Introduction
This chapter will explore the literary translator as an agent operating in a time- and culture-bound space. The agency of the translator has been an object of translation research since the cultural turn that took place in the 1990s and the revelation that translation is the work of individuals or collectives who often act with a certain cultural agenda. Research that specifically focuses on the person of the translator (from a sociological or cognitive perspective) has been conceptualised as “translator studies” by Chesterman (2009). Chesterman defines the scope of translator studies as research conducted on the activities and attitudes of agents involved in translation and their interaction with their (social or technical) environment, or their history and influence (2009, 20). Needless to say, such a broad scope requires a variety of analytical approaches and the translator’s agency continues to be explored from various perspectives; some researchers have focused on patterns of translatorial behaviour focusing on the socio-cultural constraints that shape this behaviour, while some others have foregrounded the individual creative power of translators and their potentially subversive strategies.

Most discourse on literary translation continues to be shaped by a strong belief in fidelity and transparency, associating the image of the translator “with that of a scribe, a copier or the neutral messenger of a stable message” (Guzmán 2010, 17). Not only readers and publishers, but translators themselves appear to continue adhering to some traditional concepts of translation that uphold the idea of subservience to a source author and a source text and these concepts sustain the illusion of transparency (Hermans 1996). During the past few decades, translation studies has challenged this deeply entrenched belief and unearthed the potential or actualised power of the translator in rewriting and recontextualising source texts to varying degrees. Central to this challenge is Daniel Simeoni’s call for constructing a sociological view of the translator and the emphasis he has placed on the translator’s habitus (Simeoni 1998). The exploration of a translator’s habitus requires close acquaintance with the background and professional network of a translator, as well as their works. This knowledge is often guided by the discourses that have developed around the life and works of translators. Guzmán has drawn attention to Simeoni’s call to construct translator’s sociographies and suggested that the examination of a translator’s sociography “involves the relationship between the social
and political realms and the intimate and subjective (…)” (2013, 178). Therefore, even when a translator’s subjectivity surfaces in different types of material, it needs to be read and interpreted within a specific socio-cultural context.

**Current methods: translator’s visible agency and the ‘translator’s archive’**

Revealing the presence of the translator in a translated text in concrete terms has not always been an easy task. Referred to in various ways as ‘voice’, ‘fingerprints’, ‘feel’, etc. (see Boyden 2014), the translator’s presence in the translated text itself is difficult to extrapolate. The concept of “implicit translator” has been offered to name this presence in a narratological approach (Schiavi 1996). In fact, the translator’s voice can be assumed to be present in all translations; it only becomes a matter of degree of presence, rather than an absolute absence or presence which is to be unearthed.

Advances in process research offer promising insights into how new technologies and digital data may contribute to better understanding the actual interventions made by a translator in a source text, in other words, the type and degree of a translator’s presence in the translated text. Particularly, the study of draft translations and manuscripts help reveal information about the working practices of translators and the stages that translations go through from beginning to final publication (Munday 2015, 130).

Unless the researcher has access to such draft versions, the published text of a translation may not be too revealing when it comes to pinpointing the decisions and interventions of the translator. However, translators do not only leave their marks in the translated texts; there are also sites outside of the translated text that offer more manifest traces of the translator. The subject matter of the present chapter is these manifest traces. It will focus on how these traces may serve as paths to understanding the representation and self-representation of translators in the paratextual and extratextual space they create for themselves.

In descriptive translation studies, a distinction is often made between textual and extratextual material in exploring the norms observed by translators. Gideon Toury has suggested two sites for ‘reconstructing’ translation norms; one of these are the translations themselves (textual sources), while the second major site offering data about norms is extratextual sources. The latter includes “semi-theoretical or critical formulations”, as well as statements by such agents as translators, editors or publishers, and critical appraisals of translations or translators (Toury 1995, 65). While Toury suggests that norms are directly accessible in the translated texts, he is less sure about the reliability of information coming from extratextual material and argues that statements by translators may be biased and may have misleading motives, such as propaganda or persuasion, if not downright deception (ibid., 65–66). Toury suggests that such sources should still be taken into consideration, but should never be accepted at face value (ibid., 66). Although the truth claim of explicit statements by translators is always open to question, they are interesting indicators of translatorial behaviour (as Toury himself agrees). If revealed, the intentions of translators in guiding the reception of translations in specific ways would provide important information about their personal or political agendas, in addition to their literary and poetic goals. Just like anyone else in the society, translators are involved in processes of identity and subject formation and often create spaces in and around their translation work that provide an outlet for expressing their identity narratives.

