interrogation of historiography through translation, Alberto Gelmi revisits the Bible with the Italian writer Erri De Luca's translation of *Jonah*. De Luca's translational agency is shown to profess a kind of activism, in that his experiments with interlinear translation demand the translator's peritextual intervention and, consequently, textual visibility. What Gelmi categorizes as hyperliteralism serves as an excuse for the emergence of the commentator figure which superimposes on that of the translator.

Marisa Mourinha brings in what she describes as tragicomic depictions of encounters with history as enabled through two translator-interpreters, both unskilled and damaged by history itself. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) is embedded in the Holocaust narrative whereas Todd Hasak-Lowy's short story "The Task of This Translator" (2005) evokes the Balkans war conflict. Mourinha follows and construes the interpreters' mediation performance as a statement about language's inability/insufficiency to verbalize traumatic memory. Adriana Costa, in turn, explores language's ability to reconstruct national identity. Costa examines Annette Hug's *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* (2016) as a fictional representation of a real translation process whose translator is a historical figure, the Filipino national

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[16] St. André, "History of Translation", 245.

hero José Rizal. In delving into Rizal's cultural identity, the novel provides a metacommentary on his Tagalog translation of Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), *Guillermo Tell* (1907), in which Rizal's anticolonial ideology is inscribed. The translation is thus representative of the development of a national language in detriment to that of the Spanish colonizer. This metacommentary is additionally framed by the writer's own experience of back-translating Rizal's rendition into German, which is intended to bring her closer to the linguistic and identitarian appropriation exercise underlying Rizal's endeavour.

In keeping with translation and writing of the historical self, Manuel Azuaje-Alamo and Denise Kripper also dialogue with history through their choices of case studies. Azuaje-Alamo takes us back to seventeenth-century Japan by comparing Matsuo Bashō's poetic travelogue *Saga Nikki* with its Portuguese Brazilian translation as carried out by the writer of the novel in which it is inserted and as assumed by a fictional character. History comes in through the cultural and historical embeddedness of Bashō's (translated) autobiography. Kripper, on her part, discusses two distinct modes of biographical representation of the translator's task by two Latin American authors, namely a fictional biography of a translator that is discussed in terms of its paratextual framing devices vis-à-vis a historiographical biography of a (real) translator. Focus lies on the book covers and the use of photography as a fictional, metaliterary and historiographical device that adds consistency and credibility to these representations of translators.

Another piece of research engages with specific modes of world literature reception by dealing with a translation phenomenon that historically has had a bad reputation. Besa Hashani interrogates Albanian writer Ismael Kadare's naming of his translator David Bellos as co-recipient of the literary prize Man Booker International in 2005, since Bellos translates Kadare's work via the French language as against a handful of translators that have carried out the same task but directly from Albanian. Such interrogation is conducted through the examination of the writer's statements on translation and conceptualization of indirect translation in his own fictional work.

Theoretical debates and practitioners' conceptualizations of translation have tended to rely on metaphors to better grasp the

activity and illuminate the intricacies of a translation process. Some metaphors – carrying across, bridge-building, transformation, transfer – have seemingly been incorporated into the lexicon about translation. Gender-related metaphors are more visibly or consistently addressed in a couple of articles here gathered (Barry; Pinto). Taking issue with a long history of gendered tropes in translation, Caragh Barry examines how Argentine writer Andrés Neuman reverses gender expectations in his novel *El viajero del siglo* (2009) via the female character who sees herself empowered through translation. Set in Romantic Germany, hence dialoguing with German Romanticism and nation-building, the translator gains political, historical, and individual agency through translation, which allows for defying traditional gender hierarchies and associated sexual behaviours and power relations. Pinto does not centre her reflection around gender or sexual metaphors, but one of her case studies, Yōko Ogawa's novel *Hotel Iris* (1996), hinges on the close connection between translation and sexual violence, which is perpetrated by the translator figure.

