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Volume 75

Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury
Edited by Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Daniel Simeoni
Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies

Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury

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Preface

I started being more and more interested in methodology, not in theory.
I was never interested in theory per se. My question was always:
How are we going to justify the way we do research? (Toury 2005)

To go “beyond” the work of a leading intellectual is rarely an unambiguous tribute. In the case of Gideon Toury, however, there is substantial justification for extending our collective vision beyond the discipline known as Descriptive Translation Studies. Our endeavor most superficially responds to the invitation written into the very title of Toury’s major book, Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond (1995). That text, and that title, offer us at once a common base, an open and multidirectional ambition, and many good reasons for unambiguous tribute.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Gideon Toury has been concerned with the development of Translation Studies as a research-based academic discipline. That concern was certainly born of the historical convergence of several similar visions, the nature of which is analyzed in several places in this volume. The work of Toury was in part to bring various insights together, to defend the virtues of a discipline based on programmed empirical discovery rather than quick opinions, and to do that with an originality and rigor that deservedly made him the enfant terrible of his day. The success of Toury’s project is certainly reflected in the institutional triumph of Translation Studies, particularly in postindustrial societies that significantly depend on translation for their cultural and political communication (the special weight of western Europe, Canada and Israel is evident in this volume, and is not to be concealed). That very success, however, could come at the price of making Toury a fixed point of reference, a set of stable propositions, a foundation established in the past and to be left in the past. All disciplines need such points of reference, of course, and Translation Studies certainly has a history of them both before and after Toury’s main book. In the case of Toury, however, the foundational work itself has always invited further development, opening a broad empirical frame in which even the most fundamental tenets can be challenged, dialogue and debate can be pursued, and we continue to understand each other, more or less, in terms of a common academic calling. To evince that shared yet dynamic frame is one of the main aims of this volume, forming what we hope is a broad snapshot of our discipline. To associate the work of Gideon Toury with that frame, without ignoring the numerous others who have contributed, is an act of justified collective homage.

Toury himself has encouraged many of us to move into the open spaces of “beyond”. He has long been an indefatigable networker, a relayer of information, right from the
early days of the newssheet TRANSST, and a tireless editor, both at the helm of the journal Target from its inception and, later, as general editor of the Benjamins Translation Library. Many of us know of Toury as the writer of comments on our unpublished texts, orienting the discipline from behind the scenes. Others know him as their teacher and mentor, quick to respond to their hesitant drafts, keeping close tabs on their progress, and spurring them to turn the next corner.

For those of us aware of that hidden labor, the idea of going beyond Toury is part of remaining faithful to his adopted discipline, rather than to a person. For those of us who have been reading Toury’s work over the years, the movement is all the more justified to the extent that Toury himself has not remained within fixed borders. For those who had read the early Toury, in Hebrew, was there anything really new in the cultural turn of the 1990s? For the Toury of norms and correlated tendencies, is there anything profoundly different in current glances at sociology? For the Toury who studied pseudotranslations, are there any great surprises when we see the term “translation” being used beyond some kind of translation proper? For the Toury searching for laws of translation, is there anything fundamentally different in corpus-based universals?

The diversity of the contributions in this volume may strike some as going beyond what they would consider legitimate Toury-inspired work. But the fact is that all authors acknowledge their debt, perhaps not so much to the orthodoxy of the descriptive model as to the overall project of giving Translation Studies an independent space for conceptual coherence and creativity. In this sense, we believe that Toury’s call has been answered beyond expectations.

Much in this volume is passably new, we hope. And it can be conceptualized and interrelated with reference to Toury.

References


Foreword

Gideon Toury. A name well-known at John Benjamins Publishing for twenty years now. And hopefully many more to come.

We know him as a pioneer in Translation Studies, an authority in his field, the dedicated editor of the highly prestigious Translation Studies journal Target and the first series editor of the renowned Benjamins Translation Library.

We know him as a modest man with a sharp eye, both professionally and personally, and with a very dry sense of humor for which one must always be on the qui vive.

A man who is critical in his judgment: sometimes relentless in pursuit of excellence, though never ungentle in manner, always reasonable in collegiality.

Benjamins has a great debt to the man, who was and is one of the keystones in the establishment and academic development of the discipline.

He was one of the people who opened our path to the world of Translation Studies and who helped us build a vast network of knowledgeable experts in the diverse subfields. Who helped us produce publications that have a worldwide circulation at the highest scholarly level. Who helped us create a solid basis for the maintenance of quality and continuity.

Here we express our profound gratitude to Gideon Toury, our tower of strength in Translation Studies. May the accomplishments of our collaboration serve many future generations.

John, Claire and Seline Benjamins
Isja Conen
To the memory of Daniel Simeoni

Daniel Simeoni, one of the editors of this volume, died of complications following a heart attack on November 3, 2007, as these texts were being revised.

Daniel believed passionately but quietly in the careful development of Translation Studies as an academic discipline. The work he put into this volume is to some degree representative of his role in the discipline as a whole, where he was perhaps the most intellectually serious of those who have worked beyond the limelight. His best known contribution to Translation Studies is undoubtedly his seminal article “The pivotal role of the translator's habitus” (1998), cited more than 20 times herein. Similarly serious and provocative texts by him can be found in Translation Studies journals and collective publications, as well as in the recordings of his CETRA lectures delivered in 2005. As is evidenced in his article in this volume, Daniel worked at the highest conceptual level on the deepest intellectual bases of our academic enterprise. He constantly showed awareness of multiple positions; he saw connections between very different traditions; he was always slow to criticize or condemn.

Daniel's work in Translation Studies was not put together in the book that should have been. His efforts were more readily given to helping students, to orienting research projects, to interviewing, and indeed to editing the work of others.

If anything in this volume is presumptuous or peremptory, it is certainly not to be attributed to Daniel Simeoni. He was the opposite of all that; he was, in the simplest and greatest sense, a good man.

He is much missed by contributors and editors alike.

Acknowledgements

The editors wish to express their sincere thanks to Yves Gambier for his initiative and guidance with this project, and to members of the Intercultural Studies Group in Tarragona who participated in the editing process: Serafima Khalzanova, Cèlia Querol, María Aguilar, Alev Balci, Yoonji Choi, Ana Guerberof, Diane Howard, Kyriaki Kourouni, Hyunjoo Lee, Esmaeil H. Moghaddam and Volga Yilmaz Gumus.
CHAPTER 1

Popular mass production in the periphery*

Socio-political tendencies in subversive translation

Nitsa Ben-Ari
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Not much is known about the agents of the massive, non-politicized literature of the periphery during pre-State Israel. Yet popular literature played an important role in the formation of Hebrew culture. It created and supplied a readership, introduced new sometimes subversive models and market criteria; and forced the canonic literary establishments to stratify. The agents were mostly either ignored or hidden behind pseudonyms. However, interview-based research helps us identify a common denominator between their activity in popular literature and their socio-political habituses. Insight is sought into the relationship between canonic and non-canonic literary systems, between center and periphery, between different worlds of production and distribution, and between ideologically engaged translation and commercial non-politicized translation, which may sometimes turn out to be as mobilized, yet to an opposing, subversive ideology.

Keywords: center vs. periphery, market demands, popular literature, mobilized literature, mainstream vs. subversive ideology, translators’ habituses, pseudonyms

Introduction

My translation research has branched out, over time, to focus on the powers participating in the formation of the New Hebrew. It started with my study of the nineteenth-century historical novel written by German Jews and its role in shaping a New Jew and establishing a new literary system. It went on with the censorious tendency to eliminate or play down Christianity in Hebrew translations, and what followed, almost inevitably was censorship or self-censorship of erotica, mobilized to create the literary image of the pure Sabra (Ben-Ari 1997, 2002, 2008). This led to a re-mapping of the agents (mainly translators–editors–publishers, though also critics, educators and public figures) active in the mainstream and in the periphery of Hebrew literature from the 1930s to the 1980s. The semiotic identity of the mainstream agents, ideologically mobilized to the shaping of the New Hebrew, is clear enough. Very little is known, however, about participants in the non-establishment publications, especially from the

* This essay is dedicated to Gideon Toury, with special feelings, from his home: Tel Aviv University Translation Studies.
point of view of their socio-political affiliation. Of particular interest to me were marginal agents and the vague in-between terrain of commercial ventures. The production these agents participated in was enormous and unappreciated. Many of them remained anonymous, by choice or necessity. I decided I would endeavor to put a face to these anonymous figures. I was especially intent on finding out whether there was any correlation between their non-conformist activity and their otherness.

This was not an easy task, seeing that so many of the participants have passed away or vanished. Many of the publishing houses had sprouted, flourished and closed down in a matter of weeks, often changing hands, names and character to adjust to whims of the market. Many firms were ad hoc inventions, not so much in order to avoid censorship as to evade taxes. Few of them have survived. Some of the agents did not want to be interviewed for academic research. Unlike those in mainstream activity, they still consider their past activity a dark chapter. Written material about them is practically non-existent.

In contrast to this scarcity of personal and sociocultural information, one must note the ample academic theoretical material about certain other aspects. Toury’s work on pseudotranslation provides a theoretical framework for one aspect of this marginal mass production. Even-Zohar’s work on culture shaping and especially repertoire building is crucial to the understanding of the construction of a culture. Rakefet Sela-Sheffy’s work on the mass production of popular novels in German literature of the eighteenth century helps us understand the power of numbers in shaping literary models. Zohar and Yaacov Shavit made a pioneering survey of the beginnings of pulp fiction in Hebrew literature. Zohar Shavit (1998) provided a detailed mapping of the mainstream cultural agents, but also devoted a discussion to non-canonic literature between 1931 and 1947. Yaacov Shavit provided insight into the establishment efforts to impose a mobilized popular culture on the New Hebrew. Some research has recently been dedicated to the history of the main publishing houses in the Diaspora. My own research on ideological manipulations of translation has supplied me with tools for understanding the processes involved. These, and many more, have provided points of departure for semiotic research. Yet the phenomenon has hardly been described in full, nor have questions been asked about the sociocultural identity of the many participants in the

1. Two academic investigations supervised by Gideon Toury supplied much data: Rachel Weissbrod’s Ph.D. (1989) was a source of invaluable information about tendencies of translating English prose from the 1960s to the 1980s; Inbal Sagiv (1999) wrote a pioneering M.A. thesis about translations of the neglected science-fiction genre. Eli Eshed, a journalist who calls himself a “culture detective”, compiled data on Hebrew pulp-fiction. At some time he, too, had attended Toury’s classes, though sporadically.

2. Bernard Yakobowitz, Ayala Yahav and Dania Amichai-Michlin are some outstanding examples of modern academic research of Diaspora publishers. A more thorough study of Hebrew mainstream publishers has recently been undertaken by Motti Neiger of the Netanya University College.
Chapter 1. Popular mass production in the periphery

twilight zone of cheap popular literature. Part of this essay will thus deal with unmasking the anonymous. Yet most of it deals with remapping non-canonic literary activity.

Apart from books about Hebrew culture of the period or research about specific publishers, my information about the people came from three main sources: interviews, some written material (mostly Internet sources) about deceased agents, and the data provided by the catalogue of the Jerusalem National University Library. I should add that written material on the Internet was rather scarce and not always trustworthy. And the library catalogue provided partial information only, for the simple reason that most pulp fiction was not sent to the National Library at all.

The literary field

One could sum up the history of Hebrew publishing in the twentieth century as a shift of centers from Europe to pre-state Israel (and the US). It started with the move from Central Europe to Eretz Yisrael (pre-State Israel) of small, private enterprises dedicated to the shaping of a new culture. The shifts occurred mainly because of political and economic constraints, and the move to pre-state Israel was motivated by necessity rather than ideology, since the basic infrastructure for book production had been nonexistent in the Israel of the early twentieth century. With the move of the central-European publishers, private local enterprises sprouted in Israel as well, and the years between the two world wars showed modest prosperity for the book industry. Then, in the face of economic difficulties, political movements became involved, giving financial support to the failing enterprises and demanding some degree of ideological subordination in return.

The establishment of subsidized firms pushed the private firms to the side. Their goal was to supply the literary and cultural basis for the new Zionist ideologies. Basing most of their efforts on translated literature, these publishers absorbed foreign literary models with the aim of using them as infrastructure for a new Israeli culture. Until the 1940s translations were mostly from Russian, German or Polish, and contacts with world literature were established via these literatures. Only from the 1950s did the English-language orientation become more dominant (Even-Zohar 1973:435).

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the waves of immigration that followed, more private commercial enterprises sprouted in the margins. Whereas the established publishers had ideologically charged names, these new firms are recognizable by private or family names, of the owners or occasionally of their offspring. They supplied the demand for popular reading material shunned by the central organs by publishing romance, mystery or erotic novels, many of them serialized. They did not weigh options for translated works by their literary worth but by commercial value, although some had political goals in mind as well. They prospered to such an extent that the establishment firms could no longer ignore them. Thus, the 1970s saw the solidification of privately owned canonic publishing firms dealing with popular literature, as well
as establishment publishers bowing to demand (Weissbrod 1989: 100, 106–114). Writers, poets, translators and editors of renown began to see no harm in producing popular literature. Some had made their way up from the periphery, others had worked their way down from higher literary genres and institutions. The portraits drawn here will be samples of the many who did not work for the establishment firms.

In the ideological atmosphere of the period, translators who did not identify with the establishment line were obliged to work in the periphery. They were not paid much, but work was regular, even abundant. It was also undemanding, seeing that texts were seldom revised or reviewed. Some worked for establishment publishers as well, using different names; they would sometimes use their real names for the mainstream activity, and pseudonyms for their “lower” production. Those who started in the periphery and made their way to the central firms sometimes changed name in the process.

It is not easy to paint portraits of the many faceless or forgotten translators and writers of the past. Some celebrities, who wrote or “translated” pulp-fiction such as Tarzan, Bill Carter or Patrick Kim in the 1960s, brag about it today, tongue in cheek. Not all of them do, however, particularly not those who wrote/translated erotic pulp fiction: no one seems eager to take responsibility for that, not even as a youthful prank. One of the most active pseudotranslators of the 1960s, Miron Uriel, categorically refused to discuss the good old days with me, saying that for him they were bad days, a blemish in his past. Uri Shalgi, a well-known publisher of pulp fiction, refused all interviews on the pretext that he was too busy with present projects. He was willing to describe his current activities, however: he still publishes romance chapbooks, employing a translator who produces one book a week, for which he pays 10 NIS per English page (a total, he says, of 2000 NIS per book, amounting to a monthly salary of 8000 NIS, or $ 1777, not bad for a student, he adds). In that respect, things have not changed much from the past.

Mainstream and subversive ideology

Mainstream ideology was shaped by what is now sometimes called the Mapai (roughly translated as Workers Party of Eretz Yisrael, the basis for today’s Labour party) or Ben-Gurionist socialist doctrine. It saw two enemies, one in the right-wing parties, and the other in the extreme left parties. Those who accepted the image of the Sabra or New Hebrew formed by this mainstream found their way into the establishment and were often integrated into the select body of culture shapers. Those who refused to participate, for various reasons, found the path to the mainstream more or less closed. It would only open much later, with the rise of the Likud party after 1977.

Two kinds of popular cultures had emerged in Israel before the establishment of the State: one imposed by ideologues who felt the New Hebrew working classes had to be supplied with cultural activity such as folk dancing, folk songs, theater, newspapers and culture clubs, and another that was authentic popular culture, imported from the immigrants’ countries of origin or developed from within. This was obvious in the theat-
er, where mainstream companies supplied the “right” kind of entertainment in Hebrew, while local groups (often performing in “old-country” languages such as Yiddish or Romanian) supplied the vaudeville that used to be fashionable in the Diaspora. This was also obvious in literature, where ideological mobilization was perhaps the most salient. Three kinds of popular books flowed onto the market: the mainstream distributed recommended classical literature, puritanical in nature, published in cheap formats and sold cheaply for the “working classes”, usually in installments. Commercial publishers offered soft-cover and even hard-cover popular best-sellers, considered by the establishment to be in bad taste. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the production of popular pocket-books, sold by the thousands, sometimes by the tens of thousands. This third category, chapbooks, was sold in kiosks, that is, through a completely different distribution network. The production concentrated around the commercial area of south Tel Aviv, off Allenby Street and the Central Bus Station.\(^3\) In terms of recognition by the critics or the media, the two last categories of books were non-existent. From the point of view of the reading public, the thousands who read them often denied doing so. The books did not win prizes or recognition, and the agents who dealt with them often hid behind pseudonyms, changed addresses, and refrained from providing basic information like place or date of publication. The books were poorly produced, rife with printing errors, and had the cheapest possible covers. The translations, done by amateurs or even professionals, with no revision, were probably a gross disservice to the original.

In my efforts to put faces and names to the unknown publishers, translators and pseudotranslators who worked in the periphery, it gradually became clear to me that they had either felt rejected by the mainstream or refused to be part of it, for political and ideological reasons. In other words they were subversive not only in their literary activity but in their political tendencies as well. The materials they produced could be political, but they could also simply be “other” in relation to material recommended by the mainstream, whether they be termed popular novels or (American) bestsellers with no “literary” or didactic value (Weissbrod 1989: 42–57). In this case the market would be supplying the growing demand of the immigrant readership for entertainment literature.

### Popular literature in the periphery

Drawing a portrait of a large group of translators/editors/publishers is not an easy task. This is firstly because Hebrew publishers were not a subject of research until recently. As a result, not much is known about the participants unless they established a name for themselves as poets or writers. Ephemeral publishing houses vanished long ago, or else they changed names and owners. Most of the subversive printing firms used to take up fictitious names daily, evading the law or taxation or both.

\(^3\) A similar urban concentration of printing and distribution of pulp fiction (especially erotica) in New York is described in Lefkowitz Horowitz 2002 (242–248).
Secondly, these agents were far from being a homogeneous group. They varied according to their place in the popular culture, and according to an inner hierarchy within the field.

Thirdly, they did not function as a group, although many of them knew each other and even worked together. The various partnerships often dissolved in quarrels, if not scandals. For the purposes of my research it is profitable to see them as a group, retrospectively in opposition to the mainstream, though very few of them actually had this image of themselves.

There is a recurring pattern, however, that reinforces their group identity, having largely to do with their habitus, and it is the main topic of this paper and of my current work. The pattern includes the following features:

1. They represented commercial enterprise. Bigger or smaller in scale, as private individuals or firms, they did not go into business for didactic purposes but for profit. They thus differed from the private enterprises that had started in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1880s, before moving to Eretz Israel in the early twentieth century. The European firms were mostly a product of the Revival period and were imbued with Zionist didactic fervor. This does not mean that the private enterprises of the late 1940s and beyond were all utterly devoid of ideological beliefs or motivation, but their aim was first and foremost to make money.

2. They did not share the mainstream notion that popular literature could be dictated to readers or even imposed on them by some culture shapers who knew what was good for the consumer. In fact, most of them did not plan ahead, but just went along with the flux of supply and demand, keeping a close eye on the market. They, too, had to watch their reading public while also playing a role in shaping it, since their readership was constantly changing with incoming waves of immigration. More than the mainstream agents, they had to keep in touch with changing norms and fashions, as they could not afford financial losses. Unlike mainstream agents, they were not covered, backed or supported by any subsidies.

3. They were mostly American-oriented. Far from disdaining cultural goods emanating from American culture, considered cheap and shallow by the mainstream, they favored it. In this, they anticipated mainstream publishing and may have had a part in promoting the Americanization of Hebrew culture.

4. They did not have a high regard of themselves. Some are now basking in the retrospective warmth of nostalgia, with the media occasionally spotlighting them. Reoccurring waves of nostalgia are responsible for the fact that subversive books or chapbooks of the 1950s–1960s are now in demand in second-hand book stores, and are quite expensive, too, in utter disproportion to their literary value. The teenagers of yore, who had read the books clandestinely, are now willing to pay the price, half-jokingly, knowing that the books are hard to find. There are even some avowed (and some secret) collectors of pulp fiction. This accounts for the fact that some of the entrepreneurs of the past are willing to be interviewed, but it does not completely do away with their low self-esteem. In fact, the ones I interviewed who are still in the
publishing business invariably started by showing me respectable productions they had been involved in or are involved in at present.

5. Large groups are seldom homogeneous, and neither is this one. There are various possible categorizations, which will be discussed later. For now, it is important to draw the line between those who started in the periphery and made their way up, and those who stayed “behind” (in their terms). This shift of status has a lot to do with the sociopolitical background and ideological inclinations of the people involved.

6. Their sociopolitical status was in opposition to that of agents in the mainstream. They did not come from agricultural communities such as kibbutzim or cooperative settlements; they were working-class or bourgeois individuals living and working in the big cities. Neither did they belong to the Mapai or Ben-Gurionist camp. I found out that most had right-wing inclinations, were supporters of Jabotinsky and of what was later to become the Herut party. Some had been active participants in pre-State extreme right underground movements in the struggle against the British Mandatory Rule. The political affiliation came out in the interviews, becoming such an important factor that it practically forced me to look for it in the people I could not interview. The people I interviewed supplied the information voluntarily. It first came as a surprise, since I had not expected this to be a common denominator. Once I had realized this, I still made a point of avoiding any mention of political affiliation until the information was provided by the interviewee.

7. Many of the agents working in the popular book industry worked for newspapers and magazines as well. In accordance with Bourdieu’s theory that newspapers and journalists of the same inclinations tend to find each other (Bourdieu 1984: 161–166), they found a home not in the mainstream — that is Socialist — party organs, but in evening papers such as Yediot Aharonot, which backed private enterprise and gave voice to “other” opinions. From there some found their way to bourgeois enterprises like La’isha, the first magazine for women, or Olam Ha’kolnoa, the first cinema magazine. Not surprisingly, when new right-wing newspapers were founded with the rise of the Likud in 1977 (Yoman Hashavua, or the more extreme paper Nativ), several of them found their way to these publications. Working in evening papers or in magazines came up in interviews as a form of apprenticeship, or as a means of obtaining funds that could eventually be invested in books.

8. There was a recurring pattern in the interviews. In order to put people at ease, I started by enumerating the merits of the subversive pop literature of the past: going against the mainstream, introducing variation, fighting censorship and especially self-censorship. The reaction was invariably negative: none of the my reasons had been the motive, direct or indirect, for going into the business. My assumption was met with either a shrug or even distrust as to the nature of the undeserved “compliments”.

9. All interviewees mentioned that they had started writing or translating at a very early age. Not having the right connections, they were refused jobs in mainstream firms, but they did not give in; they found their way in the periphery.
10. They had made a lot of money, relatively speaking, in a rather short time, though they usually lost it at some later point. The rise and fall in their career was due partly to tough competition, and partly to market fluctuations. The field obeyed no copyright or ethical rules, and competition was indeed fierce. Their final collapse was mainly due to mainstream firms that had become aware of the potential profits in the popular niche and reached out for their share. This coincided, of course, with the diminishing subsidies for the mainstream firms.

11. Money was not the sole criterion for the hierarchy within the periphery. Publishers like Mizrahi were not likely to be recognized by the producers of hard-cover books, who were much less successful financially. Malka Friedman, daughter of the publisher Shmuel Friedman and co-owner with him of the firm Sh. Friedman, said her father had to intervene for Mizrahi when the publishers’ organization did not accept him. Ezra Narqis, on the other hand, regarded Mizrahi as a role model, while he himself became the model for Uri Shalgi.

Before introducing some of the people involved in the popular book industry, I should say something about their names and pseudonyms.

Three main categories are discernible in the names of the agents involved: real names, names of family members (usually sons or daughters), and pseudonyms. Real names were used by small commercial publishers as a means of distinguishing between themselves and the institution-backed firms: M. Mizrahi, Sh. Friedman, Zelikowitz, Carmi and Naor, as opposed to Sifryat Poalim [literally: People’s Library], Am Oved [Working People], Ha’kibbutz Ha’meuchad [the United Kibbutz] or Mossad Bialik [the Bialik Institute]. Real names were also used by translators when translating more respectable books. First names could form an acronym for a publishing firm: David, Shimon and Eli were the three partners who formed a small publishing house called Deshe. Since the initials form the Hebrew word for grass, not many know where the name actually derived from. First names of children were used by publishers for various purposes, be it for their firm (Karni publishing), or for their various book series: Hādov, the Bear, a name used by Sh. Friedman, after his son’s name Dov; Nava — his daughter’s second name served for another series. Children’s names could be used in portmanteau form as well. When publisher Uri Shalgi sought a name for his enterprise, the name of his children, Ram and Dorit, were combined into Ramdor. The world of pseudonyms was of course much richer: acronyms and anagrams (Eliezer Carmi — as Azriel Macir), original Diaspora names before changing to Hebrew ones (Arieh Hashavia — as Arieh Lev; Ezra Narqis — whose family name was originally Khadria [“vegetables” in Arabic] — as Y. Yarkoni). In fact Narqis had a hard time remembering the many pseudonyms he invented, and said that any hint of vegetable was a helpful clue. The predominant choice, however, was foreign, preferably English-sounding names (Bert Whitford) for a whole line of pulp fiction that would not sell under Hebrew names.

Apart from these, there were literally hundreds of names invented and changed almost overnight, as cover for firms that sought anonymity. Names such as Olympia
or Eros for printing houses would obviously suggest a line of provocative erotica. 

One of the peculiarities of the field is that the huge number of pseudonyms caused the line between writing and translating to be somewhat blurred. Thus, when I introduce translators below, I do it both in the specific sense and in a more general one of translator/pseudotranslator/writer/editor. It must not, however, be confused with the general term for participants in the popular literary enterprise, referred to as “agents” for the sake of differentiation.

Translators

Work for the popular book industry started at a very early age, sometimes in high school or while doing military service. It could come about when an acquaintance of the family had a small printing firm or worked in a newspaper. Family members of a publisher would sometimes participate as translators. Some sought work in the pulp fiction industry when they were rejected by mainstream organs. Many young translators were immigrants or children of immigrants. M. Mizrahi told me how he had selected translators and editors from among the young people who constantly swarmed his book stall off Allenby Street, picking the ones who showed interest and understanding. Ezra Narqis had translated a story by Conan Doyle in school, long before he even knew how to pronounce the author’s name. A teacher caught him reading a booklet under the desk, and was placated only when Ezra’s classmates assured him it was the pupil’s own translation. Then Ezra started work in a printing shop of one of his father’s friends. He was 14 or 15 at the time. Eli Kedar described how, after his army service, he had tried to be accepted as a journalist, was rejected, and decided to look for a publisher in the bustling commercial area of south Tel Aviv. He had heard there was a man called Nissim, in the Yemenite neighborhood of Shehunat Machalul, who published chapbooks; he literally went from door to door, looking for this man. Arieh Hashavia started as a young reporter for Gadna (monthly publication of the pre-military training program), when still a student. He also started working as a messenger boy and general assistant in Yediot Aharonot. He continued as a reporter for the army magazine B’mahaneh. Arieh Karassik started writing thrillers when he was 16; when he could not find a publisher, he borrowed 25 lira from his father and started his own enterprise.

Work was abundant in the periphery. The pay was not high, but it came regularly. G. Ariuch, pen name for Gentilla Broyde, was often reprimanded by her brother for working in the popular literature business. The brother, Ephraim Broyde, translated poetry and Shakespearian drama for respectable publishers such as Sifryat Poalim, and he often begged her to stop working for the “Türk” (Mizrahi’s derisive nickname). She refused, so Mizrahi told me, since Mizrahi supplied her with a steady flow of bestsellers. Around 50 books are listed under her name in the library catalogue, most of them for central mainstream publishers like Am Oved or Zmora Bitan. Yet at least seven were translated for Mizrahi, among them Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind and books
by Louis Bromfield or Daphne du Maurier. Loyalty to one publisher was rare. Eli Kedar wrote 12 books per month, in the Wild West pseudotranslation series *Buck Jones* that he produced for his first publisher Nissim, earning 50 *lira* per book. Only two a month were published. Ezra Narqis offered to pay him 75 *lira* per book and publish as many as he could write. Kedar accepted the offer. When Narqis discovered Miron Uriel could translate/write more quickly, he soon took him on instead. Apparently, Uriel could produce a booklet in two hours. He never re-read what he had written.

The most interesting common denominator of the group is their anti-establishment political involvement. Many of them had been political activists in their early youth. Their subversive activities varied, diverging either to the extreme left or to the extreme right.

Here are some portraits to illustrate the nature of the translators in the periphery.

The first is that of Maxim Gilan, poet and political dissident under his true name, and diligent translator of erotica under the pseudonym G. Kasim (similar letters). Gilan was born in Spain and came to Israel as a poor refugee from France in 1944. As a young boy he enlisted in LEHI, the extreme anti-British underground movement also known as the Stern Gang, and after the establishment of the State he was a devout anti-Ben-Gurion activist, playing a part in at least three underground sects that planned to overthrow the first Prime Minister and even threatened his life. He was imprisoned twice, for 14 months, then for 59 days for suspected involvement in the Kaestner assassination. When he was co-editor with Shmuel Mor of the porn magazine *Bul*, they were accused of publishing the details of the Mossad involvement in the assassination of Moroccan dissident Mahdi Ben-Barqa, the Mossad allegedly having helped extradite the Moroccan to the French authorities. After the Six Day War, Gilan exiled himself to Paris, where he became editor of *Israel & Palestine*, an English-language pro-Palestinian magazine. As Maxim Gilan he went on publishing poetry books. Under the pseudonym G. Kasim, however, Gilan translated and wrote erotic literature for “Eros”, financed by Eli Kedar in the early 1960s. The books came out repeatedly and were re-printed in 1968. He was the translator of *Fanny Hill*, *Scented Garden*, *Arabian Nights*, *Turk’s Pleasures* and *The Black Woman’s Lust*. Gilan eventually came back to Israel, where he won several literary prizes. He died in 2005.

No less diligent was Eliezer Carmi, translator and writer with more than 300 books to his name (according to the National Library catalogue). He used several pseudonyms: A. Ben-Dan, Azriel Macir. He may have been hiding behind the female-pseudonym Shula Effroni, first translator of Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*. Carmi has been described by his friends as a big jovial fellow, a womanizer, who was a tireless writer/translator. He was born in Russia in 1918 and came to Israel in 1924, at the age of seven. According to Eli Eshed he did not even finish elementary school. At a very early age he co-founded a small publishing firm called Twentieth Century Publishing. They put out chapbooks: thrillers and detective stories adopted from English literature. When World War II broke out, Carmi joined the Jewish Brigade of the British army (where he first discovered Damon Runyon), then the IDF. When the war was over, he was left with-
out work. He founded Carmi & Naor, and published hard-cover books of good quality. However, the costly production led to financial difficulties, and he had to work for publishers like M. Mizrahi or Uri Shalgi (Eshed 2006).

According to Eshed, Carmi translated at a rate of 12 books a year, about 500 books in all. He was best known for his genial rendition of Damon Runyon, for which he actually invented an “equivalent” Hebrew slang. For his special style, Mizrahi coined the term “Carminization” of translated texts. He translated O. Henry, Edgar Wallace, H. G. Wells, R. L. Stevenson, Jack London and many more. He was especially prolific in translations of erotic literature, fiction and guidebooks. According to Arieh Hashavia, not only did Carmi disdain censorship of erotica, he exaggerated it when he felt the original was not risqué enough. He added abundantly to Stiletto by Harold Robbins, for instance. In his zealous efforts to translate erotic books, Carmi had to look for less “normative” publishers in the periphery. Carmi was less of a political person. However, his weekly column in the Likud magazine Yoman Ha’shavua, published in the 1980s, leaves no doubt about his right-wing political affiliation. He died in 1991.

Arieh Hashavia is an example of a translator, writer and journalist who did not identify with the right wing and who found his way to more central publishing. Hashavia started in the Gadna magazine and went on to write the IDF weekly Ba’machaneh (literally: In the [Military] Camp). In 1948, as a high school pupil, he was already working as jack-of-all-trades in the Yedioth Aharonot evening paper. When Aharon Shamir became editor of the paper’s Weekend Supplement and of La’isha [For Woman], young Hashavia became his close assistant, and remained on the job for ten years (Zvi and Paz 1999: 13). There were many immigrants who could not read Hebrew, it was the “Utility” period, people hardly had money for food, and the conservative paper for women, founded and run by men, provided advice for the working-woman-housewife-mother in matters of fashion, housekeeping and social gossip. The British magazine Woman supplied a model. La’isha started a letterbox and, seeing that response was meager, initially had to resort to fabricating readers’ letters. Should I allow him to kiss me on the first date? Arieh Hashavia, as the woman-consultant “Ariella Lev”, provided the answers. The editors conducted polls to find out what women wanted to read. What was the “recipe for success”? Hashavia explained it to me: they did not annoy or challenge anybody, they did not write about controversial subjects, they did not write about sex.

Early in his career, Hashavia managed M. Mizrahi’s publishing firm for ten years, and throughout that time translated a large number of books. He used the pseudonym Haim Lev (his full name at birth was Haim Leib) when he translated erotica such as Frank Harris’s My Life and Loves (and was surprised that I guessed as much, see Ben-Ari 2006:269–270, 288–281). He also used the pseudonym H. Adini (his wife’s name is Adina) and T. Lavie.

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4. My student, Nir Cohen, verified this for me, for which I thank him.
A colorful figure, a pseudotranslator–publisher, who made a point of staying behind the scenes all these years, is Eli Kedar. Born 1938 in Givatayim, Kedar was a central figure in the marginal popular literature scene of the 1960s. He used so many pseudonyms for his writing and his ad hoc invented printing firms that he finds it hard to remember them all. Among them: Nam Sun, Mike Baden, A. Zilber, A. Keren, A. Kadar and even a female name — Tali Frank. The publishing firm Great Art & I, for whom G. Kasim translated *Fanny Hill*, was his venture, as were a film company named Sirtey Yoel [Yoel’s Films] and a woman’s magazine called *Hu ve’Hi* [He and She]. Kedar was an entrepreneur, initiating projects and abandoning them as soon as they came into the public domain. He often lost money by quitting when the project became a hit.

In 1958, after his military service, Kedar wanted to become a journalist. When the major journals rejected him, he decided to try his hand at writing pulp fiction. It was then that he went to look for the publisher who was putting out Westerns. After the success of his first book *Kohenet Ha’yareach Ha’tzahov* [Priestess of the Yellow Moon], Nissim asked for more material, and together they created the *Buck Jones* series. As mentioned above, Nissim could not keep up with Kedar’s tempo. Ezra Narqis met Kedar in the Central Bus Station compound and offered him more money for all the books he could write. According to Kedar, he and Narqis published the first pocket-book to be sold in kiosks — Nam Sun’s *Rutz ad Ha’sof* [Run Till the End] — which appeared two weeks before M. Mizrahi published the first chapbook in his Agatha Christie series. Leafing through a foreign magazine in Narqis’s office, with pictures of voluptuous SS female officers, Kedar conjured up his greatest hit — *Stalag 13* (see Ben-Ari 2006: 163–173). In the tradition of Billy Wilder’s *Stalag 17*, the series depicted British and American prisoners being tortured in Nazi prison camps, with a “twist”: the camps were run by sadistic sex-craving female Nazi officers. Kedar did not pursue the success of the *Stalags* in Israel. He translated his book into English and went to Germany to look for a publisher. He came back to find, to his amazement, that the books had been sold by the thousands, which did not deter him from abandoning the sure success of the *Stalags* and looking for new ventures.

**Publishers**

There was a clearly defined hierarchy among small and medium publishers in the periphery. Though they all looked up to the mainstream for literary language and models and for norms of translation, a clear-cut line existed between those who published hardcover bestsellers and those who published serialized pulp fiction only, in the form of booklets and magazines. The difference was mainly in the fact that the first could be bought in certain bookstores, while the others were sold in kiosks and occasionally in second-hand bookstores. The following are representative of these domains.

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M. Mizrahi was one of the first commercial publishers and, for a long period, the greatest commercial success of them all. Meir Mizrahi emigrated from Turkey as a boy, a young tailor in a family of tailors. He had no experience with books but he had a keen business sense. In the colportage tradition, he started by lending popular books to his fellow immigrants, then peddling books that he and his wife carried around with them. Around 1958, he opened a bookstall in the busy commercial Lewinsky Market, off Allenby Street. He bought stocks of books from bankrupt printers, eventually realizing he should buy the plates and the rights as well. Later, he moved to an office and storeroom nearby. He identified a niche, so he said, a lacuna, that he could fill, that of popular novels: along with Erle Stanley Gardner and Ellery Queen, he bought the wholesale rights for Agatha Christie, all of them writers he had heard of in Turkey, all of them considered “cheap” by the mainstream. Mizrahi did not limit himself to detective stories. He published A. J. Cronin and Harold Robbins, Enid Blyton and Alistaire McLean; he published titles such as Casanova or Popeye the Sailor Man, along with Huckleberry Finn and Oliver Twist. Today, he is still very proud of several popular encyclopedias for youth that he published, or the French Que sais-je series of popular information he introduced later on. In fact, the encyclopedias were the first item he pointed out to me in our interview.

Although he certainly reached the top in commercial publishing, Mizrahi (the “Turk”), was looked down upon by mainstream and periphery alike. Although he called his bestselling series The Good Book Club, its reputation of cheapness persisted for years.

Throughout his publishing career, Mizrahi followed a golden rule: to consult with “good” people. He did not gamble on new translators; he employed only those who had established a positive reputation; nor did he gamble on unknown writers. He was not aiming at the literary elite. There are haute couture clothes made for the best clients, he said, but there are workers’ clothes as well, and they too should be well-made, not from fancy stuff, nor custom-tailored, but from good sturdy material. He recognized literary interest and taste among the people who visited his stall, and soon put them to work as readers, editors and translators. The names he mentions proudly are those of professionals such as Haim Abrabaya, Arieh Hashavia, Yitzhak Levanon, Yonatan Ratosh. He paid them less than other publishers, by the book rather than by length or difficulty, but supplied regular work. Arieh Hashavia translated, edited, read and consulted. Baruch Krupnik-Karu, a lexicographer and prolific mainstream translator, produced a fuller translation of Lady Chatterley’s Lover (Ben-Ari 2006: 248–255) and stayed on for more work, including an anthology of Hebrew writers. Eliezer Carmi made his reputation at Mizrahi’s and earned Mizrahi a small fortune with his hilarious translation of Damon Runyon. He was a tireless translator of erotic books, but found that Mizrahi drew the line at pornography. Mizrahi did not have to read the “suspicious” books. Like the famous judge who said he could recognize pornography when he saw it, he spied smut and sent Carmi to smaller, less puritanical printers. He gave up the good profit

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on Harold Robbins, for instance, when it became too daring for him, sending Carmi to Shalgi, a publisher with no such compunction. Mizrahi drew the line at Christianity, too. He published all of A. J. Cronin’s bestsellers, except for one: *The Keys to the Kingdom*, which he vetoed when he heard it was about a priest.

Mizrahi’s downfall occurred in the 1980s, when popular literature began to be published by establishment and non-establishment firms alike. He made a come-back and is still in business, though mostly re-printing bestsellers of the past. Today, at the age of 75, he still prides himself on understanding nothing about books, but understanding all about people and business.

Sh. (Shmuel) Friedman was one of Mizrahi’s competitors. He founded his publishing house in 1942. After his death in 1991, it was run by his daughter Malka and his son Dov. It has recently been sold to a relatively new publisher, Opus, which started with computer manuals and expanded into translated literature.

Grandfather Moshe Friedman came from Lithuania in 1918. He was a Revisionist, a keen follower of the right-wing leader Zeev Jabotinsky. He rejected membership in the Histadrut, the socialist workers’ union, and wrote essays against the establishment. At a time when Yiddish was fought against by the culture shapers in the famous “language battle”, he started a Yiddish paper called *Emeth wagen Eretz Yisrael* [Truth about Eretz Yisrael]. His six sons were all members of *Irgun*, the militant anti-British underground movement. His son Shmuel started by publishing political pamphlets and books, but soon realized popular genres would make more money. Most of the books published by the firm were translations, a small number from French, the rest mostly from English. Shmuel Friedman soon identified another “subversive” niche and formed the magazine *Olam Ha’kolnoa* [The World of Cinema], which was a successful moneymaker. Friedman is also known for publishing a collection of the extreme leftist political satires called “Uzi Ve’eshut”, and was friendly with Canaanites such as Binjamin Tamuz and Yonatan Ratosh, who published their own work and translated for him. The firm published a great number of the despised American “bestsellers”: *Peyton Place, Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden*, novels by Ayn Rand, Vicky Baum, Damon Runyon (the first *Guys and Dolls* by Carmi). Both the American bestsellers and *Olam Ha’kolnoa* were “luxury” American-style products, not favored by mainstream ideology.

Malka Friedman insists the firm never received any subsidy from the establishment. Moreover, when Friedman wanted to go into textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s, he was turned down for not belonging to the right party. He had to give up this profitable branch of business.

Ezra Narqis was perhaps the Number One publisher of pulp fiction in the 1950s and 1960s. Now 75, he was born in Jerusalem to a family that had emigrated from Syria. As a boy he joined the underground *Irgun*, performing various secret missions. This was when he also started translating, his first book being a Conan Doyle (a name, he recalls

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8. Interview with daughter-partner Malka Friedman-Shafir, 05.03.06.
with a smile, that he mispronounced as Devil, due to similar spelling in Hebrew). He was surprised when I told him his much-admired leader, Jabotinsky, had also translated Conan Doyle when in the Turkish prison. He started working in a printing shop and made his way up, taking Meir Mizrahi as his model (although, he says, Mizrahi became too “stuck up” later).

Narqis identified a hunger for pornography, as well as a new reading public. In his words, these were young men who emigrated from “under-developed countries” (a euphemism for Arab countries), for whom the mere thought of a woman’s bare leg was arousing. According to him, he was not swimming against the current; he was swimming wherever the current carried him. He saw a vacuum, and he filled it, having recognized the potential of the large number of new immigrants who would read smut. He supervised and copy-edited the books he printed, insisting they were well-written, better than others published in the periphery.

One of his most notorious commercial successes was the Stalags — the above-mentioned chapbooks provocatively combining sex and Nazism. As Narqis recalls, a young man named Eli Kedar came to him and offered a book entitled Stalag 13, a book every other publisher had rejected. Narqis bought the rights for 200 lira and printed it. To Kedar’s astonishment (and dismay), within five months Narqis sold nearly 40,000 books. Narqis published some 25 to 30 Stalags and other booklets of the genre, all pseudotranslations. In fact, according to him, 99% of the books he published were pseudotranslations. Some 80% of them, he says, were written by Miron Uriel under various pseudonyms. Miron Uriel wrote books by the hour; no editing or revising was necessary. Narqis invented foreign names of writers, publishers, critics — so many that he cannot remember them today. The covers were done by Asher Dickstein (today an Orthodox Jew, member of the Habad Hassidic movement) or copied from British/American magazines.

Narqis was not worried about censorship. In his entire career he spent one night in jail, his wedding night (February 10, 1963), after the publication of Stalag 13 — because, he explains, his lawyer had neglected to pay his bail. The angry judge scolded the lawyer for his negligence, scolded the police for arresting a man on his wedding night, and dismissed the case. When the notorious I Was Colonel Schultz’s Bitch (printed by his competitor Peretz Halperin) was confiscated by the police, Narqis quickly published an almost unnoticeable variation, Colonel Schultz’s Bitch (“with absolutely no erotica in it, hardly even a kiss on the cheek”) and immediately sold three editions.

In the 1960s Narqis sold booklets for 1 or 1.50 lira at a time when a clerk would earn 40–50 lira per month. He is still in business, though he too had his ups and downs, first making much money and then losing it. He is now working on a new edition of the Stalags.

The fourth portrait is that of Eliyahu (Eli) Meislish, one of three partners in Deshe Publishing. Meislish, one of the Likud Party founders, was until recently Vice Editor of Nativ, a right-wing paper. He was born to a religious family in Netanya. After com-

Nitsa Ben-Ari

Completing his elementary studies in the religious Tachkemoni school and then in a Yeshiva, he sought secular education and studied Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He made some money working in Kenya, which enabled him to found Deshe Publishing. The company was launched by Eli and his childhood friend David Lifshitz in 1960. The third partner, an auditor who kept the books “with the severe neatness of a Yekke”, left them after a short while. Lifshitz, a student of literature and history, was interested in pornography and started a pilot for three pornographic magazines in 1959. An article in Ha’olam Ha’aze (1134, 24.6.1959) claims that the pilot pocket books sold 4000 copies, an immense success in terms of the period. He planned a fourth, an illustrated sex guide that, he insisted, would not only sell but would be of pedagogical value. Each booklet had only one edition, since the law did not demand permits for a one-off publication. The jackets often bore the self-defeating title Hotza’a chad-pe’amit [literally: one-time publication], No. 2, No. 3 etc..

David Lifshitz’s career as publisher of sex books was cut short when the police arrested him after a detailed exposé (complete with photograph) in Ha’olam Ha’aze. Obscenity laws were not too clear about pornography, and so he was arrested on technicalities such as not naming the printing house or publishing firm on the cover, as required. His friend Eli got him out on bail. Lifshitz changed his name to Sadan, and Deshe Publishing became more careful about printing pornography. Lifshitz, according to Meislish, was an anarchist who supported the Arab El-Ard group, and therefore accepted a book by Lebanese writer Laila Ba’albakki, Ani Echye [I Shall Live]. It was meant to appear in an establishment publication of the Histadrut, the Trade Union Organization, but was vetoed for its anti-Zionist tone. Deshe was persuaded by the translator Yehoshua Halamish that the book included no more than one or two provocative anti-Zionist sentences, and published it in 1961.

Eli Meislish was 29 when they started the small firm. Literary celebrities of today worked for them, recommending books, translating or illustrating. Aggressive and quite modern distribution techniques were used. Eli was careful not to let David introduce too much sex. However, Sadan soon published books about Nazis and concentration camps, even a book about Hitler, with swastikas on the covers. The partnership (and friendship) finally broke up when Meislish found out Lifshitz had published a book in the Deshe format calling it Keter Publishing. Meislish then established a small firm on his own, called Golan, which published then-unknown poetry books. He copied old chapbooks, changing key words here and there to be on the safe side. He wrote a pornographic book under the pseudonym Eli Ben-Layish, and later worked for Masada Publishing, then for the Likud daily. For six years (1983–1989) he worked as producer for Olam Ha’isha (Woman’s World, La’isha’s competitor), and later moved to Națiv, the extreme-right settlers’ magazine, where he remained for 17 years. David Sadan, who remained in the book industry, established Sadan Publishing, where he specialized in law books.

Similar tendencies could be described in a long list of private commercial publishers, known for their right-wing affiliation. For lack of space I will mention only a few

**Mainstream and periphery — a word in conclusion**

There could be several conclusions to this presentation. Hypothesis A: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature were rejected by the mainstream and found their way to the subversive margins. Hypothesis B: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature rejected the mainstream, sought an outlet where they could publish anti-establishment material, and formed their own publication facilities on the periphery. Hypothesis C: both of the above are true. Some cases are not clear-cut, with people blundering into marginal production for financial reasons, and staying in it or drifting away for the same financial reasons. Being less mobilized for a cause, however, does not make them less dissident, and they were often driven by a strong sense of rejection.

The combination of non-canonic or even subversive writing, translating or publishing with right-wing political tendencies is complex and somewhat perplexing. Most of the participants were not aware of this common denominator. They would not have characterized their habitus as such. After all, they had gone into the business for profit, not ideology. However, profit was a bourgeois notion, defying true socialist, Zionist, anti-Diaspora values. The keywords business, profit, bestsellers and market would only later be adopted by mainstream publishing.

Notwithstanding, very early in my research it became clear that the texts all looked for models in the “high” literary norms. This was confirmed when I became acquainted with the people involved. It was a one-sided dependency, of course, since the mainstream did its best to ignore pulp fiction. But almost all the people involved in the popular field had a real interest in literature, and they thus had a notion of what was “right”, even if they did not always adhere to it. This changed for the worse in the 1970s when a new generation entered the pulp literature scene devoid of any literary aspirations, and for the better when, at the same time, more respectable central publishers took an interest in the commercial success of popular literature.

One thing stands out: the mainstream could not ignore indefinitely the bustling activity in the periphery. The periphery introduced what the system needed more than anything else: healthy stratification. Translation thus became, again, a vehicle for change.

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CHAPTER 2

Arabic plays translated for the Israeli Hebrew stage

A descriptive–analytical case study

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The following article offers a descriptive–analytical study of a corpus of 47 plays translated from Arabic into Hebrew (1945–2006), viewed here as a cultural subsystem, in terms of Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory. Their respective positions in the Arabic and Hebrew literary and theatrical systems are explained against the background of the Israeli–Arab conflict that has both prevented and encouraged their venue into Israeli Hebrew culture. Frameworks where the plays have been published or performed and the people responsible for their translation/adaptation and dissemination are enumerated and their motivation is explained and demonstrated.

Keywords: Arabic plays, Israeli Hebrew stage, Jewish–Arab cooperation, polysystem theory, written drama translation, stage translation

Preface

While advocating descriptive translation studies, Toury (1995) has also warned against mere descriptions that are not explanatory as well (ibid. 4). He has recommended “carefully performed studies into well-defined corpuses” (ibid. 1) and that research be carried out with regard to “(observable or reconstructable) facts of real life” (ibid.). Toury has further recommended that “[a]ny aspiration to supply valid explanations would […] involve an extension of the corpus according to some principle […] period, text type […] which could be given a justification” (ibid. 38) and “striving for higher-level generalization + explanation for a certain […] period [and/or] culture […] depending on the principle(s) underlying the extended corpus” (ibid 39). The present article is an attempt to follow these guidelines.

The corpus studied here is genre-dependent rather than chronologically delimited due to the small number of the texts it comprises. It includes all of the Arabic plays translated so far into Hebrew or adapted for performance on the Hebrew-speaking stage from translations of other genres, namely poetry and prose. The period covered here comprises over sixty years (1945–2006), from the publication of the first translation of this kind to the present.
Translation Studies has paid growing attention to theater translation, a performance genre actualized in real life. The main scholarly focus has been on the distinction between written and stage translations (Bassnett-McGuire 1985; Bassnett 1990; Aaltonen. 2000 a, b), on page-to-stage transformation (Zuber-Skerritt 1984) and on case studies of particular drama translations (Gilula 1968–1969; Golomb 1981; Shtesinger 1992; Kohlmayer 1995; Amit-Kochavi 2003). Arabic-into-Hebrew drama translation, however, has been but partially studied by the present writer, as an overview of the present repertoire of translated texts for both the literary and theatrical systems (Amit-Kochavi 1999, chapter 5 of a doctoral dissertation supervised by Toury), in brief discussions of certain sub-systems of this target system (Amit-Kochavi 1996:37–38, 2000: 72–75) and in a comparative analysis of dialect translation in two plays translated from Arabic into Hebrew and performed on the Israeli Hebrew stage (Amit-Kochavi 2003). The present paper wishes to follow a socio-historical direction rather than a linguistic one and, combining Toury’s above-mentioned suggestions and warnings with the underlying principles of Even-Zohar’s Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar 1990), try and study the production and reception of translations of Arabic drama into Hebrew in the Israeli Hebrew target culture, considered here as a polysystem, within both the literary and theatrical systems.

Source and target culture background

Some background information may be in order here for readers unfamiliar with the Arabic source culture and/or the Israeli Hebrew target culture.

Drama is the youngest, and so far weakest, genre of modern Arabic literature (Landau 1958; Moreh 1992). Most plays are written by poets and prose writers rather than playwrights and are consequently fit for reading rather than performance, since they include long stretches of didactic oratory, with relatively little theatrical action. While such Arab countries as Egypt, Lebanon and Syria have produced some prominent playwrights and constant theatrical activity since the early 20th century, Arabic literature in Israel has produced few plays and even those few Arab theaters active over relatively longer periods have constantly suffered from a lack of a permanent audience (Amit-Kochavi 1973). Despite recurrent local attempts at organizing Arab theater groups, only two (Beit Hagefen theater in Haifa, since 1963) and The Arab Theatre (later Al-Maydaan, since 1996) have managed to survive. Some prominent Arab actors, actresses and directors have been active in the Hebrew-speaking theatrical and cinematic systems (Horovitz 1993), striving at the same time to remain active within their own culture as well.

In contemporary Hebrew culture, by contrast, drama has occupied a prominent position within both the literary and the theatrical systems. While the earliest Hebrew plays were written in Eastern Europe during the 19th century (Shaked 1970), Hebrew
plays for stage performance have been written since the 1940s and 1950s. Hebrew target culture voids in this genre have been filled with abundant translations from such languages as English, Russian, German, French and Yiddish in an attempt to create and develop Hebrew culture according to European standards and serve as models for use and imitation (Even-Zohar 1990). Arabic drama, however, has never been used to fill gaps in either the literary or the theatrical Hebrew systems, both due to its own peripherality in world literature and drama and since it has followed Western European models available to Hebrew culture firsthand, while its local themes and concerns are foreign to the Western-oriented Hebrew culture.

Translated Arabic drama then has never been considered an integral part of its parallel subsystems of Hebrew culture, which have never found it necessary to integrate any elements of Arabic culture into their highly variegated activity. No translated Arabic play has ever been printed by those few Hebrew publishing houses that regularly or occasionally publish plays translated from other languages, and only a single Arabic play has so far been performed on the main stage of a mainstream Israeli Jewish theater (Chatting on the Nile, the Haifa Municipal Theater, 1982).

This almost total rejection of Arabic drama by Israeli Hebrew culture was further supported by a general denial of the Arabic language, literature and culture by Israeli Hebrew culture due to the ongoing conflict between the Zionist movement and the Arab national revival movement both prior to the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and since then. Arabs have been viewed through negative stereotypes, as bitter enemies and members of a society considered to be inferior to the Jewish one or, at best, as romanticized oriental figures rather than real-life human beings (Domb 1982; Friedlander 1989; Amit-Kochavi 1999: ch. 1).

This sad situation has been reinforced by the fact that most of those few Israeli scholars who have lectured on Arabic literature at Israeli universities and have translated some of the literary works they taught and studied have very seldom been concerned with Arabic drama. None of them has served as a reader or consultant at Israeli theaters, and an Arab play has yet to figure in the regular annual programme of any Israeli Jewish theater.

**Forces and counterforces in Hebrew translations of Arabic drama**

Despite these detrimental forces, there have been others which have made the translation, publication and production of the plays included in the corpus of the present paper possible against all odds. Paradoxically enough, these forces were rooted in the same political circumstances of the Israeli–Arab conflict. They were, however, brought to bear by people and institutions who took an ideological position that claimed, rather naively, that the translation and publication or production of Arabic plays in Hebrew translation might promote mutual understanding between Israeli Arabs and Jews and...
that Israeli Jewish familiarity with Arab culture and society through its depiction in Arabic drama would offset the stereotypical prejudice against Arabs, and possibly even help to solve the political conflict between the two political entities and their respective countries.

In this, drama translators were no different from other translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew, most of whom have expressed similar ideological beliefs (Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4). Thus, whereas Israeli Jewish culture as a whole has found Arabic culture and its products hostile and dispensable, a number of individuals and groups (rather than established cultural institutions) have found it necessary to have Arabic plays translated into Hebrew and performed on the Hebrew-speaking stage. They have belonged to various cultural systems—the academic one, the literary one and the theatrical one, but have rarely belonged to two of these at the same time. Translation for the theater has constituted but a small part of their activity, and in most cases they have acted both separately and in cooperation with one another (as partners or group members). However, no permanent framework has considered it sufficiently important to support them on a regular basis.

Drama translation within the translated subsystem (Even-Zohar 1990) under discussion has two distinctive characteristics where it differs from other subsystems of both Israeli Hebrew translated drama and other literary translations from Arabic into Hebrew. First, in addition to high ideological aspirations, these translation initiators, including translators, producers, directors and actors, have often combined the above-mentioned ideological goals with a personal ambition of improving their positions within the theatrical subsystems they belonged to. Second, the level of Jewish–Arab cooperation in translation and production projects evident here was unusually high and without parallel in any other system of Israeli Hebrew culture. Thus almost half of the 47 translated plays have involved some kind of Jewish–Arab cooperation.

Intrasystemic promotion
Promotion within either the Hebrew literary system or the Israeli academic one has been an unlikely goal, as Arabic theater has occupied a peripheral position in both of these. There was very little prestige attached to either of them, as no translator of Arabic drama into Hebrew has won any of the few prizes allocated to translators into Hebrew in Israel, such as the Tchernikhowskii Prize for literary translation or the Ada Ben Nahum Prize for translations of plays for performance on the Hebrew stage. Very few courses on Arabic drama have been taught at Israeli universities, and even those few were taught in the Arabic source language (rather than in Hebrew translation) in the Arabic language departments, rather than in theater or literature departments or at actor training schools.

Rather, personal positions have manifested themselves in attempts to move from one Israeli cultural subsystem into another. Thus, for example, on the 25th anniversary of Beit Hagefen, an Arab–Jewish community center in Haifa and a symbol of coex-
Chapter 2. Arabic plays translated for the Israeli Hebrew stage

Arabic director Antoine Saleh directed the play *A Night in a Lifetime* (1984) as part of his effort to gain acceptance into the mainstream theatrical system. Saleh, who had previously been known only to Arabic-speaking audiences through his work on the Arabic programs of Israeli television, was thereby given the opportunity to make himself known to a mixed Arab–Jewish audience, considered by Israeli culture as more prestigious than an all-Arab one.

On another occasion, Uriel Zohar, Jewish director of an amateur student theatrical troupe at the Technion (the High Institute of Technology in Haifa), directed the play *Season of Migration to the North* (1994) performed at the Acre Fringe Theater Festival, a prestigious annual event in Israeli cultural life.

Actors have also sought personal promotion through acting in translated Arabic plays. In two prominent cases this was done through single-actor plays.

First, Muhammad Bakri, a highly popular theater and cinema actor active in both Israeli Jewish and Arab cultures, has chosen to alternate Arabic and Hebrew in his performances, in an effort to reach both Arab and Jewish audiences. He has practiced this method in two very successful cases — *The Pessoptimist* (1986) and the above-mentioned *Season of Migration* (1994). The former was first performed in a small experimental framework of the Haifa Municipal Theater, and was later staged independently for about ten (!) years, an unparalleled theatrical success, especially in a relatively small country like Israel. As for *Season of Migration*, it was awarded the Acre Fringe Festival Prize for acting. The second instance is that of Yosef Shiloah, a Jewish actor of Kurdish immigrant origin, who had trained for the stage but had become famous as an Israeli cinema actor. Most of the roles he played, however, depicted ridiculous characters in non-canonical burlesque comedies. In an attempt to improve his professional image, Shiloah chose to produce and perform *The Journey* (1987), a collage of Arabic prose and poetry translated and adapted for the stage. It depicted the suffering of the refugee Palestinian people, a political topic seldom seen in the Israeli Hebrew theater before (Urian 1996). He rehearsed and performed in small Tel Aviv theaters and was applauded by the critics for the high artistic quality of his play and for its daring contents. And yet, Shiloah was unable to perform this piece in other parts of the country, since the political nature of the texts deterred Omanut La’am, the government body responsible for the dissemination of Israeli culture in the country’s periphery, from supporting this project. So hurt was Shiloah by this rebuff that he chose to leave the country for several years. It may be this experience that has prevented any other Jewish actor from attempting to repeat Shiloah’s feat.

Jewish–Arab cooperation in the production and dissemination of Hebrew translations of Arabic plays

About 20% of Israel’s citizens are Arab, and Arabic is the country’s second official language, next to Hebrew. Direct personal contact between Israeli Arabs and Jews, however, is often limited to unequal occupational encounters where Arabs work for Jews,
e.g. as masons and gardeners. Arab and Jewish students study together at Israeli universities and colleges, Arab doctors and nurses work in the Israeli healthcare system, and Jewish–Arab partnership exists at law offices and dental clinics. In Israeli literature and culture, however, there is an almost total separation between the Arab and Jewish systems. Very few Arab writers and journalists have been successfully integrated into the Israeli Hebrew media and literature (Hever 1992).

The relatively high rate of cooperation in projects involving Hebrew translations of Arabic drama is therefore noteworthy and calls for an explanation. First, Arab and Jewish actors and directors have studied together in predominantly Jewish professional or academic training frameworks, all of which exclusively teach and rehearse in Hebrew. Unlike other educational frameworks, where associating with one’s peers is optional, the special nature of theatrical work dictates close personal contact and a high degree of cooperation in workshops and projects. This may later facilitate similar cooperation between graduates of those frameworks. Second, due to the rarity and instability of Arab theatrical frameworks in Israel, numerous Arab actors and actresses have worked successfully in Hebrew-speaking theaters, TV and films (Horovitz 1993). Some of them have sought to give vent to their Arab national and cultural identity through acting in translated Arab plays. On the Arab side, then, initiating the performance of Arab plays on the Hebrew-speaking stage and participation in them has combined job opportunities (extrinsic motivation) with cultural and personal self-expression (intrinsic motivation). Cooperation with (presumably) stronger Jewish partners has meant prospective success within the predominantly Jewish target system.

Models of cooperation have varied, including work in pairs or groups. Pairs have often comprised an Arab actor and a Jewish one or an Arab actor and a Jewish director, and groups have either been exclusively Arab (e.g. al-Karma and al-Maydaan Arab theaters) or, in a single case, during the Lebanon War (1982), a mixed Jewish–Arab theatrical troupe of actors who wrote and performed a documentary play, *Humm-Hem* (= They, in Arabic and Hebrew respectively).

### The translated texts

The 47 translated texts (1945–2006) may be subdivided into two different kinds—11 plays translated for publication within the literary system and 36 translated for stage performance. The latter may be further subdivided into 26 translated plays and 10 stage adaptations from other literary genres.

#### Arabic plays translated as literary texts

Very few Arabic plays have been translated as literary texts. They include eleven items (one of which has been translated twice) published between 1945–1998. Most have been Egyptian plays, written by two older generation writers, Tawfiq el-Hakim (five
items) and Naguib Mahfuz (three items), and by two popular contemporary playwrights — Lenin ar-Ramli (a single item) and Ali Salem (single item). They were chosen due to the combination of their source-culture prominence and prestige, equally appreciated by their target-culture translators, and the translators’ own academic interests. Three translators — Sasson Somekh, Shimon Ballas and Gavriel Rosenbaum — are professors of Modern Arabic literature who have taught and studied these authors. Since a significant part of all genres of literary translations from Arabic literature has been initiated and carried out by academic experts considered by Israeli Jewish culture as the ultimate authority in the field of Arabic language and culture (Amit-Kochavi 1999), they enjoyed absolute freedom in the choice of texts. Some translations were published in the same literary magazines where those translators had published similar translations from other Arabic literary genres, with no overt intention of having them performed. A single play by an Israeli Arab writer, *Umm ar-Rubabika* by the late Emile Habiby, was published by Somekh to commemorate the first anniversary of Habiby’s demise (1997) and published in *Iton* 77, a literary magazine where Somekh has served as member of the editorial board and published translations of modern Arabic since the inauguration of the publication in 1977.

**Arabic plays translated for stage performance**

Most of the plays have been translated for the stage, either as a regular performance (e.g. *The Night and the Mountain* by Saeed Makkawi, translated for the Jerusalem Khan Theater by Israeli Arab poet Siham Saoud, 1994) or for a reading (e.g. all the plays translated for the first Arabic drama festival at as-Sarayah Theater in Jaffa, 2006). Four plays, performed by Arab actors in Arabic, were simultaneously translated into Hebrew by Jewish and Arab interpreters when there were Hebrew speakers in the audience, and in one case (Tawfiq el-Hakim’s *Angels’ Prayer*, performed for a mixed audience at al-Karma Arab theater, 1983) a scene out of the play was first played in Arabic by Arab actors and actresses who suddenly switched into Hebrew, continuing the same scene. This was done in order to symbolize Arab–Jewish cooperation as practiced at the binational community center that hosted both the theater and the particular performance, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the center (1963–1983).

**Adaptations of prose and poetry for stage performance**

Many Arabic plays are written by prose writers rather than playwrights and therefore include long didactic ideological or philosophical monologues that do not conform to Western models of stage performance, where characters are expected to dramatically justify their presence on stage. The scarcity of both supply and demand for translated Arabic drama, on the one hand, and the relative success of certain translated Arabic prose works in the Hebrew literary system, on the other (Amit-Kochavi 1999), have made some writers, actors and directors adapt translations of works of Arabic literature
from other genres (including poetry, novels and short stories), rather than their respective source texts. This strategy has combined adherence to the high-quality principle adhered to in the subsystem of translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew, a possible guarantee of prospective success, with the economic factor of paying less (if at all) for an adaptation of an existing translation rather than paying for a new one.

Thus, for example, the great success enjoyed by the Hebrew translation of Emile Habiby’s novel *The Pessoptimist*, translated by Anton Shammas (1984), was probably the main reason why it was chosen for adaptation by actor Muhammad Bakri. The poignant political irony of this work, which depicts a cunning Arab who pretends to be a fool in order to survive in the (then) young state of Israel, must have been another incentive for Bakri, whose media interviews have often focused on pride in his national affiliation. The high literary value of this novel, combined with profound psychological insight with regard to its main hero, helped Bakri perform skillfully, alternating between an Arabic version of the adapted play and a Hebrew one, and reaching different kinds of audience all over the country for about ten years.

Another prominent case of stage adaptation was the above-mentioned *The Journey* (1987), performed by actor Yoseph Shiloah. It made theatrical use of a part of a Palestinian novella, *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafany, published earlier in Hebrew translation (1978), and of newly translated poems by Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darwish and Sameeh el-Kasem, as well as parts of *A Difficult Journey Up the Mountain*, the autobiography of Palestinian poet Fadwah Toukan, fully translated into Hebrew only much later (1993). Here, too, the chosen texts, by prominent Palestinian writers, combined a high literary quality with tense dramatic contents, all of which made for intriguing material suitable for theatrical performance.

The translators

Translators of Arabic drama into Hebrew have included all possible social and ethnic groups found within the subsystem of literary translations from Arabic into Hebrew (for further details see Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4), as well as some people affiliated with the theater system. Translators have included Arabs and Jews, and have belonged to different generations and ethnic origins, mainly translating Arabic literary works from other genres. For example, Menachem Kapeliuk (1901–1975), an immigrant from Russia, the earliest translator of modern Arabic prose into Hebrew, translated a short Egyptian play in 1945. Tuvia Shamoosh (1914–1982), an immigrant from Syria and prose translator, translated a short play in 1970. Sasson Somekh (1933– ), an immigrant from Iraq and prolific translator of Arabic poetry, has translated two Egyptian short plays (1971, 1978) followed by an Israeli Arab long one (1992/1997). Siham Daoud (1953– ), an Israeli Arab poet and journalist and translator of Hebrew poetry into Arabic, has translated a single long play (1994).
Translators belonging to the academic system

Among the prominent academic experts in Arabic literature in producing and advancing translations from Arabic prose and poetry into Hebrew, only four have been active in drama translations. Two of the four, Sasson Somekh and Shimon Ballas (1933– ), have translated four plays (1971, 1978, 1980, 1992/1997) and a single one (1977) respectively, all of which were primarily intended for publication as literary texts rather than for stage performance. Two additional plays, however, were translated at the initiative of two academic figures, including Somekh in one case and Shmuel Moreh, who specialized in modern Arabic poetry and drama, in the other. Both encouraged friends and ex-students to translate more plays (Somekh once and Moreh twice). This is a familiar practice within the rather closed circle of Arabic–Hebrew translators, most of whom are academically trained in Arabic (Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4), where ex-lecturers and ex-students often cooperate in various ways.

The two other academic figures, Gavriel Rosenbaum (1948– ) and the present writer (1946– ), represent a different option or model of action. They have translated Arabic plays into Hebrew due to their personal interest in Arabic drama. Rosenbaum, who has lectured on this subject in two different Israeli universities, even went so far as to establish a private publishing house (see below) exclusively for this purpose, but had published only two titles before he realized the low demand for such texts in Israeli Hebrew culture. The present writer, by contrast, has acted from a systemic point of view in Even-Zohar’s terms (Even-Zohar 1990). In 1972, realizing that only three published translated Arabic plays were available, none of which had been performed on a Hebrew-speaking stage, she decided to try and fill two gaps simultaneously through stage translations, thus adding dramatic works to the repertoire of translations from Arabic into Hebrew within the Israeli Hebrew literary system, on the one hand, and to plays translated from Arabic into the variegated Israeli Hebrew theatrical system, on the other. These efforts were only partly successful: her first translation of an Egyptian play (1972) was not performed until 1978, after being rejected by a number of mainstream theaters. All in all, of the nine plays she translated over an extended period (1972–2006), two were published in Bamah, a prominent theatrical magazine at the time (1978, 1991), five were performed in various peripheral theaters (1978, 1983, 1984, 1987, 2006) and one was performed in Arabic with her translation serving for simultaneous translation (1998). The time gaps between drama translations by most translators except for Rosenbaum (1998, 1998) may be attributed to the very minor role of this genre in their professional activity. Notwithstanding their concerted efforts, Israeli attitudes towards Arabic drama rarely changed, except on such special occasions as drama festivals or institutional jubilees for which translations were expressly commissioned. Otherwise another poem or short story was often seen as sufficient, being easier to publish in an Israeli literary magazine than a play.
Translators belonging to the literary system

Very few of the translators were themselves writers or poets, and none of them were playwrights, a fact reflected by their often poor understanding of the special requirements of stage translation compared with drama translation for literary purposes (Bassnett-McGuire 1985; Bassnett 1990; for a detailed case study, see Amit-Kochavi 2003 on Shammas’s dialogue translation). A single Jewish translator, Shimon Ballas, also wrote Hebrew prose, including novels depicting Jewish–Arab relations in Israel. Four Arab writers have translated Arabic plays into Hebrew — among them poets Salmaan Masalhah (1993), Siham Daoud (1994) and Anton Shammas (1997), and prose writer and essayist Salmaan Natoor (1995). All of them were active in the Israeli Hebrew target cultural system to a greater or lesser extent and their command of Hebrew was excellent. Like most of their Jewish counterparts, however, they each translated a single play (a stage adaptation of a prose translation in the case of Masalhah) and Shammas, an acknowledged poet, essayist and Hebrew–Arabic/Arabic–Hebrew prose translator, translated a play written by himself as a one-time venture. None of them has made further attempts in this field, and drama translation has remained but a negligible part of their translation activity.

Translators belonging to the theatrical system

Eleven translators have belonged to the theatrical system. Texts of this kind (1981, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1993, 1994, 2006) were translated (in four cases), or adapted for the Hebrew stage (in seven cases), by people directly involved in the theatrical production, who undertook this extra work due to the scarcity of such texts in Hebrew translation and to economic circumstances. Theatrical activity in general, and the production of the kind of plays discussed in the present paper in particular, are a heavy economic burden on the people involved. When a prospective actor translates a play, it stands to reason that the expense will be lower, and the actor will be offered an opportunity to act, whereas the availability of a printed version of translated prose or poetic texts may facilitate their stage adaptation even by actors with no command of Arabic.

Dissemination of the translated texts

The obviously peripheral status of the texts under discussion here may be demonstrated through the review and analysis of their dissemination in two highly active systems of Israeli Jewish culture, the literary one and the theatrical one, as well as in their far less active Israeli Arab counterparts.
Publication

Plays translated for the literary system have been published in Israel in six different venues. First, numerous publishing houses mainly concerned with both Hebrew and translated prose and poetry have published translated plays by a variety of writers in many different European languages (e.g. English, Russian, Polish, French, Italian, German and Norwegian). Second, some publishing houses, e.g. Or Am, have been exclusively dedicated to the publication of original Hebrew and translated plays. Third, some Israeli acting schools have published plays for the exclusive use of their teachers and students. Fourth, some theaters (e.g. Habimah and The Haifa Municipal Theater) have included the full text of some plays in the program notes. Fifth, some literary magazines have published plays as written texts. Sixth and last, theater magazines such as Bamah have published translated plays, either immediately related to their stage performance or for other professional purposes, often accompanied by relevant essays and comments prepared by academic and theater experts.

Of these venues, addressed to different professional and general readerships, only the last two have included translated Arabic plays in their printed-play repertoire. Even that much was due to the previous personal involvement of the translators of those texts with the respective magazine editors, who were unable to judge the selection of materials for themselves and had to rely on the translators’ choice. Thus Sasson Somekh, a predominant figure in literary translation from Arabic into Hebrew in Israel, has published some translations of Arabic plays in the literary magazines Keshet (1971) and Iton 77 (1977), where he regularly published translations of Arabic poetry and prose. Similarly, the present writer published translations of two plays by Tawfiq al-Hakim (1978, 1991) in the theater magazine Bamah, for which she served ay that time as an English–Hebrew translator and essayist.

Stage performance: The different venues

While written translation, though published, may or may not be read by those who purchase books and magazines and its actual consumption may remain a matter of speculation, theater audiences guarantee that a translated play is actually watched and that different kinds of people are directly exposed to it. It is therefore imperative to try and find out where translated Arabic plays were performed in Hebrew translation and what kind of audience(s) attended those performances. The following are three different theatrical frameworks where such plays have been performed (1978–2006).

Mainstream theater

Since the Hebrew theatrical system has, by and large, ignored the very existence of Arab theater, it comes as no surprise that only a single play, Chatting on the Nile, an adaptation of a novel by Naguib Mahfouz, has been performed in Hebrew translation (1982) in a mainstream theater. Even this would not have taken place but for a combination of
supportive factors. As reported by the Israeli Hebrew press (Davar, January 22, 1982), a member of the Haifa Theater’s artistic board had watched a television version of the play, broadcast in Egyptian Arabic dialect on Israeli television. At the time, Arab films, conceived as light entertainment, were popular with the general public, including those with no command of Arabic, thanks to Hebrew subtitling provided by the Israeli broadcasting service. Chatting on the Nile, a high-brow novel about the futile lives of a group of Egyptian intellectuals who meet regularly on a pleasure boat on the Nile, was adapted into a film and broadcast on Israeli TV. Professor Sasson Somekh, a world authority on the works of Mahfooz, was consulted by the Haifa Theater with regard to this, and suggested that his ex-student Michal Sela translate the novel, which was ultimately later published after its stage adaptation rather than before. Mere chance, then, combined here with academic authority at a time when the Haifa Theater regularly employed some prominent Arab actors and supported a special Arabic-language troupe as well. And yet, notwithstanding the relative success of the play, these special circumstances were not repeated, and the case has remained sui generis.

Fringe theater and festivals

Fringe theater is an alternative to mainstream theater and hosts plays with more daring and innovative form, content and theatrical expression. It may receive less institutional support by the central government and by local authorities, but the freedom it enjoys is attractive to people who are eager to create fresh and daring theater. In Israel, fringe theatrical activity includes improvised and other comic theater, where Arabs seldom participate, due to the pragmatic fact that humor is language- and culture-dependent. Another framework, active every year since 1980, is the Acre Fringe Festival which takes place in Acre, a city of mixed Arab and Jewish population in the north of Israel.

The organizers have exercised a policy of encouraging Arab participation for theatrical groups and individual actors. Consequently, five translated Arabic plays, four stage adaptations of translated novels (1989, 1992, 1994, 1996) and one proper play by Syrian playwright S’ad Allah Wanoos (1993) have been included in its programs. Unlike other theatrical frameworks, where Arabic plays are never singled out, three of these five performances have been awarded prizes, possibly due to the participation of some superb Arab actors, and perhaps also in an attempt at affirmative action. Another permanent fringe framework, Teatronetto [= net theater], dedicated to small-scale experimental plays, has hosted only two translated Arabic plays (1992, 2006), which may have to do with its venue, Tel Aviv, the very heart of the Israeli Jewish cultural scene.

Last but not least, acting schools are economically free of such considerations as the taste and sensitivities of a paying audience that may deter commercial theaters, and make a point of exposing their students to a great variety of Israeli Hebrew and translated theatrical texts as well as to different acting styles and models. And yet, none of the teachers at these schools has ever made use of the few published translated Arabic plays, or adapted any of the Arabic novels available in translation in bookstores and libraries. Three exceptions were all initiated and carried out by Arab students who tried
to combine their Hebrew-oriented professional training with the expression of their individual and national Arab identity through the performance of translated Arabic texts, all of which were stage adaptations of translated Palestinian prose. In one case (1981) Fu’ad ‘Awwad, a student of theater directing, chose *Men in the Sun*, a novella by Ghassan Kanafany depicting the suffering of the Palestinian refugees neglected by their Arab brethren. In two other cases (1981, 1993), Arab acting students chose texts by Tawfiq Fayyad and Mahmoud Darwish respectively depicting the same national plight. It is noteworthy that all three cases took place at the Tel Aviv University theater department, which possibly allows its students greater political and artistic freedom than do other universities and drama schools.

**Concluding remarks**

The presence of Hebrew translations of Arabic drama on both the Hebrew stage and the Hebrew bookshelf has been marginal despite more than sixty years of activity (1945–2006). In spite of one-off successes (as in the case of *The Pessoptimist*) and awards (e.g. at the Acre Festival), the combined efforts of Arabs and Jews, not typical of the Israeli cultural scene as a whole or of Israeli theater in particular, the availability of translated Arabic literary texts for stage adaptation and of Arabic plays for translation into Hebrew, and the uncontested talent and ambition of actors and directors of both nationalities eager to perform Arabic plays in Hebrew translation, the overall impact of Arabic drama on Israeli culture has had little effect. The main reason for this sorry situation is to be sought outside the scope of literature and theater, and far beyond the Arab literary and theatrical systems described above. The ongoing Israeli–Arab conflict causes many Israeli Jews to see Arabic culture as hostile and inferior. It remains to be seen whether and how the resolution of the conflict will affect translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew in general and Arabic drama translations in particular.

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CHAPTER 3

Interference of the Hebrew language in translations from modern Hebrew literature into Arabic*

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General interference of the Hebrew language in spoken Arabic among Israeli Arabs has become increasingly widespread. It was therefore only natural that in Arabic translations from modern Hebrew literature in Israel interference from the source language should appear in the target language. In the translations of the 1950s and 1960s this interference was limited, primarily because of an inclination to the extreme of acceptability. In the translations of the 1970s and 1980s, however, it became more frequent, both because general interference increased and because of the translators’ inclination to the extreme of adequacy and to work in small units. In translations which appeared in the Arab world the number of interferences of the source language in the target language was limited, both because of the lack of direct contact with Hebrew culture and because the translators leaned towards the extreme of equivalence and tended to work in bigger units.

Keywords: interference, Hebrew–Arabic translations, Arabs in Israel, Israeli–Arab conflict

Interference as a general feature of translation

“Linguistic interference” refers to the intervention and reflection of the repertoire, rules and norms of a specific language (in the present study, Hebrew) in the intentional performance of another language (in the present study, Arabic) (Weissbrod 1989: 253). Toury (1980:71–78) has suggested that interference should be considered a general feature of translation: in other words, interference occurs, to however small a degree, in every translation. He has made a number of suggestions for the formulation of a law of interference (Toury 1995:274–279):

a. In order to ensure that no interference appears in a translation, special conditions and a special effort on the part of the translator are required.

* This article is based on a chapter of my doctoral dissertation (Kayyal 2000) which was written at Tel Aviv University under the guidance of Professor Sasson Somekh.
b. Interference is expressed in two ways: ‘negative transfer’ (deviations from the rules and norms of the target system) or ‘positive transfer’ (the choice of linguistic forms and constructions already existing in the target language).

c. Interference is influenced by the mental and cognitive processes involved in the act of translation, in the course of which there takes place what Toury (1986: 81–83) calls ‘discourse transfer’ (that is to say, the source text ‘imposes itself’ on the translator).

d. There is a clear connection between linguistic interference and the translator’s tendency to relate to the source text as a collection of small and/or low-level units rather than as a complete entity.

e. The greater the consideration for the nature of the source text when the translation is being formulated, the more interference there will be, unless the translators are particularly talented.

f. Socio-cultural factors may influence the degree of tolerance of interference. Such tolerance will tend to be greater when the translation is from a particularly prestigious culture or language, or from a ‘majority’ language, especially if the target language or culture is ‘weak’ or belongs to a minority. However, the degree of tolerance of interference will not necessarily be identical on all textual and linguistic levels in the target system.

The relationship between linguistic interference in general and the interference that takes place in translation, also known as “discourse transfer”, warrants investigation in order to discover to what extent each of them encourages the occurrence of the other (Toury 1986: 81–83; Weissbrod 1989: 253). In this article I shall attempt to assess the linguistic interference of Hebrew on the Arabic language in general, and in Israel in particular. Thereafter, I shall consider the relationship between interference in general and the interference that appears in translations from modern Hebrew literature into Arabic.

The development of translation activity from modern Hebrew literature to Arabic

This translation activity has been conducted in two centers, in Israel and in the Arab world (for an extended discussion, see Kayyal 2004). These activities have, however, been separate from each other, and have been carried out in different socio-political conditions. In essence, translation activity in Israel has reflected the hegemonic attitude of the Jewish majority with respect to the Arab minority. Most translations have been initiated, financed and supervised by the establishment, belonging to the culture of the Hebrew source. By contrast, translation activity in the Arab world has primarily reflected the aspiration to “know one’s enemy”. It appears, however, that this activity is marginal and isolated in relation to the Arabic target culture in Israel and the
Arab world. It would seem that the culture of the Hebrew source is seen by the Arab minority in Israel as the majority culture, but that the cultural links between the Arabs of Israel and the Arab world, which have grown stronger over the years, have enriched local literature with stylistic and linguistic models (Mustafa 1986: 208–209), thereby marginalizing Arabic translations of Hebrew literature.

One of the outstanding features of translation activity in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s was the involvement of elements of the establishment who hoped to create translated texts with the social and ideological aspiration of being accepted in the Arabic target culture. They were encouraged to act in this way by the cultural vacuum within the Palestinian population of Israel, created by the flight of most of the Palestinian intellectuals and the isolation of this population from the Arab world (Kanafani 1968: 11; Rekhes 1981: 181). The translators were for the most part Jews originating from Arab states, such as Benjamin Zakai (born 1927), Meir Hadad (1914–1983), Ezra Hadad (1900–1976), Eliahu Agassi (born 1909) and Tuviah Shamosh (1914–1982). They adopted a policy that included tendentious deletions, and chose linguistic elements in Arabic with an elevated stylistic register. The works selected for translation expressed the Zionist consensus in Israel. The status of this set of translations was in constant decline in the Arab target culture in Israel, especially in view of the resurgence of nationalism among the Arab population. It was eroded even further by the fervent opposition of anti-establishment Arab elements to official cultural activity, and their aspiration to provide a platform for Hebrew writers who were ideologically close to them, even though their works were sometimes marginal within the Hebrew source culture.

During the 1970s and 1980s this establishment-orientated translation policy declined, and no clear alternative framework has evolved to replace it. Most translation activity was now conducted by independent agencies supported by the establishment, and most of the active translators were young Palestinians educated in Israel, such as Anton Shammas (born 1950), Muhammad Hamza Ghanayim (1953–2004) and Salman Natur (born 1949). The decline of direct overt involvement of the establishment in translation activity, and the crisis of values in the Hebrew source literature (Shaked 1998: 19–30) led to increased freedom of expression and made it possible to choose ‘anti-establishment’ works for translation. Consequently, most translators were more faithful to the original text, and this expressed itself in clear intervention of Hebrew in their translations, and in lack of stylistic and linguistic unity. This approach, which relates to Hebrew culture as hegemonic, deepened the isolation of this translation activity in the eyes of the Arab target population, which did not accept its hegemonic attitude. It is, therefore, not surprising that the two outstanding exponents of this translation policy, Shammas and Ghanayim, ceased to engage in translation. It seems that the severe political criticism to which their activity was subjected by Arabic elements in Israel and abroad, and the feelings of discomfort aroused by their attempts to bridge the gap between the two mutually alienated cultures, led to their retirement from translation (Shammas 1985; Ghanayim 1986, 1997).
In the wake of the defeat of 1967 the interest of the Arab world in Israeli society, culture and literature increased, translation being one of the means of accessing and researching Hebrew literature. Most of the scholars and translators did not consider that Hebrew literature had any aesthetic value, and therefore did not view the material translated as literary texts whose translation demanded effort and skill. They used strictly literary language (Fuṣḥa), and tended to delete and/or interpret the contents of the source text in a way which was consistent with the stereotypes of the Jew/Israeli/Zionist current in Arab society.

General interference of Hebrew in Arabic, and its influence on translation activity

A good deal of research has shown that interference of Hebrew in the Arabic spoken in Israel is widespread. In the view of Muhammad Amara (1999: 205–215), this is mainly a result of the fact that Hebrew is the dominant language in the process of the modernization of Palestinian Arab society in Israel, and a knowledge of Hebrew is a means of reaching economic, educational and cultural levels similar to those of Jewish society. On the other hand, Amara emphasizes that various factors also led to the limitation of Hebrew interference. Among these factors were the following:

a. Palestinian Arabs in Israel, who wished to emphasize their unique identity in a state which was considered to be Jewish, saw the Arabic language as an important means of expressing their national identity. It is therefore not surprising that Arab intellectuals in Israel, motivated by nationalism, expressed extreme hostility to Hebrew interference.

b. The Arab–Israel conflict increased the tensions between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

c. The fact that they lived in separate areas limited the contacts between the two peoples.

Further, Amara points out that there are distinct differences between the degree of interference of Hebrew in spoken Arabic in Israeli Palestinian society, where it is considerable, and in the Palestinian society of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where it is more limited. These differences result from the divergent political, social and economic circumstances of the two societies. On the other hand, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank there is clear evidence of the interference of English, as in most parts of the Arab world.

There are, however, various factors, some of them conflicting, which appear to have influenced the degree of tolerance of interference in this translation activity:

a. Interference of Hebrew in the Arabic spoken in Israel does not necessarily indicate tolerance of interference in translations from Hebrew to Arabic. As noted above, the degree of tolerance of interference will not necessarily be identical at every textual and linguistic level of the target system. As far as I know, there has as yet been
no extensive research of the interference of Hebrew in written Arabic and original
Arabic literature in Israel, but my impression is that it is limited, particularly com-
pared with its counterpart in spoken Arabic.\footnote{See, for instance, Elad’s (1993) comments on Riyad Baydas’s avoidance of the use of Hebrew words, except in exceptional cases.} Thus, it is clear that tolerance of the
interference of Hebrew in translations is influenced by two conflicting factors: the
norm favourable to interference in the spoken language, and the norm restricting
interference in literary language.

b. The lack of linguistic editing in most of the translations in this translation activity
may increase the scope of interference, since the linguistic editor is usually less de-
pendent on the original text than the translator.

c. The affinity between lexical items and grammatical and syntactic constructions
in Hebrew and Arabic, both of which are Semitic languages (See, e.g., Rosenheuz

In the following paragraphs I shall attempt to assess the degree of tolerance of Heb-
rew interference and the deviations from the rules and norms of Arabic to which such
interference leads in this type of translation activity.

Limited interference in the translations of the 1950s and 1960s

As has been noted above, most of the translators of the 1950s and 1960s were Jews who
had been born in Arab countries but saw themselves as belonging to Hebrew culture.
This situation of linguistic and cultural duality could have increased the possibilities
of Hebrew interference in their translations. But they leaned towards the extreme of
acceptability, and it was this inclination, apparently, that limited interference in their
work.

Such interference as does occur appears in various ways, such as the preservation
of Hebrew syntactic constructions, infringement of the norms and rules of Arabic, se-
matic loan-translations of Hebrew idioms and phrases, etc.

Here are some examples:

1. TT: wa-zawj ḥidhā’ mushawwah al-shakl (Peretz / Anonymous 1955:13)
   ST: ve-zug na’alayim me’oqamut (Peretz 1949:81)
   ET: And a misshapen pair of shoes.\footnote{TT=Target Text; ST=Source Text; ET=English Text (my gloss of ST).}
2. TT: innahā ḥajarah karīmah tashi’ nour(an) muḍī’ah (Peretz / Anonymous 1955:
   12)
   ST: zo hiy even yiqrahah… hiy qurinit… hiy ma’irah…(Peretz 1949:78)
   ET: This is a precious stone… it shines.... it gives off light.
3. TT: wa-laqad ḥāwalt an aqif min afwāh al-nās ‘alā kunkh raḥmū hadhā wa-sirat

   ...
 Hathatih falam afuz minhum bi-ta’il... kanaat aqwâluhum fihi muta’dâribah (Burla/Hadad 1955: 5)

ST: keshebikashti lehakir et tivou, korotav ve’avaru shel ra’hmu mipi habriot — hau divrihin meqouta’im (Burla 1929:10).

ET: When I tried to find out from people Ra’hmu’s nature, his history and his past, their words were disjointed.


ET: “I couldn’t sleep. I’d been away from work too long […]”

“Certainly, my son, certainly. There’s nothing like work for lightening a man’s heart of worries and suffocation” […] “And where do you work now? Nearby, or far away?”


ET: On the eve of the new month I went to the Western Wall, as Jerusalemites who go to pray at the Western Wall on the eve of the new month are wont to do […] with new immigrants whom the Lord had brought to their place but who had not yet found their place […], After I had written the address, she added: ‘Now, my son, lift up your hand and write a decorative lamed. You’ve written it? Show me how it came out.

In the first example the loan translation of the combination zug na’alayim into zawj ḥidhâ does not accord with the linguistic norms of standard Arabic.

In the second example, since the word even [stone] is feminine in Hebrew, the translator added a feminine suffix to the word hajar (stone), clearly as the result of the influence of Hebrew; but this new word hajara does not bear mean ‘stone’ in standard Arabic.
In the third example the two loan translations which appear together make the translated text unwieldy and unintelligible. And, in fact, the loan-translation of the combination mipi habriot, min afwāḥ al-nās, is on the border-line between the two parts of the combination aqif ‘alā kunh, which is also, in my view, a loan-translation from Hebrew (apparently a translation of the combination la’amod’ al tivo, which does not appear in the original text; instead there appears the combination lehakir et tivo.)

In the fourth example the unwieldy style of the translation stems from source-language interference. Thus, for instance, the sentence mā qadirt an anam akthar (I could not sleep any more) seems unwieldy because of the translator’s attempt to find an equivalent for the lexeme ‘od (yet), while ignoring the overall significance of the sentence (note the beginning of the sentence, mā qadirt, in which there is much in common between the literary and the spoken tongue). In addition, the translator has preserved the syntactic construction of the Hebrew sentence, and has even made an attempt to imitate the source phonetically: wa-qad baṭalt ‘an al-‘amal muddah ṭawilah (I had already been absent from work too much). In this instance the verb baṭalt is phonetically close to the Hebrew verb nivtalit, even though in literary Arabic (Fuṣḥā) the use of the combination baṭul min al-‘amal (not ‘an, as in the translation) is rare, and the customary expression is aṣbah ‘ātīl(an) ‘an al-‘amal. The sentence vehikhan ‘avodatka hayom? (Where is your work today?) is translated : wa-fī ayy maḥ all al-yaūm? The beginning of the sentence looks like a calque from colloquial Arabic ‘Amiyya, and in the second part the construction of the Hebrew sentence is preserved: ‘avodatka hayom = ‘amaluk al-yaūm. Thus, in my view this sentence violates the norms of standard Arabic, since it would have been possible to say wa-ayn ta’mal hālī(an) in correct Fuṣḥā.