A sound framework for studying the presence of translators at different layers of discourse in and around translations has been offered by Kaisa Koskinen. Further refining the concept of
visibility that has been introduced to translation studies by Venuti (1995) Koskinen suggests that there are three distinct kinds of visibility: textual, paratextual and extratextual (Koskinen 2000, 99). In the same vein, Tahir Gürçağlar has suggested that Toury’s division between textual and extratextual material needs to be further elaborated to comprise elements that lie in between these two, i.e. paratextual elements (Tahir Gürçağlar 2008, 202–203). In addition to revealing a myriad of information regarding translation policies, source languages, marketing strategies, ideological framing, etc., the study of the paratextual and extratextual materials in and around translations can serve as a gateway to understanding the translator as subject living and working in a social context. This visibility can indeed reveal a great deal about the personal vectors behind translations and the agentive power of translators.

A term that proves conceptually and methodologically productive when studying the material visibility of translators is the ‘translator’s archive’. Developed by María Constanza Guzmán, the translator’s archive comprises texts and statements by a given translator; however, it is not conceptually limited to the materiality of an archive and also includes “translator’s biographies, their practices, the agents involved in the translating event, and the relations among them” (2013, 179). This chapter is exclusively limited to the first aspect, i.e. textual and material traces of translators. Nevertheless, for fuller contextualisation of a translator’s work, the concept needs to be extended as a symbolic space to include other agents and practices, as Guzmán has been suggesting. Guzmán’s approach strongly resonates with translation scholars working in a historical paradigm who underline the importance of archival materials for exploring translators’ works and lives (Munday 2012, 2015; Paloposki 2017). However, Guzmán steps beyond the materiality of the archive and argues that the translator’s archive “reveals a view of translation as invested and embodied practice, rendering translators’ bodies and life histories as part of the epistemological enquiry about the translator’s self” (Guzmán 2013, 189).

Paratexts: notes and prefaces/postfaces

Paratexts are those elements that constitute a threshold between texts and the outside world. The term is associated with the work of French literary theorist Genette (1997) who maintains that texts are always accompanied by verbal or visual elements that “surround and extend” them. Their purpose is to present the text, but not only that, their purpose is also “to make present, to ensure the text’s presence in the world” (1997, 1). In terms of their spatial composition, Genette divides paratexts into two as peritexts and epitexts. Peritexts are those elements that are located either inside or in the immediate proximity of the text, such as the title or the preface, while epitexts are located outside the text and circulate independently of the book in question, composed of interviews, conversations or diaries, etc. (Genette 1997, 5). The epitexts are different from ‘extratextual’ material, as the term is used in this chapter; they necessarily pertain to a specific text, while extratextual materials are general statements on translators and translations, not limited to a particular translation. In what follows, consider the delineation made between two specific sites in the peritexts of literary works where translators have made themselves present and revealed their agency in clear terms: notes and prefaces/postfaces. The functions of both of these sites seem to vary for each culture and time period and works covering individual translators and translations. In some cases, translation traditions have shed light on the way such paratextual devices bring out the agency of the translators. There is a great deal to be learned from the translators’ paratexts regarding the agency and subject position of the translators, as they not only supplement or promote the source text, but also mirror the translators’ attitudes vis-à-vis their respective source texts and
authors. Some paratexts also leave the orbit of the source text, and even the target text, and reveal precious information about the translator’s background or world view.