The so-called collaborative turn in translation studies[17] has created awareness of the fact that translators have been mostly portrayed as solitary figures, often suffering from sociability disorders and complaining about low-pay and unstable jobs (Costa; Pinto). Moreover, they have through the centuries accumulated accusations of being unfaithful and treacherous, traitors and manipulators (Bucaioni). To some extent, these personality traits reverberate or are instead deconstructed across the case studies addressed in the articles. Marco Bucaioni, in particular, selects a set of texts from Portuguese-language African literatures depicting mostly ad hoc translators who are assumed manipulators. Bucaioni discusses acts of intentional manipulation of the message communicated, which are often committed against foreigners coming from a stronger cultural context both to achieve some sort of personal advantage and to resist coloniality and modernity's imposed global languages/cultures. This coloniality/modernity axis leads

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[17] See, for example, Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning (eds.). *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Bucaioni to provocatively label the translators as bad, but who are eventually good cultural interpreters in serving decolonial resistance. In this respect, Costa's and Bucaioni's articles dialogue with one another in terms of the epistemological framing of their reflections and the cultural significance of the translation events under scrutiny.

From the 11 articles gathered in this issue, Adriana Lisboa's novel *Rakushisha* (2007) is singled out as the object of study in two contributions that complement each other. Its Brazilian edition being now out of print, this novel originally consists of Lisboa's PhD thesis in Comparative Literature. Azuaje-Alamo examines three translation processes at play in the novel – intercultural, intersemiotic, and rewriting – as enacted by three different characters. On the one hand, he analyses the ways in which the character Celina voices Lisboa's own study of Japanese literature, thus impersonating the authorial voice, and the intertextuality that pervades Celina's own diary. On the other hand, Haruki's illustration of *Saga Nikki* is equated with another journey in time and space, that of his self-discovery of his own Japanese ancestry. As said, Holloway privileges a different analytical prism by focusing on the Yukiko (absent translator character) – Lisboa (author) duo. By exploring the metaphorical use of the translation of Bashō's diary as a roadmap to navigate the foreign and towards self-discovery, Holloway posits this translation as prosthetic memory and itself as a prosthetic character that acts upon the protagonists and breaks the translation pact of transparency and illusion, that is, of reading a translation as if it were an original.

All the articles in this issue are concerned with the translator figure through literature as a creative dialogue with sociocultural-historical settings and backgrounds. The absence of other fictional arts or intermedial dialogues – such as theatre (from Brian Friel's *Translations*, which is a well-known example, to Joseph Vitale's *The Interpreter*, recently performed by the New-Jersey based company The Theatre Project), cinema,[18] and painting (most obvious examples include the iconic sixteenth-century Mexican figurations of La Malinche or Caravaggio's *St. Jerome Writing*) – flags up the fact that literature is a

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[18] Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies*.

good place to start relating fiction, translators/translation, and history. It is our conviction that fictions of translation and translators offer exciting prospects as a future direction in the study of translation history.

This issue closes with four timely reviews – by Elisa Rossi, Patrícia Sá, Seren Üstündağ, and Ariadne Nunes – of books all published in different languages that either deal directly with translation phenomena and theory or make use of translation to subvert relations of textual precedence, or present it as part of a writer's craft. We envision these reviews being useful to translation studies, comparative literature, and cultural studies scholars alike.

Back in 2006, in diagnosing the disciplinary development of the history of translation, Georges Bastin and Paul Bandia wrote that

> While much of the earlier work was descriptive, recounting events and historical facts, there has been a shift in recent years to research based on the interpretation of these events and facts, with the development of a methodology grounded in historiography. Translation in history is now being linked to themes such as otherness, ideology, manipulation, and power. Clearly, progress has been made, and the history of translation has become a viable independent research area within translation studies.[19]

The progress meanwhile made has in fact led to the launching in 2022 of an open History and Translation research network. Its manifesto[20] sets out as one of its goals to "promote an approach in which translation is both a constitutive category of historical analysis and a historically specific practice". We hope this issue of *Dedalus* journal can add the extra goal of promoting a broader approach in which fictions of translation and translators become legitimate objects for interpreting the history of translation, interrogating the future of translation on the basis of the represented past and of the diagnosed concerns and trends in representation, and building hypotheses about (in)visibility, otherness, ideology, trust, manipulation, and power

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[19] Bastin and Bandia, "Introduction", 2.
[20] See https://historyandtranslation.net/manifesto/.

relations. Borrowing Christopher Rundle's words,[21] we are interested in fiction as the lens through which we research our historical object.

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[21] Rundle, "Historiography", 235.

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