In the fifth example there are semantic loan translations, particularly of phrases and expressions connected with Jewish and Israeli culture. Some of these have become stock equivalents of particular expressions and phrases in Hebrew, such as qādimūn judud for ‘olim ḥadasim (new immigrants). Other loan-translations constitute unnatural solutions, since they are based on Hebrew phrases and expressions which are broken up, and their constituents are translated in sequence, with no consideration for their functional appropriateness: for instance, hakotel hama ḥaravi (the Western Wall), al-ḥā’it al-gharbi (the usual Arabic expression is ḥā’it al-burāq or ḥā’it al-mabkā) (al-Dabbagh 1988: 28 and more). The translation of ‘erev rosh hodesh (the eve of the new month) as waqafat ra’s al-shahr is also deceptive. Waqfa means holiday eve, usually referring to the Muslim holidays, and in particular to the Sacrifice Holiday (Eid el-Adha), when the pilgrims stand (waqaf) on Mount Arafat at the end of the festival of the Haj. The use of this lexeme, waqfa, which is unmistakably connected with Islam, obscures the significance of the loan translation used here.

In some of the sentences in these examples there are clear instances of translation in small units, which divorces the words from their context and preserves the original syntax and grammar. Similarly, there are instances of the use of words phonetically similar to Hebrew words. For example, in the sentence ba’d an katabt al-tārikh adāfat wa-qālat (after I had written the date she continued and said), on the one hand the
translator chose equivalents phonetically similar to the Hebrew lexemes *katabt* = *kata-vti* (I wrote) and *tārīkh* = *ta’arikh* (date). On the other hand, he preserved the syntactic construction of the Hebrew, particularly at the end of the sentence, *hosifa ve’amra, aḍāfat wa-qālat* (instead of *aḍāfat qā’ilaḥ*, as is usual in standard Arabic). The same phenomenon, the preservation of the Hebrew syntactic construction and the preference for equivalents phonetically similar to Hebrew lexemes, is also repeated when the syntactic construction is incomplete: *Katavta? Hareini hei’akh yatza* (You’ve written? Show me how it came out) = *katabt? arini ka‘if katabt*. In this sentence, under the influence of Hebrew, the translator deleted the interrogatory word: the complete syntactic construction in standard *Fuṣḥā* requires the addition of ‘*a* or *hal*. Similarly, phonetic imitation of the Hebrew text can be seen.

Two further comments on deviation from the rules and norms of standard Arabic in the translations of the 1950s and 1960s are appropriate here:

a. Not all the deviations from the norms and rules of standard Arabic are due to Hebrew interference. Some of them are the result of hasty work and lack of the ability to write correct *Fuṣḥā*.

b. Some of the translations were republished in later editions, thus affording an opportunity for editing and linguistic amendment, by the translator himself or by an independent editor. This can be discerned even by a perfunctory glance at the titles of the works in Zipin’s book (1980). For instance, Bialik’s *Ba’arov Hayom* (When Day Fades) was translated by Benjamin Zakkai in 1957 under the title *‘eind ghurūb al-nahār*. It was republished in 1965, again in Zakkai’s translation, under the title *‘eind al-aṣīl* (Zipin 1980: 22). Clearly, in the later edition the unidiomatic and unnatural phrasing of the first one was changed to a lexeme of a higher linguistic level.

**Increased interference in the translations of the 1970s and 1980s**

The lack of linguistic and stylistic unity which characteristics most of the translations of the 1970s and 1980s in Israel is evidence of work in small linguistic units at the time of translation, making source-language interference all the more likely. For instance, if in the 1950s and 1960s translators used only Hebrew words associated with Jewish religion and culture, in the 1970s and 1980s words from other spheres of life also appeared in the translations. Sometimes the increase of interference in these translators’ versions led to adverse criticism. Thus, for example, Shmuel Moreh expressed his reservations with regard to Anton Shammas’s linguistic innovations, which were influenced by Hebrew, in his translation of a collection of poems by David Rokeah, *min ṣa‘īf ilā ṣa‘īf* (*Mikayitz lekayitz — From Summer to Summer, 1977*): “Anton Shammas’s temerity and his disregard of the Arabic dictionary perplex the reader; it is hard to understand the meaning of these new words even in the context of the poem being translated.” (Moreh 1979: 327)

In my view, there were two main reasons for the increased number of interferences in the work of translators in this period:
a. The increased tendency towards adequacy in translation and towards working in small units.
b. The steadily growing penetration of Hebrew into different strata of the Arabic language, and particularly of the spoken tongue of the Arab population of Israel.

The interference of Hebrew in the translations of the 1970s and 1980s expressed itself in the following ways:

a. Deviation from the norms and linguistic rules of the Arabic language.
b. Preservation of Hebrew syntactic constructions.
c. Semantic loan translations and neologisms.
d. Use of Hebrew words in Arabic transliteration.
e. Use of words phonetically similar to those in the original utterance.

I shall now attempt to explain and illustrate these phenomena in the translations of the period.

**Deviation from the norms and linguistic rules of the Arabic language**

In the work of the translators of the 1970s and 1980s, and particularly that of Anton Shammas, Muhammad Hamzah Ghanayim and Antwan Shalhat, there are deviations from the norms and rules of standard Arabic. These may be expressed, for instance, in deviations from standard syntactic and grammatical constructions, in the splitting up of idiomatic combinations, in neologisms, and the like.

In my view, a number of factors led to the increase of such “aberrations”:

1. The pronounced interference of Hebrew in these translations.
2. These authors’ desire to display their linguistic prowess led to the use of rare words and bold linguistic innovations, which did not always suit either the context or the rules of Arabic lexicography.
3. Further reasons for the increase in deviations from the norm were lack of proficiency in the writing of literary Arabic, hasty work, the absence of linguistic editing, and the low prestige of the original works and/or of their translations.

It should be pointed out that second editions of some of these translations were published, thus affording the translators and/or their editors an opportunity to correct these errors, but few of them did so.

Here are some examples of these deviations from the norm:

   ST: mani’ haḥaiyal biroshu le’eiver Issachar hamesaqel bagan she’ala perea (Kahana-Karmon 1966: 98).
   ET: The soldier moved his head towards Issachar who was picking up stones in the garden which had grown wild.
   ST: qar‘i dapim shel te‘odut mefoḥamut (Yehoshua 1981:9).
   ET: Torn pages of sooty documents.

   In the first example the translator used the verb yahšī (to stone, throw stones at) as the equivalent of the Hebrew verb lesaqel, to remove stones, despite the semantic deviation from the source. In fact, from the translation one could understand that the person was throwing stones at the garden, whereas in the source text he was only removing stones from it. In another edition of this translation this error was corrected: yahšī was replaced by yuzīl al-hijārah (remove stones) (Kayyal and Hoffman 1995:25).

   In the second example lexical items from classical Arabic which are functionally inappropriate to the context are used: mazīq is an adjective meaning ‘torn’, though the translator apparently meant mizaq meaning ‘fragments’. Moreover, faḥmā in the sense of ‘sooty’ is anomalous, since it is customary to use faḥīmah in this sense.

Preservation of Hebrew syntactic construction
One of the outstanding features of work in small units, manifested in the translation of sentences in the source linearly, item by item, is the divorce of words from their context and the preservation of the original syntax and grammar. Here are two examples:

   ET: The children disappeared, and were found some time later near the white monastery.

2. TT: idh man alladhī yaḍman lahumā ann gīorāhum, gīorā al-ibn, lā yajlis fī nafs tilk allaḥẓah…(Yehoshua / Ghanayim 1984:8)
   ST: ki mi ya‘aruv lahem shebo‘az shelahem, bo‘az haben, einenu yoshev be‘ota sha‘a…(Yehoshua 1981:11)
   ET: For who can guarantee that their Boaz, Boaz the younger, will not sit at that time …

In the first example the syntactic construction of the source has clearly been preserved, even though this leads to a deviation from the accepted Arabic constructions — Alawlād ikhtafā instead of ikhtafā al-awlād (The children vanished); wujidū instead of ‘uthir ‘alīhim (were found).

In the second example there is a syntactic calque from Hebrew, since in Hebrew it is possible to use a possessive pronoun with a proper name in order to express affection and love; in Arabic this is not acceptable. It is true that in this example the personal noun which appears in the source is different from that which appears in the translation, perhaps because it is a different edition of the source text was used; but there is no
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doubt that the translator used a possessive pronoun with a proper name under the influence of the Hebrew giorâhum (their Giora).

*Lexical loan translations and neologisms*

There are two main reasons for the occurrence of loan translations and linguistic innovations:

1. When there are culture-specific items where original semantic meaning is difficult to convey in the target language.\(^3\)
2. The tendency to translate each word separately, without considering its function in the overall context, is expressed in the translation of idiomatic combinations split into their constituents, with each component translated separately. Such a translation leads to semantic deviation from the source, and to the use of meaningless phrases.

Here are two examples:

   ET: The green was pale after serving for years in a steamy hothouse.

2. TT: anta ahl lidhalik, shâb kal-arzah, ilâ an tasqût fi al-shibâk wa-lâ tastaqût al-najâh (Balas / Ighbariya 1979: 82).  
   ST: magei’ lakha, baḥur ke’erez, ‘ad shetipul bareshet velou tokhal lehi’altez (Balas 1979: 119).  
   ET: You deserve it, you sturdy lad, until you fall into the net and can’t get out.

In the first example the translator (Shammas) apparently thought that there was a semantic void in Arabic in relation to the word ḥamama (greenhouse, glasshouse). Therefore, he tried to convey the missing content by the innovative al-mukhtadarah al-tadfa’iyyah: the first lexeme is derived from the verb ikhtadar (to eat [fruit] before it is ripe), and the second is from the verb tadfa’ (to heat up in). It may be pointed out that there is in fact an Arabic lexeme equivalent to ḥamama — daffah — but that the translator was apparently unaware of this.

In the second example the idiomatic combination baḥur ke’erez (a lad like a cedar — a sturdy lad) was translated literally, each word separately, with no consideration for its functional suitability; thus, there is a clear semantic deviation from the source.

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3. Javier Franco Aixelà (1996) points to two main types of intercultural manipulation with regard to culture-specific items: Preservation — by repeated use, transliteration, linguistic (rather than cultural) translation, extratextual annotations (footnotes), and intertextual annotations (explications in the body of the text); Conversion — by synonyms, universal terms, cultural equivalents in the target language, omission, and neologism.
Use of Hebrew words in Arabic transliteration
As we have noted, the translators of the 1970s and 1980s used Hebrew words from various spheres — not only from Jewish religion and culture, as was the custom in the 1950s and 1960s. Here are two examples:

1. TT: fatā mukarzal al-sha’r a’tāhā burtuqālah (Kaniuk / Shammas 1974: 238).
   ST: baḥur meqorzal se’ar natan lah tabuḥ-zahav (Kaniuk 1979: 13).
   ET: A boy with curly hair gave her an orange.

   ST: ma eish la’arbushe la’sut be’in ḥarud (Keinan 1984: 44).
   ET: What’s an Arabush doing in Ein Harod?

In the first example the borrowed lexeme mukarzal (curly) is constructed in accordance with the Arabic grammatical rules; so much so that it seems to the reader that this is an Arabic word, particularly since there is a similar root in classical literary Arabic: karzam (‘to eat for half a day’).

In the second example the translator has used a lexeme in vulgar Hebrew parlance which appears in the source text: ‘arbūsh (Arabush, a derogatory word for an Arab). The translator’s use of this lexeme is accompanied by a note to the effect that it is ‘a derogatory term for Arab in the Hebrew language’, in order to express his aversion towards the use of this word, which has, naturally, not been accepted into the Arabic language spoken in Israel.

Use of words phonetically similar to those in the original utterance
Hebrew interference is also expressed in the choice of Arabic words phonetically similar to Hebrew ones. In my view, there are two reasons for this:

1. The close relationship between Arabic and Hebrew, particularly since there exist certain lexical items which are phonetically and etymologically identical in the two languages.

2. Research has shown that hasty work and lack of proficiency strengthen the tendency to use words phonetically similar to those in the source.

Sometimes the close affinity between Hebrew and Arabic makes it possible to use ‘positive transfer’ (see above) without semantic, syntactic and/or grammatical irregularity. Translators do not always, however, pay attention to the term’s functional appropriateness in the given context. Similarly, the words chosen may be in different registers, and therefore inappropriate.

Here are two examples of this type of interference:

ET: From the blue of the distant sea within which the sun shivers.
ST: hethalkha bein ohalinu hadolfim (Shamosh 1990: 136).
ET: She went around between our leaking tents.

In the first example the translator, Shammas, translated the verb *pirper* by an Arabic verb which is both phonetically and etymologically close to it: *farfar* (to shiver). The Arabic verb occurs in both the literary and the spoken language, although it has a different meaning in each. Its meaning in the spoken language is the same as that of the Hebrew verb *pirper*.

In the second example the lexeme *al-dālifah* exists both in the literary and the spoken language, but only in the spoken language does it have the same sense as the phonetically identical lexeme *hadolefet* (leaking).

**Lack of tolerance of interference in translation in the Arab world**

Lack of tolerance of Hebrew interference in the Arabic language in the Arab world, both because Hebrew is a minority language and because of the ongoing Israeli–Arab conflict, makes it more likely that such interference will be very limited in translations produced in the Arab world. In my view, the lack of interference stems from a number of causes:

a. Unlike the situation in Israel, in the Arab world there is no general interference of Hebrew in the Arabic language, since, as a result of the ongoing conflict, there is no direct contact between the two cultures.

b. The fact that the translators do not have a good command of the Hebrew language, and their tendency to use the translated texts in order to prove their case against Israeli society and Zionist ideology have led them to prefer to process larger units of text. When this approach is used, the possibility of interference is lower.

c. In several instances the translators have used mediating translations in English. In such cases it is likely that any interference will be from English rather than (the original) Hebrew.

Here are some examples of Hebrew interference in translations done in the Arab world:

ST: ohi! Tafasta oti bamila. az be’emet bo na’seh targil behigayun ubepsikhillogia vnir’eh eif omdim. ha? (Edelist 1970: 11)
ET: Aha! You’ve caught me out with my own words! So, really, let’s do an exercise in logic and psychology and see where we stand. OK?

2. TT: wa-lakin laīs ‘an musabibāt al-hubb wa-muthīrāt al-surūr fī nafsî ji’t li-‘alḵī


ET: But this time I haven’t come to talk to you about love affairs and things that make me happy.

3. TT1: ayn! laqad kān shuīūkhunā yaksirūn ruʿūsaham dhāth yaūm min ajl qiṭ’at arḍ (Yezhar / Faiyad 1988:33).


ET: Of course not! Once upon a time our old folk would have broken each others’ heads over a bit of land.


ST: ve’ani ‘omid nesh’an ‘al hagemara haptoḥa (Ben Zion 1929:343).

ET: And I still rely on the open Gemara,


ET: Even though he will cunningly leave a broad bridge to retreat and escape.


ST: obaqbuq tzev’uni shel nargila, le’ishun tabaq (Shmueli 1969:112).

ET: And a coloured nargila jar, to smoke tobacco.

In the first example one can see that the two Hebrew phrases have been broken up into their components, and each of these has been translated separately with no functional correspondence to the context. *Tafasta oti bamila* (You’ve caught me out with my own words), *akhadhtanī bikalimah*; *Vnir’eh eifo anaḥnu ‘omdim* (Let’s see where we stand), *linarā ayn naqif*.

In the second example the translator has preserved the syntactic structure of the source text. He has also broken up the clause *bati lesaper* (I have come to tell) into its components: *ji’t li-‘aḥkī*.

In the third example the incomplete syntactic structure of *efo!* (Literally: Where?, meaning “of course not!”) has been preserved in both translations, of Faiyad and of al-Shami: ayn!, a meaningless phrase in Arabic. They have both tried to deal with the idiomatic Hebrew combination *meshabrim et harosh* (breaking their heads), Faiyad by morphological adaptation [semantic loan translation] *yaksirin ru’ūsaham* (breaking their heads), and al-Shami by the unnatural and meaningless *yafqidūn ru’ūsaham* (losing their heads). In both instances there is a clear semantic shift from the source.
In the fourth example the translator used the Hebrew word in Arabic transliteration, al-gemara, because this term is specific to Jewish religion and culture. It is also possible that the translator did not know that the Gemara is, in fact, the Talmud.

In the fifth example the translator has broken up the Hebrew combination yotir gesher rahav lehisog (will leave a broad bridge to retreat) into its components; it is translated word by word, and the Arabic version is, therefore, meaningless.

In the sixth example the translator chose two Arabic words, narjila, al-ṭabāq, on the strength of their similarity to two phonetically identical words in the Hebrew text, even though other Arabic words which supply the same semantic information exist.

Conclusion

In the course of time interference of Hebrew in the Arabic spoken in Israel has spread, as has interference in translations from modern Hebrew literature into Arabic appearing in Israel. In the 1950s and 1960s these translations rarely infringed on the rules of Arabic, such as linguistic innovations, loan translations and the like. But since the 1970s, as the degree of general interference of Hebrew in Arabic and the tendency towards adequate (literal) translation grew, the scope of these phenomena increased greatly, and the influence of Hebrew on the language of translation can be clearly discerned. On the other hand, in the translations which have appeared in the Arab world, as a result of the fact that there were no close contacts between translators and the source language, and that these contacts were sometimes indirect, interference has been extremely limited.

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Chapter 3. Translations from modern Hebrew literature into Arabic


CHAPTER 4

Implications of Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism for translation research

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Research conducted within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies in Israel tends to disregard the implications of Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism for translation. To promote research on this issue, the paper refers briefly to some sites of translation activity involving Arabic, Russian and other languages besides Hebrew. An analysis of one text (an episode from *The Simpsons*, broadcast by Israeli television with Hebrew and Arabic subtitles) provides a preliminary insight into translation norms. In trying to attract attention to the relevance of Israeli multilingualism for translation, the paper responds to the criticism directed at Israeli Descriptive Translation Studies for (a) insisting on ideological neutrality while, in fact, the concentration on Hebrew as a target language may testify to ideological preferences, and (b) putting too little stress on the power relations involved in translation, which have become a major issue in the discipline.

Keywords: Descriptive Translation Studies, ideology, multiculturalism, multilingualism, norms, subtitles

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of a lacuna in the research conducted in the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies in Israel, namely the disregard of two related phenomena. One is the translation of texts produced outside Israel into languages other than Hebrew, which takes place in Israel and is intended for Israelis. The other is the translation taking place between the languages of Israel, which usually involves Hebrew as either the source or target language.

Since the 1970s Israel has been the site of one of the major branches of Descriptive Translation Studies: the Tel Aviv School (Weissbrod 1998). Israeli researchers affiliated with that school have been involved in descriptive research, using polysystem theory (Even-Zohar 1990, 2005a) and the concept of norms (Toury 1995) to examine translation in its historical context. Working within Israeli culture, in which Hebrew is the dominant language, and committed to a target-oriented approach, they have dealt mainly with translation into Hebrew (e.g. Toury 1980, 1995, 1998; Shavit 1986, 1992; Even-Zohar 1990, 2005a; Weissbrod 1991; Ben-Shahar 1994; Du-Nour 1995; Amit-
Kochavi 1996, 2004, 2006; Ben-Ari 1997, 2006). Given that the revival of Hebrew as a modern language started outside Israel, in late 18th-century Europe, research has encompassed Hebrew translation in both Europe and Israel, including the pre-State era. In studying the past, researchers have dealt with the implications of the Hebrew–Yiddish diglossia and the close relations with German and Russian for the history of Hebrew translation (e.g. Shavit 1986; Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 1995; Ben-Ari 1997). However, with a few exceptions (Amit-Kochavi 1996, 2004, 2006; Kayyal 2004, 2006), hardly any attention has been paid to the multilingualism and multiculturalism of contemporary Israel, which manifests itself in translation.

This deficiency can be explained in more than one way. Research has probably been constrained by the researchers’ linguistic proficiency. Moreover, the majority of researchers have been interested in literary translation while Israeli multilingualism is more apparent in areas such as community and court interpreting and translation for the media. However, the lacuna may also be ascribed to one of the weaknesses of Descriptive Translation Studies according to its critics, namely that it puts too little stress on the power relations involved in translation (Hermans 1999: 97), which have become a major issue in the discipline (see, for instance, Venuti 1995; Álvarez and Vidal 1996; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002; Cronin 2003). The Israeli branch of Descriptive Translation Studies has also been criticized for its alleged ideological and political neutrality—a stand which contemporary thinking tends to distrust (Gentzler 1993: 123, 141; Hermans 1999: 36). This article considers the possibility that despite this insistence on neutrality, researchers have in practice succumbed to an ideology, namely one that puts Hebrew and Hebrew culture above other languages and sub-cultures in Israel. Acknowledging this and giving more attention to other languages that take part in translation activities conducted in Israel might lead Israeli Descriptive Translation Studies in new directions and bring it closer to more recent trends in Translation Studies.

To promote this line of thinking, the present article will refer briefly to some sites of translation activity that illustrate Israeli multilingualism. An analysis of one text (an episode from *The Simpsons*, broadcast by Israeli television with Hebrew and Arabic subtitles) will provide a preliminary insight into translation norms. However, before discussing translation, a short survey of Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism seems to be in order.

**Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism: Past and present**

The linguistic situation in Israel is in line with Cronin’s observations with regard to minorities and minority languages: “[…] the notion of a minority language is not a static but a dynamic concept […] Minorities are always relational, one is a minority in relation to someone or something else. All languages, therefore, are potentially minority languages” (Cronin 1998: 151). While some of the languages used by Israel’s minori-
ties belong to the most widespread languages on earth, its dominant language, Hebrew, is a minority language in a global context. Since the 19th century, Hebrew was transformed from a non-working language used mainly for religious purposes into a “living” one. This process was initiated by the Jewish Enlightenment Movement in Europe and was continued by Zionism (Kuzar 2001). In pre-State Israel, under the British mandate, Hebrew was acknowledged as an official language, a status it shared with English and Arabic. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, the status of English as an official language was cancelled and two official languages, Hebrew and Arabic, remained. In practice, Hebrew is the dominant one. Protected not just by law but also by Zionist ideology and the melting-pot policy of previous years (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999; Even-Zohar 2005b), it is nowadays used in all areas of culture by the majority of the population of 7 million people (the data here and elsewhere are based on Statistical Abstract of Israel 2005).

Arabic is used by 1.3 million Israeli Arabs (the number refers to Israeli citizens and not to the inhabitants of the territories occupied by Israel since 1967). Despite its status as an official language, Arabic is peripheral in practice and often absent in official documents, street signs, etc. While Israeli Arabs start studying Hebrew at school in the third grade, few Israeli Jews are fluent in Arabic (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999). This can be explained by Israel’s view of itself as part of the Western world and by an aversion to Arabic caused by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the enmity between Israel and parts of the Arab world.

Since Israel is a country of immigrants, many other languages are used as well. Among them Russian deserves a special mention. “Imported” to Israel by the immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it became widespread again following the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in the 1990s. The immigrants number more than 900,000, almost as large a group as Israeli Arabs. Other languages are used by smaller groups. These include Yiddish and Ladino (still used by parts of the elderly population; Yiddish is also the language of those Orthodox Jews who object to the secularization of Hebrew), Amharic and Tigrigna (used by about 70,000 immigrants from Ethiopia), Georgian and Ukrainian (about one third of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union are from the Ukraine). Guest workers from Eastern Europe (Romania, Poland), East Asia and Africa also participate in making Israel a multilingual country.

However, while in previous years the use of the immigrants’ languages was restricted by Zionism and the melting-pot policy, they are now used openly in public arenas as well. This change, which can be ascribed to globalization, post-modernism and its local variant, post-Zionism, is particularly relevant to the recent immigration from the FSU. This immigration differs from previous ones not just by its size but also in that it has been motivated by economic considerations and an awareness of the growing anti-Semitism in East Europe rather than by Zionist zeal. Culturally, the immigrants regard themselves as members of a sophisticated European culture, and their aspiration to integrate into Israeli society often mingles with a low esteem for the local culture (Galper 1995; Gomel 2006). The inclination of the immigrants to preserve their original culture
has led to the establishment of a “cultural autonomy”, consisting of newspapers, publishing houses, theatres and cultural events in Russian.

An outline of the linguistic situation in Israel cannot be complete without mentioning English. Although English is no longer an official language, and although only few Israelis use it to communicate with each other, it is a constant presence in the life of Israelis. English is one of the main subjects studied at school, and even Israelis who cannot read or write English are familiar with its sounds (in 2004 120 full-length films out of a total of 228 were imported from the US) and graphics (English appears in road signs, billboards, advertisements, names of shops and restaurants, etc.). This is due to its status as the major language of international communication (Crystal 1997; House 2003) and the growing Americanization of Israel, which is not limited to the linguistic sphere (Rebhun and Waxman 2000; Segev 2002).

Implications of Israeli multilingualism for translation

Translating into languages other than Hebrew: Israeli television as a case in point

Translations of foreign texts into languages other than Hebrew are provided daily by Israeli television. From the time it was launched in 1968 until the early 1990s, there was a single publicly owned channel (Channel 1) financed by fees paid by owners of radio and television sets. To this day, Channel 1 broadcasts imported films and programs with subtitles — the cheapest mode of translation for a country with a small population like Israel. In accord with the Israel Broadcasting Authority Law, the subtitles are bilingual, in Hebrew and Arabic (Tokatli 2000; Schechter n.d.). The Hebrew subtitle is symbolically positioned above the Arabic one. Moreover, since subtitling involves condensation of the original dialogue, and translation into two languages at the same time means a double condensation, translation is solely into Hebrew when the original dialogue is dense or considered important (for example, in the BBC adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays). This provides more space on the screen for the Hebrew translation. The marginal position of the Arabic translation is also manifest in the manner of its production: it is usually mediated through the Hebrew translation and dependent on it (see below).

Since the 1990s, Israeli television has been undergoing drastic changes resulting from the emergence of the private sector. Two new channels, 2 and 10, financed by commercials, were inaugurated in 1993 and 2002 respectively. Both operate under the Second Radio and Television Authority Law, which dictates that at least 5% of their broadcasts must be either produced in, or translated into, Arabic, in addition to 5% in Russian (Tokatli 2000; Schechter n.d.). However, it is not legislation but commercial considerations that account for the new policy of Channel 10 — to provide Russian translation regularly, in both local and imported films and programs.
The new commercial orientation of Israeli television is also manifest in the establishment of several cable and satellite companies, recently merged into two (Hot and Yes, respectively), which offer television to subscribers. Each of them broadcasts dozens of non-local channels in addition to local ones, many of which (e.g. Hallmark, MGM, TCM, BBC Prime) provide Hebrew translation in the form of subtitles. Besides Hebrew, Russian has become a major target language. Russian translation in the form of subtitles, or voice-over, or both, is provided on both premium and non-premium channels, including the “high brow” ones on nature, history and geography. Russian voice-over has become feasible due to the move to digital broadcasting, which enables spectators to choose a target language from a list of options. Immigrants from the FSU favor this mode of translation because they were accustomed to it in their countries of origin. Hot and Yes, for their part, are eager to satisfy the needs of the immigrants because of their high percentage among the subscribers (Galily 2004). According to Noah Atlan of Yes (personal communication, May 2006), 25% of the company’s subscribers are Russian-speaking.

Compared with Hebrew and Russian, Arabic has not gained much from the new developments. The satellite company offers Arabic subtitles on its cinema channels, the ones in which it invests the most. The cable company offers even less because Arab villages in outlying regions do not always have the infrastructure needed for cable television. In fact, many Israeli Arabs install a dish and receive non-coded satellite broadcasts for free, not through the Israeli satellite company. Thus they can watch the many Arabic channels accessible in the Middle East.

According to Amit Schechter, former legal advisor to the Israel Broadcasting Authority, Israeli mass media legislation puts Arabic on a par with Russian, though Arabic, unlike Russian, represents a national minority interested in retaining its national identity. Pinto (2007), who analyzes the position of Arabic compared with Russian in Israeli law in general, came to the conclusion that both need legislative protection, but the need of Arabic — despite its status as an official language — is greater. One might claim that Israeli Arabs are not interested in Israeli television anyway. The question remains, however, whether Israeli television disregards them because they are not interested in its broadcasts, or whether their preference for foreign channels is a reaction to their neglect by local ones.

Translation between the languages of Israel: Literature and cinema

Translation between the languages of Israel, both from and into Hebrew, is significant in that it reflects the variety of languages in which Israelis produce and read texts. The following are some examples.

Hebrew as a target language: Translation of local literature into Hebrew

Israel is the home of many authors who write in languages other than Hebrew. While for some of them switching to Hebrew is just a matter of time, others regard their native
language as an integral part of their identity and have no intention of abandoning it. For many years they were refused entrance into the Association of Hebrew Authors, whose ideology is reflected in its name. In 1995 a rival association was founded which opened its gates to all Israeli authors irrespective of their language. However, there is another channel for non-Hebrew Israeli writers interested in integrating into Israeli literature, which does not clash with Hebrew ideology, namely translation. The Association of Hebrew Authors itself promotes translation of immigrants’ works into Hebrew and has established a series named *Shvut* (meaning “return”) for that purpose. The immigration from the FSU also plays an active part in this area. At least six collections of literary works by immigrants, originally written in Russian and translated into Hebrew, have been published in the past ten years.

Acceptance into Israeli literature is indicated by an author’s success in crossing the lines from a specialized publishing house, whose main mission is translating and publishing non-Hebrew local authors, into a non-specialized one. One famous example is the Israeli Arab author Emile Habiby (see Amit-Kochavi, this volume). His highly valued novel, *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*, translated into Hebrew by the (then) Israeli Arab author Anton Shammas, was published in 1995 by a central publishing house, *Hakibbutz Hameuchad*, after it had first been published in 1984 by *Mifras*, a small, radical publishing house whose expertise was Hebrew translations of Arabic literature. This occurred after Habiby was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in 1992 (Amit-Kochavi 1996, 2004). Habiby is an exception, however. Most local authors writing in languages other than Hebrew — whether Arabic, Russian or other immigrant languages — remain on the margins of Israeli culture.

**Hebrew as a target language: Local films with Hebrew subtitles**

Since the 1980s, many films produced in Israel have been bilingual and even multilingual, reflecting Israel’s multilingual reality. In films that deal with the relations between Jews and Arabs, Arab characters, usually played by Israeli Arab actors, speak their own language. This is significant, because in earlier films, even those dealing with the Israeli–Arab conflict, Arabs did not represent themselves. Their parts were played by Israeli Jewish actors who distorted Hebrew to make it sound “like Arabic”. The willingness, since the 1980s, to use authentic Arabic and Arab actors, not necessarily in the role of Arabs, in Israeli films is due to political and other reasons and reflects a less one-sided view of the conflict (cf. Shohat 1989; Gertz 1993). Translation of the Arabic parts of the dialogue is provided in the form of subtitles. Subtitles differ from re-voicing in that they do not “silence” the original, so that spectators have a chance to get used to the sounds of Arabic whether or not they understand.

The films mentioned so far were created by Israeli Jews. Films created by Israeli Arabs, in which Arabic is the main if not the sole language, are still few and occupy a marginal position in Israeli cinema (Gertz and Khleifi 2006). These films, which often stray
significantly from the Israeli ideological and political consensus, are screened only rarely in special cinema theaters such as the cinematheque, which operates in Israel’s main cities. Most Israeli filmgoers need translation to watch them.

Other Israeli films with a partly non-Hebrew dialogue deal with the life of immigrants and their relations with veteran Israelis. Halfon’s *Zirkus Palestina* (1998), which tells the story of a Russian circus performing on Arab territory ruled by the Israeli Army, is unique in that the languages spoken are Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. Most Israelis depend on translation in watching this film. Two films by the director Dover Kosashvili, the 35-minute *With Rules* (1998) and the full feature *Late Marriage* (2001), deserve special mention. Portraying the lives of Georgian families in Israel, they were innovative in that their main language was Georgian. *Late Marriage* was a great success in Israeli terms (more than 300,000 viewers), Israelis did not respond negatively to the fact that most of them needed translation to watch the film — which may be seen as evidence of a growing compliance with multilingualism.

**Hebrew as a source language: Literary translation from Hebrew into Arabic**

Literary translation from Hebrew into Arabic in Israel has been analyzed in detail by Kayyal (2004, 2006). Kayyal (2006) raises the questions of how translation from Hebrew into Arabic in Israel evolved historically, what were the main stages and how it differed from translation from Hebrew into Arabic in the Arab world. The answers testify to the hegemony of the Hebrew language and culture, including the involvement of the Israeli Zionist establishment in initiating the translation (especially in the early years of the State of Israel) and the preference for works which offer a favorable depiction of the Zionist enterprise (ibid.: 70–80). The very centrality of Hebrew as a source language and its use as a mediating language in translation from other languages further attest to its hegemony. Since Kayyal’s work confines itself to literature for adults, this article will provide one more piece of evidence for the hegemony of Hebrew from the realm of children’s literature, and more specifically — the Center for Arabic Literature for Children in Nazareth, Israel’s largest Arab city. Operating under the auspices of the Instruction Center for Public Libraries — a public institution supported by the Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport — its aim is to promote both original and translated Arabic literature for children in Israel. It is interesting to note that the list of translations produced by the center includes 21 translations of Hebrew books and only one translation of an American book (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle). Two names of translators are given. One is that of the person who translated the book into Hebrew, indicating that the Arabic translation is mediated. The exclusiveness of Hebrew as a source language may be due to financial considerations and to the fact that Arabic translations of children’s books originating in other languages can be purchased from Arab countries. Moreover, the translation of Hebrew books is in line with the center’s declared policy of building a bridge between the Hebrew and Arabic cultures in Israel and of
bringing the two populations into closer contact. However, the exclusiveness of Hebrew as a source language and the absence of translations from other languages can also be interpreted as compliance with the hegemony of Hebrew culture, which has already been observed in other fields (literature for adults, Israeli television).

Hebrew literature is also translated into the immigrants’ languages, mainly Russian. In the absence of research, evidence of such translations can be found in journalistic reports (e.g. Golan 2001; U. Shavit 2002; Lev-Ari 2004). Unlike the translation of Hebrew literature for international distribution, which comes under the responsibility of the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature (established in 1962), translation of Hebrew literature by and for the immigrants is not institutionalized. It is often carried out by non-professional translators who work for free on their own initiative and publish their translations at their own expense. If literary translation from Russian into Hebrew can be interpreted as a means to gain the acknowledgement of the hegemonic Hebrew culture (as suggested above), translation in the other direction, whose very existence remains unknown to most Israelis, requires a somewhat different explanation. Given the fact that the immigrants tend to be critical towards the local culture, including its literature, translation can be interpreted as a means of becoming reconciled with it and taking a first step towards integration. It is also possible that immigrants interested in establishing contacts with Hebrew literature find it easier to translate into their native language than the other way around.

A test case: The Simpsons

Though the purpose of this article is to draw attention to the relevance of Israeli multilingualism, a preliminary attempt will now be made to plunge into the translations themselves. The findings might serve as a basis for a future research of translational norms. The text selected is an episode from the TV series The Simpsons. This series has been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it is very witty and replete with wordplay. Comparing the Hebrew and Arabic subtitles with each other and with the English original may help clarify whether the translation of a complicated text is affected by its position in the culture. Secondly, The Simpsons is a provocative series in which people curse, get drunk and do not show much respect for religious feelings. The series has been dubbed by the MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Centre in London) for the Arab world, and great efforts have been made to “soften” it and make it fit into the target culture (Atamna 2006). This begs the question of how a translation produced in Israel but intended for an Arab audience (in Israel and perhaps abroad) treats this problematic issue.

The episode chosen is no. 306 from the 14th season. It was first aired on March 16, 2003 and broadcast on Channel 1 on September 9, 2006. Four issues that possibly pose a problem to the translators have been examined: puns, slang, references to sex and expressions of sacrilege (I thank Wijdan Atamna for back-translating and transliterating the Arabic subtitles).
Puns

1. In English, the episode is titled “C. E.D’oh!”. The “C. E. O.” hidden in the title stands for “Chief Executive Officer”, a position which Homer (the protagonist) holds at the plant where he works. “D’oh” is an annoyed grunt and Homer’s catch phrase. The Hebrew translator titled the episode “ka-homer be-yad ha-yotser”, a variation on the idiom “ka-khomer be-yad ha-yotser”, which means “like raw material in the hands of a craftsman”. “Material” is “khomer” in Hebrew. The idiom is not part of spoken Hebrew, but it fits the content of the episode in which Homer is manipulated by his boss. The Arabic translator titled the episode “Mudeer Hamm”, meaning “an important manager”. This is a play on the Arabic idiom “mudeer ‘amm” (general manager).

   Hebrew: “klab med-ushan”. The translator combined an allusion to “Club Med” with the word “medushan” which means “overweight” in Hebrew.
   Arabic: “klab medushan”. The translator has transliterated the Hebrew. The English word “club” is not used in Arabic, and since the subtitles are not vocalized, the Arab spectator may read the first word as “kilab”, meaning dogs (which are utterly irrelevant and have a strong negative connotation in Arabic). The allusion to Club Med is weaker because in the Arabic subtitle, “med” is not separated from the rest of the word.

3. English: “Make your cubicle into a you-bicle”.
   Hebrew: “tahafokh et ha-ta shelkha la-‘ata shelkha?”. The words mean: “turn your cubicle into ‘your you?’”. The rhyme is retained.
   Arabic: “hawwil khaliyyataka ila anta thataka”. The Arabic translator has been misled by the Hebrew “ta”, which means a little room but also a cell (in biology). The word he has used is the Arabic equivalent of a cell. In Arabic, a small room is called “qumrah”, “hujayrah” or “maqsoorah”.

4. English: “Bleeder of the Pack” (the name of a television show watched by Homer’s children).
   Hebrew: “manhig mi-beten u-mi-klei-dam”. This is a distortion of the idiom “manhig mi-beten u-mi-leida”, which means: born to be a leader; “klei-dam” means “blood vessels”.
   Arabic: “zaa’eem min alwiladah walawa’iya addamawiyah”. This is a literal translation of the Hebrew, which does not resemble any Arabic idiom.

5. English: “oil of oh, yeah!” (name on the bottle of oil Homer uses to look muscular and sexy).
   Hebrew: “shamna ve-salta”. Literally, the binomial means “oil and fine flour”. But it is usually used as an idiom meaning “the choicest”. It also refers to the socially elevated.
   Arabic: “zuyyoot duhoon” — literally, “oils fats”. A succession of two nouns not linked by the connective “wa” (“and”) is incorrect Arabic.
Slang

1. English: “Who gives a doodle?”
   Hebrew: “mi sam katsuts?” This is Hebrew slang for “who cares”.
   Arabic: “waman yahummunu”. The words mean “who cares” in the literary (rather than spoken) Arabic used in the media.

2. English: “That’s so cool”.
   Hebrew: “ze ma-ze madlik”. Literally, “ze madlik” means “it sets fire”. But in Hebrew slang, the expression means the same as the original. “Ma-ze” in Hebrew slang is equal to the intensifier “so”.
   Arabic: “innahu mutheer jiddan” — meaning “it’s very interesting/exciting” in literary Arabic.

3. English: “You suck”.
   Hebrew: “atem dfukim”. This is Hebrew slang meaning the same as the original.
   Arabic: “antum tutheeroona ashafaqah”. It means “you are pathetic”, “I pity you” in literary Arabic.

4. English: “complaining about him”.
   Hebrew: “mekatrim alav”. The meaning is the same as in the original, but only the translation uses slang.
   Arabic: “nahnu natathammaru minhu”. The meaning is the same but in literary Arabic.

5. English: “Get this bedlamite an alienist” (“Bedlamite” after Bedlam, the famous English institution for the insane).
   Hebrew: “tavee lacuckoo ha-ze psikhiater”. As in English, “cuckoo” is Hebrew slang for an insane person.
   Arabic: “hati tabeeban nafsiyyan lihatha almakhbool”. The Arabic word for “insane” which is used here is more elevated and less customary than “majnoon”, which appeared previously in this translation.

References to sex

1. English: “I pleased the ladies by any means necessary”.
   Hebrew: “inagtî et ha-nashim be-khol emtsa’i nidrash”.
   Arabic: “mattatû annissaa bikull waseelah lazima”.
   Both translations retain the meaning of the original.

2. English: “strip for your wife” (name of a workshop).
   Hebrew: “khasfanut la-hana’at nesheikhem”.
   Arabic: “taaare limutaat zawjaatikum”.
   Both translations retain the meaning of the original.
3. English: “Everybody’s getting some but me” (“some” refers to sex).
   Hebrew: “kulan notnot, kulum shokhvim”. Literally it means “they all give, they all lie down”, but in slang the verbs “give” and “lie down” refer to sex. In this case, the reference to sex is more explicit in the Hebrew version.
   Arabic: “bihatha alaedee kullahunna yatenaa Kullahun yastalqoona”. The translator has used verbs which are a literal translation of the Hebrew ones (“give”, “lie down”) but they do not have any sexual connotation in Arabic.

4. English: “my boobs”.
   Hebrew: “ba-tsitsim” (Hebrew slang for breasts).
   Arabic: “bithadyay”, meaning “my breasts” in literary Arabic. There is a slang word for breasts but it is considered very “low” and cannot be expected to appear on screen.

5. English: “you can turn me on”.
   Hebrew: “at madlika oti”. Literally and metaphorically, it means the same as the original.
   Arabic: “anti tuli‘ainani”. Literally it means the same as the Hebrew, but the connotation to sex is weaker.

6. English: “sex”, “sexy”. These words are used in Hebrew and the translator has transliterated them. The Arabic translator used the Arabic equivalents: “jins”, “mutheer jinsiyyan”.

Sacrilige (only one example has been found)

1. English: “There is a force that runs through the universe. We used to call that force ‘God’. We now call it ‘megatronics’”.
   Hebrew: “yesh koakh ha-over ba-yekum. pa’am karanu lo ‘elohim’ [God]. ka-yom anu kor’im lo: ‘megatronika’”.
   Arabic: “toojad quwwah tamurru bilkawni. daāwnāha marrah ‘Allah’. wanadāooha alyawm ‘megatronika’”. Both translations retain the profanation of the name of God.

The Hebrew translator of The Simpsons, Ayah Gazit, is one of the most experienced and highly respected translators working at Channel 1. The Arabic translator of the episode, Shadi, is anonymous, at least to Hebrew-speakers. Only his private name is given. Their work testifies to the marginal position of Arabic compared with Hebrew on Israeli television. The Hebrew translator has retained the puns, the slang, the references to sex and the sacrilegious expression. The Arabic translator, too, has retained the sexual elements and the sacrilegious expression (in contrast to the Arabic dubbing mentioned above; this boldness may explain why only his private name is given). However, he has used literary Arabic (maybe because it can be understood outside Israel, unlike the local dialects) and has missed, or given up, most of the wordplay. The implications of mediation for his translation are obvious: the Hebrew puns are translated literally, and in one case the text has been completely misunderstood.
Conclusion

This article has tried to show that translation in Israel involves a variety of languages. Hebrew is neither the only language of local production nor the sole target language in translating foreign texts. Some preliminary insights have been proposed to the effect that Arabic translation is marginally positioned not only with regard to Hebrew but also with regard to Russian.

Previous research on Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism has been carried out mainly in the framework of linguistics, sociology and communication studies (e.g. Spolsky and Shohamy 1999; Elias 2005; Epstein and Kheimets 2006; Adoni, Caspi and Cohen 2002, 2006). Researchers working in these disciplines have usually distinguished between the production of texts in Hebrew and in other languages, failing to pay attention to translation, which blurs this very distinction. Descriptive Translation Studies can advance the study of Israeli multilingualism by looking into the role that translation plays in creating it.

Israeli multilingualism generates strong reactions. It is often the subject of debate among researchers, politicians, journalists and Israelis in general. The status of Hebrew as a national language, its young age as a modern “living” language and the awareness that it can probably not survive outside Israel (though emigrants from Israel “import” it to countries such as the US and Canada) have triggered attempts to resist the new multilingual reality (e.g. Z. Shavit 2002). Another view regards multilingualism as freedom from the tyranny of the previous melting-pot policy. Its proponents argue that it enables a smoother and more gradual integration of the immigrants into Israeli society (Elias 2005). Furthermore, the thriving of local languages is interpreted as a counterbalance to the increasing power of English and to the Americanization of Israel (Epstein and Kheimets 2006). In the field of translation itself, and more specifically in the sub-field of community and court interpreting, translation as a means of linking various Israeli communities is seen as vital for the well-being of Israeli society (Schuster 2003). Whatever the stand one takes on this issue, translation research can help to place it on a more solid foundation. This necessitates a shift of focus in Israeli translation studies and probably a lot of teamwork because of the diversity of languages involved.

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Chapter 4. Implications of Israeli multilingualism and multiculturalism

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CHAPTER 5

Yiddish in America, or styles of self-translation

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When Shmuel Niger wrote his classic study of Jewish literary bilingualism in 1941, he was referring to the joined systems of Hebrew and Yiddish. But English would soon emerge as a new competitor, and authors such as A. M. Klein and I. B. Singer looked for ways in which they could successfully translate their themes into English. Klein’s character Pimontel, like Cynthia Ozick’s character Edelstein, are comic figures of failure. Singer, by contrast, was successful beyond expectation. Yet his success is considered suspect by some, who see in the very process of his self-translation a betrayal of the original.

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On August 30, 1908, a group of some seventy Jewish writers and intellectuals met in Czernowitz, Bukovina, to debate the following question: What language, Yiddish or Hebrew, should be considered the language of Jewish modernity? After four days of sometimes eloquent, sometimes rowdy speechifying, the Conference concluded with a compromise. It recognized the growing popularity and literary prestige of Yiddish but stopped short of calling it “the” national language of the Jewish people. Yiddish would be, along with Hebrew, “a” national language (Robin 1984: 122–129).

Czernowitz was a signal moment, the first of a series of conferences that would confirm the creativity and modernity of Yiddish in the first years of the 20th century in Eastern Europe. But far from resolving the tensions between Hebraists and Yiddishists, split along political and ideological lines, it seemed to exacerbate them. The events of the next decades continued to nourish these tensions, and so, when the distinguished critic Shmuel Niger published his classic Bilingualism in the History of Jewish Literature in Yiddish in 1941, it was as if the conference on the easternmost edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were still in session and he was giving his own belated speech at Czernowitz. Niger’s point was that the discussion was futile. Why should there be pressure for Jewish writers to fall into one literary tradition or another when in fact what we understand as Jewish literature is sustained by both Hebrew and Yiddish?¹ He railed

¹. Niger explains the bitter antagonism and passionately extremist views related to language by putting the debates in historical context. Part of the vehemence of the battle was the result of
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against what he called linguistic “monists”, those who insisted that the question be resolved definitively on one side or the other. Citing the literary critic Baal-Makhshoves, he called for “Two languages — one literature” (Niger 1990:12).

Shmuel Niger (1883–1955) was the most prolific and respected literary critic of his generation in Yiddish: author of some 24 volumes, including critical literary biographies of the great Yiddish novelists and poets (Niger 1990:4). Born in Bielorussia, studying and living in Vilna, Berlin and St. Petersburg, Niger was himself very much a polyglot. Forced to leave Vilna in 1919, he migrated to New York and spent the rest of his career as an editor and regular contributor to Yiddish publications in America, playing a central role in the founding and administration of the American branch of the YIVO (Institute for Jewish Research). Niger defended the thesis that Jews have never been satisfied with one and only one language, and have always been, minimally, a bilingual people. In the past, Jews moved between Hebrew and Aramaic, then during the Golden Age of Spain between Hebrew and Arabic. In pre-World War II Europe, Jewish expression included Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as the many “co-territorial” languages spoken by the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

Though defending multilingualism, Niger wrote all his work in Yiddish. There is no inconsistency here. For Niger, bilingualism did not imply that a writer necessarily writes in two languages. What Niger wanted to emphasize was the inter-relatedness of two languages within a single literary tradition, or as we would say today, within a single literary system. Gideon Toury acknowledges the close contact that developed (in the 19th century) between Hebrew and Yiddish, but refines this idea by adding a translational perspective:

It has been noted that, for a long time, Hebrew and Yiddish behaved as if they were two components of one and the same culture, basically a canonized and a non-canonized, or ‘high’ and ‘low’ systems, respectively. This relative positioning of the two

the conflation of political and cultural positions that occurred after the failed First Russian Revolution in 1905. Some socialist intellectuals “found strength in cultural organizations” turning either to the Bundist or to the Zionist socialist movements (p.102). “They took their impetuousness and bitterness from the earlier political struggles, like a dybbuk, into the cultural and linguistic struggles” (p. 102) “to stand up for the rights and the dignity of the Jewish working class, left-wing intellectuals had to stand up for the rights and the stature of their language” (p. 102). Paradoxically, as well, Zionists had to use Yiddish as a means of Zionist enlightenment (p.103).

2. “If there was no specific opposition to this Jewish bilingualism, it would be unnecessary to speculate about whether we should limit ourselves to one Jewish language or whether we should indulge in the use of two languages. It would be unnecessary to theorize about the actual bilingualism of entire epochs in the history of Jewish literature. There is, however, a tendency at present (which existed in other times as well) that aspires to linguistic monism. Thus, we have to clarify which trends have deep roots in Jewish life, the tendency towards bilingualism or the direction toward linguistic monism” (Niger 1990:12).
is also evident in translational behaviour of the time. Thus, it didn’t take very long before Yiddish texts began to be translated into Hebrew, often by the authors themselves. Moreover, this measure was not taken as a means of increasing the readership of the books (the potential reader of Hebrew in eastern Europe could normally read Yiddish anyway whereas a growing number of speakers of Yiddish could hardly read Hebrew any more), but as a deliberate attempt to enhance their cultural prestige. This process helped to fill many lacunae which were still felt in the Hebrew culture. (Toury 2002: xxvii)

What Toury adds to Niger’s understanding is the complexity of the direct and indirect translational relations that sustained Jewish multilingualism. For instance, though English was not a language of Jewish cultural expression in the 18th and 19th centuries, translations from English played a significant role in shaping the German system, and therefore Hebrew. "Had German not played such a decisive role in establishing modern Hebrew literature, English literature may well have had to wait several more generations until it could finally start penetrating the Hebrew system. In that case the entire web of their relationships might have been completely different" (Toury 1995: 136). Similarly, the influence of Russian is crucial for the developing literature in Hebrew (ibid. 140).

In fact, although Niger’s Bilingualism in the History of Jewish Literature is often admiringly cited as a classic statement of Jewish multilingualism, it proposes an idealistic view of linguistic co-existence, even as Niger himself acknowledged the rivalries that had always existed among literary languages. Far-reaching in its historical sweep and innovative in that it includes comparisons with many other language communities (with short chapters devoted to the examples of Latin–Italian bilingualism, the Welsh example, the Armenians, etc.), the book proposes a conservative view. Niger limits his discussion to what he considers the two Jewish languages, ignoring the many other languages (German, Russian principally, but many others) to which Jewish writers have contributed.

The circumstances of writing may explain this limitation. Niger’s book was written in 1941, in dark historical times. Looking back to Czernowitz, the book avoids mentioning current political events, which would lead to the elimination of the Yiddish language in Europe. It also avoids mentioning another threat to Yiddish: the encroaching presence of English within the Yiddish-language world in America. His essay on bilingualism turns its back on the forces that would open a new chapter in the history of Jewish languages. After the war, in North America, Yiddish would inevitably be linked to forms of translation, including self-translation. In contrast to the peaceable ideal of linguistic co-existence that Niger conjures up, forms of literary bilingualism would inevitably be conflictive. From the poet A. M. Klein’s unpopular experiments with literary fusion to Isaac Singer’s turn to self-traducement, literary bilingualism in North America remained, as it was for the speakers at Czernowitz, a subject of controversy.
Niger to Klein

A.M. Klein (1909–1972) was an important Jewish–Canadian poet, novelist and editorialist. Klein was perhaps the most successful of those North American writers who chose to work with the many languages of the Jewish past. His writings show that he gave the loftiest meanings to the task of the translator, and that he understood his own mission as a writer to include the broadest possible dimensions of translation. This was not a simple task of mediation (of informing one linguistic group of the achievements of another), nor was it an attempt to translate North American Jewish experience out of or away from the past. His goal was to imbue the present with the forms and styles of the past, to express a culture traversed by many languages and histories.

It was in response to a letter from Shmuel Niger that Klein made most explicit his relationship to languages within the context of the multilingual Jewish past. In a letter to Klein, in 1941, Niger had written: “I think your problem lies in your desire to unite the culture of one culture with the language of another culture...” (Caplan 1982: 87–88).3 Klein’s vigorous reply points to his revision of Niger’s ideas, and a very different understanding of literary bilingualism in the Jewish tradition. He has chosen to write in English, says Klein, but this does not mean that he cannot treat Hebrew themes. “English being the language, it is its technique which is applied to the Hebrew theme. This is no stranger than Yehuda Halevi writing Hebrew poetry in Arabic meters or Immanuel of Rome borrowing the sonnet form from Dante... My mind is full of linguistic echoes from Chaucer and Shakespeare, even as it is of the thought-forms of the prophets” (Caplan 1982: 87–88). In fact Niger himself had used the examples of Yehuda Halevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol and Moses Maimonides when discussing the use of alternate languages by writers within a bilingual literary tradition. But when referring to these writers, he mentioned their using one language for one genre or another (Yehuda Halevi wrote his poems in Hebrew) and another language for prose (Halevi composed the Kuzari in Arabic). Similarly, Solomon ibn Gabirol used Hebrew for poetry, Arabic for works of philosophy and morality. Idem for Maimonides.4 What Klein is referring to is a more sophisticated mixture of forms, where Halevi and Immanuel of Rome import

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3. Niger uses the word “race” and I have substituted “culture” instead. Today’s word “culture” is much closer to the idea Niger was expressing.

4. Benjamin Harshav (2005) notes that by the time Niger endorsed this idea, he was making an appeal to save Yiddish literature as part of Jewish culture. “Indeed, by that time, most speakers of one Jewish language didn’t know or didn’t read the other”. Harshav continues: “Yosef Klausner, who occupied the chair in Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, wrote a multivolume History of Modern Hebrew Literature that included detailed biographies of all the Hebrew writers. Yet he ignored the Yiddish texts that most of them had written... Klausner was a nationalist Zionist and strove to realize the formula of one language on one land by one Hebrew (rather than Jewish) nation. Much earlier, Mendele Moykher-Sforim had countered this restrictiveness: ‘I like to breathe with both my nostrils’. Yet for both Niger and Klausner, Jews who write in non-Jewish languages, like Kafka or Freud, were not part of ‘Jewish’ literature.”
“vernacular” forms (Arabic meters, the sonnet form) into Hebrew. Klein also recalls that Milton’s *Paradise Lost* assumes much Biblical knowledge on the part of the reader, and that in Joyce’s *Ulysses* “every chapter has its counterpart in a similar chapter of Homer’s *Odyssey*, … to my mind a completely successful literary merger of the values of two cultures” (Caplan, ibid.).

**Klein to Ozick**

Klein was aware of the paradoxical task he had undertaken: to turn English into a Jewish diasporic language. His poetry, essays and translations combine his Yiddish immigrant roots, his Talmudic learning, and the whole range of references encompassed by the English-language world he adopted. Using arcane words, exploiting etymologies and inventing neologisms, Klein brought the Jewish tradition into dialogue with international modernism. Joyce and Pound, Rabbi Low of Prague, Chaim Nachman Bialik all contribute to Klein’s diasporic tongue, a gathering of remnants of styles that have migrated across the continents and the centuries.

This awareness is powerfully portrayed in his novel *The Second Scroll* (1951) but most poignantly in the unpublished draft of a novel, written in the early 1950s. In a few pages of this abandoned novel, Klein creates a character called Pimontel, whose dramas of translation are an echo of Klein’s own fascination with the erudite dilemmas of language, and full of the ironies that marked the futility of his efforts.

Klein realized that the avant-garde path he had chosen would limit his readership. Though today Klein is recognized as a precursor, his poetry expressing questions that continue to resonate in a new era of immigration and intermixing, Klein enjoyed little success during his lifetime. In the character of Pimontel, he mocks the erudite games of language he himself had fashioned, turning Pimontel (and himself) into figures of ridicule. He imagines that reviewers would react with scorn to “biblic macaronics”, to “Yidgin English”, “modern poetry disguised in an exotic mediaevalism” exhibiting the “tendency to Semitize which had begun with Milton’s deplorable orientalisms, and the altogether modern tendency to subject words to plastic surgery” (Klein 1994: 135). And so the clever multilingual punster is deprived of the recognition his brilliance deserves.

Though he despaired at being appreciated for his linguistic skills and erudition, Klein was nevertheless an important public figure in the Montreal Jewish community of the 1940s and 1950s. The combination of community prominence and private dissatisfaction is captured by the novelist Mordecai Richler, who makes Klein an object of cruel satire in his novel *Solomon Gursky was Here* (1989). Taking Klein’s self-mockery to even greater lengths, Richler turns Klein into the pathetic writer L. B., a ridiculous, desperate man, ready to sell his soul to whatever forces might gain him literary recognition.

Any reader of the American Jewish literary tradition would recognize in Richler’s portrait of L. B. the echo of a story that has gained emblematic status. This is Cynthia
Ozick’s “Envy... Or Yiddish in America” (first published in 1969) in which she draws the portrait of Hershele Edelstein, a Yiddish-language poet who yearns for recognition. Edelstein, based on the eminent poet Jacob Glatstein, lived in the shadow of Yankel Ostrover, a much celebrated Yiddish storyteller who has gained fame in English, partly through his cultivation of a popular public persona. (Here the character of Isaac Bashevis Singer is immediately recognizable.) Edelstein’s fame is limited to a small coterie of Yiddish-language readers. He has become an unrelenting critic of Ostrover. (This is in fact historically accurate: Glatstein did write hostile articles against Singer.) Faithful to his art and to the historical substance of Yiddish, Edelstein is desperate for recognition and cries, “Translate me!”

Though Klein and Jacob Glatstein-Edelstein are suffering from the same affliction—the sense of being separated from the literary public they felt they deserved—Klein showed that translation itself was perhaps not the answer. At least, not the kind of rarefied self-translation that Klein had chosen. Singer, however, would come up with a more successful formula.

No writer illustrates the question of translation and literary bilingualism in America as dramatically as does I. B. Singer. The singularity of Isaac Bashevis Singer as a pivot in the shift of Yiddish-language culture from Europe to America, as the only Yiddish-language recipient of the Nobel Prize, as the first translated writer to appear in the New Yorker, as the first translated writer to appear in the prestigious American Library, and as a savvy self-promoter, is now the matter of legend. Yet Singer generated remarkable hostility on the part of his Yiddish-language readers. What was wrong with his passage into English and why is Singer still resented for it? This legacy of bitterness remains a mystery for Singer’s admiring non-Yiddish-speaking readers. Singer was not the first Yiddish-language writer to achieve widespread success in English. Sholem Asch (1880–1957) was a forerunner, a writer who achieved international fame in translation, especially in English. Asch fell out of favor with his Jewish readership, because of his astonishingly badly timed (pre-World War II) decision to write a trilogy on Christian themes. This decision alienated much of his Jewish public. The reaction against Singer has to do with very different sorts of issues. David Roskies is one of many expressing anger at an author who “outsmarts his English-language interviewers who treat his every utterance like some kind of oracle” (Roskies 1989: 1).

This outsmarting had mainly to do with Singer’s self-positioning within the Yiddish language tradition. According to Joseph Sherman, Singer’s public pronouncements in English on his own relationship to the Yiddish tradition were often false. In English, Singer minimized the extent and strength of the Yiddish tradition from which he emerged, claiming that he was the first to deal with sexuality, with the underworld, with squalor and criminality. Singer knew he was not telling the truth, but “got away with his facile disparagements because he was speaking to English readers who generally knew little about the Yiddish language and less about its literature” (Sherman 2004: 2). In fact, “Bashevis knew and respected the Yiddish literary tradition, and founded his own work on it” (ibid. 3).
Singer to Singer

David Roskies sees Singer as two writers: one who respected his own pronouncements on Yiddish (in an important 1943 essay) and another who diluted his own Yiddish in the manner he criticized in the very same essay. When Cynthia Ozick’s character Edelstein rails against the Anglicized Yiddish of America, he is echoing Singer’s ideas of 1943: “What do they know,” he [Edelstein] rails, “I mean of knowledge… Yiddish! One word here, one word there. Shickseh on one page, putz on the other, and that’s the whole vocabulary… They know ten words for, excuse me, penis, and when it comes to a word for learning, they’re impotent” (Ozick 1983). In his essay, Singer criticized the Yiddish of America and concluded that the real Yiddish writer can write only about Eastern Europe. Yiddish is inextricably linked to the life of the shtetl. The richness of the language was to be found in its historical associations with traditional Jewish life and therefore writing in Yiddish would have to return to the time and place of its flowering. Singer, for a time, made the decision to remain faithful not only to the Yiddish language but also to its history and geography.

Writing about Europe allowed Singer to maintain the purity and strength of his Yiddish. Not so when he changed his mind and began writing about the immigrant experience in America:

The author’s dire predictions of 1943 are borne out by his own American tales in which the spoken language no longer reveals a densely layered world of folk belief and religious passion. As a result, Bashevis’s American tales (which he begins to write around 1960) lose little in translation because there is nothing much to lose: no cadences; no plethora of idioms, proverbs, maxims; or no use of dialect; no speech patterns unique to somen, demons, or underworld types; most significantly, no in-group code designed to separate the Jews from the gentiles. The syncopated and sententious folk speech of the Old World storytellers is absorbed by the rambling newspaper copy of Yitkhok Warshawski, and before too long—thanks to a stable of translators working overtime to simplify and even bowdlerize the stories and monologues set in eastern Europe—folk speech and news speech become the undifferentiated English of one ’I. B. Singer”’ (Roskies 1995: 304)

Roskies’ argument is that Singer diminished the power of demons as he transferred these creatures to America. They became the favorite creatures of children, whereas they had terrified adults in Europe:

It would take a writer thoroughly versed in modern and classical Jewish sources to rehabilitate the powers of darkness; a writer who could wage a fierce oedipal struggle with the very literature that spawned him and who, in the wake of a midlife crisis, discovered storytelling as the consummate demonic art... Reading Singer in the original and from start to finish allows us to see him for what he really was: never more Yiddish than when writing about demons; never more playful, youthful, or hopeful than when writing as a demon. (ibid. 269)

Singer’s new literary life in English occurred when he was “discovered” by Irving Howe and the Partisan Review. This happened in 1953. At this point in his career, Singer
already had thousands of Yiddish readers (from works published in Poland before his migration to New York in 1934) and The Family Moskat had been published in English by Knopf. Jonathan Rosen ironically comments that Irving Howe discovered Singer “the way Columbus discovered America…. Still, Howe isn’t wrong to see him as born again in the Partisan Review.” The 1953 translation of “Gimpel the Fool” by Saul Bellow turned Singer into an American writer. Significantly, Singer never asked Bellow to translate other stories of his. He was too aware of Bellow as competition. Instead, after 1953, when Singer’s stories became appearing regularly in The New Yorker, Harper's and Playboy, he developed a system that his longtime publisher Roger Straus called “super-editing” rather than translation. His hastily written stories and serialized novels, published first in the Jewish Daily Forward, were polished and shaped into English, often with multiple translators, many of whom knew no Yiddish at all. By eventually treating the work he produced in Yiddish as a rough draft for the English “original”, Singer seemed to deny the wounded world that had spawned him… Without formally abandoning Yiddish, he managed to make it the rocket fuel, consumed in the journey, that propelled him into American literary life. (Rosen 2004)

What would Singer’s works have looked like if they had been translated by someone with full independence from Singer? The question seems impossible to answer, because in many cases the original does not exist. Singer worked closely with his translators to edit, shorten and tighten his Yiddish texts before they made their appearance in English. And translations into other languages were based on the English version (Norich 1995:3).

The difficulties of translating Yiddish into English are notorious. Indeed there will always those who insist that Yiddish is untranslatable. There are many reasons to favor this view. After all, Yiddish was a language of insiders. It was a language intimately linked to the life of a community, and therefore included references to beliefs, practices and knowledge known only to members of that community. It is also a richly expressive language, the product of a historical mélange of tongues and full of colorful expressions. And, the most definitive reason of all, it is a language that has been severed from its roots. “Of what other language can it be said that it died a sudden and definitive death, in a given decade, on a given piece of soil?”, asks Cynthia Ozick. To translate from such a language, writes Régine Robin, is like “moving from the kingdom of the dead to that of the living… Each word of this language, each line of poetry or each sentence that she

5. Singer also worked as a translator in Warsaw, publishing Yiddish translations of novels by Erich Maria Remarque, Thomas Mann, and Knut Hamsun. Singer’s translation of Remarque’s Im Westin nichts Neues (All Quiet on the Western Front) appeared in 1929. His translation of Remarque’s Der Weg zurück appeared two years later. His most significant project in the late 1930s was his translation from German into Yiddish of From Moscow to Jerusalem, the autobiography of Leon Glaser, an official of Kerensky’s government in Russia who later immigrated to Palestine. (Hadda 1997:78)
tried to translate could have been pronounced seriously, playfully, lovingly or angrily by those whose mouths were now definitively silenced.6

Though Singer is criticized for “Christianizing” or “universalizing” his Yiddish, the same criticisms might well have been addressed to Saul Bellow’s initial translation of “Gimpel the Fool.” The first line is an apt illustration of the difficulties that will beset any translator. Bashevis’s “Ikh bin Gimpl tam. Ikh halt mikh nisht far keyn nar” becomes Bellow’s “I am Gimpel the fool. I don’t think myself a fool.” But the term tam invokes, as Chone Shmeruk has noted, both the four sons of the Passover story (one of whom is a tam, a simple one) and a story by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav about a wise man and a simpleton. Erasing the crucial distinction between tam and nar, between simpleton and fool, Bellow elides the folkloric and religious resonances of tam as well as the numerous linguistic derivations from nar. But what were the alternatives? Would “Gimpel the Simple”, or “Gimpel the Innocent” have solved the problem? (Norich 1995:3)

More than translation is involved in the move between Yiddish and English. The changes in Singer’s work were in some cases more radical. The novel The Family Mosкат has three different endings. Malka Magentsa-Shaked concludes that

It is difficult to ascertain to what degree the author agreed to the changes made in the English and Hebrew translations. However, whether they were made under his instructions and with his consent or whether the translators made them on their own, there can be no doubt that in both the American and Israeli cases, they were made to suit the taste of the specific reading public and are far from the Yiddish original. (Magentsa-Shaked 1989:40)

Despite the various other half-truths and outright lies that Singer has been accused of proffering in his discussions with English-language critics, Singer was nevertheless transparent in revealing the process through which Yiddish and English were in conversation. In his 1970 “Author’s Note” to A Friend of Kafka and Other Stories he wrote: “I have translated these stories with the assistance of collaborators, and I find that I do much revision in the process of translation. It is not an exaggeration to say that over the years English has become my ‘second’ language.” The “Author’s Note” to An Isaac Bashevis Singer Reader (1971), now signed I. B. S., begins similarly: “Though I write in

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6. “Traduire des romanciers et des poètes juifs de langue yiddish, c’était à la fois passer du royaume des morts à celui des vivants. Ils ressuscitaient dans une autre langue bien vivante celle-là, mais les traduire, c’était aussi descendre à chaque fois aux enfers. Chaque mot de cette langue, chaque vers ou chaque phrase qu’elle tentait maladroitement de traduire, auraient pu avoir été prononcés sérieusement, ludiquement, amoureusement ou avec colère par ceux dont les bouches s’étaient définitivement tues. En travaillant sur cette langue, elle les rendait à la vie, mais elle se retrouvait à chaque virgule, à chaque paragraphe sur la rampe de Birkenau. Ce voyage, elle le faisait chaque jour, il était inscrit dans chaque lettre de l’alphabet. Elle étouffait. Un jour, elle aurait décidé de s’arrêter, pour respirer. De changer de métier, pour voir, d’écrire en français, peut-être, d’essayer de faire sonner le yiddish en français, d’imiter sa prosodie, son rythme, sa propre respiration. Langue de mort contre langue de vie? Quand je serai grande je parlerai français comme Juliette. Il était temps d’oublier la langue de mort, de la refouler au plus profond.” (Robin 1996:80)
Yiddish, I do most of the revisions of my writings after they have been translated into English by myself and a collaborator. Because of this, I can call myself a bilingual writer and say that English has become my ‘second original.’” (Norich 1995: 3).

Because the “first” original is largely lost in the process of revision, translations into other languages of Singer’s work will inevitably be done from English. This is a new form of indirect translation, one made obligatory by the writer himself.

**Recovering bilingualism**

By his death in 1955, Shmuel Niger would have taken the measure of the new dispensation of Jewish languages. The creation of the state of Israel meant that Hebrew once again was a living language. After the Holocaust, Yiddish was no longer a contender on the scene of world Jewish languages. And on the American continent English was beginning to show its new strength. Cynthia Ozick would soon write that “Since the coming forth from Egypt five millennia ago, mine is the first generation to think and speak and write wholly in English” (in Wirth-Nesher, 2006: 7). In one generation, the multilingualism of the Jewish experience in America would be effaced. The extent of the shift towards English becomes all the more striking when it is recalled that English was a language “foreign” to European Jewish experience until after World War II. (Rosen 2005: 1–20)

Despite lip service to the multilingual tradition within Jewish literature, North American scholarship has been remarkable inattentive to this reality. The resolutely monolingual air of American scholarship, for instance, meant that the multilingual legacy of Jewish literatures was gestured to, but rarely investigated. Some recent publications have attempted to reverse this trend and to expose the processes of translation at work within the work of such writers as Bellow, Ozick, and the many other Jewish–American writers of the past and present: Abraham Cahan, Mary Antin, Henry Roth, Demore Schwartz, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, Philip

7. Amoz Oz, in the first pages of his *Tale of Love and Darkness*, writes: “My father read 16 or 17 languages and spoke 11 (with a Russian accent); my mother spoke four or five and read seven or eight. They spoke in Russian or Polish when they didn’t want me to understand… For culture, they read especially in German and English and probably dreamed in Yiddish. But to me they taught only Hebrew—perhaps they worried that I would succumb to the charm and fatalism of Europe if I knew its languages…”.

Chone Shmeruk tells of his father who knew Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Polish and Ukrainian—but knew no FOREIGN languages. English and French were the true foreign languages. (Rosen 2005: 8) Speaking of oral testimony after the Holocaust, James Young notes that ‘many survivors have chosen after the war to speak and to tell their stories only in English, which they regard as a neutral, uncorrupted and ironically amnesiac language. Having experienced events in Yiddish, or Polish or German, survivors often find that English serves as much as mediation between themselves and their experiences as it does as a medium for their expression. (Rosen 2005: 12).
Roth, Aryeh Lev Stollman and others. These are part of a broader trend towards revealing the multilingual history of the United States and Canada (Wirth-Nesher, Rosen, Anctil et al.) and the values it represents.8

Within this history, A.M. Klein and I.B. Singer are of particular interest because of the idiosyncratic and controversial processes of self-translation they put in place. These efforts join new developments in translating what Jeffrey Shandler calls “postvernacular” Yiddish, a largely symbolic — but still culturally active — language in contemporary America. Postvernacular modes of translation create connections between Yiddish and “the reader’s literacy in other languages and cultures” (Shandler 2006: 125). These are transformative acts, enabled by those possibilities that remain alive in Yiddish today.

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8. The scholar David Roskies is unusually attuned to the strategies of translation that sustain his own academic work. Acknowledging and even foregrounding the role of translation in the work of Jewish scholarship (Roskies 2004: 263–272), Roskies offers some very basic pointers. “Which words should be italicized and which words should be normalized? I waged a campaign for de-italicizing words of Judaic import. If English, I argued, was to become a language of Jewish scholarly discourse, then such indispensable Jewish terms as midrash, piyyut, Maskil, shtetl, heder, tannaitic, halakhic, and many more had to be naturalized and printed in roman typeface. This was especially important in America, where Webster’s Third International Dictionary was amazingly inclusive of Jewish-specific terms, and many of them sans italics. If we are at home in America, these words must be at home in American English.”(ibid. 266) Roskies’ aim is a “Judaeically informed English” (ibid. 267).


Introduction: occupational identities

In this article we will outline a research project we have launched (Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger 2006) on the construction and maintaining of group identity and pursuit of status, with special reference to occupational groups. Taking the profession of translation (both written and oral) as a test case, confined, at this stage, to translators and interpreters in Israel, we will analyze the self-perception of individuals as members of this group, and the ways in which they claim status by building their “occupational selves”.

We proceed from the assumption that questions of status and the accumulation of prestige are central aspects in all human action. In this regard, an occupation, namely “what one does in one’s life”, is an important resource (Nam and Powers 1983). While the extensive research and prevailing public debates of identity and cultural tensions are focused primarily on the national, ethnic, racial, class or gender components of in-group and out-group stereotypizations and hierarchy, the occupational factor — given much less attention — appears to be no less powerful in generating a collective sense of identity and status struggles. Not only does “a job or profession constitute [for some

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1 This research project is sponsored by the Israel Science Foundation (ISF), 2006–2009.
people] a major component of their understanding of their lives” (Linde 1993: 4), it often creates a distinctive field of action within which a cultural repertoire is constructed and contested, and “group identity and values [are] maintained and perpetuated”, and internalized “in the individual as personal traits” (Lubove 1965: 118).

The marginalized status of translators and interpreters

It is precisely because of their ambivalent and insecure status as a profession that translators and interpreters constitute an interesting example of an occupational group identity. Given the weak institutional boundaries and obscure role definition and criteria of this profession, they often suffer from non-standardized conditions and pay scales, as well as fragmentary career patterns (Hammond 1994; Robinson 1997; Chriss 2000; for the situation in Israel, Translation fees 2003 [http://planet.nana.co.il/managers/meravy/article73.html], Yariv 2003; Harel 2003; Kermit 2004; the only items available with regards to fees and rates are internet sources and journalistic reports). All of these factors render them a rather “invisible” occupational group and their trade a marginal professional option. It stands to reason that this state of affairs may also be linked to the fact that translation/interpreting is largely a pink-collar profession. In spite of nascent attempts at institutional organization and academization of training in these domains, which point towards a move away from ad hoc practitioners, their recognition as full-fledged professionals has not yet been achieved. It is therefore a quintessential case for examining how an occupational group deals with its own indeterminacy and marginality.

The marginality of translators and interpreters alike is especially paradoxical, in view of the enormous potential power encapsulated in their work as culture mediators par excellence, namely as those who have held the key to all cultural contacts and linguistic exchange, either by importing innovations, hence furthering the evolution of cultures ever since antiquity (Delisle and Woodworth 1995), or by exerting gatekeeping functions, thus controlling the dynamics of day-to-day interlingual interactions (Wadensjö 1998). This exceptional power seems all the more relevant today, when so much attention is being devoted to processes of globalization, migration and transnationalism. While the marginalization of translators may perhaps be less surprising in cultural contexts with highly established socio-cultural cores and strong hegemonic traditions, such as the Anglo-American ones (Gentzler 2002), its pervasiveness in multicultural, and less-established, emerging or peripheral social settings is puzzling. One such example is Israeli society. There, bi-nationalism, coupled with an influx of

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2 Since translators and interpreters in Israel are not officially accredited or otherwise recognized (in contrast to many other countries [e.g., Nadiani 1998]), the Israel Bureau of Statistics does not provide data about them.
immigrants and a growing population of guest workers, create an ever-growing need for translators and interpreters. In addition, being an ambitious peripheral culture, the market of translated cultural production is noticeably large and prosperous, and cultural importation plays a most significant role in shaping dominant popular discourses and practices.

This situation notwithstanding, all evidence shows that translators are usually regarded as minor, auxiliary manpower in the industry of translated-text production and other interlingual communication practices, as “servants” of a higher authority, and as those who belong “behind the scenes” (Jänis 1996; Simeoni 1998; Venuti 1998), “not as aware as they might be of their own power” (Chesterman and Wagner 2002). Although they are not at the bottom of the “occupational prestige” ladder (Treiman 1977, also Semynov et al. 2000), their situation is ambivalent and unstable. Whereas certain literary translators and conference interpreters, for instance, are often perceived as virtuosos, most practitioners (and those in the public service in particular), usually untrained, are still seen in terms of the proverbial conduit role (Roy 2002). Moreover, relying on linguistic and textual skills, they belong, with other professions — such as librarians, teachers or journalists — to the applied professions in the Humanities. As such, their starting point in the competition for professional prestige is inevitably weaker than that of professions with highly scientific authority and codified procedures, such as, notably, medicine, law, or engineering. Such a status problem, we hypothesize, not only bears on their job performance, but also makes their image-making work a pressing issue on which they actually depend for recognition.

The study of translators and interpreters as an occupational group: the state of the art

Our study lies at the crossroad between culture research and Translation Studies. In contemporary Translation Studies, questions pertaining to the social formation of translators as an occupational group are not central topics. True, the bulk of writing on translation norms in recent decades (Toury 1978, 1995, 1999; Ben-Ari 1988; Venuti 1995; Schäffner 1998; Shlesinger 1989, 1999; Weissbrod 1991) has established the importance of cultural factors and the systemic position of translation in constraining the performance of translators. A common denominator of these studies has been the implicit assumption that translators suffer from an inferior status, manifested in their tendency to conform to domestic norms. However, this assumption has seldom been seriously examined. Being traditionally affiliated with disciplines such as literature and linguistics, Translation Studies tends, by and large, to focus on the communicative and linguistic contexts of translation performance, and to treat the translators themselves as a more or less transparent medium of textual procedures. Even recent attempts at “a sociology of translation”, which brought to the fore issues such as the translation market, training, ethics and ideology (Pym 1992, 2002; Gouanvic 1995; Hermans 1995;
Heilbron 1999; Heilbron and Sapiro 2002; Grbic 2001; Tate and Turner 2002; Wallmach 2002; Wolf 2002; Calzada-Perez 2003; Inghilleri 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Diriker 2004) seldom dealt with the translators and interpreters as a cultural group with its own interests and aspirations, constraints and access to resources (see, however, Henderson 1987; Robinson 1997; Delisle 2002; Choi and Lim 2002; Sapiro 2004; Limon 2005).

From a different perspective, translators are but an extreme example of an understudied occupational group. The sociological literature on professions offers a body of theory and history of the formation of modern professions, their institutions, forms of knowledge, career patterns, education and jurisdiction (e.g. Larson 1977; Torstendahl and Burrage 1990; Abbott 1988; Freidson 1994; Macdonald 1995). Yet these studies remain largely embedded in the context of the more traditionally institutionalized and prestigious liberal professions known as the “success stories” of professionalism (Elsaka 2005), such as, first and foremost, medicine, as well as law, accountancy, and the like. While they do not entirely ignore semi-institutionalized (or “failed professionalizing”; Elsaka 2005) occupations — among them, notably, journalism, or less prestigious ones, such as school teaching or nursing — most studies touch on these pursuits only fleetingly, if at all.

Whereas most of these mainstream studies are usually concerned with exclusive expert knowledge, authority and control, others focus on image-making and on building and defending a “professional self”. Drawing primarily on interviews, these studies often deal with members of occupational groups who face status problems, such as invisibility (e.g., Nilsen and McKechnie 2002 on librarians), undefined relations with their clients (e.g., Erman et al. 2004 on architects in Turkey), lower prestige (e.g., Mishler 1999 on crafts-artists), or impaired status (Gordon 1997 on black teachers in the USA). Using discourse analytical methods, they pay closer attention to the verbal and narrative specificities of their informants’ art of self-representation as a social performance in its own right. Given its low visibility as a recognized occupation, however, translation does not figure in these discussions either.

In Israel, occupations in general and translation as a profession in particular are also surprisingly under-researched. While Israeli scholarship has long been a salient contributor to translation theory (Even-Zohar 1978, 1997; Toury 1978, 1995; Shlesinger 1989, 1995, 2000), this has not included socio-cultural research. As suggested above, the lack of interest in the social position of translators in British-ruled Palestine, and later in the State of Israel, is all the more surprising, in view of Israeli history as a society of immigrants par excellence, and one that has been characterized by a peripheral yet ambitious cultural setting in which contacts (whether imposed or voluntary) with other cultures have always been regarded as important. Seminal studies have been done on the prominent role of translation in building up the modern Hebrew language and culture (Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 2002). But with the exception of Shavit and Shavit’s (1977) important preliminary study on the proliferation of the Hebrew-language translation market during the 1920s and 1930s in Palestine, these studies have essentially concentrated on the formation of the new cultural repertoire, and have sel-
dom touched upon the social dynamics that kept it going. Moreover, these pioneering projects remained restricted to literary translation, leaving out other channels of translation activities that developed in the Jewish community of Palestine as far back as Ottoman and British periods, and expanded with the advent of statehood.

In view of the sparse scholarly interest in translators and interpreters as a social group, the purpose of the present study is to start filling this lacuna: to decipher the enigma of marginality and the dynamics of status struggles and construction of an “occupational self” in this obscure occupational terrain. Confined to examining the situation in contemporary Israel, this study sets out to determine whether and to what extent attempts are made to construct the field of translation as an autonomous source of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1985), to discover the properties that Israeli translators and interpreters value as their cultural assets, along with their tendency to mobilize them, in the various branches of this profession, thus creating distinctions and hierarchies in their own ranks.

The theoretical framework

While the sociological study of professions puts more weight on institutional and formal factors, our interest lies in the perspective of the practitioners themselves, their more implicit codes, attitudes and values shared by members of an occupation, so as to maintain it as a distinctive social figuration (Elias 1996). This latter approach stands at the heart of the theory of “cultural fields” (Bourdieu 1980, 1986), a theory which has typically drawn its examples from fields that lack institutionalized boundaries and defy professionalization, such as, notably, literature and the arts, or fields that are hardly defined as occupations at all, such as the intellectual field. Rather than through formal procedures and means of control, the dynamics of a group develop, in this view, through a set of distinguishing mental (and physical) dispositions (a “habitus”) that are internalized and exercised by its members (Bourdieu 1986; Elias 1996; also Sheffy 1997; Sela-Sheffy 2005). A similar approach is implied by the biographical method in the study of professions. As Apitzsch et al. (2004; see also Elbaz-Luwisch 2001) argue, their understanding of professions goes beyond formalized procedures and means of power, to include “contexts that are rarely predetermined or formally defined, and in which the rule of engagement may be shaped under conditions of uncertainty and challenges to established boundaries” (Apitzsch et al. 2004: 1). This view leads them to explore how “biographies [of professionals] are shaped through interactive efforts to achieve or maintain social integration against the threat of exclusion processes” (ibid.: 4).

Consequently, while the sociological theory of occupational prestige includes economic achievements as an important parameter of prestige evaluation (Treiman 1977; Nam and Powers 1983), we focus on the cultural components that endow an occupation with a “spiritual” surplus value, or symbolic capital. It is a specific value, theoretically independent of “external” economic constraints, and defined, instead, in each and
every field by its internal competing forces (Bourdieu 1985). In certain cultural domains — notably in the arts — this type of capital is regarded as outweighing sheer material success and clashing with it, to the point that the pursuit of which must be condemned and camouflaged. The volume and intensity of the pursuit of symbolic capital in a certain field is, in this view, an indication of the field’s autonomous status.

Understanding translation as a field of practice and a social group in this sense, we ask how, if at all, translators and interpreters accumulate symbolic capital, what properties they value as their assets and what their resources are. Focusing on the discursive strategies of translators’ and interpreters’ verbal self-presentations, we follow works in cultural sociology which show that the way in which people describe themselves and others serves them as a means of self-assertion and coping with impaired status (Goffman 1959, 1963; Lamont 1992, 2000; Benoit 1997; Condor 2000; Dolby 2000; Campbell and McLean 2002). In line with these works and with the literature on group identity in general, we assume that “occupational selves” are far from coherent and fixed. As active social agents, people constantly construct multiple and shifting identities, by mobilizing desired images which draw upon “common pools of cultural resources” (Swidler 2001: 5; also Davis 1994; Harrison 1999; Giampapa 2001; Howarth 2002). Regardless of how close they are to reality, these images are highly instrumental in regulating social relations. Repeatedly constructed and contested by translators in different verbal interactions, they are integral part of their negotiations agreements about their social world (Davis 1994; Katriel 1985, 1999) and their position within it.

Method of work and preliminary hypotheses

We identify six main sub-groups working in the different branches of translation and interpretation in Israel: [1] literary translators, [2] translators of non-literary texts, [3] subtitlers, [4] conference interpreters, [5] community and court interpreters, [6] signed-language interpreters. This classification, however rough and inadequate, suggests some crucial differences in the role definition; languages translated; conditions, volume and prices of work; qualifications; training; recruitment and career patterns; organizational frameworks; and other parameters that distinguish between the different jobs, and also translate into occupational hierarchies. While agents may perform more than one job type (e.g., conference interpreters often also work as translators, as do subtitlers), a core group is identifiable in each branch. Roughly, the volume of manpower in the different branches is estimated to comprise over 1,000 people working in textual (literary and non-literary) translation, 250 in subtitling, 40 in conference interpreting, 80 in Israeli Sign Language interpreting and an unknown number in community interpreting (currently the most ad hoc form of interlingual, intercultural mediation).

We will conduct in-depth interviews with 20 translators and interpreters from each sub-group, and will strive for the optimal total amount of 120 interviews. Although this
is not intended as a sample corpus, the demographic data collected to date points to predominately female interviewees, with a broad and balanced age range. The interviews will be open-ended, applying a narrative approach (Mishler 1987; Gudmundsdottir 1996; Ochs and Capps 1996; Sabar and Dargish 2001), with an emphasis on life-history (Linde 1993; McAdams 1993; Lieblich et al. 1998; Mishler 1999; McAdams et al. 2001; Chamberlayne et al. 2004). Storytelling of formative phases and challenging situations (e.g., “how I started to translate”, “how I solved a critical problem”, etc.) will be encouraged, in the interest of hearing how these translators and interpreters understand their job, its merits and limits, their relations with their clientele (as defined in each case), their aspirations, commitment and ethics, the way their job fits into their personal lives, how they define their role in the community, and how they see themselves in comparison to other subgroups and to other occupations. We will also investigate agreements about a unified shared experience across the various groups, the most accepted and valued components of this experience, and the manner in which they are confirmed or contested by translators and interpreters in the various subgroups. In view of the predominance of women as translators/interpreters, we will also strive to gain a better appreciation of the extent to which the pink-collar character of their profession affects the informants’ perception of it.

Following Sela-Sheffy’s preliminary study (2005, 2006 and forthcoming), which dealt primarily with literary translation, drawing on their self-promotional discourse in the printed media, the present study is intended to expand our scope and concentrate more on anonymous non-literary translators and on interpreters, using in-depth interviews for first-hand, more complex and differentiated repertories of everyday verbal techniques of self-presentation and status claim.

We will use the material we collect to test some of Sela-Sheffy’s hypotheses about general strategies of status improvement used by Israeli translators and interpreters. Our existing knowledge of this field suggests that for all their differences, all of the subgroups alike tend to express frustration at their non-standardized working conditions and at the fact that their professional authority is constantly being called into question. It also points at two main strategies of status improvement adopted by different subgroups of translators (Sela-Sheffy 2006): (1) professionalization (e.g. emphasis on expert knowledge, membership in professional associations, academization etc.) in the realms of non-literary translation, interpreting and subtitling; and (2) emphasis on the individual-centeredness, intellectual stature and creative skills, particularly in the case of their literary counterparts. The present study will examine the techniques and intensity of these two strategies as manifested by the different sub-groups in this field.

Sela-Sheffy’s previous study of translators has further identified three general images on which translators draw as resources in terms of their public role as well as personal qualifications (Sela-Sheffy, forthcoming): [1] the translator as guardian of language and culture, and as educator engaged in a national mission, implying a profound knowledge of the canonical domestic language and cultural lore. It is a safe, albeit scarce, resource, exploited primarily by senior translators to indicate an orthodox
stance of gatekeepers; [2] the translator as agency of cultural updating, implying close acquaintance with and taste for foreign languages and cultures. This is a highly valued resource on which taste-makers in Israel usually draw, which may nevertheless become risky for translators aspiring to occupy an extreme innovative position; [3] the translator as artist in their own right. This image entails the rhetoric of the enigmatic notion of “personal talent” and exhibits unconventional personal disposition, bearing heavily on personality models of people-of-arts. In the case of literary translation it stands out as a major resource for celebrated and aspiring translators.

The use of these images and their specificities will be further examined in the proposed study, while other cultural resources of translators’ and interpreters’ collective selves and their specific strategies in using them are still to be identified. We assume that the distinction between the different branches is manifest in the inventory of prestige resources (for instance, while literary translators draw heavily on the people-of-art image, and accentuate personal creativity as their capital, community interpreters tend to borrow from social workers and accentuate empathy and care, on the one hand, and to debate the ethics of advocacy, on the other; Rudvin 2002; Inghilleri 2003, 2005a; Edwards et al. 2005), and will examine how these resources are mobilized by the same agents while shifting from one domain to the other. We also expect to find a division of attitudes between veterans and the newly arrived in each subgroup.

References


CHAPTER 7

Translators and (their) norms

Towards a sociological construction of the individual

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Communication-oriented theories like Toury’s Descriptive Translation Studies seek to take human agency into account. Yet there has been inadequate conceptualization of the relationships between translators and norms, between the individual and the collective, or between agency and structure. Human agents must still be accounted for not only as professionals but as socialized individuals. The study of plural and dynamic (intercultural) habituses may thus become a key concept for understanding intercultural relationships. It can reveal how intercultural actors interiorize the normative structures not only of the source and target fields, but also of their mutual intersections. The comparative study of two twentieth-century Belgian translators, Ernest Claes and Roger Kervyn, here shows how translatorship can be redefined in terms of habitus, as an individuation of collective normative schemes related to the translator’s personal history, to the collective histories of the target and source fields, and to the intersections between the cultures concerned.

Keywords: Descriptive Translation Studies, Gideon Toury, Pierre Bourdieu, sociology of translation, Ernest Claes, Roger Kervyn

Is descriptive translation studies too sociological?