Footnotes or endnotes have been investigated extensively, particularly in relation to specific works, authors or traditions. These have led to various categorisations of annotations (a brief selection includes Henry 2000; Miao and Salem 2010; Brownlie 2011; Lopes 2012). A broad categorisation comes from Toledano-Buendia (2013) who argues that there are two main functional types of notes based on their communicative stance. One of these is explanatory notes that supplement the information relayed by the text itself, where the translator tries to fill in information gaps or clarify issues arising from problems of linguistic or cultural equivalence (2013, 156), and the second type of footnote which the researcher names “discursive”, where notes serve as commentary (2013, 158). This latter type of footnote gives the opportunity to the translator to not only relay information, but also to make a judgement or display an attitude. However, it may be difficult to separate these two types from each other, particularly where the mere relay of information may also be considered a discursive act. While choosing to annotate certain terms or facts, translators assume a lack of knowledge on the side of the readers and this in itself serves to create certain hierarchies in their relationship. When translators annotate something, they assume an authoritative position, either vis-à-vis the readers, or, interestingly, sometimes the writers of the source texts. So regardless of whether the footnotes are explanatory or discursive, they give away the position of the translator regarding at least three major variables in the translation process: the source text; the source author; and the target readership. Outi Paloposki writes convincingly that the information offered by footnotes is not limited to translation problems encountered during the translation process, or accounts of the strategies adopted by translators; rather, footnotes offer a perspective on the agency of the translators. She adds, “Their agenda in writing footnotes can be studied through textual and contextual analysis; likewise, their attitudes towards their readers and their ideas of their own role as regards the audience can be researched through the study of footnotes” (Paloposki 2010, 104).

Prefaces or postfaces are similar in terms of their potential to bring the agency of the translator to the fore. Like footnotes, prefaces are among the most widely studied forms of paratext in translation studies (Dimitriu 2009; McRae 2012; Norberg 2012). Prefaces written by translators also create a moment of direct interaction between the translator and the readers. Like translators’ notes, translators’ prefaces can assume a myriad of different functions, not all of them limited to presenting the source or the target text. Rodica Dimitriu has identified three main functions served by the translators’ prefaces: explaining the translation for the readership (the explanatory function); providing instructions or guidelines for other translators (the normative/prescriptive function); and offering information regarding the source text or the socio-cultural contexts (the informative/descriptive function) (2009, 201–203). Dimitriu is more interested in how translators’ prefaces can be used as a documentary source by translation researchers to better understand the translation process, and the translation norms or ideological stance of the translators, as much as they relate to the translations in question. There may be more subjective and implicit information available in the prefaces, just like in notes, about the ideological and social position of the translators vis-à-vis their readers or sources. Prefaces offer clues about how translators see their own cultural role (Tahir Gürçagılar 2013). Dimitriu sees the translators’ discourse in the prefaces as “frequently vague, emotional, impressionistic and unsystematic, leaving the impression of being constructed according to the translators’ fits of inspiration” (2009, 204) in line with Toury’s emphasis on the unreliability of extratextual data. However, there are many cases where the
subject position and agency of translators reflect through their discourse and the unsystematic
nature of translators’ prefaces can provide access to the workings of the individual translator’s
mind and creativity.

Sir Richard Francis Burton’s paratextual interventions in
his translation of Arabian Nights

Translated texts often feature a variety of paratextual devices, and where available, these
always have a dialogical relationship with each other, complementing, supplementing and in
some cases, contesting one another. Therefore, treating them as part of the same ‘translator’s
archive’ that houses the translations, and other documents and statements by and about
translators, helps construct a holistic and dialogical framework for the discussion of a
translating subject.

This point can be demonstrated by casting a brief look at a well-known translator, Sir
Richard Francis Burton, and his translation of Arabian Nights (1885–1886). It will become
apparent that Burton’s translation strategies, his annotations and the essays he added to the
translation constitute an overarching context of reception for the readers. Burton’s paratextual
commentary on the Arabian Nights in the form of notes, a foreword and a terminal essay has
helped construct a new image for the source text—which then served as a major inspiration for
many authors in the West. However, in addition to presenting the source work in a new light,
Burton’s paratextual interventions in the text mirror his own background, subjective choices and
his strong agency. One reason to focus on Burton’s work in this section is the fact that Burton
was responsible for all of the paratexts used in the translation due to the specific circumstances
surrounding the work’s publication. Translated literature is a field often shaped by multiple
forces, and agents such as publishers, editors, advertising and marketing professionals have a
say on many aspects of a work’s paratext. In the case of Burton, there is uncontested information
that he was the sole creator behind all the verbal paratextual additions to the translation.

