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50 Years Later. What Have We Learnt after Holmes (1972) and Where Are We Now?, edited by Javier Franco Aixelá and Christian Olalla-Soler, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Servicio de Publicaciones y Difusión Científica, 2022, 200 pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788490424605, available Open Access via UPLGC

In 1972, the translator, editor, and lecturer James Stratton Holmes (Iowa, 1924 – Amsterdam, 1986) delivered a paper entitled “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Copenhagen. Since then, Holmes’ paper is generally accepted as the formal starting point of Translation Studies (TS) (Gambier 2018, 182). Acknowledging the state of confusion in which this fledgling area of enquiry was finding itself at that time, Holmes set out to chart it, giving it a name that is still in use, and identifying its possible scope and objectives. The paper was groundbreaking in many ways. Notably, it accounted for the shift from prescriptive, linguistics-based approaches to translation theory and practice to a descriptive outlook, whereby translation phenomena are described to then provide general explanations and predictions (Holmes [1972] 2000, 176). Ongoing engagement with Holmes’ fundamental paper has arguably turned it into a classic of TS. Now, fifty years after his paper was first delivered, homage is being paid to Holmes, whether to challenge or expand his work, which remains a reference point for the TS community. For example, the conference under the provocative title “Nothing Happened: Translation Studies before James Holmes” took place in

November 2023 at University College London. This conference aimed to displace “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” as the foundational beginning of TS. Instead, it acknowledged the importance of translation theories that originated in different geographical and historical contexts, ranging from 16th-century Italy to premodern Japan, with a particular focus on oft-overlooked Eastern European contexts in the first half of the twentieth century.¹ A further example of the TS community’s celebration of the semicentennial of Holmes’ paper is the collection under review here: *50 Years Later. What Have We Learnt after Holmes (1972) and Where Are We Now?* edited by Javier Franco Aixelá and Christian Olalla-Soler.

The volume, available open access, consists of seven chapters that cover various subfields of Translation and Interpreting Studies, ranging from translation technologies and interpreting to translator training and cognition, accompanied by chapters of a theoretical nature on TS’ history and functional translation theories. This series of chapters is opened by a short introduction in which the editors provide a brief overview of Holmes’ paper and the related map that was then drawn by Gideon Toury (2012, 4), argued as having “catapulted” Holmes’ “proposal to fame” (9). The introduction also states the book’s overarching objective, namely, to provide “a panoramic view of the state of translation studies half a century later”, with chapters comparing the current state of affairs of translation research with that described by Holmes in 1972 (10). Since the 1970s, TS has come on in leaps and bounds not only in terms of continuity with the scenario depicted by Holmes, but also by branching out to other research areas, encountering new possibilities and theoretical frameworks. While Holmes ([1972] 2000, 173) pointed to a state of confusion originating from the blurry “contours of the field, the problem set, the discipline as such”, in the last fifty years, TS has expanded without necessarily defining its core more clearly. So, confusion arguably persists. The very concept of translation, in fact, is straying away from the traditional domain of TS (see Marais 2023). Therefore, the attempt made by *50 Years Later* to retrace the evolution of various areas of TS over the last fifty years is a timely contribution to knowledge. While the book is perhaps somewhat susceptible to becoming outdated soon, due to the constant turns and developments in TS, it could be potentially functional to create some

¹ For details of the conference proceedings, see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-languages-culture/events/2023/nov/nothing-happened-translation-studies-james-holmes> (last accessed 5 March 2024).

mental order, curbing the risk of losing the plot of TS' history, at least of some of its diverse subfields. Although this edited collection does not yield cutting-edge findings, insofar as it offers overviews and prospects of existing research tendencies, it can hence still be taken as a reference point in terms of the research trajectories of the selected areas of TS.

Given the ambitious objective and the wide scope of the collection, all its chapters follow methodological paths that differ from a case study approach. The case study is one of the most recurrent research designs in TS (Hadley 2023, 12). However, rather than focusing on single primary sources, the seven chapters adopt a historical and meta-analytical approach to provide more comprehensive overviews than those made possible based on individual cases. While the shift from in-depth investigations of particular case studies to wide-ranging prospects is necessitated by the objective pursued by the collection, this methodological choice might also appeal to readers as a somewhat refreshing way of conducting research. This is one way in which *50 Years Later* may be of help to TS researchers and, in particular, postgraduate students finding their feet in TS. Not only does it describe the evolution of translation technologies, pedagogical approaches, and translation process and cognition research, but it also exposes researchers who may be in the early phases of their career to a meta-analytical research approach, which they might not be necessarily familiar with yet. Therefore, the collection could be a valuable resource not only in terms of its content, but also for its analytical style and methodological orientation. Furthermore, it does not shy away from quantitative methods, as is the case in the first chapter.