At the end of the 1970s Gideon Toury introduced the concept of norms into Translation Studies. Norms function as various types of sociocultural constraints on human behavior: they are shared values and ideas on how to act, think, translate etc. appropriately in a certain context and for a certain group of people. From the receivers’ viewpoint, Toury defines norms as “criteria according to which actual instances of behavior” like translation, are evaluated “in situations which allow for different kinds of behavior, on the additional condition that selection among them be non-random” (1995: 55). Since then, the concept of norms has been used differently within translation studies and its “value has been both asserted strongly and called into question” (Schäffner 1998: 1). In particular, by focusing on the study of various and variable norms as the “very epiphenomenon” (1995: 53) of a target-oriented approach, Toury’s model for Descriptive Translation Studies has privileged collective schemes and structures instead of individual actors. It has lent itself to research into texts and their discursive embedding in a broader sociocultural, and political context.
In this, Toury’s project takes a sociological stand (Chesterman 2006: 12 might range it within a “sociology of translations as products”, and we would agree). Since the end of the nineteenth century, the separation between sociology and psychology has been based on a rather radical division concerning the object of study. The notion of the individual is left for psychology, while sociology studies everything outside the individual, like groups, classes, milieus (on this historical development, see Lahire 2004: 695ff.). However, this leaves open the question of the individual as a sociological construct, as well as the link between the collective and the individual. Collective structures are not external to the people composing them; they are enacted by those people (cf. Douglas 1986). The social can certainly be grasped through objectivated forms, but this does not imply that those objectivated forms exist outside their multiple individual usages. Indeed, since Durkheim, the sociological “solution” for the exclusion of the individual is a personification of the collective. In Toury’s seminal chapter on norms (Toury 1995: 53–69), such a personification of collective structures is omnipresent. Let me cite one passage at length:

Operational norms as such may be described as serving as a model, in accordance with which translations come into being, whether involving the norms realized by the source text (i.e. adequate translation) plus certain modifications, or purely target norms or a particular compromise between the two. Every model supplying performance instructions may be said to act as a restricting factor: it opens certain options, while closing others. Consequently, when the first position is fully adopted, the translation can hardly be said to have been made into the target language as a whole. Rather, it is made into a model-language, which is at best some part of the former and at worst an artificial, and as such nonexistent variety. In this last case, the translation is not really introduced into the target culture either, but is imposed on it, so to speak. Sure, it may eventually carve a niche for itself in the latter, but there is no initial attempt to accommodate it to any existing ‘slot’. On the other hand, when the second position is adopted, what a translator is introducing into the target culture (which is indeed what s/he can be described as doing now) is a version of the original work, cut to the measure of a preexisting model. (Toury 1995: 60–61; author’s italics)

This passage testifies to an (often implicit) continuous tension between the personified collective level of norms and the individual level of the translator (here as a hypothetical construct). In methodological terms, this means that a conceptualization of norms, of collective structures by definition, requires a conceptualization of the translator, of the agency “behind” the norms, and indeed of the relationships between the two. Not surprisingly, especially in Toury’s chapter on norms, implicit or explicit references to the concept of translator are ubiquitous. In this sense, the observation that “there were no people doing anything in that chapter” (Pym 1998: 108) is somehow an oversimplification. The chapter opens with a definition of translatorship as:

being able to play a social role, i.e., to fulfil a function allotted by a community — to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products — in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for manoeuvring between all the factors which
may constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment. (Toury 1995: 53; author’s emphasis)

On occasion, the relationship between translators and norms, and between structure and agency, are touched upon in terms of traditional sociological approaches: “Norms are acquired by the individual during his/her socialization” (Toury 1995: 55). The idea of socialization is taken up more extensively in “Excursus C: The making of a ‘Native’ Translator” (1995: 248–254), where Toury presents the development of a bilingual into a recognized translator:

Socio-culturally speaking, what emerging translators thus undergo is socialization as concerns translating. During this process, parts of the normatively motivated feedback they receive are assimilated by them, modifying their basic competence and gradually becoming part of it. At every phase of its development, a native translator’s ‘competence’ therefore represents a characteristic blend of nature and nurture, of the humanly innate, the individually assimilated and the socially determined. (Toury 1995: 250–251; author’s emphasis)

Toury leaves the relationship between nature and nurture, between translators and norms, between the (more) individual and the (more) collective relatively un(der)conceptualized. For him, “the relative role of different agents in the overall dynamics of translational norms is still largely a matter of conjecture even for times past, and much more research is needed to clarify it” (Toury 1995: 62).

The translator as a socialized individual

The last few years have seen many attempts to integrate the notion of habitus into a descriptive approach to translation (Simeoni 1998; Sela-Sheffy 2005; Inghilleri 2003, 2005; Meylaerts 2006). For Sela-Sheffy (2005: 2), “[o]bviously, this concept corresponds to and reinforces the notion of norms of translation”. Although habitus is a category that goes back to Aristotle (see Simeoni 1998), translation scholars mainly draw on the term as used by Pierre Bourdieu (1972), who designed habitus as the motor of a dialectic between a theory of effects and a theory of strategies. Bourdieu wanted to escape from a philosophy of the subject without sacrificing the actors, and to escape from a philosophy of structure without refusing to take into account the effects structure exerts on and through the actor. Habitus refers to the subjects’ internalized system of social structures in the form of dispositions. The inculcation of social structures is a life-long process of interactions between structure and agency through various and variable individual and collective experiences. Dispositions engender practices, perceptions and attitudes that are regular but not necessarily fixed or invariant. Under the influence of social position and individual and collective past, every cultural actor thus develops (and continues to develop) a social identity: a certain representation of the world and of the person’s position therein.
Nevertheless, since fine-grained analyses are lacking, especially in the case of intercultural contacts, the notion of habitus seems to confirm all too often what it was supposed to avoid, i.e. the precedence of structure over agency. It has thus frequently been criticized for being deterministic, static and one-directional (Sela-Sheffy 1997, 2005; Geldof 1997; Corcuff 2003), and rightly so. Attempts to apply it within Translation Studies have further laid bare its mono-cultural character, too much linked with structures and actors that refer to national societies only (Simeoni 1998). Intercultural actors develop perceptions and practices partly through cross-cultural habituses. By integrating the translators’ intercultural habitus in its framework, Translation Studies can offer a much-needed correction to Bourdieu’s theory, which is still more national than intercultural in nature (Meylaerts 2005). This should turn the habitus concept into an intercultural construct valid for less homogenous situations.

Recent insights insist on habitus as a \textit{dynamic, plural} concept, as the object of confrontations with various field logics and thus of multiple definitions and discontinuities (Lahire 2001, 2003, 2004; Sela-Sheffy 2005). Every (inter)cultural actor appears as a complex product of multiple processes of socialization disseminated in various institutions (family, schools, friends, work, neighborhood, etc.). Attitudes, perceptions and practices are the result of an unstable interplay of multiple kinds of habituses, questioning the uniqueness and permanence of the individual person. The actors’ plural and dynamic (intercultural) habitus therefore forms a key concept for understanding the modalities of intercultural relationships. It can reveal how (intercultural) actors interiorize dynamically and variably (institutional and discursive) normative structures of the source and target fields, and indeed of their mutual contacts and intersections.

We thus need a conceptualization of the human actor as a socialized individual. We need a sociology at the individual level, analyzing social reality in its individualized, internalized form (Lahire 2003, 2004). Until now, Translation Studies has conceptualized this socialized individual mainly as a professional (Simeoni 1998; Sela-Sheffy 2005; Inghilleri 2003, 2005; Gambier 2006). Translators, though, are always more than mere translators. A socialized individual cannot be reduced to a profession: “The habitus of a translator is the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history” (Simeoni 1998: 32). Furthermore, in situations where the professional field is not (or is only weakly) differentiated, this individualized history is likely to make up most of a translator’s habitus, particularly in periods prior to the second half of the twentieth century. Many social domains (politics, religion, arts, economics) have been evolving into relatively autonomous fields over the past two centuries (cf. Bourdieu 1971), and translation is no exception. Only a few major translator-training institutes were founded prior to the 1930s (Caminade and Pym 1995), and it was not before the 1960s and 1970s that their number started to increase and spread out geographically, with a real boom after the 1980s. The large majority of translations in human history would seem to be produced by what we would call “non-professional translators”. Research on translation thus mostly deals with situations where, in Toury’s terms, bilingual or multilingual speakers become translators (cf. Toury 1995: 241ff.). We find numerous situations where transla-
tors are simultaneously writers, critics, lawyers, philosophers, teachers, monks, priests, kings, diplomats, etc. In all these cases, insight is needed into these actors’ various and variable internalization of broader social, cultural, political and linguistic structures, of both the institutional and discursive kind. This helps us grasp the actors’ actual position-takings, their possible role in the dynamics of constraints on positions, and the evolution of their translational choices at the micro-structural and macro-structural levels. These choices concern a continuum ranging from the specific socio-stylistic aspects of habitus-governed translating to an individual’s willingness or refusal to be a translator. They exclusively depend neither on individual preferences nor on collective norms but require instead an analysis of the relations between structure and agency.

The usefulness of a dynamic and plural subject-grounded category that goes beyond the purely professional is most evident in a professionally non-differentiated or weakly differentiated multilingual context where the various source and target languages, cultures and people share the same space within a particular institutional framework. This is precisely the type of context in which people’s social and cultural history is often intricately linked to linguistic and cultural oppositions and tensions (cf. Even-Zohar 2005). How do translators find their way through complex webs of competing norms and socio-political, sociolinguistic structures? How are we to understand variations and evolutions in translators’ profiles and choices in relation to the overall structural and normative model? Part of the answer lies in the individual’s dynamic and varying internalizations of the norms and structures of the source and target fields, and of their mutual contacts and intersections.

**Being a translator in interwar Belgium**

**Structures and norms**

Let me illustrate this by focusing on the position and positioning of Belgian literary and legal translators during the first decades of the twentieth century. Translators had to work in a professionally non-differentiated, oppositional, bilingual (French–Dutch) context in which French had been the dominant language of the nation-state’s institutions and elites since Belgium’s foundation in 1830. Institutional monolingualism had helped controlling who was “in” and who was “out”. While Dutch was excluded from the powerful socio-political sphere, French was linked to socio-political and socio-cultural distinction and mobility, giving access to university and to higher-level prestigious jobs. This, of course, had fundamental implications for the linguistic habitus of all people in the field. Through prevailing institutional structures and via discursive practices that steadily confirmed the superiority of French and the inferiority of Dutch (see Meylaerts 2004a, 2007), the average adult of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had interiorized the superiority of French in various and variable ways, from total submission to strong resistance.
From the second half of the nineteenth century, however, some Dutch-speaking groups reacted to their internalized inferiority. After the First World War, this gradually led to calls for monolingual Dutch administration, justice and education in Flanders, the north of the country. Of course, such a change in language policy was bound to be a much-debated and sensitive process. Only in the 1930s, one century after Independence, had the most important linguistic laws created monolingual Dutch institutions (administration, education, justice) according to the principle of territorial monolingualism (Dutch in the north and French in the south). This evolution towards institutional monolingualism was prepared by regulations pertaining to legal, judicial and administrative translation, determining which specific documents or laws had to be translated from French into Dutch. Obligatory institutional translation thus protected the minority language rights of Dutch. The most emancipative Flemish groups were nevertheless opposed to this type of institutional translation and struggled for its abolition, their ultimate goal being monolingual Dutch administration in Flanders (see Meylaerts 2007).

During the whole interwar period, tensions between the two language groups were thus particularly heightened, as can be seen in many discursive practices. Even after institutional reforms, the interiorized sociolinguistic inferiority of Dutch speakers did not disappear altogether. It was a product of people’s collective and individual confrontations with discursive and institutional structures. Individuals, and especially intercultural actors, internalized this intricate web of oppositions in various and variable ways. Sharing a group habitus leaves space for variations both within individuals and between individuals.

This period was also characterized by a real boom in literary translations from Dutch into French (literary translations from French into Dutch were scarce since educated Flemish were able to read in French). The normative model of these translations seems perfectly adapted to their socio-linguistic and socio-political functions (see Meylaerts 2004a, 2004b). Translations of regionalist Flemish novels functioned as a way to perpetuate a retrograde, peaceful image of Flanders. In the eyes of the French-speaking upper classes, these novels confirmed all the clichés of an ideal world where “Flemish” continued to be synonymous with popular life and backwardness, a world at the opposite of the claims to sociolinguistic emancipation coming from some Dutch-speaking groups. This uniform selection strategy was seen by the French-speaking elites as “simply Flemish”. In other words, the target culture had a very pronounced set of preliminary norms. A similar observation can be made for the operational norms. Let me give two aspects of special interest for the present discussion. First, Dutch dialects, prominent in the source texts, were never translated into Walloon or French dialects. The French speakers would have perceived the use of dialect as incompatible with the

1 For example, the Equality Law (Gelijkheidswet) was passed in 1898. From then on laws were only valid if they appeared in both French and Dutch. In practice this meant that legislation was first written in French then translated into Dutch.
translations’ patriotic function of glorifying the French-speaking nation-state. Instead, translations switched between standard French for narration, and colloquial levels for dialogues. The social and regional differentiation of the Dutch dialects was reduced to the social differentiation of sociolects. This reinforced the cherished formula of “simply Flemish”, without affecting the status of French as the prestigious national vehicular language. A second type of operational norm was the preservation of Dutch toponyms and patronyms, sometimes even the nicknames of the characters. This option clearly identified the geographical setting and the characters as Flemish. For the French-speaking upper-class target readers, these Dutch names evoked a familiar world of villages where they sometimes lived themselves (as the local landlord), with their reassuring sociolinguistic hierarchy and with characters bearing the names of their servants (Dutch proper names were also commonly used in French-language literature of the time, which made the option all the more acceptable). This was not the dangerous Flanders with its claims to sociolinguistic emancipation. The introduction of undoubtedly Dutch heteroglossic elements in the French translations did not therefore affect the prestige of the national vehicular.

Translators

Given the prevailing language hierarchies, French speakers did not bother to learn the disdained minority language. Translators were consequently mostly Dutch speakers who had become bilingual at French-language schools. They had a hard time in this oppositional setting. Considered by the dominant French-speaking groups to be one of the cornerstones for continuation of the hierarchies, the translators were called traitors by combative Dutch-speaking groups. How do individual translators find their way through this intricate web? How should we understand changes in their profiles and in their choices in relation to the overall structural and normative model? Part of the answer lies in the individual’s dynamic and varying internalization of the structures and norms. To see this, we can sketch out the socio-biography of two Belgian interwar translators.

The (im)possibility of being a translator: Ernest Claes

Ernest Claes (1885–1968) was a best-selling Flemish author of the interwar period and is still famous today. However, he also had a professional career as a legal translator in Parliament, notably as the first director of the Dutch Summary Report of the Parliamentary Debates.² Born into a family of poor Flemish peasants, Claes was raised in Dutch (dialect). An intelligent boy and promising pupil, he received the bishop’s

² In 1932, the Summary Report of the Parliamentary Debates started publishing a Dutch translation of parliamentary debates. The French-language Summary Report had been around for 60 years.
financial support to attend a prestigious French-language Catholic collège in Flanders. Claes felt uneasy among pupils who mostly belonged to the French-speaking or bilingual upper and middle classes. This inferiority was accentuated by the prohibition of Dutch at school. After secondary school, Claes studied Germanic philology at the then French-language Catholic University of Leuven in Flanders. Through his French education, he was bound to interiorize the superiority of French language and culture, but not without developing resistance to it. During his secondary school years, Claes opposed the ban on Dutch and participated in prohibited meetings of the Flemish Students Association. At Leuven University and the years after, he was an active member of several organizations seeking Flemish emancipation in areas such as university education in Dutch. Nonetheless, as a bilingual he had the ideal profile to become a professional translator. Bear in mind that minority language rights had been enshrined in law about a decade before Claes graduated. Claes must have been aware of the ambiguous role of translation with respect to the linguistic hierarchy, especially for those Dutch-speaking minority groups who were struggling for monolingual Dutch administration in Flanders and thus for the abolishment of some types of obligatory institutional translation. When he applied for a job as a legal translator in Parliament in 1913, Claes addressed his letter of application to the President of the Chamber in Dutch, not in French. This letter put Dutch on a par with French and thus questioned the prevailing sociolinguistic and institutional hierarchies; it was perceived as a provocative, norm-breaking choice. Despite these acts of minor resistance and his support for Flemish emancipation, Claes remained a legal translator for his entire professional life.

Claes’s struggle with his own linguistic habitus was more pronounced in his literary career. In theory he could have chosen to write his novels either in Dutch or in French (many of his Flemish bilingual contemporaries wrote in French). Arguably, his choice to write in Dutch only was a way to resist his interiorized inferiority. It was generally seen at the time as a means of promoting Dutch as a literary language and to participate in the emancipation of the Flemish people. The same holds true for the literary genre, the regionalist novel, he excelled in. In complete opposition to their French translations, these picturesque stories had an emancipating function for the Flemish reader: they gave voice to the people. Claes’s choice of the minority language was so exclusive that he never wrote in French nor translated his own novels into French, even though he remained a legal translator. Those of his colleagues who did translate their literary works into French were attacked as traitors. Unlike them, Claes’s resistance to this inferiority became a straightforward refusal to be a literary translator. He preferred to check on his French translators and control their work as an invisible hand. Note that his resistance did not reach the point of forbidding French translations of his novels and thus defying the preliminary norm. However, he was opposed to any operational norm that would downgrade the image of the Flemish people and literature, as in the use of Dutch proper names. In the translations that he revised (e.g. Claes 1928), Claes replaced those names with French equivalents, suggesting a less obvious link between “Flemish” and “rustic”. Claes did however support the operational norm of translating
Dutch dialects into colloquial French, since he considered that French dialects would hinder an eventual breakthrough in France (a vain hope in most cases: French translations of Flemish novels were not successful on the French market). In his various translational choices, this intercultural Flemish bilingual hovered between submission and strong resistance to the prevailing norms and structures, between the acceptance and the rejection of his interiorized inferiority.

The impossibility of remaining a translator: Roger Kervyn

As an exception to the rule, the most prolific translator of Flemish novels into French during the interwar period was of French-speaking origin (see Meylaerts 1999, 2004a). Roger Kervyn de Marcke ten Driessche belonged to the majority culture for which he translated, so at first sight would not have to care about minority opposition to certain translational norms. Kervyn was a typical upper-class adult of the period. Born in Ghent (Flanders) in 1896, he lived mostly in Brussels. Son of a French-speaking Flemish aristocrat and a Dutch mother, he was raised in French, totally in accordance with the sociolinguistic habitus of the time. Still, from his early childhood on, he also learned Dutch through his mother’s family, through contacts with domestic servants and in the streets of Brussels. He lived in a smart Brussels neighborhood but near the Marolles, the most famous working-class quarter of the city, known for its picturesque mixture of Dutch and French dialects. Kervyn went to a very prestigious French-language secondary school where Dutch was forbidden. All these aspects would have contributed to his internalization of the superiority of French language and culture. At the same time, he was exceptionally in contact with the bilingual world of the Marolles. After secondary school, Kervyn studied law at the French-language University of Brussels. Very quickly he abandoned this profession to become a writer (thanks to the possibilities allowed by the family fortune). Kervyn belonged to the elites who cherished the French-speaking nation and opposed Flemish emancipation. His works and his correspondence contain evidence of these dispositions.

Kervyn nevertheless became the most important translator of Flemish regionalist novels during the interwar period. Although an aristocrat, he had enough knowledge to translate from Dutch, a language at the time mostly ignored if not disapproved of by his social milieu. At the same time, Dutch was finding its way into the institutions of the nation-state. Kervyn’s translations then proved to be highly successful. The translator shared to a large extent the sociolinguistic and cultural habitus of his target public, and brilliantly interpreted its aesthetic tastes. He perfectly followed the preliminary norm of selecting Flemish regionalist novels. Moreover, as an example of the socio-stylistics of habitus-governed translating (Simeoni 1998), Kervyn constructed a continuous mixture of literary language with more colloquial and vulgar registers, and did so beyond the speech of the characters. More colloquial and thus perceived as more “simply Flemish” than his bilingual Flemish colleagues’ version of this operational norm, popular undertone was highly appreciated by the French-speaking readers. Often it
had a picturesque, comic side-effect, again in harmony with the dispositions of the target public, only asking for more of the same. At times Kervyn also ventured into the “Marollien” dialect in his translations. As a mixture of Dutch and French, it was the only dialect that might fulfill the patriotic function of the translations. However, this initiative was blocked by Flemish authors like Claes, for the reason mentioned above.

At the height of his success Kervyn stopped translating. Why does a successful translator quit the job? How individual and how collective is such a decision? From 1932, the year in which his reputation as a translator was firmly established, Kervyn expressed increasing disdain for the type of literature he felt obliged to translate. The translator wanted to go beyond the expectations of his public and dreamed of translating “modern” Flemish authors. All his attempts failed, since his readers and publishers swore by “simply Flemish” novels. His personal aesthetic evolution, perhaps due to more elaborate contact with Flemish literature, preceded in part the more conservative literary and sociolinguistic habitus of his readers. Still, next to this individual intercultural habitus, more collective, structural factors influenced the individual’s decision. About the same period, Kervyn was particularly upset with some very negative reviews of his translations, written by Flemish critics in the French-language press. The fact that these Flemish critics used the dominant language did not necessarily imply internalizing the dominant perceptions of translation and intercultural contacts. The Flemish bilinguals condemned both the unilateral selection criteria (preliminary norm) and the style of the translations (operational norms) for giving a one-sided rustic, condescending, old-fashioned image of Flanders and of Flemish literature, confirming the perceived superiority of the French-language literature and nation. They sought a more modern selection in a less popular style. Although his personal preferences went in the same direction, Kervyn felt caught between two opposites. He stopped translating at the moment when the gap was growing between his personal history and the collective history of his public, and there was an increase in the collective weight of the emancipating intercultural Flemish. The end of his translating was effectively co-determined by the internalization of divergent source and target structures, as well as their problematic intersection. It was the end of a success story.

Conclusion

Translators have to find their way in an intricate web of competing norms and structures, especially when working in an oppositional, professionally non-differentiated multilingual context. Variations and evolutions in their profile and choices are linked to the individual’s dynamic and varying internalizations of the norms and structures of the source and target fields and of their intersections. Therefore, a close investigation of their plural and dynamic habituses is necessary for the study of intercultural dynamics. In more general terms, translatorship amounts to an individuation of collective schemes related to personal history, the collective history of the source culture, the
collective history of the target culture, and their intersections. Given the interplay of constraints to which translators as social agents are subjected, a subject-grounded category is required if we are to understand which influences are active, to what extent, and when. A dynamic and plural habitus concept can help explain the extent to which translators play a role in the maintenance and/or dynamics of norms. It can give evidence of the (sometimes profound) tensions between expected choices and unexpected variations. In short, “norms without a habitus to instantiate them make no more sense than a habitus without norms” (Simeoni 1998: 33).

References


CHAPTER 8

Refining the idea of “applied extensions”*

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Applied extensions such as translation aids, translation quality assessment, and translator training are not addressed by Descriptive Translation Studies, which assumes that “bridging rules” specific to applied fields will supply the transition between theory and practice. However, contrastive analysis and corpus linguistics, although promising, have not successfully bridged the gap between theory and practice to meet the needs of working professionals. Here we argue that the concept of applied extension should be refined in light of usefulness and usability. The paper shows how useful and usable data can be generated by relying on empirical, identifiable corpus-based data and by making examples directional. It also introduces the idea of anchor phenomena — grammatical resources that are perceived as being cross-linguistically equivalent but that tend to and/or do convey partially divergent meanings. The anchor-phenomena data can then be conceptualized for use in applied tasks such as assessment tools for evaluating translation quality.

Keywords: Applied Translation Studies, contrastive analysis, corpus linguistics, cognetics, translation quality

Introduction

In Toury’s map of Translation Studies, translation aids, translation quality assessment and translator training are seen as “applied extensions” (Toury 1995: 17–19) and are excluded from the disciplinary core of descriptive and theoretical Translation Studies. Applied activities are perceived as pertaining to other fields of study that would presumably provide the tools (conceptual and otherwise) needed to establish assessment criteria or decide on pedagogical implementation.

An examination of the background literature reveals that very little attention has been paid to applied Translation Studies (e.g. Williams & Chesterman 2002: 67–68) and that, while there is a wealth of descriptive research, generally speaking, the information is not directly amenable to applied endeavors. For those in the ranks of Translation

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Studies and those in the fields involved in particular applied activities, the term “applied” appears to signal the point where work on the descriptive level concludes, leaving it up to the final user to work out how to make use of the findings.

Problems in the applied areas may be of many types and may originate in various areas, but for the most part they tend to come down to a textual and linguistic bottom line. Contrastive analysis and corpus linguistics appear to be more obvious contributors of relevant information for applied purposes. Contrastive analysis aims at mapping the similarities and dissimilarities of (usually) two languages and producing descriptive results. Corpus linguistics uses empirical data as collected and organized in computerized corpora to study different language phenomena. More a methodology than a language model, it has teamed successfully with a number of approaches to yield extremely useful descriptive results (Laviosa 2002). In both cases, the outcome of the research process is raw descriptive data that may or may not have strong implications for applied translation activities.

These facts suggest that the crossover from description to “applicable” has not been solved satisfactorily within these fields either. Contrastive and corpus-based language research yield two types of information: the “what” and the “how much/many” of the phenomena analyzed. However, such research cannot supply the necessary “bridging” information for cross-linguistic applied purposes.

In Toury’s model the gap between description and applied objectives is sorted out by “bridging rules” specific to the particular applied field (1995: 18). However, empirical information suggests that neither Translation Studies nor any of the other fields of study are capable of directly “bridging” the transition between descriptive declarative knowledge and performative procedural information so as to meet the needs of applied professionals (Byrne 2006: 118–121).

Applied extensions, research, and real users

If we look for an answer in language-oriented Translation Studies we encounter a nullification of the “applied problem”. Proposals that seek to offer alternative paths are generally linked to corpus-based work. In terms of methodology, corpus linguistics has played a central role in the construction of tools that (assumedly) serve to improve and upgrade, among other things, the old practices of setting up all sorts of classifications (Nord 1997: 50–52) or of formulating strategies to circumvent cross-linguistic problems (Baker 1992: 20–43, 46–67, 119–215; Chesterman 1997: 87–116; Hatim and Munday 2004: 10–16). Rather than actual applications, most of the new possibilities involve corpus work by the final user (Bowker 2001; Varantola 2003); they can also be seen as constituting a verification stage in an experimentation process.

The situation does not look any better from the vantage point of contrastive analysis. It would seem reasonable to expect useful feedback from usage-based contrast, but, significantly, many of these cross-linguistic studies have explanatory aims in mind,
such as the study of grammaticalization (Traugott and Heine 1991; Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994) or characterizing one category across language boundaries (Dahl 2000). A second group of studies describes and interprets the similarities and differences of a given phenomenon in two or more languages, generally within the framework of one specific theoretical model. This type of study includes Larreya (2001), Martínez Vázquez (2003) and Celle (2005). The phenomena singled out for analysis can be interesting both theoretically as well as from the viewpoint of the applied user in terms of their potentiality as cross-linguistic problem triggers. Research along these lines may typically close with a well-known line of the type “these results are of prime importance for foreign language teaching, translation, etc.”, but the readers are never told why this might be so (with the exception of the cross-linguistic difference) or how these (assumedly useful) findings might be used in a particular applied activity. In other words, whether “a cross-linguistic problem” exists is not openly contemplated.

An additional difficulty is the gulf that separates what the research community thinks “applied” means and the expectations of the applied users. Whereas in the academic context “applied”, as mentioned above, tends to be easily dismissed as something left to be done by the user, final users in the real world demand ready-to-use aids built on reliable findings. Knowledge gained from contacts with independent language services providers in Spain suggests that commercially available tools and aids are not as popular or as widely used as might be expected. A similar situation is reported by Jääskeläinen and Mauranen (2004) in a corpus experiment carried out with in-house translators in the Finnish export industry. Among the reasons these final users give for avoiding commercially (mainly electronic) available tools were that they were not useful because they did not (directly) supply solutions to problems, nor efficient because translator productivity did not increase significantly. A popular complaint is that what is on offer is not what users would expect from a translation/revision aid.

In the particular case of corpus tools, some of the professionals contacted were truly receptive and enthusiastic but became very disappointed when it became clear that corpora did not provide direct answers to their needs but rather required extra work on their part. Informal reports noted that information extracted from corpora was valuable, but that using these tools was extremely time-consuming and often required additional technical training. The reality is that user demands do not find an answer in content-deprived commercially available tools such as translation memories or expert glossaries. This being so, it is hardly surprising that proposals from academia are viewed as self-serving activities that do not consider the relationship with the actual workplace.

In short, users cite the following drawbacks to supposedly applied products: such products need a considerable amount of “bridging work”; they are not available for all major language combinations; and they require the final users to undergo extensive and time-consuming training. There is also a dim awareness that what works for English may not travel well into a cross-linguistic bilingual (or multilingual) situation.
In many respects, these user problems belong in the domain of cognetics, i.e., cognitive engineering. Cognetics is a kind of “ergonomics of the mind” (Byrne 2006: 135) and its purpose is to take into account the capabilities and limitations of the human mind when designing a user interface, or, as in this case, applied extensions. Two of the more general and central concepts in cognetics are usefulness and usability. Being useful means actually helping users to solve real, practical problems, being usable means allowing intended users “to accomplish their tasks in the best way possible” (Foraker Design 2002–2005). As our background review revealed, standard descriptive data do not generally meet these criteria and the stages of the transition to actual applications have not been properly mapped out.

This is a position paper. It is my contention that the concept of applied extension needs refining in terms of usefulness and usability and that declarative knowledge gained from corpus-based contrastive analysis has to be further conceptualized if it is to serve any applied purpose. To this end, I will briefly review the above-mentioned notions and the way they can be implemented in this proposal. A description of how to produce useful and usable results will follow. The paper will close with a section on strategies for building applied extensions.

Usefulness and “anchor phenomena”

Usefulness is a performance indicator associated with the extent to which tools (technological, conceptual or otherwise) are relevant to the actual needs of a user. When research has an applied goal, not every phenomenon that is interesting from a descriptive point of view is necessarily relevant, but those that tend to be associated with frequent problems in cross-linguistic practice are.¹

These problems do not occur in the abstract but in actual situations, between particular languages and in a specific direction; all of these factors will influence our research questions. Another factor that can enhance or detract from the relevance and usefulness of our cross-linguistic data is the researcher’s stand relative to prescriptivism (Chesterman 1999). Understandably, applied users have quality concerns that have survived the tidal wave of descriptivism; for such users, quality considerations are concomitant with the very concept of translation.² From the applied point of view, prescription is naturally integrated in the users’ understanding of whichever

1. In this paper “contrastive analysis” refers to applied contrast “which deals with the practical consequences of differences between contrasted languages for teaching purposes, bilingual analysis or translation” (Jaszczolt 2003: 441). For possible applications of contrastive analysis, see Granger et al. (2003).

2. Chesterman’s inclusive interpretation of prescriptivism in terms of “implicit hypotheses of effect” (1999: 15) may be methodologically useful but this type of discussion does not belong in the applied area.
activiti(es) they engage in: there is a set of quality measures against which results are to be evaluated. Whereas many of these measures amount to social evaluation (House 2001) and by themselves lack usefulness, linguistic description offers firmer ground for prescriptive output. However, not all types of linguistic description have applied usefulness. Grammatical meaning in English–Spanish has been explored contrastively (e.g. Jaszczolt and Turner 2003: vol. 1) as part of wider linguistic enterprises, but it has not been systematically studied as a pool of problem-triggers in English→Spanish applied activities.

When examined from a cross-linguistic analytical perspective, certain grammatical areas show clear differences in the meanings some of the resources can convey in each of the languages. Empirical data demonstrate that dissimilarity in the way(s) grammatical meanings are conveyed is a constant source of cross-linguistic problems affecting both text processing and production. These language-specific associations between grammatical meaning and formal resource can be seen as “anchor phenomena” and can be used as key indicators of the degree of success in cross-linguistic transfer. “Anchor” is used in the same sense as in “anchor words”: in a parallel corpus, the anchor words are specific words that are defined for the two languages involved and that are related by some type of cross-linguistic equivalence. “Anchor phenomena” would then be those grammatical resources that are perceived as being cross-linguistically equivalent but that tend to and/or do convey partially divergent meanings, for example, the future in English and French (Celle 2005) or progressive forms in English and in Spanish (Rabadán 2005). Since cross-linguistic grammatical meaning dissimilarity cannot be assumed to be the same for different language combinations or in each direction, the form-meaning associations that qualify as anchor phenomena also differ by direction and language combination. For the pair and direction English→Spanish, a group of solid candidates to become anchor phenomena include imprecise quantification, adjectival chain characterization, and temporality (Rabadán, Labrador and Ramón 2004).

A language-pair-bound repository of anchor phenomena would provide core information for a number of applied goals. If it is to be useful, this applicable repository must (1) rely on empirical, corpus-based data, (2) be directional (i.e. English → Spanish or Spanish→English), and (3) include information about the type of textual materials to which it refers. Empirical data ensure real language for real cross-linguistic communication problems. Directionality guarantees that the anchors respond to the research questions and are, therefore, relevant and useful. The information about textual domain/type, etc., ensures that the temptation of unduly generalizing the discriminatory power of the chosen anchors is kept in check (e.g. verb forms as temporality anchors do not seem to be particularly useful in scientific texts in English or in Spanish).

In addition to being useful, the repository needs to be usable: it is imperative to show how descriptive anchor findings can work as an efficient tool for different applied purposes. This can be accomplished by further characterizing the anchors cross-linguistically.
Usability and cross-linguistic labels

The first requirement of an effective and efficient application is its usability. In its original field, usability “has become a catchphrase for products that work better for their users” (Quesenbery 2001). Technically speaking, usability is a quality attribute that assesses (1) how user-friendly your results are, (2) to what extent your method and techniques are user-centered, and (3) whether your research goals include meeting users’ needs. This pervasiveness of the attribute indicates that usability plays a role in each stage of the design process (Nielsen 2003), starting with the description of the problems that initially triggered the need to redesign. In this proposal, usability is implemented throughout the research process and beyond via a set of cross-linguistic labels that are, in contrastive analysis terms, the tertium comparationis against which the degree of cross-linguistic match is measured (Krzeszowski 1990: 15).

These labels are relevant for cross-linguistic discrimination of grammatical meaning and their role is to assist in identifying the common ground, or otherwise, between the two languages during the experimentation process (Rabadán 2005). Since their purpose is to help identify and represent meaning features that are relevant for language-pair bound applied purposes, they do not follow the usual conventions of descriptive linguistics. First, these labels do not belong in any particular model of linguistic description; rather they borrow, adapt, and use whatever may be useful, regardless of origin. Second, they show different statuses because they may mark grammatical, pragmatic, semantic, and even interlanguage information (Chesterman 1998: 27–40). In addition, the labels and the terminology are tested for usability so that they may also be accessible to final users as a basic analytical tool in a number of applied activities, including revision.

An illustrative example for the language pair and direction English→Spanish is the multi-level meaning “irrealis” [IRR]. It stands for a number of non-factual values that have also received other names (Fleischman 1995). Although some very delicate distinctions are possible between these values, they are not particularly relevant for our applied goal with the exception of one feature: “irrealis” applies to contexts expressing that something intended and/or planned to happen that never did.3

(1) Mr Griffin pulled a chair forward for Rose. “We were coming to see you as soon as we’d had tea,” he said. [IRR] (22-PRP_EN)

(2) Los dos días y medio que pasé en la Dirección General de Inseguridad — ¡y yo que creía que eso ya no existía! — fueron verdaderamente kafkianos. [IRR] (60-COND_SP) [The two and a half days I spent at the National (Un)security premises — I thought it did not exist any more! — were totally Kafkaesque]

3. For Palmer (2001: 18ff.) there is no binary contrast realis/irrealis, but it is a useful concept, as “it links modal systems to mood in the overall category of modality”. Neither English nor Spanish can be said to have one specific resource specialized in marking off the meaning “irrealis”. 
Frank would have been proud at the turnout. He would have loved all the attention [IRR] (226-WOULD)

Me explico, es el encargo de un editor a un viejo escritor antifranquista y tengo que contar la vida de Franco como la escribiría el propio Franco. Es una obra para los jóvenes del año 2000 porque el editor piensa que ninguno sabrá nada sobre Franco. [IRR] (320-COND_SP) [I’ll explain — it has been commissioned by a publisher to an old anti-Franco writer, and I am expected to tell Franco’s life as he himself would have written it. It is a work addressed to the youngsters of 2000 because the publisher thinks that none will know anything about Franco].

While English conveys this meaning by means of a past progressive (1) or a perfective construction (3), Spanish uses an imperfect (2) and a conditional (4).

Producing usable descriptive results

In order to arrive at useful and usable results, the experimentation involves three processes: (1) an interlinguistic contrastive analysis, (2) a cross-linguistic translation analysis, and (3) an intralinguistic target language verification. Four types of tools are used: two are technical (computerized corpora and statistics), the third is conceptual (cross-linguistic labeling), and the fourth is evaluative (a control group of representative users). Tools are the means, not the goal here. Yet every effort has been made to ensure they comply with our basic procedural guidelines: usefulness and usability. To keep this basic premise in focus, clarification of the role each of these tools plays in the process is required.

Research tools: Description and roles

Source corpora and the comparable corpus (English–Spanish)

The original language empirical data come from two large monolingual reference corpora, the Bank of English (BoE) and the Corpus de referencia del español actual (CREA) (Real Academia Española 2007). For both corpora the “general language” subcorpora

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4. In the case of both corpora, the “general language” written subcorpora selected are: “books”, “newspapers”, “magazines”, and “ephemera/miscellaneous”. The “spoken” language subcorpora have not been considered as the results are intended for the translation of written materials. The statistics and the core comparability of the BoE and CREA have already been discussed in Rabadán, Labrador, and Ramón (2004:145–146).
have been selected. These are “books”, “newspapers”, “magazines”, and “ephemera/miscellaneous”. This means that, in quantitative terms, both online source corpora have been trimmed down to some 30 million words. “Source” means that both monolingual corpora are used as a starting point to build phenomenon-specific comparable corpora according to needs.5

The role of the comparable corpus is to contribute empirical data concerning the correct grammatical usage both in English and in Spanish of each anchor phenomenon. Evidence obtained from this source brings the prescriptive component into the process, which is at the core of everything applied (Toury 1995: 19) and can also be made part of any empirical cross-linguistic study in the form of (non)explicit predictive hypotheses (Chesterman 1999: 14–15).

Diagnostic corpus

Translation data are sourced from the Parallel English–Spanish Contrastive Analysis and Translation (P-ACTRES) corpus.6 It features over 2 million words distributed among the same types of textual material as contained in the monolingual corpora. P-ACTRES is an open corpus and its copyrighted materials cover the period 2000–2006.7 Legal restrictions are the reason P-ACTRES includes chunks of 15,000–20,000 words each rather than complete texts.

The P-ACTRES corpus adheres to the convention of considering the threshold of representativeness at 1 million words (Biber 1993). The three reasons for this choice are (1) depending on what you want to do with your corpus, the importance of size is relative; (2) ACTRES has been designed to work effectively not for just one, but for various applied purposes; and (3) the recurrence rate is higher for grammatical than for lexical phenomena. This is because the former constitute a closed, finite class, which means that a given grammatical anchor phenomenon will occur more often than one particular lexical item, regardless of the size of the corpus. The search strategies are more straightforward in the case of the translation corpus. First, there is no need for adjustment because the materials are presented together, as aligned bilingual pairs; sec-

5. The key feature that allows for these ready-made corpora is the possibility offered by CREA of selecting the chronology of the materials. The BoE does not offer the chronological restriction feature and so searches of English language materials are always done by default. The usual corpus building strategy is then to search the English corpus first and use the chronological selection feature in CREA so as to obtain a statistically comparable volume of materials in Spanish.

6. P-ACTRES is a restricted access corpus because of copyright limitations. A demo is available at http://actres.unileon.es/demo.html

7. There are two exceptions dated 1995 and 1998 respectively. All the translated materials are reviewed for “threshold quality” before becoming part of the corpus. The “threshold quality test” reviews two aspects: overall intelligibility in Spanish and degree of semantic match between original and translation.
ond, the tagging allows searching for grammatically marked forms independently of or combined with their lexical bases.  

In this applied frame the role of a parallel corpus is to contribute empirical diagnostic data that have to be contrasted with those obtained from the comparable corpus. When applied to translation data “diagnostic” means “instrumental” in that the data are not the object and/or goal of the study but a means to obtain complementary information about language use and cross-linguistic interpretation. This information is used as a basis for identifying (1) alternative expressive options to those revealed by the comparable data, (2) “gap fillers” for those original uses without an obvious target equivalent, and (3) possible discrepancies in grammatical usage between original and translated texts and evidence of comprehension and interpretation mistakes of source language materials by target language (TL) users. As already discussed, cross-linguistic labels function as the *tertium comparationis* in the contrastive part of the process. Without them it would not be possible to collate the data, as there would be no systematic relationship between English and Spanish phenomena. To ensure usefulness, labels belong to different levels of analysis and show different status and levels of abstraction. To promote usability both by researchers of different ascriptions and applied users label denominations need to be kept as unencumbered as possible.

### The meaning of statistics

Statistics help in various ways, most prominently in determining the statistical significance of differences between groups of data. Statistics can be particularly interesting when interpreting results and can provide a welcome link between quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence as they help to focus on those uses or functions that trigger cross-linguistic problems. Yet, quantitative data by themselves do not supply applicable information. Results have to be filtered and their representativeness and suitability for the purposes of this study qualitatively assessed. Feedback from prototypical users comprises one of these filters.

### Representative users

A basic and effective way of tracking usability levels from the very beginning of the research process is to recruit a small group of representative users to act both as informants and testers of the proposals at every stage. These represent a sample of the final

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8. P-ACTRES has been aligned with a new upgraded version of the *Corpus Translation Aligner* (http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/enpc/ENPCmanual.html) and tagged using *TreeTagger* (http://www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/projekte/corplex/TreeTagger/). It can be searched (restricted access) by means of CWB (http://www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/projekte/CorpusWorkbench/). All websites were last accessed December 2006. We are grateful to Knut Hofland for his help and expertise throughout the corpus building process.
users the results are destined for: applied professionals involved in language and/or translation training, language services providers including those performing translation quality assessment, and translation practitioners who use translation aids.

The role of the representative users/informants is to act as a “control group” in providing feedback concerning relevance and usefulness of findings as well as usability recommendations. Using small informal tests whenever this is deemed necessary means capitalizing on limited resources and allows the researcher to modify those aspects that are perceived as flaws and therefore poorly rated by the intended users individually. If the test is given formally to the informants as a group, their answers could be misleading as interactive feedback between the individuals could contaminate the results. Their suggestions function as working assumptions or thought out evaluative comments throughout the research process.9

Method and procedure

The experimentation sequence mainly adheres to Krzeszowski’s (1990) three-step model of description, juxtaposition, and contrast distributed in the three phases indicated above, although with some important modifications: (1) the selection stage, which in Krzeszowski is part of description, in our work sequence is considered separately and is a double step as the empirical data are extracted from source comparable corpora and from the translation corpus; (2) likewise, the description phase is also double as both comparable and diagnostic data are analyzed in terms of the chosen tertium comparationis; and (3) the final contrast happens between original TL and translated TL and includes Chesterman’s verification of TL fit (2004:6).

Selection. This stage comprises the corpora search input(s), the search strategies, and the statistical sampling. Key questions here relate to the criteria for cross-linguistic commonality in the comparable data and the type of sampling to be used.

Description of comparable data source language–target language. The description is concerned with the qualitative (and quantitative) analysis of the empirical data retrieved from the corpora. The qualitative phase uses the cross-linguistic labels (see above) relevant for the phenomenon being described and, in the case of multifunctional items, yields the numbers for the quantitative description. The aim is to find evidence—both quantitative and qualitative—of the resources available to express a given meaning in both languages and their distribution. Collating these figures gives us information about typicality and distribution in each of the languages separately, for instance, the distribution of the English simple past and the Spanish preterite and imperfect (Rabadán 2005a).

9. The “control group” suggestions do not preclude extensive assessment and evaluation of future applications derived from this research.
**Juxtaposition of comparable data.** At this stage the degree of match between both languages is established by mapping the capabilities of the chosen grammatical phenomenon in one of the two languages onto those of the equivalent resource\(^\text{10}\) in the other language. Juxtaposing qualitative data gives us information about shared capabilities and interlinguistic gaps. Juxtaposing quantitative data will produce the dissimilarities in the distribution and supply information about whether the resource is more central (or prototypical) in one language than in the other. They will also point to what degree there is cross-linguistic overlapping of functions, or whether the target language (depending on directionality) has adopted transferred (interlanguage) functions for some anchor phenomenon and how significant this is. A typical case is the surplus use of *can* as Spanish *poder* in contexts where it is not needed (Rabadán 2006: 282–284).

**Description of diagnostic data.** When describing diagnostic data, the same input is searched in the parallel corpus in order to obtain a diagnostic sample of the rendering of that particular grammatical feature (and its uses) into the TL. The qualitative analysis supplies the range of values in the source language (SL) and the formal options for the input phenomenon in the TL. In quantitative terms, we obtain their typicality rates in translation for each particular use. An illustrative case study is the analysis of -ly/-mente adverbs using the P-ACTRES corpus (Rabadán, Labrador, and Ramón 2006). In all cases, when researching grammar for applied goals, the translation data are treated as diagnostic data, as they do not necessarily fulfill the requirement of correctness and acceptability that precede any degree of prescription.

**Verification:** Contrasting translated and nontranslated language. In the third analytical stage the diagnostic (translation) data are compared with the nontranslated evidence obtained from the monolingual part in the comparable corpus. In our frame, this means diagnostic evidence from the P-ACTRES corpus (Spanish translated from English original texts) and original Spanish from the CREA.

This will allow for the identification of possible differences in grammatical usage between original and translated Spanish. Usefulness of results may be compromised if a strictly quantitative analysis is favored but quantitative data may be significant when combined with comparable data results, because they may indicate possible fillers for the gaps, additional interpretations and/or problems in the interpretation of our cross-linguistic values. Singling out anchor values that are not sufficiently discriminating can also detract from data usability by affecting trust on the part of the applied users, who expect reliable, efficient, and effective information. This situation has been avoided by using tests of statistical significance to help decide which anchors can be actually invested with cross-linguistic discriminating value.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{10}\) For an extensive treatment of cross-linguistic equivalence see Chesterman (1998:6–52)

\(^{11}\) For inferential statistics and tests of statistical significance see Richard Lowry’s *Concepts and Applications of Inferential Statistics.*
Interpreting the results: An inventory of “instruction-like” guidelines

The final part of our process to generate usable data is to provide an inventory of translation options based on the evidence gained during the experimentation and verification stages. According to the control group of representative users, such an inventory should be conceived of as “descriptively prescriptive guidelines”.

These guidelines can adopt the following formats (among many others) for the values of the relevant anchor phenomena being considered for a given situation:

“Value A” can be translated by <option x> or alternatively by <option y> if and when information of the type α is/ is not explicit/ can be inferred from the context/ etc.,

or:

“Value B” tends to be translated by <option x> in contexts of the type β and δ. A possible, but less frequent possibility is <option y>.

“Bridging rules” or conceptualization strategies?

While the prominence of tools and procedure in an empirical study may obscure the purpose of any applied research process, a clear explanation of the importance of producing useful and usable data is essential. Seeking and finding solutions for the applied question(s) we intend to address requires targeting the particular goal of the applied activity(ies). This involves some type of conceptualization that can render the anchor phenomena operational. In Toury’s proposal this took the form of “bridging rules” (1995: 18–19), a set of modifying principles that are assumed to be different for different applications.

My proposal is that, starting from the type of useful and usable data described above, it is possible to articulate a replicable strategy to serve different (groups of) applied tasks. Anchor results from the experimentation process can be used as an indicator of translation quality (Rabadán, Labrador, and Ramón, in press). Translation universals, such as the simplification hypothesis (Toury 1995: 267–274), the law of interference (understood as transfer, Mauranen 2004: 79), or the unique items hypothesis (Tirkkonen-Condit 2002: 209), are particularly well suited to serve as conceptualizing tools in order to identify cross-linguistic grammatical misinterpretations in the source text and the subsequent misuses in the target text. This conceptualization can be formulated by means of low-level language-pair specific conditioned statements inspired by Toury’s formulation of general laws of translation (cf. Toury 2004: 25–28) as follows:

the lower the number of instances of <anchor x> in the translated text, the higher the degree of under-representation of language α specific grammatical resources and the less acceptable the translation, and vice versa;
the smaller the disparity between native and translated usage in the use of particular grammatical structures associated with specific meanings, the higher the translation rates for quality.

Work on anchor phenomena for different language pairs should yield data leading to the formulation of more (and more refined) statements of the type shown above. The more anchor phenomena are made available as potential assessment tools, the higher the discriminatory power when evaluating.12

Since applications derived from these data are aimed at translation critics, reviewers and other language service providers, usability (ease of use), usefulness (relevance for the job) and adaptability (capable of adjusting to different uses, e.g. revision of writing produced by nonnative speakers) is a primary concern.

References


12. There are obviously other factors that intervene in the quality of a given translation and that have to be taken into account (House 2001). However, the most tangible and widely accepted criteria seem to be language correctness and acceptability, which, of course, encompasses grammatical correctness and semantic and pragmatic appropriateness.


In Gideon Toury’s conceptual map of Translation Studies, the transition from theoretical and descriptive study to translator training, translation aids and translation criticism is not direct but occurs through the establishment of “bridging rules” by practitioners. Corpus-based research into the universals of translation is strengthening the pivotal role of description in Translation Studies through the development of an explicit, coherent methodology and the acquisition of new knowledge about translational behaviour, without necessarily paying attention to such bridging rules. At the same time, however, teachers of translation are independently drawing on the insights of corpus-based Descriptive Translation Studies and would seem to be aiming, in the long term, to formulate bridging rules that postulate what translator trainees should be doing if they adhere to the patterns of translational behaviour unveiled by descriptive scholars. Here we examine the main features and achievements of corpus-based Descriptive Translation Studies and then focus on the integration of corpus-based description into translator training and translation quality assessment, with particular reference to the role played by universals in applied research carried out in the specialized translation classroom.

**Keywords:** corpora, Descriptive Translation Studies, translation universals, laws of translational behaviour

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**Revisiting Toury’s map of Translation Studies**

The relationship between Descriptive Translation Studies and Translation Theory, maintains Gideon Toury, is one of interdependency: the results of observational and experimental descriptive–explanatory research, which reveal what translation “DOES involve, under various sets of circumstances, along with the REASONS”, verify, refute or modify theoretical assumptions about what translation “CAN, in principle, involve”. In turn Translation Theory, on the basis of empirically established “regularities of behaviour”, predicts what translation is “LIKELY to involve, under one or another array of specified conditions” (Toury 1995: 15–16). These predictive statements are expressed in terms of conditioned, probabilistic laws of translational behaviour whose basic format is: “The presence of 1, 2, 3, … ∞ enhances the likelihood that X (or: reduces the likelihood that no-X)” (Toury 2004: 26). The laws of translational
behaviour explain the relations existing among a myriad of cognitive, cross-linguistic and sociocultural variables that influence a particular translational behaviour or its avoidance (2004: 15). Toury assigns to Descriptive Translation Studies a vital role in the evolution of Translation Studies (Toury 1995: 265) because, through the accumulation of findings concerning actual translational behaviour, it should be possible to move “gradually, and in a controlled way, towards an empirically justified theory which would consist in a system of interconnected, even interdependent probabilistic statements”, this being the ultimate aim of Translation Studies (Toury 2004: 15). Although Toury prefers the term “laws” to denote the probabilistic pronouncements put forward by Translation Theory, he concedes that they qualify as universals of translational behaviour, whose value lies in their explanatory power rather than in their existence. He also recognizes that the notion of translation universal “is one of the most powerful tools we have had so far for going beyond the individual and the norm-governed” (2004: 29).

In line with Toury, Andrew Chesterman (2000, 2004) views the quest for universal features of translations as the descriptive route through which scholars propose and look for generalizations about translation. These general regularities or laws, he explains, are explored by operationalizing abstract notions about universals and putting forward and testing, through a comparative model of translation, general descriptive hypotheses about the existence of similarities between different types of translation, without disregarding either the differences between them or the uniqueness of each particular case. Chesterman distinguishes between S-universals, which refer to “universal differences between translations and their source texts” and T-universals, which refer to “universal differences between translations and comparable non-translated texts” (Chesterman 2004: 39). If universals, which are essentially descriptive constructs, are supported by extensive empirical evidence, they can have explanatory force as regards the occurrence of a given feature in a particular translation (Chesterman 2000: 26). This means that if a universal is verified, it acquires the status of law, so one can say that a given translation exhibits a particular feature under given conditions because all translations tend to exhibit that particular feature under those same conditions (Chesterman 2005: 198). The causes of universals, on the other hand, are sought in neighbouring fields of scientific enquiry, such as human cognition. Discourse transfer, observes Toury (1995: 275), is an example of translation universal that can be explained by the basic mental processes involved in translation, particularly the rapid switching between source and target codes and vice versa. Therefore in Translation Studies, like in any discipline, general explanatory laws not only permit us to make predictions about future cases but also create vital interdisciplinary links (Chesterman 2000, 2004).

Going back to Toury’s map of Translation Studies, whereas Descriptive Translation Studies and Translation Theory are mutually dependent, the relationship between the two “pure” branches of the discipline and its applied extensions into the world is
unidirectional. Each applied extension of Translation Studies (e.g. translator training, translation aids, translation criticism or translation planning) formulates and applies a different set of bridging rules by drawing on theoretical assumptions and predictions as well as empirical evidence concerning translational behaviour (Toury 1995: 17–18). Moreover, each applied activity sets its own bridging rules by also drawing on areas of scholarly enquiry that lie outside Translation Studies. The role of the applied extensions of the discipline is to establish rules of translational behaviour that are expressed in terms of prescriptive statements which “tell others what they should have done and/or should be doing” (1995: 19) if they conform to the norms set by translation practitioners, i.e. translator trainers, translation critics or translation planners.

Chesterman (2000) advocates a causal model for Translation Studies, considered to be the only model that incorporates all four categories of hypotheses formulated in the philosophy of science: interpretive, descriptive, explanatory and predictive. Chesterman also asserts the importance of putting forward and systematically testing, with appropriate empirical tools, explicit explanatory and predictive hypotheses so as to be able “to develop corroborated hypotheses into probabilistic laws, as envisaged by Toury” (2000: 26). He believes an explicit causal model of translation would make a significant contribution to the development of a translation theory or theories that would explain the link between causal conditions, translation profile features and observed effects. It would also be applicable in translator training and quality assurance (Chesterman 2000, 2005). Unlike the comparative and process models, a causal model can in fact accommodate prescriptive statements, since stating what translators or translator trainees should or should not do in a given context is the same as formulating implicit predictive hypotheses of effect. These prescriptive hypotheses (e.g. if a given norm is accepted/broken under given conditions, certain desirable/undesirable effects will be produced) can be explicitly formulated and tested in the translation classroom. This can enhance our understanding of how causal conditions, translation profile features and observed effects are related to each other. It could also provide the type of information that a translator, a translator trainee, or a teacher of translation wants to know about translation, for example how to produce high-quality translations or what the likely effects are of a specific translation choice, such as the tendency to avoid the use of lexical anglicisms when translating English economics articles into Italian (Musacchio 2005; Laviosa 2006). From Toury’s perspective, applying a causal model in the translation classroom can provide practitioners with an analytical framework they can draw on for carrying out their own systematic research into the product and process of translation, and this application would not be with a view to accounting “either for possibilities and likelihoods or for facts of actual behaviour” (Toury 1995: 19). The latter aims are the tasks of theory and description respectively. The pedagogical application would be with a view to setting norms in a more conscious way, since the applied extensions “cannot be anything but prescriptive” (1995: 19), just as, by the same token, “theory should certainly not be concerned with bringing about changes in the world of our experience” (1995: 273).
Corpus-based Descriptive Translation Studies

Since the mid-1990s, electronic corpora have been widely used as a research methodology in Descriptive Translation Studies. This has given rise to a new area of scholarly enquiry that draws on the Corpus Linguistics approach to language study and the target-oriented historical–descriptive approach developed by Toury from Polysystem Theory. Corpus Linguistics and Descriptive Translation Studies are informed by a set of common tenets: they study language in use rather than idealized or intuitive language data; linguistic regularities are viewed as probabilistic norms of behaviour rather than prescriptive rules; and these patterns of actual behaviour are inextricably related to socio-cultural variables since they reflect and reproduce culture. Corpus Linguistics and Descriptive Translation Studies adopt a comparative research model in which descriptive hypotheses that make claims about the probabilistic generality of a given phenomenon are put forward, and texts are examined across corpora representing different varieties or modalities of the same language (written, spoken and mixed general and specialized monolingual corpora), different languages (bi- and multilingual comparable corpora), translated and non-translated varieties of the same language (monolingual comparable corpora), as well as original texts and their translations into one or more languages (bi- and multilingual parallel corpora). Furthermore, the analytical procedures and corpus design principles of Corpus Linguistics are largely compatible with Toury’s (1995: 36–39) “discovery procedures”, involving a gradual inductive progression from observable translational phenomena to the non-observable norms that govern translators’ choices. The use of corpora in Descriptive Translation Studies, first proposed by Mona Baker (1993), was welcomed by Toury as a valuable research tool in the quest for laws, which “would have to take into full consideration regularities of actual behaviour obtained by an evergrowing (and even more variegated) series of studies into well-defined corpuses” (Toury 1995: 265). The two scholars asserted the importance of developing an explicit research methodology to operationalize and test theoretical assumptions, compare results, replicate studies, and deepen our understanding of translation and translating. Corpus-based descriptive research has made a valid contribution to the development of such a methodology, particularly with the study of the universals of translation. As Chesterman (2004: 46) observes “[c]orpus-based research into translation universals has been one of the most important methodological advances in Translation Studies during the past decade or so, in that it has encouraged researchers to adopt standard scientific methods of hypothesis generation and testing”. Furthermore, corpus research into universals offers an excellent example of the reciprocal relationship between theory and description, as envisioned by Toury. The following review shows in fact how corpus studies of translation universals have formulated and tested explicit interpretive and restricted descriptive hypotheses derived from general theoretical claims, broadened our knowledge of translation, and suggested explanatory hypotheses that can be properly tested by putting forward explicit predictive hypotheses in future studies.
Up to the mid-1990s a number of linguistic features considered common to all types of translated texts had been identified by translation scholars, mainly on the basis of contrastive analyses of translations and their source texts. These features principally concerned simplification (Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1983; Toury 1995; Vanderauwera 1985), explicitation (Blum-Kulka 1986; Klaudy 1996; Shlesinger 1989, 1995; Toury 1995; Vanderauwera 1985), and normalization (Vanderauwera 1985; Shlesinger 1991; Toury 1995). Lexical simplification, in particular, was defined by Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Eddie A. Levenston as “the process and/or result of making do with less words” (Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1983: 119). This interpretive hypothesis was confirmed by one of the first corpus studies of translation, which was carried out with the English Comparable Corpus (ECC), a multi-source-language monolingual comparable corpus made up of translational and non-translational narrative and newspaper texts (Laviosa 1998). The four core patterns of lexical use identified in the corpus of translated texts vis-à-vis comparable originals support the general descriptive hypothesis that, independently of source language and text type, translators working into English as their mother tongue tend to restrict the range of words available to them and use a relatively higher proportion of high-frequency lexical items. This tendency, argues Sandra Halverson from a cognitive perspective, supports and can be accounted for by the idea of gravitational pull from category prototypes in semantic networks, since prototypes are selected more frequently than more peripheral structures or items (Halverson 2003: 218–219), mostly as a result of their high frequency of use (Langacker 1987, in Halverson 2003).

Blum-Kulka’s (1986: 19) general descriptive explicitation hypothesis which “postulates an observed cohesive explicitness from SL to TL texts regardless of the increase traceable to differences between the linguistic and textual systems involved” was tested by Linn Øverås (1998) with a corpus of literary translations drawn from the ENPC, a bidirectional English–Norwegian Parallel Corpus. Starting from the interpretive hypothesis that a rise in the level of cohesion in the target language text can be seen as an aspect of explicitation, Øverås put forward a restricted descriptive hypothesis stating that English and Norwegian target texts tend to be more cohesive than their source texts. The results largely confirmed this hypothesis since the explicitating shifts, involving the addition and specification of lexical and grammatical items, were found to outnumber the implicating shifts in both direction of translation, although English target texts showed a lower level of explicitness vis-à-vis Norwegian target texts. In addition to the process of interpretation inherent in translation, Øverås considers various factors that may explain the phenomenon of explicitation, for example the stylistic preferences of source and target languages, their systemic differences, and culture-bound translation norms.

More recently, Baker’s notion of explicitation, which refers to “an overall tendency to spell things out rather than leave them implicit in translation” (Baker 1996: 180), has been investigated by Maeve Olohan and Mona Baker (2000) at the level of syntax through the analysis of the occurrences of the reporting that in translated fiction and
biography texts drawn from the Translational English Corpus (TEC) vis-à-vis comparable originals drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC). The findings show a preference for the use of the optional *that* with the verbs *say* and *tell* and suggest a higher level of grammatical explicitness in translational English. Drawing on Günter Rohdenburg (1996), Olohan and Baker suggest that the cognitive complexity involved in translation can explain the over-representation of the optional *that* in translated texts. In addition, Olohan’s (2003, 2004) latest studies reveal a correlation in both translated and non-translated texts between omission of the optional *that* and use of contracted forms, so that, while TEC texts are more likely to include *that* and not use contractions, BNC texts are more likely to omit *that* and use contractions.

Drawing on Blum-Kulka’s explicitation hypothesis and Baker’s notion of explicitation, Vilma Pápai (2004) has put forward three restricted descriptive hypotheses that she examines with the ARRABONA corpus, a combined English–Hungarian parallel corpus and a corpus of comparable original Hungarian texts. Pápai hypothesizes first that English–Hungarian translations are characterized by five explicitation strategies involving not only shifts in cohesion but also additional linguistic and extra-linguistic information and disambiguation of ST items. The second and third hypotheses state that translated Hungarian texts tend to exhibit a higher level of explicitness than comparable originals and the degree of explicitness is higher in translated scientific texts than in literary ones. The first two hypotheses have been confirmed, the third one has not been supported.

Normalization, defined by Baker (1996: 176–177) as “the tendency to conform to patterns and practices which are typical of the target language, even to the point of exaggerating them”, was the starting point of Dorothy Kenny’s (2001) study of lexical creativity and lexical normalization in a parallel corpus of contemporary German literary texts and their English translations (Gepcolt). Kenny identified three sets of creative lexis in the German corpus: creative word forms identified from an initial list of hapax legomena (word forms that occur only once in the corpus), creative forms specific to a particular writer, and creative author-specific collocations. Kenny has found that 44% of creative hapax legomena and 16% of creative collocations were normalized. So, although lexical normalization was found to be a feature of translation, on most occasions normalization did not take place. The extent to which creative lexis is normalized appears to be influenced by how translators see their brief and by the systemic resources of the source language. For example, creative lexis linked to the derivational possibilities offered by German or those that involve puns might be particularly difficult to render in the target language. Some evidence of normalization is provided by Linn Øverås’s (1998) study of explicitation discussed earlier, which shows a tendency in translation to prefer typical rather than unusual collocations and to neutralize metaphorical expressions. The evidence provided in Kenny’s and Øverås’s studies lends some support to Toury’s law of growing standardization, whereby source-text textemes (signs that assume specific functions deriving from the special relationships they create within the text) are often replaced by target-language repertoremes (signs
which belong to an institutionalized repertoire, that is a group of items which are codifications of phenomena that have semiotic value for a given community). In the process of translation, argues Toury, the dissolution of the original set of textual relations is inevitable and can never be fully recreated. Moreover, Toury suggests that factors such as age, extent of bilingualism, the knowledge and experience of the translator, as well as the status of translation within the target culture may affect the operation of the law (Toury 1995).

A new universal identified by recent studies is Sonja Tirkkonen-Condit’s Unique Items Hypothesis, which can be subsumed under Toury’s general law of interference as a particular case of negative discourse transfer. Discourse transfer refers to the tendency of translators to produce a translated utterance not by retrieving the target language via their own linguistic knowledge, but directly from the source utterance itself (Toury 1986). The universality of discourse transfer is expressed by Toury’s law of interference, whereby the transfer of source-text phenomena can be of two types: “negative transfer (i.e. deviations from normal, codified practices of the target system)” and “positive transfer (i.e. greater likelihood of selecting features which do exist and are used in any case)” (Toury 1995:275). The Unique Items Hypothesis states that target-language-specific elements, which do not have equivalents in the source language, tend to be under-represented in translated texts compared with comparable originals, since “they do not readily suggest themselves as translation equivalents” (Sonja Tirkkonen-Condit 2004: 177–178). The hypothesis has been tested on two subcorpora drawn from the Corpus of Translated Finnish (CTF): academic and fictional texts. Two sets of elements specific to Finnish were investigated: verbs of sufficiency and two clitic particles. The findings largely support the hypothesis. Anna Mauranen (2000) also found confirmation of the Unique Items Hypothesis in the CTF when examining the occurrence of a TL-specific item, toisaalta, in translated and non-translated academic writing and popular non-fiction. The hypothesis is further supported by Sari Eskola (2004) who, in her study of translated narrative prose from English and Russian and comparable original Finnish texts, found evidence of under-representation of referative non-finite syntactic structures, which have no straightforward equivalent in either English or Russian. Conversely, final non-finite constructions, which have straightforward equivalents in both source languages, are over-represented in translation. A possible explanation for these findings is the operation of a “filtering element in the translation process which directs the translator’s mind to those linguistic elements in the target language that do have linguistic counterparts” […] and blinds the translator so that s/he tends to overlook the unique linguistic items” (Tirkkonen-Condit 2002:16).

This brief review of a small but representative sample of corpus research shows how the findings of well-constructed and well-executed empirical studies contribute to the refinement of theory. It is fair to say that the descriptive–explanatory investigation of translation universals has come a long way in recent years, pushing Translation Studies in a more empirical direction (Chesterman 2004:46) and boosting Toury’s hope that “the mark of empirical studies will be more noticeable […] towards the estab-
lishment of a full-fledged, multi-facet theory of translation of a high explanatory (and some predictive) power” (Toury 1995:240).

Corpus-based description and translator training

Translator training has been a much researched applied activity of Translation Studies in recent years, as amply testified by the growing number of publications in the field, widely ranging from handbooks for translator trainers (e.g. González Davies 2004; Kelly 2005) and practical courses in translation (e.g. Hervey et al. 2000; Laviosa 2005) to scholarly volumes (e.g. Colina 2003; Robinson 2003; Nord 2005; Tennent ed. 2005) and academic journals, such as *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* and *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter* (see Kelly 2005 for an up-to-date bibliography). Essentially interdisciplinary, these works explicitly bring together reflections derived from the “Pure” branches of Translation Studies and a host of neighbouring disciplines and areas of scientific enquiry, namely Linguistics, Education, Second Language Acquisition, Second and Foreign Language Learning, and Language Teaching Methodology.

Equally impressive is the literature on corpus-based translator training, ranging from practical guides on how to use corpora in the LSP classroom (e.g. Bowker and Pearson 2002) to scholarly volumes that examine and illustrate the use of corpora for pedagogic purposes (e.g. Botley et al. eds. 2000; Hatim 2001; Granger et al. eds. 2003; Zanettin et al. eds. 2003; Gavioli 2005). These works too are interdisciplinary; they draw on the theoretical and descriptive branches of Translation Studies, translation aids, and neighbouring disciplines and areas of scholarly research such as Corpus Linguistics, Information and Communication Technologies, Computational Linguistics, Machine (Assisted) Translation, Contrastive Linguistics, Terminology, Lexicography, and LSP studies. Some of these studies have been carried out by descriptive translation scholars who also teach ESP and specialized translation. They show a very close relationship between description and application. Students engage with corpus data in a systematic way using a methodology based on the principles of Data-Driven Learning put forward by Tim Johns (1991a, 1991b) in foreign-language teaching. This involves carrying out small-scale research projects where students identify problem areas arising from translation practice, suggest restricted descriptive hypotheses based on a comparative research model, and then test them together with their tutor, who has the role of facilitator in the learning process. In this particular teaching context, corpus design and compilation, as well as processing tools and procedural steps, are very similar to those employed in corpus-based descriptive research, although the aims are specifically pedagogic. Small, specialized corpora are designed and used not only as resources for retrieving translation equivalents, particularly in terminological work, but also as repositories of data for improving students’ understanding of actual translational and linguistic behaviour, so that norms can be accepted (or refuted as the case may be) in a more conscious way on the basis of bridging rules grounded in reality.
More recently, translator trainers working in the field of LSP studies have drawn on the insights of descriptive research into translation universals. The insights have been taken as "a basis for conscious manipulation" (Toury 1995: 273) in experimental studies aimed at testing in the classroom environment the validity of a number of universals, their usefulness in raising student awareness about translation and translating, and their possible use as predictors of higher or lower quality translations. What follows is a review of some very recent works, which may well represent the beginning of a new trend in the applied extensions of Translation Studies.

Normalization is the point of departure of Dominic Stewart's (2000) corpus study of conventionality in the context of teaching L2 translation. The aim of his study was to test the following explanatory hypothesis: using a large general-language monolingual corpus of English as an aid to translating into English as a foreign language leads to the reproduction of conventional patterns in L2 translations. Stewart’s classroom-based research shows that the use of the British National Corpus (BNC) for translating tourist brochures from Italian into English as L2 encourages students to look for and produce natural-sounding collocations, by examining the frequency of occurrence and concordance lines of assumed target language equivalents of source language noun phrases. Two examples of fluent collocations retrieved from the BNC are *grand tour of the city*, as the equivalent of *gran giro della città* and *road with panoramic views*, as the equivalent of *strada panoramica*. A large, general-language corpus such as the BNC can therefore be a very useful resource for students translating into English as a foreign language since it can compensate for their lack of native-speaker knowledge of target language and culture. However, argues Stewart, the use of corpora in the translation classroom may well contribute to reinforcing the normalizing tendency displayed by translated texts and perhaps inhibit creativity. In order to test this hypothesis Stewart suggests carrying out a comparative examination of lexical and syntactic conventionality between translations produced using a reference general-language corpus, such as the BNC, and translations produced using traditional resources alone.

The Unique Item Hypothesis has been tested experimentally in the translation classroom by Pekka Kujamäki (2004) with a view to raising student awareness of what translation entails, through the examination of their own translations. In the first phase of the experiment, thirty-six students were asked to back-translate into Finnish the German and English translations of a Finnish original text created ad hoc on the topic of driving in Finland, which included several language-specific items with no straightforward equivalents in either German or English. In the second phase of the experimental design the students’ translations were compared with the students’ use of original Finnish, as revealed by a cloze test designed to elicit unique items. The findings confirmed the Unique Items Hypothesis. In their translations, in fact, students tended to overlook unique items and opt for straightforward lexical or dictionary equivalents, even if TL-specific items were found to be part of their lexical repertoire, as revealed by the results of the cloze test.

Finally, within the research area of translation quality assessment (TQA), Federica Scarpa (2006) has assessed, in relation to specialized translations carried out by
advanced translator trainees, the validity of simplification and explicitation as translation universals and possible indicators of translation quality. The aim of the study is twofold: to deepen our understanding of translational behaviour in a particular training context and to provide reliable measures of quality with a view to improving the effectiveness of translator training. Specialized English–Italian translations carried out by advanced translator trainees were first compared with the English source texts as regards overall length, number of sentences, average sentence length, standardized type/token ratio, and lexical density. The results of this initial analysis were then compared with the TQA grades awarded. In the last stage, the translated texts were compared with comparable originals drawn from the Italian reference corpus CORIS (Corpus dell’Italiano Scritto). Italian translations were generally found to have more running words as well as fewer and longer sentences than the English originals, type/token ratio was higher and lexical density lower. Compared to lower-scoring translations, higher-scoring translations were found to have a lower number of running words, higher average sentence length, lower number of sentences, higher type/token ratio, and lower lexical density. Higher-scoring and lower-scoring translations deviated from comparable originals to the same extent on all measures. The validity of simplification and explicitation as S- and T-universals was largely confirmed by comparisons made with source texts and comparable originals. The analysis of the relation between universals and TQA grades showed that higher-scoring translations have a higher level of explicitness and a lower level of simplification compared with lower-scoring translations.

All three studies explicitly draw on translation universals as empirically established features of actual behaviour. They test experimentally and in different classroom environments a number of explicit and implicit hypotheses, adopting either a comparative or a causal research model. Stewart’s hypothesis is explicitly explanatory, while Kujamäki’s is explicitly descriptive. Scarpa adopts a causal model and her research design is more complex. First of all she puts forward a number of interpretive and descriptive hypotheses aimed at testing the validity of universals as attested in the literature. She then suggests an implicit two-tailed explanatory hypothesis, which can be phrased as: either a high or a low TQA score is caused by the presence of certain translation profile features, which are regarded as aspects of universals of translation. Finally, she tests this explanatory hypothesis by putting forward an implicit two-tailed predictive hypothesis of effect, which can be phrased as: a given set of translation profile features, which are viewed as aspects of translation universals, will result in either a high or a low TQA score.

Conclusion

On the basis of the present examination of theoretical pronouncements, descriptive evidence and pedagogic research in specialized translation, it can reasonably be argued that translator trainers are going beyond the mere “recognition that some kind of the-
oretical premise is essential in order to foster the awareness that is at the basis of modern-day translating” (Ulrych 2005: 19), as revealed by a survey investigating the state of the art in translator training practices at tertiary level at universities and translator-training institutions in Europe and North America. Translator trainers are doing much more than simply integrating a variety of leading theories into professionally oriented translation courses, mainly linguistic, functional, cultural studies, descriptive translation studies, comparative literary, but also gender studies, postcolonial, and socio-historical approaches (Ulrych 2005: 20). While some teachers of translation may simply take on board pieces of knowledge “projected onto the applied extensions of Translation Studies” (Toury 1995: 273), many others actively engage in carrying out empirical research that draws on and brings together the “Pure” branches of the discipline and a remarkable array of scientific fields close to their specific pedagogic concerns. Conversely, while some linguistics-oriented scholars may still plan research projects with the sole intent of addressing and solving problems arising out of the training context, many empirically minded theorists and descriptive scholars work closely together “towards an increasingly better understanding of the ways translation and translators, as individuals and members of societal groups alike, manoeuvre within the manifold constraints imposed on them, and produce texts which look and function the way they do” (Toury 1995: 266).

References


Pseudotranslations of detective fiction became a specific form of literary production in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods in Turkey, including numerous translations and pseudotranslations of Sherlock Holmes stories. Until the middle of the 20th century, two different types of poetics governed the field of literature in Turkey. The intellectuals and the ruling elite regarded translation as a means of establishing a new literary canon in Turkey and stressed the Western classical provenance of translated works. On the other hand, the field of translated popular literature, included great numbers of borderline texts such as pseudotranslations, concealed translations and anonymous texts and continued to be governed by a poetics that was largely inherited from the folklore literary tradition in the Ottoman Empire. The Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations, which span over half a century, provide fertile ground for exploration of what happened to the poetics of folklore.

Keywords: pseudotranslations, Turkish literature, Sherlock Holmes, poetics of reception, translation history

Studying the emergence of new literary forms in a given culture provides insight not only into processes of change within the literary field, but also into possible social and cultural transformation. One can thus study the emergence of the Turkish novel in the 19th century both as a culmination of Western influence and as a cursor of the changing social and cultural life, particularly in the urban centers. Translations, especially from French, played a significant role in introducing new literary genres such as the drama and the novel. Translations were done from canonical works, which in turn became a shaping force in terms of “high literature”. At the same time, however, translations and adaptations of more popular works were active on a lower level, and their interaction led to many literary innovations in the home system (Paker 1991: 18). Detective fiction was a part of the non-canonical field, yet was instrumental in the development of a new prose style especially through the translated and original works by the famous author Ahmed Midhat Efendi (Özön 1985: 230–231). It was a genre denounced by some and welcomed by many, including a major figure like Sultan Abdulhamid II. Nevertheless, it was little discussed as a literary form in terms of its function or reception.
This paper will not attempt to trace the development of detective fiction in Turkey. Rather, it will look at how detective fiction in one of its forms, namely the dime format, aligned with and drew inspiration from traditional Turkish folk literature. This provides an interesting example of how literary forms and definitions change over time, and how this change is invariably accompanied by some kind of resistance manifested in individual or collective literary practices. The topic of the present study is neither original nor translated detective fiction; it is instead an excursion into what Anthony Pym refers to as “borderline cases” (Pym 1998: 65). This borderline area will be explored through pseudotranslations of Sherlock Holmes stories alongside original Turkish fiction that had Sherlock Holmes as an imported character.

Gideon Toury has done much to introduce pseudotranslations as an important topic within Translation Studies. Acknowledging the rich information pseudotranslations have to offer to researchers, Toury has called for an approach that incorporates pseudotranslations as legitimate objects of study (1995: 46). For him, pseudotranslations are “texts which have been presented as translations with no corresponding source texts in other languages ever having existed — hence no factual ‘transfer operations’ and translation relationships” (Toury 1995: 40). Although pseudotranslations are not translations in the strict sense of the word, Toury’s concept of “assumed translation” enables them to be regarded and treated as such. When we talk about “assumed translations”, we deem all utterances presented, regarded or revealed as translations to be legitimate objects of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury 1995: 32). So regardless of whether a target text has a corresponding source text in another language, we can study it in relation to the way the readership receives it as a translation. In many instances, the decision to present an indigenous text as a translation is a deliberate act, with social and ideological implications. The pseudotranslator offers new options for a culture or presents material that would be unaccepted or censored in indigenous texts (Toury 1995: 41–42). The Turkish system of translated literature is rich in pseudotranslations, however there is evidence that pseudotranslators did not always have a socio-political agenda. Many pseudotranslations aimed to capitalize on the commercial success of popular authors and characters. The way the readership read and liked these pseudotranslations points to the complex reception and production patterns of a culture in transition.

Despite the absence of translation relationships, pseudotranslations reveal interesting information about the concept of translation in a given time. All we have to do is study the features that distinguish them from originals. Yet for certain traditions and periods there are no clear borders between the two. Douglas Robinson calls a clear distinction between translation and original a recent “social fiction” and writes that “[t]he concept of pseudotranslations is interesting in large part because it calls into question some of our most cherished beliefs, especially the belief in the absolute difference between a translation and an original work” (1998: 185).

The Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations in Turkish reveal a grey area at the intersection of translation and original. I will argue that they inherited this area from the
anonymous Turkish folk story. While originality was an important issue in translated canonical literature in the 20th century, the authors of the pseudotranslations displayed a certain indifference towards this issue and continued to produce their work in an interculture, at the crossroads of the old and the new. I will argue that this interculture is indicative of two different literary habituses (Bourdieu 1993:5) present among Turkish writers, translators and readers until the middle of the 20th century. The ruling elite and the intellectuals propagated and even imposed a new set of dispositions that would be established through the imports of Western literary sources and a Western poetics into Turkey. This poetics had special focus on authorial originality and canonicity. On the other hand, the poetics dominant in popular literature helped an older literary habitus to endure. Unlike the newer one, this habitus could be associated with an approach that emphasized popular characters over authors, generic features over canonicity, and anonymity over originality.

A brief history of early detective fiction in Turkey

The first translation of a detective novel appeared in Turkey in 1881, 22 years after the translation of the first Western novel into Turkish and 40 years after Edgar Allen Poe published his The Murders in the Rue Morgue, acknowledged as the forerunner of the detective genre. Erol Üyepazarcı suggests that the three factors behind a potential interest in the detective novel were the establishment of an organized police force in the 1840s, the increasingly cosmopolitan structure of the major Ottoman cities, and the development of the novel as a literary genre (1997:64–65). This potential materialized with the translation of Ponson du Terrail’s Les Tragédies de Paris by Ahmet Münif in 1881. This was followed in 1884 by Ahmed Midhat Efendi’s translation of Emile Gaboriau’s Le Crime d’Orcival. Ahmed Midhat Efendi proved to be not only a revolutionary and popular figure in Turkish literature, with an ability to combine entertainment with education, but also one of the pioneers in translated and original detective fiction. Following his Gaboriau translation, he wrote an original detective novel called Esrar-ı Cinayat (The Mystery of Murders), highly influenced by Gaboriau’s style (Üyepazarcı 1997:73). This was followed by translations of works by Gaboriau, du Terrail, Pierre Delcourt, Edmond Tarbé, and Fortuné de Boisgobey, among others, between 1884 and 1902. In the meantime, two seminal works — Eugène Sue’s Les Mystères de Paris and Edgar Allen Poe’s The Murders in the Rue Morgue — were also translated and published, in 1889 and 1902 respectively. The works translated in this period were mainly by French authors and were often a mixture of crime and melodrama.

Translation of detective fiction came to a halt in 1903. This situation was not unique to detective fiction and was mainly due to the deteriorating political atmosphere in the country and the heavy censorship that affected both authors and translators. Publishing activity was revived in 1908 within the relatively liberal environment created by the proclamation of the Second Constitution (İskit 1939:130). Translated detective fiction
took on a new turn after this date and expanded to cover American and English works in addition to French ones. While the founding fathers of detective fiction such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, Gaston Leroux, and Allain-Souvestre started to be translated, there also appeared series of “dime novels” (cheap fiction booklets, so called because they originally cost 10 cents, a “dime”, in the United States). These covered adventures of dime heroes such as Nick Carter, Nat Pinkerton, Nick Winter and even Sherlock Holmes and Arsène Lupin stories, some of which were pseudotranslations. In the meantime, domestic novels and adaptations grew in number. By 1928, when the Latin alphabet was adopted to replace the Arabic-based Ottoman script, detective fiction had become a popular and well-established genre. The pattern changed little after 1928; there were new translations and new originals produced. Many well-known authors translated and wrote detective fiction under assumed names well into the 1960s. The detective novel as an imported form became a successful instance of transfer and found itself a place alongside other forms, challenging some of them in terms of popularity.\(^1\)

Ever since its emergence in Turkey in the nineteenth century, detective fiction has constituted an interesting field where translations, originals, pseudotranslations, pseudooriginals, and adaptations co-existed, opening up a rich literary sphere (about whose literary value there was much doubt and little debate). A review of these works also reveals that this field was a haven for an older mode of literary production, namely rewriting.\(^2\)

Criticized and marginalized in favor of more canonized genres, rewriting as a literary mode lived on in re-editions of traditional folk stories, in a group of works termed “people’s books”. These targeted a rural readership and offered reading material to a largely illiterate population. On the other hand, as the urban population increased along with the literacy rate, there emerged a need for more diverse forms of reading material. The traditional experience of collective reading gave way to individual reading. In this process, detective fiction, especially the dime novel, addressed the newly literate, male, lower urban classes that had little formal education. To understand this process, it may be useful to consider the political and cultural changes Turkey underwent in the first half of the 20th century.

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1 For a detailed account of import and transfer and their role in the making of the cultural repertoire, see Even-Zohar 1997.

2 In this paper the term “rewriting” is not used in the broad sense of the word to cover all activities of translation as suggested by André Lefevere (1992: vii). I will use “rewriting” to cover literary production resulting in
   - Re-editions of the same folk story written by different authors,
   - Pseudotranslations,
   - Originals with imported characters.
A nation in the making: Early Republican Turkey

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed on October 29, 1923, a date considered a milestone in Turkish history in terms not only of politics or economics but also of culture and social life. In 1923, Turkey had just gone through a war of liberation against occupying powers and was opening a new page in its history. It was a country with a new name and a new political system that placed Westernization at its crux. The Ottoman Empire had been occupied with the question of modernization and Westernization since the 18th century, but it was the Republican era, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, that finally institutionalized this trend. The first twenty years of the Republic were marked by intensive planning activity aimed to Westernize Turkey while building a nation equipped with a unique Turkish identity. The young Republic was trying to establish a new and secular Turkish identity that would ideally rise up from a common culture, language and history instead of the older order of religion (Güvenç 1997: 225, 245). This new national identity was constructed through a series of essentially secular reforms that have had strong implications not only on how the Turkish state was run but also on how people went about living their daily lives. The reforms included unity in education (1924), adoption of Western time and calendar (1925), universal suffrage (1928), adoption of the international numeric system (1928), and alphabet reform (1928). These reforms may also be considered elements of an emerging repertoire in Turkey composed of a largely Western inventory. One of the most important steps was the alphabet reform, which re-shaped the cultural configuration of the newly founded Republic and symbolized a major cultural and social transformation. The proponents of the reform suggested that the Arabic-based Ottoman script was difficult to learn and therefore impeded the cultural development of the nation. Yet the intention was not only to increase the rate of literacy, which was around 10 per cent in the first few years of the Republic; the adoption of the Latin alphabet would also serve as a significant break with the Islamic past symbolized by the Arabic letters and contribute to the new secular cultural policies (Katoğlu 1997: 413; Lewis 1961: 273). Immediately after the alphabet reform was announced, Millet Okulları (Nation Schools) were established with the aim of teaching the Latin alphabet to the people. Within the first ten years of the reform, over two and a half million people attended these schools (İskit 1939: 188).

For the first time in the history of the country, Turkey could not just adopt only selected items of the Western repertoire, as had been the case in the 19th century (Arıkan 1998: 4). The aim was to absorb Western civilization and consequently to produce a unique version that some referred to as “Turkish humanism” (Sinanoğlu 1980: 8). This ambitious project could not be realized overnight. Ottoman traditions rooted in several centuries would not be so easily overthrown. While many intellectuals gave explicit support to Westernization, it is difficult to know the opinion of the more silent groups such as ordinary people or agents active in the production of peripheral literary works. Were they willing and/or able to replace their reading or writing habits with the ones
propagated by the new regime? Or alternatively, did they experience a transition and adjustment process whereby they combined elements of both worlds, the traditional and the new? This paper accepts the second alternative as a hypothesis and looks at how that period of adjustment may have reflected on literary practices on a popular scale. The term “interculture” will be used to refer to popular literature at this specific transition period, adopting Anthony Pym’s definition of the term as “beliefs and practices found in intersections or overlaps of cultures, where people combine something of two or more cultures at once” (1998: 177).

The state and the intellectuals attached great importance to translation within the Westernization project. The mission attributed to translation was to import Western ideas to prepare a background for the creation of a new form of literature and thought. However, not all translations were desirable. Translations of Western classics were called for with a sense of urgency. This idea was not unique to the Republican period. Already in 1874, only 15 years after the appearance of the first translated novel, the newspaper Hayal printed an article about the kinds of books that should and should not be translated from Western languages. The authors advised against translations of “immoral” narratives that would threaten Muslim principles, while they recommended the translation of historical and educational narratives (reprinted in Akbayar 1985: 450). The discrimination continued, although in later periods the works were judged not so much on their moral vices but on their literary value and position vis-à-vis the canon in their home systems. Translation of seminal works of Western literature into Turkish was considered vital for the development of a new Turkish culture, severing its ties with the Ottoman heritage (Nayır 1937: 162; various authors in Özdenoğlu 1949).

The position of detective fiction within the Turkish literary system

Translation activity was often criticized throughout the pre-Republican and early Republican periods. Translations were found to be unsystematic, arbitrary and hasty (Ülken 1997: 347). Lack of revision, control and criticism was stressed (Vala Nureddin in Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi 1939: 149). Translations were said to be full of mistakes, and some translated titles were judged ill-chosen (Sevük 1940b: 607). The publication of non-canonical popular novels was considered to be a commercial pursuit lacking in dignity (İskit 1939: 287, 298).

In fact, literary critics mostly ignored popular fiction altogether, let alone detective fiction. Even negative comments were rather rare. Although hundreds of original and translated detective novels had been published, in 1940 the literary historian İsmail Habib Sevük included only twelve translated detective novels among the 1,210 pages of his two-volume anthology of translated European literature in Turkey. He wrote in his preface that he offered nearly a complete list of translated European literature in Turkey. He wrote in his preface that he offered nearly a complete list of translated European literature in Turkey. Yet he also added that he had neither the urge nor the opportunity to include an exhaustive list of “detective and adventure” novels (Sevük 1940a: VII-VIII). In the second
volume he declared that “detective and adventure novels”, which made up a significant proportion of publishing activity, lacked literary value (Sevük 1940b: 603). In his memoirs, author Suut Kemal Yetkin recalled having read Sherlock Holmes and Nat Pinkerton novels as a child, and added that many adults read such novels in secret, as if they were committing a misdemeanor (Yetkin in *Milliyet Sanat* 1985:9).

Small wonder that publishers felt the need to defend themselves. Semih Lutfi, a major publisher of popular novels in the 1930s and 1940s with a series called “cheap novels”, said in an interview that his sole criterion was the people and all he did was give people what they wanted (İskit 1939:295). Another case is Türkiye Publishing House, which noted in the first book of a detective series they launched in 1949:

Detective novels are not simple novels that have a negative effect on people, as some suggest. A well-chosen selection of such books can help develop the intellect and provide opportunities for taming one’s will and nerves. This is a fact acknowledged by the greatest psychologists and educators of the West (Editor’s note in Christie 1946; our translation here and throughout)

Panned or praised, popular novels, with detective fiction to the fore, provided reading material to a section of a society changing worlds. The few rural readers continued with their previous habit of reading traditional folk stories. Even after the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the literacy campaign, people who could read were still overwhelmingly urban. Literacy figures remained low. While in 1927 around 10 per cent of the population was literate, this rate increased to about 20 per cent in 1933 (“Onuncu Yılında Maarifimiz Rehberinden” 1933), growing every year thereafter but at a slower pace.

**Reading material for an emerging readership**

In 1936 the literary historian Mustafa Nihat Özön divided Turkish readers into three groups: first class (readers of canonized literature), second class (readers of popular novels consisting mainly of detective and adventure fiction) and third class (readers of folk stories) (Özön 1985:110). Özön based this analysis on especially the pre-Republican readership but suggested that the categories were still valid in his day. The shortcomings of such a broad categorization are clear. Yet for the sake of argument, we may propose that the changing life styles and the rising literacy created a new group of readers between the second and the third classes.

If we go beyond Özön’s classification and look at the division based on the types of texts read, we can come up with a fourth group of texts. These were dime novels, both those written originally in Turkish and the ones that were translated. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the kind of readership these texts addressed, I would like to argue that they mainly targeted groups of readers who were familiar with the folk tradition but were attracted to different themes such as detective plots. These readers were either unable or unwilling to move on to popular novels and enjoyed the less voluminous for-
mat and less sophisticated plots of the dime novels. There exist kinship ties between these short novels and the larger and more prestigious examples of the detective genre. However, the dime novels appear closer to the folk story in terms of their production and marketing strategies. It was not uncommon to see the same authors (such as Selami Münir Yurdatap and Vedat Örfi) behind the rewrites of folk stories and the translated dime novels. Likewise, the ads for folk stories published in detective dime novels (see for example the “Sherlock Holmes’ın Arsène Lupin ile Sergüzeşleri” series by Selami Münir Yurdatap — a Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslation series from 1926) suggest that these books addressed a similar readership. Furthermore, the same publishers would be involved in the publishing and distribution of both types of books (Cemiyet Printing House in the 1920s and Güven Printing House in the 1940s).

The intellectuals of the early Republican period referred to folk stories as “people’s books” (see the Proceedings of the First Turkish National Publishing Congress, Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi, or Türkiye Bibliyografyası 1938–1948, the official bibliography of books published in Turkey).3 Faruk Rıza Güloğul, who published a book titled Halk Kitaplarmına Dair (On People’s Books) in 1937, included as “people’s books” religious books, religion-inspired battle stories, romances, folk poetry, national battle stories as well as recent imitations of these (1937: 3). Some of these books, especially the earlier examples, were looked down upon to a large extent and were regarded as having a bad effect on people. This mainly had to do with the fact that they were based on religious legends and they reinforced superstitions. For instance, in a letter to the First Turkish Publishing Congress in 1939 publisher Halit Yaşaroğlu wrote:

Unfortunately, the semi-literates in our society, that is to say those belonging to the older generation, only read those meaningless and harmful books called folk literature. It would be a wise step to pass a law to ban the publication of these books that are rather detrimental with their grammar, illustrations, style and ideas. However, we also need to prepare a body of works to replace these. (Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi 1939: 368–369)

In his book Güloğul was pleased to announce that the lithograph-printed versions written in Ottoman script, which were the products of a “backward mind”, had disappeared after the alphabet reform. Yet he also added that some publishers “unfortunately” printed transliterations of the Ottoman texts in the new script, while some published “improved” copies (1937: 4). The improvements consisted of omitting religious and superstitious elements, while some retained those but added the following note in the preface or epilogue: “Read these books not to believe them but to have a good time. Because none of them are based on history or real stories” (Muharrem Zeki in Güloğul 1937: 5).