Burton’s translation titled The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, subtitled A Plain
and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments, was published in 1885 as a
private edition under the label of Kama Shastra Society. The erotic content of the translation
and Burton’s paratextual additions demonstrating his strong critique of Victorian morality
made the text open to censorship under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857. The work was
published as a private edition with the aim of circumventing this censorship regulation and
became a huge success with the readers, but also stirred a great deal of controversy in the
context of 19th-century English society. The reactions caused by Burton’s edition were not
only due to the text of the translation, but also had to do with the many notes the translator
added to the stories, as well as a “Terminal Essay” he wrote. These paratextual additions
rendered Burton’s own voice as a translator clearly audible throughout the text. He was not
only explaining cultural items in his notes, Burton embedded his translation in a new context
and asserted his cultural authority through them. He used them as an occasion to demonstrate
his knowledge on erotic customs of the Arabs and to criticise Victorian morals. His “Terminal
Essay” presented a lengthy discussion on homosexuality in the East which was not directly
relevant to the narrative in Arabian Nights. In fact, Burton’s paratextual additions were
disliked by many critics as they were seen as a “strong imprint of the translator’s interest and
personality” (Marzolph et al. 2004, 507). So it is clear that even when translators are willing to
remind the readers of their existence and draw attention to their own views of the works they
are translating, as well as the larger context in which they are offering their works, they may
not always be welcome.
Tarek Shamma who has carried out a detailed analysis of the context Burton operated in, positioning his Arabian Nights translation in a particular socio-cultural setting, has not only shown the type of paratextual framing Burton has built around his translation but also the continuity between this frame and Burton’s real-life image he intended to reflect on his readers (Shamma 2009). This continuity becomes immediately clear in the first paragraph of the Translator’s Foreword. Burton writes:

This work, labourious as it may appear, has been to me a labour of love, an unfailing source of solace and satisfaction. During my long years of official banishment to the luxuriant and deadly deserts of Western Africa, and to the dull and dreary half-clearings of South America, it proved itself a charm, a talisman against ennui and despondency. (Burton 1885–1886, vii)

These initial sentences are enough to give an idea about the discourse Burton used in the foreword where he emphasised the work’s value for him and the world at large, and where he also offered an exaggerated and highly embellished self-portrait.

The numerous annotations Burton introduced to his translation are also a strong indication of his attitude towards his task as a translator. These annotations were offered in the form of detailed footnotes that served as cultural translation (termed “cultural violation” in Irwin 1994), offering the readers an insight into the customs and history of Arabs. Burton assumed the position of a learned expert in most of these notes and at times reinstated this position by referring the readers to his three-volume narrative giving an account of his travels in Arabia ([1855–1856] 1964) (Burton 1885–1886, 28). In the meantime, many notes contained erotic diversions where Burton offered his personal views about the sexual practices in Arabia, often tainted by his racist perspective. For example, he presented his ideas on the preferences of women favouring “negroes on account of the size of their parts” (Burton 1885–1886, 6), or he informed the reader that the “subject of kissing is extensive in the East” while annotating an erotic passage, adding that there are ten different varieties enumerated in The Hindu Art of Love, translated from Sanskrit (Burton 1885–1886, 270). Irwin argues that Burton’s notes “add up to an encyclopaedia of curious sexual lore” (1994, 33) in addition to being “a parade of barmy erudition interspersed with snatches of autobiography” (1994, 34). Burton’s “Terminal Essay” is well-known for its long discussion on homosexuality in the East, which he terms “pederasty”. Burton offered a long and controversial account of homosexual practices in the essay and introduced for the first time the concept of a “Sotadic zone” where sexual relations between men and young boys were permitted and even celebrated. Spanning over several-hundred pages, this essay was not exactly relevant to the reading and understanding of the stories that Burton translated, since homosexual references in the stories were not that many. Then rather than serving the presentation of the source text, the long digression served to convey Burton’s stance vis-à-vis his readership and their sexual morals. When read today, Burton’s detailed and even comical account appears to tell the reader more about Burton than sexual practices in the “Sotadic zone”.