Chapter I is particularly clear and even meticulous when it comes to the description of its own objective and methodology, and through quantitative evidence, it succeeds in substantiating a synopsis of the turns and shifts in TS (e.g., from linguistics and stylistics to ideology and ethics). The book's central concern, as its title suggests, of the development of TS is not limited to the first chapter. Following a diachronic approach, Chapter II goes on to dispel the myth that Holmes' 1972 paper was the starting point of translation research, by highlighting how, despite its different forms, academic investigation into translation was already there before Holmes, who then sought to "'academize' a curriculum with the intention to establish TS among the traditional departments and to use it as a model for systematic research" (42). This chapter also has the merit of humanising TS, taking into account not only disembodied research shifts and trends, but

also “the behaviour of the colleagues who created TS”, keeping in mind that “scholars are also real everyday human beings” (63). Attention to the human aspects of translation theory and practice, which have been so often overlooked (Kaindl 2021, 4), is a further reason for which this collection is to be commended. Similarly, Chapter III also considers the human aspect of translation research, moving on from what Holmes described as “the little black box” ([1972] 2000, 177), to trace the development of Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies, and acknowledging the need to embrace artificial intelligence, natural language processing, and neuroscientific approaches (87). This chapter reminds us that technology transverses virtually every research area. Technology is also the main topic of Chapter IV, which strikes a sensitive nerve: the perceived threat of machine translation (MT) replacing human translators (99). Here, Sharon O’Brien seeks to locate MT on the Holmes/Toury map, investigating the role of machines within TS. While observing how machines have made their way into literary translation (103), O’Brien also puts MT into context, emphasising how technology is a medium for developing a human-centred approach to deal with “societal challenges”, rather than obliterating the human agents involved in the translation process (106). In Chapter V, Gary Massey raises the issue of the skills that translator educators need, explaining how translation pedagogy has moved from transmissionist to transformationist teaching philosophies and strategies. In other words, Massey describes here the shift from teacher-centred approaches, whereby the future translator is imparted knowledge and, hence, remains a passive learner, to a student-centred philosophy that allows students to actively develop their translation skills through pedagogical activities akin to real-world scenarios (115). Chapter VI traces the development of Interpreting Studies, paying particular attention to ethical implications, including seeking consent for documentation and conceiving the interpreter as a human agent rather than a mere conduit. This penultimate chapter could be of particular interest to TS researchers who are not familiar with the history and practice of Interpreting Studies.

While each chapter grapples with a different area of TS, constituting an extensive report thereof, the transitions from one contribution to the next are far from smooth. The only thread holding the seven chapters together is their dialogue with Holmes’ paper, rather than inner thematic coherence. Therefore, the reader is not given a clear sense of direction. In addition, a

description of the relevant section of the Holmes/Toury map is provided in almost every chapter. This reiteration, which renders the reading experience somewhat repetitive, could have been solved had the editors' introduction offered a more exhaustive description of the map and its relevance to the following contributions. Another issue directly related to this is the selection of TS areas discussed within the collection. The editors are certainly aware that "[t]here are many areas of Holmes' map that have not been covered in this volume" (11), but do not provide any selection criteria for those they did decide to see covered. Relevance arguably remains highly subjective, but more room could have been dedicated to novel TS research trends, such as the uses and affordances of artificial intelligence for (literary) translation, new translation-related phenomena such as localisation and post-editing, as well as Translator Studies as opposed to the functional theories that take up Chapter VII – an important but relatively well-trodden territory. Tackling more recent developments may have resulted in a starker contrast between TS in the 1970s and the 2020s, and in the context of a renewed and updated version of the Holmes/Toury map.

Finally, a significant missed opportunity is the lack of future research avenues that each chapter could have indicated more explicitly, especially to cater for the needs of research students. While this edited collection arguably remains useful for this category of researchers, who may use it as a reference point for their literature reviews, it does not provide them with concrete suggestions on how to push forward our knowledge of TS, in general – Holmes' "meta-discussion" ([1972] 2000, 183) – and some of its subfields, in particular. Therefore, while the seven contributions offer information on how certain areas of TS have evolved over the last fifty years, the applicability of their findings for future research remains unclear. In sum, this edited collection answers the questions asked in its title: *What have we learnt after Holmes (1972) and where are we now?* but does not offer particularly clear insights into where we can go from here.

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