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3 It is interesting to note that an official state publication such as this used the term to cover not only Turkish folk fiction but also original and translated detective and adventure fiction in 1950. This provides further evidence for the existence of a close alliance between the two genres in that period.
Folk stories were read in manuscript format as early as the 18th century. There is evidence indicating that they were read out in public places like coffee houses. We also know that these books were sometimes rented out, since they were expensive and only the lucky few could afford them (Özön 1985: 73). The availability of these books expanded after 1835 following the establishment of the first lithograph press in Turkey. The first printed “people’s books” were published in the 1840s and became immensely popular. Only a few of them were attributed to a specific author, and even those with a known author had the style of anonymous stories (Özön 1985: 72). Most of these books had their roots in the oral story-telling tradition. The first publishers recorded some of the known stories, bought manuscripts or commissioned authors to rewrite oral stories they had discovered (Boratav 1988: 160). The early Turkish novels were influenced by the language and style of these folk stories (Boratav 1939: 139). However, as they developed a language and style of their own, they started having an effect on the new rewrites of folk stories. Some publishers and authors modified the language and style of the folk stories, correcting linguistic errors and omitting some elements while retaining the basic features. They put these books in their own names, even though everyone knew the stories were from anonymous tradition. There was no debate about authorship or the extent to which the rewriters could claim the stories were their own. The official bibliography gave their names as the authors. Some authors acted much more radically and wrote original stories under the heading “folk story”. They used patriotism, heroism and the newly emerging Turkish identity as their themes. However, these works never became as popular as the older anonymous stories (Boratav 1988: 162).

The Directorate General of Press approved and even encouraged the rewrites. Seeing the popularity of folk stories, the Directorate General launched a campaign to modernize the stories as an educational and ideological instrument. Their reasoning was simple, as expressed in a note sent to known literary personalities:

People like the protagonists of people’s books. These characters should be kept as they are, but they should be depicted in new plots that agree with the spirit of the regime and carry a higher meaning. So the people will be instructed through the books they like. For instance, the character Mickey Mouse stays the same, yet becomes the protagonist of a different plot, a different setting in each film. Likewise we want to use the popular characters within new themes and let them live on in adventures that propagate the aims of the Turkish revolution and civilization. (cited in Güloğul 1937: 56–57)

In the meantime, rewriting had become common practice in an adjacent field of popular literature, namely detective fiction. The rewriters of detective fiction probably did not share the aims of the Directorate General. Nevertheless, they seem to have capitalized on the same assumption that people would like to see their favorite characters involved in different plots. The characters they chose for their rewriting activity had already been created for the series format. They were Sherlock Holmes, Arsène Lupin, Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton, i.e. characters that had already traveled from plot to plot, creating a dedicated readership. Their adventures were sometimes translated from the source language they were originally written in. Some of the stories were market-
ed as translations but their originals cannot be traced, making them instances of pseu-
dotranslation. Still others claimed to be original stories but had international heroes of
detective fiction as their characters. The last two cases are especially interesting, since
they tell of the tendency of Turkish authors to appropriate the foreign. The authors of
the pseudotranslations and of the originals with imported characters felt equally free
to adopt existing material as their own and treated it as if it were anonymous, without
an original creator. Among these characters, Sherlock Holmes appears to be one of the
most popular, building himself a successful career in Turkey and appearing in over 200
dime-format pseudotranslations and originals in four decades.

Enter Sherlock Holmes

The first Sherlock Holmes story to be translated into Turkish was “The Man with the
Twisted Lip”, under the title “Dilenci” (The Beggar). This 54-page translation by Faik
Sabri Duran was published in 1909 and was followed by translations of The Hound of
the Baskervilles, “The Read Headed League” and “The Engineer’s Thumb” in the same
year. Why was Sherlock Holmes translated into Turkish at that specific point in time?

As it happens, Conan Doyle and his wife had been to Istanbul in 1907, two years before
the first translations appeared. They were guests of Sultan Abdulhamid II, known for
his fondness for detective fiction. While the couple was in Istanbul, the Sultan received
them in the palace and decorated Conan Doyle with a royal medal (memoirs of Sir
Henry Woods in Üyepazarcı 1999:4). However, this visit does not seem to have created
much excitement in the country, as popular interest in Sherlock Holmes exploded only
after Pierre de Coursel’s play “Sherlock Holmes”, inspired by Conan Doyle’s stories, was
there was a translation of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and a series consisting of
four volumes, including some of the stories from The Return of Sherlock Holmes. The
year 1912 indeed represented a milestone in terms of Turkish versions of Sherlock Hol-
mes. This year saw the publication of the first pseudotranslations and the first original
novel hosting Sherlock Holmes as one of its characters. The original novel was written
by Yertvard Odyan, an author of Armenian origin, and was called Abdulhamid ve Sher-
lock Holmes. Odyan told the story of the “real” Sherlock Holmes, or rather the character
Conan Doyle presumably based his Sherlock Holmes stories on: a retired Scotland Yard
detective called McLane who lived in Scotland with his wife and four children. Odyan
used McLane as an instrument of political criticism. His book was not a detective story
but a political piece criticizing Abdulhamid II’s politics (Üyepazarcı 2007). This nov-
el comprised 832 pages and in 1913 its sequel appeared under the title Saliha Hanım
(Birkiye 2006).

4 Üyepazarcı gives the date of the play as 1912.
Pseudotranslations

The original Sherlock Holmes stories had by no means all been translated when the first series of pseudotranslations appeared in 1912. Only one novel and 15 stories had been rendered, which means that many were still not available in Turkish. The first series of pseudotranslations was titled “The Secret Files of the King of Policemen Sherlock Holmes”. It comprised 16 books of between 100 and 150 pages each (Üyepazarç 1997: 97). Üyepazarç suggests that this prototype of pseudotranslations bore certain resemblances to some of the stories in The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes. However, this does not seem very likely, since The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes was published in English for the first time in 1927. The Turkish series nevertheless set the tone for the later Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations and proved to be an archetype. It was the first series that presented Sherlock Holmes as a member of the official police force, a feature imitated by many of the following pseudotranslations. The adventures are not narrated by Dr. Watson, who is completely absent from the stories except for one where he pays Sherlock Holmes a medical visit. Watson is replaced by a Harry Taxon, who acts as Sherlock Holmes’ assistant. (Harry Taxon appears off and on in many pseudotranslations well into the 1950s.) The stories do not have a named narrator and are told in the third person, another feature inherited by later pseudotranslations (Üyepazarç 1997: 98). The major difference between this series and the later pseudotranslations is perhaps their length, since all series of Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations published after 1912 were in the dime format, comprising between 10 and 35 pages.

There is little doubt that this form of writing became quite popular, and lay readership received the products well. Between 1912 and 1927, 33 Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations appeared in various series. The second pseudotranslation series was much more short-lived than its forerunner and featured only two books. Yet these books, or rather booklets, are interesting, since they completely altered Sherlock Holmes’ character and made him subordinate to a woman. The series, published in 1914, had the title “Sherlock Holmes’in Metresi” (Sherlock Holmes’ Mistress). This title is remarkable in itself, given Sherlock Holmes’ traditional celibacy and standoffish approach towards women. The first book of the series, Esrarengiz Bir Cinayet (A Mysterious Murder), caricatures Holmes as an inept detective, much akin to the Scotland Yard.

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5 One should also note that at that stage translations from Western literature were done mainly via French and translators of Sherlock Holmes stories largely depended on the availability of French translations.

6 Harry Taxon first appeared in Germany in 1907 in a series of pseudotranslations titled “Detektiv Sherlock Holmes und seine weltberühmten Abenteuer”. (I would like to thank Terry Hale for bringing this to my attention.) So the Turkish series was somehow inspired by the German one. However, it is not likely that the novels in the Turkish series were direct translations of the German pseudotranslations, since the books in the Turkish series were longer than the German series, which comprised 32 pages. Furthermore, the translators of the Turkish series were known to work mainly from French.
detectives in the authentic stories. Faced with an impossible case of murder, Sherlock Holmes seeks advice from his mistress Miss Barclay, who not only takes over the case but also mocks Sherlock Holmes for his lack of skill and calls him a fool in more than one instance. To solve the mystery, she changes guise twice, makes plans (rather than a detective working on deductive premises, she seems to be a cunning planner) and traps the murderer using her feminine charms. The story appears to be inspired by “The Adventure of the Dying Detective” in *His Last Bow*. Similar to the original story there is a highly contagious disease (the tropical disease replaced by typhoid fever, certainly much more familiar to the Turkish readership) and the method of contraction is the same: the pricking of a sharp object.

The next Sherlock Holmes translation was published in 1920. This was a seven-page story with the title *Karanlıklar Padişahı* (The King of Darkness). It appeared as number 14 in a series of “famous stories”. On the front page the translator is indicated as Vedat Örfi, with no author mentioned. There is also a one-sentence introduction telling the readers that this is a “highly exciting story from the extraordinary adventures of the famous police inspector Sherlock Holmes” (Örfi 1920, cover page). Sherlock Holmes has an office in Bridge Street and Harry Taxon is his assistant. Throughout the story Sherlock Holmes appears to know a lot about the case but the reader is not told his sources and there no trace of the famous deductive method. Unlike original Sherlock Holmes stories, there is more weight on action than reasoning, a feature that characterizes the pseudotranslations especially before the alphabet reform.

The same publishing company (Cemiyet Kitabhanesi) published another pseudotranslation series between 1925 and 1927. The stories were in the dime format and comprised 16 pages. The ads on the books suggest they were weekly publications. The first series consisted of 6 stories and bore the title “Meşhur Polis Hafiyesi Sherlock Holmes” (Famous Police Inspector Sherlock Holmes). The stories are longer and more sophisticated than the previous series, with more characters involved. The first title, *Esrararengiz Parola* (The Mysterious Password), is a collage of two Sherlock Holmes stories rather than a pure pseudotranslation. M. Kemaleddin put together “The Adventure of the Empty House” and “The Adventure of the Dancing Men”, both from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. The sum of these two stories produced quite a different plot. The other stories in the series are pseudotranslations. In these texts Sherlock Holmes makes some use of his deduction skills, but the weight is more on the detective’s adventures in disguise. This time his assistant is called Harry Watson, who carries no other resemblance to Dr. Watson and is an apprentice to the detective, whom he calls “Master”.

Another pseudotranslation series was published by the same company in 1926. The author, Selami Münir, wrote about adventures involving Sherlock Holmes and Arsène Lupin (“Sherlock Holmes’ın Arsène Lupin ile Sergüzeştileri”). These stories do not bear any similarity to those written by Maurice Leblanc where the two characters are also brought together. Seven stories were published weekly in dime format. They depict Sherlock Holmes as an official police inspector helping the Paris police to catch Arsène Lupin. He is aided by his assistant Harry and is much more passive, putting Harry
in charge of much of his detective work. The focus is totally on action. Sherlock Holmes is presented as inferior to Arsène Lupin since the thief always devises a cunning trick to escape at the last moment. In 1927 a series of three books came out (Üyepazarcı 1997: 110). They were credited to Selami Münir and another translator called Remzi. Although we have not been able to locate copies of these titles, the names of the two of the books (Fahişeler – Prostitutes and Zevk Çılgınlıkları – Crazy with Bliss) suggest that they were a combination of detective and erotic fiction.

This was the last pseudotranslation series to appear before the alphabet reform. However, another series with Sherlock Holmes as one of its leading characters needs to be mentioned as an example of borderline cases. This series, “Cingöz Recai Şerlok Holmes’e Karşı” (Cingöz Recai against Sherlock Holmes), was written by the famous Turkish author Peyami Safa under the penname Server Bedi. Cingöz Recai was inspired by Arsène Lupin. He had the same characteristics: a thief but also a gentleman, well-educated, a lady’s man and never a murderer. In 1926, Server Bedi brought Cingöz Recai and Sherlock Holmes together. In these stories Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson come to Istanbul upon the invitation of the Turkish police to help them catch Cingöz Recai. Although they come very close to catching him in each story, Cingöz Recai is able to escape at the last moment and proves to be superior to Sherlock Holmes in terms of intellectual capability. This series was very popular and went through many reprints in the Latin alphabet.

Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations continued to be published after the adoption of the Latin alphabet. The major change distinguishing these from earlier pseudotranslations is a shift of emphasis from action to deduction. There were two major series published in 1944-1945 and 1955 respectively. The former was published by Güven Yayinevi, a publishing company active mainly in the field of popular literature. This series was called “Meshr Ingiliz Polis Hafiyesi Şerlok Holmes Serisi” (The Famous English Police Inspector Sherlock Holmes Series) and consisted of 83 dime novels offering a mixture of translations and pseudotranslations, although pseudotranslations make up the overwhelming majority. The translations display systematic omissions: the main plot is kept while secondary issues and dialogues not essential for the progression of the plot have been deleted. The resulting text is a rough retelling of the story, without reference to relationships and tensions between the characters, reducing their complexities and simplifying the language. There is no attempt to recreate Conan Doyle’s style. This series shared many features with the 1955 series called “Şerlok Holmes Harikulade Maceralar” (Sherlock Holmes’ Wonderful Adventures). Both comprised 16-page booklets appearing weekly. The latter series appears to be the last of its kind. It ran to over 85 stories. Both series had the same paratextual properties: their cover design, the illustrations on the cover and the type-set are the same. They were also marketed through the same channel, i.e. as dime novels to be sold at newspaper stands. Even their price (10 kuruş) agreed with their dime format. The plots of these stories distinguish themselves from earlier examples, as they foreground Sherlock Holmes’ brainpower over his physical capabilities. Sherlock Holmes is still referred to as a police inspector, indicating that
the readership had a difficult time imagining a private detective working outside of the police force. In terms of their style, the texts are made up of short sentences and have several sections divided by subheadings. There is extreme use of paragraph breaks. In short, they display a style that would be considered typical of children’s books today. One feature common to both series is that they claimed to be anonymous and did not print the translator/author’s name on the text. This was common practice even in the translations of original Sherlock Holmes stories.

**Contextualizing pseudotranslations**

Pseudotranslations are an interesting mode of literary production. In the case of the Turkish versions of Sherlock Holmes, they provide insight into several points. First of all, they suggest the fluidity of literary categories of “original” and “translation”. The early pseudotranslations, i.e. those written in the Ottoman script, seem to have developed a variety of strategies in order to keep their status as pseudotranslations veiled. Some of the books mentioned neither an author’s nor a translator’s name (i.e. “Sherlock Holmes’ Mistress” or the series in the 1940s and 1950s). Some called the author of the same series “author” on some weeks, and “translator” on others, although all of the books were pseudotranslations. Some used the term nâkil (renderer) (e.g. stories by Selami Münir Yurdatap). This term was operational in the Ottoman and early Republican periods and could refer to creators of both originals and translations.7

Even when these books made no claim to be translations, catalogues and bibliographies did not include them among original literature. The comprehensive bibliography of works written in Ottoman script prepared by Seyfi Özege classified these stories as translations. The Republican bibliographies were not that clear about their status and placed these books in mixed sections such as Children’s Literature (Türkiye Bibliyografyası 1955) and Serialized Publications (Türkiye Bibliyografyası 1938-1948), where no distinction was made between translations and originals.

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7 The authoritative Ottoman dictionary *Kamus-i Türki* gives the following definitions of nâkil: “1. transporter, 2. one who reports news to others, 3. transmitter” (Şemseddin Sami 1978:1450). Its literary use has clearly derived from the second meaning. Cemal Demircioğlu has shown that the term nakil has been used by authors and translators of the late Ottoman Period, including the eminent Ahmed Midhat Efendi, to refer to various forms of textual production that also cover translations (Demircioğlu 2005). The mere existence of such a term points to blurred boundaries between the categories of translation and original, and highlights the need to have a more detailed look at the specific terminology used to write/speak about texts that we refer to as “translations”. In fact, using the Western concepts of original and translation as umbrella terms to cover cultural and time-bound aspects of textual production may create false categories. For the Ottoman literary context, Saliha Paker has written about the limitations of looking at historical translation phenomena from the perspective of our modern concept of translation (Paker 2002, 2006).
The anonymity of the last two series is especially interesting. They were published at a time of much discussion about translation and its capacity to reshape Turkish culture and literature. The official Translation Bureau established in 1940 published over a thousand translations of mainly Western classics until 1966. These books were sold at low prices and were designed to reach the masses through the network of the Ministry of Education. The Bureau also published a journal called *Tercüme* (Translation), offering articles on translation history, theory and criticism. The efforts of the Bureau gave new impetus to translation activity in the private sector, especially in terms of the translation of canonized works from the West. In the sphere of canonized works the issue of source and authorship was well-defined. “Fidelity to the original”, “creating the same effect of the original”, and “mentality of the author” were some of the phrases that characterized the discourse on translations (Yücel 1940: 1–2; Nüzhet Haşim Sinanoğlu in Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi 1939: 390–395). It is interesting that certain fields of popular literature (as exemplified by the Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations) remained so immune to these discussions and trends. The popularity of these series indicates that some parts of the readership remained unaware of and/or indifferent to the intellectual debates. Their expectations did not include a clear division between original and translation. This may be because these readers had been exposed to the folk tradition, where the idea of anonymity prevailed and source mattered little.

The pseudotranslations of the 1940s and 1950s were part of a private marketplace, existing alongside a state-regulated publishing market. Working from Bourdieu, Jean-Marc Gouanvic writes,

> Published translations enter into the logic of the cultural marketplace. In Western liberal economies […] what regulates the production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods everywhere is the law of the market place, free enterprise, and “laissez-faire”. (Gouanvic 1997:127)

That was not so much the case in Turkey, especially in the 1940s. The state, with considerable support from the intelligentsia, was trying to create a market for Western classics through its own production and distribution mechanism. The pseudotranslation series stand in contrast to that attempt as an example of commercial publishing without an underlying social or political agenda. Although intellectuals criticized the series harshly, these publications met a real demand for reading material in a section of the public not catered for by the state or private publishers of canonical literature.

However, if we should call this form of publishing a merely commercial endeavor, severed from what we might refer to as publishing with a socio-political agenda, this does not mean it was an isolated form without any cultural role to play. The pseudotranslations of the 1940s and 1950s were very much a part of the book market. They were thus among the factors determining the success of the culture planning partly carried out through publications of canonized Western literature. As Even-Zohar writes,

> Since, by definition, the implementation of culture planning entails the introduction of change into a current state of affairs, the prospects of success also depend on an effec-
tive exploitation of market conditions. The chance for the planning to be frustrated may therefore be expected constantly. (Even-Zohar 1994: 12)

The popularity of the series does show at least one instance where the planning reinforcing the translation of canonized works was frustrated. The publishers and authors of pseudotranslations may have been commercially driven, but the cultural and literary implications of their works mean that a solely commercial explanation would be reductionist.

Conclusion

The Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations published in Turkey over the course of several decades created a Sherlock Holmes different from that in Conan Doyle’s stories. Sherlock Holmes’ detective pursuit, his pipe, his assistant (baptized with several different names) and his talent to disguise himself are perhaps the only things the Turkish Sherlock Holmes holds in common with Conan Doyle’s hero. In fact, Sherlock Holmes changes his character throughout the Turkish series, some of which foreground his talent for deduction while some present him as an action hero. In some pseudotranslations he is the cool and cynical man Conan Doyle created him as, while other pseudotranslations make him a passionate and avenging hero. All in all, simplicity of plot and reasoning, lack of humor and the lack of a marked literary style are the properties that unite the Sherlock Holmes pseudotranslations across several decades and distinguish them from the original stories. These are very similar to the features of the American detective fiction translated in France after World War II, as revealed by Clem Robyns (1990). Robyns suggests that this translation model may partly be due to the persistence of the belles infidèles tradition.

In the case of the Turkish Sherlock Holmes, a similar claim can be made. The model of these pseudotranslations can be traced back to another tradition, namely the rewrites of folk stories. As the social fabric in the country changed, the anonymous folk story was marginalized as part of an older and undesirable culture. Its realm gradually shrank, but its rewriting tradition caught on in a certain section of the field of detective fiction. There the agents of production (publishers and translators) resorted to rewriting not only as a commercial strategy but also as a creative tool. They were sparked by their position in the interculture of the traditional and the new, and by a field of literary production that fostered two distinct yet co-existing literary habituses.

No other Turkish pseudotranslations of Sherlock Holmes appeared after the series of 1955. Since the translations of original Sherlock Holmes stories started to appear less frequently from that date, we can speculate that the readership lost interest in Sherlock Holmes to the benefit of more modern and action-oriented characters such as Mike Hammer by Mickey Spillane. It might also be assumed that the readership for these dime pseudotranslations started disappearing and blending in with other categories. It is little coincidence that rewrites of folk stories also started to decline around the same
period (Kabacalı 1976: 1; Kabacalı 1994: 90). Rapid urbanization and social transformation may be considered significant factors in this.

The unproblematic approach towards the question of authorship, exemplified by appropriation of characters and stories, no longer exists in the Turkish literary system. This is indicative that somewhere along the way, the concepts of translation and original were redefined in the field of popular literature, which in turn put an end to the relaxed attitude of the translators, authors, publishers and readers towards literary categories. This is no doubt closely connected with the gradual disappearance of the older literary habitus and its replacement by a more uniform Western-inspired one.

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CHAPTER 11

When a text is both a pseudotranslation and a translation

The enlightening case of Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441–1494)

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Toury’s discussion of pseudotranslation may be taken further by addressing the following question: Can we really establish a clear demarcation between pseudotranslations and genuine translations when texts are of mixed mode (i.e. translation and fabrication)? To answer this, we build on Pym’s elaboration of a working definition of translation. This will then be tested by looking at a text from the early Italian Renaissance that has been considered by many contemporary scholars a pseudotranslation: Matteo Maria Boiardo’s Historia Imperiale (1471–1473). This study shows that the various conceptions of what counts as translation in different societies and historical periods (e.g. the Renaissance) blur the boundary between the two cultural practices (translation and pseudotranslation) even more than Toury suggests.

Keywords: pseudotranslation, Toury, Matteo Maria Boiardo, paratexts, epitexts, peritexts

Introduction

Here we draw on Toury’s fundamental discussion of the cultural position of pseudotranslation (PT) and its relevance to Translation Studies. Since Toury brought the topic to the attention of translation scholars, cases of fictitious translations have been analyzed in Turkey in the first half of the twentieth century (Tahir Gurcaglar, in this volume), in Spain under the Franco regime (Merino and Rabadán 2002), in France during the 1980s (McCall 2006) and at the turn of the twentieth century (Apter 2005), and in the US in the 1970s (Apter 2005). Earlier uses of PT have also been discussed by Robinson (1998) and Toury himself (1995 and 2005). Current debate makes it clear that the existence of PT problematizes the distinction between original and the translation (T). Indeed, this problematization extends to the very question of the boundary of translation itself (Robinson 1998: 185). PT is therefore not only important as a still little-studied example of cultural dynamics (Toury 2005), but also as a critical process of cultural translation that goes well beyond the relationship between source and target translation.
text. As Apter puts it, PT shifts the ethics of translation away from questions of trust and fidelity towards conditions of textual reproducibility. Texts become a “technology of literary replication that engineers textual afterlife without recourse to a genetic origin” (2005: 171).

The relevance of PT to Translation Studies is indisputable and Toury should be credited for drawing it to our attention. However, the nature and function of PT are still far from clear. Definitions of PT are varied and often conflicting, as we shall see below. The sixteenth-century scholar Vives explains that definition is the act of delimiting a thing: “Diffinitio est cuiusque rei limitatio” (in Rener 1989: 266). Hence, by attempting to define the difference between translation and pseudotranslation, we should improve our understanding of PT. The research conducted so far on PT seems to indicate that translation and pseudotranslation are mutually exclusive. On this view, a text is either a translation (T) or a pseudotranslation (PT). As against this position, however, this study suggests that the coexistence is possible in theory and practice. Such a coexistence of both practices (T and PT) within the same text testifies “to what a society has become conscious of in its conception of translation” (Toury 1995: 46) and has interesting theoretical ramifications that warrant further discussion. This paper will therefore address the following two issues:

1. What is PT and how can we differentiate it from T?
2. Can earlier practices of PT inform the current debate and perhaps provide a different understanding of PT?

We need a quick observation before addressing the questions above. Translation Studies scholars show a certain reticence about studying early modern translation practices. The same seems to happen with research on PT. Except for Santoyo’s brief contribution to a history of PT (1984) and scattered references to arguably the most famous cases (Don Quijote: see Robinson 1998 and Pym 2000: 179), no studies of translation have explored earlier practices of PT in Western cultures. The cut-off time appears to be the eighteenth century, before which translation scholars find themselves in the land of hic sunt leones: multifarious practices that escape any workable definition. Should scholars treat centuries of translation practices as “one thousand years of non-translation” (Beer 1989: 2)? No, we would argue. This paper attempts to contribute to recent debate on PT by looking at a specific use of T and PT in fifteenth-century Italy.

What is PT and how can we differentiate it from T?

Scholars do not seem to agree on a definition of PT. The term “pseudotranslation” is not the only one used. Toury, and most of the researchers dealing with this topic, refer to PT as “pseudotranslation” and “fictitious translation”. Pseudotranslations are presented as texts “with no corresponding source texts in other languages ever having existed” (Toury 1995: 40). By corollary, the authorship of the fictitious translation is disguised,
thereby providing the chance for the writer to conceal his/her authority or to exploit a dominant culture (in some cases both take place within the same cultural product).

Such a definition of PT poses a problem, as Toury himself admits. Even though PT should not have a relationship with a source text, it is nevertheless often the case that a fictitious translation is drawn from a group of sources. The case of the *Book of Mormon* is a clear example of this (Toury 2005: 11–14). PT is also described as a “textual cloning” (Apter 2005: 161), the opposite of genuine translations (Merino and Rabadán 2002) and as a transfer process different from adaptation and cloning of genres, settings and character stereotypes (Merino and Rabadán 2002). Such terms are suggestive and offer a different perception of textual tradition and transmission. But they do not really tell us what PT is (or is not).

The vagueness of terms such as “genuine”, “cloning” and, most importantly, “translation” hinders the possibility of finding a working definition. Let us take a different approach. Is there a difference between PT and T? Following Robinson (1998) and Toury (1995 and 2005) this is what can be inferred:

**Definition 1**: A PT is a T until it is unveiled as a fraudulent cultural act. After this, the PT is not a “genuine” T but an “original composition disguised as a translation” (Toury 2005: 62). However, it is not always possible to tell the difference between the two cultural transfers, not only because “it is not always clear what a so-called translation is […] but because some texts have been presented one way by their authors and taken another way by their readers” (Robinson 1998: 183).

Pym (1998: 60) confirms the doubt expressed by Robinson and shows convincingly that a clear demarcation between T and PT cannot, in many cases, be reached. There are many different degrees of Tness and PTness in texts. For instance, weakly marked translations can contain so many transformations that they can hardly be considered translations of antecedent texts. Do we have to accept that the only way we can differentiate between T and PT is by describing texts as more genuine or less genuine translations based on the evidence available to us (e.g. paratexts, reception, and research)? Perhaps there is another way to go. Toury tells us that PTs are acts of cultural planning aimed at introducing innovations or changes into the receiving culture. However, this is what some genuine translations do too (Toury 2005: 6). The difference between genuine T and PT is then:

**Definition 2**: PT is an act in disguise and consequently allows pseudotranslators to draw such cultural changes not from one but “a whole group of foreign texts, even the [abstractable] model underlying that group, rather than any individual text” (Toury 2005: 6).

Indeed, such a differentiation works well if we are to accept that a genuine translation can only be a cultural transfer from one source. As we shall see below, in some cultures texts that meet the second definition are produced and received as genuine translations. In other words, some aggressive translation practices produce texts that are mainly a translation from one source but at the same time 1) a translation of other texts available to the translator and 2) “original” writing that is not based on or inspired by sources.
A working definition

The definitions listed above are attempts to delimit the boundaries between T and PT or so-called T. They insist that the two products are mutually exclusive, although a clear demarcation between the two does not appear to be possible. The second definition suggests that perhaps PT is a different type of T for it translates from more than one source. If this is the case, why should we call it “pseudotranslation” when it is in fact a translation of multiple sources?

Pym provides a different approach. We should define translations (and consequently non-translations as well) from paratexts (1998:61–65). This can prove to be very useful, especially if we need to sift through hundreds of catalogues in search for (pseudo)translations. To use Genette’s terminology (1991), peritexts (prefaces, blurbs, table of contents, etc.) tell us about the authorial and/or editorial intention behind the text. However, the intention expressed in a preface to a T does not necessarily tell us who is doing the convincing and, most importantly, why. Is the translator/editor trying to convince the addressee/dedicatee that the work is a translation when it is instead a PT? Or is the translator/editor telling us that the text is a translation because it is indeed a translation?

Peritexts become even less reliable when one considers that they are often governed by formulaic expressions (e.g. captatio benevolentiae or self-authorization strategies, cf. Dunn 1994) that do not necessarily provide reliable information. They are “modified unceasingly, according to periods, cultures, genres, authors, works, editions of the same work” (Genette 1991:262). In other words, peritexts will reveal the intentionality of the cultural plan (to follow Toury’s evaluation of PT). For example, the translator and/or editor want the addressee to consider the text a translation, regardless of the actual nature of the text. Peritexts can also reveal important information about the relationship between the translator and the client, the translation and its antecedent, and about the position of the text in the receiving cultural system. What the peritexts will not tell us is whether the text is a T or PT.

Instead, epitexts (all documents outside the book, such as letters, reviews, and relevant archival documents) will provide information about the reception of the translation and, consequently, the function of the text in the culture to which the epitexts belong. Obviously, the more epitexts we find that confirm the reception of the text as translation the better. This is often not the case. Translation historians can often rely only on catalogues produced much later than the text and they tend to be based on what peritexts (e.g. the translator’s preface) say.

However, a study of both the peritext and epitext for a given translation can indeed prove to be constructive. This brings us to a working definition (of what though?) very close to Pym’s.

Working definition: If both peritext and epitext say that the text is a translation, the text should be considered a translation. However, if the peritext tells us that the text is a translation but epitexts indicate that it is instead a pseudotranslation, we should conclude the following:
1. If the epitexts are written long after the alleged PT, the text might still have been considered a T by the cultural system that produced the text, even though the culture behind the epitext does not.
2. If the epitext was produced by the same cultural system that produced the text, the translation is in fact a pseudotranslation.

In the next section we shall put this working definition to the test. Our example is from early Renaissance translation practice, an area that still remains largely unstudied. The text in question is relevant to the definition of PT, for it has been the focus of much attention by historians and literary scholars for its alleged unreliability as a translation and historical text. Since its first publication in 1723, scholars (Muratori 1723; Ponte 1975; Zanella 1980; Tristano 2005 and others) have variously argued that the translation is in fact mostly a PT.

An early modern case of pseudotranslation?

The text we will focus on is the *Historia Imperiale*, a translation of an early fourteenth-century Latin text into northern Italian vernacular. The translator is Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441–1494). We have only one copy of the text: the presentation one, contained in manuscript 424 of the Biblioteca Classense, Ravenna (Italy). The translation is dedicated to the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole I (1471–1505). Our recent research on this text shows that the translation was carried out between 1471 and 1474 (Rizzi 2003).

Evidence from the peritext

The peritext of the translation (preface by Boiardo) is a translation from Latin into vernacular: “ho deliberato tradure a la vulgar gente da lingua Latina” (f. 2r). The translator indicates unambiguously that the text is his translation of a text attributed to Riccobaldo of Ferrara (1245–1318): “Prologo ne / la traductione de Ric/cobaldo per Matheo Maria Boiardo” (f. 1r). Finally, the translated text appears to have been just unearthed: “questa anticha hystoria novellamente ritrovata” (f. 2r). It is possible, but not explicit from the peritext, that the work was commissioned by the Duke of Ferrara himself.

The peritext does not give us the title of the source text nor the target text. The first time Boiardo refers to the source as *Historia Imperiale* is in the title of book one: LIBRO PRIMO DE RICO/BALDO FERRAREXE / nel quale se descriveno ne la Historia Imperiale queli / principi” (f. 2v). This is puzzling, for none of the known works of Riccobaldo has this name. His three major works are *Pomerium*, *Historie* and *Compendium Romanae Historiae*, the latter being an abridged and revised version of the second (for a comprehensive discussion of Riccobaldo and his work, see Hankey 1996). The *Historie* should be considered his most important and substantial work,
since Riccobaldo himself refers to it in the Compendium as “alio volumine meo maiori” (“in the other major work of mine”, see Hankey 1996: 62). Unfortunately, only portions of the Historie still remain. There are also four minor chronicles, which appear to be very close to at least one of three versions of the Pomerium known to us. Riccobaldo’s works are somewhat related to each other. As with many medieval chroniclers, the medieval historian improved his chronicles by refining the use of sources and changing the narrative when a more reliable source would suggest so (Hankey 1996: 7). To sum up, the evidence from the peritext suggests that the Historia Imperiale is a translation from a Latin text attributed by Boiardo to Riccobaldo of Ferrara.

In order to follow our working definition of pseudotranslation, we shall not engage in textual analysis for the moment; we shall look instead at the evidence provided by epitexts.

Evidence from epitexts

Only one of the inventories of the library of Ercole I Este, to whom the Historia Imperiale was dedicated, mentions Boiardo’s translation. The occurrence is in a list of books held in the private study of the Duke. The catalogue was probably compiled just before 1477 (Tissoni Benvenuti 2005: 244).1 Under the heading “LIBRI VULGARI” we find “Ricobaldo per Matheo Maria Boiardo”. This shows that the translation was perceived as such and that the source text was attributed to Riccobaldo. Hence, the catalogue in question confirms that Boiardo’s dedicatee did indeed consider the text a translation. Further, a cursory investigation into the archives of the Este dynasty reveals that the Dukes of Ferrara were in possession of at least two Latin works by Riccobaldo before Boiardo produced his translation: a “Cronica Ricobaldi in Membranis” marked with the number 43, and a “Ricobaldus super Cronica diversorum rerum rex principum et Civitatum” numbered 136.2 This suggests that the Duke (i.e. the dedicatee) or his librarian would have been familiar with the source text used by Boiardo.

More epitexts confirm that the Historia Imperiale is indeed a translation. In a miscellaneous manuscript, Ludovico Sandeo (1446–1482) describes how Riccobaldo’s work had recently been translated into plain vernacular (“materna lingua perquam dilucide nuper traductum”) by Boiardo (see Rizzi 2003: 143). Later copies of sections of the Historia Imperiale do not dispute the validity of the text as a translation. The Ferrarese historian Gaspare Sardi (early sixteenth century) copied a relevant section of book four of the translation. The copy is prefaced by the following: “Copia del L.° 4° della hystoria Imperiale extratta da Ricobaldo Ferrarese… scritta per me Gasp. Sardi 1546”.

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1 Archivio di Stato, Modena, Camera Ducale Estense, Aministrazione principi, Guardaroba 92.

2 The two texts are in the 1467 and 1474 inventories of library of the Dukes Borso and Ercole of Ferrara (for the 1467 inventory see Venturi 1888). The 1474 catalogue is in the Archivio di Stato di Modena, ASE, Camera Ducale, Casa Amministrazione Biblioteca, Busta 1, carp. 2.
Again, this proves that the Historia Imperiale was indeed considered to be a reliable translation from Riccobaldo’s work. More copies of the texts reiterate that the Historia Imperiale was accepted as a translation. The evidence from the epigraphs is overwhelming. There is no indication that the translation should be considered a non-translation or a pseudotranslation. Both epigraphs and paratexts force us to conclude that the Historia Imperiale is a translation from Riccobaldo.

However, since Muratori published the last two books of the Historia Imperiale in 1723, scholars have argued that this is not the case (cf. Reichenbach 1929; Ponte 1972; Zanella 1982; Soffientini 1998). The translation has been considered a “patchwork” (Soffientini 1998: 479), a fable (Muratori 1723: 282) or in the best cases, a conflation of different sources (Reichenbach 1929: 189n and Zanella 1980: 5). More recently, Tristano hastily accepts that the Historia Imperiale is a free translation of the fourth book of the Pomerium (following Zanella) and concludes, “Boiardo uses pieces of Riccobaldo’s history as a basis for producing a finished, historical narrative” (2005: 141). Tristano then proceeds to compare the Historia Imperiale (in its manuscript form) to the eighteenth-century edition of Riccobaldo’s Pomerium (Muratori 1723b) to show that the translation is in many instances a pseudotranslation: many passages are either inspired by other sources or written ex novo. Despite admitting that the culture informing the Historia Imperiale was “in translation”, Tristano seems to be much more interested in Boiardo’s skills as a historian rather than translator. Such a reading of the text dismisses the fact that paratexts confirm that the translation is exactly what it says. The T might be a PT after it has been unveiled, but it does not follow that it was not reputed to be T by the culture for which it was destined. To paraphrase Tristano (2005: 129), it is not Boiardo’s abilities as historian that have been underestimated, but his skills as a translator. The issue at stake here is to better contextualize a translation practice before the product is assessed.

Conclusion

Our working definition proves to be helpful when assessing the function given to the text not only by the translator/editor but also by the client and end user. The matching of peritext and epitext can confirm the agreement or not between expectations and delivery within the same culture. In the case of Boiardo, it seems that the text was accepted as what it was intended to be until its function was lost (almost three hundred years after it was produced!).

However, the unveiling of the Historia Imperiale as a pseudotranslation in 1723 forces us to consider some theoretical ramifications. Even though the allegations are disproportionate and obviously based on a notion of translation that contrasts with the

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3 E.g. Archivio di Stato di Modena, Biblioteca Manoscritti, 5, f. 20r and Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea Ferrara, Cl. 1 n. 428.
one shown by Boiardo’s contemporaries, we still have to admit that the text cannot be defined as a genuine translation. As our forthcoming edition of the *Historia Imperiale* shows (Rizzi 2007), books 1, 2 and 3 of the *Historia Imperiale* are generally translated from Riccobaldo, whereas book 4 is almost completely independent of Riccobaldo’s work. In many sections of the text the translator uses sources that were not available to Riccobaldo (e.g. Ammianus Marcellinus is used at f. 5v and 49v, Flavio Biondo at f. 16r, etc.). In others, Boiardo embroiders the narrative by means of explicative or interpretative digressions. Adjustments and additions to Riccobaldo’s narrative seem to be determined by the need to provide more readable and enjoyable stories for the Duke.

Let us test the evidence gathered from the paratexts and text against the three definitions discussed above. According to Definition 1, the *Historia Imperiale* might be a fraudulent act given that large portions of the translation are in fact rewriting of disparate sources or original compositions (e.g. Boiardo’s description of the emperor Aurelian, f. 33v). However, there are also sections in the text that are close renderings of Riccobaldo’s narratives (e.g. most of book 1). Moreover, there is little doubt that both the translator and reader had a similar view on the nature of the text, as demonstrated by both peritext and epitext. It is apparent that Definition 1 does not help us understand what sort of text we are dealing with.

Similarly, Definition 2 does not do any justice to a translation that, at least in books 1 and 2, follows the source very closely. There are, indeed, many sections that are disguised as a translation, but these are counterbalanced by many examples of translation.

On the other hand, the working definition avoids the dichotomy T or PT for it allows any type of text to be considered a translation for as long as the target culture receives it as such. Clearly, the *Historia Imperiale* functioned as a translation until it was unveiled as a pseudotranslation and a translation. Out of its context, the translation becomes a hybrid (see Tristano 2005: 140).

The coexistence of two distinct text typologies within the same cultural product should be at least contemplated by Translation Studies. The boundary between the two cultural practices (translation and pseudotranslation) appears to be acceptable not only in late fifteenth-century Italy, as we have seen, but also in medieval and Renaissance translation practices. As Rener suggests, translation during the Renaissance served more than one function and the final product “must be regarded as a compromise between the wording of the original, the expectations of the audience, and the translator’s own idea of good style” (1989: 326). This is consistent with what Copeland tells us about secondary translation in the Middle Ages (1991: 179–186): some translations serve the purpose (set by the culture, the translator or the patron) to displace their sources by means of aggressive textual appropriation. The translator becomes an auctor while still retaining the function of translator. Taken from such an inclusive perspective, the translation by Boiardo is a complex cultural and political program that seeks to make historical and ideological information more accessible to the addressee. As the translator makes clear in his preface, history is here used for the preservation of good government (Tristano 2005: 137).
The coexistence of T and PT within the same text “testifies to what a society has become conscious of in its conception of translation” (Toury 1995) and suggests that the notion of translation is much more fluid than we are inclined to think. The working definition helps us to understand the function of the text within a particular cultural context. In the case of alleged PT, it is not the text that should be unveiled, rather the complex relationship between the translator, the client, the patron and/or dedicatee. Once such a veil is lifted, Translation Studies might indeed discover that the scandal is not the PT (Apter 2005:161) but the unhistorical dichotomization of translation vs. non-translation.

References


Economic factors have been generally ignored in Translation Studies. An examination of the influence of economic policy on translation and publication trends in Brazil in three periods (1930–1945, 1945–1961, and post 1964) offers a model for incorporating economic elements in Translation Studies in general and in Even-Zohar’s polysystem model and Toury’s concept of norms in particular. The analysis of the relationship between Brazilian economic policy and the number of published translations suggests a possible structural correlation: high tariff barriers will generally result in an increase in the number of domestic translations published. The link between these factors needs to be confirmed by studies of other countries.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Brazil, economic factors, translation norms, book collections

Introduction

This paper examines the importance of economic factors in the production of translated works in Brazil, initially concentrating on the period from 1930 to 1945. This “Golden Age” of translation is then contrasted with the period 1945 to 1950 and the time of the Jucelino Kubitschek presidency from 1956 to 1961. It then looks at the years following the military coup of 1964. The paper ends by proposing that economic factors can be included in the polysystem model of Itamar Even-Zohar and the concept of norms, as proposed by Gideon Toury.

The economic area has been almost totally ignored by Translation Studies scholars. In his introduction to Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting, Anthony Pym laments the lack of studies in this area: “It is surprising, in this respect, to see how rarely economic factors are cited in our studies [...]” (2006: 12). A number of the papers in the volume tangentially mention economic factors. In “Translation from the point of view of the East German censorship files”, Gaby Thomson-Wohlgemuth begins to examine the importance of financial factors in translations made by East German
publishers (2006: 53–64). One of the main problems in publishing translations was the drain on much-needed foreign currency. Publishers were allocated a certain budget by the state and had to make the best use of their resources. Thus, for business reasons, priority was often given to contracts with foreign publishers that would publish East German titles. However, the role of economic factors in publishing decisions is not the focus of Thomson-Wohlgemuth’s study, and the point is never developed. Other articles in the same volume merely touch on financial factors. Michaela Wolf, examining “The female state of the art: Women in the translation field”, points out that “most women publishers own small publishing houses (about 95 percent)” and have less economic capital, with the result that they often work “to the point of total exhaustion” (2006: 138). Stella Linn analyzes “Trends in the translation of a minority language: The Case of Dutch” and points out that one of the main factors in deciding whether publishers will publish a Dutch work is whether funding is available. She notes that both the Netherlands and Flanders have funding bodies that subsidize up to 70% of translation costs (2006: 27–39).

Elsewhere, when Toury discusses the growth of the translation market in Hebrew following the establishment of Israel in 1947, he does not touch on the importance of financial or economic policy (1980: 122–139). Nor does Even-Zohar mention economic factors as influencing translations in the literary polysystem (2000: 192–197).

Thus, economic factors appear to be something of a blind area, a lacuna, in Translation Studies. Hopefully this paper will serve as an initial step in focusing attention on this important issue.

Brazil in the 1930s: Effects of economic policies on publication and translation

The first period I shall examine is Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s. This was a period of considerable social, economic and political upheaval, which saw the beginning of the transformation of Brazil from a country that depended almost exclusively on coffee as its main export into an industrial society where coffee was no longer king.

In the period before 1930 economic policy was dominated by the “café com leite” (“coffee and milk”) policy. The powerful states of São Paulo (coffee) and Minas Gerais (milk) dominated policy and had a gentlemen’s agreement to alternately provide national presidents.

The Brazilian economy was dominated by coffee exports, which accounted for up to 80% of total exports. Coffee producers were paid a minimum price for coffee, resulting in over-production. Coffee was exported almost exclusively to Europe and North America, from which Brazil imported the great majority of its industrialized goods. In order to keep these markets open to Brazilian coffee, low tariffs were placed on imported industrial goods. Furthermore, the Brazilian currency, the mil-réis, was maintained at an artificially high rate. This was possible because Colombian and Kenyan
coffee was not yet competitive and the limited amount of Brazilian industry that existed was not competing in international markets. Thus, the country did not need a low exchange rate.

Defenders of this policy believed that Brazil should remain an export-driven country; attempts at industrialization would only result in wasting resources on setting up industries with poor productivity, and these industries could never compete with their European or North American counterparts. Far better to concentrate on producing coffee. As was the case with other industrially produced goods, the book market in Brazil was dominated by books produced abroad, in this case especially in Portugal and France (see Tables 1 and 2), which were actually cheaper and of better quality than books produced in Brazil.

The 1929 Wall Street Crash greatly reduced the price of coffee and showed the folly of Brazil’s dependence on a single product and the unconditional support for the coffee barons. In addition, in 1929 Brazilian President Washington Luís nominated another São Paulo politician, Júlio Prestes, as the candidate of the São Paulo Republican Party (PRP) for the 1930 national elections in order to defend the powerful coffee producing oligarchy in São Paulo state. This lost him the support of the powerful Minas Republican Party, which began to plot with the gaucho military leaders from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. Prestes won the March election but was accused of fraud and was deposed by the Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais alliance, which gained the support of the majority of the military.

After the bloodless 1930 October Revolution, through which the gaucho politician Getúlio Vargas, from Rio Grande do Sul, became president as leader of the Aliança Liberal Party, many of the economic policies of the previous government were reversed. Protection for coffee production was eliminated, and coffee would never regain its dominance of the Brazilian economy. The mil-réis was devalued, and tariffs were placed on imported goods, including books. Priority was given to the development of national industry.

As a result, the number of publishers entering the market and the number of books printed in Brazil grew rapidly. Indeed, as shown in Table 1, in the 1930s Brazil was actually exporting books to Portugal for the first time.

The government also took measures to help the book industry. A reform of basic education resulted in greater demand for school textbooks, and the Instituto Nacional do Livro was set up by the Getúlio Vargas government to improve the distribution of books to public libraries. The Instituto reissued out-of-print classic Brazilian works and planned to publish the Enciclopédia Brasileira, a project based on the Italian encyclopedia Triccani, which had been published under the auspices of Mussolini. However, this final project never got off the ground.

Translations of successful literary works were usually a sound investment if the work was in the public domain: royalties were zero, and the chances of the foreign work being accepted by the Brazilian public, which had always looked abroad, were much better than those of a book written by an unknown Brazilian author.
The Vargas regime proclaimed the Estado Novo at the end of 1937, proscribing the Communist Party and toughening the censorship of books. This meant translations were a safer option than original works for many publishing houses.

Another factor that encouraged publishers to translate foreign works was the precarious copyright situation of the period. Copyright laws were frequently infringed, thus allowing for multiple translations of the same volume, which could be aimed at different markets.

High tariffs enabled Brazilian publishers to start up and flourish. But the equation is slightly more complicated. In 1918, Monteiro Lobato, when he was beginning his publishing career, criticized the Brazilian government for the low tariffs on imported books. Under the tariff system, imported books were often cheaper than their Brazilian counterparts, and a special agreement and the need to supply the small market for technical and scientific works meant that all books imported from Portugal were untaxed.

As a publisher, Lobato naturally wanted his books to compete favorably with imported works, and so he supported high tariffs on imported works. However, at the same time he was in favour of low tariffs on imported paper. The fledgling Brazilian paper industry, which had a powerful lobby, needed to import expensive machinery and cellulose and did not have the techniques to produce high-quality paper. So Lobato wanted cheaper and better quality imported paper but did not want the competition of cheap imported books. However, his wishes were not granted, and he had to make do with the poor-quality Brazilian paper.

Adriana Pagano details the growth of important private publishing houses in Argentina and Brazil in the 1930s: Editora Globo, Companhia Editora Nacional, Martins, and José Olympio in Brazil; and Sudamericana, Losada, Emecé, and Claridad in Argentina (Pagano 2001). The period from 1930 to 1950 saw growing industrialization and urbanization in both Brazil and Argentina. The labor market was expanding, allowing for a rise in the purchasing power of those who had hitherto had little access to consumer goods. A rise in personal income meant a rise in consumption. The policies to improve basic education and literacy led to an increasing number of literate people and hence of potential readers of books and magazines. Other sources of consumption involved new forms of mass media such as the cinema and the radio.

In both Argentina and Brazil a large number of book series were issued, appealing to the new lower-middle-class reader who had relatively little cultural capital and did not know foreign languages. The books translated and published for this new reader were generally for leisure purposes (often tie-ins with Hollywood films), in addition to feuilleton novels, translated soap opera scripts, adapted screenplays, comics and cartoons. Many series were published in both countries with titles like Grandes Novelistas (Great Novel Writers), Grandes Ensaístas (Great Essayists), Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros (Great Brazilian Books), Obras Primas Universais (Universal Masterpieces), Novelistas Americanos Contemporâneos (Contemporary Novel Writers of the Americas) and Biblioteca de Obras Famosas (Library of Famous Books). Each series usually brought together a wide variety of authors. For example, the Brazilian series Biblioteca dos Séculos...
Chapter 12. The importance of economic factors in translation publication

(Exclusive of the Centuries), Coleção Globo (Globo Collection, published by Globo) and Fogos Cruzados (Cross-fire) include authors such as Montaigne, Laclos, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, Verlaine, Balzac, Plato, Shakespeare, Fielding, Emily Brontë, Dickens, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Poe.

These series could be very profitable for the publishing houses, as the purchaser of the initial volume was naturally induced to buy the second volume, and so on. The series launched in Brazil played an important role in establishing the currency of Brazil on the international intellectual market. A number of collections were devoted to Brazilian subjects: Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira (Brazilian Pedagogical Library), which includes the famous series Brasiliana (Brazilian), Grandes Livros do Brasil (Great Books of Brazil), Biblioteca Médica Brasileira (Brazilian Medical Library), all published by Companhia Editora Nacional; and Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros (Great Brazilian Books), published by José Olympio. These collections were published alongside other series made up mostly of translated texts, with names like Paratodos (For All), Terramarear (Land, Sea and Air), and Biblioteca das Moças (Library for Young Ladies), all published by Companhia Editora Nacional. José Olympio, for example, issued the collections Documentos Brasileiros (Brazilian Documents) and Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros (Great Brazilian Books), together with other series such as Rubáiyát, Jóias da Poesia Universal (Rubáiyát, Gems of World Poetry) and Fogos Cruzados (Cross-fire), both mainly made up of translated foreign texts. Martins launched the series Biblioteca Histórica Brasileira (Brazilian Historical Library) and Biblioteca de Literatura Brasileira (Brazilian Literary Library), alongside a collection called Excelsior, mostly containing translated books. Not by chance, Lia Wyler calls 1942–1947 the “Golden Age” of translation in Brazil (2003: 129). During this time Editora Globo published a large number of high-quality translations in its Biblioteca dos Séculos and Coleção Nobel series. The translations were often carried out by outstanding literary figures such as poets Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Mário Quintana and Manuel Bandeira, or critic Sérgio Milliet.

So far I have focused on the relationship between government economic policy and the number of published translations. High tariff barriers resulted in imported French and Portuguese books becoming expensive. Many new Brazilian publishing companies started up, and as seen above, a large number of translations were published. Tariff barriers protect local industry against outside competition. Such competition may be beneficial to improving the competitiveness and productivity of local industry in the long run. However, in a developing economy, high tariffs are necessary to get local industry off the ground, as was the case in Brazil in the 1930s. Publishing popular translated works is a way in which a fledgling publishing house can begin to stand on its own feet, particularly if it does not have to pay (or fails to pay) royalties. I therefore propose that there is a strong relationship between high tariff barriers and the number of translations published, particularly in an incipient industrial economy. The specific economic factor of high tariff barriers will generally result in an increase in the number of domestic translations published.
Brazil from 1945 to 1961: Contradictory policies

The Golden Age of translation in Brazil can be contrasted with the open-door policies pursued after the downfall of Vargas in 1945. In the post-war period, economic policy was reversed to please the coffee exporters once again. Imported books in a number of areas received preferential tariffs and in many cases were actually sold at a lower cost in Brazil than in their country of origin. Right through the 1950s imported books were sold at a preferential dollar rate that ranged from 33% to 60% of the official dollar rate, with the result that it was cheaper to import books than the paper on which to print them. As translation rights had to be paid at the official dollar exchange rate, it was much cheaper to import a translation made in Portugal than to buy the rights and carry out the translation in Brazil. Obviously, in this period growth in the Brazilian publishing industry slowed, particularly in the area of translations, and Brazilian books became too expensive in Portugal. This policy remained in place until 1959 (Hallewell 1985: 434 passim).

Despite these disadvantageous conditions, this was a period of growth in the translation market in Brazil. The “developmentalist” program of President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (1956–1961) was to “concentrate fifty years of progress in five”, with rapid industrialization and development of infrastructure. This program required the translation and publication of a large number of manuals and technical works. A total of 5,348 translations were published from 1956 to 1967, and this figure grew to 34,888 translations from 1970 to 1980 (Hallewell 1985: 578).

Brazil after the 1964 military coup: The primacy of politics

The post-1964 period saw the Brazilian economic “miracle”, when economic growth averaged over 10% per annum from 1968 to 1973 (Diniz Alves 2006). Brazil leapt into the league of industrial nations and has remained there, although this excessively rapid growth produced a number of problems: high inflation, a huge external debt, and unruly urban growth. This was also the time of military rule, when President João Goulart was ousted on March 31, 1964 for leaning too far to the left and allowing the economy to fall into chaos. Many feared he would then stage a left-wing coup and follow Fidel Castro’s path. He lost the sympathy of the military and was replaced by General Castelo Branco. Moderates hoped for a quick return to civilian rule after a “corrective” period, but a hardline coup in December 1968 resulted in a period of severe repression and censorship between the end of 1968 and the mid-1970s, particularly during the government of President Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1970–1974). During this period the press was censored, and books on the USSR or socialist themes could not be published. Yet it was a period during which the publishing industry developed at a rapid rate, undergoing its own “miracle”. In 1960 a total of 0.5 books per inhabitant were published; in 1980 this had risen to two books per inhabitant, a 400% growth in the space of 20
years. This rate was higher than that of the rest of the economy, which tripled in size.

During this period the book market was dominated by imports from the US. Table 3 in the Appendix shows that some 50% of all imported books came from the US, which had now definitively replaced France as the major cultural force in Brazil. At the same time, many books published in Brazil were translations of American originals. The MEC-SNEL-USAID treaty for Cooperation for Technical, Scientific and Educational Publications, signed on January 6, 1967, resulted in the Brazilian publishing market being flooded with publications of American writers. In other words, the diffusion of these works now became a public policy of Brazilian government. According to this treaty, 51 million translations of books originally published in the US would be used in the Brazilian school system in a period of three years, beginning in 1967. While MEC (the Ministry of Education and Culture) and SNEL (the National Union of Book Publishers) carried out the policy, personnel from USAID (the United States Agency for International Development) controlled the technical details of the manufacture of the books, including the production, illustrations, editing and distribution, and the acquisition of copyrights. In fact, the predecessor of USAID, USIA (the United States Information Agency) already had a foot in the door in the 1950s, “helping out” the Brazilian publishing industry, which, as seen above, was then going through a rough time. USIA supplied original texts, obtained translation rights, and even supplied translations and helped meet production costs (Hallewell 1985: 434 passim).

Publishing houses like McGraw Hill were particularly active, producing translated textbooks in areas such as business, economics, medicine and engineering. With the Cold War, and particularly with Cuba taking the path towards Communism, Latin America was a priority area for the US in the 1960s. No effort or money was spared to prevent another country in the US backyard from jumping the fence. The US sought to win hearts and minds, and to inculcate an American mode of thinking into students and the technical and administrative classes in Brazil.

The enormous growth in the publishing industry in Brazil during the “miracle” years was similar to that of Brazilian industry in general. It was not economically hampered by the prohibition on publishing left-wing works. This growth in publishing was fuelled by the support from USAID, with its very clear political agenda supporting a large number of translations of American works. Here we thus find the political influencing the economic.

During these very same years, a large number of translations of American poets were published. These were basically from two groups: firstly the American Modernists: Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound; and the Beat poets: Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso, as well as Charles Bukowski. Pound’s innovations and the importance he gave translation were inspirational to Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, while the Beats provided an outlet for the muted protest possible in Brazil. As Even-Zohar has pointed out, translations mainly perform a conservative role in the literary polysystem but may also take on a radical and reforming role (2000: 192–197). This is a good example of that duality.
Again, in this period we see the growth of the book industry accompanying that of the Brazilian economy in general, even exceeding it. Translation played a major role in this growth and was particularly influenced by the USAID program.

Conclusions

This paper has made a number of proposals that need to be confirmed by further studies. I have suggested a close link between high tariff barriers in a recently industrialized economy and a sharp increase in the publication of translations. The link between these factors in countries other than Brazil should be compared with my findings for Brazil. As seen above, Pagano has linked the growth in publishing in Brazil to that of Argentina during the 1930s and 1940s. The publishing center of the Hispanic world moved to Buenos Aires in this period, due to considerable censorship in Franco's Spain, the weak Spanish economy, and the growth of the Argentine economy under relatively more liberal regimes. A more detailed study examining publishing trends and translations in Argentina would be of great interest.

Another project would be a closer examination of the economic factors that restricted the publication of translations in the old Soviet bloc, developing the points that Thomson-Wohlgemuth (2006) introduces. Moreover, I am aware of no study on the economic factors of publishing translations within specific publishing houses.

The USAID program in Brazil has been criticized by José Oliveira Arapiraca in A USAID e a educação brasileira: um estudo a partir de uma abordagem crítica da teoria do capital humano (1982), by Ted Goertzel in his essay “MEC-USAID: ideologia de desenvolvimento americano aplicado à educação superior brasileira” (1967), and by Márcio Moreira Alves in O beabá dos MEC-USAID (1968). However, none of these studies analyzes specific translations carried out inside the program. And did the USAID program influence translations in other countries?

Finally, it would be of great interest to take another look at the groundbreaking work carried out by Even-Zohar and Toury from the economic point of view. Toury refers to the increase in translations from English into Hebrew in the post–Second World War period (1980: 138). To what extent was this the result of financial support from international Jewish organizations, especially from the US? Are there certain similarities between the situation in Brazil in the 1930s that I described and that in Israel, a country developing its industrial economy, of which the publishing is part? Even-Zohar and Toury both emphasize the important role of translations in many areas of the Hebrew literary polysystem. My hypothesis is that tariff barriers in a protected growing economy can result in an increase in the number of translations published. I suggest that this may also be the case for the post–Second World War Israeli economy.


Chapter 12. The importance of economic factors in translation publication

References


Appendix

Table 1. Trade of books between Brazil and Portugal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Imported from Portugal</th>
<th>Exported to Portugal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volume kg</td>
<td>Value US$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>131,398</td>
<td>$113,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>154,367</td>
<td>$131,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
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<td>$145,972</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>96,638</td>
<td>$53,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>72,202</td>
<td>$53,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>41,685</td>
<td>$28,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>67,191</td>
<td>$62,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>80,032</td>
<td>$63,864</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Table 2. Importation of books from France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Volume (tons)</th>
<th>Value (US$)</th>
<th>% of all imports: (weight)</th>
<th>% of all imports: (value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>268,223</td>
<td>$236,026</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>324,901</td>
<td>$251,533</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>335,801</td>
<td>$202,032</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>210,048</td>
<td>$147,099</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>97,779</td>
<td>$91,042</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>38,689</td>
<td>$70,903</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
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<td>7.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>$7,545</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1946</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>162,957</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1965</td>
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<td>$467,341</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>112,560</td>
<td>$546,540</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<td>1975</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>67,983</td>
<td>$1,082,820</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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</table>

Adapted from Hallewell (1985: 328–329).
### Table 3. Imports of books from the UK and the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Volume (tons)</th>
<th>% of all imports (weight)</th>
<th>Value (US$)</th>
<th>% of all imports (value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>UK 44.44</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>$24,326</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>US 80.36</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>$39,657</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>UK 33.38</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>$51,465</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 245.14</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>$235,312</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>UK 40.31</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>$49,268</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 126.55</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>$108,998</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>UK 30.43</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>$40,915</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 111.80</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>$85,691</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>UK 23.96</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>$33,690</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 85.73</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>$70,878</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>UK 31.60</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>$42,457</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 109.00</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>$142,792</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>UK 26.14</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>$88,139</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 294.26</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>$580,644</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>UK 51.21t</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>$65,041</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 309.82</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>$415,718</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>UK 92.71</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>$271,796</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 423.00</td>
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<td>$1,667,255</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
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<td>4.4%</td>
<td>$250,266</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>5.2%</td>
<td>$1,855,994</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>36.1%</td>
<td>$6,717,365</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US 1,571,631</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>$14,373,455</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Hallewell (1985: 400–403).
CHAPTER 13

Translation constraints and the “sociological turn” in literary translation studies

Denise Merkle
Université de Moncton, Canada

From the viewpoint of the sociological or social turn marked by Pierre Bourdieu’s thought, Gideon Toury contributed to the current interest in the (psycho)-sociology of translation and translator behaviour by laying the foundation for a social orientation in Translation Studies, mainly through his work on functional Descriptive Translation Studies, constraints and textual manipulation. A comparative analysis of the translations of four of Shakespeare’s plays by Antonine Maillet provides insights into the impact of expectations, convention and socio-cognitive constraints on translator behaviour and, by extension, on the translation process.

Keywords: Descriptive Translation Studies, Antonine Maillet, Pierre Bourdieu, socio-cognitive constraints, translator behaviour

[What is just a favoured mode of behaviour within a heterogeneous group may well acquire much more binding force within a certain (more homogeneous) section thereof, in terms of either human agents […] or types of activity […].] (Gideon Toury 1995:54)

Following the “cultural turn” in Translation Studies (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990: 1) of the 1980s and 1990s, recent years have seen a “sociological turn” (or “social turn”, as in Wolf 2006:9). This has been led, in Canada at least, by Daniel Simeoni (1998) and Jean-Marc Gouanvic (1999). The object increasingly being studied by translation scholars is the human agent, the translator, as a member of a sociocultural community called upon to interact with and within the community’s structuring and structural dimensions, or Bourdieusian habitus, and as an agent of (inter-)cultural negotiation, rather than translations as cultural artefacts. This is, of course, not to say that translations are no longer being studied, rather that the emphasis has shifted. The result has been to provide literary studies, comparative studies and literary translation researchers with a broad range of methodologies and research techniques from which to choose, thereby greatly enriching the discipline or “interdiscipline” (see Snell-Hornby 1988/1995:133). This paper will attempt to consider the usefulness of Gideon Toury’s emphasis on the target text, especially when considered in conjunction with the current interest in the (psycho)-sociology of translation and the translator. A close look at Toury’s writings will show that he opened the door to this type of research, a fact that has been noted by Daniel Simeoni (1998), Reine Meylaerts (2004) and Michaela Wolf (2006), among others.
Over the years, Gideon Toury has been credited and criticized for shifting the focus of research in Translation Studies from the source text and culture to the target text and culture. When researchers take inspiration from Toury’s publications, they invariably emphasize the target translation and how it functions in the target system, the link obviously being made between Itamar Even-Zohar’s literary polysystem and Toury’s work on how translations function within the target system, especially in relation to target system constraints.

Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) was first introduced by James S Holmes (1972/2000) then further developed with an emphasis on “function” by Gideon Toury in Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond (1995). Certain scholars of literary translation have found the approach particularly productive, notwithstanding criticism of the over-emphasis on the text and target-orientedness (Hermans 1995), especially when the corpus invites a longitudinal and historical approach. In the context of Spain’s TRAducciones CEnsuradas (TRACE) project, Rosa Rabadán and Raquel Merino (2002) have succeeded in applying functional DTS to a “coherent corpus of translated text” (Baker 1993: 240) and obtained revealing results. The researchers were careful not to limit their study to a product of censorship, i.e. the censured text; rather they situated their analyses in the socio-institutional context (Robyns 1992) of the receiving culture that controlled the reception (dissemination versus censorship) of translations. However, their work emphasizes the text, more so than the translator, perhaps, at least in part, because of the type of information that the researchers have been able to obtain from the Franco files in Madrid.

Through his work on DTS, Toury has thus provided a theoretical framework and research methodology for such large-scale projects as the TRACE project as well as his own projects. DTS theory is a logically self-consistent model for describing the behaviour of a related set of translation phenomena. It is supported by Toury’s own experimental evidence and is testable. It is clear that this particular contribution to Translation Studies is far from negligible. However, the focus in this paper is more specifically the constraints hypothesis that is bound within DTS theory and its influence on translator behaviour. In fact, Toury’s influence has reached beyond DTS methodology to participate constructively in research on textual manipulation and translation behaviour, an influence that was being felt in the 1980s and that is still being felt today (cf. Lefevere 1983, 1992).

In the following pages, we would like to consider from the viewpoint of the sociological or social turn Toury’s thoughts on various constraints on translator behaviour that range from idiosyncrasies to laws, first, by looking at his own writings in direct relation to some responses they have elicited from translation theorists, and then by presenting a brief study to demonstrate how certain hypotheses can be put to productive use. In keeping with Simeoni (1998) and Wolf (2006: 10–11), among others, I argue that by anchoring DTS in sociology and psychosociology, albeit behaviourist, Toury (1995: 54) laid the foundation for a sociological or social orientation in Translation Studies that by no means neglected cognitive and psychological factors. He essentially
invited researchers to revisit his thinking in the light of advances in (psycho)-sociology research. Increasingly, emphasis is being placed on cognition and thought processes (Buzelin 2005). Rather than concentrating on demonstrated behaviours as seen in cultural products, researchers are more interested in studying the agents who produce them, and how and why they do so, or in other words, researchers are opting for a “sociocognitive approach to cultural process and outcome” (Simeoni 1998: 34). DTS subjected to the “sociological” turn, or “the study of habitus-mediated relations of norms” (Simeoni 1998: 34) will be applied here to the case of the Acadian translating agent Antonine Maillet, a canonized writer in her own right. While we agree that it is important to put greater emphasis on the translator, agency, *habitus* and translation practices, we believe that the interaction of these and other elements, especially the prestige of a translated text as cultural artefact, the prestige of the translator within the target system and the target audience’s horizon of expectation, must not be neglected.

Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory transformed Translation Studies into an investigation of the position of translated texts taken as a whole (i.e. genre) in the historical and textual systems of the target culture. One of his students, Gideon Toury, took this transformation as his point of departure. Polysystem theory requires that a translated text, produced like the original text by a human agent, be studied as a part of an organic whole, although what the whole is remains unclear to many researchers and has thus sparked debate. For example, is the whole a sub-system of the literary polysystem grouping all genres of translated texts, the complete literary system, including foreign and indigenous texts, or the cultural system? We concur with Mary Snell-Hornby who affirms that the polysystem theory introduced by Even-Zohar has been “outstandingly influential” (Snell-Hornby 1988/1995: 134); nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that Toury’s work on target-oriented DTS, and more specifically his work on norms, has also been highly influential. The formal introduction of the notion of norms into the discipline is marked by Toury’s 1976 doctoral dissertation *Normot shel tirgum ve-tirgum ha-sifruti le-ivrit ba-shanim* 1930–1945 [Norms of Literary Translation into Hebrew, 1930–1945], published a year later by the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, and his 1978 article “The Nature and Role of Norms in Literary Translation”. In fact, Theo Hermans affirmed in the 1990s that by emphasizing the target rather than the source text, the concept of norms had effectively replaced equivalence as the operative term in translation studies (1995: 217; see also Baker 2001).

Nevertheless, Theo Hermans (1999) and Daniel Simeoni (1998), among others, have recently argued that studies inspired by Toury’s DTS relied too heavily on the target text, looking for trends in translation behaviour primarily in the translation product, thereby neglecting the translator, their thought processes, and the translation process. Yet Toury’s thoughts on constraints take their inspiration from sociology and social psychology; his emphasis on positive and negative reinforcement and observable behaviour (the translated text being a “witness” to that behaviour) betray a Skinnerian
influence. New socio-psychological theories have gained ground since the 1960s. Specifically, since the 1990s a Bourdieusian influence is being increasingly felt in Translation Studies, Jean-Marc Gouanvic being an early proponent well before the publication in 1999 of his *Sociologie de la traduction: la science fiction américaine dans l'espace culturel français des années 1950*. At first, Bourdieu’s influence was essentially limited to the concepts of *habitus* and field, but a broader understanding of his theory has added new elements to the discussion. Productive links have and can be made between Bourdieu’s theory and DTS, as numerous translations scholars have demonstrated (Simeoni 1998; Meylaerts 2004; Wolf 2006), given that Bourdieu’s thoughts on *habitus* and control of discourse complement Toury’s thoughts on translation behaviour and constraints.

Toury defines sociocultural constraints as a continuum with “diffuse” “borderlines,” ranging from idiosyncrasies to rules (or laws) with norms falling between the “two extremes”:

Socio-cultural constraints have been described along a scale anchored between two extremes: general, relatively absolute *rules* on the one hand, and pure *idiosyncrasies* on the other. Between these two poles lies a vast middle-ground occupied by intersubjective factors commonly designated norms. […] The borderlines between the various types of constraints are […] diffuse. (1995: 54, Toury’s italics)

Under the “Norms” entry of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Mona Baker explains that, in Toury’s view, these “intersubjective factors” are the options that translators as members of a community living in a given socio-historical context select on a regular basis; translators are members of a community with shared values, norms and practices (2001: 164) who share a common understanding of what is correct and proper behaviour in a given situation. Baker goes on to explain the difference between norms and conventions, the latter covering preferences that are non-binding. In “Translation and the Consequences of Scepticism,” Anne Mette Hjort (1990) refers to David Lewis’s definition of conventions “in terms of common knowledge”; “[conventions] are based on common knowledge and on a preference to have one’s behaviour conform to that of others” (43). The individual decides whether or not to be conventional, i.e. to be like their peers. On the contrary, directive norms that involve “regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type” (Toury 1995: 55) appear to be binding since they are tied to “dictated” social expectations which exert pressure on members of a community to behave in certain ways under specific circumstances.

It would be useful at this point to make a link here with Hans Robert Jauss’s reception aesthetics (1978) and how it can be applied to the reception of foreign literature within a given literary system. Jauss’s concept of “horizon of expectation” considers the reader as a member of the target culture, and Translation Studies generally considers the translator to be a reader, par excellence. The potential overlap with Toury’s thought is evident. The “horizon of expectation” also shares common ground with social expectations and can be used to compare a reader’s reception of foreign products.
and indigenous products within the target system. Making the link between a translator/reader’s horizon(s) of expectation, their natural inclination to conventional or conformist behaviour, social expectations imposed on the translator/reader and the (directive) norms that may influence translation behaviour can lead to fresh insights into the relationship between the foreign and the same in the sociocultural system under study. Of course, studying the relationship between the foreign and the same within the target system brings us face to face with what distinguishes the two, and this would necessarily be what sets apart the “general values or ideas shared by [the target] community” (Toury 1995: 54) from the general values or ideas shared by the source community. Is there a clash between the translator’s values and those expressed in the source text? Does the translator enjoy the freedom to be impartial (Hermans 2006: 82)? From the point of view of an individual who functions within the system, these values or ideas may be referred to as the constraints that guide, even direct, behaviour so that it conforms to the combination of traits that distinguishes the individual’s culture from another, much like one person’s personality traits distinguish them from their neighbour. In other words, “[translators] simply operat[e] within different sociocultural settings and hence ha[ve] different norms as guidelines for their translational behaviour” (Toury 1995: 277).

When there is no conflict between the values or ideas of the foreign and receiving cultures, the foreign cultural product will likely be welcomed. By contrast, when there is conflict, the target culture, and more specifically the translator, may “consent” to difference (Hermans 2006: 82) or may resist what is perceived to be foreign “interference”, taking it as an intrusion into the culture. In some cases, resistance to the linguistic or cultural alterity of the source text may take the form of “purification” of the target text.

Despite the very broad recognition of the usefulness of Toury’s ideas, some weaknesses, above and beyond those already discussed, have nevertheless been pointed out. Toury’s *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* has been repeatedly criticized for its mechanistic approach and under-emphasis of translators as members of a community (although I venture that the preceding discussion may lead the reader to wonder whether the latter criticism is justified). Toury appears to present a very top-down model that does not open the door to dialogue between translators or to dialogue between translators and those who might try to influence their behaviour. He seems to present professional translators as a discrete group working to some degree in isolation, despite their membership in a community. Norms seem to be imposed from above, and “sanctions” are attached to them. Toury states that “there would normally be a price to pay for opting for any deviant kind of behaviour” (1995: 55). Although he does discuss the reaction of translators to norms and acknowledges inspiration for his ideas on norms from sociology and social psychology, Toury does not explore the network of interactions between the translator as human agent with a personal history and a free will, and the various agents with whom translators must negotiate: other translators with whom they are competing or collaborating, the author, the client, the editor, the publisher, the reviser, the literary critic, etc. (Buzelin 2005).
In response to this “gap”, Simeoni explores “the possibility of nudging theory away from the properties of systemic constructs towards the main focus of translation norms, i.e., the translator” (1998: 1). He convincingly argues that “norms without a habitus to initiate them make no more sense than a habitus without norms. Incorporating conflict in one single construct attached to the person of the translator should also help us better understand the tension behind the individual choices during the decision process” (1998: 33). Simeoni suggests emphasizing “practices of translating and authoring rather than texts and polysystems; translatorial habitus rather than translational norms” within a DTS framework (1998: 33). Here we shall explore this approach with respect to the case of a single translator, Antonine Maillet, who has developed a coherent corpus of translations for the theatre (four plays by Shakespeare).

Antonine Maillet and William Shakespeare: Setting the stage

A decade or so after plays such as Robert Gurik’s Hamlet, Prince du Québec (1968) and Michel Garneau’s Macbeth de William Shakespeare, traduit en québécois (1978) dominated the Montréal theatre scene, the city experienced the Shakespearean spring of 1988. The former translations (and the term is used very loosely here) support Annie Brisset’s argument (1990) that the cultural recycling of literary classics (from Molière to Shakespeare) reflected the tensions that Québec society was experiencing during the quiet revolution as well as during the two decades that followed it. By contrast, the plays produced in 1988, i.e. Michelle Allen’s Songe d’une nuit [A Midsummer’s Night Dream], Alice Ronfard’s La Tempête [The Tempest] and François-Victor Hugo’s Cycle des rois [The Second History Cycle], were respectively textual, simplified and nineteenth-century literal (cf. Mallet 1993). The tensions felt by Québécois audiences that had provoked an ethnocentric reaction to alterity, especially to British and French colonial alterity, appear to have been assuaged as a result of acquiring greater cultural autonomy in the space of twenty years. In Sherry Simon’s opinion (1988: 87), Québécois audiences were ready for translations that did more than simply enrich linguistic and cultural identity; their horizon of expectation had undergone a transformation. Instead of Gurik’s parody translation or Garneau’s perlocutionary translation (Brisset 1990), a new approach to translating Shakespeare into French had been inaugurated. The following year, Antonine Maillet’s Richard III was performed at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert. Maillet would consequently be a player in this Shakespeare revolution, for she would translate four of Shakespeare’s plays between 1989 and 1999: Richard III (1989) [Richard III], La Nuit des rois (1993) [Twelfth Night], La tempête (1997) [The Tempest] and Hamlet (1999) [Hamlet]. The first three plays were published by Leméac; however, Hamlet remains unpublished.

Born and raised in Bouctouche, spending her early adulthood in Moncton, Maillet is the product of a small, rural and marginalized culture with a young literary tradition. Her rise to fame can be attributed to the phenomenal success of La Sagouine (1971);
however, it was the recognition associated with winning the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1979 for *Pélagie-la-Charrette* that catapulted her into the international limelight. Being the first “outsider” to win the coveted French prize has been linked by some to her literary French, which the French jury could read with greater ease than many literary products from Québec. Philip Stratford describes Maillet’s French in the following manner:

The crux of the matter is that Antonine Maillet doesn’t write pure acadien at all. Acadien is just her base. To this she adds, instinctively, her own accent, images, rhythms, expressions. The product is an imaginative equivalent of acadien, heavily laced with Rabelais, Perrault, Molière, folk tales, the Catholic missal, Jean Giono and other sources that have influenced her. What she writes is an amalgam of all these parts, not academic acadien, but a new language. To give it its true name one should call it Antoninais or Mailettois, to give credit to the most important ingredient, her own originality. (Stratford 1986: 326)

According to Stratford, Maillet’s literary *acadien* is inspired by the writings of great canonical sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French writers, including Rabelais, Perrault and Molière. During an interview with Margaret Courchene, Maillet explained that she wished to “rehausser la langue populaire au niveau de l’art” (1992: 69). The Acadian woman of letters would in fact seize on the growing francophone interest in unadulterated Shakespeare at the end of the 1980s to maximize the use of all registers, including popular varieties of Canadian French, in her translations, registers that would be recognizable to a reader of Rabelais, Perrault or Molière — but also to a speaker of rural *acadien* whose French harks back to Rabelais’s French, as Maillet’s doctoral thesis proved. All of this to reject “un français restreint, contrôlé et châtré”, Maillet thereby affirming “notre renaissance, c’est de découvrir que nous sommes un people et que ce peuple a une expression” (Courchene 1992: 68), an affirmation that clearly echoes Québec sovereignist discourse.

Thanks to the 1979 Prix Goncourt, Antonine Maillet’s status in French–Canadian letters was canonized. She was not on the outskirts of the literary system, rather she was formally recognized as a great French–Canadian writer who many considered a Quebecker. What may have contributed to the confusion regarding the author/dramatist’s origins was her move to Montréal. Because Maillet is primarily a dramatist, who seeks large enough audiences to be able to mount plays on a regular basis, she moved to Montréal, the centre of Canadian francophone theatre and literary activity. In fact a number of Acadian expatriates have migrated there (e.g. Claude LeBouthillier, Jacques Savoie), and this has led to resentment among some Acadians who have stayed *chez eux* in Acadie and paid the price of catering to a much smaller market, living in a primarily rural setting with rural values, and of being in constant contact with the immediate threat of English. It is in Montréal where Antonine Maillet not only wrote and staged her plays, she also started translating those penned by other playwrights, in particular William Shakespeare.
Antonine Maillet re-translates Shakespeare: Confronting translation constraints

Gurik and Garneau had cut Shakespeare’s plays from their source literary system to a certain extent through tradaptation, which was the “norm” in Québec until the late 1980s (Beddows 2000: 11). Maillet, like those translators of the Shakespearean spring, would do the opposite. In terms of Toury’s “initial norms”, which involve the relationship between “at least two sets of norm-systems” (Toury 1995: 56–57), Gurik and Garneau had opted for “acceptable translations” that minimized the foreignness of Shakespeare’s plots, settings and language. However their respective, and very different, translation projects went beyond contesting the authority of Québec’s traditional colonial masters by subverting their literary conventions and norms; these playwrights set out to create new literary and discursive norms for a culturally autonomous francophone Québec. For her part, Maillet opted for “adequate translation”, deciding to put greater emphasis on the norms of the source literary tradition, or more precisely the norms that had been bequeathed to future generations by the canonized Elizabethan playwright whom she personally admires, in her words “l’un des plus grands auteurs de tous les temps” (Maillet 1991: 7). However, as we have already seen, the stage was already set for this translation strategy; in fact, Maillet would appear to be conforming, at least to some extent, to the dominant literary and translation trends of the period.

In addition to the initial norms that we just looked at, operational norms enter into the equation. Different British and French literary conventions call upon norms that govern decisions taken by the translator during the translation process. In fact Maillet’s translation of Richard III was criticized for having distributed certain linguistic elements in conformity with target norms instead of source norms. This criticism marks a stark contrast to the enthusiastic reception of Garneau’s Macbeth, which cut scenes deemed unnecessary and which, more often than not, changed Scots cultural references to Québec ones. Theatre translation norms, at least when it comes to translating Shakespeare, would then appear to have evolved by the end of the 1980s. However, the questions to be considered here are (1) whether this evolution was a response to changes in the “general values or ideas shared by a community — as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate” (Toury 1995: 54), and (2) how Antonine Maillet reacted to these “values and ideas”.

During the late 1980s there would appear to have been growing institutional support for unadulterated Shakespeare. First, Shakespeare’s literary status in France, and, by extension, in Québec was undoubtedly bolstered thanks to the interest shown in the bard’s dramatic literature by, among others, the Sorbonne’s Centre de recherches en traduction et stylistique comparée de l’anglais et du français. The Centre published one issue of Palimpsestes in 1987 (translating dialogue) and two issues in 1990 (one on retranslating and one on translation/adaptation) that included at least one article on translating Shakespeare. Second, Charlotte Melançon’s translation Shakespeare
et son théâtre [Northrop Frye on Shakespeare] was published by Montréal’s Éditions du Boréal in 1988 and honored the same year by the Association of Literary Translators of Canada with the John Glassco Prize for Literary Translation. It seems probable that a confluence of institutional support for the “real” Shakespeare contributed to the transformation of norms “into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension” (Toury 1995: 54–55). Translators were put in the position where they could conform to or reject these new “performance instructions”.

Antonine Maillet clearly admires Shakespeare. Furthermore, institutional support for source-oriented translation would have reassured a translator who apparently prefers to follow literary trends. These factors come into play when we consider Maillet’s mental processes or her “habitus”, that is, “the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history” (Simeoni 1998: 32). The Acadian translator also greatly admires Rabelais, a bawdy pre-classicist French writer who was more or less a contemporary of the bawdy bard. A variation of Rabelais’s French could conceivably be used to render Shakespeare’s English. Maillet’s preparatory work on Rabelais’s French was done when she earned a doctorate at Université Laval; the topic of her dissertation was Rabelais and the lineage of Acadian language and culture. Her linguistic mastery and scholarly bent had prepared her well to meet the challenges of re-producing Shakespeare in French. Another factor to consider could be, specifically, the writer/translator’s apparent inclination to conform to literary and translation trends, as her Bourgeois gentleman (1978) and Évangeline deusse (1975) appear to demonstrate when considered in their literary context.

Nevertheless, her 1989 translation of Richard III was considered inadequate by some critics, in particular Robert Lévesque, who published an incisive review “Du Shakespeare en réduction” the same year. While the Acadian writer had maximized foreignness (by contrast to Gurik’s and Garneau’s efforts), she had nevertheless not yet succumbed to the empire of the Shakespearean hexameter, choosing instead the conventional French alexandrine (Lévesque 1989: 12–13), her Richard III betraying the traditional French tendency to make the translated text conform to French literary tastes and textual conventions. However, Maillet’s approach evolved in direct response to the negative criticism penned by members of the target culture. Members of a cultural community are generally able to recognize linguistic practices as “belonging” to their culture and to spot “foreign” practices that may have been retained by a translator who has adopted the norms of the source culture (Toury 1995: 56). In this case members of the target culture sought out foreign practices in the translation product and, in stark contrast to the preceding decade, expressed disappointment at not finding more examples. Maillet had initially resisted the interference of British literary conventions and received a “negative” sanction when her translation behaviour was evaluated (1995: 54–55). This “problem” was corrected in her 1993 translation of Twelfth Night, and the following review by Solange Lévesque is glowing:
La dramaturge acadienne semble s'être retrouvée chez l'auteur britannique comme dans un univers familier; la multiplicité des tons, la raillerie, la roublardise, les équivoques, le plaisir du jeu (jeu des mots, jeu des rôles), la vivacité et le naturel des dialogues, tous ces traits brillamment entremêlés chez Shakespeare ont trouvé en français, grâce à la traductrice, des correspondances qui font de son texte une traduction d’une valeur indiscutable. (Lévesque 1993: 31)

Not all writers-cum-translators are as responsive to their critics as is Antonine Maillet. She is in the enviable position of being financially independent, in large part thanks to the success of *La Sagouine* and *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, and could have chosen to ignore them. In fact, she chooses to translate what interests her and what the Théâtre du Rideau Vert is interested in producing. Furthermore, it would appear that she wishes to please her audience by giving them the type of translation they are expecting.

It is interesting that the Acadian writer should have chosen a canonical Elizabethan writer to explore the limits of French (literary) language, especially considering the “irreconcilable philological differences” between the two language systems, “including the lack of elasticity of the arguably more regulated French language” (Beddows 2000: 11). However, we have already seen that Maillet considers Shakespeare one of the greatest writers of all time, hence a model worthy of imitation. Maillet’s international recognition had also transformed her into an “authorized spokesperson” (Bourdieu 1982: 169) of not only the French–Canadian literary system, but also of the French language. And as Pierre Bourdieu has written, a culture’s authorized spokespersons are called upon to reproduce officially sanctioned behaviour. Moreover, Antonine Maillet’s “translations of Shakespeare demonstrate Québec’s ability, in the 1990s, to tolerate the foreign on its stages” (Beddows 2000: 102).

**Conclusion**

The preceding pages have made every effort not to “overlook the human agent, the translator” (Hermans 1995: 222), by insisting on the study of “translatorial habitus”. Clearly, Gideon Toury’s thoughts on translator behaviour in response to norms have been useful in helping us arrive at the conclusion that Antonine Maillet is an agent of translation who is the product of her personal trajectory and sociocultural context. She is an accomplished writer in her own right; moreover, she has been attributed the socio-literary role on the national level of authorized spokesperson, apparently as a result of having acquired and internalized the dominant translation and literary norms of the period. Furthermore, the translator appears to have been seeking critical and social approval, and to obtain it bowed to critical expectations voiced in Québec and, to a lesser degree, in France. In this case, conforming to expectations has been positively received. In addition, Maillet’s approach to translating Shakespeare has allowed “la fanatique de la défense et de l’illustration” of Acadian French (Maillet 1999: 52) to give “à des mots qui sont parfois vieillis, parfois désuets, parfois inutilisés, parfois incompréhensibles,
leur véritable noblesse” (Courchene 1992: 69), an approach which could help explain her choice of the bawdy “barbare de génie” who allows her to exploit the full range of possibilities offered by the French language (cf. Merkle 2000).

This comparative and systemic analysis represents but a tiny chapter in French–Canadian “translation historiography” (Meylaerts 2004: 307, my translation) and has attempted to show that the relationship between the translator, her habitus-mediated relation to norms and translation agency must all be considered when examining translation process and function. Having brought into the discussion the thoughts of a number of translation theoreticians with a sociological bent does not diminish the fact that our point of departure was DTS and Toury’s work on constraints. It is to be hoped that this case study might provide insights into the impact of convention and socio-cognitive constraints on the translation process.

References


CHAPTER 14

Responding to globalization

The development of book translations in France and
the Netherlands

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Gideon Toury’s Descriptive Translation Studies holds that translations need to be studied within their target cultures. However, one often neglected aspect is the position of these target cultures within changing transnational relations. If we compare the case of France with that of the Netherlands, we observe two different strategies with regard to the hegemony of English. In both countries the number of translations has increased and by far the largest number of translations is from English. Nevertheless, French and Dutch translations have developed in opposite directions. The proportion of translations from French has declined in the Netherlands since the beginning of the 1980s, whereas the number of translations from Dutch has increased in France. Here we study the proportion of translations from English, French, German and other languages in relation to the total number of books in the Dutch market. Additionally, we analyze the situation of Dutch translations within the French book market during the same period. This comparative case study is a plea to look at translations from a broader, sociological perspective and to include geopolitical and geocultural dimensions in this type of Translation Studies.

Keywords: literary translation, French, Dutch, sociology of translation, world systems

Introduction

According to the founding principle of Descriptive Translation Studies, translations need to be studied in the context in which they are produced and published, that is within their target cultures (Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 1995). While this approach has been extensively elaborated, used and discussed, one of its critical aspects has not received proper attention. Numerous studies imply that target cultures are more or less autonomous cultural systems, operating in and for themselves, rather than systems embedded in a larger set of transnational relations. These relations and the resulting flows of texts, ideas and people can be understood as a world system, with characteristics similar to that of an economic, political or language system on a global level (Wallerstein 1975–1989; De Swaan 2001). If we apply the significance of such a global
configuration to the understanding of translation practices, we can argue that significant features of target cultures derive not so much from their intrinsic properties but from their specific position within the world system of translation. Dominant languages and core language groups tend to have low translation ratios as compared to less dominant languages and more peripheral language groups. We can use the core versus periphery structure of the world system of translations to explain the uneven flows of translations between language groups, as well as the varying role of translations within language groups (Heilbron 1999, 2002).

Such an analysis implies that responses to changes in the world system will vary according to the position within that system. Thus, responses to globalization and to the hegemony of English may display important variations. In most developed countries in the latter half of the 20th century, the growth in translated books (especially from English) has accompanied increasing cross-border mobility. The only apparent exceptions are the most dominant powers, the United States and the United Kingdom. Typically, no significant increase in the remarkably low translation ratio has taken place in these countries since the end of World War II. If we compare of the case of France, a country with a central language and a traditionally prestigious culture albeit somewhat in decline, with that of the Netherlands, a small semi-peripheral and internationally oriented country, we observe different strategies in responding to the supremacy of English. In both countries the number of translations has steadily increased in the second half of the 20th century, and by far the majority of these translations are from English. In the Netherlands, three out of four translated books are currently from English. In France, the proportion is not much lower, with two out of every three translations being from English. However, there is an interesting divergence in translations from other languages. The number of translations from Dutch into French and from French into Dutch has developed in opposite directions. Book translations from French have declined in the Netherlands since the 1980s, a loss of position that is roughly comparable to that of German. The hegemony of English has increasingly marginalized both languages, the only ones in a position to compete with English. In France, the opposite has happened. Not only has the number of translations from Dutch increased, but their quality has greatly improved as well, and Dutch literature currently enjoys a cultural acclaim unprecedented in history.

Here I will document this development and argue that both tendencies can be understood as divergent strategies to cope with the increasing dominance of English and Anglo-American culture. In France the widespread political and cultural unease with globalization à l’américaine has stimulated interest in foreign literature and letters, an interest that is felt to be in line with the country’s tradition as a great literary nation, and perhaps also with a latent sense of its mission civilisatrice. The Netherlands does not have this sense of national identity and international orientation. Translation statistics as well as other indicators suggest that Anglo-American cultural colonization is, by and large, taken for granted and is only rarely an issue of public debate. The comparative case study presented here is a plea for studies of translation from a broader, sociologic-
al perspective (cf. Heilbron and Sapiro 2002, in press) and for greater attention to the positions of target cultures within the world system and the geocultural strategies these positions generate.

Translations and the Dutch book market

As the Netherlands is a relatively small country surrounded by three major powers (France, Germany and England), cultural imports have always played a significant, even dominant role. National elites have traditionally defined themselves in relation to foreign models, and receptivity to foreign influence is often viewed as a national virtue. Contrary to French “chauvinism” or English insularity, the Dutch national pride is based on not being nationalistic. The readiness to adapt to changing international circumstances is lived as a precondition for national survival. Political and cultural practices in the Netherlands tend to follow on the heels of shifts in the international balance of power. Instead of resisting cultural domination in international affairs, we find a pattern of active accommodation and a predominant tendency to adjust to reality as defined internationally.