Throughout the notes he added to the translation, as well as his terminal essay, Burton depicted a self-portrait as a well-travelled and well-read adventurer. He often made references to both Eastern and Western sources, i.e. the Koran, the Kama Sutra, Shakespeare, Sappho or Boccaccio, as well as Galland’s and Lane’s translations of the Nights. This is no doubt a strategy that Burton operationalised in order to establish his authority and credibility, not only as a translator, but also an expert in Arabic and Eastern customs and the West’s encounters with it. However, Burton was not the first translator to annotate the Nights and overload the
translation with cultural information. In fact, his notes can be seen as a form of rivalry to those by Lane in his translation of the *Nights* (1840). Seeing that Lane had already relayed plenty of information on Muslim manners and life, Burton apparently wanted to top him and went beyond the customary annotation necessary to establish the cultural framework required for the reception of a work by lay readers. His notes covered more “recondite matters” than those by Lane, who was equally generous with the number of notes he added (Irwin 1994, 33–32). So, these notes shed light on Burton’s endeavours to establish himself as an expert who knew more about the East than Lane, as well as his personality and conduct when it came to translating and promoting the *Nights*. The position he has taken vis-à-vis Lane, as it comes across in the references he makes to Lane in the paratexts surrounding the translation, also help explain the dynamics behind the English translation and retranslations of the *Nights* throughout the 19th century, emphasising the personal and ideological struggles that lie behind acts of retranslation, rather than the inherent value of the Arabic tales which invites retranslation.

The context of Burton’s retranslation becomes especially evident in the terminal essay. Before he moved on to the topic of homosexuality, Burton offered a lengthy survey of the history and social context of *Nights*, including its introduction and reception in Europe. This was where he referred to other translations of the stories, starting with Antoine Galland’s French version. In addition to this section, he also appended W. F. Kirby’s bibliography of *The Thousand and One Nights* and “Imitations and miscellaneous works having more or less connection with the Nights”.

Burton’s paratextual material fed into the translation and framed it as the product of Burton’s direct experience arising out of his multiple identities, as an adventurer, anthropologist and intellectual and in sum, Burton’s paratextual interventions ended up presenting much more than the translation and its source.

While prefaces and footnotes provide ground for explicit or implicit assertions of the translators’ subjective views, their assumed positions of power and expertise, these are mostly an extension of the translator’s identity narrative. Such narratives also strongly emerge in autobiographical sources such as memoirs and journals. Although their truth value always needs to be questioned, such sources show how translators write their life narratives and the roles they attribute to translation at the service of their personal, social, cultural or ideological agendas. Most often, the translators endeavour to write their memoirs in a way that is stable and consistent, with little room for discordance among various life choices and events, including translational ones. However, offering an account of a person’s life in a book is a complex act and each version of a biography will reflect a limited angle. It will be seen how *The Man Between*, to be taken up in the next section, turns weakness into strength and accepts the challenge of creating a whole from the fragments of a person.

**Extratextual visibility: interviews, memoirs and (auto)biographies**

This section will discuss the importance of taking personal accounts by translators into consideration in unearthing the position of the translator as someone working and functioning within a broader sociocultural context, often equipped with the power to create some potential or kinetic social energy. These personal accounts are components of a ‘translator’s archive’, therefore the link between the paratextual and extratextual layers of discourse always needs to be taken into account, explored and analysed in attempts to explore a translator’s subjectivity. Certain types of extratextual materials may offer a gateway into the social background, cultural networks and the functioning of a translator’s mind. Memoirs, autobiographies and
interviews establish direct contact between the translators and the readers and give the translator a chance to address the reader with their own voice. Needless to mention, translators’ statements appearing in such materials should not be taken at face value. They are very much a part of the translator’s public image, often carefully constructed, and therefore Toury’s caveat about their reliability needs to be borne in mind. Yet, as Munday argues, “such sources offer valuable testimony and more direct access to the working practices of the translator and can give crucial insights into both historical circumstance and translation” (Munday 2014, 66).