This pattern of adaptability is historically associated with trade and commerce, and is, more generally, a characteristic of the political systems of smaller Western democracies (Katzenstein 1985). It is also apparent in the cultural field, and more particularly in the development of the book market. Book production in the Netherlands has had continuous growth for most of the 20th century. Growth was strongest during the three decades following World War II, which were years of sustained economic growth, increased prosperity, and rapid expansion of the educational system. Despite competition from new media such as radio and television, the annual book production more than doubled in 35 years, rising from over 6,000 titles in 1946 to over 14,000 in 1980. Apart from the increasing demand due to population growth and rising levels of schooling and purchasing power, the expansion of the book market was also stimulated by falling prices, caused by the introduction of paperbacks. Often published in separate series, paperbacks made books accessible to larger groups of the population, changing the publication pattern. Reprints of previously published hardbacks became more numerous and, in most paperback series, translations were particularly important.

The proportion of translations in the national book production, both reprints and new titles, climbed from about 5% of all published books in 1946 to nearly 30% around 2000. If the new paperback series can partly explain this strong growth, the growth in translations was also related to increasing international mobility and international

1. Unless indicated otherwise, the Dutch data presented here are taken from annual reports by the Research Foundation of the National Association of Booksellers and Publishers, the Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het Boek (1960–2006). I have updated a previously published analysis for this chapter (Heilbron 1995).
awareness, intensified through the Marshall Plan and Western alliances like NATO and the European Union. The growing number of new translations improved the position of translators, which in turn reinforced the translation economy.

The development of the postwar Dutch translation ratio indicates two periods of decline within the overall pattern of growth. The first decline, between 1966 and 1972, coincided with an overproduction crisis after the paperback boom. Several publishing houses specializing in paperbacks went bankrupt, while others restructured their publishing programs in favor of a new and more profitable type of paperback, the “giant paperback” (Van Voorst 1997). The second period of decline, between 1980 and 1988, was more profound. Following the economic downturn at the end of 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the book market underwent a structural transformation, changing from a steady growing market into a cyclical one. During the economic crisis of the 1980s, when unemployment reached a peak of 14%, the book market shrank and the annual book production fell nearly 20% within a few years. Around 1990 the title production started to increase again, reaching a high in 1995, but despite this economic boom, annual book production decreased again after 1995. The sales figures, in particular the sale of books classified as General books (as distinct from Educational and Scientific books), confirm this pattern. By 2000 the total number of General books sold was 18% lower than it had been 25 years earlier (Van Leeuwen 2001). Although initially linked to the economic circumstances, the downward cycle of the book market has since suffered primarily from competition from new media like commercial television (cable and satellite) and the personal computer (the internet and games). These market dynamics can explain the two dips during the postwar period in the development of the translation ratio. The first period of decline was the outcome of a specific overproduction crisis, linked to the previous paperback boom. The second one, at the beginning of the 1980s, was part of the more structural transformation of the book business: the number of books published diminished, sales were in decline, and the reprint ratio diminished as well. This is one of the explanations for the temporary decline in the translation ratio.

To understand the significance of the translation ratio, one must take into account the way translations play a different role in the various categories of books. Dutch book statistics have a classification system distributing books over 33 categories. Some of these categories are so closely bound to national rules and regulations that there are virtually no translations (school books, legal publications, political and social essays). In other categories, however, translations are crucial. In the category of Prose, the majority of published books are translations (70% in 2002). Literary work proper is only a minor part of this category, which is dominated by popular and highly international genres such as thrillers, fantasy, detective stories, and science fiction. After Prose, many translations are categorized as Children’s or Youth books, including comics (40% translations). Other categories where translations are proportionally important are Religious books (38%), Historical studies (20%) and Technology (20%).

The different source languages can be seen as an indication of the cultural capital of the linguistic group in question and the country’s prevailing geo-cultural orientation.
The usual way to present such data is by calculating the number of translations from a certain language over the total number of translations. If we distinguish four language groups (English, German, French, and Other Languages), it is evident that, for example, the share of translations from English has increased from nearly 40% (1946) to 75% (1997). In part as an immediate consequence of the growth of translations from English, the percentages for the other three language groups were in decline. However, the problem with this mode of presenting data is that indigenous books are left out of the equation, suggesting that translation is a zero-sum game. Translations compete not only with other translations, but also with books in the native language. It would be more accurate to calculate the proportion of translations from the four language groups as a percentage of the total number of books. Dutch books then become part of the competition. The pattern that emerges (see Figure 1) differs in various respects from the common mode of presentation. Instead of an overall decline in translations from languages other than English, there is a highly uneven but general growth of translations until approximately 1980. Growth was obviously stronger for English translations, which increased from 2% to 15% of the total number of books in 1976. But the share of translations from other languages also increased. German translations expanded from 1.4% (1946) to nearly 6% (1980), French increased from 0.6 to 2.7% (1980), and translations from Other Languages went up from 1.2 to 2.6% (1984).

![Figure 1](image-url)

**Figure 1.** Translations from English, German, French and other languages as a percentage of the total number of Dutch books (1946–1997)
Although English gained an enormous advantage over its competitors, book translations from German, French, and other languages also improved their share. Translations during these decades were on the whole more in favor than were Dutch books. From 1976 to 1986, during the economic downturn, this trend was reversed. There was a general decline: translations from German declined from 5.7% (1978) to 3.4% (1997), translations from French from 2.7% (1980) to 1.7% (1997), translations from Other Languages from 2.6% (1984) to 2.1% (1997). For a while even translations from English decreased slightly: from 15.1% (1976) to 14.2% (1986). But English was the only language that recovered: from 1986 to 1997 its share increased further, from over 14% to 21%.

The corresponding data are not available for the period after 1997. Comparable data, however, can be obtained from the Royal Library in The Hague. Although the figures are less selective than those used for the period 1946–1997, they unambiguously confirm the abovementioned trends. During the years 1990–2002, translations from English have increased both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total number of books: from almost 14% to almost 20% (Van Rees 2004). The decline in translations from French is stronger than the previously cited data indicate (from 2.9% to 1.6%), translations from German remain stable in absolute numbers but regress proportionally (from 3.5 to 2.8 %), while translations from other languages increase in absolute numbers but remain proportionally stable at around 2% of the national book production.

On the basis of this analysis, it seems clear that the economic crisis of the 1980s had a cultural component. Prior to that period, the share of translations from each of the four language groups had increased as a proportion of the number of books published. English was by far the most important foreign language, but the shares of German and French also increased. After the crisis of the 1980s, a cultural reorientation seems to have taken place: publishers further increased the proportion of translations from English while diminishing translations from French and German. Since these statistics concern all categories of books, not just literary translations, the explanation must be relatively general. The 1980s and 1990s were a period of important geopolitical shifts. European integration accelerated and the antagonism between Western democracies and Communist states first weakened and then disappeared, leaving the US as the only superpower. Both processes have reinforced the international position of English. While this is evident for “globalization” after the fall of Communism, it is also the case for European integration. The very plurality of languages in the European Union strengthened the call for a lingua franca, for which English was the best candidate. As Abram de Swaan demonstrated in his analysis of the European language system, the more languages, the more English (De Swaan 2001, Chapter 8).

**Dutch translations in the French book market**

Considering the case of Dutch translations into French, we observe the reverse tendency in approximately the same period of the 1980s and 1990s. Contrary to transla-
tions into Dutch, very little was and still is translated from Dutch. For every six books translated into Dutch, there is only one book translated from Dutch. This discrepancy applies to all smaller and more peripheral language groups. Writers and intellectuals from these countries must contend with the “one-way mirror effect” (Goudsblom 1988:69–88). They are like observers behind a half transparent mirror, attentively observing what is happening in the international scene, but not participating. For small countries and peripheral language groups, international communication is very much one-way traffic.

Although we do not know much about translations from Dutch in earlier historical periods, we believe that few Dutch writers were translated, even when the Dutch Republic was a world power. No Dutch writers entered the canon of world literature. Serious foreign interest in Dutch literature only began to emerge at the end of the 19th century, along with interest in Russian and Scandinavian literature. A few Dutch authors (Multatuli, Couperus and others) have probably benefited from the broadening interest. The emerging demand did not go unnoticed in the Netherlands: In 1939, the Royal Library in The Hague devoted an exhibition to Dutch writers in translation and published a first bibliography of translations.

After World War Two, the publicly funded Stichting ter Bevordering van de Vertaling van Nederlands Letterkundig Werk (1954) promoted translations of Dutch literature. This Foundation subsidized translations, established contacts with foreign publishers, commissioned trial translations, and diffused information about authors and their work. Private organizations such as the Flemish Foundation Ons Erfdeel (1957) (Our Heritage) also promoted the translation of Dutch and Flemish literature. The results of these efforts, however, were rather disappointing. The number of translations remained modest, their quality left a lot to be desired, and literary recognition did not ensue. One of the most prominent postwar Dutch authors, Willem Frederik Hermans, wrote an essay on the suffering of translated writers (“Het lijden der vertaalde schrijvers”) in which he severely criticized the promotion practices of the Foundation. He recalled the mediocre quality of many translations and added that the commonly obscure foreign publishers were probably more interested in receiving public subsidies than in publishing literary works (Hermans 1983). During the 1980s, several studies confirmed Hermans’ suspicions to a greater or lesser extent (see especially Vanderauwera 1985; Van Noesel and Jansen 1985).

During the same period, a change was already well underway. A few high quality translations were published, attracting considerable critical attention and translation prizes. Such was the case of the novel Het land van herkomst (written in 1935) by Edgar Du Perron (André Malraux had dedicated La Condition humaine to him), translated into French in 1980 by Philippe Noble. This translation was published by Gallimard and won the Dutch Martinus Nijhoff translation prize in 1981. Cees Nooteboom’s Rituelen (1980), translated into American English by Adrienne Dixon in 1983, received the international Mobil Pegasus Prize and generated much publicity. At the same time, novels like Het verdriet van België (The Sorrow of Belgium, 1983) by Hugo Claus and
De aanslag (The Assault, 1982) by Harry Mulisch had sold exceptionally well in the Netherlands and were successfully translated into other languages. All these works were published by well-known literary publishing houses.

The Frankfurt Book Fair of 1993 marks the international breakthrough of Dutch literature. Dutch and Flemish literature were the highlight, the Schwerpunkt of the Fair. A large number of Dutch works were translated. Their authors were present in Frankfurt and participated in media events. The number of book reviews reached an unprecedented level, remaining high for at least four consecutive years (Kelderman 2000).

Given the increasingly dense interactions between German and French publishers in these years, it is no coincidence that the French book event Les belles étrangères of 1993 was also dedicated to Dutch and Flemish literature. On a more modest scale, eleven translated writers participated in round tables, readings, and signing sessions and attended various other media events.

The event known as Les belles étrangères was a significant and quite typical initiative for understanding the growth and diversification of translations in France during these years. It was created in 1987 by the Ministry of Culture and it takes place under the responsibility of the Centre National du Livre. It is based on a working alliance between public institutions and private actors from the publishing world. The aim is to invite the reading public to discover foreign literatures that are not yet well known.

French government policy is to support the production, distribution and translation of high-quality books. This policy was reaffirmed and reactivated in France during the second half of the 1980s as a response to the liberalization policies developed within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). France was one of the most active and articulate proponents of a policy that would respect the principle of cultural exception that had been part of the original GATT agreement of 1947. The principle allows public support for cultural goods in order to protect them from an exclusively commercial logic based on only economic criteria. Although this French policy primarily dealt with movies and television programs, it also protected the book market and especially its literary sector (Van Hemel et al. 1996).

We need to see the translation statistics for France in this context of a political and cultural alliance for the defense of cultural goods, opposing the increasing dominance of a purely commercial logic (Bourdieu 1999; Schiffrin 2000; Bokobza 2004). Along with policy-makers, this movement also involved translators, critics, publishers, writers, language and literature teachers. The Electre database indicates a growth in book translations in France during 1984–2002, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total number of published books. Translations from Dutch also increased, as did translations from Hebrew (Sapiro 2002) and from Italian (Bokobza 2004). Although the absolute numbers are modest, their growth is regular. Literary translations are accompanied by unprecedented public attention and literary recognition. Dutch writers are now regularly translated, well-known publishing houses publish many of them, and the quality of the translations has enormously improved. The tendency reached a provisional top in 2003, when Dutch and Flemish literature was the honorary guest, the in-
vité d’honneur, at the annual French book fair, the Salon du Livre. Fifty-five Dutch writers presented themselves and their work. Many press articles shed light on a literature that had been virtually unknown twenty years earlier.

The number of translations rose continuously from ten titles in 1984 to 51 in 2002. Out of more than 500 titles, 40% are categorized as Literary Books, while 20% as Children’s or Youth Books. The other categories are much less important and generally very dispersed. For example, Human Sciences, representing some 10% of the total, is too heterogeneous and insignificant to be a unit of analysis. It includes political essays, practical guides about fiscal matters, as well as very diverse historical studies. Since the statistics are the result of different processes, it is interesting to look closely at the roles of publishers and translators. In both cases, a few publishers/translators publish/translate the majority of titles. The 200 or so new literary titles, for example, are published by 56 publishers and translated by no fewer than 80 translators. Six publishers published half of the translations (Gallimard, Seuil, Calmann-Lévy, Lansman, Longue vue, Actes Sud), whereas 27 publishers published only one title. The same applies to the population of translators: ten of them translated half the number of titles (each one at least five books), whereas 55 translators translated only one title each.

The market for Dutch translations thus rather functions as a peculiar oligopoly: a small number of firms and translators dominate the market, but they have numerous competitors, apparently because the costs to enter the market are relatively low. While this characteristic may hold for the book market in general (cf. Reynaud 1982), the barriers of entry are comparatively low for the French market of translations from Dutch, because of the presence of Belgian publishers and translators. Their linguistic competence and their familiarly with the book market in both France and the Netherlands has made them the traditional intermediaries between the French and the Dutch culture. When the demand in France rises, they are capable of responding swiftly. The reverse phenomenon also existed, but as I argued in the first part of this essay, it is becoming less frequent.

Geopolitical and geocultural dynamics

The intermediary role of Belgian translators and publishers goes only part of the way towards explaining the rising interest in translations from Dutch and Flemish in France. We have touched upon two other mechanisms. The first is the growth of interactions among major European centers, in particular between Germany and France. For geopolitical reasons, German publishers have published most translations from Dutch since the beginning of the 19th century. German intellectuals, and in particular Germanists, elaborated a cultural alliance between Germany and the Netherlands, first against the French, then against English domination in Europe. They saw Dutch language as a kind of popular German, belonging to the Germanic cultural sphere. Translations from Dutch could complement the German output (Kloos 1992). For a long time, German
translations from Dutch have had very little effect on the policies of French publishers. During the 1980s, however, when several Dutch authors enjoyed a certain success in Germany, they attracted the attention of publishers in France. European integration, and the French–German collaboration in particular, has thus reinforced the emerging French interest in Dutch writers.

As the development of book translations in the Netherlands has demonstrated, however, the process of European integration favors translations from languages other than English only under specific conditions. Perhaps the most important of these is the existence of political or cultural opposition to the global hegemony of English. Only if sufficiently powerful actors are prepared to invest in translating from languages other than English, and to accept certain inevitable economic risks, will European integration contribute to the linguistic diversity of the translation market. Such powerful actors are losing ground in the Netherlands. In France, however, they enjoy state support. They have developed a policy favoring cultural exchange with countries and cultures outside of the English-speaking world, including relatively peripheral ones. Here, as in other matters concerning translation practice, geopolitical and geocultural dynamics represent a neglected but significant and interesting dimension of Translation Studies.

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Normes de traduction et contraintes sociales

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Les travaux de Gideon Toury ont montré que les processus de traduction sont régis par les normes de la culture cible. La contribution que nous proposons est centrée sur les contraintes sociales qui pèsent sur ces processus, entre les politiques publiques et les enjeux éditoriaux, et sur la façon dont ces contraintes structurent les pratiques de traduction littéraire, entre un pôle de grande production régi par la logique du profit commercial et un pôle de production restreinte régi par la logique du profit symbolique. Ceci permet d’articuler l’analyse des normes de traduction avec une approche sociologique en termes de champ, selon le concept forgé par Pierre Bourdieu.

Gideon Toury has proposed that translation processes are governed by the norms of the target culture. Here we focus on the social constraints that condition those processes on a scale that runs from government policies to publishing strategies. In the field of literary production, these constraints operate between two poles. On the one hand, there is the logic of commercial gain, on the other, restrained production governed by the logic of symbolic gain. This model allows us to analyze translation norms in terms of the sociology of fields, as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu.

Keywords: translation, literary translation, sociological fields, translation strategies, translation norms


Comme le pointait Gideon Toury dans son article, les normes se situent entre deux extrêmes, les règles explicites d’un côté, les idiosyncrasies de l’autre. Dans son Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique, Pierre Bourdieu (2000), reprenant un problème formulé par Wittgenstein et Quine à propos de la polysémie du mot «règle», mettait en garde contre la propension des théories objectivistes, de la linguistique saussurienne ou chomskienne à l’anthropologie structurale de Lévi-Strauss, à faire de la régularité des
pratiques le produit de l’exécution d’une règle. On passe ainsi insensiblement du modèle de la réalité à la réalité du modèle, en réifiant les concepts. Pour pallier ce risque, Bourdieu invitait à une approche praxéologique prenant en compte le rapport pratique au monde et fondée sur le concept d’habitus.

La notion de normes présente l’intérêt d’être centrée sur la dimension contraignant de pratiques, c’est-à-dire, selon la définition durkheimienne, leur caractère social et collectif, indépendant de leurs manifestations individuelles. Comme tous les faits sociaux, les normes s’imposent au traducteur de l’extérieur, et il les a plus ou moins intériorisées au cours du processus de sa formation ou de sa pratique, notamment à travers les sanctions.


Qui plus est, les normes présentent l’avantage de pouvoir être étudiées non seulement à travers leur mise en pratique mais aussi de l’extérieur, en tant que telles, à travers les attentes des éditeurs, les corrections de manuscrits, etc. Il peut, certes, y avoir un écart entre les normes explicites, telles que formulées par les acteurs, et les pratiques réelles, mais comme le notait Gideon Toury, la régularité des pratiques dit dans quelle mesure la norme est active et effective — ou dans quelle mesure elle est contraignante. En outre, ces contraintes et ces normes ne se manifestent pas seulement à travers les choix linguistiques mais aussi à travers les principes de sélection des textes, leur découpage (texte intégral, extrait, recueil), le paratexte (commentaire, notes de bas de page, quatrième de couverture), etc.

Les types de contraintes qui pèsent sur la circulation des biens symboliques

Les contraintes qui pèsent sur la production et la circulation des biens symboliques et donc sur les transferts culturels sont de trois ordres: politiques, économiques et spécifiquement culturelles. Le mode de circulation des textes dépendra de ces différentes logiques, selon la structure des champs de production culturelle dans les pays d’ori-
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Les contraintes politiques peuvent se manifester aussi bien du côté l’espace de production culturelle de la culture-source que du côté de l’espace de réception, ainsi qu’à travers les relations entre les champs politiques des deux pays (guerres, relations diplomatiques, relations entre partis, comme le parti communiste, imbrication dans un mouvement international, etc.). Ainsi, dans des pays où le champ économique est subordonné au champ politique et où les instances de production culturelles ainsi que l’organisation des professions intellectuelles sont étatiques, comme dans les pays fascistes ou communistes, la production et la circulation des biens symboliques sont très fortement déterminées par des contraintes et des enjeux politiques. La traduction apparaît alors comme un instrument idéologique, voire un instrument de propagande (c’est le cas dans les situations de guerre, l’exemple extrême étant la diffusion de tracts à la population des pays ennemis; Jacquemond 2006). Cette surpolitisation conditionne le transfert culturel, qu’il s’agisse du processus d’exportation ou du processus d’importation, ou encore de la circulation légale ou illégale des œuvres, comme l’illustre le cas des traductions des littératures d’Europe de l’Est en français pendant la période communiste (Popa 2002, 2004). La dimension politique doit être entendue au sens large, englobant les enjeux identitaires (nationaux, religieux, régionaux, etc.) : ainsi, par exemple, la traduction peut avoir pour fonction sociale le maintien de la cohésion d’une minorité, ou le renforcement de l’image d’une culture étrangère (Sora 2002; Sapiro 2006a).

D’autres transferts culturels sont principalement régis par la logique de marché. Les biens culturels apparaissent avant tout comme des biens commerciaux devant procurer à leurs producteurs des profits économiques à court terme. Le processus de fabrication de best-sellers mondiaux standardisés en est l’illustration. La rationalisation des coûts pour maximiser le profit est le principe qui préside ici à la production et à la circulation de ces biens considérés comme des marchandises.

Pris entre les contraintes politiques et économiques, les champs de production culturelle et scientifique peuvent jouir d’une relative autonomie (Bourdieu 1971, 1992; Sapiro 2003). Il en va de même pour les transferts culturels, qui s’insèrent dans les échanges ou relations entre des champs de production culturelle nationaux (Bourdieu 2002). Les champs littéraires nationaux ont développé de longue date des échanges, la traduction pouvant être un mode de transfert de capital symbolique (Casanova 1999). Ces échanges ne passent pas seulement par le marché du livre mais aussi par des instances spécifiques comme les revues ou les cahiers pour le théâtre. Moins liés aux langues nationales, les champs scientifiques sont d’emblée plus internationalisés et leurs échanges institutionnalisés à travers des organisations comme les congrès internatio-
naux, les publications dans des revues étrangères, etc. (Charle 1996). Si dans les sciences de la nature l’anglais s’est imposé comme langue d’échange, en sciences humaines et sociales, plus proches des traditions littéraires, les langues nationales prévalent encore, et les échanges passent souvent par la traduction. En outre, en raison de la place qu’occupe encore le livre dans ces disciplines, ces échanges dépendent en partie du marché du livre, qui leur impose des contraintes de type économique (Thompson 2005; Auerbach 2006).

Types de contraintes et normes de traduction

Ces trois types de contraintes, qui constituent des types idéaux au sens de Max Weber, n’existent jamais à l’état pur : les considérations économiques se combinent souvent avec les enjeux culturels spécifiques, ou ces derniers peuvent être pris dans des enjeux politiques. Mais tel type d’enjeux prédomine dans certaines conjonctures socio-politiques (par exemple, les enjeux politiques pour les littératures circulant depuis ou vers les régimes communistes).

En outre, différents types d’enjeux peuvent co-exister dans des circuits parallèles : l’opposition définie par Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1992, 1993) entre un circuit de production restreinte et un circuit de grande production permet de prendre en compte la co-existence de la logique économique et de logiques spécifiques sur le marché des biens symboliques. Cette opposition présente l’avantage de renvoyer à des pratiques concrètes (chiffres de tirage) et à des catégories utilisées par les agents : livres de fond, rotation lente vs. rapide, distinction faite par les agents littéraires entre « literary upmarket » et « commercial fiction », etc.

L’hypothèse que nous faisons dans cet article est que chaque type de contrainte implique des normes de traduction particulières du point de vue de la sélection, du découpage et des modalités de traduction des textes.

Ainsi les normes de respect du texte original dans son intégralité, de fidélité au contenu et à la forme (séquences, style, etc.), toute comme l’idée de la supériorité des traductions directes sur les traductions indirectes, qui sont souvent supposées dans les études sur la traduction, ne constituent qu’un cas particulier des pratiques. Elles se sont imposées à travers la traduction de textes dotés d’une légitimité culturelle, donc selon des règles spécifiques aux champs de production culturelle, et ont été codifiées à travers la législation sur le droit d’auteur : il est significatif, sous ce rapport, que le droit moral de l’auteur, qui interdit de modifier la forme du texte sans l’autorisation de son auteur, soit inaliénable en droit français, alors qu’il est cessible dans la législation du copyright, qui considère les œuvres comme des biens commerciaux avant tout.

Or les normes de respect de l’intégralité du texte et de fidélité au contenu et à la forme ne sont pas observées dans les circuits politisés ou commerciaux. Dans les circuits politisés, ces normes sont subordonnées aux enjeux politiques, comme en témoigne l’exemple des traductions de l’hébreu en arabe : celles qui sont réalisées à l’insta-
tion de l’État d’Israël à destination de la population arabe d’Israël sont expurgées de tout ce qui pourrait attiser les tensions entre communautés, tandis que celles qui sont effectuées au sein des pays arabes sélectionnent, à l’inverse, les extraits susceptibles de conforter la relation conflictuelle (Kayyal 2003).

Par-delà ces conditions de circulation surpolitisées des textes, on peut situer à ce pôle la propension à la lecture « ethnographique » des œuvres, appréhendées comme des documents livrant une image de la culture-source plutôt que comme des œuvres littéraires à part entière : ce type d’attentes induit des pratiques de sélection des textes et de traduction qui mettent en avant leur dimension ethnographique ou exotique (Jacquemond 1992, 2006: 93, Sapiro 2002).

Le pôle le plus commercial du marché du livre obéit, on l’a dit, à la logique de la rationalisation des coûts en vue de la maximisation des profits sur le court terme. Les normes de traduction seront donc subordonnées à cet objectif : le texte peut être réduit, le travail de traduction réparti entre plusieurs traducteurs pour accélérer le rythme, son contenu adapté à la culture-cible de manière à toucher le public le plus large, son style simplifié, avec peu de souci pour la fidélité au texte d’origine. La littérature pour enfant, dont la circulation s’est fortement commercialisée depuis le début des années 1990 (Sapiro, à paraître), fait l’objet d’un tel traitement.

Position du texte et position du traducteur

Le type de contraintes prédominant doit être croisé avec au moins deux autres variables pour rendre compte des pratiques de traduction : la position du texte dans l’espace de production symbolique et la position du traducteur. On examinera successivement ces deux variables.

On peut faire l’hypothèse que les normes de traduction varient tout d’abord selon le degré de légitimité culturelle du texte. Il se mesure à la catégorie dont relève le texte en question, à la position du texte dans la hiérarchie des genres, à son ancienneté, au prestige dont jouit la culture dont il relève et à son degré de consécration.

Les normes de traduction se différencient d’abord selon la catégorie du texte traduit et l’objectif du transfert, selon l’intérêt porté au contenu ou à la forme. Au pôle où prime l’intérêt pour le contenu se situent les traductions techniques, juridiques et scientifiques, qui adoptent un langage spécifique, fortement codifié, l’objectif premier étant la précision, hors de toute considération esthétique. À l’opposé, les normes de traduction littéraire mettent en avant les qualités esthétiques et stylistiques, qui peuvent parfois même primer sur le sens — c’est le cas pour la poésie notamment (Kalinowski 1999). L’insistance de nombre de traducteurs français que nous avons interviewés à parler de leur travail en termes de restitution de la « musique » du texte en témoigne. Les traductions de textes de sciences humaines et sociales se situent entre ces deux extrêmes, selon leur proximité plus ou moins grande au modèle d’écriture littéraire (philosophie, histoire) ou à celui des sciences de la nature (psychologie, économie). Les
textes politiques (tracts, programmes, etc.) ou publicitaires tendront à être adaptés aux publics visés en fonction de l’effet recherché.

La hiérarchie des genres varie entre les périodes et les cultures et peut contribuer à faire changer un texte de statut entre une culture et l’autre ou d’une époque à l’autre : ainsi, une nouvelle traduction de la Bible, réalisée par une équipe d’écrivains dans une perspective littéraire plus que religieuse, est parue en français en 2005 chez Bayard. Dans les sociétés où s’est formé un champ littéraire autonome, la poésie se situe au sommet de la hiérarchie littéraire, le roman rose est le plus souvent tout en bas. Alors que la traduction poétique, qui s’effectue souvent en marge du marché du livre, est soumise aux normes esthétiques du pôle de production restreinte du champ littéraire, la traduction du roman rose obéit à une logique strictement commerciale. Entre ces deux extrêmes, le roman, qui s’est anobli au cours du 19e siècle, occupe une position intermédiaire. Les normes de traduction des romans se diffèrent en fonction des autres critères évoqués : leur ancienneté et leur degré de consécration. On peut opposer selon ce critère les œuvres classiques à la littérature contemporaine, les premières étant moins soumises aux pressions commerciales que celles relevant de la seconde catégorie. En outre, les classiques sont souvent accompagnés d’un paratexte, commentaire qui constitue un marqueur de sa légitimité. Les moindres contraintes commerciales s’expliquent en partie par le fait que, d’une part, ces œuvres sont souvent libres de droits, de l’autre, elles enferment déjà un capital symbolique qui, même s’il ne procure pas un rendement économique immédiat, confère à ses importateurs et au catalogue dans lequel il s’inscrit une légitimité symbolique tout en garantissant des profits matériels également sur le long terme. En témoigne, par exemple, l’événement qu’a constitué la publication de la traduction d’A la recherche du temps perdu en hébreu par Helit Yeshurun. Dans le degré de légitimité culturelle intervient aussi le prestige de la culture auquel appartient le texte concerné, qui peut être mesuré au nombre de classiques universellement reconnus relevant de cette culture.

Les normes de traduction dépendent également de la position des médiateurs, instances et individus, dans l’espace de production symbolique. Les instances qui participent au transfert véhiculent les différents types de contraintes évoquées, politiques, économiques et culturelles, selon qu’elles relèvent du champ de production idéologique (instituts culturels, partis, mouvements contestataires, etc.), du champ économique (maisons d’édition) ou du circuit restreint du champ de production symbolique (revues). L’espace de production éditoriale se structure lui-même autour de l’opposition entre le circuit de grande production et le circuit de production restreinte, ces deux logiques pouvant coexister chez un même éditeur : ainsi la traduction ne constitue pas uniquement un enjeu commercial mais aussi un enjeu d’accumulation et d’entretien du capital symbolique d’un éditeur, qui implique le choix de textes dotés d’un certain degré de légitimité ou bénéficiant à tout le moins d’une certaine reconnaissance symbolique, comme l’illustrent les collections de littérature étrangère des éditeurs français (Serry 2002; Sapiro 2006b).
Les normes adoptées par les traducteurs varient également selon leur position sociale, la reconnaissance dont ils jouissent, les conditions d'exercice du travail et leur habitus. Encore faiblement différenciés dans la première moitié du 20e siècle (Wilfert 2002), le métier de traducteur a connu un processus de professionnalisation. Les traducteurs se répartissent en premier lieu entre traducteurs techniques d'un côté, traducteurs littéraires et scientifiques de l'autre (Heinich 1984). Ce dernier groupe se différencie entre traducteurs professionnels, plus soumis aux contraintes éditoriales tant du point de vue du choix des textes que des normes de traduction, et traducteurs occasionnels, exerçant la traduction en complément de leur activité principale. Les traducteurs occasionnels se recrutent parmi les écrivains et les universitaires, qui sont plus en mesure d'imposer leurs choix et leurs propres normes en faisant valoir soit leur compétence, soit leur capital symbolique (Casanova 2002; Sela-Sheffy 2005). Cet écart de position entre universitaires et écrivains traduisant occasionnellement et traducteurs professionnels est à l'origine d'une division du travail qui renvoie à l'opposition entre œuvres classiques entre littérature classique et contemporaine (Kalinowski 2002). Enfin, à un dernier niveau, les normes de traduction des universitaires tendent à se distinguer de celles des écrivains du fait de la fonction différente que les uns et les autres assignent à l'acte de traduire: alors que pour les écrivains, c'est un travail qui se rapporte avant tout à leur propre recherche esthétique, qu'elle peut chercher à légitimer dans le champ de production littéraire-cible, pour les universitaires qui ne sont pas animés d'ambitions créatrices il s'agit plutôt de faire valoir l’œuvre par rapport à sa culture d'origine.

Les normes et pratiques de traduction sont également liées à l’habitus du traducteur qui renvoie, par-delà l’habitus professionnel, aux conditions d’acquisition de la compétence linguistique et au rapport à la culture-source (Simeoni 1998; Sapiro 2004; Gouanvic 2007). On peut ainsi émettre l’hypothèse que l’apprentissage de la langue par une formation systématique tend à favoriser les pratiques de traduction « ciblistes », c'est-à-dire soucieuses de l'adaptation à culture de réception de manière à faire disparaître toute trace d'étrangeté du texte, tandis que l’acquisition de la langue par la pratique, dans le cadre d’un parcours migratoire, tend à favoriser, du fait de la familiarité avec la culture-source, un plus grand respect de ses spécificités culturelles et linguistiques. Cette dernière variable doit cependant être croisée avec les précédentes pour rendre compte des pratiques effectives.

Conclusion

Selon le modèle d'analyse proposé dans cet article, il faut prendre en compte trois types de variables pour appréhender les normes de traduction de textes: le type de contraintes qui pèsent de manière prédominante sur le transfert (politique, économique, culturel), la position du texte dans l'espace de production symbolique, la position des média-
teurs dans l’espace de la production et de la circulation culturelles. Ce modèle demande bien sûr à être affiné et vérifié empiriquement. Cependant, il permet de mettre en place des indicateurs articulant analyse externe et analyse interne. Il permet aussi d’élaborer certaines hypothèses. Ainsi, il semble que la position élevée du texte dans la hiérarchie symbolique et le capital symbolique du traducteur garantissent une relative autonomie face aux contraintes hétéronomes (économiques notamment) que les divers agents impliqués dans le transfert culturel (les éditeurs, en particulier) peuvent imposer aux traducteurs. Mais la traduction implique également un rapport à la langue qui est aussi fonction de l’habitus du traducteur.

Références


Chapitre 15. Normes de traduction et contraintes sociales


Due to Descriptive Translation Studies, research on written translation has always placed emphasis on contextualizing translations, but this has not been the case in work on conference interpreting. Calls have nevertheless been made for a more sociological viewpoint, with “norms” as a focal point. Research on conference interpreting has started becoming more sociologically oriented and is moving towards more contextualization. While researchers who want to study conference interpreting as situated action can benefit from the theoretical and methodological discussions in Translation Studies in general, their findings will certainly help shape the discussion in Translation and Interpreting Studies as a whole.

**Keywords:** Interpreting Studies, Translation Studies, conference interpreting, situated action, context

**Introduction**

Few scholars today are likely to argue that the practices of translation and interpreting—and the academic fields of Translation Studies (TS) and Interpreting Studies (IS)—are completely different and should remain that way. Looking back on the scant interaction that has occurred between theory and research in these fields over the past four flourishing decades, however, one might easily conclude this was and still is indeed the case. The lack of exchange is most particularly striking between TS and Conference Interpreting Research (CIR), which has until recently attracted the lion’s share of attention in IS. Research in TS has largely focused on exploring literary translations in their social contexts, while CIR has focused mainly on cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects.

Despite diverse paths in the past, the need for dialogue and perhaps even cross-fertilization seems more pressing than ever. Technology has begun to challenge the traditional distinction between orality and literacy in general, and between interpreting and translation in particular, by introducing new forms of interlingual and intercultural transfer such as the simultaneous translation of chats in the EU institutions (Campbell cited in Schäffner 2004).
In this paper, I will first take a retrospective look at the main theoretical and methodological directions historically adopted by TS and IS. I will then argue that one possible area of intra-disciplinary cooperation concerns the exploration of conference interpreting as situated action. Following a general overview of the current literature that has either called for or actually explored simultaneous conference interpreting (SCI) as situated action, I will point out certain areas still in need of further exploration. My main contention is that research on conference interpreting as situated action will not only benefit from the theoretical and methodological discussion in TS, but will also enrich the discussion in both TS and IS by opening up a highly complex social practice to critical reflection.

Translation and Interpreting Studies in hindsight: Divergent paths of growth

Although the first research efforts on translation and interpreting date back to more or less the same period, TS and IS have greatly diverged in theory and methodology. From the early days onwards, TS placed significant emphasis on the constitutive role of context. In the 1970s Gideon Toury in Israel and Hans Vermeer in Germany — in nearly parallel endeavors — emphasized the importance of the social contexts for which and in which translation is carried out. With the dissemination of these views, and most particularly through the impact of the widely circulated and influential Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) developed by Gideon Toury, TS began to approach translations as “facts of real life” (Toury 1995:1).

Challenging prescriptive, source-oriented approaches that prescribed correct ways of translating, Gideon Toury underscored the importance of studying actual translations by taking into account the cultural-semiotic conditions under which they occur. Setting the framework for a descriptive-explanatory approach in TS, he considered contextualization to be one of the most fundamental aspects in investigating translation products and processes (ibid: 174).

As theoretical discussion expanded with the contributions and criticisms of others, many scholars in TS agreed with Toury on the significance of accounting for real-life translations. As a result, TS witnessed a surge of research on translation history, and the main beneficiary came to be historical case studies on literary translations (Hermans 1999).

Today theoretical discussion in TS has become rather complex, running parallel to issues taken up by critical social theories. Concepts such as agency, power, ideology and gender are discussed quite extensively, with increased endeavors to enlarge

1. Throughout this paper, both “conference interpreting” and “simultaneous interpreting” refer to simultaneous conference interpreting.
As poststructuralist views constantly urge TS scholars to become more aware of their own biases and less assumptive about their ability to render objective descriptions, TS remains keenly - but also more self-reflexively - focused on analyzing translations and translating as situated action.

Turning to SCI, which has for years remained the focus of Interpreting Studies, the first systematic research was undertaken by psycholinguists who were interested in the simultaneity of various cognitive processes. They began by investigating issues such as simultaneous listening and speaking, memory and attention allocation in SCI (e.g. Broadbent 1952; Goldman-Eisler 1967; Pinter 1969; Gerver 1974). Information-processing models that aimed to map the cognitive processes in SCI were quick to follow suit (e.g. Gerver 1976; Moser 1976; Kirchhoff 1976a; Roothaer 1978). In contrast to TS research, which focused on the translated product and its functions, the majority of investigations in SCI focused on the process, making the cognitive approach the main focus in SCI.

While the first research was instigated by psycholinguists, the most influential theory on conference interpreting was formulated by the interpreter-scholar Danica Seleskovitch, who also founded the Paris School.

One of the main tenets of Seleskovitch’s théorie du sens, also referred to as the Interpretive Theory (IT), was that interpreters did not transfer the words, but rather the “sense” of a speech in a given communicative situation. Seleskovitch underlined that this process entailed a deverbalization stage, arguing:

> Interpretation is not a direct conversion of the linguistic meaning of the source language to the target language, but a conversion from source language to sense, the intermediate link being nonverbal thought, which, once consciously grasped, can then be expressed in any language regardless of the words used in the original language. (Seleskovitch 1977: 28)

Seleskovitch (1976) also underlined that due to their previous use in numerous contexts, words were loaded with a plurality of meanings. At a time when linguistic theories were reigning in academia, these views were very provocative, if not revolutionary.

According to Seleskovitch, what could dispel this ambiguity was the usage of language in concrete communicative contexts. Especially oral communication in actual contexts allowed interpreters with proper background and situational knowledge to grasp and transfer the sense of the speakers’ utterances (ibid). Thus the importance Seleskovitch attached to contexts was very strong, perhaps too strong, because it left little room for discussion of the ambivalence and co-constructedness of meaning that often exists even in concrete situations involving oral communication.

The portrayal of conference interpreters as competent professionals who can access and render the sense frees the profession and the professional from the straitjacket of lexical equivalence and enhances their symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu...
This (re)presentation of the profession(al) was thus wholeheartedly adopted by insiders such as interpreters, professional organizations, interpreter-trainers, and a considerable share of those doing research in interpreting (see Diriker 2004 for an analysis of this discourse).

The willingness of professional interpreters as well as their associations and organizations to accept and internalize this (re-)presentation is quite understandable. However, one cannot but wonder why conference interpreting scholars have been so slow — even after the sweeping influence of anti-essentialist and dialogical theories of language — to expand the context-conscious theoretical groundwork laid by Seleskovitch so as to delve more deeply into the polyvalence of language and co-constructed meanings in concrete conference contexts.

Interestingly enough, this distancing from the more critical theories on language and meaning has remained particular to conference interpreting research between spoken languages. Most research endeavors on signed language interpreting and dialogue interpreting, on the other hand, have been deriving their theoretical framework from interaction analysis, concentrating on the relationships between the interpreter, their decisions, and the social context in which the interpreting takes place. Significant attention is devoted to how the interpreters reveal, represent, reproduce and occasionally restore power differences between individuals (micro-contexts), as well as among individuals, institutions and society at large (macro-contexts). With the exception of conference interpreting, research in nearly every mode and setting of interpreting has accumulated significant data on real-life situations in which interpreters work and survive as professionals (cf. Diriker 2004; Pöchhacker 2004a).

The attention paid to analyzing complex micro-contexts in other types of interpreting is particularly striking, given that here too one would anticipate the same challenges that scholars in conference interpreting generally complain of as hindering their research on actual interpreting situations. These include the difficulties of accessing actual interpreting data and making field observations. In fact, given the sensitivity of many contexts where such interpreting takes place (police interrogations, interviews in asylums, doctor–patient consultations, to name only a few) it is only fair to assume that accessing data and witnessing actual interpretation would be at least as difficult as in SCI. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. Without underestimating the difficulties voiced by SCI researchers, I would venture to suggest that even more than the real-life constraints complained of, it is actually the dominant paradigm(s) in SCI research that has/have discouraged a broadening of exploration in sociocultural aspects of conference interpreting, by foregrounding the cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects of the task as the more legitimate objects of study.

This, however, is not to say that the importance of viewing SCI as a form of situated activity has never been voiced by research scholars. Indeed, various scholars have underscored the importance of SCI as a social practice, generally emphasizing the importance of applying some of the key analytical tools used in TS (most notably norms) to SCI. Until recently, however, only a few scholars have combined this emphasis with
analyses of actual SCI behavior in context, and thus many aspects of real-life interpreting still await a more thorough exploration.

Previous calls for and research on exploring SCI as situated action

Bruce Anderson was probably the first to emphasize the importance of evaluating the actual presence and performance of interpreters in given socio-cultural and interrelating context(s). As early as 1976, Anderson argued that interpreting took place “in social situations — situations amenable to sociological analysis”, contending that “in any such setting the role played by the interpreter is likely to exert considerable influence on the evolution of the group structure and on the outcome of the interaction” (1976: 209).

In a paper exploring interpreter roles, Anderson (1978) pointed out discrepancies between what interpreters claimed interpreting entailed and what they did in actual interpreting situations. In a similar vein, Hella Kirchhoff drew attention to the role of context(s) in shaping the meaning of utterances, underlining the importance of interpreting as a communication system operating over a number of linguistic and extra-linguistic variables (1976a, 1976b).

The first scholar to call for more observational and descriptive research in SCI was Catherine Stenzl (1983), who stressed the importance of approaching SCI as an interlingual communicative task involving the speaker, the interpreter and the target-culture receiver in a situational context. She also suggested the need for a detailed overall model that approached SCI not as a sequence of mental operations, but as a holistic communicative action (ibid: 48).

Miriam Shlesinger was the first academic to suggest extending Toury’s notion of translational norms to interpreting (Shlesinger 1989). Indeed, quite a few later pleas for more sociologically oriented approaches in IS followed that of Shlesinger, demanding a closer look at actual behavior so as to gain a better understanding of the norms (Schjoldager 1995a, 1995b; Gile 1998; Diriker 1999; Garzone 2002; Inghilleri 2003).

Brian Harris (1990), who responded positively to Shlesinger’s initial call to integrate the concept of norms, actually referred to a number of practices that he saw as the norms in SCI. Underlining that speaking in the first person of the speaker was the norm in professional interpreting, Harris also noted that interpreters were subject to the fundamental and universal norm of the “honest spokesperson”, which obliged them to “re-express the original speaker’s ideas and the manner of expressing them as accurately as possible and without significant omissions, and not to mix them up with their own ideas and expressions” (Harris 1990: 118).

In the literature on conference interpreting, Franz Pöchhacker (1994a) was the first to actually explore SCI as situated action. Aiming mainly to test the viability of the functionalist theory developed by Hans Vermeer (1983, 1989) and Justa Holz-Mänttäri (1984) for conference interpreting, Pöchhacker investigated a real-life SCI event, evaluating the interpreters’ output as text-in-situation-and-culture. Based on the tran-
scribed recordings of a three-day conference of the International Council for Small Business, he focused on SCI as a complex act, including how interpreters dealt with forms of address and with humor.

In 1995, Anne Schjoldager followed Shlesinger in drawing attention to the significance of studying norms, tying the scholarly lack of interest in norms to the epistemological status of research that foregrounded the cognitive constraints in SCI at the expense of ignoring the underlying norms (Schjoldager 1995a). With her students, she also carried out a small study on norms and suggested that “substitution proper” seemed to be a norm characteristic of SCI (Schjoldager 1995b).

Sylvia Kalina, on the other hand, underscored the value of situational knowledge in SCI (Kohn and Kalina 1996; Kalina 1998). Stressing the need for empirical investigation of interpreting strategies, she transcribed the recordings of a conference on fraud, complementing her analysis of SCI strategies with the interpreter’s introspective comments on these strategies, thereby expanding the scope of the investigation to include perhaps the most crucial party in the SCI contexts (cf. also Monacelli 2000).

Reinstating his previous call for “priority to observational research” (Gile 1990), Daniel Gile also emphasized the need to consider the norms in interpreting and thus finally “open up the researchers’ minds to the sociological concepts and working methods previously neglected in the field of conference interpreting” (Gile 1998: 102).

One other important contribution to the analysis of actual SCI behavior came with Robin Setton’s *Simultaneous Interpretation: A Cognitive–Pragmatic Analysis*. Making use of both authentic and simulated corpora, Setton set out to develop a cognitive–pragmatic approach analyzing how meaning is cognitively processed in the context(s) of conference interpreting (Setton 1999).

My own research (Diriker 1999, 2004) aimed at distinguishing what various actors and institutions *say* about SCI and what interpreters *do* when interpreting. By comparing and contrasting the (re)presentation of the profession(al) with a real-life interpreting assignment, I suggested that the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters in actual conference settings is far more complex than we realize, and I argued that this complexity becomes most palpable in the relationship between the speaker and the interpreter who share the same subject position (i.e., the first person singular, “I”) in the delivery (Diriker 2004).

The strongest call for considering SCI in context(s) came with Michael Cronin’s (2002) appeal for a “cultural turn” in IS. Pointing out that IS had remained largely unaffected by theoretical developments elsewhere in TS, Cronin forcefully underlined the need for material, cultural, and manipulatory perspectives that could examine all forms of interpreting “as they are grounded in the economic, cultural and political aspects of people’s lives” (ibid: 391).

To some avail, recent and forthcoming publications in IS seem to be signaling a growing interest in exploring actual SCI performances as *situated action*. For instance, in a volume edited by Garzone and Viezzi (2002), a number of papers review vari-
ous theoretical and methodological aspects of approaching SCI as *situated action* (e.g. Aston and Cencini, Garzone, Riccardi, Setton). More recently, two volumes edited by Christina Schäffner (2004) and Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Zuzana Jettmarová (2006), as well as an issue of *The Translator* edited by Moira Inghilleri (2005), all devote considerable attention to the increasing awareness of the social dimension in interpreting research. One must still admit, however, that most of the optimism for a “social turn” comes from research in other modes and types of interpreting.

Better news for a “cultural turn” in CIR seems to be reflected by recent dissertations, e.g. those of Vuorikoski (2004), Monacelli (2005) and Beaton (2007) as well as some new articles (Apostolou forthcoming) that focus specifically on SCI as a social practice. Exhibiting keen interest in the interpreter in relation to sociocultural, interactional and ideological contexts, these could well be the precursors of the cultural turn that Michael Cronin called for.

Given that a number of these dissertations (e.g. Vuorikoski and Beaton) derive their corpora from speeches and their interpretations delivered at the European Parliament, the online availability of the EP’s plenary sessions appears to be facilitating and stimulating research on authentic interpreting corpora.2

Clearly there has been a recent surge of interest in exploring SCI as *situated action*. Nevertheless, Pöchhacker’s (1995) contention that Interpreting Studies remains focused on the cognitive mechanics of processing rather than on a holistic conception of the text, situation and the entire course of action throughout a professional interpreting assignment to a great extent still holds true today; the relationship between simultaneous interpreters, their delivery and the interactional/socio-cultural/ideological contexts still needs more thorough investigation and elaboration.

Some questions awaiting further exploration are the following.

- What kinds of presence and performance are deemed praiseworthy/correct/ethical in SCI? By whom? And why?
- Do interpreters’ decisions comply with and reinforce the norms “on the air”, or are there divergences between what is *said* and what is *done*?
- (How) do the presence and performance of interpreters influence the immediate and the broader social context(s)?

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2. The online availability of the speeches and their interpretations at the EP’s plenary sessions is certainly an invaluable source for researchers interested in analyzing authentic corpora of interpreting. Caution, however, is necessary, since the online availability of such recordings means they can be used by everyone, including researchers who have never seen the European Parliament in session nor talked to the interlocutors there to gain an idea of the constraints of interpreting in that particular setting. Although analysis of any data will by nature never be a mirror reflection of reality, drawing conclusions on SCI as *situated action* based on de-contextualized recordings must be taken with an even larger grain of salt.
- (How) do the presence and performance of interpreters influence the production and effect of the original speech?
- How visible are interpreters in the actual conferences? How much presence is granted to them and how much presence can or do they assume? Do different degrees of (in)visibility influence their performance and the general flow of interaction?
- Who are the users of SCI? What do they expect of interpreters? Can we really talk about general and shared expectations, or are expectations bound to subjective definitions?
- Does gender play a role in the selection and pursuit of SCI as a profession? Does it influence the presence and performance of interpreters?
- (How) do ideological and power differences manifest themselves in SCI settings? Are interpreters aware of these?
- What are the impacts of various technologies (remote interpreting, live broadcasts, webstreaming) on the presence and performance of interpreters?

Exploring these and other questions will not only broaden our horizons in Conference Interpreting Research, they will also enrich the discussion in TS, where most research efforts to date have focused on historical case studies of literary translations where the producers of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) are often geographically and chronologically far removed from one another, the production of the ST precedes that of the TT, and the two texts may come into existence under considerably different socio-cultural conditions. In SCI, on the other hand, the speaker and the interpreter are generally both at the same venue, the interpretation follows the production of the source speech with a very short time-lag, and the presence and performance of the interpreter can play an immediate role in how the source speech unfolds (cf. Diriker 2004: 109–114).

Thus research in SCI, together with that in other modes of interpreting, can provide valuable insight into how different forms of sharing time and space with the source speaker can influence the interpreting process itself, the product, and the general pattern of communication. Such exploration is bound to precipitate further discussion on conventional binaries such as source versus target speech, and original versus interpreted utterance, as well as bringing new insight into the roles of agency, power, impact of social contexts and co-construction of meaning — all of these being issues that TS scholars are actively discussing and exploring.

**Conclusion**

Looking back, we see that research in translation and conference interpreting has followed quite different theoretical and methodological directions. With the marked influence of Descriptive Translation Studies, TS has primarily focused on the translated product and the ‘cultural-semiotic conditions’ (Toury 1995: 13) under which it occurs.
Thanks largely to the fertile ground thus prepared, TS has been very receptive to the critical social theories that have swept through the social sciences. However, while prospering in context-sensitive product-oriented research, TS has been much less involved in cognitive and psycholinguistic research - areas in which conference interpreting research has developed a firm hold.

Conference interpreting research, on the other hand, has grown quite strong in these areas, but rarely approached SCI as situated action. This is due at least partly to the importance attached to cognitive processes in the scientific discourse, and to the rather unproblematising nature of the general discourse on SCI that has viewed the transfer of “original meanings” possible.

More recently, however, conference interpreting researchers have begun to exhibit a more profound interest in SCI as situated action. Indeed, after long years of estrangement, the need for more dialogue between translation and conference interpreting scholars seems more pressing than ever, especially considering technological developments such as the “on-line chat translations” now challenging the traditional boundaries between translation and interpreting. Due to such developments many scholars have recently been emphasizing the need for more inter- and intra-disciplinarity (cf. Schäffner 2004). Such cross-fertilization will not only benefit TS and IS separately, it will no doubt also strengthen the discipline of Translation and Interpreting Studies as a whole.

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CHAPTER 17

Cultural translation

A problematic concept?

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Cross-cultural translation is commonly interpreted in a growing number of disciplines dealing with translation (postcolonial translation studies, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, sociology and some more) as a mode of “translation” that puts special emphasis on a number of verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication between more or less remote cultures. These aspects include linguistic and generic hybridization, cultural opacity and defamiliarization, and rewriting techniques. It seems, however, that both the concept and its applicability are quite problematic. First, we need to clarify the researcher’s underlying presuppositions, notably regarding the supposed relations with “common” intertextual translation and with adjacent types of translation research, but above all the implicit nature of the set of procedures covered by the concept and the relations between them. Secondly, these procedures should be approached by a coherent, unified and functional research model able to take into account historical and spatial variation. A plea is made here for an interdisciplinary model based on the concept of “assumed translation” (Toury) and supported by insights from historiography and linguistic ethnography. Examples are taken from several European-language literatures.

Keywords: translation, cultural translation, translation history, hybridization, assumed translation

Introduction

A frequency search of the expression “cultural translation” on Google yields fairly impressive results, some 77,300 occurrences. The expression seems quite popular in disciplines as unrelated as marketing, cultural studies, political sciences, religious studies, anthropology, and literary studies, being mostly used as a metaphor for processes of mediation between different cultural practices. No doubt “translation” has become one of the key concepts in cultural discourse worldwide. But we cannot be sure that it is underpinned by a common theory, nor that it is being approached in comparable ways within the disciplines concerned.

1. In addition, the plural “cultural translations” appears 10,400 times, “culture translation” 15,600 times, etc. (visited October 2006). It is also notable that similar expressions in other languages are quite less wide-spread.
Such problems should be carefully dealt with in the times to come, since in scholarly discourse metaphors can only serve as provisional substitutes for concepts and models to be developed on their basis. We thus cannot avoid engaging in a dialogue not only between the different conceptualizations of cultural translation, but also between the latter and the concept of translation as understood within the more or less established discipline of Translation Studies, especially in view of the fact that “cultural translation” does not (yet) belong to the current metalanguage of the discipline (it is absent from Delisle et al. 1999, 2003, and from the works of other authors).

Yet, even if the concept is lacking in stability, even if it does not meet the categorization standards of modern translation research, we can still approach it scientifically as an observable object. We can design techniques for describing its origin and evolution, as well as the numerous forms it takes in theory and in writing, including literature.

In the following, a small part of this vast program will be tackled. Three angles will be offered. The first will look at the complex intertwining of translation forms in modern writing; the second will consider the possible role of cultural translation approaches for the understanding of these forms; and the third will develop a historiographical approach to their study.

Openings

Au bout d’une longueur de silence, Congo revint au corps de Solibo et, dans un affolement de ses rides, posa le diagnostic utilisé comme ouverture de cette parole Méié é hann, Ohibo tjoutjouté anba an hojèt pahol-la ! Ce qui, traduit, peut vouloir dire: Messieurs et dames, Solibo Magnifique est mort d’une égorgette de la parole… (Chamoiseau 1988:42)

How should one deal with “translation” in this passage chosen from a contemporary Caribbean Francophone novel? Our common understanding of translation as an intertextual substitutive operation engaging two different languages and cultures does not seem to match the complex network of relations involved:

- it coexists with its original within a “third” text, whose language it adopts;
- like its original, it is a partial text, marked by three points, and taken out of a longer “text” that is not reproduced, and whose length, genre, etc. are not given;
- it is related in specific ways to its textual environment:
  - like its source text, it takes the form of a quotation without inverted commas, thus, keeping close relationships with the co-text;
  - unlike its source text, it does not belong to the discourse of the character, but to the discourse of the narrator;
  - unlike its source text, the translation is preceded by a narrator’s (ironical) comment that gives it the status of a metalepsis, a sort of instruction for the reader as to the type of relation with the original that has to be acknowledged;
• It invites a non-linear reading process, by a non-bilingual reader, in contradistinction with the (bilingual) narrator.

Obviously, our understanding of so-called “natural” translation is unable to cover all the formal and functional characteristics mentioned. How, then, should we approach those features? And how should we relate this particular token of translation with natural translation, as well as with the vast array of other textual phenomena designated as “translations”? These phenomena can be encountered in both Chamoiseau’s novel and contemporary writings in European languages, especially in postcolonial and/or diglossic literatures, on a scale that goes from isolated forms of intratextual rephrasing, via footnotes, glossaries, paraphrases, up to the act of writing defined as “translating” cultural reality (cf. Bandia 1993).

Envisaging the use of a general banner to cover these phenomena insofar as they belong to matching perspectives is at least tempting, and many translators and scholars have indeed done so. Quoting Richard Philcox, translator of the work of Maryse Condé:

Il ne faut pas oublier que Traversée de la mangrove est déjà la traduction en français, une langue européenne, d’une culture non européenne. Le livre en anglais [i.e. Philcox’s translation] est donc la traduction d’une traduction: c’est par le biais de la langue française qu’on arrive à la communauté de Rivière au sel et en conséquence à la société guadeloupéenne. (Condé 1996: 229–230, quoted in Wilson 2000: 23)

From a scholarly viewpoint, whether the concept of “cultural” or “cross-cultural” translation is helpful in this respect is far from clear. It does not seem to fit the basic criterion of “simple categorization”, i.e. “the means by which we can determine whether an exemplar belongs to the category or not (distinguishing ‘translation’ from ‘non-translation’)” (Halverson 1999: 4).

For sure, on the one hand, the translation in Chamoiseau’s text exhibits some of the basic norms that usually come with definitions of “translation”:
• a norm of adequacy on a linguistic level, exemplified by lexical translation, as produced by a bilingual narrator;
• a norm of adequacy on a literary level, exemplified by the rendering of the generic specificity of the source text, i.e. a beginning of an oral tale.

On the other hand, however, we do not meet the norm of substitution, since the “translation” does not replace the original. On the contrary, its inability to do so is stressed. In spite of the postulate of adequacy, the outwardly ironic comment of the narrator tends to suggest that this “translation” is but one of the possible renderings of the original. Something of the original seems to remain “untranslatable”, and yet is probably essential to the understanding of the text in relation with its referents.

As a consequence, the idea of a general banner such as “cultural translation”, assignable to a single approach, is deceptive in view of the complex content of translation. Interdisciplinarity becomes a central issue.2

2. For a general outline, see Chesterman (2002) and others.
The migration of concepts

The following recent definitions of translation, in both a verbal and a non-verbal context, mirror in more than one respect the intertwining of several translation phenomena. They require some kind of interdisciplinarity:

The Caribbean is translation. From the time of the “discovery” of the Americas to current globalization, the Caribbean region has been constructed along a semiotic process of naming, interpreting and writing which is the very process of translation. […] Given this context and its metaphorical value, the concrete practice of Caribbean translation faces many problems whose investigation and occasional proposed solutions contribute to the field of Translation Studies on many levels, linguistic, literary, cultural and postcolonial. (Malena 2000:9)

So cultural studies in its new internationalist phase turned to sociology, to ethnography and to history. And likewise, translation studies turned to ethnography and history and sociology to deepen the methods of analyzing what happens to texts in the process of what might be called ‘intercultural transfer’, or translation. (Bassnett 2003:442)

Cultural translation takes place within the framework of all encounters and negotiations involving different manmade patterns and systems that add, produce and reproduce meaning and interpretation.

The noun “translation” in this sense does not simply encompass the literary and technical *translatio* (the act of transferring meaning from one specific culture-bearing language to another), but also all individual and collective negotiations and influences between different cultures (which also involves the ways of producing meaning). (NTNU 2006)

In particular, three elements are popping up:

- The semantic extension of the translation concept is variable, concerning full texts as well as larger and smaller portions of texts, texts that belong to the category “translation” and to other texts and semiotic constructs.
- These definitions have either a normative focus, which means that they are designed for researchers and/or translators in view of meeting specific standards for rendering cultural items, or a descriptive focus, which means that they aim at discovering and understanding the nature of cultural translation.
- They possess both a culture-specific basis, which means that they refer to translation produced in a given time and space situation, and a general or theoretical basis.

Two possible paths follow from the assumption that no single discipline seems able to cover all these features: translation is a partial object of study for several disciplines, or a global object of study for one discipline that is a sort of “interdiscipline” in itself. Especially in the latter case, the moves, i.e. the processes of migration of concepts (often via natural translation) taking place between disciplines are of crucial importance. No doubt, there are different types and degrees of migration. One of them will shortly be illustrated, namely the migration processed by comparisons and metaphors.
For a long time, the use of tropes was considered proof of the prescientific status of the discipline concerned (Koller 1972). Nowadays, from a cognitive viewpoint, it is generally acknowledged that tropes play a crucial role in concept design (D’hulst 1992). Similarly, the concept of cultural translation, when it takes cultural anthropology or ethnography as its vehicle, may be mapped metaphorically onto verbal translation. In such cases, “cultural” items supersede the tropes of interlingual or intertextual equivalence, for a long time held to be the core feature of the translation concept. For instance, the concept of “thick description” was used by Clifford Geertz (1973) to qualify the complex array of fine distinctions made by the ethnographer while describing his subjects. It has since been applied to translation, partly in order to disturb the prevailing vocabularies of translation studies by importing other conceptualizations and metaphorizations of translation, thus querying the assumptions underpinning Western translation theory and its contemporary avatar, translation studies. (Hermans 2003: 9)

Of course, this is not the only disciplinary option available for conceptual migration. One can easily observe similar moves taking place between Translation Studies and Cultural Studies or between Translation Studies and Comparative Literature. Yet much more research is needed to understand the paths followed by these moves. For example, Harish Trivedi (2005) observes the use Cultural Studies is making of the translation concept and its ensuing spread in postmodern and postcolonial writing. He hypothesizes that cultural translation goes back to a particular interpretation given by Homi Bhabha of a passage by Derrida deconstructing Walter Benjamin’s idea of translation as a form of “after-life” (sur-vivre):

What is nevertheless clear and indisputable in Bhabha’s formulations of what he calls cultural translation is, firstly, that he does not at all by this term mean literary translation involving two texts from two different languages and cultures, and secondly, that what he means by translation instead is the process and condition of human migrancy. […] Since Bhabha first articulated it, the distinctly postmodernist idea of cultural translation in this non-textual non-linguistic sense has found an echo in much contemporary writing, both critical and creative. (Trivedi 2005: 5)

Be that as it may, there is more at stake here. Not only is the awareness of the concept’s migration low enough to become irrelevant for its actual use in many disciplines, in addition, we need to look for answers to the “why” questions: e.g. why did translation concepts enter migration processes? Few ideas have been circulating on this subject, and quite often their epistemological bias is mingled with prospective views, notably as to the position of Translation Studies itself. To quote Theo Hermans in this respect:

No single model of investigation can capture the intensity of the local. What emerges, rather, is the prospect of a splintered discipline, a de-centred and perhaps ex-centric field of study that must learn to speak several tongues, recognizes the contingency of theory and seeks to make its own uncertainties productive. (Hermans 2006: 9)
Other disciplines may follow the other path, integrating a concept of translation into their own theorizing without referring to Translation Studies. In the meantime, we definitely lack insight not only into the history of recent interdisciplinary exchanges in the field of cultural translation, but also into its historiography and even its metahistoriography.

Towards a model for historiographical research

As we know, historical research falls apart in three layers: “history”, i.e. the sequence of facts, discourses, etc., “historiography”, i.e. the writing of history, and “metahistoriography”, i.e. the scientific reflection on epistemological and methodological aspects or problems of historiography. Such a distinction is essential in view of the questions raised above, since they cut across the levels of theory and methodology. What follows is a rough sketch of a frame for historiographical research on translation.

Historiography or history-writing is a scholarly activity that applies parameters such as scope or time/space division. The historian retrieves information from primary and secondary sources, according to selection procedures such as: the focus of the program, the expected outcomes, and the researcher’s personal preferences and competences (linguistic and disciplinary among others). The format concerns the type of presentation of the information that has been retrieved and deals more precisely with the historian’s analytical and synthetic procedures such as periodization and the structuring and analysis of data.

Before launching a practical research program, the historian is expected to reflect on the procedures, i.e. to define explicitly the objects and methods and make clear the restrictions deliberately imposed on the scope and format of the research (e.g. oral vs. written translation, languages and literatures considered, number and type of disciplines involved). In addition, the historian should make clear the metalanguage of historiography itself, the language used while designing the concepts and methods, in distinction with the language used by the practices and disciplines that constitute the formal objects of historiography. Yet, how should the objects be labeled and described? For instance, how should one approach the following terms used in order to label cultural translation:

Unterwerfung oder Befreiung des Diskurses des Anderen, Abhängigkeit, Vertrautmachen, Entfremdung… Das alles sind Begriffe, die man auf den Bereich der Übersetzung, im allgemein sprachlichen wie im kulturellen Bereich, anwenden kann. (Carbonell i Cortès 2002:221)

The same difficulty applies to the metalanguage of translation used by critics, writers and translators, such as the metalanguage of the protagonist in Eva Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation*:

3. The outline partially relies on insights gleaned from the history of linguistics (Swiggers 1990, among others; see also D’hulst 2007).
I have to translate myself. But if I’m to achieve this without becoming assimilated—that is, absorbed—by my new world, the translation has to be careful, the turns of the psyche unforced. To mouth foreign terms without incorporating their meanings is to risk becoming bowdlerized. A true translation proceeds by the motions of understanding and sympathy; it happens by slow increments, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase. (Hoffman 1998:211)

One may recall here the well-known distinction ethnographers used to make between “emic” and “etic” levels of description. The first level means the “internal” metalanguage of a cultural system, the second the “external” metalanguage of the researcher:

It proves convenient—though partially arbitrary—to describe behavior from two different viewpoints, which lead to results which shade into one another. The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system. (Pike 1971:37)

Such a distinction is helpful not only to mark boundaries during task division, but also as an instrument to study the interaction between both levels:

Specifically, for example, the emic units of a language, once discovered by emic procedures, may be listed for comparative purposes with the similar emic units from other languages so studied. The moment that this has been done, however, the emic units have changed into etic units, since they are divorced from the context of the structure of the language from which they have come, and are viewed as generalized instances of abstract stereotypes, rather than as living parts of an actual sequence of behavior events within a particular culture. (Pike 1971:41)

Adopting the principle of interaction as an analytical procedure implies accepting as objects of study all sorts of metaphorical mappings, and even misreadings, such as the ones made by many scholars of the work of Walter Benjamin (as Trivedi 2005 has stressed). They are simply there… And, on what grounds could one deny the legitimacy of literary uses of concepts such as cultural translation?

No doubt, the entire paradigm into which one may try to fit the historiography of translation is contentious in itself. It is perfectly feasible to develop a different conceptual frame from a different starting point. Further, anyone is entitled to draw attention to and criticize the connection between “Western” historiography and Translation Studies. However, from a metahistoriographical viewpoint, any other proposal lays itself open to the same type of criticism. There is no pure, unbiased viewpoint. However, all viewpoints should be made as explicit as necessary.

4. This may apply, for instance, to the tentative reconstruction by Maria Tymoczko of a number of “current presuppositions about translation”, one of them being precisely the generalizing postulate of a “Western” tradition, without considering either the distinctive properties of national traditions in Europe or North-America, or the complex and partly still unwritten history of the relations between these traditions (Tymoczko 2006).
Turning back to cultural translation, let us resume the historiographical and meta-historiographical steps that may be proposed for its study:

- Establish the scope of historical research: choice of period and place, of practices and/or disciplines, of texts and/or other media, of contexts of these practices and disciplines (personal, institutional, etc.).
- Develop tools in order to structure and analyze the historical information retrieved.
- Explore the researcher’s metalanguage as developed in contact with practices and via interdisciplinary borrowings.
- Explicate the underlying presuppositions about the history of the concept and of practices of cultural translation.

In what follows, we will reflect on our initial example, trying to show how a historiographical approach may help us understand one aspect of the interdisciplinary study of the translation concept in modern Francophone Caribbean narrative.

**Intratextual and intertextual translation: a case in point**

Most translation research characterizes translation both as a process and as a text, the latter serving also “as an ordinary message, in a regular intrasystemic act of communication, without, however, necessarily losing its distinct identity as a special kind of message, namely a translation […]” (Toury 1980: 16). Yet disciplines that have featured translation as one of their objects of study and have integrated it into their conceptual framework rarely refer to the triple articulation of translation. Such is the case of sociolinguistics, ethnography, discourse analysis, field theory, cultural studies and postcolonial studies.

Take sociolinguistics. How would a sociolinguistic approach deal with the translation example in the novel by Chamoiseau? It would probably situate partial translation on a scale of possible forms of interlingual transfer, such as loan-translation, lexical and syntactical borrowing, and lexical translation. It would also relate translation to register variation and modes of language contact like code-switching or interlanguages. However, a sociolinguistic linkage on the level of processes offers little possibility of answering questions about the narrative treatment of intratextual, partial translation within the novel, or about the relation between intratextual translation and “common” intertextual translation, such as a translation of the novel itself into another language.

Or take field theory. One may consider the category “translation” as a global carrier for a set of functions in target literatures and cultures. For instance, when studying the strategies of minority literatures in diglossic situations, such as the French Caribbean, Pascale Casanova includes “translation” among the major carriers of literary consecration:

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5. So far, it does not seem feasible to adopt a strict order of procedure, nor a clear internal demarcation.
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[...] adoption de la langue dominante, autotraduction, œuvre double et double traduction symétrique, création et promotion d’une langue nationale et/ou populaire, création d’une écriture nouvelle, symbiose des deux langues. (Casanova 1999: 352)

But what about the network of relations between all these forms? And how are they actually processed? And what about the constituents of both intratextual and intertextual translations (language forms, enunciation, compositional devices and so on)?

From a historiographical angle, the analysis is aimed at interrelated understandings of what happened, when, why and how, in terms of changes in the objects concerned:

- Which factors have weakened the borders between translation and writing? Was it dissatisfaction with a mainstream concept of translation? Was it the actual possibility for the concept of translation to become a prototype for a set of cultural and transcultural phenomena otherwise labeled by terms like migration, exile, diaspora, transposition and the like?

- How was the bridging between these practices and their corresponding disciplines carried out? Did concepts of cultural translation move from translation and writing towards theory or the other way round? Or did they rather merge?

- What has been the effect of this bridging on other concepts of interlingual and intercultural transfer? Did it contribute (when, where, for whom) to a growing conceptual diversity and the creation of new relations between translation and adjacent concepts (see D’hulst forthcoming)?

- What has been the effect on translation norms themselves?

Let us briefly glimpse the relations between the concepts of partial, intratextual, translation and of “full” intertextual translation in the contemporary Francophone Caribbean novel. As a hypothesis, one could understand the former as a metonymy for the latter, i.e. for a sort of translation that seems to be rare or unsatisfying in terms of cultural adequacy for a given group of writers and critics favoring the thesis of linguistic and cultural hybridization or métissage. The function of partial translation could well

6. Following Eve Sweetser (1990), it should be examined whether conceptual change is not induced primarily by practitioners: “In general [...] it seems clear that more abstract domains of meaning tend to derive their vocabulary from more concrete domains (rather than vice versa), and, furthermore, that in some cases there is a deep cognitive predisposition to draw from certain particular concrete domains in deriving vocabulary for a given abstract domain” (Sweetser 1990: 18, quoted in Halverson 1999: 16).

7. “Faut-il dès lors voir dans la revendication d’une traduction des œuvres caribéennes par des traducteurs caribéens, un simple réflexe ‘protectionniste’ lié à une angoisse quasi paranoïaque de la trahison? Ou, au contraire, une insolence d’intellectuels et d’hommes de lettres, décus par une pratique traductrice aux relents centripètes, niant l’altérité du texte et cherchant donc à cloisonner là où c’est précisément la volonté de décloisonnement qui domine, qui s’affirme?” (Mencé-Caster 2002: 34)
be, then, to represent a positive or a negative (ironic in the case of Chamoiseau) model of intertextual translation: “[…] la traduction est une véritable opération de créolisation, désormais une pratique nouvelle et imparable du précieux métissage culturel” (Glissant 1996:45).

Yet the understanding of translational relations in terms of a metonymic link should also account for a conceptual basis that underlies the formal differences between partial and full translation, i.e. between a mode of intratextual bridging between language variants, both French and Creole, 8 and a mode of intertextual bridging between two literatures. This basis could be the trope of translation as intercultural bridging.9

As a matter of fact, it is the supposed connection between a common basis and different translation functions and forms that may help us to understand the emergence and evolution of a more or less “free space” within the concept of translation, a space where the interlingual and intralingual, the verbal and non-verbal aspects of translation, meet and merge to a certain extent. This space could be described as a locus of experimentation, empowering a set of textual categories and literary forms as encountered frequently in diglossic and postcolonial writing (theme of translation, narrator-translator, character of the translator, etc.) with selected items from the translation concept. It is precisely this disconnection from mainstream conventions about “language” and “translation” that creates the possibility of a critical distance, enhancing the input of forms and concepts from adjacent practices and disciplines.

Conclusion

Of course, this is but a very small initial step in a vast program sketched out in the above paragraphs. But in contradistinction from an approach that advocates understanding cultural translation through a complex blending of disciplines, a historiographical approach that makes explicit its procedures and underlying presuppositions may help to clarify the emergence and changing status of the concept itself, as well as its fuzzy relations with other practices and disciplines. The concept of “assumed” translation as defined by Gideon Toury may be considered an invaluable starting point:

9. See also in this respect the conclusions arrived at by Halverson (1999:25): “For the ‘translation category’, I posit that the same cognitive model encompasses a number of concepts […]. However, we believe that the status of interlingual translation within such a system of related concepts remains central. One indication of that centrality lies in the particular relationship of interlingual translation to the underlying cognitive model. Another is the pervasive use of the ‘translation’ concept as a source domain in metaphors of understanding.”
Obviously, there may be many reasons for regarding a text as a translation. The text may be explicitly presented as one, but it may just as well exhibit certain features which, in the culture in question, have come to be associated with translations (or, more narrowly still, texts translated from a particular culture/language). Knowledge of the existence of a text in another language and culture, which a target-language text is taken to have replaced, may also serve as a trigger for adopting the assumption that a text is a translation. This last possibility is of paramount heuristic importance for cultures, or historical periods, where translations exist as concealed facts — whether it is only the presentation of a text being of a derived nature which is not customary or whether the very distinction between translations and non-translations is not culturally functional and is hence blurred. (Toury 1995:70–71)

Nothing should prevent us from giving the concept of “assumed” translation a heuristic function outside the realm of natural translation. It becomes a tool in the hands of the historian.

A historiographical perspective should mark a considerable move away from the question put in the title of this contribution, i.e. is cultural translation a problematic concept? All in all, perhaps the search for an answer is not the first priority. One may also be interested in the question itself, when looked at from a historian’s angle. In a domain where the patient reconstruction of practices and theories of past and present still has a long way to go, small answers to “when” and “why” and “by whom” questions may help reconstruct bits and pieces of a larger picture. For the time being, that seems ambitious enough to encourage further reflections. Even if cultural translation has a short life, as some would likely predict.

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CHAPTER 18

Status, origin, features*

Translation and beyond

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This essay revisits Toury’s concept of assumed translation as well as his threefold distinction between system, norm and performance. It pushes the historical relativism which is inherent in these notions to the extreme by arguing that in our theoretical models of translation (and of discourse more generally!) we need to make an absolute distinction between the status ascribed to textual materials and discursive acts (e.g. as “translations”, “originals”, or as something else), their actual textual origins (inasmuch as these can be reconstructed) and the features they show (as brought to light with the help of different possible descriptive models at various levels of analysis). This radical move simultaneously undoes the conceptual autonomy of Translation Studies as a discipline and injects multilingualism and intercultural contact straight into the heart of any study of discourse. It thus creates a comprehensive framework that accommodates traditional definitions and practices of translation but also less conventional ones, as well as a host of other, more or less related discursive phenomena, indeed inviting a study of their mutual relationships and functional interactions. By the same token, the status/origin/features scheme enables, nay even requires, the “international turn” in translation studies to happen in earnest.

Keywords: assumed translation; status/origin/features of translations; the international turn; autonomy of translation studies

System, norms, performance

Perhaps the greatest single gift of Gideon Toury to translation studies is that he has sharpened our sense of the historical variability of translation: “difference across cultures, variation within a culture and change over time” (Toury 1995: 31). He has also given us the theoretical tools to model this variability and thus to observe it more efficiently. These models have evolved over time but the concept of norms has never stopped being central to them. In much of my own research I have made ample use of

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Toury’s norm concept and, more specifically, of the distinction between the three levels of translational relationships that it entails:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of system: theoretical possibilities (“can be”)</th>
<th>For each translation problem or source text, it is possible to envisage a whole range of possible or theoretical solutions or target texts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of norms: culture-bound constraints (“should be”)</td>
<td>On the intermediate level of the norms, some of these possible relationships will be recommended or even required as being the only ones that can generate “genuine” translations, whereas others will be dismissed or even simply ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of performance: empirical discursive practice (“is”)</td>
<td>We can then observe which relationships have actually materialized in a given cultural setting. By definition, these empirical relationships constitute a subset of the possible relationships; their degree of frequency in a given cultural situation is a crucial indication that certain norms have been at work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are certain Chomskyan and systemic overtones in the terms “performance” and “system” (incidentally, the latter is sometimes referred to as the “competence” level), but these associations are immaterial to the logical substance of the argument. As to the norms concept, we need a broad and flexible understanding of it, i.e. one that enables it to cover also what others might prefer to call “ideology”; one that allows for various degrees of stringency, explicitness and institutionalization; one that can account for conflicting norms and for clashes of loyalties; one that excludes neither the effect of individual agency nor the possibility of universals of translation; and so on. What remains constant throughout is the fundamental insight that translation always involves choices (or, in Jiří Levy’s terms, “decision processes”) and that an adequate understanding of translation therefore requires both a good grasp of the entire paradigm of possible options (including those which were not chosen for whatever reason) and insight into the factors (including norms) that guided or influenced the translators in their choices.¹

The concept of norms gives Toury’s approach an extremely open and relativistic character. Rather than impose a predefined notion, he famously defined² translation — at least for his descriptive purposes — as “any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds” (Toury 1985: 20). The target culture decides, and for reasons that are its own, what translation is and what it can be expected to do. A priori definitions are thus replaced by cultural self-definitions. That is why descriptive, empirical research is needed above all else,

¹. The same logic can of course be applied to the preliminary choice of whether some form of translation will occur at all, and which discourses are eligible for translation, and so on (cf. Toury’s preliminary norms). Wherever there are alternatives, we as scholars need to be aware of them and theorize them, in order to better understand the choices really made in culture.

². To use Theo Hermans’ apt phrase, it might be more correct to say that Toury “undefined” translation in the said manner (Hermans 1999: 46).
starting from texts that are claimed to be and/or have been perceived as translations, and involving an effort to understand these “assumed translations” in their contemporary cultural context. There is thus a strong argument that the much hyped-up “cultural turn” of the 1990s had really started in the 1970s and 1980s in the work of descriptively oriented pioneers such as Toury.

**Status, origins, features**

In this contribution I would like to revisit the system level in the above tripartite model of translational relationships and link it to Toury’s concept of “assumed translation”. I do not intend to review the various uses, comments and criticisms that the latter concept has given rise to, nor to discuss its evolution within Toury’s own thinking. My aim is to push the historical relativism that is inherent in it the last inch further, to give it a more visibly absolute and programmatic character.

To this end I will make a basic claim that is of an almost embarrassing simplicity. It holds that in our theoretical models of discourse (“translated” or not) scholars have to make a radical analytical distinction between three dimensions of discursive reality: the **status** of discursive phenomena (what they are claimed or believed to be in a given cultural community), their **origin** (the real history of their genesis, as revealed by a diachronically oriented reconstruction) and their **features** (as revealed by a synchronic analysis, possibly involving comparisons). In given historical situations these three dimensions tend to be collapsed into fixed articulations defining which status may “legitimately” be attributed to phenomena on the basis of their origins and/or their textual features. But in different cultural contexts, “status”, “origin” and “features” can be made to interlock in quite different ways so that, if our descriptive model wants to reach any level of generality at all, it is crucial to construe these three levels as forming discrete continua.

Reformulated in terms of Toury’s tripartite model, our basic claim can run as follows: theoretically speaking (at our **system** level), the scholar should make no assumptions in advance about the way in which the three levels correlate. How links are formed between them in empirically observed reality (**performance**-level) and how these interconnections are likely to reflect certain cultural constraints (level of **norms**) is a matter of crucial importance to be investigated in empirical-historical research. In other words, the disjunction of status, origin and features should occur first of all in the scholar’s mind at the level of translational virtuality, breaking down the question of “possible relations” in Toury’s model into three separate sets of questions. This enables us to reformulate the table as follows:

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3. For the sake of convenience I shall use the abbreviation T1 (‘text 1’) and T2 (‘text 2’) to refer to discursive phenomena, but keeping an absolutely open mind as to what a ‘text’ can be and not considering the number two (T1, T2) as being restrictive.
For each translation problem or source text, it is possible to envisage a whole range of possible or theoretical solutions or translations:

- **Status:** T1 and T2 may or may not be regarded, presented, named... as "translations".
- **Origin:** T1 and T2 may or may not present certain genetic relationships of dependency.
- **Features:** T1 and T2 may be analyzed and compared in many ways and be shown to share certain features or to show certain differences.

Certain clusters of status-related claims, genetic relationships and features may harden into conventional patterns* that the members of a culture will have recourse to as the most adequate or even the only thinkable response to a certain communicative situation.

Such conventionalized forms are likely to be found with a significantly higher frequency in actual reality within the given social group.

* Such patterns do not have strict borderlines; it appears more helpful to see them as a having a prototypical organization. For the sake of simplicity this is a point we are not enlarging on here (but see Delabastita 2003).

That we, as translation scholars, need to be willing to dissociate status, origins and features is most evidently illustrated by the case of pseudotranslations, which Gideon Toury has done more than anybody else to put on the discipline's research agenda. In terms of their status, pseudotranslations are presented and often perceived as translations, but in genetic terms they are at least for the greatest part original texts, while certain features may or may not be present in them to simulate the foreignness of the alleged original as well as a certain conventional type of translation. Clearly only a very minor explicitation or extrapolation is needed to derive the status/origin/features model from the kind of thinking that inspired Gideon Toury to take pseudotranslations on board in the scholarly study of translation, despite them not being "translations" stricto sensu. We shall now examine each of the three levels in greater detail.

**Status**

Like other phenomena in the world, texts and discursive acts are subject to categorization. Communicative events will be seen as belonging to a certain conventional type (novel, prayer, sitcom, ironical statement, shopping list, joke, insult). Depending on this type, more or less specific rules or conventions for their production, use and understanding will be triggered and certain quite specific expectations will be created. The use of words or other metalingual signals to categorize a text as a "translation" is therefore a very significant semiotic act. Let us now consider various aspects of this significance.

1. Whatever their origin and their features, texts may be labeled as "translations" or
not. The absence of such a status label may be as relevant as its presence. When it is used, the label may be accompanied by complementary information that specifies which type of translation we are allegedly dealing with and which type of relationship (e.g. types of “equivalence”) is supposed to obtain between source text and target text (e.g. qualifications such as “free”, “literal”, “word for word”, “creative”, “revised”, and so on).

2. Such claims may draw authority from the fact that they were made by someone with relevant professional training or with an academic background that lends weight to their judgment. Some claims have a more institutional and even legally binding character, such as “self-translation”, “authorized translation” or “certified translation”. As such, status-related claims may be accompanied and institutionally validated by contracts, stamps, signatures and the like. All of this confirms that status claims about texts belonging to certain categories are made by various people and institutions (e.g. text producers but also text distributors and text receivers) and that they may have different degrees of authority and impact. As Sandra Halverson (2004: 347) has usefully reminded us, “not every person in the culture is in a position to make identifying claims about translations that will be immediately or non-controversially accepted by the other members of that culture.”

3. Claims can of course be contested and they can evolve over time. Consider the case of a pseudotranslation being unmasked (the “translation” becomes an “original” overnight, more precisely an instance of literary mystification) or the inverse situation of interlingual plagiarism being exposed (what was formerly seen as an “original” suddenly becomes a “translation”, more precisely an undeclared and fraudulent one).

4. The exact meaning of all these terms and qualifications related to “translation” depends very much on their mutual relationships. The words in question belong to what semanticists might call the same lexical field; they show mutual relations of similarity and overlap but also of difference. Hence the need to study the entire semantic field of words referring to forms of translation as well as to other forms of text processing. In English this semantic field would include words such as crib, adaptation, paraphrase, version, rewording, rendering, transliteration, bilingual edition, interpretation, dubbing, subtitling, retexting, localization, pastiche, quotation, and edition.

5. In our terminological study of claims made about texts and translations, we have to be sensitive to the often implicit metaphorical load that words can carry. Following Lakoff and Johnson’s work on the “metaphors we live by”, we should try and be aware of conceptualizations (ways of thinking and structuring a category) that may be encapsulated in a certain terminology. This implies that we have to be alert to the conceptual residue left behind by the history of words. It is along such lines, for instance, that several translation critics have commented on the etymology and the implied metaphor of English translation (from the Latin transferre, “to carry something across”) and on the term’s alleged latent imperialist connotations.

This is no doubt an intriguing research avenue but some caution is in order too. It may be tempting for the sake of rhetorical effect or scholarly argument (or in the interest of some ideological agenda) to reduce a word to its etymon and to allow diachrony
to overrule synchrony. But this logic entails the risk of a relapse into naïve pre-Saussurean semantic thinking that should have no place in a rationally based scholarly discipline today. In other words, a distinction must be made between ancient word origins that still somehow shape conceptualizations today, and those that have progressively been erased or redefined by historical evolution beyond recognition and cognitive relevance today. It is wise to remember that in the large majority of cases etymologies are of interest only to lexicographers and language historians (in the scholarly sphere) and to poets and language mystics (outside the scholarly sphere), while no longer having any demonstrable impact on how the majority of contemporary ordinary language users think and name the world.4

6. Our study of terms such as “translation” and its lexical neighbors and cognates should also take note of the fact that they can be subject to further semantic changes and extensions taking place in the present. Words not only result from a long history, perhaps with metaphorical or other semantic processes from the past still being dormant or active in the present, but they continue to be part of history today. Thus, we currently seem to be witnessing a process whereby the term “translation” is used more and more widely in a range of metaphorical senses. For example, a panel at a recently held congress in Philadelphia (Northeast Modern Language Association, March 2006) “aim[ed] to explore how the act of translation can be used as a metaphor for the process of negotiating differences when crossing borders (physical, psychic, local, global) which results in identity construction and social change” and a conference held at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul in April 2007 has invited the participation of scholars from other disciplines (philosophy, the natural sciences, the social sciences, computer science, the humanities and the arts) who are working with or on concepts or metaphors of translation. Similarly, the description of women, emigrants or members of postcolonial cultures as “translated subjects” has become something of an established critical trope, stretching the translation concept to just about any kind of life experience characterized by difference, change, unstable identities or secondariness.

7. In this paper English is both the language of communication and the language of exemplification. But it goes without saying that everything we have said about names and the status claims that they make or imply (terms and their further qualifications, semantic fields, etymology, further extensions) applies and should be applied to other languages as well. The semantic field of words for what English calls “translation” may well be structured in a very different manner in other languages and cultures, involving different etymologies and different conceptualizations. We have heard several calls lately for an “international turn” in translation studies, urging the discipline to shed its Eurocentric or Western bias and to adopt a truly global character. As has recently been argued by Martha P.Y. Cheung (2005) and by Maria Tymoczko (2006), such an effort might find an

4. Degrees of relevance in this domain are not necessarily easy to make, of course. The best way to get a grip on the diachronics of conceptualization and categorization is to turn to historical semantics.
excellent starting point in the argument that the conceptualizations of “language” and “translation” in other (including non-Western) languages and cultures need to be taken as seriously as those in English, French or German.

8. Categorization depends not only on metatextual indications such as “translation”. Texts or discursive acts can define and advertise their status in other, less explicit ways as well. These other strategies may roughly be subsumed under two headings: editorial and paratextual ones (on the one hand) and textual ones proper (on the other).

By editorial and paratextual features we mean aspects of written communication such as lay-out, bilingual presentation, colophon, dustcover, prefaces, introductions and annotations, all of which can help to convey the message “this is a translation” and even “this is a translation of a specific type”. The smallest details of typographical and visual rhetoric deserve our attention here. For example, it is worth looking into how often the name of the translator appears, and where, and with which degree of visual prominence as compared to the name of the author of the original. Analogous examples could be found for oral translation too (e.g. the protocols regulating the presence and intervention of interpreters).

The intrinsic features of the text itself too can serve to define or confirm the status of the text. Translated texts can try to achieve “acceptability” (Toury) or “fluency” (Venuti) through a “domesticating” strategy that makes them look like original writing. Or they can incorporate opaque cultural references, unusual syntax, stylistic variation, archaisms and so on, in order to showcase the irreducible otherness of the original text and thus their own status as translated discourse. Even without explicit metalingual signals, texts can thus try to conceal their foreign origin or throw it into relief.

Origins

Things are not always what they seem or pretend to be. Hence the need to take a closer look at the objects on which certain status claims are projected. This can happen by trying to reconstruct as closely as possible the true origins of discourse. The standard Western model of translation posits a kind of exclusive, binary and unidirectional relationship between source text and target text. However, this model is an idealized abstraction that rarely corresponds to the rather messier realities of cross-language communication.

1. Thus, translations can refer back to a composite of source texts rather than to a single, well defined original. Literary translators, for example, often have a wide selection of source-text editions, critical commentaries and reference tools on their desk, and that is not even counting the proliferation of texts brought to the contemporary translator’s computer screen by digital technology, which potentially transforms the “source text” into a endlessly expanding network of hyperlinked documents.

2. That translation can be indirect may of course also be illustrated by common practices such as relay interpreting or the use of intermediate translations (either in the target language or in a “third” language). Like the previous point, this is an important aspect of what could be called translational intertextuality. But translational intertextual-
ity can also function in a negative manner, namely when translations display avoidance strategies by not using certain solutions that in every other respect would have seemed to be the logical choice, except that the solution in question has been adopted and observed in earlier translations and that having recourse to it might create suspicions of undue dependence or even plagiarism. Freely adapting the American literary critic Harold Bloom’s phrase, we could call this the translator’s “anxiety of influence”. Operating in absentia by definition, this phenomenon is much harder to discern and pin down than the cases where patterns of influence are positively on textual record and enable the translation scholar to establish a more or less reliable stemma or genealogy of texts.

3. To the examples already listed we could add the practice of team translation, the vetting and partial rewriting of translations by censors, the intervention of style editors and the use of computer technology linking the translator to programmers and earlier translators (Automatic Language Processing, data-bases, electronic translation memories, etc.). The creative process and textual genesis of translation is thus likely to involve several communicative partners, who may be connected to each other in a wide range of possible configurations. Importantly, in some of these configurations translation is likely to become interactive, involving dialogical role-switching and the swapping of source and target poles. This happens routinely in community interpreting, for example, but also in certain forms of written translation. In the “simultaneous” drafting of multilingual documents, the formulation of the “translation” of a passage often has a retroactive feedback effect on the “original”, causing the latter to be rewritten to reflect changes made in the “derived” version.

4. The above list of examples, incomplete and insufficiently theorized as it is, may suffice to show that the status claims that accompany discourse very often give a simplified and perhaps even completely wrong idea of its real genesis.