The parallels between translation and life-writing (as biography, auto-biography and memoir) have been explored very little despite the fact that any theorisation of all these forms of (re)writing revolve around the central problematic of representation. In her insightful study on (translated) biographies of Jorge Luis Borges in English and Turkish, Elgül (2016, i) sums up the key relationships between translation and biography and argues that they are “analogous mediums of transcreation that confront similar constraints while constructing a representation of a selected source for a certain group of receivers”. Elgül argues that there are a few major points of intersection between the two: the questionable authority of the rewriters over their products, a specific form of intertextuality, the wish to offer an immediate and transparent representation of the subject (which, she argues, would correspond to vividness in biographies and fluency in translation) and the invisibility of their producers, the concern that images (of the source text or human subject) will be refracted during the act of representation. This leads to the conclusion that any attempt at committing one’s life story to paper is a form of translation, where the source is the biography/memoir persona whose life and identity appear in constant flux, therefore impossible to capture in a static narrative. This is akin to the well-known concept that each translation is a specific reading of the source text and that meaning is never immediately graspable, let alone fixable in a single interpretation. It can be suggested that a translator’s auto-biography or memoir is a site where the translator is “imagined” (Guzmán 2008, 212), or “transcreated” (Elgül 2016) by the translator herself, often for a specific readership. In her work on Rabassa, Guzmán shows how Rabassa’s translator’s memoir (If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents, Rabassa 2005) is a product of his discursive context and cannot be taken at face value with its rhetorical force and bold stance. Elgül (2016), likewise, demonstrates how the various biographers of Borges focus on different periods and life events and end up constructing drastically different images of their subject.

In recent years, a number of books by/on translators have been published. Some of these are biographies, autobiographies or memoirs, while some are personal reflections on the topic of translation. While providing interesting factual details about translators’ lives and backgrounds, the circumstances under which they have developed their translation strategies, and the concepts of translation that they uphold, analyses of these books generate questions about issues of representation and the deeply rooted essentialism underpinning most thinking on translation and translators.

Attempts at portraying translators are not limited to the written word. The screen is also a rich medium for representing individual translators. An example of this is Vadim Jendreyko’s 2007 documentary on Svetlana Geier (1923–2010), *Die Frau mit den 5 Elefanten [The Woman with the Five Elephants]*. Best known as Germany’s leading Dostoyevsky translator, Geier had a busy and eventful life. Spending her childhood and youth in Ukraine, she came to Germany in 1944 where she settled and became a literary translator between Russian and German, in addition to her teaching career. The film offers glimpses of Geier’s early life through pictures and footage from a train journey Geier took towards the end of her life, in that sense it is a highly biographical film. It is vivid and immediate, and appears highly transparent, too, as Geier takes centre stage with scenes from her daily life in Germany. In addition to the voice-over narrator (presumably the documentary-maker himself) the main speaking subject in the film is Geier, where she is given the chance to conceptually reflect on translation and speak of her translation experience. This gives the film an auto-biographical character. The most striking scenes of the film that offer the illusion of immediacy to the reviewers is when Geier is shown working on her translation, first when dictating her translation to her typist and then revising her work with a musician friend. These appear to offer the viewers an unmediated glimpse into Geier’s home and translation life. Although the issue of representation that is very much at the heart of all documentary filmmaking spills over to create question marks about the authenticity/truth dimension of what is seen on the screen, this is probably as close as anyone could get to the human translator behind Dostoyevsky’s works in German. Jendreyko also uses a set of visual metaphors in the film that allude to the activity of translation (shown as Geier’s home chores such as cooking and ironing, or the frequent close-ups of her gnarled hands) – something that also adds a literary quality to the documentary. Indeed, film appears to be a very effective medium in making the translator ‘come alive’ as it were. It also excels in foregrounding the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the human translator by engaging multiple senses. Thanks to its strong visual language, *The Woman with the Five Elephants* portrays Geier as an aging and suffering human being, a caring mother and grandmother, an enigmatic figure that continues to be haunted by a distant past and above all an experienced and diligent translator devoted to transporting Dostoyevsky’s works into the German context. In that sense, it is a reflection on the fragmented and multi-faceted representation of the biography subject that eventually makes a statement about the rich and multifarious nature of identity.

**Portraying Michael Henry Heim: the man between**

*The Man Between: Michael Henry Heim and a Life in Translation* is a prime example of how a biographical work can bring the flesh and blood translator closer to their readers, while also offering rarely available information about working methods of translators and their own ideas on their work. Michael Henry Heim (1943–2012) was a prolific cultural agent, a translator, academic and the secret donor behind the American PEN Translation Fund (2004). *The Man Between* not only offers the readers a multi-faceted portrait of the late translator and professor of Slavic studies but also tries to reckon with the challenge of capturing the life and translation efforts of a prolific translator in the confines of a single book. Sean Cotter faces this challenge head on by explaining their endeavour as a “thick description” of Heim’s career (“Introduction”, 2014). This thick description is not the work of a single author, it is the total sum of the numerous contributions made by various authors to the book.
The editors call the volume a “collection of voices” and consider the diverging narratives on Heim constructed by the various authors an asset, rather than a problem, arguing that this diversity leads to a dialogue that helps explore Heim’s “expansive generosity” as an agent active in more than one cultural field. Interestingly, Cotter offers a reference to biography as translation: “By placing one version of Heim’s influence alongside another, our approach to biography resembles the way we might compare a translation to an original in order to see the translator’s work come to light in the space in between” (“Introduction”, 2014). Indeed, Heim’s work and personality shine through the contributions in the book that presents an interdisciplinary and intergeneric character, interwoven with Heim’s own voice relayed in the various pieces by people who have had direct contacts with him, as well as an extensive interview with Heim and a talk he delivered on the subject of translation. Among these, it is the series of interviews titled “A Happy Babel” that offers the deepest and most private account of the making of Heim, the translator. The selection of interviews is further interesting in that it is prefaced by Cotter who translated them into English; the interviews were initially given by Heim in four languages (English, French, German and Romanian). Heim later revised some of the English translations and in a preface, Cotter summarises Heim’s stylistic interventions that tell the readers a great deal about his subjective voice and his concept of translation. Apparently he allowed no room for redundancies and dramatised the narrative components in the stories that he translated. All in all, the biographical interview helps reveal the ‘personal diction’ of Heim that can never be as readily accessible through over sixty translations he made from eight languages. The interviews offer extensive information about his childhood, his father’s Hungarian background and interesting musical career, Heim’s turn to languages and his commitment to literature and translation during his adult life.

The book offers a collage of Heim’s life from various perspectives and narratives: his own and those of his friends and collaborators. It is not only a bibliographical work, it is a true ‘sociography’; not only does it offer information on Heim’s personal and professional habitus, it also assesses Heim’s vast translation corpus and academic work and underlines his legacy. In a way, it lays the groundwork for Heim’s translatorial ‘afterlife’, situating him historically (as a child and product of the intellectual climate of the post-war era in Europe and the USA) and providing the reader with a toolkit that illuminates Heim’s translator personality and translation style, giving them an awareness about the background of Heim’s choices.

Turkish translators’ memoirs: narratives of selfhood

To complement the largely English-language-based information given in the rest of this chapter, let me turn to a culture that largely remains outside the Western literary radar, except its only Nobel laureate, Orhan Pamuk.

Recent years have witnessed a flourishing of the biography/autobiography genre in Turkey, just like the rest of the world. There are translators among many cultural figures who have published their biographies, memoirs or journals. These works reflect the complexity of the professional identity of translators and reveal the work they carry out as cultural agents in a number of fields, mostly as authors and academics in addition to being translators. Translators’ (auto)biographies and memoirs are popular among readers, revealing the interest shown in narratives of selfhood and identity construction, especially when they are offered by well-known persons in the culture. A general survey of memoirs by several Turkish woman translators has shown that most of these women are in fact known as authors and their translation journey has been largely overshadowed by their authorship (Tahir Gürçaglar, forthcoming). Translation is often positioned in the fringes of the professional and daily lives.
of author–translators; nevertheless, these memoirs still contain a great deal of information about their translatorial habituses and offer clues about their perspective on their translating self.

One of these is a well-known Turkish author–translator, Tomris Uyar. She started publishing her journals in 1976 and the separate titles published through the years were collectively published in two volumes in 2003, appropriately titled Bir Uyumsuzun Notlari (Notes by a Misfit) (Uyar 2003). Merve Akbas, who carried out a study on Tomris Uyar’s identity as a woman translator, has encountered frequent references to Uyar’s translation work in these volumes (Akbas, forthcoming). The journals offer a great deal of information about how Uyar translated and her working methods. Furthermore, they reflect Uyar’s own voice, since she wrote her journals in the first-person singular, frequently referring to herself and her private life, as well as her literary efforts. Rather than giving biographical details, the notes open up a gateway into Uyar’s literary habitus where translation played a pivotal role. They contain information about Uyar’s preferred genres for translation, her translation strategies and more importantly, the way she conceptualised translation as a tool on various fronts. Akbas maintains that Uyar regarded translation as an extension of her authorship and a means to expand her literary expression. Complemented by numerous interviews she gave to journalists, the journals reveal how Uyar selected the titles she would translate based on her affinity with the source author. They also offer new ideas to other literary translators in terms of the way they can develop an appropriate voice for the source-authors they are translating in Turkish and the need to stylistically differentiate among different writers. Although she was a well-known author with a unique stance and style herself, Uyar always seemed to give priority to this latter point over anything else. Uyar always wanted to get to know an author before she started her translation, including doing research about the author’s life and social milieu. Her methods of imagining details about the author go as far as placing an author’s photo in front of her while translating. In one instance Uyar wrote in her journal that Lucretius became a familiar figure in their household after she and her then husband started co-translating him. She felt very close to Lucretius and she even referred to him with an endearing nickname in her conversations (Uyar 2003, 78 in Akbas, forthcoming).