The genesis of texts can be studied from a variety of angles, including Interpreting Studies (which is excellent at describing the dynamic pragmatics of oral translation), process-oriented Translation Studies (which focuses on the mental operations of translating), genetic criticism in Literary Studies (which offers potentially relevant expertise in the study of creative processes) and the more traditional but still indispensable philological branches of source criticism and textual criticism (which can be of great help for written forms of translation when different versions and textual variants are available). All of these can provide us with useful research techniques to model the range of text-genetic possibilities and to guide us with diachronic reconstructions of where specific translations really come from.

But there is no denying that, from a certain point onwards, questions of text genesis are likely to resist the scholar’s best efforts. It is well known that what goes on inside the minds of people has a way of eluding observation (the notorious “black box” problem) and that for psychological, commercial, institutional or other reasons translators and interpreters tend to be reluctant to let researchers look over their shoulders and monitor their work procedures. For older texts, and often even for more recent ones, the basic documentation (drafts, working notes, manuscripts, etc.) is simply not available.
Features

Regardless of its origin and regardless of any claims that are made or could reasonably be made about its status, any text or discursive act (and any part or aspect of it) is open to various kinds of analyses aimed at bringing out its features.

When it comes to describing a translation’s features, the binary model of the comparison of “original” and “translation” (often but not necessarily accompanied by an evaluative conclusion) has traditionally been a standard format in Translation Studies. But it is by no means the only possible one. For instance, like any other text, translations or parts of them can be analyzed individually, i.e. without reference to their originals or to any other texts. Or, alternatively, they can be viewed as part of large series or corpora of texts. The analysis can thus range from individual words or aspects of the text to entire texts and, beyond them, to large groups of texts, and at any of these possible levels comparisons involving one of several parameters can be built into the analysis.

Whatever the extent of the corpus and the comparative reach of the investigation, the outcome of the analysis will always be determined by the descriptive categories used. What follows is a list of analytical categories that could be included in a descriptive grid:

- connotation
- deixis and other pragmatic features
- forms and degrees of text cohesion
- genre signals
- ideology
- imagery
- legibility
- lexical density and variation
- logical and argumentative structures
- narrative technique
- orality versus literacy
- use of language varieties and presence of foreign languages
- punctuation
- referential (denotative) meaning
- register and linguistic level
- rhetorical and stylistic figures
- sentence length and grammatical complexity
- sociocultural and intertextual references
- sound effects and prosody
- text length
- use of media

This incomplete, fairly heterogeneous and randomly (alphabetically!) ordered list brings together descriptive categories from different research traditions and disciplines.
It goes without saying that the application of each is likely to produce different sets of findings: the way in which a text may use imagery is quite independent from features such as punctuation or text length. In other cases, interesting correlations between features are more likely to come to the surface, such as between legibility and text cohesion.

Importantly, these various categories also show various degrees of methodological feasibility. Some descriptive categories can be applied with a high degree of objectivity and precision. For example, average sentence length in originals and translations can be calculated and compared with mathematical precision. Likewise, the legibility (understood as the average degree of difficulty) of texts lends itself to fairly accurate measurements and to replicable empirical tests. The denotative meaning of words and sentences too can very often be discussed in a fairly straightforward manner: French *neuf* and *onze* are indisputably perfect referential equivalents for English *nine* and *eleven* respectively, whereas *deux* and *trois* are not. But, of course, when things like allusion, connotation or ideological subtexts come into play, neutral descriptions and comparisons may become more difficult if not impossible to achieve. Depending on where you stand in terms of time, place and politics, “9/11” does not signify the same thing to everyone.

If not with all, then definitely with several of the above-mentioned features, descriptive objectivity becomes little more than a pious wish. Even when wearing our scholar’s cap, we cannot simply stop our knowledge, experience, norms, ideology, sensitivities, expectations — all the things that make us into subjects and social beings — from influencing our interpretations of discursive realities. This factor will come to the fore even more and in a more problematic manner when we consider the fundamental fact that in texts and discursive acts dazzlingly complex combinations of the above features work together in expressing a certain intention, generating a certain meaning and/or producing a certain impact on readers (listeners, viewers). These are indeed three further descriptive categories with respect to which texts and discursive acts (e.g. “originals” and “translations”) may be investigated and that we could add to the list:

- intention
- meaning
- effect

Issues of intention, meaning or effect (to which one might want to add “function”) are undoubtedly as relevant as they are fascinating, but their stunning complexity combines with the subjective and intersubjective nature of interpretation to make it impossible to aim realistically for objective answers. As scholars in the humanities, we have to live with the challenge that the most interesting questions are often also the

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5. The trust that most of us—including translation scholars of the postmodern persuasion—seem to be putting in air travel or in modern medicine probably rests on a shared belief that the undecidability of meaning is less than radical at least in certain semantic domains.
most difficult ones to answer. In this respect, structuralism, text-linguistics, Descrip-
tive Translation Studies and other functionalist and empirical research traditions have
often been over-optimistic regarding the scope of rational science in matters of text an-
alysis. Christiane Nord (1991:17), for example, believes it is possible to “control” the re-
ception of a text “by a strict model of analysis which covers all the relevant text features
and elements”. But, having surveyed various attempts (many of them less ambitious
than Nord’s) to develop descriptive methodologies in Descriptive Translation Studies
(including Toury, Van Leuven–Zwart, Lambert and Van Gorp, Frank and others), Theo
Hermans (1999:71) concludes that
the models are most instructive where they most obviously fail. The failures have taught
us the utopia of neutral description, of fixing stable units for comparison, of neat div-
isions, of excluding interpretation, of studying translation in a vacuum.

I find it hard to disagree with Hermans’ insightful analysis and sobering conclusion.
But then, one wonders what the alternative might be. Postmodern approaches have
tended to replace the trust in methodology and the empirical orientation by the twin
principles of undecidability and self-reference respectively, but it remains to be seen if
this constitutes a step forward in our understanding of cultural realities. The position
we should aim for, I think, sits somewhere in the middle, however uncomfortably. It is a
position of strict rationality, and by that I mean a rationality whose very strictness com-
pels it to recognize its own limits and which should therefore contain a great deal of ag-
nosticism and modesty.

Some further implications

My intention here has not been to discuss how translation works in the real world but
to suggest a conceptual tool able to make such a discussion more effective. That tool
makes a radical analytical distinction between (a) the claimed or perceived status of
texts, (b) their origins and (c) their features as viewed from a range of possible descrip-
tive angles. This distinction enables us to envisage all kinds of possible relationships be-
tween various kinds of “translation” and various kinds of “non-translation”. Having a
three-dimensional view of the full range of virtual possibilities, we should be in a better
position to look at discursive realities and the normative constraints behind them and
to appreciate fully the choices made by social agents as such, i.e. as choices made con-
sciously or unconsciously from a wider series of options, for certain reasons and with
certain effects.

The status/origin/features scheme is particularly open and inclusive. It accommo-
dates the classic Western prototype of translation that sets up a binary relationship of
unidirectional dependence and alleged equivalence between source text and target text,
performed by individual human translators and labeled “translation”, etc. But its ab-
solute flexibility also allows it to encompass all other possible situations. The scheme
covers cases such as pseudotranslation, where the label “translation” is used for a text regardless of the reality of its genesis (origin) and despite the absence of cross-language similarities with an existing other text (features).

Our scheme also covers the many opposite cases where the label “translation” is not used even though it could seem justified on the basis of both demonstrable genetic parentage (origin) and manifest textual similarity with other existing texts (features). Such instances of “translation” passing for original discourse are very frequent and they occur in a wide range of contexts, reflecting a variety of motives. The practice of undeclared “translation” may be inspired by rhetorical or commercial considerations (e.g. advertisements in multilingual marketing campaigns often hide their imported origin and want to speak to the potential buyers “directly” in their language) or by diplomatic or legal reasons (e.g. international treaties in various languages are presented as equivalent parallel texts, because presenting one as the mother copy and the others as derived translations would create a hierarchy of legal authorities and thus become a source of contestation). Undeclared translations may also occur out of a concern with communicative conciseness and journalistic efficiency (as with the hidden use of translated material in news bulletins), or out of sheer laziness or dishonesty (as in the case of cross-language plagiarism).

José Lambert (2006: 141–142) has repeatedly and rightly stressed that questions of translation should not be restricted to entire texts or even to long segments of texts. If we heed this advice and attend to all discursive phenomena below the text level, claims or assumptions about the status of texts turn out to be even less reliable. Indeed, “translations” can contain “untranslated” material (e.g. loan words), “original” discourse can contain “translated” sequences (e.g. quotations), free renderings presented or known as “adaptations” can contain phrases that show the exact genetic and textual features of “faithful” translation, and so on.

But the status / origin / features model even has room for the study of phenomena where the label “translation” is not used and where genetic relationships between texts appear to be missing. We are then focusing on the “features” of texts and discourses in a kind of study that is coextensive with what traditional academic taxonomies would call Comparative Literature, Contrastive Linguistics, Cultural Studies, etc. An example would be the study of so-called parallel and multilingual corpora (a type of study that takes us beyond the level of individual texts). In the case of multilingual corpora, the series of texts in different languages that are compared never pretend to be “translations” of each other (status) and their production has followed entirely autonomous genetic lines (origin). Yet their comparative study may reveal interlingual and intercultural patterns that are directly relevant to the study of “translation”, highlighting features that may or may not occur between texts that are “translations” in the genetic sense. Or, one could, under the wide umbrella of the model, wish to compare a corpus of French-into-English renderings made by French-speaking translation students with a corpus of English original compositions written by French learners of English. Or one could describe the textual characteristics of postcolonial writing in terms of the
kinds of linguistic and cultural interference and transfer operations that are found in “real” translation, and so on.

Our open model of translation enables scholars to study all these and many more phenomena, both at the level of theoretical possibilities and as discursive realities. Most crucially of all, we can do so without having to lose precious research time over ontological definitions (“is this a translation”) or territorial disputes (“does this problem come under the remit of Translation Studies?”).

Also, we can safely stop wondering at certain “paradoxes” that we may encounter along the way, such as the perceived paradox of the incompatibility of “translation” and “equivalence”. Cases such as the Septuagint, the Book of Mormon or international treaties could indeed be argued to show that perfectly equivalent translations stop being translations and become fully authoritative originals existing side by side with other versions: “Equivalence means the ultimate limit, the vanishing point and thus the end of translation, also the death of the translator. Equivalence resolves translation” (Hermans 2004: 11; my translation).6 This sounds enigmatic and profound but, upon reflection, such cases simply emphasize the need for the systematic distinction between status, origin and features we have been advocating here. Once this distinction is accepted, the paradox melts away before our eyes (and it becomes easy to square it with the case of self-translation where it is precisely the emphatic presence of the author/translator — not their annihilation — that underlies the claim to equivalence). What remains lends itself to straightforward description and invites systematic further research: certain texts are produced in a certain manner (features) and making certain uses of existing materials (origin), and a certain identity and degree of autonomy, importance, etc. are ascribed to them (status), and all of that is done by people and institutions in a given cultural context and social setting.

This scheme’s greatest merit may be that it encourages us to take the international turn. It invites us to study linguistic, literary, discursive, cultural repertoires across the world (features) and makes us wonder what textual and intertextual categories (status) exist in non-English and non-Western cultures, and what kind of discursive practices they correspond with (in terms of origins and features). A frame is created for their comparison and for the study of their mutual interactions.

These may be considered benefits, but they do not come without what the taxonomically minded will regard as a heavy cost. The scheme’s radically open and relativistic view of translation ends up questioning the existence of Translation Studies as an autonomous discipline: “translation” becomes part of a general, interlingually based and intertextually inspired model of discourse, all of which it informs rather than simply disappearing into it. If Linguistics, Literary Studies and Discourse Studies ought to give up their customary monolingualism, Translation Studies ought to stop clinging to the word “translation” and start looking beyond the limits created by its

6. The original reads: “Equivalentie betekent de uiterste grens, het verdwijnpunt en daarmee het einde van het vertalen, tevens de dood van de vertaler. Equivalentie lost vertaling op”.

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own ideal definitions. All could come together in the broad church of a model of discourse which is much larger than Translation Studies but not without making cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contact and communication into one of its central parameters. This is another way in which we can fruitfully try to reach beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Some may want to venture “beyond descriptive translation studies” by strengthening the explanatory dimension. Others are moving “beyond descriptive translation studies” in order to promote a more activist line of approach. Perhaps it is also the “translation” bit in the phrase that we have to be ready to see beyond.

References


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Les études descriptives de la traduction, dont Gideon Toury est l’un des principaux instigateurs, ont non seulement révolutionné la traductologie, elles ont également permis de poser la question des facteurs d’fluence sociale et politique sur la traduction sur la société au travers notamment des « normes préliminaires ». Ces dernières trouvent en amont des normes traductives celles qui président aux choix des éditeurs qui sont eux-mêmes déterminés par les normes objectives du droit positif, autrement dit du droit d’auteur et de sa logique économique. Or, comment savoir que, malgré son statut secondaire et périphérique, la traduction participe également à la formation du discours sur l’autorialité ? Dans ce dessein, il est nécessaire de se mettre à l’écoute des auteurs les plus influents et d’examiner leur engagement pour la promotion de leur activité au rang de métier à travers un échantillon archéologique prélevé au 19ème siècle : Lamartine et la critique socialiste. Échantillon qui servira en fin de compte à souligner la nécessité d’intégrer une conception multidimensionnelle du polysystème textuel où l’éthique le disputerait au droit.

Mots-clés : normes préliminaires, droit d’auteur, traduction, archéologie, éthique

1. Il est nécessaire de distinguer le « droit de traduction » du « droit de la traduction ». Le premier relève surtout d’une approche juridique. En effet, ce droit concerne celui, exclusif, que possèdent les auteurs sur la création de toute œuvre dérivée de leur œuvre originale et donc sur la traduction. Le droit de traduction est une prérogative donnée à l’auteur d’une œuvre originale à traduire, un droit de bénéfice pécuniaire sur la traduction qu’en fera non pas l’auteur lui-même, mais le traducteur qu’il aura autorisé. Le second, en revanche, ressort plutôt de la traductologie dans la mesure où celle-ci réfléchit sur la possibilité d’envisager le rapport interdisciplinaire du droit et de la pensée traductive. Ces derniers, conçus comme champs de réflexion théorique, ne relèvent ni de la stricte réglementation légale ou jurisprudentielle ni de la pratique professionnelle, mais d’une pensée théorisante et expérimentale qui souhaite jeter les grands traits d’une traduction de droit, d’un droit de traduire qui pousserait la revendication aux limites d’une justice de la traduction au-delà de l’éthique professionnelle : pour un droit à la traduction comme éthique de l’être ensemble, pour un droit de la traduction comme expression libre, symbole même de liberté.
Introduction : partir de la théorie descriptive

Il est des événements qui renversent le cours des choses dont l’effet est semblable aux révolutions. En traductologie, le « tournant culturel » fut l’un d’eux. Dans ce mouvement, on peut compter plusieurs courants importants. Pour l’école allemande de la théorie du skopos ainsi que pour les études descriptives de la traduction (EDT), c’est leur fonctionnalisme qui a surtout contribué à marquer la radicalité du changement par rapport à tout ce qui les a précédés. Désormais, on n’évalue plus les traductions en les comparant au texte original, mais bien plutôt par rapport à la fonction qu’ils remplissent dans le contexte de la culture ou du système d’arrivée. Or, à l’intérieur même de ce nouveau paradigme fonctionnaliste, les EDT se sont également distinguées par la renonciation à toute considération prescriptive dans l’étude de la traduction en consacrant une approche strictement descriptive. Ce modèle ne cherche plus à propposer une méthode de traduction, mais à expliquer en fonction de quels critères normatifs du système textuel d’arrivée (« target oriented-approach ») les traducteurs ont fait leurs choix.

Gideon Toury n’a pas seulement participé à ce dernier bouleversement, son œuvre en a été le signal : « Since Toury’s 1980 book, the focus of translation studies shifted from theory to descriptive work » (Gentzler 2001: 131). Si sa contribution a eu l’effet d’une révolution en traductologie, la langue qui reflète le mieux la proximité entre le terme qui exprime cet effet et notre objet d’étude est la langue turque. En effet, il est remarquable de noter au passage que dans cette dernière, le mot le plus usuel pour « traduction » est « çeviri », qui signifie littéralement tourner sur soi, et que le mot « devir » est l’un de ses équivalents qui désigne lui-même le sens de « révolution ». À notre sens, envisager la recherche traductologique à décrire le phénomène social de la traduction après l’avoir uniquement conçu comme une formule, un devoir à prescrire relève sans aucun doute d’un tournant important de la discipline. (Snell-Hornby 2006)

De fait, parmi les éléments de cette théorie, il en est un particulièrement pertinent dans le « tournant culturel » : les normes. Ces dernières constituent en effet le lieu par excellence du caractère social de l’acte traductif, puisqu’il ne saurait s’effectuer dans le vide, mais bien plutôt dans le cadre d’un système de normes dictées par les cadres historico-culturels d’une société donnée.

Sociologists and social psychologists have long regarded norms as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community — as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate — into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations… (Toury 1995:54–55)

La traduction est désormais comprise comme un comportement prioritairement social dont les normes d’exécution sont acquises par les individus durant leur socialisation. Ces normes sont d’au moins trois sortes et interviennent à différents niveaux :

2. Il est intéressant de signaler également que la forme « deveran » est la transposition fidèle du mot arabe « dawaran » signifiant rotation.
les « normes préliminaires » qui concernent les facteurs gouvernant le choix des œuvres à traduire ainsi que la stratégie globale de traduction dans un ensemble de systèmes (politiques traductives) ; les « normes initiales » qui organisent les choix individuels du traducteur de se conformer soit à une approche sourcière, soit cibliste ; et les « normes opérationnelles » (matricielles et textuelles) qui orientent les décisions traductives durant le processus de transfert lui-même.

L’étude du processus de « decision making » qui concerne surtout les opérations les moins directement influencées par le social, tout en étant les plus directement traductives, représente l’essentiel des travaux descriptivistes. De fait, au cœur même de la discipline traductologique, les tendances plus conservatrices nous laissent entendre que plus on est proche de l’étude des normes qui gouvernent les choix au niveau microstructurale (Wills 1996) des textes, plus la pertinence au traductif est grande. En revanche, la pertinence sociale (voire politique) des études sur la traduction — tout en étant certes reconnue aujourd’hui — ne joue pas du même engouement, quoi qu’en nette progression depuis le « tournant postcolonial » de la traductologie. La traduction n’est pas seulement un acte social, il s’agit également d’un enjeu politique : Bassnett et Trewedi (1999), entre autres, nous apprennent qu’il n’est pas innocent et qu’il appelle par conséquent son historicisation.

C’est en ce sens que les normes préliminaires nous paraissent constituer le cadre le plus propice à notre étude. En effet, quand bien même les choix traductifs seraient socialement déterminés, il reste que ceux relevant de la sélection des textes à traduire sont premiers par rapport à ceux qui n’interviennent que plus tard dans le processus, autrement dit durant l’opération traductive à proprement parler. Le choix qui a lieu au début de la chaîne des choix, de plus en plus spécifiques, est décisif puisqu’il les oriente tous de manière déterminante du seul fait qu’il est premier. Or que sait-on des normes qui président aux choix éditoriaux des traductions ? Qu’ils sont pour la plupart du seul ressort des maisons d’édition (et non pas des traducteurs), qui elles-mêmes fonctionnent en conformité aux contraintes culturelles ambiantes ainsi qu’à celles du marché ? On peut certes en convenir. Mais décrire les normes préliminaires d’une société, au travers de sa politique traductive, et en déduire que les traducteurs agissent en conséquence ne nous apprend rien sur les sources ou les raisons d’exister de ces normes, voire de leur légitimité ou encore de leur valeur éthique — quelle que soit leur acceptabilité.

Dans la section consacrée à la définition du concept des normes, Toury précise que la force des contraintes socioculturelles est relative et que les normes traductives se situent entre deux pôles distincts :

In terms of their potency, socio-cultural constraints have been described along a scale anchored between two extremes: general, relatively absolute rules on the one hand, and pure idiosyncrasies on the other. Between these two poles lies a vast middle-ground occupied by intersubjective factors commonly designated norms. The norms themselves form a continuum along the scale: some are stronger, and hence more rule-like, others are weaker, and hence almost idiosyncratic. The borderlines between the various types of constraints are thus diffuse. (Toury 1995:54)
C’est dire, à l’instar de Theo Hermans, que les contraintes sont diverses et nécessitent d’être distinguées les unes des autres (objectives/subjectives; convention/tradition; etc.), mais qu’elles sont en même temps à considérer dans un continuum où les frontières sont floues (Hermans 1999: 79–85). Cela étant, il s’avère surtout qu’au-delà des seules normes traductives, il existe des normes plus objectives (voire positives) — assimilables aux « règles » (rules) de Toury — qui constituent le corps de lois qui régite de façon encore plus préliminaire les choix non seulement traductifs mais également éditoriaux des traductions à publier: le droit d’auteur. De fait, même si le droit d’auteur en lui-même n’offre pas directement les choix des maisons d’édition, il demeure qu’il lui offre une sorte de cadre normatif qui permet une certaine marge de manœuvres essentiellement motivées d’ailleurs par le facteur économique. Ainsi, c’est grâce à la prédisposition, voire à la logique fondamentalement économique du droit d’auteur que les normes préliminaires impriment en général une direction aux choix éditoriaux des traductions qui soit conforme à la fois au cadre législatif et aux conventions dominantes en matière textuelle. Les normes s’agencent donc dans un polysystème normatif concentrique où le droit se situe parmi les cercles les plus excentrés, parce que plus englobant et plus objectif.

Cependant, si les normes sont déterminées en fonction de celles qui les entourent, on peut se demander ce qui détermine ces dernières. En fait, les normes « externes », ou le corps de lois constituant le droit positif, ne sont en général pas le fruit d’un ordonnancement fortuit ou extérieur, mais bien plutôt celui d’une construction discursive qui émane d’un développement historique des conventions du sein même du monde de la production et de la reproduction textuelle. Ce qui est confirmé par Toury lui-même pour qui les textes traduits eux-mêmes constituent les sources « textuelles » des normes traductives, et que les sources « extratextuelles » de ces dernières proviennent de

[…], semi-theoretical or critical formulations, such as prescriptive ‘theories’ of translation, statements made by translators, editors, publishers, and other persons involved in or connected with the activity critical appraisals of individual translations, or the activity of a translator or ‘school’ of translators and so forth. (Toury 1995: 65)

Ce qui veut dire que les normes de sources dites « extratextuelles » qui déterminent de façon préliminaire les normes proprement traductives, au centre du polysystème socioculturel, sont le lieu du développement de celles proprement juridiques qui sont en revanche à l’orée de celui-ci (puisque plus objectives) (Toury 1995: 65). Ainsi, l’orientation de l’influence normative ne va pas seulement dans le seul sens de la périphérie vers le centre, mais dans le sens inverse également.

Or comment le vérifier ? Comment savoir que, malgré son statut secondaire et périphérique, la traduction participe également (ne serait-ce qu’indirectement) à la formation du discours dans l’épistémé textuel en cours ? Comment déterminer que le discours sur l’auctorialité, l’originalité et, par conséquent, sur la traduction elle-même (produit par toutes les parties concernées) est le lieu d’émergence du droit qui administre l’ensemble du réseau de la production textuelle et artistique ? De fait, quelles sont les
sources extratextuelles des normes qui ont contribué à former le statut de la traduction, du traducteur et, en amont, celui de l’auteur qui a produit le corps de « règles » ou de lois qu’on appelle aujourd’hui le droit d’auteur ? Comment le discours des auteurs a-t-il fait émerger celui du droit qui régit à la fois les œuvres originales et les traductions ? Comment en est-on arrivé aujourd’hui à une définition de la traduction qui soit de plus en plus uniformisée à la fois sur le plan des règles et sur celui du discours ?

Au fond, peut-on raisonnablement poser le problème des sources normatives de la production textuelle en abstraction des réalités de la mondialisation économique actuelle, de l’héritage historico-discursif sur l’exercice de l’activité scripturaire et artistique, des relations de pouvoir qui existent entre les langues et les cultures de traduction ainsi que les différents constituants du réseau de production des traductions ?

Le discours des auteurs sur leurs droits et la traduction

Pour comprendre d’où provient la source des normes dominantes de l’auctorialité3 et, par conséquent, de la traduction en Occident, il est nécessaire de se mettre à l’écoute des auteurs les plus influents et d’examiner leurs caractérisations mutuelles, l’évolution de leurs représentations respectives ainsi que les traces de leur engagement pour la promotion de leur activité au rang de métier (Brunn 2001). En effet, en étudiant l’histoire du droit d’auteur en Europe, on y apprend que c’est essentiellement dans les revendications des écrivains pour leurs droits que le discours sur l’auctorialité a progressivement formé sa représentation normative.4

Cela étant, pour réaliser un tel objectif, il faudrait idéalement faire une étude archéologique sur un nombre non négligeable d’auteurs français remontant du siècle qui a vu naître le droit d’auteur national (18ème) jusqu’à celui qui l’a consacré sur le plan international (fin du 19ème).5 Or, pour des raisons évidentes de place, nous nous conten-

3. Nous utiliserons désormais ce néologisme pour parer au manque dans la langue française d’un équivalent pour le mot anglais « authorship ». « Le néologisme d’auctorialité désigne dans la critique contemporaine ce qui fait d’un auteur un auteur. […] L’auteur — auctor — est celui que marque son auctoritas, c’est-à-dire celui qui jouit d’un ‘droit de possession’ sur son texte, mais aussi, inséparablement, celui qui en est le ‘garant’. » (Brunn 2001 : 211–212).


5. La même étude est nécessaire sur le terrain britannique également puisque le phénomène de création du statut de l’auctorialité est celui qui va non seulement consacrer l’avènement du copyright anglais (et de l’ensemble du système anglo-saxon dans le reste du monde), mais il le sera par les auteurs eux-mêmes, pareillement qu’en France, voire bien avant. Cela dit, compte tenu du manque d’espace pour intégrer la réalité britannique, nous nous limiterons dans le présent article à celle de la France.
terons dans ce présent article de ne proposer qu’un échantillon dans le seul espace de la France. Une période de préélection parmi d’autres se situe au cœur du siècle des éditeurs, de l’explosion de l’industrie de la publication et de l’internationalisation du droit d’auteur. C’est donc au travers de la figure d’Alphonse de Lamartine qu’il s’agira de consigner l’une des représentations de la figure de l’auteur et, partant, du discours qui a favorisé l’émergence des normes préliminaires à l’origine de la formation des statuts du traducteur et de la traduction.

Lamartine et les socialistes

Si l’on ne connaît de Lamartine que les Méditations poétiques, on peut s’étonner d’apprendre qu’il eut en même temps une carrière politique, qu’il fut un malheureux candidat aux élections présidentielles de l’éphémère seconde République de 1848, et qu’il mourut ruiné, malade et bénéficiaire d’une rente viagère dans une maison offerte par la charité officielle (Ambrière 1990 : 491). Mais l’étonnement atteint son comble lorsqu’on le voit cité dans un savant traité de droit de l’auteur pour avoir été, en mars 1841, le rapporteur d’une commission sur la même question et tenir un discours très avisé — quoique déclamatoire — pour décrire les principes qui ont guidé l’élaboration d’un projet de loi sur le droit de la propriété des auteurs et des artistes (Worms 1878 : 139–174). Bien souvent, la raison de cette surprise en est que la conception que l’on se fait du poète romantique tient essentiellement dans le lyrisme égoïste auquel se réduiraient ses principales préoccupations.

Or, à l’instar d’autres mages romantiques comme Victor Hugo, Lamartine portait en lui une idée du sacerdoce poétique, de la mission qu’il devait accomplir auprès des hommes en s’engageant notamment dans l’activité politique (Bénichou 1988). Mais comme bien des cas, l’investiture des « prophètes » (« Il est évident que Dieu a son idée sur moi ») s’obtient au prix d’un voyage initiatique (Chestellier 1928 : 126, in Bénichou 1988 : 41)

C’est en effet au lendemain de son pèlerinage en Orient, où il a souffert la mort de sa fille, que sa conception spiritualiste du lyrisme parvient à dépasser sa propre personne pour s’élargir aux autres. Ainsi écrit-il en 1837 à Félix Guillemardet sur sa maladie :

Puis mon cœur insensible à ses propres misères,
S’est élargi plus tard aux douleurs de mes frères […]
(in Bénichou 1988: 108)

Pendant la « Révolution de juillet » (1830) et jusqu’à la première renaissance de la République (1848), qui suscitera tant d’espoirs pour les hommes de sa génération, l’objectif sera donc de changer non seulement la poésie, mais la politique elle-même. De fait, fort de la nouvelle dimension sociale de sa pensée tout orientée vers l’idée de progrès, Lamartine n’envisagera plus la poésie comme avant : elle « ne sera plus lyrique dans le sens où nous prenons ce mot ». « La poésie sera de la raison chantée, voilà sa destinée pour longtemps ; elle sera philosophique, religieuse, politique, sociale, comme
les époques que le genre humain va traverser » (Ambrière 1990: 191). Accompagnant l'humanité dans son progrès, la poésie doit « se faire peuple et devenir populaire comme la religion, la raison et la philosophie » (ibid.) Désormais, Lamartine se présente littéralement comme un poète social, messianique, et c’est dans l’action politique qu’il tentera de traduire ses nouveaux idéaux.

Partisan d’un néo-christianisme démocratique et social à la façon d’un Hugo, Lamartine n’en est pas pour autant devenu un écrivain révolutionnaire, son attachement à la propriété privée, et foncière plus particulièrement, ayant été la cause principale de sa déchéance financière. Alors qu’il faisait montre d’une attitude critique à l’endroit des légitimistes rétrogrades de la Chambre des députés — auxquels il était naturellement affilié, mais dont il était distant –, Lamartine était cependant connu pour ses revendications « humanitaires » et ses demandes d’améliorations sociales et économiques qui le rapprochaient, sans s’y confondre jamais, des socialistes d’extrême gauche (Bénichou 1977: 381–422). À telle enseigne que, dès 1843, il passe à l’opposition radicale pour mieux faire front à la montée du prolétariat, ce qui lui vaudra la perte d’une large part de son audience populaire, et ce jusqu’à son anéantissement politique par Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte en 1848 (Ambrière 1990: 192).

Ceci nous montre d’ores et déjà l’ambiguïté des positions de Lamartine sur la propriété littéraire. En effet, sans entrer dans les détails de son projet de loi, notons ce premier argument, maintenant familier, qui consiste à asseoir la légitimité du travail de l’esprit en prenant pour référence celle du travail matériel. Or, tout en faisant la distinction entre la dimension idéelle et matérielle du livre, il n’en souligne pas moins les polarités qui les opposent. Si l’on peut noter avec Jean Matthyssens « la mise en évidence par Lamartine de l’aspect du droit moral du droit d’auteur » (« La nature même de cette propriété, toute personnelle, toute morale, toute indivisible dans la pensée… »), il est manifeste que le statut de l’œuvre de l’esprit, par rapport à sa matérialisation physique dans l’objet du livre, possède une valeur particulière qui la promeut à un rang incomparablement plus élevé que toute autre propriété (Matthyssens 1954 : 45 ; Worms 1878 : 151–152). Alors que le « livre tombe dans la circulation commerciale », l’idée « ne tombe jamais dans le domaine inférieur d’une loi pécuniaire ».

Cette pensée du législateur n’enlève rien à l’intellectualité et à la dignité de l’œuvre de l’écrivain. Elle n’avilit pas le livre dans la qualité immémore (sic) de service libre et spontané rendu au genre humain sans aucune vue de récompense vénale. (ibid: 143)

Ainsi, en parfait désaccord avec la philosophie traditionnelle du droit d’auteur à venir, pour Lamartine, il n’est objet de commerce que l’objet « livre » (« qui rend la pensée palpable comme le caractère qui la grave »), tandis que l’idée est un don philanthropique qui ne souffre pas les transactions humaines (« L’idée vient de Dieu, sert les hommes et retourne à Dieu en laissant un sillon lumineux sur le front de celui où le gé-
nie est descendu…») (id.). Mais ce platonisme qui sépare l'idée de la chose ne manque pas d'incohérence lorsqu'on lit plus loin que « [c]ette propriété existe, se vend, s'achète, se défend comme toutes les autres», qu'elle est «indivisible» par sa nature et que, dès lors qu'habillée des oripeaux de la contrefaçon, elle est une «spoliation criante» (ibid. : 146). Si l'idée est un don, alors la fabrication du livre à partir de ce dernier ne peut être raisonnablement considérée comme un vol. C'est que, contrairement à Vigny qui a posé la traditionnelle césure entre la forme et le contenu pour distinguer l'objet du droit, Lamartine a confondu ces derniers et réduit l'objet du commerce à l'incarnation physique que représente le livre (Vigny, lettre ouverte aux députés, 15 janvier 1841 : «De Mademoiselle Sedaine et de la propriété littéraire», in Œuvres complètes, vol. 5, 1884).

À pousser cette logique de la dualité jusqu'au bout, on serait tenté de penser que le bénéfice de l'œuvre, au lieu de se partager entre la société (par sa divulgation et une courte durée de protection) et la famille de l'auteur, il s'avère qu'il se fait entre cette dernière (par une protection d’un demi siècle) et les éditeurs (Lamartine, in Worms 1878 : 149). C'est dire en fait, selon cette conception du droit d'auteur, que si l'auteur a fait don de son œuvre intellectuelle à la société (et dont la rémunération est laissée « au temps et à la mémoire des hommes»), quelle que soit la période de rétention des droits, il lui aura donné l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire la part la plus digne de son œuvre. À l'auteur, ses ayants cause et à l'éditeur le reste, produit vénal sans importance qui, paradoxalement, suscite tant de passion. Alors que Lamartine s'est refusé, au nom des membres de la Commission, à trancher la question de la perpétuité ou de la durée limitée, prétendant qu'ils n'agissaient pas comme «philosophes» mais comme «législateurs», il a néanmoins laissé échapper (à peine, puisqu'au conditionnel passé) l'avis des premiers en proclamant «théoriquement la perpétuité de possession des fruits de ce travail» (ibid. : 146). Une page plus loin, il ne peut que tirer la conclusion logique de toute sa rhétorique:

Le jour où le législateur, éclairé par l'épreuve qu'elle va faire d'elle-même, jugera qu'elle peut entrer dans un exercice plus étendu de ses droits naturels, il n'aura qu'à ôter cette borne; il n'aura qu'à dire toujours où notre loi a dit cinquante ans, et l'intelligence sera émancipée. (ibid. : 147)

Celui qui imagina la création du « parti social » — parti politique nouveau et réconciliateur, « c'est-à-dire un rassemblement d'hommes qui fût représentatif de la société » (« Croyez-moi, j'ai l'instinct des masses. ») — ne semble pas aussi favorable aux intérêts de la société qu'il le prétend (Bénichou 1988 : 147). En effet, alors qu'il fait le pari qu'il n'est de gouvernement viable que celui qui repose sur « l'idée des masses » (« prolétariat industriel compris »), qu'il faut totalement s'abandonner à la logique démocratique et que « l'exercice universel des droits présente plus d'avantages que de dangers », Lamartine n'en est pas moins violemment pris à parti par les rédacteurs de La Phalange, journal fouriériste de science sociale, qui commente son projet de loi d'un point de vue rigoureusement… social (ibid. : 49).
Dans les colonnes du journal, le commentaire publié sur plusieurs numéros pose le problème des « contrepoids nécessaires pour maintenir, vis-à-vis de la propriété privée, le droit imprescriptible des masses » (in La Phalange: 556).

Les avantages attribués, à titre de propriété, à certaines familles, n’ont-ils jamais pour effet d’empêcher l’établissement de familles nouvelles, qui demandaient aussi une place dans le monde, et qui n’ont pu l’y trouver ? Enfin, l’accroissement de la richesse publique est-il toujours lié à l’accroissement de chaque fortune particulière ; autrement, l’intérêt collectif et l’intérêt individuel ne sont-ils jamais en opposition dans les conditions sociales que la Législation humaine a sanctionnées, sinon établies ? (ibid.)

Orientant la discussion sur le terrain du conflit d’intérêts latent entre celui du public et celui du propriétaire, le journal annonce d’ores et déjà que les problématiques énoncées « reçoivent, dans la synthèse sociale conçue par Charles Fourier, une solution qui maintient tous les légitimes privilèges de la propriété, en même temps que, par la reconnaissance au travail et au minimum, elle réintègre le prolétaire dans son droit naturel et imprescriptible. » (ibid.)

Prenant au mot Lamartine lorsqu’il compare la propriété littéraire à la propriété foncière, le rédacteur du journal constate que la conclusion logique du raisonnement du poète-député est incohérente. En effet, alors que le droit de propriété est octroyé sur le produit du travail en général, l’auteur se demande en premier lieu ce qui appartient légitimement à celui qui a cultivé une terre. Concluant qu’il s’agit de la récolte et de la plus-value qu’il aura donnée au champ cultivé, il considère que ce sont là les seuls éléments qui méritent rémunération ; et que « le fonds même, la terre brute, le capital primitif n’est pas un produit de l’industrie de l’Homme : donc, il ne [peut] pas devenir la propriété privée de celui-ci, au même titre que les fruits et la valeur ajoutée au sol par l’exploitation. » (in La Phalange: 557) En ce sens, la compréhension de la propriété même de la terre fait déjà l’objet d’une confusion. Le problème est qu’on confond les valeurs ajoutées avec le fonds commun lui-même, « qui est le patrimoine inaliénable de tous les hommes. »

À l’instar de Proudhon plus tard — lui-même héritier de la lignée du socialisme utopique de Fourier — c’est la conception de la propriété elle-même qui constitue la pierre d’achoppement entre les mutualistes sociaux et les tenants d’une pensée libérale plus largement répandue. Alors que la terre est considérée par les rédacteurs de La Phalange


8. « […] si la question de la propriété littéraire n’est pas rationnellement soluble aujourd’hui, c’est parce que la question de la Propriété en général n’a pas reçu elle-même une solution de tous points conforme aux règles de l’équité et de la logique dans la constitution actuelle de la propriété type et pivot de toutes les autres, je veux dire la propriété immobilière. » Ibid., p. 604. Avec la différence cependant que Proudhon ira plus loin en ce qu’il ne reconnaît pas le vocable de « propriété » comme adéquat à l’objet de protection du droit d’auteur. Le titre de son livre s’intitulant d’ailleurs Les majorats littéraires (1862).
Phalange comme un fonds commun, elle est par ailleurs possédée par quelques-uns qui
ne sont légalement obligés à rien envers la partie de la population qui ne possède pas.
Sans entrer dans les détails du mode de gestion alternatif que les fouriéristes proposent,
il suffira de signaler que tout en admettant que Lamartine assimile le travail intellectuel
au travail corporel, le vice de compréhension qui entoure la constitution actuelle de la
propriété foncière est tel « qu’en la prenant pour modèle de la constitution à donner à
la Propriété littéraire, on cour[te] le risque de s’égarer.» (ibid. : 557) En effet, l’équiva-
dent dans cette dernière, représentée par le fonds commun dans la propriété territoriale,
étant inexistant, on ne peut raisonnablement mener l’analogie jusqu’au bout, « à moins
qu’on ne voulût considérer […] la masse des idées en circulation au moment où l’écri-
vain exécutait son œuvre, et dont il dût s’inspirer. »

Or, même dans cette éventuelle interprétation d’un « fonds commun intellectuel »,
l’assimilation ne serait toujours pas juste puisque, contrairement au mode d’appropria-
tion de la terre qui devient nécessairement exclusif, l’usage ou l’appropriation multiple
de « la masse d’idées » — idées et formes — est tout à fait possible, puisque ces dernières
sont partageables. Une propriété qui est d’ailleurs commune à toutes les formes de pro-
ductions intellectuelles, mais également à la traduction. Dans la mesure où la logique
de la traduction (comme celle de l’adaptation, entre autres formes de duplication) est
reproductive, répétitive et par conséquent « survivante » à l’objet original, elle peut être
entreprise par plusieurs personnes à la fois sans jamais diminuer l’espace d’appropria-
tion originale, mais bien au contraire, l’augmenter de manière indéfinie.

C’est dire qu’en comparant la terre aux objets de l’intelligence, on s’expose à néglig-
er pour ces derniers la part du droit qui ne peut cesser d’appartenir à tous, comme c’est
le cas dans la constitution donnée à la propriété territoriale.9

Dans la constitution qu’on essaie de donner à la Propriété littéraire, dont nous sommes
loin d’ailleurs de nier […] la base légitime, nous craignons qu’on ne se laisse aussi préoc-
cuper outre mesure de l’intérêt particulier, au détriment de l’intérêt général. (ibid. :
558).

Mais le journal fouriériste et les « socialistes » ne tiennent pas seuls le plancher de la
contestation dirigée contre la propriété individuelle et en faveur de l’intérêt public. En
effet, dans la séance parlementaire du 22 mars, le comte Joseph-Marie Portalis, l’un des
rédacteurs du code Napoléonien, fils du célèbre Jean Étienne et incidemment directeur
général de l’imprimerie et de la librairie sous l’Empire, formule une critique acerbe à

9. Voir également le refus, dans les discussions dans la Chambre des députés, de l’auteur du
Traité de propriété littéraire (op. cit.) de 1838 de souscrire à l’assimilation de l’exploitation d’un
livre à celle d’un champ. « Il ne reconnaît pas aux auteurs un droit préexistant de propriété. […]
En perpétuant la propriété littéraire, on mettra le sort des livres dans les mains des riches ; la
spéculations aura bientôt absorbé le privilège des familles ; enfin l’on construira des fortunes sans
travail. » In La Phalange : 592. À voir comment les multinationales de la culture fonctionnent un
peu moins de deux siècles plus tard, il semble que les prémonitions de l’époque se sont révélées
être très proches de la réalité.
Chapitre 19. Aux sources des normes du droit de la traduction

l’endroit du droit de propriété littéraire le qualifiant d’« usurpation au préjudice de l’humanité » et appelle à « protester […] contre ces barrières incessantes et ces tyrannies nouvelles qui s’élèvent au profit de l’égoïsme mercantile et envahissant le patrimoine commun » (ibid. : 593 ; voir aussi Kasirer 2003).

S’insistant en défenseur des prolétaires de la monarchie de juillet (« […] jamais on n’a eu plus de dévouement pour les classes pauvres, et tous les jours on cherche à leur enlever quelque chose… »), l’ex-censeur de Napoléon s’insurge contre « l’hypocrisie » de Lamartine qui, selon lui, « ne craint pas de dire que la propriété littéraire est surtout la fortune de la démocratie, alors que par le projet il restreint la part de chaque homme au grand foyer de l’intelligence humaine. » (id.) C’est que l’enjeu qu’il place au centre du débat constitue l’exacte formulation du problème qui mettra aux prises, tout au long du siècle, « libéraux » et « socialistes ».

Dès la séance suivante, Lamartine réagit aux différentes interpellations de la veille, mais surtout à celle de Portalis. En grand rhétoricien (bien que dénué de l’immunité de contradiction), il admet que « la pensée est le bien de tous, puisqu’elle émane de Dieu même. […] L’être misérable qu’on appelle humain n’est que le réflecteur et non le créateur de la pensée » (id.). Alors que, d’un côté, il reconnaît que les êtres humains sont propriétaires d’un bien commun (et individuel — d’où la propriété littéraire), il leur dé- savoue, d’un autre côté, la possibilité même d’être les créateurs (et par conséquent les propriétaires) de leurs propres idées, n’étant que les serviles « réflecteurs » de celles-ci puisque d’origine divine. Mais y a-t-il véritablement contradiction? En fait, la seule manière pour Lamartine de trouver cohérence à ce qu’il vient d’exposer est de considérer la création littéraire comme la traduction du bien commun dispensé par Dieu. Or, la compréhension traditionnelle qu’on peut avoir de la fonction du poète romantique n’est pas toujours clairement définie entre deux représentations possibles : d’une part, simple intermédiaire entre Dieu et les hommes, il ne serait qu’un traducteur du verbe divin révélé mais élevé à la dignité de prophète, seul réceptacle et diffuseur du sacré ; et d’autre part, du fait de son nouveau « sacerdoce laïque » qui ramène la divinité à sa propre dimension humaine, il serait un créateur sans autre référence originale que lui-même : le poète, lui-même divin, est auteur de sacré.

Mais alors que la thèse du sacre de l’écrivain prend de l’ampleur — au sens où il aspire également à un statut sacré —, elle s’accompagne en même temps de celle, paradoxale, de la sécularisation de son art (« sacerdoce laïc ») (Bénichou 1973). En effet, le poète, au lieu de se borner à traduire les textes des Écritures saintes pour faire passer en français les textes poétiques qu’elles contenaient — à l’instar des Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, Lefranc de Pompignan et Louis Racine —, traduit désormais directement la parole divine (ibid : 79–89). Bien plus,

10. Les guillemets sont ici nécessaires pour signifier, d’une part, que les deux tendances ne doivent pas être confondues avec les homonymes d’éventuels partis politiques actuels et, d’autre part, que le sens de ces termes mérite d’être remis dans le contexte du 19ème siècle et d’être développé de manière à comprendre les nuances de leur évolution jusqu’aujourd’hui.
Borné dans sa nature, infini dans ses vœux,
L’homme est un dieu tombé qui se souvient des cieux.
(Lamartine)\textsuperscript{11}

Imitant les textes bibliques en devenant lui-même le prophète du divin, le poète traduit la parole sacrée « dans sa pure source humaine » comme s’il était l’organe de l’Esprit-Saint lui-même (Bénichou 1973: 181)

Au nom sacré du Père et du Fils, son image,
Descends, Esprit des deux, Esprit qui d’âge en âge, […]
Soit que, te balançant sur l’aile des tempêtes
Tu lances tes éclairs dans les yeux des prophètes,
[…] Soit qu’en langues de feu, dans les airs suspendu,
Sur le front de l’apôtre en secret descendu,
Tu perces tout à coup, comme un jour sans aurore,
De tes rayons divins son cœur qui doute encore.
Descends, je dois chanter!
(ibid.: 187)

Ainsi entendue, le sens de la traduction ne se limite plus à la transmission d’un texte préalablement écrit ou d’une parole déjà formulée, mais s’élargit à l’expression même du divin, autrement dit d’un autre ordre de la parole. Le poète n’est plus le réceptacle d’une parole déjà révélée à un prophète qui l’aurait précédé ; il est lui-même choisi par Dieu pour « répéter » sa parole, dire à sa place et exprimer pour la première fois à l’humanité ce qui ne lui a jamais été dit auparavant.\textsuperscript{12} La traduction étant désormais la tâche fondamentale du poète, il n’est d’œuvre « originale » que la sienne. Autrement dit, traduction et création participent d’un seul et même geste. — Dans le prolongement de cette réflexion, il serait pertinent de revisiter, voire littéralement déconstruire les significations et les différences, données pour acquises, de la création, de l’auctorialité et de la traduction comme productions de l’esprit humain.

Cette conception du processus de la création littéraire — foncièrement romantique — serait apparemment une remise en question radicale de l’idée d’une création pu-

\textsuperscript{11.} \textit{Œuvres complètes}, deuxième méditation, \textit{op. cit.}, t. 1, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{12.} Jeune étranger, dit-il, approchez-vous de moi.
Depuis des jours bien longs de bien loin je vous vois :
[…] Toujours quelqu’un reçoit le saint manteau d’Élie,
Car Dieu ne permet pas que sa langue s’oublie !
C’est vous que dans la foule il a pris par la main,
Vous à qui son esprit a montré le chemin,
Vous qui depuis le sein d’une pieuse mère
De la soif du Seigneur sa grâce ardente altère ;
C’est vous qu’il a choisi là-bas pour écouter
La voix de la montagne et pour la répéter.

rement immanente et exclusivement humaine, si ce n’est que dans l’esprit de Lamartine la traduction est elle-même une création, rendant alors parfaitement légitime la revendication de sa propriété.

Ainsi, dans l’apparente contradiction de sa formule (« réflecteur et non […] créateur de la pensée ») avec le reste de son œuvre, Lamartine restitue néanmoins, bien qu’indirectement, la distinction de Vigny (conforme à la conception du droit d’auteur) entre l’idée et son expression. C’est parce que la masse d’idées est un « bien commun » que l’expression est individuelle et susceptible d’être objet d’un droit de protection. Or, Lamartine ne profite pas de l’occasion pour développer ce donné du droit d’auteur, mais s’aventure plutôt sur le terrain de l’argument politique en incriminant orgueilleusement la société pour son ingratidute habituelle et sa résistance toute plébéienne à l’endroit des idées neuves (in La Phalange : 593)\(^\text{13}\) Le débat ne faisant que s’intensifier sur le partage du droit entre l’individu et la société, un député de la Loire-Inférieure rétorque aussitôt au rapporteur de la commission que la dette de Galilée et de Colomb est due « à la société des penseurs qui se continue à travers les siècles ». Pour lui, « le droit de la société […] s’élève à côté du droit de l’écrivain et […] se lie à ce second droit. » (ibid. : 594)

Ne se suffisant pas de rapporter les discussions de l’hémicycle, La Phalange les prolonge en relevant le fait, entre autres, que si le public possède un droit dans la propriété littéraire, c’est parce que « par l’usage qu’il fait du livre, [il] lui donne valeur…

\[\ldots\] quel fermage tireriez-vous de vos terres, s’il n’y avait pas de consommateurs pour en acheter les produits, s’il n’y avait pas de travailleurs pour les labourer, les ensemener (sic), les récolter ? (ibid.: 604)

On pourrait même dire, avec Benjamin et Derrida, que la valeur de l’œuvre dépend de ses utilisateurs, et plus particulièrement des traducteurs qui non seulement lui offrent de survivre, mais la projettent vers des horizons culturels qu’elle n’aurait jamais autrement espéré atteindre (Derrida 1987). De plus, le public-lecteur est également traducteur en ce que par sa lecture de l’œuvre, il la perpétue, lui donne vie et la transforme par le fait même de sa diffusion dans les catégories mentales et culturelles d’individus aussi différents que changeants.

Cela dit, et n’étant pas en mesure d’aller en plus de détails dans l’analyse du projet de loi de Lamartine, mentionnons encore deux derniers éléments qui mériteraient d’être développés et qui s’inscrivent dans la suite de notre lecture traductologique du

\(^\text{13}\) « […] on a tort […] de prétendre que la société aide en général à découvrir l’idée nouvelle. Loin de là, elle la contrarie, la persécute et la ridiculise le plus ordinairement: demandez à Galilée, demandez à Colomb quel appui ils ont trouvé dans la société de leur temps. Les idées nouvelles ont toujours des combats avec la société dans laquelle elles se produisent. Prétendre que la société est co-propriétaire des vérités qu’elle tue ou des œuvres du génie qu’elle persécute, c’est ajouter la dérision à l’ingratitude. Le caractère du génie est précisément de marcher si loin en avant de son siècle qu’il n’en est pas reconnu. La société n’accueille que ce qui lui ressemble ou la flatte. » Cité par La Phalange, op. cit., p. 593.
droit d'auteur. Premièrement, la pertinence de la mise en rapport de la traduction avec le théâtre du fait que ce dernier se présentait — plus particulièrement à l'époque de la Révolution — comme une traduction vivante du droit de revendiquer une parole libre. Deuxièmement, celle de la traduction comme reproduction et, par conséquent, comme contrefaçon.

Mais qu'est-ce en vérité que le statut de la liberté d'expression au regard du droit d'auteur ? Quels sont les véritables critères qui peuvent légitimer la condamnation de la réimpression/contrefaçon, que ce soit dans le contexte du 19ème siècle franco-belge ou dans notre contexte actuel de mondialisation ? En quoi la transformation d'une œuvre et sa réimpression constituent-elles des pratiques délictueuses en soi ; ne le sont-elles qu'en fonction d'un contexte particulier ou encore parce qu'elles produisent des dommages collatéraux dans un schéma socio-économique (national et/ou international) particulier ? Quelles seraient les caractéristiques d'une « contrefaçon bienfaitrice », s'il en est ? Et enfin quelles sont les conditions d'existence pour une traduction libre de toute contrainte, mais dont la destination serait telle qu'elle n'encourrait aucune condamnation, voire bénéficierait d'un encouragement de la part des États pour lesquels les enjeux de l'alphabetisation et du développement culturel sont vitaux, prioritaires ?

Autant de questions qui nous mettent aux prises avec les origines du discours normatif actuel sur la production scripturaire et artistique, dont la traduction.

Conclusion : des normes et du pouvoir

Dans la préface de sa *Naissance de la clinique*, Foucault décrit son entreprise archéologique comme suit :

Ici, comme ailleurs, il s'agit d'une étude qui essaie de dégager dans l'épaisseur du discours les conditions de son histoire.

Ainsi, ce sont les conditions de l'émergence du droit de l'auteur de l'œuvre originale, autrement dit son archéologie, qui nous a intéressé jusqu'ici pour mettre en évidence le fait que son origine est non seulement traversée par des courants idéologiques (socialisme, anarchisme) qui diffèrent de celui qui a finalement dominé (capitalisme), mais qu'elle révèle chez cette figure de l'auteur la prépondérance d'une valeur dont la Révolution s'est fait le plus grand promoteur (liberté individuelle) ainsi que les orientations d'économie politique qui en découlent et que nous lui connaissons aujourd'hui (indépendance financière).

Jadis, l'auteur s'est battu à l'appui de principes fondamentaux que le traducteur se voit aujourd'hui défendre pour sa propre accession à l'autonomie et la reconnaissance. Mieux, au cœur du processus de constitution de l'auctorialité, c'est la traduction qui a servi de prétexte et de point d'appui principal pour son élaboration. Des congrès internationaux des gens de lettres (1858–1878) à l’Association littéraire et artistique internationale ou ALAI (1878), des congrès annuels de cette dernière aux conférences diploma-
Chapitre 19. Aux sources des normes du droit de la traduction

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tiques instituant l’Union de Berne (1884) et ce jusqu’à l’établissement de la Convention internationale pour la protection des œuvres littéraires et artistiques (1886), la traduction était au centre des préoccupations des législateurs du droit d’auteur international (elle fut même proclamée comme « la question internationale par excellence »). Tra
ditionnellement, la création d’une « œuvre originale » ne possédait qu’un intérêt strictement local, à moins d’être traduite. Si elle a depuis toujours permis au lecteur d’accéder à l’étranger, la traduction a désormais permis au droit d’outrepasser les frontières nationales. Le droit d’auteur n’est devenu international qu’à partir du moment où l’on a fait valoir le potentiel de « scandale » dont la traduction était capable (Venuti 1998).

Mais qu’est-ce que l’international au 19ème siècle si ce n’est surtout ce viol outrageant en quoi consiste le colonialisme ? En effet, la naissance du droit d’auteur international ne peut être considérée indépendamment du phénomène colonial. Au moment même où l’on énonce les principes d’un traitement égalitaire entre les ressortissants des pays signataires dans un élan de « fraternité » tout naturel entre gens de lettres, l’avènement de la traduction comme un enjeu fondateur entre les nations est accompagné de sa contradiction pure et simple.

C’est dire qu’au-delà des normes, qu’elles soient juridiques ou préliminaires, qui orientent et déterminent les œuvres et leurs traductions, il y a celles du pouvoir qui mettent aux prises les langues, les cultures, les nations et les individus. Héritiers que nous sommes aujourd’hui d’une configuration mondiale où les rapports de force sont certes perpétués mais selon la logique diffuse et ordonnatrice d’un empire multipolaire, et où les États ne sont plus les seuls détenteurs du pouvoir de répression, c’est désormais — croyons-nous — selon une conception prioritairement foucaldienne que le polysystème normatif doit être envisagé.

Par pouvoir, je ne veux pas dire « le Pouvoir », comme ensemble d’institutions et d’appareils qui garantissent la sujétion des citoyens dans un État donné. Par pouvoir, je n’entends pas non plus un mode d’assujettissement qui, par opposition à la violence, aurait la forme de la règle. […] Par pouvoir, il me semble qu’il faut comprendre d’abord la multiplicité des rapports de force qui sont immanents au domaine où ils s’exercent, et sont constitutifs de leur organisation ; le jeu qui par voie de luttes et d’affrontements incessants les transmute, les renforce, les inverse ; les appuis que ces rapports de force trouvent les uns dans les autres, de manière à former chaîne ou système, ou, au contraire, les décalages, les contradictions qui les isolent les uns des autres ; les stratégies enfin dans lesquelles ils prennent effet, et dont le dessin général ou la cristallisation institutionnelle prennent corps dans les appareils étatiques, dans la formulation de la loi, dans les hégémonies sociales. (Foucault 1976 : 121)


15. Il faut rappeler que durant tout le dix-neuvième siècle, le plus grand ennemi et corollaire de la traduction était la contrefaçon qui trouvait en Belgique, en Suisse et aux Pays-Bas ses principaux centres d’activité. À l’époque, traduire, c’était reproduire (sans droits) et, par conséquent, contrefaire.
À l’heure de la mondialisation homogénéisante des conventions, des normes et des lois, à l’ère de l’information instantanée, globale et multimédia, le pouvoir diffus des discours dominants sur les moyens de production textuelle et les hiérarchies qui en découlent ne peut que reproduire un savoir normatif diffus qui se conforme à la logique de l’hégémonie économique qui le sous-tend. Cela dit, au même moment où le droit d’auteur semble avoir pris le dessus par son caractère d’évidence devenue incontestable, le monde virtuel de l’Internet semble en retour donner naissance à un mouvement de résistance qui non seulement remet en question les normes traditionnelles de l’auctorialité en encourageant le partage et l’accès libre aux « créations », mais propose une alternative au pouvoir monopolistique des entités industrielles et commerciales mondialisées en revendiquant pour les usagers le droit de créer selon le principe transparent (« open source ») de l’intertextualité, autrement dit de la traduction.

Le droit de la traduction, c’est la revendication du droit à la transformation ou, comme le dirait Derrida, à l’héritage, condition fondamentale de l’être :

Être, […] cela veut dire […] hériter. Toutes les questions au sujet de l’être ou de ce qu’il y a à être (ou à ne pas être : or not to be) sont des questions d’héritage. […] Nous sommes des héritiers, cela ne veut pas dire que nous avons ou nous recevons ceci ou cela, que tel héritage nous enrichit un jour de ceci ou cela, mais que l’être de ce que nous sommes est d’abord héritage (Derrida 1993:94; souligné dans le texte).

C’est dans cet esprit de reconnaissance de l’héritage que ce présent article s’est voulu depuis son début. Si les normes traductives de G. Toury ont pu constituer un point de départ pour la conception d’un polysystème concentrique où la traduction pouvait être tantôt au centre et tantôt à la périphérie, il reste que la réalité fragmentée et postcoloniale du monde contemporain nous invite à considérer un polysystème multidimensionnel, multipolaire et diffus où la traduction ne serait plus seulement l’objet d’une pratique et d’un savoir (théorique, critique, normatif, etc.), mais également un paradigme subversif dont l’action sociale ne serait plus celle d’un pouvoir normatif mais bien plus celle d’une éthique traductive de l’être.

C’est que la responsabilité du traducteur et de la traduction plus généralement, pensons-nous, relève du concept de « transmission », par contraste avec celui de « communication », selon la « médiologie » de Régis Debray que Cronin reprend pour l’appliquer à la traduction (Cronin 2003 : 20). En effet, au-delà du « transfert social de connaissances » au travers de « différentes sphères spatio-temporelles », ce qui fait passer la traduction du statut de communication à celui de transmission, c’est la valeur à la fois politique et éthique reconnue à l’acte traductif lorsqu’il transmet un immatériel de l’ordre de l’identité culturelle qui en fait une transmission plutôt qu’une simple communication (ibid.). Dans la mesure où c’est l’identité culturelle qui est l’objet du transfert, la traduction s’enrichit non seulement de la dimension sociale dont parle Cronin, mais également de la dimension profondément individuelle qui donne valeur à l’acte traductif visible et, par là, responsable ( venuti 1995).
De cette notion de transmission, Derrida nous rappelle encore dans son Spectres de Marx que « [l’]héritage n’est jamais un donné, c’est toujours une tâche»16 (Derrida 1993: 94 ; souligné dans le texte). Autrement dit, une éthique, un devoir… « un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre ! »17

Références


16. Nous dirions ici, pour notre propos, une «norme».
17. Arthur Rimbaud, Une saison en enfer, « Adieu ».


An exploration of the relationship between translation and scale may help elaborate a position for translation in cultural history and for translation scholars in critical theory. In so doing, translation perspectives can be seen as a way of going beyond some of the current impasses in critical social theory and of providing a way for smaller polities to engage in a non-defensive way with current debates on multiculturalism, interculturalism and cosmopolitanism. In particular, a notion of denizenship is one of the ways that we might use to think again about what we want translation to do and what it can do in a global age.

Keywords: translation, multiculturalism, interculturalism and cosmopolitanism, citizenship

The tag line for the film is “If you want to be understood, listen”. The problem for the characters in Alejandro González Iñárritu’s Babel (2006) is that even when they do listen they do not always understand. The version of the Babel story that is gravely intoned in the film’s preview is explicit about the link between hubris and incomprehension:

In the beginning all the Lord’s people from all parts of the world spoke one language. Nothing they proposed was impossible for them. But fearing what the spirit of man did accomplish, the Lord said let us go down and confuse their language so that they may not understand one another’s speech.

As the rifle shots ring out across the Moroccan desert, the implication is that to speak one language is to be all-powerful, to speak many a manifesto for chaos. But of course, it is the film itself, ranging across three continents and seven different languages (English, French, Arabic, Berber, Spanish, Japanese, and Japanese Sign Language), that recreates the Babelian project. From behind the lens of the camera, it is possible to take in the multiplicity of the world in the single frame of the cinema screen. As the narrative rapidly shifts from Southern California to Morocco to Tokyo, the world unfolds before us as if the Tower of Babel was an in fact an observation post, the cinema itself an Observatory for a humanity brought together for our inspection. It is hardly surprising then, when checklists are drawn up to establish the incontrovertible fact of a shrinking world, that cinema, and in particular the cinema output of Hollywood majors, is regularly in-
voked as a shared element in an emerging global culture (Crane, Kawashima and Kawasaki 2002). What I want to do in this essay is to situate the Babel film event in a broader iconography of contemporary globalization and suggest a number of approaches for reconfiguring translation as an essential part not only of the way we understand human cultures in the present, but of what we are to make of them in the future.

One of the most common icons of the global age is not surprisingly the globe itself. From the shots of the blue planet suspended over abyssal darkness—courtesy of the Apollo space missions— to the sketchy outline of earth on notices encouraging hotel customers to re-use their towels, the images of the planet are increasingly common in the contemporary imaginary. Seeing things from a distance is as much a matter of subjection as of observation. Occupying a superior vantage point from which one can look down on a subject people or a conquered land is a staple of colonial travel narratives (Pratt 1992: 216). There is a further dimension to the question of distance described by Tim Ingold where he draws a distinction between perceiving the environment as a “sphere” or as a “globe.” For centuries, the classic description of the heavens was of the earth as a sphere with lines running from the human observer to the cosmos above. As geocentric cosmology fell into discredit and heliocentric cosmology came into the ascendant, the image of the sphere gave way to that of the globe. If the sphere presupposed a world experienced and engaged with from within, the globe represented a world perceived from without. Thus, in Ingold’s words, “the movement from spherical to global imagery is also one in which ‘the world’, as we are taught it exists, is drawn ever further from the matrix of our lived experience” (Ingold 2000: 211).

In the movement towards the modern, a practical sensory engagement with the world underpinned by the spherical paradigm is supplanted by a regimen of detachment and control. As the images of the globe proliferate, often ironically to mobilize ecological awareness, the danger is that these images themselves distort our relationship to our physical and cultural environment by continually situating us at a distance, by abstracting and subtracting us from our local attachments and responsibilities. However, it is precisely such an ability that is often construed as a basic requirement for both national and more recently global citizenship. It is the capacity to look beyond the immediate interests of the clan or village or ethnic grouping that creates the conditions for a broader definition of belonging at a national or indeed global level. For example, Szersynski and Urry argue that “banal globalism”, the almost unnoticed symbols of globality that crowd our daily lives, might “be helping to create a sensibility conducive to the cosmopolitan rights and duties of being a ‘global citizen’, by generating a greater sense of both global diversity and global interconnectedness and belonging” (Szersynski and Urry 2006: 122). The promise of such citizenship is an almost axiomatic contemporary defense of why anyone should bother with translation. When Pascale Casanova in her survey of the World Republic of Letters tries to synthesize those elements that have conditioned eligibility for citizenship of this Republic, translation is very much to the fore:
In the world of literature, if languages can also be represented using a “floral figure,” that is, a system where languages on the periphery are linked to the center by polyglots and translators, then it is possible to measure the literariness (the power, prestige, the volume of linguistic–literary capital) of a language, not by the number of writers and readers in a language, but by the number of literary polyglots (or main players in the literary arena, publishers, cosmopolitan intermediaries, well-educated talent spotters…) who know it and by the number of literary translators—for export as well as for import—who cause texts to be translated into or out of this literary language.

The global standing of a literature depends on the efforts of those language learners and translators who can stand outside their own language and learn the other language for the purposes of reading, translation, or both. But Szersynski and Urry ask the following questions, “is this abstraction from the local and particular fully compatible with dwelling in a locality? Could it be that the development of a more cosmopolitan, citizenly perception of place is at the expense of other modes of appreciating and caring for local environments and contexts?” (Szersynski and Urry 2006: 123).

In opposition to the figure of the citizen we find the notion of the “denizen”, which has been propagated notably by the non-governmental organization Common Ground, where a denizen is a person who dwells in a particular place and who can move through and knowingly inhabit that place. Therefore, Common Ground dedicates itself to encouraging the proliferation of vernacular, ideographic, and connotative descriptions of local places that can take the form of place myths, stories, personal associations, and celebrations of various kinds (www.commonground.org.uk). The importance of the concept of denizenship for Translation Studies lies in three areas that will be discussed in turn: tourism, real estate, and migration.

An inevitable consequence of banal globalism is the tyranny of the gaze.

Martin Heidegger’s claim that the “fundamental act of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture” (Heidegger 1977: 134) is hardly surprising, given the centrality of seeing to the rise of Western science. Relying on the testimony of the eyes rather than the authority of texts became the touchstone of the new scientific method championed by Francis Bacon and others (Rorty 1980). The importance of ocularcentrism was relayed by the development and enhancement of optical instruments such as the microscope and telescope. Literacy and the advent of printing gave further impetus to visualized and specialized perceptions of experience (Ong 1989). In more recent
times, the process of commodification itself has a strong visual correlate, as noted by Eamonn Slater:

As the process of commodification penetrates deeper into the cultural realms of society, commodity production takes on a more visual character: this corresponds to a process of visualization. Images and visual symbols become the universal language of commodity production across national boundaries. Television, movies and the advertising industry can replicate images endlessly and beam them virtually anywhere. (Slater 1998:4; his emphasis)

This has profound implications not only for goods and services, the usual focus of discussions around the design-intensity of aestheticized goods such as branded clothing and rock music (de Zengotita 2005), but for the very “common ground” on which people rest.

One of the salient features of experience in the developed world is the emergence of a comparative cartographic gaze based on the twin imperatives of tourism and real estate. As the world opened up to travelers in the second half of the twentieth century and tourism rapidly became one of the most important items of trade on the planet, the range of potential destinations increased significantly (Urry 1990). The ending of the Cold War, for example, saw the emergence of many former Soviet-bloc countries as prime destinations for tourists, as the economies of Central and Eastern Europe sought to accelerate infrastructural development and employment through tourism. It is no accident in this respect that many of the locations chosen for the shooting of the most recent James Bond film Casino Royale (2006) are to be found in the Czech Republic or Montenegro. Destinations through brochures, television travel programs, magazine articles, Sunday supplements, can be visually compared across the globe, and from this cartographic perspective the planet becomes a set of juxtaposed images on offer to the viewer who has the financial wherewithal to make choices. The correlative in real estate is the fate of property in a globalized world. As restrictions on the movement of funds and the acquisition of property were relaxed in many countries in the 1980s and 1990s, significant investment funds were directed towards real estate that could now be purchased and evaluated on a worldwide basis. So now in Singapore, it is possible to buy 1000 feet of office space in London and vice versa (Sennet 2002:46). When N. H. Seek, the President of the real estate firm GIC, designates the “world winning cities” that represent optimal possibilities for property investment, he includes Calgary, Austin, San José, Helsinki, Tallinn, Budapest, Barcelona, Cape Town, Santiago (Chile), Porto Alegre, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Xian, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou (Seek 2006). It is not just pension funds and large corporate investors, however, who seek financial redemption in bricks and mortar.

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, of the Institute for Public Policy Research, noted that in 2004 over 200,000 British nationals left the United Kingdom to live abroad on a long-term or permanent basis. A survey showed that over one-fifth of Britons intended to spend their retirement years abroad and with one quarter of the British population set to reach retirement age by 2030, this means many millions of Britons will be
living outside the country in locations dotted across the globe (Sriskandarajah 2006). The popularity of programs in the UK such as the Channel 4 series A Place in the Sun, which helps “buyers find their dream home in an exotic location”, further reinforce this powerful comparative cartographic gaze where the world is flattened into the collage of the holiday snapshot album, except that in the case of property buyers, the holiday-makers do not go away but stay behind. What is striking about this visual instrumentalism, whether it be in tourist discourse or real estate, is that “[p]laces have turned into a collection of abstract characteristics, in a mobile world, ever easier to be visited, appreciated and compared, but not known from within” (Szerszynski and Urry 2006: 127). In this context it may be more appropriate to posit as a possible ideal for Translation Studies not so much an ideal of a global citizen as a global denizen. In other words, what denizenship posits is a knowledge from within, and this knowledge, if we consider the aims of Common Ground—place myths, stories, personal associations—is almost invariably though not exclusively expressed through language.

If the slogan of real estate agents is “Location, Location, Location”, there could hardly be a better definition at some level of what translators do. Part of the business of the translator is to understand what people actually say in a particular location and to bring this knowledge to another location, the target language. This is why the education and training of translators takes years. It is not so much an abstraction from as an engagement in local attachments that is demanded by the translator’s task, and this task takes time. When Richard (Brad Pitt) in Babel desperately seeks help for his wife, Susan (Cate Blanchett), who has been inadvertently shot, he shouts out the English word “Help” to a Moroccan motorist who, bewildered and alarmed, speeds off. The visual promise of the holiday is undercut by the linguistic reality of his surroundings. The inability to translate thus foregrounds a cultural blindness on the part of the traveler who finds he is not so much an empowered citizen of the world as the unwilling denizen of a place. In this sense, the failure to translate reinstates the importance of a particular kind of time in overly spatialized and visualized models of the global. The importance of instantaneous time is repeatedly emphasized by commentators on globalization who see the availability of cheap, ubiquitous computing as the portal to a flat world of instant, limitless connectedness (Friedman 2005). This standard time-space compression thesis lends itself effectively to panoptic ideals of global simultaneity where the diversity of the world can be captured on a multiplicity of screens. However, this perception is in marked contradiction to the intensely local, place-bound existence of the majority of inhabitants on the planet. Gerladine Pratt and Susan Hanson, for example, argue that:

Although the world is increasingly well connected, we must hold this in balance with the observation that most people live intensely local lives; their homes, work places, recreation, shopping, friends, and often family are all located within a relatively small orbit. The simple and obvious fact that overcoming distance requires time and money means that the everyday events of daily life are well grounded within a circumscribed arena. (Pratt and Hanson 1994: 10–11)
This is not to argue, of course, that place cannot be shaped by influences from elsewhere, even if people do not move. On the contrary, from the spread of Buddhism in China to the initiation of rural electrification projects worldwide, local lives can be dramatically transformed by developments that have their point of origin many thousands of kilometers away. What the prevalence of local lives does mean, however, is that local languages have a reality that resists the easy sweep of the comparative cartographic gaze.

A further implication is that one must invoke an idea of durational time alongside the more commonly represented notion of instantaneous time. That is to say, any notion of an understanding of another culture, many of which in a multilingual world involve another language, implies a potential three-phase level of translational interaction that is at the constituent core of denizenship. Phase One interaction is heteronomous translation that involves relying on someone to do the translation for you, whether it is the interpreter in the real estate office in France or the Polish PA negotiating for the foreign business-person with local suppliers in Warsaw. Interpreting, no matter how proficient, takes time and already there is a sense in which time is beginning to “thicken” in phase-one translation exchange. Phase Two is the shift towards semi-autonomous translation where subjects want to begin to learn the language themselves and in a sense do their own translation. They begin to invest a certain amount of time in the process so that the durational reality of time begins to take precedence over the instantaneous. In *Learning the Arts of Linguistic Survival* (2007), Alison Phipps describes the experiences of “tourist language learners” in a Scottish context, and demonstrates how tourists’ perception of time and place alters with the shift to semi-autonomous translation. The place of escape mutates into the time of discovery. Phase Three is fully-autonomous translation where subjects become fully-functioning bilinguals or multilinguals whose competence involves extensive expenditure of time either as a result of circumstance (growing up in bilingual/multilingual environments) or acquisition (formal language study). All three phases involve the acknowledgement of the state of denizenship with the shift from the heteronomous to the autonomous modes of translation, indicating a gradual shift from recognition to implication. All three phases equally imply the restoration of durational time as a dimension to the experience and understanding of space. In a sense, what the inevitable fact of translation contests is the banal globalism that draws the world in Ingold’s words cited earlier “ever further from the matrix of our lived experience.”

One of the fundamental misunderstandings of “flat-earthers” in their euphoric celebration of a friction-free globalization is to substitute distance as a physical fact for distance as an economic reality. To present the world as a smaller place because planes fly faster or computer messages are delivered at greater speed is to assume that proximity is a function of time and closeness is simply a matter of real or virtual cohabitation. However, distance for human beings is primarily social rather than physical (Massey 2004). In other words, living near or close to someone does not imply that contact is therefore immediate, instantaneous, and unproblematic because matters of income, class, gender (in particular instances) may make any meeting or interaction a distinct-
ly remote possibility. To take one example out of many, in their study of regional poverty and income inequality in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Michael Förster, David Jesuit, and Timothy Smeeding noted a marked and continuous rise in income inequalities as the economies of the region became increasingly integrated into the global economy. They further observed a particular materialization of income inequality in the capital cities in the case of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (Förster, Jesuit, and Smeeding 2003). So as the world’s economy drew closer, the income disparities between citizens of the same territories grew larger. The physical proximity to a global reticular economy was enhanced, but the social distance between groups was enlarged. The social nature of distance is a vivid illustration of the realities of denizenship, which may be very much at variance with more abstracted or detached notions of citizenship with its accompanying utopia of friction-free possibility. Distance as a socio-economic construction also underlines the centrality of translation to thinking about forms of distance in the contemporary global order.

In 2005, the United Population Division projected that in the period 2005–2050 the net number of international migrants to more developed regions would be around 98 million. In the period 2000–2005, net immigration in twenty-eight countries either prevented population decline or at least doubled the contribution of natural increase (births minus deaths) to population growth (United Nations Population Division 2005). Ageing populations in wealthier countries and the huge labor demands of service-intensive economies are of course two main contributory factors to increased migration (Sassen 1999). Thus, the combined effects of demographic disparity and the exponential growth of the tertiary sector in developed economies mean the demands for economic migrants, despite the vociferations of political parties on the Far Right, are set to continue, if not increase. At any rate, as many migrants are brought in initially to perform poorly-paid, relatively unskilled jobs, the sense of social distance can be relatively acute as the affluent diners in the up-market restaurant will have little in common with the migrant kitchen help working fifty meters away behind closed doors.

The distance can of course be even more marked in that what the increasingly global search for migrant workers has done, despite the many obstacles put in place by national governments, is to alter the linguistic composition of workforces. Bischoff and Loutan, for example, reporting on the interpreting situation in Swiss hospitals, noted the consequences for translation and language awareness of a shift in migration patterns. In earlier decades, migrants had largely come from countries that spoke a Romance language such as Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. The situation began to change towards the end of the last century, and a nationwide survey of interpreter services in Swiss hospitals revealed that the languages requiring interpreters were, among others, Albanian, South Slavic (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Bulgarian), Turkish, Tamil, Kurdish, Arabic, and Russian (Bischoff and Loutan 2004: 191). Thus, there was a shift from relatively low levels of linguistic awareness, due to a real or assumed familiarity with cognate Romance languages, to a situation where radical linguistic dissimilarity made the fact and existence of language otherness inescapable.
Hence, the recourse to language mediation in the hospitals was the acknowledgement of distance and the need to bridge this distance in some way.

In his study of Indochinese refugees working in the United States, Tollefson showed how difficult it may be for migrants to integrate linguistically into a host community. His subjects were working long, unsocial hours in poorly paid, largely unskilled jobs and had few opportunities to meet or socialize with Anglophone co-workers. An ability to communicate in the dominant host language or to translate what was been said often compounded a situation of isolation and exploitation (Tollefson 1989). Therefore, when growing multiculturalism is presented as evidence of a shrinking planet, or when versions of vernacular cosmopolitanism are offered as incontrovertible proof of the emergence of the global village, it is necessary to invoke the socio-economic dimension to distance and the increasing linguistic hybridity of migrant workforces to restore a proper sense of complexity to place in globalized settings. More significantly, from the perspective of Translation Studies, the proper understanding of what it is to be a denizen in a particular locality in the context of global mobility (and immobility), makes the task of the translator more rather than less important. In other words, accelerated mobility rather than continuously smoothing out differences in the sense of the frictionless circulation of a global economy of signs and spaces makes the presence of translation issues even more salient. What the inexorable rise in the demand for translation indicates (Cronin 2003), alongside the increasing prominence of community interpreting in Translation Studies debates (Blommaert 2005: 219–236), is the return of the repressed detail of spherical situatedness to debates too often dominated by the visual shorthand of the global paradigm.

How we see the world then is part of how we see ourselves. But how we see the world is also bound up with how we represent the world to ourselves and how we believe we understand it. In Envisioning Information, Edwin R. Tufte discusses Constantine Anderson’s precise 1989 axonometric projection of midtown Manhattan. In his map, Anderson was partly going back to the cartographic tradition exemplified by Michel Etienne Turgot and Louis Bretez in their 1739 Plan de Paris, where the very precise rendering of every façade and building in the city of Paris allows the reader to literally wander through the streets of the map while still being afforded the bird’s-eye view that the overall Plan provides. In Tufte’s comments on Anderson’s map, he argues:

This fine texture of exquisite detail leads to personal micro-readings, individual stories about the data: shops visited, hotels stayed at, walks taken, office windows at a floor worked on—all in the extended context of an entire building, street and neighborhood. Detail accumulates into large coherent structures; those thousands of tiny windows, when seen at a distance, gray into surfaces to form a whole building. Simplicity of reading derives from the context of detailed and complex information, properly arranged. A most unconventional design strategy is revealed: to clarify, add detail. (Tufte 1990: 37; his emphasis)

It is possible to develop highly personal detailed readings and to perceive larger structures of coherence.
A similar process is at work in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. where the viewer sees a long continuous rectangle of black granite from a distance. Coming closer to the memorial, it is possible to pick out individual names, and for those who have lost friends or relatives the individual names carry their own specific stories and resonance. Tufte asserts that a fundamental and effective principle of information design is at work in these micro/macro compositions. The panorama or the vista give the viewer the freedom of choice that comes with the overview, the ability to compare and sort through detail. On the other hand, the “micro-information, like smaller texture in landscape perception, provides a credible refuge where the space of visualization is condensed, slowed, personalized” (38). In these high-density designs viewers select, narrate, and recast data for their own purposes. One viewer might see the Veterans Memorial as a visually overwhelming indictment of warfare and empire whereas another might see the mention of a loved one as a fitting tribute to patriotic sacrifice for a noble cause. In macro/micro designs, it is the viewers rather than the designers or editors who are in control of the information. In a sense, there is no predicting or dictating to what uses the designs will be put. Moreover, as Tufte notes, “Data-thin, forgetful displays move viewers towards ignorance and passivity, and at the same time diminish the credibility of the source” (50). The less data there is available, the more viewers are likely to wonder what has been left out and for what reason. In other words, clarification does not always imply reduction and simplification can simply mean mystification.

Simplicity of data and design does not automatically imply clarity of reading; “[s]implesness is another aesthetic preference, not an information display strategy, not a guide to clarity. What we seek instead is a rich texture of data, a comparative context, an understanding of complexity revealed with an economy of means” (51). In a sense, what is being argued for here is a way of visualizing the world that does not succumb to the panoramic sweep of mastery but that makes complexity a condition of interpretive freedom. The less subtle and complex the account, the less interesting the reading. If we relate the notion of micro/macro designs back to the discussion of the translational implications of mobility, whether economic migration or the preferential forms of mobility implicit in tourism and real estate acquisition, we find the connection between the micro-information of the actual translation settings and the overview of translation analysis as an emergent thread.

Writing on complexity and contradiction in the architecture, Robert Venturi observed that “an architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation towards the whole: its truth must be in its totality or its implication of totality. It must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion […]. Less is a bore” (Venturi 1977: 17). Even if totality is a term that almost invariably provokes unease and is rarely available as a hermeneutic possibility in translation, the gesturing towards the “difficult unity of inclusion” is important. A feature of Gideon Toury’s writings through the decades has been precisely this interrogation of the macro and the micro, and the movement towards the difficult unity of inclusion. On the one hand,
there is the determined situating of translated texts as part of the macro-phenomena of a target culture, subject to the larger ideological preoccupations of the receiving culture. On the other, there is a detailed concern for the operations of norms in individual and particular instances of translation practice that clarify an overall picture. This kind of working ethic forms the basis for a way not simply of envisioning information but of finding a place for Translation Studies in the new century. Translation, in its rhetoric of self-justification, has often posited a circulatory discourse of emancipation. Translation is deemed a by and large good thing because it favors the movement of goods, people and ideas. Translators are feared and persecuted because they can or do let things in (the vernacular Bible) or let things out (state secrets). In the light of the predominance of banal globalism and the omnipresent paradigm of time/space compression, it may be necessary, however, to revisit the types of arguments that act as a horizon of expectation for translation studies. In particular, as we have seen above, the basic categories of space and time need to be reworked in a way that allows for the detail of translation to clarify the pictures of globality.

Invoking notions of denizenship, durational time, and spherical situatedness, also helps to shift an exclusive emphasis in translation history and analysis from the transnational to the translocational. The manner in which translation history effectively contested the dominance of the nation-state paradigm in the writing of the histories of national languages, literatures, and cultures, is one of the singular virtues of its emergence as an important preoccupation in Translation Studies at the end of twentieth century. The history of nations could no longer be understood as a sui generis, internal development within immutably fixed borders, but was presented increasingly as the result of an intense traffic of influences from elsewhere through the medium of translation (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995). Indeed, part of the marginalization of translation as an activity was the tendency of nationalist historiography to exclude narratives that called into question founding myths of originary purity. Of course, the emphasis on the transnational also complemented the accelerated flows of goods, peoples and services commonly associated with the emergence of globalization in late modernity. However, there may be a sense in which undue attention to the transnational still leaves analysts operating within the implicit paradigm of the national (if only in terms of scale) and that what is required is smaller-scale, more spatially located and temporally durational forms of inquiry such as the model provided by Sherry Simon’s Translating Montreal (2006). In her exploration of one specific city and the manner in which the denizens of the city over time have engaged with the fact of translation, Simon shows not only how detail clarifies but how it is possible to conceive of a politics of place beyond place through translation. Specifically, concentration on one particular place becomes an opening out rather than a closing down, a foregrounding of a complexity of connectedness rather than a paean to singular insularity. Although not written from a Translation Studies perspective, Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse’s history of Wroclaw equally shows the macro/micro design of translational connexity in the centuries-old history of one location (Davies and Moorhouse 2002). Translocational anal-
yses of translation practice invite us to revisit assumptions about the nature of space and time in recent and not so recent human history, but they also, more urgently, cause us to consider the consequences of the failure to take cognizance of the full complexity of target cultures for places where people live and interact. Simple-mindedness is not the one language the peoples of the world speak, and it is only the dangerously simple-minded who see this as a desirable ending to the Babel story.

References


CHAPTER 21

Culture planning, cohesion, and the making and maintenance of entities*

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Throughout history, deliberate initiatives have generated change in the life course of societies. Such initiatives, called in short “culture planning”, in particular when carried out on an intensive scale, have frequently been tightly connected with actions for the creation or maintenance of groups, large and small. This paper attempts to illustrate the connections between the invention, codification, and diffusion of culture repertoires and the ability of groups, societies and nations to survive.

Keywords: initiatives, culture planning, change, socio-cultural cohesion, groups, large entities, societies: emergence and maintenance, management of life, options of life management

Introduction

Planning a culture is an instance of deliberate creation of new options for social and individual life. The generally accepted view is that such options somehow emerge and develop through the anonymous contributions of untold masses. These contributions are normally described as “spontaneous”, i.e., as products, or by-products, of the very occurrence of human interaction. Items emerging under conditions of spontaneity are believed to be random. Moreover, the way by which the items accumulate, get organized and develop into accepted repertoires is supposed to be the result of free negotiations between market forces. The complex mechanism through which, out of the free negotiation between these forces, certain groups adopt or reject specific repertoires is the chief question on the agenda of all the human and social sciences.

However, this view needs several modifications; not by eliminating the ideas of spontaneity and market negotiations, but by recognizing that these very negotiations

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may unavoidably lead to acts of planning. This happens because negotiations inherently result in selection—choosing between alternatives. Thus, once any body, either an individual or a group, in whatever capacity, starts to act for the promotion of certain elements and for the suppression of other elements, “spontaneity” and “deliberate acts” are no longer unrelated types of activities. Any deliberate intervention to establish priorities in an extant set of possibilities (often discussed out-of-context as “codification”, “standardization”, or “legislation”) must therefore be recognized as a basic instance of “planning”. If, in addition to acting in favor of priorities, a given individual or a group not only supports but is actively engaged in devising new options, then planning is unmistakably at work.

Why certain individuals or groups become engaged in culture planning, what they expect to achieve by it, and what practices they use, are among the questions I intend to deal with in the following.

Planning is a regular cultural procedure

If “planning” is conceived of as deliberate intervention in an extant or a crystallizing repertoire, then this brings us to my first hypothesis, namely that culture planning is a regular activity in the history of collective entities.

From the very dawn of history, a major preoccupation of groups and individuals in the context of social organization has been the introduction of order into what may have emerged as a disorderly set of options. That is, they have been engaged in continuously transforming non-structured inventories into structured repertoires. By the very act of such a structuration, new relations were established for extant categories. Through combination, analogy, and contrast, new components were introduced as well. Clearly, however, any such acts could not just stop at the level of introducing some order or priorities into an extant, ready-made set, modifying it through whatever sorts of manipulation.

Culture planning definitely was at work, to judge by the evidence, in the very first organized human group that documented itself, that is the old Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia. In this and subsequent phases of known human history, i.e. Akkad, Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, the Hittite Empire, and various other politically organized entities in the Fertile Crescent (such as Mari, Ebla, or Yamhad), planning was kept in the hands of those few who held physical control of the groups in whom they attempted to inculcate organized culture.

The conspicuous interest in culture planning expressed by rulers of those entities is clear evidence of their awareness of the insufficiency of sheer physical force for successful domination. The emergence of centralized religious institutions and practices (in contradistinction, perhaps, to local cults), we are told by historians, can best be explained in terms of imparting social cohesion via cognitive allegiance through persuasion. Clearly, by adhering to the same codified set of cults and beliefs (anachronisti-
cally called religions), people were told what reality was, and which options of what repertoires are available to them, or indispensable for them. Students of ancient Egypt have suggested an explanation for the enigmatic preoccupation with the burial monuments known as pyramids. In their view, the whole enterprise was dictated by the need to invent a common project for the population to accept a certain repertoire of social order and individual identity. Even in Assyria, whose disrepute was gained by cruelty and use of extreme force, rulers displayed remarkable interest in promoting themselves by propaganda (Tadmor 1981, 1986). Singing one’s own praises for having provided the good life to the people seems to have become a cliché used by rulers on their inscriptions all around the Fertile Crescent (Azitawadda of Karatepe and Kilamuwa of Sam’al are two examples that come to mind). And the early schools of Sumer, with the rich options they created in terms of writing systems and a textual canon, are the world’s oldest prototype for education systems, academies, and canon-dictating institutions — all serving as the most readily available instruments for the implementation of desired or preferred repertoires.

In short, there is nothing modern in rulers taking deliberate action to create repertoires that would be accepted by at least part of the population under their domination. Nor is the recruitment to that end of people to undertake the planning.

It seems, however, that it is only in ancient Israel, and later in ancient Greece, that we first witness attempts carried out not by power-holders but by self-nominated persons removed from the circles of power to take upon themselves the task of offering alternative repertoires, or parts of such repertoires, and to publicly work for their acceptance, often in opposition to power. I am referring to the prophets in Israel who, defying both political and cultural rulers (the latter generally personified by the clergy), often by risking their own necks (the most famous case being that of Jeremiah), struggled for repertoire replacements. The same holds true of the Greek philosophers and other literati. Both groups can be seen not as agents hired to render services to demanding rulers but as archaic types of intellectuals. The absence of evidence about such individuals or groups in the other ancient societies (though glimpses of possible cognates do emerge, such as the case of Imhotep in 2630–2611 BC) does not necessarily prove that they did not exist, only that the evidence was not preserved, which by itself is not an insignificant piece of information about the relevant society.

1. Azitawadda (8th–9th century BC) boasts repeatedly in the inscription found at Karatepe (Cilicia, Anatolia) that in his time, “all over the Adana valley from sunrise to sunset […] there was plenty of food and good life and long life and enjoyment to all the Danaeans and the whole Adana Valley” (Tur-Sinai 1954:70). Kilamuwa of Sam’al (south-central Turkey, 12th century BC) boasts that “[…] to some people I have been a father, and to others a mother, and to others a brother. People who have not seen the face of a sheep I have made owners of a cattle, people who have not seen the face of a bull I have made owners of a herd […],” and so on (Donner & Röllig 1971, No. 24). For both texts, and various other of the same vein, see also Green 2003. (All translations are mine.)

2. See Even-Zohar (in print) for a further discussion of the case of intellectuals in antiquity.
Since the beginnings of the Modern Age, towards the end of the 18th century, rulers and other power-holders have been more and more inclined (although not necessarily willingly) to resort to culture planning, making growing use of the repertoires provided, directly or indirectly, by culture producers. Culture planning has definitely accumulated vigor, intensity and momentum, having become a major factor in the shaping, reshaping, and maintaining of large entities.

The implementation of planning provides socio-cultural cohesion

The implementation of planning provides cohesion to either a factual or a potential entity. This is achieved by creating a spirit of allegiance among those who adhere to the repertoire thus introduced.

By “socio-cultural cohesion” I mean a state where a widespread sense of solidarity, or togetherness, exists among a group of people, which consequently does not require conduct enforced by power. I think the key concept for such cohesion is the mental disposition that propels people to act in many ways that otherwise would have been contrary to their “natural inclinations” and vital interests. Going to war prepared to be killed would be the ultimate case, amply repeated throughout human history. To create shared readiness on a fair number of issues is something that, although vital for any society, cannot be taken for granted. For example, no government can take for granted that people will obey “laws”, whether written or not, unless people are successfully persuaded to do so. Obedience achieved by force or intimidation, applied by the military or the police, can be effective for a certain span of time. However, sooner or later such obedience will collapse, partly because few societies can afford to keep a large enough corps of law-enforcement agents.

Classical sociological thinking has recognized the powerful role of what they called “persuasion” for the “successful control” of a dominated population. As most succinctly put by Bartoli, these mechanisms consist

odi persuasione alla conformità e di interiorizzazione di modelli culturali che la classe o i gruppi al potere ritengono necessari per i mantenimento dell’equilibrio del sistema sociale e che, in particolare nelle società fortemente stratificate, determinati altri gruppi o classi sociali pongono al centro di una strategia di organizzazione del consenso attorno ai propri obiettivi e attorno alle proprie definizioni della realtà. (Bartoli 1981:4)3

It is not easy to assess the level of cohesion in any society. However, it seems worthwhile to develop some clear categories for such assessments. These categories make it clear what we may mean by a “high level” — which in its turn can be re-translated to

3. “Of persuasion to conformity and of internalization of the cultural models (patterns) that the dominating classes or groups deem necessary for maintaining the equilibrium of the social system and which, especially in highly stratified societies, certain other groups or social classes put in the center of a strategy of organizing the consensus about the appropriate objectives and the appropriate definitions of reality.”
“success” from the point of view of planning — or a “low level,” which in its turn can be re-translated to “failure”. When, for example, territories are subjected to the domination of external powers, and the local population sticks to the repertoire with which it had crystallized as an entity, we may speak of a high level of cohesion. One could think of such cases as the Jews in Roman Palestine, the Polish under the domination of Germany, Russia, and Austria, or the Icelanders under the domination of Denmark. On the other hand, we have evidence of low levels of cohesion in the seemingly rapid collapse and disappearance of the Assyrians as both a distinct organized entity and a group of identifiable individuals. This is an especially striking example because of Assyria’s notorious esprit de corps, imparted by brutality and terror.

Cohesion is a necessary condition for the creation or survival of large entities

Socio-cultural cohesion may become a necessary condition for creating a new entity, and/or for the survival of an existing entity.

The large entities discussed here are social units such as “community”, “tribe”, “clan”, “people”, or “nation”; they are not “natural” objects. They are formed by the acts of individuals, or small groups of people, who take initiatives and are successful in mobilizing the resources needed for the task. The most vital element among those resources is a cultural repertoire that makes it possible for the endeavoring group to provide justification, contents and raison-d’être to the separate and distinct existence of the entity.

Various methods can be observed for the creation of large entities, especially those known as “nations”, where we witness a search for a repertoire suitable to support the existence of the entity and secure its perpetuation. The most conspicuous seem to be the following:

1. A group takes control of some territory by force and dominates its inhabitants. If the enterprise is to hold, there is a chance that the members of the controlling group will eventually realize that for the maintenance and survival of the entity, they had better do something to achieve cohesion. Many cases in history where a relative minority invades or otherwise takes control over a majority territory would provide good examples: the Franks in Gaul, the Swedes in Kievan Rus, the Swabs and Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula, or the Ostrogoths in Italy.

2. A group of individuals organize themselves and become engaged in a power struggle to rid themselves of control they wish to reject. Once they succeed, they may find themselves at sea vis-à-vis the entity they created which, now that the struggle is over, may disintegrate for lack of cohesion. This may have been the case of Holland after the so-called rebellion against Spanish rule. According to Schama,

The most extraordinary invention of a country that was to become famous for its ingenuity was its own culture. From ingredients drawn from earlier incarnations, the Dutch created a fresh identity. Its manufacture was in response to what would otherwise have
been an unbearably negative legitimation: rebellion against royal authority. Unlike the Venetians, whose historical mythology supplied a pedigree of immemorial antiquity and continuity, the Dutch had committed themselves irrevocably to a “cut” with their actual past, and were now obliged to reinvent it so as to close the wound and make the body politic whole once again. On a more pragmatic level, it was imperative that popular allegiance be mobilized exclusively in favor of the new Fatherland. What was required of a northern Netherlands culture, then, was that it associate all those living within the frontiers of the new Republic with a fresh common destiny, that it stigmatize the recent past as alien and unclean and rebaptize the future as patriotic and pristine. (Schama 1987: 67)

And further:

Dutch patriotism was not the cause, but the consequence, of the revolt against Spain. Irrespective of its invention after the fact, however, it rapidly became a powerful focus of allegiance to people who considered themselves fighting for heart and home. No matter that heart and home more obviously meant Leiden and Haarlem than some new abstraction of a union, the concept of a new patria undoubtedly gave comfort and hope to citizens who might otherwise have felt themselves desperately isolated as well as physically beleaguered. It is not surprising, then, to find that it was in the period of the great sieges of the 1570s that the first signs of national identity became visible on coins and medals. (Schama 1987: 69)

3. An individual or a group engage in devising a repertoire to justify the establishment of an entity over a certain territory that does not necessarily overlap with their home territory. This is often connected with the successful so-called unification of different territories. The same method, however, can work in the opposite way, i.e. it can make it possible for a certain territory to secede fully or partly from a larger entity (Hechter 1992).

Conspicuous examples for the first type (“unification”) may be the cases of both Germany and Italy, two states founded around almost the same time (1860–1870). In both cases, the work of planners preceded the actual political course. In Germany, as pointed out by an accidental observer, “Bismarck hätte die politische Einheit nie schaffen können, wenn nicht vorher von unsern Klassikern die geistige Einheit begründet worden wäre” (Goldstein 1912: 20). In Italy, if there had not been such a repertoire the tiny and in many minds ridiculous kingdom of Piedmont–Sardinia could not have succeeded in unifying the whole of the Italian peninsula including Sicily.

Examples of the second type (secession) are all cases of states and provinces created by separating from a larger state, such as Czechoslovakia after World War I, or Slovakia in 1993, or any of the “autonomous communities” of Spain, most conspicuously Catalonia and Galicia.

4. A group that cannot survive, either culturally or physically, as an entity in one territory (where they may be a persecuted or an underprivileged minority) emigrates

4. “Bismarck would have never been able to create the political unity, had our Classical writers not founded prior to it the spiritual unity.”
to some other territory and there puts to use the repertoire they could not implement in their home country. This could apply to the emigration of the Nordic groups who founded Iceland in the 9th century, or the English Puritans’ emigration to New England, or the emigration of Jews to Palestine towards the end of the 19th century.5

In all of the varieties of the emergence and crystallization of entities, it thus becomes apparent, whatever the pace, that the maintenance of an entity over time is certainly a primary concern for those who are interested in its existence. The larger the entity, the greater the difficulty in maintaining it without some consent of its members. (For more about consent see Dodd 1986, esp. p. 2.)

The more consent is achieved through cohesion, the more this interest will become a concern of larger numbers of individuals. If not achieved, or not even attempted, it will naturally remain an interest of the very privileged few, who may be the only ones drawing benefits from the existence of the entity. This may nevertheless endanger the survival of the entity in the long run and put in peril the vested interests of the privileged group itself.

By collapse I do not necessarily mean the physical disappearance of a collective of individuals, although such an event may also follow violent shifts in power. The examples of such events are too numerous and too obvious to quote. Rather, what I mean is the termination, whether permanent or temporary, of the separately identifiable entity qua entity. This involves the adoption by the relevant individuals of a different repertoire, which they can no longer use to identify themselves as “distinct” from all the others.6

Planning needs a power base

What thus matters for planning are its prospects of being successfully implemented. Accordingly, planners must have the power, get the power, or obtain the endorsement of those who possess power.

The purpose of this hypothesis, trivial and self-evident as it may seem, is to draw attention to the fact, often neglected in both the humanities and the social sciences, that to be engaged with repertoire production per se is only a necessary condition for a desired planning to be implemented.

Power can be achieved on various levels, and is by no means a simple notion in relation to culture producers. Often the engagement of intellectuals with repertoire production seems to be nothing else than sheer sport. With the emergence of self-nominated producers, i.e. those whose services are not engaged by power-holders, the products they deliver may not reach more than a limited circle. People who produce texts in a language that is not acceptable to the dominating groups, or who invent or re-invent

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5. About culture planning in British-ruled Palestine see Even-Zohar 1990a.
6. Quite recently, Jared Diamond (Diamond 2005) dedicated a whole book to cases of collapse.
the language involved, or become engaged in long and infinite discussions about the desired nature of the entity about which they may be dreaming, or about the nature of the members who will be born in that entity, or the kind of lifestyle which will replace the current one, and so on — may all look pitiable and pathetic to their contemporaries, who may regard what they do as wasting life on futile endeavors. However, once the product gets somehow to market, a larger circle may be created to eventually become the power base needed for action that will introduce the desired shifts. The situation then may change dramatically, transforming the erstwhile helpless culture producers into powerful agents.

A planning activity that may develop into a full-scale endeavor for repertoire replacement can start with seemingly harmless products. Indeed, many new entities can trace their roots to such products, be they epics allegedly written down from the mouths of villagers in the primordial forests of Karelia (I am thinking of course of the Finnish Kalevala) or lyrics written in a no longer prestigious language by a fragile woman living in half-seclusion in Santiago de Compostela (I am referring of course to Rosalía de Castro). The epic in Finland, like the lyrics of Rosalía, became cornerstones for new repertoires that impart a different sort of cohesion. In Spanish Galicia, the small circle including Rosalía and especially her husband Manuel Martínez Murguía organized the innocent Xogos florais (a poetry competition; literally: Floral Games), the first of which was held in La Coruña in 1861. This created the public channel for the new options to be offered to the potential market.7 In Italy before unification, Verdi’s operas must have served a similar role, with libretti censored when their text seemed too dangerous to the contemporary rulers. Incidentally, Verdi’s very name has become politically subversive as it was punningly interpreted as an acronym for the phrase “Viva Emmanuelle re di Italia” (Long live Emmanuel, King of Italy).

The xogos florais, and a variety of associations and societies bearing such harmless names as “Language Brotherhodds” (Irmandades da fala in Galicia) or “Literary Societies” (the Icelandic Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag in Copenhagen), are often the primary, or even crude, instruments for creating power bases for the implementation of culture planning. Although they may eventually develop into full-scale political bodies such as parties and mass organizations, I cannot think of any case where their endeavors have made real progress until coupled with either actual or potential holders of power. Culture planning could have been carried out for who knows how long by the Italian culture entrepreneurs without reaching their goal, which was to create a new Italy and new Italians — not only politically disengaged from the Austrians and the Spaniards, but also positively following a new set of directives for life. It was the coupling of their aspirations with the political ambitions of the prime minister of Piedmont, Count

7. For the sake of precision, however, it should be noted that the Xogos florais of Galicia followed the Catalan Jocs Florals of 1859, which in their turn followed the tradition of the Jeux floraux of Occitania (Languedoc, Provence), which have never led to any success faintly similar to those of Catalonia and Galicia. The Jocs florals of Barcelona are still held as an annual poetry festival.
Cavour, that made it all possible, almost suddenly. Hopeless ideas, like the revival of the Italian literary language, could at last start with the establishment of the Italian state. Similarly, more than a hundred years of the lingering venture to create a unique Galician entity did not bring about the same result as did some seven or ten years of local government. Although belatedly, that government did “discover”, as it were, that it could successfully make use of the rich repertoire already created, most particularly the rejuvenated Galician language and its by-products, to provide optimal justification for the political identity of Galicia, needed to secure the continuation of its autonomy.

**Effective planning may become an interest of an entity**

Numerous studies show that power-holders and planners may both acquire, through successful implementation, the domination, or control, of a given entity. To return to Bartoli’s formulation, which I find representative of the socio-historical tradition, such domination is the ultimate goal and purpose of the enterprise of culture planning from the point of view of power-holders. Obviously, the latter wish to reinforce their positions by making an accommodating repertoire acceptable to larger sections of the population, while culture producers may turn into power-holders through the acceptance of their products, or obtain the support of those already in power. In any of the possible consequences of a successful implementation of planning, both may profit.

This type of analysis makes perfect sense for quite a few cases: at least one can hardly find a trace of other conspicuous interests in those cases. For an agglomerate of individuals inhabiting some territory, the benefits of establishing an organization that is larger than their own immediate environment are not at all self-evident. On the contrary, such an organization may even constitute a threat to their liberties and force upon them unwelcome burdens.

It is only when there is awareness that there may be profits from the founding of a large organization, or when there is awareness that losses will be incurred without it, that people may display passive or active consent. This does not mean that in practice everyone then gives a hand to those who take it upon themselves to carry the load of the enterprise, but it definitely allows the latter to carry on with fewer impediments.

No wonder, therefore, that in suggesting an alternative repertoire the propagators often refer to matters such as discrimination or humiliation which, it is then claimed, can be cured only if a current repertoire is overthrown. For example, if those who dominate us mock us and discriminate against us because we have not mastered the language they master best, then an alternative can be found, that is, to use “our own language” instead. This “own language” is often presented as a natural resource, equally and painlessly accessible to members of the addressed group. In fact, this is hardly ever the case, since more often than not the language must be rehashed from some non-standardized state, thus losing its immediacy for the targeted speakers. In many other cases (for instance, Italian), the language is not anyone’s actual language at all.
The same holds for any other possible items of a repertoire such as daily customs, dress and food, interaction routines, and so on. However, in all cases, whether painlessly accessible or acquired by learning, what counts is not the real state of the alternative repertoire as “native” or “indigenous”, but its ability to function as dissimilar to the current options. If a different repertoire can provide the options otherwise barred, then persuasion is undoubtedly looming.

The same factors certainly apply to the much more clearly institutionalized state where an entity is already well-established. In such cases we can expect some higher degree of socio-cultural cohesion, which makes the members of the entity prone to resist undesired repertoires whose imposition upon them is attempted. In such cases it makes perfect sense to argue that resistance to an alien repertoire, or an interest in promoting home repertoires, should become a common sentiment, if not well-spread awareness, among the members of the entity. It is indeed their only way to survive as an entity, a status through which their privileges are guaranteed.

Naturally, there is a lot of room here to discuss to what extent this awareness is a consequence of actual privileges enjoyed by people, or of manipulatively successful inculcation, i.e. an effective persuasion carried out by agents of the power-holders. I would like to contend that this is a matter of interpretation for each particular case. I would hasten to reject any one-sided or biased analysis: (a) the one that may fall into a romanticizing trap, describing such involvements as supported by all members of the community who, devoted to the cause, as it were, are said to have realized how much their deepest “values” are at stake, and (b) the one that analyses the enterprise as a basically cynical machination whose only goal is to bring profits to the exploiters of common credulity.

Market factors do not easily accommodate themselves to new repertoires

Since, by definition, the implementation of culture planning entails the introduction of change into a current state of affairs, the prospects of success also depend on an effective utilization of market conditions. The chance for the planning to be frustrated may therefore be constantly expected. In addition, where resisting forces are strong, failure — either partial or complete — may ensue.

The “market” is the aggregate of factors involved in the selling and buying of products and with the promotion of types of consumption. This includes all factors participating in the semiotic (“symbolic”) exchange involving such transactions, and with other linked activities (Bourdieu 1971). While it is the aggregate of the culture “institution” that may try to direct and dictate the types of consumption, and establish the values of the various items of production, what really determines its success or failure is the kind of interaction that it is able to establish with the free market. In the socio-cultural reality, factors of the cultural institution and those of the market may naturally intersect in the same space: for instance, literary “salons” are both institutions and
markets. Yet the specific agents playing the role of either an institution or a market, i.e. either marketers or marketees, may not overlap at all. A regular school, for instance, is a branch of “the institution” in view of its ability to sell the type of properties that the dominating establishment (i.e. the central part of the cultural institution) wishes to sell to students. Teachers actually function as marketing agents. The marketees, who wil-lily-nilly become some sort of consumers, are the students. The facilities, including the built-in interaction patterns, which are made available by the school, actually constitute the market *strictu sensu*. However, all of these factors together may, for the sake of a closer analysis, be viewed as the “market”.

The implementation of culture planning is therefore obviously a matter of successful marketing carried out among other means by propaganda and advertising. It can be argued that this might be a simplification, since one’s willingness to buy a certain merchandise does not necessarily organize one’s life in the sense that a culture repertoire does; that is, products do not dictate one’s view of reality and, hence, all behavioral components derivable from it. I do not support this argument, because there seems to be considerable agreement regarding the role of modern consumption in the view of reality held by the members of the so-called consumer society. The distinguishing line between various modes of inculcation lies elsewhere, namely, not in the profundity and weight, as it were, of the products that are promoted, but in their degree of internalization.

As we know, the inculcation of a repertoire can only appear to be successful. People accept it either because there is no alternative, that is, if it is imposed, or because the surrounding milieu requires it, or because this was the only option they were raised with. Public adherence to such a repertoire renders obvious profits, such as becoming a member of the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R, or one exonerated from being deported to gulags. If this entails negation of divinity, any overt practices of religion may be wiped out from the life of people. However, on the morrow of the collapse of the old U.S.S.R, young people in post-communist Russia who may have had no apparent previous access to religious cults eagerly embraced the Orthodox religion, an alternative cultural repertoire completely contrary to their whole way of upbringing.

Let me reiterate that for a repertoire to be wiped out and replaced by another there need not be a repertoire shift within the same societal group. If a position shift occurs within society, whereby the group adhering to one repertoire is pushed towards the periphery of the overall structure of society, the repertoire may lose its primary position. Such processes are prevalent in any society, a hypothesis that reminds us to admit that if we accept the market hypothesis, then any established products are always at risk of overthrow by contenders. In culture, such contenders may be those who were defeated in some previous round. If we accept the polysystem idea (Even-Zohar 1979, 1990), then any time we allow ourselves to observe some “new phase” in a system, what we are actually observing — as was long ago clearly hypothesized by Tynjanov (1929) — is the success of some new repertoire in pushing its way to the center. This success does not necessarily obliterate the older repertoire: it may only dethrone it. The defeated may at
that moment be too weak to frustrate successful implementation of the new repertoire, but they may grow strong enough in time to have such an attempt.

I would therefore like to stress that we are too often tempted, for the sake of elegance of description, to accept neatly finalized states. In matters of culture planning, as with all matters of culture analysis, neat states are only temporary, and even then visible at only some sector of the overall network of relations we call “society” or “culture”. Accordingly, at the very moment when a given enterprise, the implementation of a certain repertoire fought for by dedicated individuals, has reached its peak, it may already be on its way towards disintegration and irrelevance for the emerging new circumstances, those which would call for another, different repertoire.

The consequences of failure of culture planning are not the entity’s collapse, but a creation of energy

When partial or complete failure ensues, planning and the activities it engenders do not necessarily create negative consequences for the welfare of the entity involved, although it may of course be detrimental for the particular persons involved with the planning.

I contend that where a planning activity has taken place, regardless of the consequences, the relevant entity — or the agglomerase of people — may have achieved improvement of life, although not necessarily according to the planners’ design or in terms of satisfying the goals and ambitions of their partners in power. Moreover, I am more and more convinced that for the maintenance of any such socio-cultural human entity, the planning activity per se eventually creates motion of some scale, an enhancement of vitality which makes it possible for the entity involved to access options from which it may have been previously barred. I suggest the term “energy” to cover this bundle of events, at least until a better term is found.

It can, of course, be argued that the engagement with planning is a result of energy rather than the other way around. Where there is social action, people also write texts and develop ideas, and engage very energetically in creating and implementing new repertoires. However, in all of the cases that served as input for my culture planning hypotheses, the engagement with planning began at a very low state in the welfare of the population. This does not mean that they all were equally humiliated or terribly underprivileged, but that they all had less access to resources than did others, or at least so it seemed from their own point of view. For example, in comparison with France and England, the 18th and 19th-century German provinces had inferior possibilities. Similarly, provinces such as 19th-century Galicia had not become out-of-the-way localities because of their geographical position on the Iberian Peninsula. On the contrary, Galicia was the first developed Roman province on the peninsula, and it kept its primary position almost until the political unity of Castile and Aragon in the second half of the 15th century. Its decline was a consequence of a deliberate policy of ostracism by
the central government. The slow and non-coordinated steps towards a reinvention of Galicia, carried out throughout the 19th century, became the only chance for the province to establish itself as an entity with a proper culture that would allow it not to be confined only to options that are available and permissible in the center. After all, this is a nutshell a definition of the relations between “periphery” and “center”: a periphery is allowed only to follow what is already available in the center, while the center is free to offer new options daily. What I have come to label “energy” allows a certain agglomerate of people, or an entity already established to some extent, to take on the privileges of a center. By doing so, local welfare increases remarkably. In contrast, if nothing is done, the place is often doomed to a peripheral state.

It is not always a simple question to determine when the results of some enterprise of planning are to be considered a success or a failure. One of the reasons for this is that for the planners and entrepreneurs, the content of a repertoire may eventually become more important than the purpose of that repertoire as described by its propagators. For example, if reintroducing the Galician or the Italian language became a sine qua non for the respective so-called “Revival Movements”, then the potential failure of Galician at a time when the ultimate goals of the Galician entity may have reached their peak, might be disappointing for those who had attached their worldview and self-identity to the language, although what the language was meant to serve was to improve, not worsen, as might have been the results, the chances of people to better their access to social, political and economic resources.

The reason for such — perhaps sad — occurrences lies in the very nature of the planning enterprise. Once planners and power-holders begin to collaborate, it may take only a short time for the enterprise to advance quickly. However, if planners must create a power base and toil for the creation of a repertoire that will appear attractive enough to entice power-holders, then the span of time between planning and its outcomes may be long, sometimes over a century, as is the Galician case. In such cases, the alternative planned repertoire, designed under the initial conditions and thus fitted with solutions relevant to those conditions, may already be cruelly dated by the time of implementation. For example, if it still seemed possible, three decades ago, to pull the Galician population from its misery by legitimizing what one called “its own language”, it has since dawned upon many modern Galicians that if they confine themselves to this, the now fully legitimized official Galician language, they are more likely to make losses than gains. The results are that while you see the language on all the public signs on roads and buildings, and on all bureaucratic forms, schoolchildren and their Galician-speaking parents are more and more inclined to prefer Castilian, a language described in the Galician patrimony as the source of all evil.8 Without the language as a central ingredient in the new Galician repertoire, one undoubtedly could not have achieved the current socio-political success of Galicia. However, with the language as

a major vehicle of socio-cultural interaction, Galicia may be doomed to backwardness. In spite of all that, without the conflicts about this and other components of repertoire, Galicia would have definitely created no energy. This conflict of interests is in itself a generator of energy, as painful as it may be for the individuals involved.9

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9. See Even-Zohar 2003 for a more elaborate discussion of “dated solutions”. 


CHAPTER 22

Translation competence and the aesthetic attitude

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Teachers whose aspiration is for their students to achieve Translation Competence need an understanding of its nature and of ways to help students attain it. The notion is related to that of Natural Translation, which proposes a series of developmental stages of the interpreting ability of a bilingual infant/child. The theory claims that links established between sets of items in a bilingual’s languages as the languages are acquired are exploited during a pretranslation stage from which Natural Translation develops. This is not incompatible with recent understanding of the Universal Grammar hypothesis and recent findings in the neurolinguistics of bilingualism. However, the model cannot account for non-native bilinguals’ abilities to translate, nor for translation abilities developed during formal instruction. These abilities might be based on innate Interlingual Proficiency and Transfer Proficiency Potentials. I list a number of ways in which Toury has argued that these potentials may be encouraged and add a suggestion or two of my own.

Keywords: translation competence, natural translation, Universal Grammar, translation pedagogy, translation and enjoyment, the aesthetic attitude

Introduction

There comes a time in the life of most disciplines when it or some of its notions appear to have reached a point of stagnation, impasse or simply general scholarly boredom. All that can be said seems to have been said, with relatively little advance or agreement. In such cases, it can be helpful to go back to the beginnings of scholarly research on the topic to see whether something there, at the roots, may have been overlooked, which might now seem more significant, perhaps in the light of advances in related areas of study. In this article I want to do this for a notion that seems to me to be in the danger zone, namely “translation competence”. While I would not dare claim that we have not advanced in research on this notion, I refer the reader to Shreve (2002) and Pym (2003) for expressions of some frustration with the state of the art. I shall also argue for a renaming of the phenomenon, which I will address from two perspectives, the theoretical and the pedagogical. I base my study on two quotations, one by an eminent
linguist and one by an eminent translation scholar. The first quotation is from Brown (1996:1):

A teacher who proposes to teach something to a student should have a clear grasp of what is to be taught. This means not only having a good grasp of what is to be taught in a particular class, but also a view of how that part of the subject relates to the whole subject area.

The relationships between parts of subjects, and between parts of subjects and whole subjects, are represented in theories. A theory of X is a set of beliefs that ideally have preferred status among a community of scholars who have the wider community’s sanction and trust; their preferred beliefs thus ideally become preferred by the wider community too. The set of preferred beliefs is thought of as internally coherent. Indeed, a new hypothesis is typically tested for coherence with other preferred beliefs within the larger theory.

The perceived coherence of belief systems is extremely important both practically and pedagogically. If we did not believe in a coherent universe we would be unable to reason from past through present to future and to understand simple everyday causality, let alone more complex relations between cause and effect; problem-solving activities would be hit-and-miss events; learning would be unthinking habit formation; and teaching would be impossible.

The interdisciplinarity of Translation Studies can be counterproductive of intra-disciplinary theoretical coherence, because one of the consequences of interdisciplinarity is a tendency to adopt and adapt, selectively, concepts and terms from a variety of disciplines. Intra-theoretical coherence is difficult to ensure in such circumstances, because those who borrow from discipline Y may not be expert in co-feeder discipline Z, and scholar A may have a different understanding of disciplines Y and Z than scholar B has. Obviously, this may affect the translation teacher’s ability to grasp their subject in the way Brown thinks essential. Besides, interdisciplinarity complicates the drawing of boundaries around disciplines and tends to make the area across which coherence needs to be established demandingly vast. However, as Toury (1984:188) notes:

if translation pedagogy does not wish to renounce all claims to pedagogical validity and go on operating on more or less intuitive grounds […] it has hardly any choice but set up, if only tentatively, its own conceptions and models of the initial and terminal “translation competence” and of the interdependencies between them, and establish on their basis the most efficient methods of approximating a student from the former to the latter position.

In other words, assuming that we desire pedagogical validity in translation teaching, we need to know how “translation competence” begins, develops and ends, and this requires us to have a good grasp of what “translation competence” is. In the following section I shall reflect on this notion and on the relationship between it and its cousin, linguistic competence, from which it derives in at least one of its earliest manifestations, albeit in rather few of its later manifestations.
Chapter 22. Translation competence and the aesthetic attitude

Competence

Anyone with even a fleeting acquaintance with linguistics will tend to be reminded by the term “competence” of linguistic competence as understood within theoretical linguistics, even though the link between this notion and that employed by most translation scholars is tenuous. A notable exception to this general tendency is Harris and Sherwood’s (1978: 155) description of “translating [including interpreting] done in everyday circumstances by people who have had no special training for it”, as “an innate verbal skill” which is “coextensive with bilingualism”. Harris and Sherwood call this “natural translation” and explicitly relate it to “Chomsky’s sense of ‘competence’” (1978:160).

Natural Translation

On the basis of case studies of untrained people of ages ranging from birth to eighteen years, and with a variety of European language pairs (as well as mathematical symbolism), but mainly on the basis of their reading of the famous case studies of childhood bilingualism by Ronjat (1913) and Leopold (1949), Harris and Sherwood present what they think of as “stages that a young natural translator goes through” (1978: 155), namely (1978: 167):

1. **Pretranslation** observed by Ronjat in his French–German bilingual son, from the time the child was one year and two months old. Pretranslation involves automatic production of both realizations (one in each language) of one concept, as exemplified by the following examples from Ronjat (cit. Harris and Sherwood 1978: 166):

   Father: Dis merci (French: “say thank you”)
   Child: Danke (German: “thank you”)
   Mother: Was hat Papa im Mund (German: “what has father in his mouth?”)
   Child: Pfeife (German: “pipe”)
   Father: Qu’est-ce que c’est que ça? (French: “what is it that it is?”)
   Child: Pipe (French: “pipe”).

   According to Ronjat, in the first case, the child responds by reflex in German because he is most often asked to say “thank you” in that language. In the second case, the languages of inquiry simply trigger two linguistic realisations of the one concept. Harris and Sherwood (1978: 166) call this a “bilingual response”, and in neither case, according to Ronjat as well as to Harris and Sherwood, is translation involved. The child at this stage (co-extensive with the one-word stage of monolingual acquisition) can also be observed spontaneously rehearsing word pairs: “œil/Auge” (“eye”); “Schiff/Bateau” (“boat”), a playful, enjoyable use of the two languages which persists later (Harris and Sherwood 1978: 166).

2. **Interpersonal autotranslation** means translation of one’s own utterance for the benefit of others (1978: 165). This is concurrent with the later stages of pretranslation,
and was observed by Ronjat from when his son was aged one year and nine months. It is preceded by a stage during which the child autotranslates for itself; this stage can clearly be considered similar in nature and motivation to the playfulness with single words just mentioned.

3. **Transduction** is defined as “communication in which the translator acts as an intermediary between two other people” (1978: 165). This was observed by Leopold in his daughter when she was three years and three months old. It is clearly what most people think of as translation.

Harris and Sherwood (1978: 167) speculate about the relationship between these stages and monolingual language development and about which of the notions of innateness then prevalent in developmental psycholinguistics is relevant to their study: A weak sense of “a specialized predisposition in children to learn how to speak from the language they hear in their environment”; or the strong sense of “an inherited ‘theory’ of language (‘universal grammar’) which enables the child to speak sooner and more grammatically than can be accounted for by its chronology [i.e. age]” (1978: 168). In spite of the above mentioned parallel which Harris and Sherwood (1978: 160) draw between Natural Translation and “Chomsky’s sense of ‘competence’”, they now opt for the weak sense of innateness, because they believe that only this will allow them to speculate about what may be required for the special disposition to engage in Natural Translation over and above what is required for the acquisition of the languages as such, and they list the following as potential features (1978: 168–169):

(i) the pleasure that young children derive from translating
(ii) a bilingual mental lexicon
(iii) a language-independent semantic store
(iv) an ability to conserve meaning across languages

Clearly, Harris and Sherwood’s findings amount to no more than rather weakly based hypotheses about the developmental stages that a natural translator goes through, since each stage is exemplified by only one or a very few individuals speaking different language pairs. Nevertheless, the issues that they address remain central for a coherent theory of translation competence and for translation pedagogy, and we can take Harris and Sherwood’s proposed stages as an hypothesis to be further tested, meanwhile seeing how well it is relatable (i) to the more carefully developed, contemporary hypothesis of Universal Grammar (UG), (ii) to recent findings from the neurolinguistics of bilingualism, and (iii) to recent explorations in the area of translation competence.

Were the stages proposed found to be supported, certain advantages would immediately accrue, especially with regard to the first stage: A spontaneous pretranslation stage lets us off the difficult theoretical hook of accounting for first steps; if translation

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1. The strong sense, currently, is Chomsky’s sense of Universal Grammar as the initial state of the language faculty, containing principles, parameters and semantic primitives.
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links are established between languages as they are acquired, we have a good basis for translation activity proper.

In addition, innately endowed pretranslation would provide a rationale for cognitively determined translation universals (Malmkjær, forthcoming), such as the under-representation in translations of features of the target language that are not shared by the source language, compared to their representation in original writing in the (target) language (Tirkkonen-Condit 2004). Tirkkonen-Condit suggests that the phenomenon of under-representation in translation of features unique to the target language arises because such features are under-represented in a translator’s mental lexicon while he or she is translating. Nothing in the source text is likely to trigger them. The idea of pre-translation strengthens this supposition, because it suggests that the lack of opportunity for linking to the other language during acquisition may result in a permanently weak activation (see below) of unique items, compared to terms that have counterparts in the other language.

Linguistic competence

Within theoretical linguistics, the notion of competence is the notion of a native speaker’s knowledge of their language, which is sharply distinguished from their performance, “the actual use of language in concrete situations” (Chomsky 1965: 4). Speakers’ abilities to do things with words in actuality depend heavily on aspects of context (see Austin 1962; Hymes 1971, 1972a, b) which lie way beyond the area that is theorizable from the Chomskyan view of language as primarily part of the natural (as opposed to the social) world, and of Competence as an unconscious mental state reached at the end of a process of biological growth. The development takes place by means of interaction between (i) linguistic input data received by the language-acquiring individual and (ii) the default or initial state of the language faculty, which contains innate knowledge called Universal Grammar (UG) (Wearing 2006: 341). UG includes (i) “a set of innately endowed grammatical principles which determine how grammatical operations apply in natural language grammars”; and (ii) “a set of grammatical parameters which impose severe restrictions on the range of grammatical variation permitted in natural languages (perhaps limiting variation to binary choices)” (Radford 2004: 11). In addition, there is “a set of semantic primitives, out of which specific word meanings are constructed” (Carr 2006: 333).

The steady state that is Competence is characteristic of every normal adult native speaker of a given language, variations in performance being exactly that: Performance features, influenced by aspects of the social world, including e.g. teaching and learning. Competence is internal to each single individual; it is an I-language. It is not the shared, social, supra-individual entity that Saussure’s (1916) *langue* is often understood to be (Lyons 1996: 15), and which, for Chomsky, who of course does not deny its existence, is E-language. I-language is not primarily designed for use in communication, according
to Chomsky, but for thinking (Carr 2006: 332); it is an instrument of cognitive growth (Brown 1996: 3).

Relatively little has been said in terms of this model of language about bilingualism and bilingual acquisition, but there is a clear tendency not to distinguish these from monolingualism and monolingual acquisition in any fundamental way, and to think of multilingualism as an inevitable consequence of the complexities of natural language, and of the lack of clear boundaries between languages, and between languages, dialects and registers (Chomsky 2000: 169):

Even to speak of Peter as having the I-language L is a severe simplification; the state of any person’s faculty of language is some jumble of systems that is no more likely to yield theoretical understanding than most other complex phenomena of the natural world. Peter is said to be multilingual when the differences among his languages happen to interest us for one or another reason; from another point of view, everyone is multiply multilingual.

This view is compatible with one of the most prevalent current understandings of Bilingual Language Acquisition, according to which children who are addressed in two languages from birth “have two first languages: A and Alpha” (De Houwer 2006: 780). The evidence for this is that “from the onset of even somewhat intelligible speech, children raised with two languages from birth mostly produce utterances that can be related to just one of either of their input languages”. They do not mix the two systems randomly, but are able to switch easily and contextually appropriately “between unilingual utterances in language A, unilingual utterances in language Alpha, and mixed utterances” (De Houwer 2006: 784). Therefore, they must from early on be “able to determine that the huge range of variation in speech sounds that they are exposed to can be categorized according to two main categories, two main ways of speaking” (De Houwer 2006: 781).

The issues of how a bilingual’s languages are organised and how their uses are controlled are addressed within the neurolinguistics of bilingualism, to which I shall now turn.

The neurolinguistics of bilingualism

The Chomskyan view discussed above is in accord with findings in the neurolinguistics of bilingualism as documented in Paradis (1985, 1987a, 2004; see also Ahlsten 2006 and Fabbro 1999). Paradis’s understanding of bilingualism, like Chomsky’s, assumes no categorical difference between it and monolingualism. A bilingual has “two subsets of neural connections, one for each language, within the same cognitive system, namely, the language system” (Paradis 2004: 110), and (Paradis 2004: 112):

awareness of language membership is a product of metalinguistic knowledge. In online processing, language awareness is of the same nature and as unconscious as the process

2. Chomsky would obviously not deny that language is in fact used for communication; he merely insists that this is no more its primary purpose than speaking is the primary purpose of the mouth and human breathing apparatus.
that allows a unilingual speaker to understand (or select) the appropriate word in a given context. The process of selecting a Russian word by a Latvian–Russian bilingual person is the same as the process that allows a unilingual Russian speaker to select among the indefinite, almost unlimited, possibilities for encoding a given message.

Both processes involve relating the selected item to a single, language-independent conceptual component (Paradis 2004: 200):

the conceptual component of verbal communication is not language-specific and there is a single non-linguistic cognitive system, even though speakers group together conceptual features differently in accordance with the lexical semantic constraints of each language. The lexical items are part of the language system, but the concepts are not.

According to Paradis’s Activation Threshold Hypothesis (1987b, 1993, 2004: 28–31), a linguistic item stored in a bilingual’s brain requires, at any one time, a certain amount of positive neural impulse to activate it, and this requirement is its activation threshold. Every time an item is activated, the threshold is lowered, but it rises again if the item is not activated for a while. Whenever one item is activated, all other possible alternative items are inhibited, that is, their activation thresholds are raised. For whole languages, the process is described as follows (2004: 115):

When one language is selected for expression, the activation threshold of the other language is raised so as to avoid interference […] . However, it is not raised so high that it could not be activated by an incoming verbal stimulus that impinges on the auditory sensory system and sends impulses to the corresponding representation […] the unselected language is not totally inhibited. Its activation threshold is simply raised high enough to prevent self-activation, but not so high as to preclude comprehension.

Given that Paradis (2004: 133–138) aligns himself closely with the theory of Universal Grammar, and given that De Houwer’s account of bilingual language acquisition is compatible with the same, we have a good measure of theoretical consistency and coherence across the three areas so far investigated, and, as we shall see in a moment, also with the theory of Natural Translation.

Natural Translation, Linguistic Competence and what remains to be explained

The theories discussed above are clearly compatible with Harris and Sherwood’s (1978) notion of Natural Translation developing from a pretranslation stage which exploits links established between sets of items in the two languages as they are acquired. The existence of that stage would provide a strong basis for the further development of a childhood bilingual’s translation skills (for a recent account of these, see Valdés 2003). But as Toury (1995: 245–246) points out, Harris and Sherwood’s model cannot account for non-native bilinguals’ abilities to translate; nor can any of the models discussed account for the well documented fact of development through formal instruction of translating and interpreting skills.
Interestingly, Paradis’s account of the prevention of interference by means of suppression of one of a bilingual’s languages says little about what happens during actual translation or, particularly, interpreting, when what is obviously required is a balance between inhibition and activation: As Toury stresses (e.g. 1995: 274–279), ST interference is a *sine qua non* for adequacy in translation, but it has to be controlled to the extent that acceptability can also be achieved. We may hypothesize that, at least in successful simultaneous interpreting, the switch between inhibition and activation is facilitated by the regular use of the two languages together to verbalize similar concepts, which causes the differences in activation thresholds for the respective lexicalizations of the concepts in the two languages to remain relatively minor.

Translation, and perhaps also consecutive interpreting are likely to be different from simultaneous interpreting when it comes to the involvement of pre-established links between expressions in the two languages, on the one hand, and components of verbal communication that are beyond the subliminal, on the other. The latter components include sensory perception and feelings, episodic memory and encyclopaedic knowledge, metalinguistic knowledge and the pragmatics of the languages involved (Paradis 2004: 227). Translating, especially, often involves drafting, redrafting and editing, that is, highly conscious problem-solving activities, and neither Paradis nor Harris and Sherwood (1978) have much to say about how these phenomena impact on translating ability.

Three of the four features that Harris and Sherwood deduce for the bilingual, translating child over and above its natural predisposition to acquire language (see above) — a bilingual mental lexicon, a language-independent semantic store and an ability to conserve meaning across languages — are accounted for within currently preferred theories of Linguistic Competence and the Neurolinguistics of Bilingualism, neither of which draws qualitative or categorical distinctions between mono- and multi-lingualism. These theories are also compatible with De Houwer’s view of bilingual language acquisition.

What remains to be dealt with in terms of performance from the Harris and Sherwood study are, then, (i) the pleasure that young children, as well as older translators, derive from the activity; (ii) non-native bilinguals’ abilities to translate; and (iii) development through formal instruction of translating and interpreting skills. As far as I am aware, little has been written in the Translation Studies literature about (i) above, although I have experienced plenty of anecdotal evidence that the pleasure principle is widespread among translators. Below, I shall suggest a starting point for subsuming it within the field of translation pedagogy. The second and third points above are much more frequently discussed in formal settings under the heading of Translation Competence. But given the fact that they are obviously factors beyond Competence as an underlying basis for performance, it might be preferable to cease using the term. Until it is practically possible to do so, I shall enclose the term in double quotation marks.
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Translation Competence as an end state

As Toury (1980, 1984) points out, attempts to clarify how Translation Competence can be achieved tend to emphasize the qualities a translator needs, with relatively little regard to what a potential translator sets out with or to the gradual development they may go through, for instance in a program of translator education and training. Thus, according to Shreve (2002: 154) the term “translation competence” “has come to represent a motley set of academic understandings about what one has to know (and by implication what one has to learn or be taught) to become a translator.” In his entertaining, if somewhat acerbic article, Pym (2003) divides this motley set into four main types, as follows (I present only a selection of the numerous examples Pym cites), before producing a definition of his own:

1. **Summation of linguistic competencies**
   According to Wilss (1982: 118; see Pym 2003: 483), Translation Competence amounts to source-language text-analytical ability together with target-language text-reproductive ability. According to Koller (1979: 40; see Pym 2003: 483), it consists in “the ability to put together [verbinden] the linguistic competencies gained in two languages.”

2. **No such thing as “competence”**
   Pym (2003: 484) cites several studies by Wilss in which Translation Competence is reduced to other notions such as declarative knowledge and knowledge of translation processes (Wilss 1988), or proficiency (Wilss 1992), or code-switching (Wilss 1996). He also mentions Lörscher’s (1991) reduction of Translation Competence to problem-solving strategies, and he takes Schäffner and Adab (2000: x) to task for slipping into an “almost unthinking reduction” (Pym 2003: 485) of competence to performance in their definition of competence as “a cover term and summative concept for the overall performance ability which seems so difficult to define” (Schäffner and Adab 2000: x).

3. **Multicomponentiality**
   Under this heading, Pym (2003: 485) cites Bell’s (1991) listing of components such as target-language knowledge, text-type knowledge, source-language knowledge, subject area (“real-world”) knowledge, contrastive knowledge […] “communicative competence” (covering grammar, sociolinguistics and discourse). Virtually everything that any kind of linguistics wanted to talk about was tossed into the soup as Pym puts it. Also included are Hatim and Mason’s (1997: 204–206) source-text processing, transfer, and target-text processing, with several skills under each heading, and Hewson’s (1995: 108) additional “cultural and professional elements”, including, under professional elements, “remuneration […] access to and use of proper dictionaries and data banks, access to equivalent material in the second language, practical
knowledge of word-processors and peripherals, and so on”. Hurtado (1996, 1999) also appears here, as does Mayoral (2001: 109), who includes (see Pym 2003: 486) “common sense (above all), curiosity, ability to communicate, capacity for self-criticism, meticulousness, ability to synthesize, etc.”, and Robinson (1997) who adds “good typing speeds, Internet discussion groups, and working with a computer in a room at the right temperature”.

4. Just one thing

5. Pym’s own minimalist definition
Pym’s own view is that Translation Competence consists of two skills (2003: 489), “The ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT1, TT2 ... TTn) for a pertinent source text (ST)” and “The ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence.” He defends this position by pointing out (2003: 492–494) that (i) it allows for a clear distinction between translator training and language learning; (ii) it “sees translating as a process of producing and selecting between hypotheses” and that it is therefore “a mode of constant theorizing”; (iii) it “challenges the authoritarian role …[of] the teacher of translation”; and, finally and importantly, (iv) it “can sustain a critical approach to those tasks and technologies that […] mistake means for ends”: 

For instance, the postmodern abundance of information makes the production of alternative TTs easy, which means that more emphasis has to be placed on the elimination of possible TTs […]. On the other hand, the use of translation memories facilitates the unthinking repetition of previous TTs, such that what is lacking in such modes of work is the active production of hypotheses […]. More important, the use of websites, memories and the rest […] invite[s] us to forget that our basic tasks involve communication between humans, and only then the manipulation of electronic mediation.

True and important though this may be, Pym’s model is still of the desirable end state of Translation Competence; it has little to say about the aspiring translator’s starting point and journey, issues to which I now turn.

The development of Translation Competence

In order to elucidate what the aspiring translator brings to the learning process, Toury (1984: 189) proposes that “the ability to translate presupposes the existence of two other, more basic abilities, namely (a) to acquire more than one language, and (b) to establish
similarities and differences, on more than one level, between items and structures, if not full utterances, pertinent to the languages that one has actually acquired”.

Toury classes both of these abilities as “humanly innate” (1984: 189). The ability to acquire more than one language is accounted for, as we have seen, by the language faculty, and it leads to what Toury refers to as “bilingual competence” which, as was made clear above, can be identified with Linguistic Competence. The second, which Toury calls “interlingual competence”, may arise from Harris and Sherwood’s pretranslation stage in the case of people who have been raised bilingually, but not in the case of people who have learnt one of their languages as a second or foreign language, as very many translators do. We therefore need to develop an account of how interlingual “competence” can be learnt, and learnt interlingual “competence” cannot be Competence in the Chomskyan sense. In fact, even in the case of people who have grown up in two languages, we may need a learning account of the ability to produce informed comparisons between languages, since, in my experience at least, not every bilingual, although they may be able to tell you how to say $x$ in language B where it is appropriate to say $y$ in language A, is able to pinpoint the similarities and differences between the expressions. Similarly, few native speakers, even though they can tell you whether or not a string is a well-formed sentence of their language, can tell you why they have made that judgement. To have these abilities is already to have moved beyond the Competence that every normal native speaker (mono- or bi-lingual) attains, and into performance. It would therefore be more appropriate to refer to this component of the translator’s ability as “Interlingual Proficiency Potential”.

Furthermore, as Toury continues, the presence of these two properties “does not in itself imply the ability to translate” (1984:189). Translating ability requires the two properties together with a third, “transfer competence”, which Toury (1984:190) borrows from Wilss (1982:81). This competence, too, may derive from pretranslation in childhood bilinguals, but, again, not in people who have learnt second and subsequent languages later in life; besides, not all bilinguals are equally adept at this transfer, so a learning account is generally required. Therefore I shall avoid the term “competence”, and refer to this component as “Transfer Proficiency Potential”.

Toury (1995:248–258) makes a number of suggestions for how these potentials develop and how they can be encouraged to unfold into actuality in training. To begin with, since translation, along with other forms of text production, is communicative, it is interactional and subject to shaping through environmental feedback, which is closely related to the norms that govern translational behaviour in a given environment at a given time. During a person’s socialization as a translator, whether during formal training or during more informally gained experience, these norms become internalised, and this may result in inhibition of the kind of creativity that is often required in translation, and which probably distinguishes the truly great translator from the (merely) very able.

Consider, as an illustration of this kind of inhibition, a selection of translators’ means of dealing with the first line of the opening paragraph of Hans Christian An-
Kirsten Malmkjær
dersen’s story *Den grimme Ælling* (1844) (“The ugly duckling”) (Malmkjær 1999: 20–34). The paragraph reads as follows (my emphases):

Der var saa deiligt ude paa Landet; det var Sommer, Kornet stod guult, Havren grøn, Høet var reist i Stakke nede i de grønne Enge, og der gik Storken paa sine lange, røde Been og snakkede ægyptisk, for det sprog havde han lært af sin Moder. Rundtom Ager og Eng var der store Skove, og midt i Skovene dybe Søer; jo, der var rigtignok deiligt derude paa Landet! Midt i Solskinnet laae der en gammel Herregaard med dybe Canaler rundt om, og fra Muren og ned til Vandet voxte store Skræppeblade, der vare saa høie, at smaa Børn kunde staae opreiste under de største; der var ligesaa vildsomt derinde, som i den tykkeste Skov, og her laae en And paa sin Rede; hun skulde ruge sine smaa Ællinger ud, men nu var hun næsten kjed af det, fordi det varede saa længe …

This paragraph constitutes a typical beginning for a piece of realist literary writing. It begins with a passage of description of a place in the distance, vis-à-vis the narrating voice, as indicated by the use of *der* “there” as a place-deictic location adverb, before switching to the use of the proximal place-deictic adverb *her*, “here”, which takes the narrating voice to the place being described and which coincides with a closing in on a central place/character, the duck on her nest. The shift is powerfully reinforced by means of the use of the past tense form of the verb corresponding to “to be”, *var*, together with the temporal adverb of the immediate present, *nu*: effectively “now was”, which presents as present the point of view of a character being told about in the past tense. The narrating voice locates itself in the same place as the duck, “here”, and creates empathy with her (Lyons 1977: 677; Adamson 1994).

The suddenness of the switch from there to here is heightened in the Danish passage by the repeated use, often in theme position in clauses, of a dummy subject having the same form as the place deictic distal adverb, *der*. In the gloss translation into English below, these are retained in Danish to show the effect:

*Der (det)* was so lovely out in the country; it was summer, the corn stood yellow, the oats green, the hay was raised in stacks down in the green meadows and *der* walked the stork on his long, red legs and talked Egyptian, for that language had he learnt from his mother. Around field and meadow were *der (0)* large forests, and in the middle of the forests deep lakes; yes, *der (det)* was indeed lovely *derude (0)* in the country! In the middle of the sunshine *lay der (0)* an old manor house with deep canals around it, and from the wall and down to the water grew large dock-leaves which were so high that small children could stand upright under the largest; *der (det)* was just as wildsome *derinde (0)* as in the thickest forest, and *her* lay a duck on her nest; she had to hatch her small ducklings out, but *now was* she nearly bored with it, because it took so long.

All of these could either have been left out of the passage altogether, or another term, *det* (it) could have been used in their place, as also indicated in the gloss translation with either *det* or *0* in brackets after the term in question. The availability of alternatives together with the constant preference for *der* strongly suggests deliberate choice on the writer’s part, and in my opinion this is motivated by the reinforcement of the deictic
shift which the repetitions of the der-form creates, and especially its use as the very first word of the passage.

In English, the only possible choice of dummy subject in weather and atmosphere conditions is “it”, “there” being restricted to existential or presentative sentences like “there is someone at the door”, and this fact seems to have hoodwinked the translators into disregarding the desirability of reproducing the Source Text pattern using, for example, a sentence like “There was no end of loveliness out in the country side” (with thanks to Tim Johns) to begin the passage:

Anon: How beautiful it was in the country! It was summer time;
Corrin: It was glorious out in the country. It was summer.
Dulcken: It was glorious out in the country. It was summer,
Haugaard: It was so beautiful out in the country. It was summer.
Keigwin: Summertime! How lovely it was out in the country,
Kingsland: It was so lovely out in the country! It was summer:
Lewis: It was so delightful in the country. The air was full of summer;
Peulevé: Summer had come and it was so lovely out in the country.
Spink: It was so lovely out in the country! It was summer
Nunnally: It was so lovely out in the country. It was summer.
Frank and Frank: It was so lovely out in the country — it was summer.

Toury suggests a number of remedies to counteract the force of the norms that govern translational behavior:

1. Do not specialize too soon (1984: 191–192; cf. 1995: 253): “the greater the variety of situations that a translator is put into, the greater the range and flexibility of his ability to perform, or adapt himself to changing norms is going to be ... On the other hand, specialization ... will probably tend to ... reduce the adaptability of the translator”.
2. Allow for feedback from a variety of sources, including (i) tutors who are non-conformists and (ii) fellow students (1995: 256–257)
3. Analyze past and present translations “with an eye to determining how their make-up and/or the relationships obtaining between them and their respective sources are interconnected with their (intended or realized) positions in the target culture, and with no immediate evaluative purpose in mind” (1995: 257–258). This can be supplemented with attempts to “apply the governing principles as they emerge” in order to open “the students’ eyes to the multiplicity of modes of translation, all of which may be legitimate, according to one set of norms or another”.

To this advice, I would like to add a suggestion of my own. We should, in my opinion, make as much as we possibly can of Harris and Sherwood’s notion of translation enjoyment (see above), because, if nurtured and understood in a certain way, it will promote self-confident normativity, free of concerns for sanctions — a similar facility
as the one that Toury (1995: 253–254) ascribes only to socioculturally acknowledged, high-status translators.

Translation and enjoyment

To prevent habitual associations from getting in the way of creativity, it seems to me that it would be helpful to train prospective translators to adopt an attitude to the language of texts which Scruton (1974, Ch 10) calls “the aesthetic attitude”, and which he, interestingly, holds to have “a permanent tendency” to become normative to various degrees, because (1974: 139):

A normative attitude seeks to found agreement in reason, and not in some chance convergence of opinion. A man with a normative attitude to \( X \) feels that others should recognize the qualities that he likes or admires in \( X \), and on this basis come to like \( X \) themselves.

Aesthetic judgements do not, however, imply sanctions, as the theory of translation norms suggests that norms do, and which moral judgements also tend to do (Scruton 1974: 141–142), so “we are no longer concerned with the enforcement of a code of conduct, but rather with the development of a capacity for enjoyment … of an object for its own sake” (1974: 143). And (1974: 148): “If I am interested in \( X \) for its own sake, then I shall respond to the question ‘Why are you interested in \( X \)?’ with the expression of the thought that provides the reason for my continued interest — in other words, I shall respond with a description of \( X \)”.

This notion is clearly in harmony with Descriptive Translation Studies, but it also connects with the bilingual child’s enjoyment of the repeated citation of its word pairs, because repetition is a kind of description of a linguistic object. A childhood bilingual will in all probability come to the translation programme with a predisposition to enjoy textual objects and to enjoy translating them. By engaging in some form of translational stylistics (see Malmkjær 2003, 2004) we can probably ensure that this type of enjoyment can be maintained for the childhood bilingual and fostered in translators whose additional languages are learnt later in life.

References


Source for Andersen's original text


Sources for the translations


CHAPTER 23

On Toury’s laws of how translators translate

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Gideon Toury has proposed two exemplary laws of the way translators produce translations: the law of increasing standardization, and the law of interference from the source text. Much subsequent investigation has tended not to be on the level of laws but is instead framed in terms of translation universals, particularly when involving the use of comparable corpora. However, when comparing Toury’s proposed laws with Baker’s compilation of four possible translation universals, we find that the latter elaborate only the first of the laws and do not regularly concern interference from the source text. This one-sidedness of the “universal” agenda enhances the justification of comparable corpora but poses serious problems for any kind of causal explanation of the findings. It would thus seem advisable to return to the duality of Toury’s exemplary propositions. At the same time, the probabilistic nature of Toury’s laws, which would become strong or weak depending on variable sociocultural conditions, means that they cannot properly be universal on the solely linguistic level, where they would in fact appear to contradict each other. In keeping with this, we propose that the tendency to standardize and the tendency to channel interference are both risk-averse strategies, and that their status as possible laws thus depends on the relative absence of rewards for translators who take risks. It follows that future possible laws might be found in the dynamics of risk management.

Keywords: Gideon Toury, laws of translation, universals of translation, risk management, Translation Studies

A personal and dispensable prelude

This text will offer a reading of Gideon Toury’s proposed laws of how translators translate. Those laws will be compared with four universals of translation compiled by Mona Baker. The reading and the comparison will be with a view to a possible unification of all the proposals. That is an intellectual activity, as dry as old bones, and not for the faint-hearted. Yet it has a personal and political context.

In 1992–1993 Gideon Toury and I coincided at the Sonderforschungsbereich in literary translation in Göttingen, Germany. He would come to our house for Sunday lunch, and we would try to make conversation. He was writing Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond at the time, so I would ask about the book. “Let’s not talk shop”, came the reply, understandably enough (Professor Toury came to lunch to get away from the book). So I would try to talk politics, and ask about the Middle East: “Wiser minds than mine
have not been able to solve that problem”, was the response. With work and politics thus out of bounds, we must have managed to discuss food, family, whatever. In fact, there must have been some degree of success in the exchanges, since my daughter, then aged two, conferred on Professor Toury the honor of being the only adult ever invited into her cubby house (a privilege never extended to myself). Two-year-olds tend to know a good man when they see one.

We all separate our private and professional lives to some extent. Gideon Toury makes special use of the separations. His work as a translation theorist is mostly kept apart from his work as a literary translator, just as his place in Israeli culture is rarely mentioned to academic circles outside of Israel. My frustration at not being able to discuss his work-in-progress was partly annoyance with that kind of separation. When I eventually did see *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, as a printed book, some of that frustration came out in my *Method in Translation History*, which I was writing at the time. I did not have an abundance of good things to say about Toury at that stage, at least academically. My book was then refused by Benjamins (quite independently of Toury) and accepted for publication by Mona Baker at St Jerome Publishing. Those were perhaps the consequences of the initial separation of personas: irritation led to publication in one place rather than the other. Subsequent events, however, have obliged me to think beyond the masks.

In 2002 Gideon Toury and Miriam Shlesinger were ousted from the boards of journals edited by Mona Baker. That was how the Egyptian Mona Baker chose to apply a boycott of the Israeli state and all those employed by that state. Part of Gideon Toury’s very brief response to that action was predictably in keeping with his separation of personas: “I was appointed as a scholar and unappointed as an Israeli” (reported in Goldberg and Woodward 2002). True enough, Toury was there for his merits as a translation scholar, and not because of any particular national provenance. To my knowledge, that point has never been responded to in any adequate way. Mona Baker’s journals do continue to put countries after everyone’s name, as if we were all in quaint national dress. But there has been no real attempt to argue that the world of Translation Studies (or any other world for that matter) can be neatly divided in accordance with the policies of nation states. All we have is the boycott as an extreme division of people, not just of personas.

Some will see this text, indeed this book, as breaking that boycott. Yet neither the paper nor the book are playing the game of nation-states. There is a far more substantial loyalty at stake. Perhaps since Boëthius, scholarship has partly been its own reward, never fully exchanged for economic or political gain. Certainly since the Renaissance, the European humanities, the *studia humanitatis*, have never been fully reducible to national policies or pay checks, although they have certainly needed both and have occasionally flirted dangerously with both. The call of humanistic learning remains a shared vocation, a long-standing tradition that ideally produces knowledge for the benefit of all, in unrestricted relations of intellectual exchange and debate, beyond whatever we may think about the political or personal provenance of the people we are dealing
with. The practice of that vocation is always difficult, requiring countless symbolic separations of people into personas, incurring innumerable petty frustrations along the way. Yet that shared creation of knowledge is the only aspiration that makes our efforts worthwhile; it is the only cause worth defending in this place; it is the only standard by which our scholarly relations and strategies should be measured; it is the calling shared by the most noble group of people, over centuries and across countries, to whom we can be loyal. The following lines have been written in that belief.

Introduction

In Gideon Toury’s seminal *Description Translation Studies and beyond* (1995), the “beyond” part is a search for laws of translatory behavior. That last chapter has perhaps enjoyed rather less success than many other parts of the book; it would seem the least cited part of Toury’s structured research program. Some reasons for this no doubt lie in the way that chapter is written, as a series of exploratory reformulations, each different and none definitive. Part of our work here will be to analyze why that style was necessary in 1995 and might still be valid today. At the same time, however, the quest underlying Toury’s proposed laws has enjoyed considerable success elsewhere, notably under the label of a search for “universals” of translation, surreptitiously allied with specific research tools such as translation corpora. Here we thus propose to compare Toury’s original formulations of potential laws with some of the later possible universals of translation. The purpose of the exercise is not just to seek the reasons for relative success or failure. We are more particularly interested in whether anything really new has been added to Toury’s insights, and also in whether there is a way to unify all the proposed laws and universals. Such a unification could be in the interests of developing a unified discipline. So as to allay the suspense: at the end we will claim that there is one underlying cause, which we shall call risk-aversion. And to tone down the fanfares: we will also claim that this underlying cause is properly neither a law nor a universal, although it might still be of considerable intellectual interest.

Toury’s proposed laws

Much of Toury can be picked up and used in research projects, or fruitfully discussed in research seminars. The concept of norms, for example, seems easy enough to understand and apply; it could be the concept that launched a hundred research projects. Indeed, it is too deceptively easy to apply. But laws? Of the kind Moses would have brought down from the mountain-top? The formulations and reformulations of Toury’s two candidate laws are hard to grasp, difficult to follow, and ultimately frustrating for the student in search of lapidary statements that can be written in notebooks and cited in prefaces. And so one reads and re-reads, moving from insight to perplexity. At one moment the
two laws sound trivially obvious, even cheeky. One posits *grosso modo* that translations have less internal linguistic variation than non-translations. That sounds like nothing more than the age-old complaint that translators over-translate (cf. Mounin 1963). The other law suggests, and again we impose our own words, that translations tend to carry over structures of their source texts. That is little better than another long-standing complaint: translators produce foreign-sounding language. Toury would seem to have picked up the bad things that critics perennially say about bad translations, and he has promptly turned them into unavoidable qualities of all translations. You have to stand back to see it, but much of Toury’s intellectual *modus operandi* is based on precisely that: take what everyone says, and argue that the opposite, or almost opposite, might be equally valid, if not more valid. *Enfant terrible* of his age, to an extent that we sometimes fail to appreciate, he formed our discipline by turning opinion on its head.

It gets worse. Read in those simplistic terms, Toury’s two laws surely contradict each other. One law says that a translation is like all other translations (they all share “flatter language” and so on), and the second law says that translations are like source texts (they all have “interference”). If all translations are like other translations, how can they also be like their very individual and different source texts? Which is it to be? One suspects that, with one law looking forward and the other looking backward, this Janus image of translations can either not fail to be right, or must always be at least half wrong. Whatever we find, surely it can be attributed to either one side or the other?

Let us now turn to the formulations themselves, to see if they resolve these naïve doubts.

The law of growing standardization

The first law refers to “growing standardization” and is given in several formulations. Perhaps the one most retained is the “conversion of textemes into repertoremes” (1995: 267). I think this means a source-text feature in some way specific to that text will tend to be replaced by a feature from the stock held in waiting in the target-language genre. I know this happens. When I put occasional Australianisms into academic texts, thus creating expressions that are rarer than a blue-arsed fly, they either just disappear in translations or are turned into something absolutely standard (if indeed the copyeditors do not eliminate them first). My textemes are converted into repertoremes, much to my chagrin. This tendency is thus also called the “law of conversion” (274), explained as follows: “textual relations obtaining in the original are often modified […] in favour of (more) habitual options offered by a target culture” (268). Then the same thing in different terms: “items tend to be selected on a level which is lower than the one where textual relations have been established in the source text” (269), where “lower” means on a less text-specific level. The general phenomenon is also exemplified (with an experimental example) in terms of procedures that seem rather more specific: “disambiguation and greater simplification” (270). That makes sense, since if one reduces the reader’s options by taming ambiguity, the effect must be greater standardi-
zation. However, the door is thereby opened to all forms of “simplification”. Are all reductions of complexity to be included under this law? This would be suggested by further alternative expressions such as “reduced rates of structuration (that is, simplification, or flattening)” (273). The proposed law is thus expressed in terms of an open-ended string of adjectives: when compared with non-translations, translations are simpler, flatter, less structured, less ambiguous, less specific to a given text, more habitual, and so on.

Why this string of adjectives, instead of staying with just one formulation (of which several good candidates are given)? The technical reason surely lies in the degree of generality involved. The law can be applied at the level of many different linguistic variables. To restrict the formulation would involve limiting the law to the variables best suited to the terms or best exemplified in the discussion.

A more probable reason, in fact a down-to-earth version of the former, is the nature of the laws as an invitation au voyage. Far from being laws that have to be obeyed in order to escape punishment, these are ideas to be pursued, played with, experimented upon, and thereby extended into an open-ended beyond. The law is not engraved in stone; it is instead penciled on students’ translations of Rocky (270), the simple textual experiment that Toury would like to see duplicated by others, to “shed more light on the issue at hand” (270).

The law of interference

Less seems to be said about the law of interference, which starts from a very simple formulation: “In translation, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text” (275). That seems painfully obvious. Where else is a translation going to get its features from? The simplicity is nevertheless soon complicated when we realize that the “make-up” can also come from “the normal, codified practices of the target system” (275). Only then does it make much sense to say that the transfer may be negative (when the translation deviates from what is normal in the target-system) or positive (when it does not). That means that even when the results of interference are invisible to the reader (since positive transfer appears normal in the target system), there is still interference. At this point most readers pause to reflect, or should do so.

One paragraph ago I risked a cheap pun on stone/Rocky, with a tenuous link to the earlier mention of Moses. It is a texteme (no repertoire would deign include it). Let us imagine a translator who tries to carry that bad pun over to the target text, perhaps inventing something based on the sounds of the English name (several possibilities are offered by tablete/rocoso in Spanish, or by pierre/rocher in French, where Rocky could become the Saint Peter of Toury’s pugilistic church). In that case, the texteme would be rendered as a texteme, and there would be interference of the negative kind. The translator would not have obeyed the law of growing standardization; they would have obeyed the law of interference. However, if the translator opted to render the opposition
engraved/penciled, or even law-giver/student, the result could be quite standard in the target culture and yet there would still be interference from the source text. In that case, the translator would have acted in accordance with the law of standardization and the law of interference, both at the same time.

That is one way we might understand and possibly agree with Toury’s claim that the two laws “are largely interconnected” (267), for as long as the interference is positive. However, the argument is sophistic, to say the least. A better way would seem to lie in the term “make-up”, in the phrase “phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text” (275). What is this make-up? Cosmetics? Looking at some of the examples, it seems more reasonable to see it as a set of segmentational and macrostructural features. Toury mentions, for instance, that the law of interference might apply in a German translation of a haiku, but not in a translation of a video-recorder manual (279), since the latter might be made to conform to the way Germans write instruction manuals. That makes sense. Between European languages, at least, there is a default norm by which one translates sentence for sentence, paragraph for paragraph, text section for text section, and that whole default behavior might be described as “interference”. This understanding of Toury even makes good sense of the claim that non-interference “necessitates special conditions and/or special efforts on the translator’s part” (275). You usually need a very good reason to change a paragraph break, and it does take a special effort. I note in passing that this is even more true when we work with translation memories, where the segmentation imposed by the software makes rather more impositions than authorial segmentation ever did (cf. Dragsted 2004).

That said, I remain perplexed by both these possible readings of Toury (the sophistication of “positive interference”, and the possibility that one law applies best to macrostructures). I sense there is something here that I have not properly understood, and that illumination will come soon. Do Toury’s laws ultimately contradict each other? For the moment we leave the question in the air.

Baker’s proposed universals

Mona Baker has been a prime proponent of using corpus linguistics to study translations. Since her early programmatic texts (e.g. Baker 1993) one of the aims of the exercise has been to describe the “principles of translational behavior”, also known as potential “universals of translation”. In a slightly later text we learn that a particular kind of corpus linguistics, comparing translations with non-translations in the same language, can “allow us to capture patterns which are either restricted to translated text or which occur with significantly higher or lower frequency in translated text than they do in originals” (Baker 1995:235), although on this occasion there is no mention of universals as such. However, in the following year (Baker 1996) the author gives a brief checklist of the universals she feels might be identified. Although that text makes no refer-
ence to Toury and carries no mention of “laws”, the list of universals might ring some bells. Here we summarize the list:

1. **Explicitation** is “an overall tendency to spell things out rather than leave them implicit” (1996: 180). The phenomenon is seen as including text length, as well as “optional that in reported speech” (181), to which we return soon.

2. **Simplification** is “tentatively defined” as “the tendency to simplify the language used in translation” (181). This includes phenomena such as using shorter sentences in the translation, preferring finite instead of non-finite structures, resolving ambiguity, removing unusual punctuation (cf. Malmkjær’s text published in 1997) and producing texts with a lower lexical density and a lower type–token ratio (183). In features such as the preference for non-finite structures, “there is a clear overlap with explicitation” (182).

3. **Normalization/conservatism** is glossed as “a tendency to exaggerate features of the target language and to conform to its typical patterns” (183), as seen in the use of normalized punctuation (Malmkjær 1997; Vanderauwera 1985), finishing incomplete sentences, and avoiding ungrammatical structures.

4. **Leveling out** is described as “the tendency of translated text to gravitate towards the centre of a continuum” (184). For example, “the individual texts in an English translation corpus are more like each other in terms such as lexical density, type–token ratio and mean sentence length than the individual texts in a comparable corpus of original English” (184). Similarly, very oral texts become more written, and written texts become more oral (Shlesinger 1989).

Before we attempt to assess these four proposals, a few notes should be made on the way they are presented. In Toury, the one law goes through a series of dialectic reformations, drawing out possible consequences, indicating a direction for thought rather than a quotable product. In Baker, on the other hand, we have one simple noun phrase for each proposal, in most cases just restating the name of the potential universal (“simplification” is “the tendency to simplify”, with a simplicity worthy of Grice). What in Toury is an intellectual process becomes in Baker a readily understandable and reproducible product. Toury takes 13 pages to describe two laws; Baker needs just five pages for four universals—there can be no doubt where the greater cost-benefit lies. Many readers do not understand Toury’s laws; everyone understands Baker. That is perhaps why there are frequent citations of things like “Baker’s concept of simplification” (cf. Laviosa in this volume). Baker can be cited with confidence; Toury is a minefield. In sum, Baker’s is a great and necessary divulgation, absolutely vital whenever we attempt to address a wider audience (in a process that can be taken further; Pym 2003 gives five potential laws in just one page—great value for money!).

Of course, divulgation is not authorship, and Baker is curiously reluctant to cite sources here (she cites sample experiments, but not conceptual antecedents). “Explicitation” carries no reference to the “explicitation hypothesis” formulated by Blum-Kulka (1986) with respect to cohesion markers, nor to the work of Klaudy (cf. 1993), which
extended the term to a very wide field. As noted above, Toury is not cited in the article at all (although he is indeed cited in the article Baker published in *Target*). Nor did he have to be. After all, his English-language discourse was about laws. Then again, the vocabulary of translation universals had certainly been developed by Toury in Hebrew (cf. Toury 1977) and by other authors working with Hebrew, similarly not mentioned here on the conceptual level. The intellectual work is in Blum-Kulka (1986), of course, but also in Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1983), Shlesinger (1989), Zellermayer (1990), and Weissbrod (1992), at least.

With respect to the actual universals proposed by Baker, we might be concerned about two aspects. First, all four propositions appear to be saying much the same thing. Second, they all seem to elaborate Toury’s law of standardization, without touching his proposed law of interference. That is, Baker might have taken half of what was available in Toury then divided that half into four. Let us test the arithmetic.

To start with the most obvious, Baker admits that some of the features listed under “explicitation” are also under “simplification”. This is recognized with respect to the preference for finite structures (no examples, but we take her word for it). Yet could it not also be the case for the lower lexical density in translations (explicitation, in Blum-Kulka’s sense, adds grammar words), and indeed for type–token ratios (explicitation adds common words)? At the end of the day, both explicitation and simplification make texts easier to read, and the line between the two becomes hard to discern. Precisely when is explicitation not also a simplification? Or would it be fairer to say that explicitation is one of many types of simplification?1

Another relatively obvious mix-up: The tendency to normalize punctuation appears under both “simplification” and “normalization”, with the same reference to Malmkjær each time. So what is the essential difference between these two universals?

For that matter, if all translations share the features of explication–simplification–normalization (the three that clearly overlap), then it is likely to follow that translations tend to “gravitate towards the centre of a continuum” (the fourth universal, “leveling out”). The norm is theoretically in the center of a bell curve, after all, and this fourth universal refers to the same linguistic variables as the previous ones (lexical density, type–token ratio, sentence length and, in Shlesinger, explicitation and normalization).

So we have some grounds for suspecting that all these universals are different aspects of the one underlying universal. In fact, the term “universal” here seems to be naming no more than the linguistic variables that operationalize then test the one un-

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1. The problem here is that implicitation can also be seen as a form of simplification (cf. Pym 2005) when it reduces the complexity of syntactic structures. For Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1983: 119), lexical simplification was thus “making do with less words” (cf. Laviosa, this volume). Explicitation would then be a kind of simplification that reduces complexity by spreading semantic load over a wider stretch of text. The problem in Baker at this point would seem to be that no specification is made of what level simplification is supposed to operate on. If, as we suspect, it can be found at all levels, then it should perhaps become the superordinate for explicitation, implicitation, and much more as well. (There is nothing more complicated than a simple definition of simplicity!)
derlying universal (which we should perhaps could a “law”?). The usage is nowhere near the intellectually demanding concept of “universals” in Chomskyan linguistics (cf. the critique in Malmkjær 2005). Then again, if Baker’s four universals do happily say much the same thing, perhaps that is as it should be. After all, if they contradicted each other, they could not be universal at all, could they?

This is where some niggling worries set in. First, if “leveling out” is truly universal, then a lot of translations will presumably avoid anything extremely explicit, extremely simple, lexically very non-dense, or with a very low type–token ratio, in order to move to the center of the continuum. But if they did that, of course, they would thereby falsify the universals of explicitation, simplification, and parts of what has been shoved under normalization. In the question of universals, you cannot have your cake and eat it too, can you?

Second doubt: The universal of “simplification” includes the shortening of sentences (by no means a universal of English-to-Spanish technical translation, but let’s move on). This must surely contradict the universal of explication, which makes sentences longer, as indeed it might contradict disambiguation and the lowering of lexical density, both also included under “simplification”, not to mention finishing incomplete sentences, classified under “normalization”. If a lot of universals are pushing sentences to be longer, it seems difficult to use sentence length as an indicator of anything as simple as simplification.

Third doubt: Baker incorporates Shlesinger’s findings into the universal of “leveling out” without taking into account that Shlesinger was working on oral translation (interpreting). This raises the question of whether the universals are supposed to apply to all kinds of translation, or just to the written kind that easily gets into corpora. The question is of considerable importance in view of what Shlesinger herself said in that early study, where the “equalizing universal” (Shlesinger’s term) is considered a feature predominant in the interpreting mode itself, and that mode is found to be more powerful a variable than are the tendencies to explicitation or to adoption of target-side norms. More explicitly, Shlesinger effectively proposed that interpreting has its own universal (since she found the spoken or written mode carries more weight than explicitation or normalization), and thus that not all universals have the same strength (see Pym 2007). To find that argument drafted into a neat list of four equally balanced universals begs many questions.

Now for our second major suspicion (leaving aside the minor doubts). What is the difference between these four universals and Toury’s law of standardization? Many elements are mentioned in both places, or can be interpreted as such: normalization (“habitual options” in Toury), simplification, disambiguation, low lexical density (“reduced structuration” for Toury), and low type/token ratio (“flattening”). On the other hand, Toury does not discuss sentence length, hopefully for the reasons we have just mentioned (it is the result of too many different causes). More strangely, Toury’s discussion of standardization makes no mention of explicitation, although Blum-Kulka’s explicitation hypothesis is certainly mentioned elsewhere in Toury 1995. Why this
absence? It might be because of Shlesinger’s work on interpreting (Toury directed that research), which did after all suggest that explication was not universal to interpreting. The general idea of explicitation might nevertheless be contained, I suggest, within the more general metaphor of “flattening”. It could moreover be seen in Toury’s reference to translators selecting items “on a level which is lower than the one where textual relations have been established in the source text” (1995: 269), which would concord with Klaudy’s view of explicitation being any reference to a less specific or less defined item (also expressed in terms of levels). In all, we might surmise that explication, like sentence length, is not mentioned by Toury because he was seeking categories of more general validity. These were supposed to be high-level laws, not just norms.

If Baker’s universals can thus be more or less fitted into Toury’s law of standardization, what room is left for his law of interference? None, apparently. This way Baker avoids the problem of having major universals that overtly contradict each other (any internal contradictions are minor in comparison, to be put down to sloppy thought and little else). So is Toury’s second law at all necessary? The answer could have to do with explanation.

Laws with explanations

If any part of Toury’s laws most deserves to endure, it is probably not his descriptions of the linguistic variables (the part we have looked at so far). The laws are far more engaging when they relate linguistic to extra-linguistic variables in a probabilistic manner. In his later work in this area, Toury has emphasized that this is the direction of his interests (e.g. Toury 2004). We should thus attach particular importance to the following correlation hypothesis (which refers back to a similar hypothesis formulated by Even-Zohar in 1978):

[…] the more peripheral [the status of the translation], the more translation will accommodate itself to established models and repertoires. (Toury 1995: 271)

That is, the law of standardization is not something that happens in all translating. It tends to happen in cases where the translation (or translation in general) is of relatively minor importance (less “central”) within the target culture. The point for us here is that the linguistic variables depend on sociocultural factors. The law is subject to social conditions.

Much the same happens with Toury’s law of interference:

2. Another question is whether this is necessarily so. Laviosa (in this volume) sees Tirkkonen-Condit’s Unique Items Hypothesis (“a new universal”) as a particular case of negative interference (so is it really new, or just another linguistic variable to test the same law?). The attribution is of interest here because the testing of unique items can be done with comparable corpora (as in Baker), and yet it does locate a particular kind of interference. The trick, of course, is that the comparative linguistics has to be done prior to the corpus work, in the selection of the “unique” items to be tested.
[...] tolerance of interference [...] tend[s] to increase when translation is carried out from a ‘major’ or highly prestigious language/culture. (278)

So the law of interference also depends on sociocultural factors. The actual relation here seems fairly evident, since “interference” effectively means imitating the foreign, and no one imitates something that has no prestige. Let us note in passing that Baker says virtually the same thing, albeit the other way around:

The higher the status of the source text and language, the less the tendency to normalize. (1996: 183)

This is without reference to Toury or Even-Zohar (we do not wish to suggest any plagiarism—Even-Zohar and Toury are hard to read). The main point is that, thanks to these probabilistic formulations, it becomes quite reasonable to have contradictory tendencies on the level of the linguistic variables. If social conditions A apply, then we might expect more standardization. If conditions B are in evidence, expect interference. And there is no necessary contradiction involved.

Of course, if you only have one coherent universal on the linguistic level (Baker does not address the possibility of interference on the linguistic level), how can you explain that this universal ceases to be universal once the status of the source text changes? One suspects that Baker’s probabilistic correlation does not really belong in her theory, and certainly has little place in her method.

That suspicion can be tested. Here we turn to Olohan and Baker (2000), a study of the optional English reporting that (as in “She said [that] she would come”). Olohan and Baker find that this connector is more frequent in a corpus of English translations than in a comparable corpus of English non-translations. The higher frequency is hypothetically attributed to “subconscious explicitation” (although one might also see it as an eliminating a marker of orality, in accordance with Shlesinger’s equalizing hypothesis). Whatever the alternatives (and there are more), the higher frequency is offered as support for explicitation as a potential universal. The connector is obviously a grammar word, and those were the things that Blum-Kulka’s original hypothesis was based on (cf. Pym 2005). The attribution would seem to be justified by the theory. After all, if you only have one kind of underlying universal, you can only have one kind of attribution. However, if the higher frequency of that were due to some specific social variable like the status of the original texts (the explanatory hypothesis that has intruded into Baker’s shortlist), how would we know? The corpora have little to say about those large social variables. More worryingly, if the higher frequency were due to interference (the major tendency absent from Baker’s list), how would we know it?

As we have mentioned, Baker (1995: 235), re-affirmed by Olohan (2004: 43), argues that translations can be studied by comparing them with non-translations in the same language, without focusing on source texts or source languages. This means we can describe translational English in opposition to non-translational English, doing all the research on English. The result is perhaps the major methodological advance asso-
associated with corpus studies. It has many economic advantages: it cuts out all the bother of learning foreign languages and cultures; it controls numerous tricky variables associated with suspicions of linguistic and cultural relativism. In the English-only research on optional that, there is thus strictly no way of knowing about any kind of foreign interference causing the frequencies of the linguistic variable, since in principle the source texts are not in the corpus. Unfortunately, the likely equivalents of reporting that appear to be obligatory rather than optional in virtually all the non-English languages I have asked about. It follows that the higher frequency of that in the translations could be a case of straight interference. But since the corpora are of English texts only, Baker’s “comparable corpora” will never tell us about it.

Does this explain why Baker’s list of universals does not include interference? Does it explain why Toury’s laws do? We can only guess. Yet the suspicion must remain that Baker is looking for the only causes that her tool and method will enable her to find (which is why, indeed, the research only concerns the reporting function of that, because it can easily be located by searching for the verbs). Since source texts do not enter into the method, the tool is selecting the possible explanations, and apparently the possible universals as well. The tail is wagging the dog.

A related problem here concerns the kinds of explanations that can be offered on the level of linguistic analysis alone. For Chesterman (in this volume), when frequencies of reporting that are attributed to the “universal” of explicitation, the move does constitute a kind of explanation. For us, the procedure merely involves formulating a hypothesis of extendibility and giving it a name (“explicitation”). The name is there for as long as the data justify it, and the data are grouped together for as long as the name is useful, so the relation between the two levels is ultimately tautological, as in any naming operation. There is a big difference, for us, between that kind of conceptual work and the more intellectually satisfying explanation that comes from relating two levels, both with data, both with names, and with some kind of hypothesis linking the two. We might thus seek to explain the linguistic variables in terms of social variables, or cognitive variables, or indeed any other level offering creative explanations. Corpus studies do this occasionally when referring to cognitive hypotheses as possible explanations, albeit without causal reasoning or probabilistic dependencies. Toury, however, does this consistently in his probabilistic laws, notably when he refers to the cultural position of translations and the relative prestige of source texts. Those external variables would seem to be social, or cultural, or sociocultural (cf. Pym 2006). But could they also be cognitive or psychological? At this point the search for explanations must indeed move beyond the narrow descriptive level.

A possible unification

Malmkjær (2005), echoing something of Blum-Kulka (1986), favors a kind of cognitive explanation for explicitation. She turns to Grice’s Cooperation Principle, on the
basis of which we might say that translators provide more “communicative clues” than non-translators; they are somehow more “cooperative” in communication. We could go further and propose that translators tend not to flout whatever Gricean maxims are operative in the target locale (the maxims are culturally variable, but the Cooperation Principle is not). We might thus be able to cover a whole range of something like “communication assistance strategies”, basically stating that translators tend to avoid extremes of all kinds (cf. Shlesinger 1989). That kind of thinking might be able to explain translation features in a very powerful way, based not on narrow linguistic descriptions, nor just on a theory of translation, but on a theory of the fundamental reason why people enter into communication with each other. That view also fits in neatly with claims that translators are basically nurturers, helpers, assistants, self-sacrificing mediators who tend to work in situations where receivers need added cognitive assistance (i.e. easier texts). In line with that view, Simeoni (1998) broadly sees translators as being in subservient positions, with less power than their communication partners. We might therefore surmise that translators are somehow disposed to work so that others do not have to do excessive linguistic work. There is just one problem with this magnificent all-embracing explanation: the linguistic features are not universal to all kinds of translation. As in Baker, that view is only explaining the “standardization” part of translation processes. It fails to account for interference as the other aspect of what happens in translation.

Let me give an example of why it is important not to abandon the concept of interference. The little that we know about how translators work with translation memories (the market leader is currently Trados) suggests that the technology reinforces some of the standardizing tendencies but reduces others (Gow 2003; Dragsted 2004; Bowker 2005). Greater consistency at the level of terminology and phraseology fits in with everything we have placed under the rubric of “standardization” (that is why companies use the memories). At the same time, however, the segmentation patterns (the textual “make-up” indeed) tend to come straight from the source text as parsed by the software. When we compare translations done with memories to those done without, the ones done with the memory display a significantly higher level of syntactic interference. We might suppose (and we are going to check) that the resulting texts are harder to use than are translations done without the technology. In other words, what you win on the swings (greater standardization) you lose on the roundabouts (syntactic interference). Toury’s two laws are both in evidence, at the same time, on different levels. Is there a way of explaining both tendencies at the same time?

The relations between risk, standardization and interference can be formalized. In the present circumstances, however, a narrative illustration should suffice:

You are translating and you are in doubt. For this particular source-text segment here you can think of two or three possible renditions, and they all seem more or less correct. No time to check any purpose-built corpus or parallel texts; no justification for checking with a client or expert, since basic correctness seems not to be in doubt. You have to decide, quickly. You are going to take a risk, as we all do when communi-
cating. You are going to bet that this option, rather than the other two, will be usable. But which? You might decide to trust your experience of the target field and locale, and you put what sounds most normal. You still have doubts (too much risk?): choose an item at a more general level (a “lower” level in Toury’s terminology). So far, everything you have been doing to deal with risk has been within the general tendency to standardize. But then, the translation memory is also giving you a rendition, there on the screen, quite independently of your personal experience or recollection. That translation comes with the authority of the job itself (memories are mostly provided by clients), or from the experience of a previous translator (presumably paid by a client), or from your own experience in less doubtful situations (also presumably paid for). Whatever the case, if you go for that option, the risk is to some degree moved away from your immediate domain. Either someone else is to blame (if things go wrong), or you can point to those who granted you success in the previous situation. Either way, the translation memory gives you a relatively low-risk option, and translators tend to select it. In a mini-experiment by Bowker (2005), translators opted for the memory-based rendition even when it was clearly erroneous. When in doubt, trust whatever seems authoritative. This general strategy gives results that clearly come under the banner of “interference”.

We thus have two general ways of dealing with doubt: either say what seems normal or safe (standardization), or say what someone else can be responsible for (interference). Both sets of strategies are ways translators reduce their personal risk burden. In accordance with both laws, at the same time, many translators do not tend to take on communicative risk in their own name.

One might object, of course, that the use of translation memories is an aberration, a distortion of the true dynamics of translation. The same objection could be raised to Shlesinger’s early study (1989), where the oral mode of rendition was found to be more powerful than the tendency to standardization. Then again, are the laws or universals only to be considered valid for translators working with pen and paper, with no time constraints, and with no professional risks involved? For that matter, what we find in the case of translation memories curiously resembles the strategies used in pre-print medieval translation. When rendering scientific texts from Arabic into Latin, translators would reduce the guesswork by adopting extreme literalism and numerous calques. The result might not make much sense, but it would not be entirely wrong. Further, throughout the medieval period, the ideological hierarchy of languages meant that translation was often used as a way of developing the target language, actively using interference to impose new lexical items and syntactic structures on the receiver. For that matter, much the same thing is happening today in localization projects into the more peripheral languages, and not only because of the use of translation-memory tools. The languages themselves are placed in an ideological hierarchy with respect to technology, and translation downwards on the hierarchy tends to operate through interference strategies of various kinds. For all these reasons, the relative predominance of interference is not to be considered an aberration introduced by minor communi-
cation technologies. Quite the reverse: The undue attention given to standardization strategies is more likely to be the result of bias in favor of written translation (particularly literary), in the second half of the twentieth century, and between languages not generally considered in need of structural development through translation (in a moment of ideologically “equal languages”). Perhaps because of the special history of Hebrew, and its importance for much of the research commented on here, Toury gave more specific weight to interference than did most of those who have since worked on universals.

Where the laws or universals might lie

Our proposed unification has reached this point: Translators tend to standardize language or to channel interference because these are two main ways of reducing or transferring communicative risk. This proposition is compatible with several other hypotheses concerning conditioning factors. For instance, if the source text or culture is authoritative or prestigious, it makes sense to allow that authority or prestige to absorb risk (thus producing interference). Or again, if the source-text syntax in a particular passage is especially difficult to interpret, it makes sense to invest effort in those places to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, thus producing standardization of various kinds (cf. Whittaker 2004). And if translation occupies a relatively peripheral place in the target culture, such that any potential receivers are likely to be very sure of themselves and seek no substantial influence from the foreign, then the safest bet for any translator is to use the linguistic repertoires and norms of the target culture (thus producing standardization). There are no doubt many more conditioning factors in this vein, and they can be expected to overlap and reinforce each other. For example, a cultural locale that feels itself to be prestigious and strong will also tend to hold translation in a peripheral position, and will thus have at least two reasons for rewarding standardization and not tolerating interference. The result would be what Venuti (1995) has termed “fluent” translation, considered typical of literary translation in the United States.

In our view, however, all those conditions only correlate with translation strategies to the extent that they affect the risks that translators are likely to take or avoid. The conditions do this by offering different reward structures. If translators are going to be rewarded (financially, symbolically or socially) for taking risks, then they are likely to take risks, rather than transfer them. Translators may then have an interest in breaking all the maxims, norms, laws or universals that theorists throw at them (Toury himself has envisaged the virtues of training translators to break norms). If we are translating for advertising purposes, for example, then the insipid language of standardized translations may be unrewarded or even penalized, and gains will be found by taking the risks of invention or, in some circumstances, extreme interference from the foreign. Similarly, in a locale of low-risk translations, a translator like Venuti can seek unusual gains by adopting foreignizing strategies and reaping the rewards in a neighboring field,
as an academic theorist of translation. (If not, how could his characterization of Anglo-American translation possibly account for translators like himself?)

In a vast number of cases, however, the translator’s activity is not subject to any reward structure that can justify a risk-taking disposition. As Leonardo Bruni complained in 1405, authors always get the praise for what is good in a translation, and translators just get the blame for what is wrong (Bruni 1928: 102–104). With this kind of reward structure, translators will logically tend to be risk-averse, and risk aversion may develop into a deceptively universal behavioral disposition. Of course, once risk aversion is embedded, it tends to reproduce itself: risk-takers will go into other cross-cultural professions (the high-flyers of international marketing), and those that deal with translators will tend to assume risk aversion and thus structure tasks and rewards accordingly. Yet there is no fatality. With another kind of reward structure, we would hope to find other kinds of communicative strategies.

If there are large-scale explanatory laws or universals, we should not expect to find them on the language level alone (e.g. translations tend to have more or less X than non-translations). Nor are we wholly content with a simple correlation between linguistic variables and sociocultural variables like “prestige” or “position” (e.g. translations tend to have more X in the presence of social condition Y). We see the analysis of risk dynamics and of risk-management as a crucial link, leading to the formulation of relations that have a stronger human causation (e.g. translators will tend to take risk X in the presence of reward structure Y).

In terms of the unification we are seeking here, the closest we can come to a law-like formulation would thus be as follows: Translators will tend to avoid risk by standardizing language and/or channeling interference, if and when there are no rewards for them to do otherwise. That sounds fairly obvious, even empty. But the reward, for us, is not in the universal formulation itself. We are more interested in achieving cooperation between cultures, and in defining risk the probability of non-cooperation. That formalization, however, will have to wait for another place.

One final consideration, to return to our point of departure: A text that is clear and readily applicable avoids many communicative risks and can thus find rewards in the short term. Baker’s compilation of universals might be one such text, and the rewards certainly came. On the other hand, a text that is dialectically abstruse and resolutely non-superficial runs a severe risk of not being understood in the short term, as indeed may have been the case with Toury’s laws. (I have needed more than twelve years to grasp an inkling about why there are two apparently contradictory laws.) In terms of risk allocation, if nothing else, Baker’s work is simply not in the same league as Toury’s. In taking that special kind of communicative risk, however, Toury implicitly sought a risk-taking readership, quite unlike those who run out and apply Baker’s universals. Some of my students get to the end of the chapter of laws and exclaim, “Is that all? Is that what I get for so many hours of hard reading?” They feel their investment has not paid off; they took too high a risk and seem to have lost. Such communication will always be precarious and more than occasionally frustrating. Yet the compensa-
tion is not necessarily in the book itself, nor in its immediate application. In consciously leaving fundamental problems for the future to solve (the chapter on laws finishes very much in media res), Toury has the potential to produce rewards over vast stretches of space and time, wherever and whenever the loyalty to scholarship survives.

References


CHAPTER 24

Norms and the state

The geopolitics of translation theory

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The field of Translation Studies, just like any other field of research in the social sciences, has long ignored the geopolitical substrate of investigations carried out in its name. Theories and the various methods to establish sets of rules and principles on the basis of empirical observations are part of the history of disciplines. This history, however, cannot be reduced to a contest of methodologies, as useful as the comparative angle may be. In a context of intercontinental dissensus, taking Gideon Toury’s norm-focused work over the last three decades as a base against which to assess the emergence of new ways of approaching translation issues may be an occasion to revisit the history of the field. A geopolitical unconscious is thus revealed, equally active under the most scientistic versions of translation theory and the more recent attempts to commit theory to cultural activism.