Autobiographies by two other woman translators published in the 1990s are also worth mentioning in this context. Although their comments on their translation process are not as elaborate as Uyar’s, the autobiographies by Urgan (1998), who was a professor and translator of English literature, and Nihal Yeğinobalı (2007), a prolific translator of both classical and popular fiction, as well as a novelist, offer detailed information about the socio-political background of their professional activities and position these two women socially and ideologically. Their personal narratives present a particular habitus that is directly related to the period when they were born. It is fascinating to witness the way in which they ‘imagine’ themselves, and lead the readers to imagine them, as educated and liberated women with a big debt to the cultural policies of the early republican government through their discourse. Yeğinobalı has titled her memoirs “Cumhuriyet Çocuğu” (A Child of the Republic) and throughout the book she foregrounds Turkey’s early modernisation and secular policies, making frequent references to how much these have defined her personal and professional identity. In her Bir Dinazorun Anıları (Memoirs of a Dinosaur), Urgan carefully constructs an image around her as a strong female intellectual who leads an independent life and is able to reach the peak of her academic and translation careers with little assistance from anyone else. Her political orientation and staunch secular attitude comes across clearly between the lines. The memoirs of both Yeğinobalı and Urgan help contextualise their work as translators culturally and historically and establish links between their translation choices (in terms of the books they have translated and their translation styles) and life choices. They depict images of
two woman translators who are well-educated, independent and free, in both their translation careers and private lives. Both Yeğinobalı and Urgan portray themselves as women who have refused to succumb to traditional norms and cultural expectations and, in both cases, their translation careers have facilitated that, both intellectually and financially. While these autobiographical works reflect aspects of these two translators that are not accessible through translations, their relationship to an objective reality is open to debate, just as any other act of self-representation.

Future directions in exploring the translator’s subjectivity

The cases taken up in this chapter have shown that the connections between a translation, the culture in which it is embedded, and the translator may be revealed on various textual, paratextual and extratextual levels. This chapter has discussed the latter two and argued that paratexts in various forms and formats, as well as (auto)biographical work by and about translators are good places to start in tracing the subjectivity of the translator. Yet attempts at defining the subjective position or agency of the translator cannot bypass questions of identity and selfhood.

The translator has increasingly taken centre stage in recent years, driving some attention away from textual and linguistic studies of translated texts and systems approaches to translation. Cognitive and sociological research has contributed to this shift towards the positioning of the agency and subjectivity of the translator as a major research topic. Combined with a growing body of work on the figure of the translator in fiction and film, sociological and cognitive perspectives will likely continue flourishing. As the importance of manuscript and archival research becomes gradually more apparent, translation history will likely also shift direction from a macro view of translation (as a phenomenon controlled and regulated by institutions and groups of individuals) to a micro view of the individual translator’s immediate network and subjective imprints.

Further reading

This book presents the sociography of Gregory Rabassa and explores his translator’s agency, contextualising and historicising his work in terms of inter-American literary exchange.

This book is a successful model of a translator’s sociography, gathering multiple voices and perspectives, allowing a critical assessment of Heim’s work and life.

This article explores the use of archival material in producing a history of translation and translators, emphasising the contributions of a micro-historical approach.

This chapter offers a general introduction to the use of paratexts in translation research.

This book features a series of articles that incorporate the study of the translator as an agent in translation history, reminding the readers that translation is the result of complex sets of agendas furthered by individual agents.
Related topic
The Figure Of The Literary Translator In Fiction.

Bibliography


The translator as subject