Keywords: historiography of translation theory, translation and norms, nation and normativity, theory and exile

Gideon Toury’s scholarship is well anchored in the European tradition. In view of the increasing interest in studies of translation worldwide, it may be useful to recall at least three nexuses of references, present from the start of his career and never entirely disavowed:

Uriel Weinreich’s precedent in *Languages in Contact*

Uriel Weinreich’s work on languages and cultures in contact (1951, 1953) is seldom cited in Toury’s published work, at least in his publications in English. His name appears once only, in passing, in *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (1995: 135). But it is duly mentioned in the lengthy 1976 abstract in English to Toury’s PhD thesis (pp. xxii, and further, pp. xxxviii & xxxix in the final section entitled “Translational Norms and the Position of Translated Literature within the Hebrew Literary Polysystem”). There not only is the foundational term “model” referred explicitly to Weinreich, but a parallel is also drawn between “linguistic loyalty”, a behavior Weinreich related to language in ways analogous to the relationship of nationalism to nationality, and the “epigonic” (i.e. hyper-conservative) norm system governing literary transla-
tion — specifically novels — from English and German into Hebrew from 1930 to 1945 that Toury took as the object of study in his thesis. Besides, transcultural concepts such as “transfer”, “norms”, “tolerance” or its reverse, “resistance” to innovation, which have been part and parcel of Polysystem Theory since its inception, are clearly Weinreich-derived (1953: 4, 86). Overall, it is notable that of the very few names referenced in the 39-page long PhD abstract (I counted only seven: Even-Zohar, the sociologist Jay Jackson and his work on norms, Porat and Hrushovski, Jakobson, Toury himself once, and Weinreich), Weinreich ranks second in frequency of appearance, even before Jakobson, and just after Toury’s mentor and future colleague Itamar Even-Zohar.

**Semiotics**

Toury’s intellectual training occurred during the heyday of semiotics. Among acknowledged influences in this domain, through Even-Zohar’s intermediation, were Jakobson and the Russian Formalists. The dynamic functionalist framework of Descriptive Translation Studies was partly an extension of the Russian tradition of European linguistics (Jakobson and Tynjanov and their notion of culture as a “system” of “systems” articulated as early as 1928)¹ and from the poetic modernism of Shklovsky. Other sources could have been used or at least cited to mark a distance from them — most notably authors whose careers took place in France (the first Barthes, Genette, Greimas, Todorov following Bakhtin, etc.) who at the time were similarly engaged in the theorizing of literature from a semiotic perspective. The Tel Aviv group opted instead for a perhaps less combative semiotic substrate devised by the older generation of European émigrés.

**A belief in the powers of “theory”**

The third inspirational corpus of influences overlaps with the second but its scope is somewhat wider. At that time, a strong “theoretical” inclination was shared by virtually all researchers in the humanities and social sciences, from linguistics to psychoanalysis through anthropology and sociology. In this regard, the theorization of translation that Toury and others were after was innovative in relation to this particular object, but it was also very much in line with the larger scheme of things — it seemed that everybody was into literary theorizing in Europe in the 1970s.

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¹ In Jakobson’s words (1985: 16), referring to his 1928 Prague publication “Problems in the study of literature and language” (co-authored with Yuri Tynjanov): “Our comparative study of language and of literature was important not only for insisting on the common tasks in both fields, but also for drawing attention to the correlation existing between literature (as well as language) and the different contiguous series of the cultural context” (my emphasis).
Nor was theorization a new thing: there had been a long tradition of theoretical pursuits in Europe, from Russian Formalism to Spitzer’s stylistics through the Prague circle, Curtius’s topology, Croce’s antipositivism, Contini’s critique of variants, the work done by the École de Genève (for a quick survey of those rich undertakings, see Compagnon 1998). Still, the decade from 1963 to 1973 was characterized by an explosion of theory-driven research in all matters of language use, from linguistics proper to discourse analysis and the study of literature, in the firm hope of breaking the codes of language and of literature. Interestingly, as early as the mid-1970s, cracks were already beginning to appear in the same circles around the issue of whether theory ought to adopt the most formalized models to explain the more spontaneous and socially inscribed uses of language and literature. In any case, it is difficult against such a backdrop of theoretical proposals to dispute the notion that Toury’s work was grounded in the European psyche, specifically the continental European one. North America had only produced New Criticism (during the 1940s and the 1950s mostly), with its main representatives Cleanth Brooks, René Wellek and Robert Penn Warren (see e.g. Cusset 2003) while on the English side, F.R. Leavis and his Cambridge disciples stood for a deliberate anti-theoretical approach. To summarize, Toury’s conceptual work on translation materialized in the wake of, and alongside, a long-lasting continental European tradition of theorizing language and literature where émigré scholars from Russia and Eastern Europe occupied a prominent position.

Toury’s work was noticed by few scholars in the 1970s. This lack of visibility was commented on by Hermans (1995:215–223) in his tribute to the 1980 edition of In Search of a Theory of Translation, coinciding with the publication of Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond (1995). In his review, Hermans observed that the first book had been a “publishing disaster” largely because of its poor commercial distribution through a research institute of the University of Tel Aviv. It remained largely inaccessible even to those most eager to read translation theory. Few were likely to take much notice of the publication anyway, beyond the restricted circle of scholars in Central and Northern Europe trained in other disciplines (specifically Applied Linguistics, Semiotics and Comparative Literature). This was for the simple reason that the field of Translation Studies was conspicuously absent from the disciplinary map at the time. As noted by Toury himself in the first part of Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond (1995:8), Holmes’s oft-cited contribution to the same circles, “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” (1972), had suffered the same treatment. Even Steiner’s 1975 opus After Babel, published by Oxford University Press and coming from a very different tradition, was not greeted by a great many reviews, even less so by scholars specializing in the study of translation — as Steiner bitterly complained in his Preface to the second edition. Could this be because Steiner had vowed to distance himself, most notably in Chapter 4 entitled “The Claims of Theory”, from earlier attempts by linguists and semioticians not only to provide better understanding, but to explain the makeup of translations with the help of theoretical work of the kind Toury and others were trying to construct? Steiner’s publisher had far greater resources than Toury’s or Holmes’s,
but Steiner was certainly writing against the grain at a time when theory was on everyone’s agenda. On the other hand, Toury’s work was in line with the spirit of the era. As Hermans put it (1995:215), Toury’s 1980 book “succeeded because its message fell on fertile ground, and because it was a provocative, even a revolutionary message, with plenty of potential”. And, we might add, because it raised the level of contextual understanding of translational phenomena to new levels, where theory remained strong in the quest for empirical evidence.

The contrast was striking when *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* was published in 1995. By then, a field had come into existence and Toury’s book could be placed in a unique position in relation to its competitors. The story here again is well known. Institutional recognition was on the way; conferences, specialized journals, refereed publications, graduate courses on any of the topics making up Translation Studies were becoming common; departments and programs of Translation Studies began to emerge. In the ten years since the publication of *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, the trend has continued. Toury’s book became an instant classic, as did the descriptive model to which his name is attached.

Meanwhile, there has been evolution in the wider map where Translation Studies now occupies a space of its own. Perhaps the most unexpected development is that the days of “theory”, at least in the sense of the term in the 1960s and 1970s, are now over (Compagnon 1998; Eagleton 2003). Whole areas of research formerly “strong on theory” — Linguistics, Semiotics, Comparative Literature — are on the decline (cf. Spivak 2003) or have been forced to adapt themselves to a radical reshuffling of interests. There is less “theory for theory’s sake” in the classic sense, and — depending on the sphere of interest — more applied work, greater attention to the “social demand”, sometimes also a return to technological hopes or chimera. New expert knowledges have developed too, as witnessed by the growth of interdisciplinary programs of “studies”: Cultural Studies, Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Environmental Studies, International Studies etc., programs whose research foci often overlap with one another. Indeed, “Theory” is becoming more and more of a topic for a historiography of Translation Studies (see for example Venuti 2002), as reflected in changes in curricula in many places in the world. An increasing number of courses now treat theory as a symptom of the environments that host it, just as the way Linguistics departments study grammar: linguistics or stylistics has taken a decisive historical turn since the 1990s. In some cases, theory for the sake of articulating theory is dismissed or, worse, suspected of serving a “circular” purpose: justifying its premises instead of elucidating the problems under investigation. Significantly, if we keep in mind Gideon Toury’s background as delineated above, wherever “Theory” continues, it is very different from the mode of inquiry developed in the 1960s by European scholars, émigrés or not (cf. Trivedi 2005).

These global changes are constitutive of a whole new backdrop against which Translation Studies in general, and Toury’s work in particular, find themselves realigned. The same groundswell that has altered the disciplinary map of the humanities and the so-
cial sciences has also affected the work and concerns of translation scholars worldwide.

Could it be that this long transition of thirty years or so, taking place in the extended field of the humanities and social sciences from the 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century, is also signaling another “translation” of sorts, i.e. a massive displacement of research centers from Europe to the United States and from there potentially at least, to other parts of the world?

The first of these displacements of course took place some 60 to 70 years ago, when Jewish European scholars, trained in classical philology, structuralist thinking and the classic humanities, were forced to emigrate from Europe to escape extermination. Recalling their names today reads like a tapestry of Western thinking: Arnheim, Auerbach, Gombrich, Panofsky, Bettelheim, Spitzer, Cracauer, Lowenthal, Adorno (whose father had converted to Protestantism — which made no difference — and who chose to go back to Germany in 1949), Lazarsfeld, Mannheim, Jakobson, Weinreich, Hannah Arendt, Norbert Elias (before his return to the Netherlands), not to mention figures in the more rigorous sciences (Einstein…), etc. As Milner recalls (2006: 168–169), the greater part of the generation taking refuge in the United States or, in lesser numbers, in England before the Second World War never fully integrated into their host countries. Their experience was not diasporic; it was exile. Fragments of information are easy to locate in letters and biographies of émigrés raised and educated in Germany and surrounding countries, expressing their disenchantment. They appear also in new prefaces to their books reissued (Said 2003 on Auerbach 1953) or in personal recollections (Bettelheim’s New Yorker piece on Freud 1982, Elias’s Notes on a Lifetime in 1994, etc.). Less known, says Milner, is the extent to which those émigrés were originally perceived as a threat, intellectually, to homegrown, conventional, positivist thinking: “the nabobs of pragmaticism, behaviourism and empiricism, were shaken in their departments” (2006: 169). That experience of exile was all but unique, of course. But the resulting “academic war”, with the newcomers’ multi-faceted strategies of resistance, survival, compromise, or failure to adapt, has not been written. It seems that a new displacement of sorts is happening today, far less dramatically but no less marked, with the “retranslation” of Western styles of thinking, not only within the Western hemisphere itself but also outward from there, beyond the places where the more conventional modes of doing research apply.

The second phase of global displacement began during the last third of the twentieth century and is not over yet. A massive work of textual and cultural translation has crystallized, mostly out of France and Germany, toward North-American campuses. Again, information is easy to locate, for example in columns of large-audience Anglo-American literary journals (The Times Literary Supplement, The New York Review of Books, The London Review of Books, etc.). The transatlantic voyage of “French theory” — the systematic translation and transpositioning into English of the likes of Barthes, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault and Lacan — is a clear sign of cultural transfer producing forms of writing unknown before in North America (the new icons of cultural theory are named Homi Bhabha or Gayatri Spivak). Like their
literary counterparts (Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh for instance), the new scholars grew up in the peripheries of the Empire but they were trained in, and are now employed in the epicenters of American academic thought: Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, New York University, the University of Chicago, the same places that, once the initial shock was over, accommodated the first wave of European scholars before and immediately after the Second World War. The first phase was brutish — people were displaced, sometimes losing their manuscripts and personal libraries in the process, with some even committing suicide. The second is being mediated by texts. Seminal books were turned into English; invitations were extended to authors to present their work. As a corollary, the centers forming the newer interdisciplinary studies have extended to the former settlement colonies of the British Empire (Australia and Canada).

Toury’s approach to translation is and always has been quintessentially modernist — if we agree to call “modernist” an approach that owes its fundamental working procedures to European thought preceding and accompanying the early 1970s (ironically, this use of the qualifier “modernist” is well in line with the North-American conventional usage of the term). The so-called “descriptive” stance that Toury’s name has come to stand for — again, following Weinreich’s preference for “descriptive linguistics” (1953: 3) — is best understood as a symptom of the Enlightenment and of its aftermath.

A descendant of those Jewish intellectuals whose names are attached to the Haskalah, Toury’s intellectual progress typically followed that which, in Milner’s words, substituted a new model of “Juifs de savoir” (Wissenschaft) for the age-old tradition of “Juifs d’étude” investing their intellectual energy in the study of the Torah. Had the Second World War not broken out, it is far from certain Toury would have accomplished his career in Israel. Even then, his formative years as an Israeli scholar were spent learning and furthering knowledge that emerged and developed primarily in Europe by émigré scholars living in exilic circumstances. It is useful to keep this trajectory in mind even when thinking of the genealogy of the concept of norms in Toury’s work. The sociologist Jay Jackson, out of whose work the theory of translational norms developed (Toury 1995: 67–69), was already cited in Toury’s 1976 dissertation abstract. Jackson was a behaviorist, and a disciple of Parsons. Talcott Parsons, founder of American sociology and a prolific writer before and after the Second World War, was also the translator from German of all of Max Weber’s foundational works. Weber, for all his personal

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2 I take this use of the term “descriptive” to be unproblematic, but it is important also to keep in mind, in the context of the cultural evolution described in this article, that a great many authors who have been called “poststructuralist” in Anglo-American circles and who, indeed, have been proposing entirely different approaches to their objects of study than those put forth by systemists, also led their followers to privilege description as an operational mode sometimes of the most minute kind, in at times extraordinarily perceptive ways and, typically, non-theoretical in the classic sense of the word. Foucault’s vivid descriptions can serve as an illustration. Similarly, although not Foucauldian by any measure, the work and mode of understanding of Michael Cronin in the field of Translation Studies gives a good idea of how multiform the concept of “descriptive work” can be.
difficulties with integration, was not an émigré of course. Nor was he persecuted for his beliefs. But he was quintessentially European, and, crucially, the major sociological theorist of the modern state.

As time passes by, it is becoming increasingly clear that the concepts and models of understanding attached to Toury’s name are incontrovertibly related to the birth and maintenance of states — not so much the birth of the state of Israel as the issue of the birth and development of state institutions in general, particularly such cultural institutions that foster the crystallization of national literatures, including translated literatures, in the context of nation-states designed after the European model of state-building. He is not the only scholar, in Translation Studies and elsewhere, to have chosen this path. The same political substrate of the notion of “system” as redefined in “polysystem studies” underlies virtually all systemic constructs imagined and disseminated in Europe prior to the 1990s. Before we hasten to characterize that notion as anchored in the history of the Jewish state following the Second World War, we would do well to remember that the substrate of the triangular concept of field, capital, habitus attached to Bourdieu’s orthodoxy also served a model of development inspired by the particular history of the French state and its performative Republican mythology.

The anchoring of “theories” in the collective histories of their most explicit tenets could surely be extended to other cases. Can it be generalized? To the best of my knowledge, one trait has rarely been retained to explain how it was possible for Toury’s program of research, again through the mediation of Itamar Even-Zohar’s ideas, to attempt a solid working relationship with Pierre Bourdieu’s Centre de sociologie européenne in Paris. Both polysystems-informed Descriptive Translation Studies and Bourdieu’s sociology of culture-turned-universal-theory-of-the-social-world have been predicated on the premise that the makeup of social facts — including translations — reflects certain normative ideas embodied in a doxa fostered by state-induced institutions anxious to preserve their systemic consistency and integrity. The first contacts between Toury and Paris occurred in the early 1990s when Bourdieu was lecturing on what he called “state-induced thinking” (La pensée d’état) based on his understanding of the French academic world (1984). Fieldwork material going back to the 1960s was reactivated in the light of an evolving theory of the state bearing on matters of social upbringing, education and, more generally, cultural forms contributing their coherence to strong states and providing their citizens with a sense of identity. “Fields” and their accompanying conceptual apparatus were updated as so many state-induced creations giving rise to homogeneous entities or rather, since it was becoming obvious that homogeneity in matters of state is largely imaginary (Anderson 1983), of homogenizing entities. Bourdieu’s image, of course, was that of a critic, a rebel in his own country, who, as time went by, increasingly denounced the abuses and the ordinary oppression of the French state over its citizens. But this also came from the way in which his — French — readers understood his work and interpreted his theoretical constructs. In his scholarly work, the state does not exercise a rebellious function; it is just there as a given, the major border-tracer of the most extensive field — the national one — in which all its contained
formations — economic, literary, judicial, cultural — are organized as a site for conflict and domination. This configuration is not so different from that present in Toury’s work, where the imperious, normative frame of translators’ performance is set as the default case. It does not prohibit transgressing practices and, in fact, Toury does favour transgression of norms by translators. Nor does it imply that the theorist is the agent of oppression (see the Toronto interview in this volume). Simply, the frame of understanding is clearly modernist and, as such, constrains the way research objects are constructed.

Like Bourdieu’s sociology, Toury’s model of *Descriptive Translation Studies* has looked persistently for all kinds of regularities to homogenize variability and variation in performance. In his case, the choice made initially to locate the specificity of norms between the concept of rule and that of idiosyncratic options deflected norms evidently towards the regulatory pole, using categories aiming for greater homogeneity in terms of the array of choices effectively proposed to all those involved in translational activities: initial norm / preliminary norms / operational norms (Toury 1976: iv–ix; 1980: 51–62; 1996: chapter 2). Otherwise, variation risked becoming chaotic, with relativity threatening to reach a point where conventional scientific procedures would not apply. This may be the common thread that can account for Toury’s and Bourdieu’s evident distancing from postmodernist approaches.

Further, the same explanatory intent that Bourdieu named “sociodicée” (1989: 377), or the self-justification by society of its own practices of domination — following Weber’s conception of state domination by those decision makers (prominent agents) providing a “théodicée de leur propre privilège”, can also be detected in Toury’s quest for universal laws of translation applying across borders (for a terminological distinction between the uses of the term “laws” and that of universals, see again the Toronto interview and also Toury 2006, which followed the Savonlina conference on translation universals). Both constructions echo earlier calls that, in more buoyant times, turned the academic search for theory into an explanatory utopia about to come true. Whenever I go back to the opening chapter of *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, where the scope of translation theory is referred to “all that translation can, in principle, involve” (1995: 15), I am reminded of Genette’s own disciplinary utopia to uncover the perfect theory of literature in which “the object of theory would not be limited to the literary real, but would extend to the totality of the literary virtual” (1972: 11). Genette’s and Toury’s proposals differ considerably of course. It is just that theories of language and society produced and hosted by strong states or — this would be my guiding hypothesis — in the expectation that a state (more often than not, the state where the researcher is active) should be as complete as any, i.e. a “normal state” with all the required attributes of power including knowledge, will be prone to data-homogenizing and to universalizing their findings. Just as “language loyalty” was the neutral term coined by Weinreich, already mentioned at the beginning of this article, to characterize for the benefit of linguistic studies the pathology that “nationalism” constitutes with regard to “nationality”, one is tempted to speak of “culture loyalty” to characterize the
researcher’s internalized preferences for homogeneous groupings representative of the
culture under study, more often than not his or her own. This loyalty has often taken the
 guise of a theoretical agenda modeled after the cohesive strength entailed in European
state building (but where is the alternative model, even today?). Few scholars are aware
of this connection, so that much of the work that goes on in the disciplines of the social
sciences and the humanities following traditions closely linked to the development of
their institutions, even as they question them, may in fact be steeped in a geopolitical
unconscious, l’impensé géopolitique de la théorie.

Toury’s stratificational concept of translational norms was constructed as early as
the 1970s: the introductory sentence of his thesis abstract read, “This study is, I believe,
the first attempt to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for the norms
governing literary translation”. It can be seen as the cultural embodiment, applied to
the makeup and publishing of translations, of that supreme homogenizing entity, the
modern state — not only the Israeli or European states but any newer, conventional en-
tity born out of the decolonization process worldwide or yet to come (a prophecy that
Franz Fanon formulated long before the late Edward Said 2000 proposed his own ideas
on the form to be taken by new independent states). Why are “norms” so important to
the study of translation? In Toury’s words, again three decades ago, “Norms are the key
concept and focal point in any scientific approach to the study and description of so-
cial phenomena, especially behavioural activities, because their existence, and the wide
range of situations they apply to (with the conformity to them implied) are the main
factors ensuring the establishment and retention of social order” (1976: ii). Central to
the idea of norms governing both the makeup of translations and strategies of transla-
tors is the orderly way in which conventional state institutions, supported in this role by
the private sector, aspire to impose consensual frames of thinking and, for better or for
worse, often succeed in doing so.

This commingling of research with a sense of identity by default — perhaps the
most common denominator for social scientists and scholars and the humanities over
the last two hundred years (on Linguistics and Sociology, see e.g. Simeoni 2005; but see
also nowadays the appeal of titles in Translation Studies such as “Translation in China”,
“Translating Ireland”, “Translation Studies in Israel”, or “in Spain”, or “in the Americas”
etc. on the cover of books or recent journals) — may have been one reason why the con-
cept of norms was so successful among translation scholars, as well as translators spe-
cializing in non-literary texts. Although it emerged in the context of a heavily formal-
istic theory with a highly technical understanding of literary form, the concept could
be transposed with minimal loss to more ordinary productions, anywhere translations
are commissioned and the person/agent/entity employing translator(s) occupies a posi-
tion of power in the social structure. That is, virtually everywhere but in the lesser
spaces of power where disinterested, experimental practices find shelter. Again, a very
modernist picture.

By the end of the 1990s, however, the concepts of field/capital/habitus and of norms
were already being used for the description of systems of a different order. Less closed
and self-organizing than the more traditional model of the modern state by Weber, with its classic emphasis on the monopoly of legitimate violence and excise systems, the new systems were put to use to index larger ensembles focusing on practices of cultural circulation and exchange across borders, not within them. The last doctoral thesis supervised by Pierre Bourdieu, authored by Pascale Casanova, was published in March 1999 under the title *La République mondiale des lettres*. The model of the French state suddenly expanded to encompass the whole world (Damrosch 2003: 27, footnote), standing now for the larger international field of publishing emerging literatures, with translations playing a foundational role. For the theory to function properly, the world had to take on the traits of a strongly centralized state: France. Or perhaps of any traditional state on the European model. The author of this thesis being French, the French model was the most serviceable. Besides, the more developed the cultural institutions in a state, the easier to transfer the model to the whole world system, of course.

Why this change of scale? And how founded is the analogy drawn above between the modernisms exemplified by Bourdieu’s sociology of fields and Descriptive Translation Studies in the face of the new focus on the interplay of forces across borders, instead of within the state? Agreed, Casanova’s move was a formidable attempt to elevate the struggles for distinction and (re-)positioning documented in the realm of the social as defined by the sociology of a specific culture to the status of an international sociology of cultures, probably Bourdieu’s late response to the increasing dominion of Cultural Studies outside continental Europe. In contrast, the Tel Aviv model was international from the start, since the agents introducing norms in a Hebrew literature still in the making were, by definition, bilingual at the very least. While translating into Hebrew, their first languages had been German and Russian. Of the ten “professional” literary translators translating into Hebrew during the period studied by Toury (1930–1945), most “translated from at least three, and up to five source languages, and none of them had at his disposal only one source language” (1976: xxiv). Yet the fact remains that, just as the French state has been the one on which Bourdieu conducted fieldwork, the default frame in Toury’s case was clearly that of the forthcoming state of Israel and, to be fair, secondarily, in Even-Zohar’s work (1996) other similarly positioned states at an early stage of development and in a peripheral position. Bourdieu also frequently alluded to other frames of reference in prefaces to his translated books—*Distinction*, most noticeably— or in contributions first published in English in *Poetics Today* dealing with countries like Japan. But that was always to advise his international readers that they ought to take tools he himself had developed for France and apply them to those cultural institutions they knew from experience. The shift of interests is signaled by Casanova’s book. It can also be found in more recent suggestions by translation scholars who want to use the concept of norms to study more than what it had been designed for, i.e. for more than the study of the target side only (Hermans attached a lot of importance already to the “toning down” of this adverb between the categorical formulations of *In Search of a Theory of Translation* and the propositions contained in Chapter 1, Section 2 of *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*).
a response to changes in the real world, in turn modifying the conditions of applicability of the conceptual core of the theory. But, to repeat, the underlying structural model has tended to remain that of an existing state, more often than not that of the researchers themselves. Exceptions can be found, of course.

Just as there has been renewed interest in structures beyond those interacting within the borders of the state or on the “target side only” of the translational act, new concepts like those of métissage, transculturalism and transnationalism have for some time induced yet another toning down, this time of the notion of “system” as used in the larger part of the twentieth century, replacing it with that of “network”, less rigid, more sensitive to individual usage, more open and porous to exchanges, suggesting bi-directionality or multi-directionality and, above all, describable on the ground, since the view from above makes less sense. In many ways, the concept of “network” seems to be to globalization what “system” was, and continues to be, to the more traditional notion of the nation-state. The new concepts were impelled by a growing perception that “theory” as it developed in Europe is no longer the comprehensive project defended optimistically until the mid-1970s. The field of Translation Studies, in both the textual and cultural senses, seems to be looking more and more outward across borders. Modernist ways of thinking about societies, literatures or translation systematically may well have been fostered by the particular yet widely shared histories of Western state-building, under the gaze of migrant European observers — among whom Jakobson and Weinreich, who so deeply influenced Gideon Toury’s theorizing. The newer concepts too have a hidden political history that remains to be studied. When that history is written, it will likely relate to the steady decentering of the world of research from Europe to the US and, from there, to an Anglo-American archipelago of sorts, before new models come to replace them. Newcomers to the field should realize, as they step into the circle and start to work with certain concepts instead of others, that they are likely to side with a conception of the object that goes far beyond mere “methodological” concerns.

In closing, it may be useful to remember that research in Translation Studies remains more open than ever. The snapshot just taken should not suggest that “systems are out, long live global networks”. Nor was it meant to imply that the modernist roots of Gideon Toury’s model, or of Bourdieu’s approach to social facts, or of anyone designing their research blueprint with nation-based categories, are outdated. First, it is not clear whether the systemic coherence of the traditional state model is less stringent now than in the past, or whether feelings of state-induced identity and loyalty (or their equivalents, in community, ethnic or religious garbs) are on the wane. I have simply attempted to show that “theories” of translation, like “theories” of literature and of culture, have substrates of a more difficult and complicated order than their logic and rhetoric appear to signify, and that those substrates during the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century have been, perhaps unconsciously, geopolitical. Something is at work in the vogue of discourses intent on “provincializing Europe” that goes beyond mere denunciation of mistaken universalizing tendencies. Other empires, national, regional, religious or globally language-based, are also interested parties.
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CHAPTER 25

Translations as institutional facts*

An ontology for “assumed translation”

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Although Toury’s notion of “assumed translation” has been criticized from many quarters, it remains an important contribution to the methodology of Translation Studies. To ensure its survival, it may be revised and a more radical version of it adopted. This can be done by building on the groundwork provided by Searle’s account of “the construction of social reality”. After illustrating why a revision of the notion is necessary, I demonstrate how this would be done in a Searlean framework. I then discuss what this would mean for the identification of translations for empirical investigation. Finally, I look for areas in which this approach may be related to current work in the sociology of translation, specifically research inspired by Bourdieu.

Keywords: assumed translation, ontology, definition of translation, Gideon Toury, John Searle

Introductory comments

Gideon Toury’s role in the development of empirical translation studies can hardly be overstated. His programmatic call for a sound epistemology, an appropriate set of methods and a clear objective, in the form of carefully accrued generalizations, has been instrumental in securing a position for translation study in the world of empirical science (its position in more humanistic, philosophical traditions was never in question). An important step in this work was his rethinking of the entire issue of how to determine what counts as a translation. Obviously, this is a crucial task for any theoretical/empirical enterprise. Before Toury, at least within linguistically oriented circles, disagreements on this issue were not usually matters of ontological or epistemological principle: the ontology/epistemology was a given, and the task was primarily conceived of as a theoretical one involving defining criteria for the equivalence relationship. Equivalence, in turn, delineated the object of study. Controversies concerned the proposed criteria, not the idea of criterial definitions as such (for discussion see Halverson 1997; Pym 1995, 2007).

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In his work on “target orientation” and “assumed translation” (1980, 1995), Toury proposed a new view. Rather than defining the object of study a priori and then studying the exemplars that fit that definition, Toury proposed the reverse: that we investigate the phenomenon by studying exemplars that are taken to (assumed to) represent it. The object category was not circumscribed in advance. Instead, one of the aims of enquiry was to determine the limits of the category.

Toury has taken a good deal of flak for this proposal from various holds. Not surprisingly, there were protests from those who would retain an a priori criterial definition (for example, see Koller 1995; Komissarov 1996). There was also criticism from the opposite camp, from skeptics of empirical progress (see for example the position outlined by Arrojo in Chesterman and Arrojo 2000, 2002). Pym (2004, 2007) points to problems inherent in the three postulates that Toury associates with the notion. In a similar vein, Gutt (1991) points to an inconsistency between the notion of “assumed translation” and these three postulates, which he sees as aiming to capture something “universal”. In previous work, I argued against an inherent relativism in one interpretation of “assumed translation” (Halverson 1997).

In spite of the criticism from various scholars, I still believe that the idea of “assumed translation” is important, and that it may be saved, though in a different and perhaps more radical form than Toury originally proposed. In the following I will attempt to do just that by integrating the idea of “assumed translation” into an ontological framework designed to account for “the construction of social reality” (Searle 1995). After presenting Searle’s framework, I will discuss how translation fits into it. I then consider what this move would mean for studying translation, and relate the proposal to Toury’s “assumed translation”. In turn, I relate the empirical framework, and some initial work done within it, to the Searlean ontology. In closing I will consider the affinities between this approach and that of other scholars currently working within the sociology of translation, e.g. Simeoni (1998), Inghilleri (2003, 2005), Buzelin (2005), and raise questions regarding how my approach and theirs might be mutually informative.

Searle’s ontology and translation

In an earlier paper (Halverson 2004) I briefly presented Searle’s ontology and made a connection between it and the world of translation. I will need to repeat part of that presentation here in order to make my case.

Searle’s account of social reality

Searle’s basic ontology has been developed over many years. The first presentation of some of the basic ideas was in his 1969 volume *Speech Acts: an essay in the philosophy of
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Language. A further, refined account is given in Searle (1995), which serves as the primary source for what follows.

In Searle’s account, the key ontological distinction is between “brute facts” and “institutional facts”. “Brute facts” are defined as “features of the world that are matters of brute physics and biology” (1995:27). Searle’s example of a brute fact is that “the sun is a certain distance from the earth” (1995:27). Institutional facts (a subcategory of “social facts”) “require human institutions for their existence” (1995:2). Examples include money, citizenship, ownership, sports, and language.

The focus in Searle’s later volume is on the structure, creation, and maintenance of institutional facts. In his account, institutional facts involve three key elements: assignment of function, collective intentionality, and constitutive rules. Function assignment involves the crucial assumption that “functions (are) assigned relative to the interests of users and observers” (1995:19). This means that such facts incorporate a function or set of functions for humans and are formed and affected by the needs, desires, and aims of human agents. The second key element is collective intentionality. In Searle’s framework, intentionality refers to “the capacity of the mind to represent objects and states of the affairs in the world other than itself” (1995:6–7). Collective intentionality is then “the sharing of intentional states” (1995:23). In other words, collective intentionality is what enables shared knowledge. It is necessary for conventionalization. The third element, constitutive rules, states that an institutional fact exists by virtue of the following of rules. Examples include playing soccer, dancing the polka, ordering a meal, and speaking a language (1995:27–29).

Translations as institutional facts

Translation clearly qualifies as an institutional practice, and translations as institutional facts. Among the kinds of human institutions that are required for its existence are language or other conventionalized modes of communication and a range of communicative practices, i.e. conventionalized means of achieving various social objectives (some of which may also be institutional facts). At present, in some areas of translation activity, we may observe institutional facts at an even higher level, such as education, qualification schemes, employment, and professional organizations. Although these are not necessary for translational activity, they are part of its practice in many of the cultures we know today, and demonstrate the iteration of institutional facts in the creation of more complex systems.

If we allow that translations are institutional facts, then it should be possible for us to account for the structure of these facts in terms of the framework outlined by Searle (X counts as Y in C). This may be done as follows. The X term in our case must be a text

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1. See also Harder (2003: 62–63) on the significance of this point in the perpetuation (or not) of institutions.
2. X is either a brute fact or another institutional fact, Y represents the function of functions
or communicative artifact of some kind (e.g. a signed text, a pictorial or audial representation). Note that the X is an iterated institutional fact: “text” is the Y term in a prior institutional fact incorporating an X term which is a brute fact, i.e. marks on stone, papyrus, or paper, a pattern of light on a computer screen, or movements of hands in space. Returning to the case of “translation”, the Y is the status of “translation”, and C is the context in which the status pertains. In Translation Studies, the C context is usually taken to be a cultural configuration at a specific point or period in time, for example, in historical studies such as Pym’s (e.g. 1998, 2007) and the excurses in Toury (1995), to mention just two.

The function assigned by the Y term in the case of “translation” is whatever function(s) a particular culture assigns to artifacts (Xs) labeled with the linguistic status indicator of the word translation, traduction, Übersetzung, etc. In other words, in any given context (C), there are artifacts or practices that are singled out using such an indicator.

The notion of collective intentionality in institutional facts and its relevance for the notion of “assumed translation” was addressed in a previous discussion (Halverson 2004). The concern there was in responding to critical comments raised by Komissarov (1996) on the issue of the various types of identifying claims that might be put forward regarding translation. In that paper, I linked collective intentionality to Toury’s “target orientation”, i.e. the claim that translations are facts of a target culture (1995:23ff), and I brought in a proposal regarding a division of intellectual labor to account for the varying legitimacy of identifying claims (i.e. who says it is a translation, and who is entitled to say so?). In short, the argument is that through collective intentionality, identifying claims of certain groups (professional translators, recognized bilinguals) are accepted as legitimate identifications.

3. The selection of word is not trivial, nor do I assume a priori that these three are interchangeable. The issue of language will be returned to later. At this point, I wish to remain language-neutral: the three terms here are to be taken as possible alternatives.

4. It is interesting to note what Searle says about functions: “Sometimes the function in question is only very generally specified or implied by the status expression, and sometimes a whole range of functions, rather than a single specific function may be implied” (1995:14).

5. See also Dennett’s discussion on “the division of doxastic labor” (2006:217ff). Dennett’s argument could also be used to support the tack of letting translation scientists determine what “translation” is. I would counter, however, that this will not work for institutional facts if the objective is scientific enquiry. Lay persons might defer to translation scholars for their purposes, but scholars must defer to the collective when studying status assignment for facts such as ours. In our case, it is the collective that first assigns functions, not the scientific community.
With regard to *constitutive rules*, a translation exists by virtue of following specific rules regarding, at the first level, linguistic practice, and at the next level, collectively agreed practices for the creation of this specific type of communicative artifact or event. Such rules will probably have to do with the relationship of the translation to a pre-existing text, though this remains to be shown. It is on the grounds of this type of rule that Toury’s *pseudotranslations* would be invalidated, presumably. If the required constitutive rule is violated, the attempt at function assignment will be denied. We do not know precisely what the constitutive rules are for translation in every culture, at every possible time. But once we accept that there are such rules, then the search for descriptions of them becomes central to the empirical enterprise.

As regards the emergence of this particular institutional fact, obviously the origins must be sought in historical contexts. The artifacts identified with a relevant Y term may or may not have been the same kinds of artifacts identified by a current, perhaps related or derived term, e.g. *translation*. For example, there is etymological evidence to suggest that there were two alternative Y terms, at least, in Old English for what seemed to be the same phenomenon (see Halverson 1999: 200ff). The investigation of translation history is engaged in seeking insights in this domain, and problems of this nature are a concern (see e.g. Pym 1998, 2007). For our purposes here, it is important to note that there is no doubt of the institutional status of translation even in its inception: human institutions have always been a prerequisite. The particulars of its historical development represent important empirical questions.

The question of the maintenance of this institutional fact is also complex. At Searle’s diachronic level, the account of how institutional facts are maintained and passed on from generation to generation becomes a crucial story about the transmission of cultural knowledge. In order to take a closer look at the dynamics of translation, we must make use of Searle’s critical (and criticized) concept of “the Background” and investigate the place of Y terms in it. First, however, we must consider what is entailed in studying translation as an institutional fact.

**Studying translations as institutional facts: identifying exemplars**

If translations are institutional facts with the structure outlined above, then there are certain implications for the overall project of empirical work. In this section we will consider the first steps involved.

**Status indicators and identification**

If we are interested in scientific inquiry in general, or in investigating a particular institutional fact in particular, there are two main ways to attempt to collect exemplars of the fact for empirical investigation. The first is to define the object of enquiry, and
then find exemplars that qualify and study those (a deductive approach). The second approach is to collect exemplars on the basis of some other means of identification, and then to describe them and to posit and/or test hypotheses for their explanation (an inductive approach).

From the perspective of institutional facts, the most reasonable tack is start out with cases that we have the best grounds for taking as exemplars. The most obvious are those that bear an explicit status indicator. In our case that would be texts that include such identifiers as “translated by Jane Doe” (in an English-language context). These are the most clear-cut cases: the assumption of status is based on an explicit identifying claim.

However, not all exemplars are so clearly labeled. In some cases we assume their status as translations on different grounds. For example, a Norwegian newspaper recently printed an essay in Norwegian with the byline Jürgen Habermas. The informed reader knows that Habermas’s native language is German and that he is not likely to be fluent in Norwegian. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the text is a translation, on the basis of an understanding of what translations are (knowledge of the meaning of translation, i.e. knowledge of the institutional fact identified by the word) and of an assessment of the current context.

A third case, and one that is frequently encountered, is that of a tag or leaflet presenting instructions for the use of a product. For example, the extensive care instructions on a set of rain gear are given in four languages. The buyer assumes that at least three of them, maybe all four, are translations. In this case, the assumption of status is based not on an explicit identifier, or on knowledge of the author, but on knowledge of conventionalized textual practices (translation of instructions or product information for multinational consumer groups), again in conjunction with knowledge of “translation”.

Let us pause here to consider what is actually going on in identifying a given text as a translation. The key element is always an understanding of the concept with which an identifying word/label is coupled. Even in cases where there is an overt status indicator “this is a translation”, one still needs to know what the identifier means. In cases two and three, in the absence of the overt indicator, an understanding of the concept, in conjunction with contextual clues, is used to determine the status of the text or artifact. Note that this identification process is one that most readers or consumers would not carry out, or that they would carry out tacitly, at best. They simply are not interested in whether a text is a translation or not.

A more difficult case is that in which knowledge of “translation” as an institutional fact in general and specific knowledge concerning an author or conventional textual practice does not provide grounds for assuming that the artifact in question is a translation. As Searle points out, not all artifacts in a culture bear an indication of their status. Over time, a range of functional artifacts are created, and new members of a culture encounter these artifacts and are capable of learning their functions regardless of whether these are explicitly marked or not. This was Komissarov’s point in his 1996 article. As such, once an institutional fact is created, its continued use, with or without an explicit status indicator, ensures its continued existence in that society. Members of the soci-
ety accept the existence of such facts without requiring exposure to either status indicators or any other explicit identifiers. In the case of translation, we are faced with a body of texts that we may assume includes some translations, but for which we have little or no overt information regarding status. If we are to study this institutional fact, we must have a means of identifying these cases as well.

My response to this particular identification problem is to make use of the same kind of information used in all three cases above: an understanding of what the Y term (here translation) means. In other words, once the term has been learned (e.g. through encounters with clearly identified cases), which is part of learning the language we speak (including the meaning of status indicating words such as translation), then there is a concept that can be used to determine the status of other candidates. The identifier is culturally available. Knowledge of the concept and its domain of use are applied deductively in cases like the newspaper essay or the product instructions. If a lay person is to proceed in situations where contextual cues are lacking, they will make use of a knowledge base. If the objective is scientific enquiry, then the concept and its use must be empirically investigated and articulated (subject to amendment in the face of counterexamples). The articulated (hypothesized) concept must then be used in further identification tasks.

Toury’s assumed translation

The solution presented above is, up to a point, essentially what Toury has done in his argumentation regarding “assumed translation”. I am arguing for the same approach as he did when he stated that we should grant translational status to “[…] all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture” (1995: 32). Toury does not stop there, however. He goes on to claim that the notion of “assumed translation” can be described in terms of a “cluster of postulates”: the source-text postulate, the transfer postulate and the relationship postulate (1995: 33ff). The three postulates and their relation to “assumed translation” are described as follows:

The source-text postulate:
Regarding a text as a translation entails the obvious assumption that there is another text, in another culture/language, which has both chronological and logical priority over it: not only has such an assumed text assumedly preceded the one taken to be its translation in time, but it is also presumed to have served as a departure point and basis for the latter. (1995: 33–34)

The transfer postulate:
The source-text postulate also entails the assumption that the process whereby the assumed translation came into being involved the transference from the assumed source text of certain features that the two now share. (1995: 34)

The relationship postulate:
[...] adopting the assumption that a text is a translation also implies that there are accountable relationships which tie it to its assumed original. (1995: 35)
Toury brings these three postulates together to give his elaborated definition of assumed translation:

[...] an assumed translation would be regarded as any target-culture text for which there are reasons to tentatively posit the existence of another text, in another culture and language, from which it was presumably derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by certain relationships, some of which may be regarded — within that culture — as necessary and/or sufficient. (1995:35)

This definition is meant to provide a means of proceeding in the identification task. It brings to the task a postulated content against which identifying claims may be tested.

There is one critical difference between the institutional fact approach and Toury’s postulates. This difference is precisely the key role played by the overt status indicator, the linguistic label. Toury is quite explicit in denying that the three postulates are derived from, or must be linked to the meaning of a word in any language. He says:

Proceeding from culture-internal notions often involves local, pre-systematic nomenclature as well. It stands to reason that many of the distinctions recognized as functional within a culture would also find expression in language, labeling being one important indication of cultural institutionalization. (1995:33)

Thus far his approach and the approach argued here are virtually identical (though I would not have referred to “pre-systematic nomenclature”). Toury continues, however:

This possibility notwithstanding, our principles have not been put forward with respect to the English word ‘translation’, as strangely posited by Gutt (1991:7), so that there is hardly room for his doubt as to their applicability to German Übersetzung, Amharic tïr-gum, or any other ‘ethnic’ label. It is the notion of (assumed) translation that is at stake here; and no matter what name it goes under, this notion can be accounted for as a cluster of (at least) three postulates: [...] (ibid, author’s own emphasis)

This is precisely where Toury and I part ways. In my view, the addition of the postulates is highly problematic. The problem lies in the incompatibility of privileging local identifying claims and at the same time requiring the satisfaction of a set of postulated universal relationships. It is difficult to see how accepting “all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture” (1995:32) can be coherently united with a set of postulated relationships that are not linked to the “presentation” or “regarding” of the texts. This point is also raised by Pym, who states that Toury’s three postulates would seem to delimit an eternal conceptual space for translation (2007). Gutt makes the same point when he states that:

Toury’s approach is, in fact, not culture-determined but does make a priori assumptions about translation, or rather about ‘translating’ [...] Thus Toury does after all, in the last resort, rely on a universal concept of ‘translating’ as a process, if not of ‘translation’ as a product. (1991:7)

So we see the flaw in Toury’s argument. If we accept the three postulates, then this approach is ultimately no different from other a priori definitions, except for its ten-
tative, postulated status. Granted, the specific realizations of the postulates are not given, and this distinguishes the definition from previous equivalence-based approaches. But the fact remains that “assumed translation”, without the postulates, is ungrounded if the link to a linguistic “label” is denied. The notion of “assumed translation” with the postulates introduces a criterial definition that circumscribes the category a priori.

Pym, also concerned with this problem, chooses the same solution as Toury. Pym presents his “formal conceptualization” (definition?) in the form of two maxims: the maxim of translational quantity and the maxim of first-person displacement (2004, 2007). The maxims were selected with an aim to capture features that were amenable to “textual analysis”, i.e. features of translations that are more easily identifiable than are “actual historical subjects as receivers” (2007: 7). In other words, the original idea was to get around the problem of an “assumer”. This is a real need in historical work, where evidence of collective agreement regarding meaning is scarce. I am not convinced, however, that such evidence is completely lacking.

Assumed translations as institutional facts

The current proposal is not the same as either Toury’s added postulates or Pym’s alternative. On the contrary, I suggest that we take Toury at his word and grant translational status to “all texts which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture” (1995: 32). The claim of translational status, within the proposed framework, will be constrained by the qualifications regarding collective intentionality (the agreed meaning of “translation”) and the legitimacy of identifying claims. This means that the use of the word translation as a status indicator, given a division of intellectual labor, collectively agreed, will single out a pool of relevant material for empirical investigation. The identifying claims of those granted the status of translator (e.g. recognized bilinguals or practicing professionals) will largely be accepted. There will be contested cases and there will be attempts at forgery (pseudotranslations). But given a Searlean ontology, there is no need for, nor room for, Toury’s postulates or Pym’s maxims. The status indicator, the word translation is a sufficient starting point. In short, the current proposal involves taking Toury’s original position to its ultimate consequence.

In the task of empirical investigation, then, we are left with a procedure by which we may identify exemplars for investigation. It is a matter of proceeding as outlined in the cases listed above. First, starting in one culture at a specific time, we select the linguistic status indicator, and then derive a postulated meaning for the underlying concept (more on that later). The selection of relevant label for the first investigation is, of course, a crucial step. But such a selection need not be random or merely “intuitive”. We can start with translation, just as we might start with family, property, leadership, or any other status-marked institutional fact. In our particular case, as in cases such as these, we have no reason to ignore the status indicators that our cultures use.
Once a postulated meaning has been derived for the selected concept, we may proceed to use that concept to identify further exemplars. Candidates will turn out to be more or less central to the ensuing category: membership will be graded (see Halverson 1999). These steps follow from adopting the perspective of translation as an institutional fact. If it is an institutional fact, then the linguistic label is the relevant status indicator, which imposes a function or function on the text or artifact in question. The function or functions thus imposed may be investigated empirically. Over time, the meaning of the Y term and conditions for its use will be passed on through linguistic and other cultural learning. The structure of this and other facts may pass into the repository of cultural knowledge referred to as “the Background”. If it is necessary to articulate this knowledge, for example, for scientific purposes, then it must be excavated from there. We will pursue that enterprise a step further below. Before doing so, however, it is imperative that we address the one crucial weakness in this approach.

The critical problem in the approach advocated here is that we are left with no obvious means of grounding cross-linguistic or cross-cultural comparisons. (This was the problem Toury was trying to solve with the three postulates.) We do not know what the functions (meanings) associated with translation are until we have investigated them: nor do we know what the functions (meanings) associated with Übersetzung are until we have investigated them. The degree to which the artifacts that are assigned status Y1 in C1 are similar to the artifacts that are assigned Y2 in C2 is an empirical question. But in order to answer it, we must have a means of linking Y1 and Y2. And if we deny ourselves a universal notion, then what can ground our comparisons?

This matter of identifying translations across cultures and times is crucial. Any empirical enterprise is only as good as the means it utilizes to ensure the comparability of isolated investigations, and thus to ensure the validity of any ensuing generalizations. Pym (2007) refers to my approach, as outlined above, as “an inductive mode of conceptualization [that] would content itself with intuitively collected historical terms, related in terms of semantic networks or prototypes” (2007: 1–2). He continues, “[t]here is little to be said about such approaches, which can be neither right nor wrong” (2007: 2). While there is little conclusive argumentation to support this claim, it still remains for me to demonstrate that there is something to be said, and while I would rather talk about a proposal as being “fruitful” or “informative” (or not), rather than being “right or wrong”, this point too will be addressed in what follows.

First, however, it must be pointed out that adopting an approach such as this does not imply a return to naïve inductivism. The identification of exemplars is not based on intuition. It is based on the use of status indicators, as demonstrated by the members of the collective in which they are current at any given time. Thus the status indicators are

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6. Remember that in the absence of an indicator, no function as translation will be assigned automatically. Contextual cues may lead to a function assignment, but if there are no such cues either, then the artifact will not be taken to be a translation: it will be taken to be a text of whatever kind. This is precisely the point made by Nord (1997).
accepted as such, and evidence of their use is taken as indicative of the collective agreement on their applicability. Thus, if the label translation is to be used, then texts identified as translations are accepted as such unless the identification claim is contested, for whatever reason. Similarly, use of the identifying label is also considered to be an important source of information about the institutional fact that it refers to. Thus the inductive practice is grounded in an account of social reality, and is not considered either absolute or theory-independent. Moreover, intuitive derivations of the meaning of the identifying term are not considered sufficiently grounded in the collective. The source of collective agreement must, obviously, be sought outside individuals.

In the following section, we will first continue with the project outlined above: seeing how we might identify translations within a cultural context. Then, having taken the project a bit further, we will pause to address the questions raised by Pym (2007).

**Mining the Background: The meaning of translation**

In earlier work I have carried out empirical investigations aimed at completing the initial stages outlined above. The aim of two of these studies was to establish a concept of “translation” that would meet the requirements of collective intentionality. In these two studies, the concepts underlying two linguistic status indicators, the English translation (Halverson 1999) and the Norwegian oversettelse (Halverson 2000) were empirically investigated using various types of data: etymologies, corpora and a questionnaire. The empirical studies were linked to the development of an idealized cognitive model for the English translation. The studies were brought together in Halverson (1998) and (2002), and readers are referred to those works for the details. The model itself is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Image-schematic structure of “translate” (Halverson 1999: 207)
The figure illustrates the image-schematic structure of the “translate” concept. The A dimension represents a TRANSFER schema, by which an object is moved from a SOURCE along a PATH to a GOAL. The B dimension captures the conceptualization of language as a CONTAINER into which an OBJECT (meaning) is put prior to the act of TRANSFER. In the translation schema above, the object is removed from its original CONTAINER, placed into a new one and then TRANSFERRED along a new PATH, indicated as dimension C.

For our purposes here, the important elements of that earlier work are the empirically derived idealized cognitive model itself and the support for the idea that such a model can be used to ground cross-linguistic comparisons (see Halverson 1998, 2002 for how this is so). As such, these studies constitute the first stages of the program suggested above, empirical investigations of two status indicators, and the positing of an underlying concept (structured by an idealized cognitive model) for each. Within the ontology being argued for here, the idealized cognitive model would be the kind of thing that would be found in the Background.7

Critical questions

We now return to questions concerning the utility of this account of “assumed translation”. There are three primary issues that require a response: the kind of inductive practice entailed, the fruitfulness of the approach, and finally, the question of grounding cross-linguistic or cross-cultural comparisons.

Let us address the issue of induction first. There is, of course, a vast philosophical literature on the problem of induction. Two aspects of the current position are important: the variety of realism entailed, and the role of theory in the identification of exemplars. As regards the former, the position taken here does not entail a variety of realism in which an inductive practice assumes an objectively given world, i.e. some form of objectivism or essentialism. The ontology outlined above should be sufficient evidence of that. The full account is most easily accessed in Searle (1995). As regards the role of theory, the inductive practice using the concept of “assumed translations” as suggested here is completely grounded in an ontological framework that makes particular claims about the role of language, and which in turn is linked to a specific cognitive theory of meaning. Thus the selection of a label such as “translation”, the use of a set of linguistic methods to derive an idealized cognitive model, and the further use of that model are all grounded in the particular philosophical, theoretical framework sketched here and in earlier work. The term “assumed translation” is, in this account, as theory-laden as it could possibly be. This is not naïve (or intuitive) induction.

7. As mentioned above, Searle’s notion of the Background is a contentious one. My use of it here is not entirely consonant with the notion as Searle presented it, but it is precisely in line with another account of it as developed by Johnson (1987:182ff).
Chapter 25. Translations as institutional facts

The second question is whether there is anything that can be said using this approach. In other words, what can be achieved for the field of Translation Studies? At the end of the previous section it was suggested that an idealized cognitive model derived by linguistic means could be empirically tested. How? Let us take the model presented in Figure 1 as our starting point. In the article in which the model was originally presented (Halverson 1999), a diachronic development for the concept of “translate” in English was outlined. It was argued that the changes in senses given in the OED could be accounted for through a set of transformations of the underlying schema. For translation scholars, an interesting investigation would be one in which the alternative historical versions of the schema would be compared to sets of texts or artifacts identified as translations at the times in question. If the model changed, then the sets of texts or other artifacts identified as translations should show signs of commensurable changes. For instance, if the argument holds, then in English the historical development for the verb translate includes a more recent phase involving the emergence of a sense of translate as “transform”, and also temporal and causal senses. All three of these newer developments entail the loss of the TRANSFER schema with its OBJECT component. Interestingly, in some areas of Translation Studies there has been a parallel movement away from the preservation of an OBJECT (equivalence) approach to a focus on the more communicative aspects of transformation and the significance of the receiving culture, as exemplified in Toury’s own “target orientation”. It is possible to test this further through careful investigations of bodies of translated texts at earlier and later periods. Of course, as long as several versions of the same model co-exist at any given time, bodies of translations will be expected to show similar variation.

An additional test would be to see how alternative models, for example, in different times or cultures, correspond to the sets of texts or artifacts identified using the terms in question. For instance, we might hypothesize that an idealized cognitive model that resembles the concept linked to Old English wenden (“to turn”) would manifest itself in texts or artifacts that had a higher tendency towards “acceptability”, rather than “adequacy”, to use Toury’s terms (1995: 56ff). Along the same lines, we might ask whether other languages/cultures that borrowed the Latin “transfer” concept demonstrate comparable trajectories to that demonstrated for English.

Finally, we might investigate the extent to which cultures with several models, or several versions of one model, demonstrate a greater diversity in the range of artifacts accepted as “translations” than do cultures in which one model is uncontested. The hypothesis would be that the more variation there is in the set of Y terms, the more variation in the artifacts it identifies. We might also hypothesize a greater degree of conflict concerning acts of status identification in such a culture as well. As we see, there are a number of questions that we might ask, and they may take the form of empirically testable hypotheses. The work required would be comprehensive, and the hypotheses mentioned here have not yet been operationalized in terms of specific data sets. But they can be, and that is what matters.
The third question at hand is how we move from a model for English to models for other cultures’ institutional facts without resorting to the very process we are out to investigate. In other words, how can we guarantee that the artifacts that are assigned status $Y_1$ in $C_1$ are comparable to the artifacts that are assigned $Y_2$ in $C_2$? On what grounds can we link $Y_1$ to $Y_2$? How is Translation Studies to proceed from isolated descriptions to broader generalizations?

First of all, we assume that the overall ontology holds for all cultures. Thus the procedure that we have sketched thus far, using linguistic indicators and looking for Background structures is a valid one across cultures. Obviously, the manifestations of social reality will vary vastly. The question that still remains, however, is the equation above: do $Y_1$ and $Y_2$ compare?

This issue is discussed in Hermans (1997). In his words:

The question only becomes acute when we try to speak about ‘translation’ generally, as a universal given and therefore supposedly present in all cultures; or when we wish to understand what another culture means by whatever term they use to denote an activity or a product that appears to translate as ‘translation’ — whereby we naturally translate that other term according to our concept of translation, and into our concept of translation; and in domesticating it, we inevitably reduce it. (1997:19)

As Hermans also points out, there is no real resolution to this problem. In his view, the only thing we, as translation scholars, can do is, “[…] patiently, repeatedly, laboriously negotiat[e] the other’s terrain, while trying to conceptualize our own modes of representation and the commensurability of cultures” (ibid.).

My response to the problem, while recognizing the dangers of potentially reductive translation, still involves translation itself as one step in a cycle of empirical enquiry. This cycle, illustrated in Figure 2, consists of an alternation between semasiological and onomasiological investigations.

Starting with the status-indicating word “translation” (word$^1$), for example, the first semasiological investigation would result in an account of the concept (concept$^1$ in the figure) upon which the relevant collective agrees (“translation”, for example). The move from concept$^1$ to a candidate concept$^2$, indicated by the arrow, is an act of translation. This concept is preliminary: it requires further investigation in the collective in ques-

![Figure 2. The semasiological–onomasiologial cycle](image-url)
tion. This investigation must necessarily include the onomasiological turn (identification of word\textsuperscript{2}) and the ensuing empirical investigation of its currency in the culture. The next step would be another semasiological turn: the grounded account of concept\textsuperscript{2}.

The cycle illustrated in Figure 2 includes translation in the move from one concept to another. Translation is suggested as the resolution of the problem of linking concepts across times and cultures. In the kind of ontology proposed here, this is less of a problem than one might imagine: given one important constraint. The translation of concepts across cultures must, like other definitional matters, be grounded in the collective. The matter of linking meanings to words (making status claims) may also in this instance be delegated to a group of recognized experts. Once we agree that a set of individuals (professional translators, bilinguals) are qualified to claim which artifacts are translations, then we must also allow them the authority to tell us which concept or concepts (with the corresponding term or terms) in another culture is the appropriate candidate for investigation. In other words, by the same means as we identify exemplars for investigation in culture\textsuperscript{1}, we move to culture\textsuperscript{2}. Crucially, the status identifying is a collective matter, not the work of an individual scholar. Thus what counts as the relevant term for “translation” in another culture is a matter for professional translators and bilinguals to agree on: not for a translation scholar to decide.

The move to concept\textsuperscript{2}/word\textsuperscript{2} must then lead to an empirical investigation to see whether the conceptual terrain actually matches, and if it does not, then the discrepancies must be described. The cycle shown in Figure 2, if iterated (as suggested by alternative routes to tentative concept\textsuperscript{3}), represents the continuing elaboration of the conceptual space of “translation” as different concepts are included and the conceptual terrain investigated. Crucially, the link to the different words used in the various cultures (the different status identifiers) requires empirical grounding in the cultural collective. The conceptual space is not delineated without it.\textsuperscript{8}

This may seem an unsatisfying resolution. We do use “translation” in the process of investigating “translation”. But there is no other way. The same state of affairs pertains in other sciences as well: linguists must use language to describe language, cognitive psychologists must cognize in order to explain cognition, and social scientists are entwined in the social worlds they wish to explain. In the approach argued for here, the key element is the institutional foundations on which our phenomena rest. The collective and institutionalized nature of our object can serve as a counterweight to reductive tendencies by requiring the investigation of non-native institutional practices.

\textsuperscript{8} One might ask what would happen if one encountered a culture in which there seemed to be an artifact that is understood in terms of similar conceptual content, but for which there is no explicit status indicator. This is fully possible within the Searlean ontology. Not all institutional facts are overtly status marked. For translation studies, this would involve recognizing a lacuna in the cycle, and agreeing an alternative means of investigating the conceptual content for that culture without the help of the status indicator. This might involve studying conventional actions involving the artifact in question, etc.
Concluding remarks

I now wish to do two things: reiterate what distinguishes my revised version of “assumed translation” from Toury’s original version, and then briefly consider possible affinities between this proposal and work done within newer, sociologically oriented theories of translation.

Toury’s “assumed translation” and the revised version

As we have seen, the current proposal entails no universal postulates or any other kind of universal content for “translation”, and it is argued that we must take into account the actual linguistic terms that various cultures use to single out the institutional facts with which we are concerned. A crucial element of the investigation is they ways in which cultures actually use these terms, as use is not objectively given or static. On this view, “assumed translation” is exactly what Gideon Toury said it is, less the universal postulates: “all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture” (1995: 32), given the qualifications regarding collective meaning outlined earlier (Halverson 2004). The Searlean ontology provides a framework within which such facts can be accounted for and empirically investigated.

Interestingly, earlier work on Norwegian and English demonstrated that the content associated with both oversettelse and translation resonates with Toury’s transfer postulate (see Halverson 1998). The crucial point that must be made here, however, is that in this work the content is not postulated: it is empirically demonstrated. It may turn out that Toury’s other postulates will be similarly visible in some cultures at some points in time. The extent to which they will be universal is the extent to which they can be generalized over the cultures and languages that are investigated. Crucially, their status would then be quite different.

Other work

I have already mentioned two areas of research that share certain perspectives with the view I put forward here. The first is Hermans’ paper on “Translation as institution” (1997). The second area is recent work on the sociology of translation. As mentioned previously, Searle himself was of the view that the Background was roughly similar to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (1995: 132). This and related concepts from Bourdieu’s work have also been introduced into Translation Studies in recent years, as demonstrated by conference and journal activity, for instance the special issue of The Translator (2005). It is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a detailed analysis of the similarities between Background and habitus: indeed, this is a project in which philosophers are engaged (e.g. Marcoulatos 2003). It is important to note however, that translation scholars who
argue for the integration of habitus and other concepts from Bourdieu seem to be doing so for the very same reason that motivates the current argument for the Searlean ontology (with Johnson’s version of the Background). There seems to be a common search for a means of linking individual knowing and doing (which are cognitively grounded) with a social realm of causal forces that both enable knowing and doing and at the same time constrain them. This seems to be the function of habitus. The choice of a revised Searlean approach, and of the Background to do the work that habitus might do, has much to do with my concern with detailed linguistic analyses of translation within a cognitively sound theoretical framework that has this ontology as its foundation. The more immediate objective of scholars who adopt the Bourdieusian perspective (Sela-Sheffy 2005; Simeoni 1998; Inghilleri 2003, the papers in the special issue of *The Translator* 2005) would seem to be good investigations of the social level.

What seems to distinguish the Bourdieusian inspired approaches from previous sociological approaches is the priority given to the translator as agent. This is described by Simeoni as follows:

> Bringing the translator’s habitus center stage is of course tantamount to giving the act of translating prominent status, as the main *locus* precipitating mental, bodily, social and cultural forces. To talk of a habitus is to imagine a theoretical stenograph for the integration and — in the best of cases — the resolution of those conflicting forces. (1998: 33)

The translator is clearly central to the picture. In the cognitive approach argued for here and elsewhere, the translator is also crucially central. The main difference between this work and a cognitive approach lies in different views of where to aim the brightest spotlight first: not of where the light needs to shine at the end of the day. It would be fruitful to take a closer look at possible areas of common concern in future work.

In closing: it should come as no surprise that those of us who value Toury’s work highly should continue to look for and articulate aspects of the translational world that place emphasis on social reality and its manifestations. Toury’s is, after all, a norm-based theory. As new perspectives on our complex social world emerge, it is fitting that we follow his lead with the best theoretical equipment we can find. As new theories of cognition and language emerge, these too might be brought to bear. Our efforts may mean revisions of his original insights, as proposed here for “assumed translation”.

More generally, however, I believe that the aim of Translation Studies must be a cognitively sound, socially plausible theory of translation and translating. In my view, such a theory must be able to explain phenomena at various levels: at the local level of the translator’s cognitive processes, and at the most global level of institutional and commercial interests, power relationships, etc. We are quite a way from such a general theory at present. Indeed, a synthesis of this kind is hard to envisage in much detail. It surely will not be of the deterministic type that will allow predictions and causal chains to be drawn from the highest level down to the micro level of cognitive processing. I am convinced, however, that there are many scholars today who agree that such a theory must build on an ontology that is designed for the social world as it is created, changed, maintained and lived in by embodied human minds.
References


Chapter 25. Translations as institutional facts

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**On explanation***

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As Descriptive Translation Studies expands its goals to include explanatory hypotheses in addition to descriptive ones, it has made use of different notions of explanation, all of which are relevant to Gideon Toury’s work. This essay analyses these different notions in the light of some work in the philosophy of science, beginning with the apparent contrast between explanation and understanding. It then focuses on explanation in terms of generalization, causality, and unification. The crucial concept underlying all these is that of a relation. This point of view also allows a characterization of what is meant by explanatory power, and shows how explanation can emerge from description.

**Keywords:** explanation, generalization, causality, unification

“Conducting research on a ‘wish-to-understand’ basis”  
Gideon Toury (2006: 55)

**Introduction**

My key word in the title of Gideon Toury’s book *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (1995) is the last one, *beyond* — beyond description, i.e., towards explanation of some kind. This does not mean that we no longer need descriptive work, of course: without this, we would not really have anything specific to ask “why?” about. But Toury’s title does serve to remind us that description is not usually the end-point of a scientific endeavour. We also want to be able to explain things.

What kinds of things need an explanation? A singular surprising event, perhaps; or a surprising generalization or pattern in a set of data; or a problem that needs a solution. We look for an explanation when something puzzles us, or when something unexpected occurs, or when we are faced with an unknown phenomenon that we want to explore. An explanation “fills a gap” of some kind in our understanding. It answers an “explanation-seeking” question (Sintonen 1984: 7) in a way that seems relevant to the questioner. In other words, “explaining” is a communicative act. Proposed explanations may not necessarily be complete, or adequate, or even true; but to the extent that

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they satisfy the questioner, in a given context — to the extent that they are adequate to the questioner’s needs — they contribute in the first instance to the questioner’s understanding.

I take “understanding” here to be a state of mind rather than an act. An explanation is thus initially an explanation for someone, i.e., its adequacy and acceptance as an explanation depends partly on the questioner’s cognitive context, their experience of a gap or puzzle that needs explaining. To the extent that an explanation is indeed true, it also contributes to knowledge. The overlap between “understanding” and “knowledge” is evident. In the present context, I will just note that understanding seems the more subjective notion, residing primarily in Karl Popper’s World 2. Knowledge resides in World 2 as well (as subjective knowledge), but also in World 3 in a publicly available form. To put it simply, we could thus say that explanations contribute both to understanding and to knowledge.

But there is also a further conceptual problem here. Traditionally, the two concepts of “explanation” and “understanding” have been associated with different conceptions of science. This was the theme of Georg von Wright’s seminal book Explanation and Understanding (1971), and the relation between the two concepts has been widely discussed since then (see, e.g., Salmon 1998). The broadest distinction runs between the natural sciences (which are said to seek explanations) and the human sciences (which are said to seek understanding). Alongside and underlying this distinction there are arguments about different notions of causality, of determinism, of explanation itself, and of epistemology in general. Several of these philosophical distinctions and arguments have left their mark on Translation Studies (See in particular the series of contributions to the Forum section of Target, beginning with the initial article by Chesterman and Arrojo in 2000 and ending with volume 14.1, in 2002.)

As outlined above, I take the view that all kinds of explanation may lead to greater understanding (and greater knowledge), particularly when the object of research is one that is as complex and multidisciplinary as translation. No discipline, no social science, nor indeed any other field of science, can manage without some kind of preliminary assumptions (which are also a form of understanding), without the interpretation of both concepts and data, and hence without hermeneutic explanation of some kind. Some research problems are, in addition, amenable to other kinds of explanation. My attitude to the opposition “explanation vs. understanding” is therefore that this is a false opposition. Not “vs.” but “and” (cf. von Wright 1971: 135). We need both concepts, and neither is a simple one.

What counts as an explanation?

The past decades have seen growing interest in ideas and ways of explanation in Translation Studies. Explanations have taken several different forms, most of which appear somewhere in Toury’s work. Attempts to explain translational phenomena have been
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based on different initial assumptions about what actually might constitute an explanation. This paper explores the main kinds of explanation that have been proposed recently in Translation Studies, and seeks to show the relations between them.

Explanation is not a unitary notion (see e.g. Sintonen 1984:12–13). In everyday English, we use the verb explain in several different ways (discussed e.g. in Salmon 1998). We can explain, for instance,

a. what something is
b. what something means, what its significance is
c. how something is possible
d. how something has evolved, developed
e. how something works
f. how to do something
g. why a particular fact is true
h. why an event took place
i. why a general regularity exists
j. what something is for
k. to what end something occurs.

These uses can be grouped into some obvious categories. Types (a–b) above could be called descriptive or interpretive or hermeneutic, in the sense that they have to do with definition and interpretation. Types (c–f) are explanations concerning how something can be or comes to be possible, or can be made possible, and thus focus on necessary conditions. Types (g–i) have to do with why something is necessarily the case, i.e., with causality, and focus on sufficient conditions. Types (j–k) concern purposes, functions and goals.

Let us illustrate these main types briefly, before going into more detail. Interpretive explanations often take the form of metaphors or comparisons. We can make some sense of an unfamiliar or complex phenomenon by comparing it to another phenomenon that we know better; in other words, we try to see the unfamiliar as the familiar. We compare light to waves, or to particles. We compare translation to crossing a river, or to cannibalism. All such metaphorical comparisons serve as explanations in the sense that they relate the explanandum ("that which is to be explained") to a more familiar explanans ("that which explains"), in a way that sheds light on the phenomenon in question, making it a bit less mysterious. Such explanations are only explanations "to some extent", yes; but most, if not all, explanations are also only "to some extent", ultimately.

Explanations "how" have to do with processes or instructions. In Translation Studies, research using Think-Aloud Protocols and keystroke data (e.g., using Translog), and also sociological research observing working procedures, can offer explanations of this kind. By examining the details of the translation process, that is, we come to understand more about the conditions that made the final product possible. The same is true of historical research on the background social conditions of a given translation. In this
case, the timescale of the process concerned is different, but the general structure of explanation is the same: these were (some of) the historical / political / social conditions that made this translation what it is.

Causal explanations have been proposed at many levels in Translation Studies, and we shall return to consider them in more detail below. A very simple causal explanation might suggest, for instance, that a given lexical error in a given translation was caused by the poor bilingual dictionary that the translator consulted. Some interpretations of causality overlap to some extent with the “how”-type explanations mentioned above, as we shall see.

Teleological explanations have been most evidently implied in Translation Studies by skopos theory: a given translation is as it is because of its purpose. I say “implied” because this theory is fundamentally a prescriptive one, aiming to highlight the importance of the goal or intended function of a translation as a guiding principle for translators’ decisions and in translator training. Implicitly, however, the theory can also be interpreted as assuming a post hoc explanation of why a given translation is as it is; and this implied explanation is a teleological one. (For further comments on different interpretations of skopos theory, see Chesterman 1998a.) Teleological explanations are also implied by relevance theory: a given translation solution is chosen because of the relevance principle guiding all human communication.

Any proposed explanation may of course turn out to be a wrong one, or an inadequate one, which needs to be replaced by a better one. An explanation of any kind thus starts life as a hypothesis (or, if you like, as a theory). Some causal explanations may allow corresponding predictions to be made, either absolute or probabilistic ones; and these predictions can then be tested, to test the proposed explanation itself. But not all kinds of explanations entail corresponding predictions, and other ways of testing them are needed. Explanations about how something became possible allow what von Wright calls retrodictions: “[f]rom the fact that a phenomenon is known to have occurred, we can infer back in time that its antecedent necessary conditions must also have occurred in the past. And by ‘looking into the past’ we may find traces of them (in the present)” (1971: 57–58) and thus test the explanations to some extent (cf. the “backward predictions” mentioned in Toury 2004b: 23–24).

In Translation Studies, there are many kinds of explananda. Translations are not only effects (i.e., they have causes of various kinds — see below); they themselves are also causes (i.e., they have effects). On one hand, we might want to know why this translation has such-and-such a feature or textual profile; why the translator made a given decision; why the client decided to employ this translator; why the task conditions are as they are (deadline, fees, etc.); why the prevailing translation norms are as they are. On the other hand, we might wonder why the client, or readers, react to a translation in a given way (e.g., why it is judged to be of a publishable standard or not); why a given translation had such a significant effect in the target culture; and so on (see Delabastita 2005 for a wonderful list of such questions). In fact, we often get interested in causes because our attention has first been drawn to effects — desirable, undesirable,
or otherwise interesting ones. It follows that we may need many kinds of explanation, to account for all these *explananda*.

To sum up so far: an explanation is an attempt to make sense of something. The purpose of an explanation, we could say, is better understanding and better knowledge.

**Generalization**

The final chapter of Toury’s book introduces two potential “laws” of translation: the law of interference and the law of growing standardization. “Laws” are understood as “theoretical formulations purporting to state the relations between all variables which have been found relevant to a particular domain” (1995:259). Toury distinguishes this scientific sense of laws from non-lawlike generalizations such as lists of possibilities or directives. However, it is not clear to me whether Toury’s proposed laws are genuinely “nomic”, i.e., whether they capture necessary relations between variables or whether they are simply generalizations that happen to be the case, i.e., contingent generalizations (see von Wright 1971: 178, note 62; and Chalmers 1999: chapter 14). There is more to a nomic law than a mere statement of regularity; and probabilistic laws are not nomic.

Formulating a law is nevertheless one way of formulating generalizations about features of translations that seem very widespread, perhaps even universal, regardless of the languages, text-types, or cultures concerned. Other scholars have preferred the term “translation universal” or “pattern” or indeed just “regularity”. In later articles, Toury (2004a: 24; 2004b: 29) leaves open the terminological question of whether it would be more appropriate to speak of “high-level regularities” or “universals” or “laws”. The point is that “‘hunting for regularities’ is the name of the game” (Toury 2004b: 28). Interesting regularities may also be sought at less general levels: some may be genre-specific, media-specific, or language-pair-specific, for instance.

Observations about regularly occurring features of translations are of course much older than the 1990s, when the advent of corpus translation studies made research on translation universals a hot topic, but the earlier proposals tended to be presented in a purely pejorative spirit, as “typical weaknesses” or “deformations” of translations (Chesterman 2004).

But in what sense is a generalization about a potentially widespread feature an *explanation* of this feature? Surely a generalization is a way of describing something, perhaps part of the conclusion of a description; not part of an explanation? Yes and no. Sandra Halverson (2003) has drawn the attention of translation scholars to an important insight discussed by William Croft (1990/2003), who argues, I think convincingly, that between description and explanation there is not really a clear dividing line. Following on from my own point above, we could say that any (good) description, too, can increase understanding. Explaining “what something is” (type (a) on my list above) is surely equivalent to describing it in some way. Croft argues as follows:
Instead of using the dichotomy of description vs. explanation, one can describe grammatical analysis — or any other sort of scientific analysis, for that matter — with a scalar concept of degrees of generalization. The basic concept is that a more general linguistic statement can be said to explain a more specific one, though it may itself be explained by a yet more general statement. Thus, any given statement is an explanation for a lower-level generalization, but a description in comparison to a higher-level generalization. (Croft 1990:246/2003:284)

Croft argues (2003:285) that “[a] successful generalization shifts the kinds of questions that are asked to a higher plane”. The lower-level questions are no longer asked; they are no longer interesting. Applying Croft’s various levels of generalization to translation research, we can illustrate as follows:

Level i: Observation: description of basic facts.  
[We note, for instance, that there are some shifts in a particular translation.]

Level ii: Internal generalization about these facts.  
[We note that similar shifts occur elsewhere, with the same language pair.]

Level iii: Higher internal generalization.  
[We generalize to other language pairs; further, we hypothesize that these shifts manifest a universal tendency: in translation, shifts always occur.]

Level iv: External generalization.  
[We hypothesize that this tendency can be accounted for in terms of constraints of human psychology/biology/sociology, etc., and/or in general differences of language structures, etc.]

Consider now how the explanatory power of the generalizations increases as we go up the scale. At level (ii) our surprise at the existence of a given set of shifts — concerning, say, explicitation — is somewhat reduced because we see that they are not particular to the translation in question, but also occur elsewhere: so the ones we noted at level (i) are not so special, not so surprising. At level (iii), after examining quite a few other translations, we find so much evidence of these shifts that we would be surprised if a translation (longer than just a few words) turned up with no such shifts. They are in fact to be expected. So we propose that the occurrence of these shifts is universal. Toury uses the example of shifts in general to illustrate a potential universal (i.e. “translation involves shifts”) that has a rather trivial status, both because it is pretty obvious anyway and because, as thus formulated, it does not make any more specific claim, e.g., about types of shifts or relative frequencies of different types (such as explicitations vs. implicitations) (see e.g. Toury 2004b). However, as counter-evidence to the notion of equivalence-as-identity, the universality of shifts in general is surely significant. From the point of view of explanation, moreover, if it is indeed the case that shifts are universal, this fact does present an obvious way of offering some kind of explanation of the occurrence of the observed shifts we started off with. They occurred because all translations contain shifts, because all translators introduce shifts. Thus formulated, such an explanation is not a genuinely causal one, of course, since the mere existence of a universal
tendency does not itself constitute or imply a nomic principle (like, say, the law of gravity). Some might argue that it is not a real explanation at all (see e.g. Malmkjær 2005; and, in historical linguistics, Lass 1980), but that depends on what you accept as an explanation in the first place. We do not claim (at this level of explanation) that we know why the proposed universal tendency exists; it just does (or may do). We shall return to some of the complexities of causality below.

At level (iv) the proposed explanation becomes stronger, because a causal link is claimed beyond the field of translation itself. Translation shifts make sense if we look at the ways in which the translation process is constrained by human cognition, task conditions, etc. This is the level at which Halverson (2003) proposes an explanation for translations, in terms of cognitive constraints on human information processing. Current attempts to move to this level of generalization remain, however, largely speculative. Notwithstanding, the more we find we can generalize at the lower levels—the more evidence there is for the universality of a given kind of shift, for instance—the more there is a need to explain such generalizations at this higher level (iv): there is more that needs explaining.

At each of these levels (ii–iv) the explanation proceeds by positing relations between the data in question (these shifts here) and other data: other translations, “all” translations, other kinds of data. The more relations we can see, the more powerful the explanation seems to feel.

Toury’s formulations of possible laws are all probabilistic and in their full form they are all conditional, of the general form: “if X, then the greater/the lesser the likelihood that Y” (1995: 265). Some formulations are correlational: “the more X, the more Y” (e.g., 271). What matters is discovering the relations between the variables, the scholar’s “fervent search for interdependencies” (237). Toury seems to avoid using the explicit verb “cause”. He speaks indirectly of “conditioning factors” (e.g., 277), or how variation in a social variable may “lead to” differences on the textual level (e.g., 278). But these hints of causality are rather tentative (see further below).

Laws can of course be correlational, not causal. Behind any correlation, however, we may naturally suspect some kind of causal influence one way or another and perhaps try to test for it. One obvious way of testing would be by means of comparative studies in which two or more cases are selected which differ in respect of one particular variable but are similar with respect to other ones; in this way, the influence of the variable concerned can be checked (cf. Susam-Sarajeva 2001, for a powerful example of the comparative method applied to matters even more complex than translation, see Diamond 2005).

This is a good point to recall Hempel’s classic statement about the goals of empirical science, which Toury also cites at the beginning of his book.

Empirical science has two major objectives: to describe particular phenomena in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which they can be explained and predicted. The explanatory and predictive principles of a scientific discipline are stated in its hypothetical generalizations and its theories; they character-
ize general patterns or regularities to which the individual phenomena conform and by
virtue of which their occurrence can be systematically anticipated. (Hempel 1952: 1;
cited in Toury 1995: 9)

As I have argued elsewhere (2001), I think Hempel’s key concepts can also be interpret-
ed in such a way as to apply to more hermeneutic approaches. There too, many schol-
ars seek generalizations, general principles, patterns; they seek to describe and explain;
and many scholars work — even if only implicitly — with hypotheses (for instance in-
terpretive ones). A hermeneutic understanding may also allow probabilistic anticipa-
tion (if not precise prediction), and hence reduce surprise.

Formulating a generalization, then, is one way of at least beginning to explain.

Causality

I now turn to one of the most complex aspects of explanation: causality. This is a more
prominent notion in empirical research than in hermeneutics, and it has a long history
of conceptual debate behind it, which I am not competent to summarize. But I would
like to make some general points that may be of interest to translation scholars. We
have already noted that explanations come in many forms; there are also several types
of causality, which have been variously interpreted.

There is, perhaps surprisingly, no entry for “causality” in the subject index of Toury
(1995), although there are many references throughout the book to explanation and ex-
planatory hypotheses. He prefers to speak of explanation more generally, or of the “ jus-
tification” of translator decisions. His “justification procedure” (ibid: 36–39) outlines
the way in which a researcher can “speculate” about the background or conditioning
factors (such as norms) that may have influenced or constrained a set of translation de-
cisions. The results of these decisions are seen in the target text, which provides the pri-
mary evidence (together with data from interim drafts, where available). Toury’s evi-
dent reluctance to talk explicitly about “causes” may indeed be well justified (see below).
Norms, for Toury, are above all sources of explanatory hypotheses (e.g., p. 59). These
hypotheses concern not only the concept of translation (and thus of equivalence) un-
derlying a given translation or set of translations; they also concern aspects of the trans-
lation decision process (e.g., pp. 93–94) and the workings of the black box (p. 180f).

A major locus classicus on causality in Western philosophy is Aristotle, who pro-
posed four types of causes. These have been applied to Translation Studies by Anthony
Pym (e.g. 1998: 148f; see also Chesterman 1998a). They can also be considered as four
basic patterns of explanation.

Material cause

The explanandum is as it is because of its material conditions of occurrence. Transla-
tions are made of the abstract “material” of language, in the broadest sense of the term,
including different media. More specifically, they are constructed in the target language.
So one general explanation for the question “why is this translation like this?” is “because of the nature of language, and particularly of the target language itself, and also because of the relation between the target language and the source language”. This kind of causal explanation is implied by equivalence-based theories of translation. It works at the textual level of translation theory, and underlies much corpus-based work.

**Final cause**
The *explanandum* is as it is because of the goal of the agent(s) producing it. This is a teleological explanation. Its most obvious application in Translation Studies is in skopos theory. This is curious in a way, because skopos theory has generally been interpreted as being prescriptive and pedagogically valuable, showing that good translations are guided by their purpose (see e.g. Vermeer 1996: 15, and 67, footnote 24). But seen as proposing an important explanatory factor to account for translation, skopos theory comes across in a different light. With respect to relevance theory (Gutt 2000), to the extent that the agent (the speaker/translator) intends to communicate in an optimally relevant way, this approach also employs a notion of final cause. This kind of causal explanation works at the social level of translation theory, where we are concerned with the objectives of the client and the translator and the function of the translation itself.

**Formal cause**
The *explanandum* is as it is because of the formal requirements of what is expected. In other words, because of the norms. In the case of translation, these norms are primarily in the target culture, but also in the relevant translation tradition more generally. This kind of causal explanation is offered, e.g., by polysystem theory, and by norm-based research in general. It is widely represented in the cultural turn in translation research.

**Efficient cause**
The *explanandum* is as it is because of the physical and mental / emotional nature of the agent(s) involved. For us, this means primarily the body and mind of the translator. These kinds of causes are investigated by cognitive research in Translation Studies, such as TAP research (for a survey, see e.g. Jääskeläinen 2002). In translation, the efficient cause is the proximate one: that is, the one nearest to the *explanandum*. All other causes (material, final, formal) are filtered, as it were, through the translator’s mind, either consciously or by unconscious routine.

Other philosophers have been interested in defining the line(s) between causal and non-causal explanation, rather more precisely than I did above. Von Wright (1971: 85) proposed a four-fold taxonomy of explanations, as follows.

Causal explanations proper

These must be based on a nomic (i.e., lawlike and necessary, not just universal) connection between a given causal condition and its effect. They are also known as “covering
law” or “subsumptive” explanations, because they can be expressed in terms of a general law (like the law of gravity). They are (or have been) typical of the natural sciences. Such explanations are also known as deductive–nomological explanations, because they are based on deductive argument. Some philosophers have argued that causal-proper explanations may also be statistical (e.g., Salmon 1998), accounting for the explanandum in terms of the relative probabilities of relevant conditional factors.

Quasi-causal explanations

These have to do with (non-nomic) reasons, justifications, rather than causes proper. Such explanations are typical of the behavioural and social sciences (von Wright 1971: 135f). One example discussed by von Wright is the causes of the First World War (ibid.: 139f). He analyses these as a network of different events, including the assassination of the Austrian archduke, which all played some contributory role. What connects the nexus of events “is not a set of general laws, but a set of singular statements” (p. 142). These statements function as premises to practical inferences or syllogisms (to which we return in a moment), which von Wright sees as central to teleological explanation. One could also appeal here to the notion of contributory conditions; these are less strongly causal than sufficient or necessary ones, but in combination with other conditions they may make a given event more likely, and hence more understandable. Toury (e.g. 2004a: 22) describes such conditions as “enhancing” the causal effects of other conditions. Moreover, some conditions may be more relevant than others, a point highlighted by Salmon (1998).

Teleological explanations

As their name suggests, these have to do with human intentions; they are not nomic. These kinds of explanations are central to the human sciences, and von Wright argues that they can be explicated in terms of what he calls a practical inference or syllogism (p. 26f, 96f; the term itself is not new, and the idea is found in Aristotle):

- A intends to bring about p.
- A considers that he cannot bring about p unless he does x.
- Therefore A sets himself to do x.

Von Wright claims that “the practical syllogism provides the sciences of man with something long missing from their methodology: an explanation model in its own right which is a definite alternative to the subsumption-theoretic covering law model” (ibid.: 27). The syllogism reminds us of the underlying rationale of skopos theory, and the role of the translator as decision-maker.
Quasi-teleological explanations

These are the functional explanations found, e.g., in biology (why does a frog have long back legs?). They do not involve intentions, and they depend on nomic connections between phenomena.

Von Wright's types of cause do not overlap exactly with Aristotle's, but we can see some relationships between them. Aristotle's classification has to do with the potential sources of causal explanation, whereas von Wright focuses on the internal logical structure of different kinds of causal or explanatory claims: different patterns of explanation. Aristotle's final cause looks like von Wright's teleological cause. Aristotle's material cause would presumably have to do with von Wright's “causal-proper” explanation, in that the material concerned would be subject to the causal-proper laws affecting it. But language, from which translations are constructed, is not a natural material of the kind studied by physics or chemistry. Causal-proper explanation may only apply to translation insofar as we try to account for our explanandum in terms of the physical constraints of the human body or mind, or of the medium in question. Quasi-causal explanations, on the other hand, look highly relevant to our field; they seem to cover partly the same ground as Aristotle's formal causes. In this context, von Wright discusses the notions of norms and normative pressure at some length (p. 147f), and their relation with teleological explanation (e.g., a person's wish to avoid sanctions that might follow the breaking of a norm). Quasi-teleological explanations do not seem relevant in their literal (biological, organic) sense, but we can and do say that texts, translations, or institutions “have functions”, and these can usually be distinguished from the intentions of the various agents involved (cf. von Wright 1971:153f).

In terms of this analysis, it may seem unreasonable to speak about causes at all in Translation Studies (causes proper, that is), except in a very limited way. On the other hand, we could argue that we nevertheless find it useful to use the term “cause”, albeit sometimes in a loose sense, in order to refer to a wide range of factors that seem to impinge in some way on translations and people's reactions to them. Sometimes it does seem possible to isolate specific causes of specific decisions or shifts, e.g. by interviewing translators or via contrastive study of the source and target texts. But we should be wary of slipping into a stricter interpretation of “causality” than can be justified, given the nature of the evidence we are examining. And not all explanations are causal anyway — a point to be explored in the following section.

Unification

Explanations why something is the case, or how something is possible, may also be based on unification. This form of explanation is highlighted in Wesley Salmon's work
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(1998: e.g., 69f). He sets it alongside causal explanation as one of the main categories of explanation. This kind of explanation works by showing how the explanandum fits into a wider context, how it relates to “broad structural features of the world” (ibid.: 359), and thus reduces the number of assumptions that have to be made in order to understand it. In so doing, such an explanation also “colligates facts under a new concept”, to use a classical phrase (see von Wright 1971: 200, note 2). In its widest sense, unification provides a way of relating a phenomenon to an overall conception of the world, a Weltanschauung (Salmon 1998: 360). Salmon argues that the notion of explanation by unification has developed from the traditional view of explanation in terms of covering laws (ibid.: 362). A good example is Darwin’s theory of natural selection (ibid.: 360), which could be called a functional explanation. Darwin was not aware of the causal mechanisms provided by genes, but he did create a coherent picture which brought together a number of different facts and ideas: the existence of variation and chance mutations, the ideas of the competitive struggle for survival and adapting to the environment, and so on. Darwin’s unification “made sense” of the evolution of life-forms, and has since given rise to a wealth of more detailed hypotheses.

Salmon’s discussion mainly concerns the natural sciences, but he also refers to the relevance of this view for some behavioural and human sciences, such as archaeology. It seems to me that in the human sciences, examples of unification explanations are also given by explanatory narratives (and in the prescientific age by myths). These make sense of complex phenomena by linking them together into “stories”, such as are used in psychotherapy, history, politics, and sociology. (For a recent example illustrating the relevance of explanatory narratives to Translation Studies, see Baker 2006.) I suggest that further illustrations of unification are the general principles that have been proposed as bases for functional explanations in linguistics, such as economy (in grammar, accounting, e.g., for certain syntactic and morphological features) and relevance (in pragmatics, accounting for some of the characteristics of human communication). Against this view, with special reference to historical linguistics, Roger Lass (1980) has argued that functional explanations of language change are not really explanations at all; one reason is that they are non-causal, and another is that they appear to be non-falsifiable (p. 71f). His interpretation of what constitutes an explanation is thus stricter than the one I am exploring here. He agrees that generalization and unification, and also, e.g., the creation of useful taxonomies, are valuable contributions to knowledge, but he does not wish to call them “explanations”. Nevertheless, by offering a coherent “vision” of some kind, they all contribute to the creation of conceptual order; they bring intelligibility (ibid.: chapter 5, especially 156f).

Salmon argues that unification is “top-down” explanation; it complements “bottom-up” explanations, which are framed in terms of explicit causal mechanisms. Both types of explanation are needed, they complement each other. In the human sciences, Salmon suggests that unification may involve reduction too. For instance, psychology may offer ways of understanding explananda in fields as different as sociology, economics and political science (1998:358).
Salmon’s explanation-by-unification seems partly similar to von Wright’s quasi-causal explanation. Salmon also implies a link with causality in a general sense. He writes: “[t]o give scientific explanations is to show how events and statistical regularities fit into the causal network of the world” (ibid.: 104).

Fitting something into a network: this reminds us of Toury’s insistence on the importance of contextualization, which he sees as vital for both description and explanation (1995: 29, and Part Three, “Translation-in-Context”). This form of explanation has been much used by polysystem scholars, and increasingly by scholars working in the sociology of translation (see e.g., the special issue of The Translator, 11, 2, 2005), but notions of what the most relevant context actually is tend to vary. As Pym points out (2006), a given observation can be contextualized in any number of ways, depending on the researcher’s point of view; but priority should presumably be given to the contextualizations that seem to bring the most new understanding and has the most explanatory power (see below), depending on the particular research design in question.

Ultimately, attempts to explain via unification are motivated by the old dream of consilience, the unity of all knowledge.

Multiple explanations

What is known as the underdetermination thesis claims that any body of evidence can admit of more than one explanation (or theory or interpretation). In other words, the choice of explanation is underdetermined by the evidence: there always seem to be alternative explanations available. One consequence of this is the value — and necessity — of entertaining multiple explanations at the same time (like the theory that light is composed of particles, simultaneously with the theory that it is composed of waves). True, the possibility of multiple explanations may appear confusing at first.

Pym (1998: 158 and preceding sections) points out that one of the major weaknesses of the various theories proposed in Translation Studies is that they tend to focus only on one kind of causal explanation. We have theories of equivalence, of skopos, of polysystems, but no theory (as opposed to individual studies) that uses a broader range of explanations. This is a good point. We have no reason to suppose that only one kind of explanation would suffice to account for all the complexities of translation. The perceived inadequacy of these too restricted theories is one good reason to seek alternative and additional explanations.

A simple way to combine different causes (or sets of conditioning factors) would be to model them as a linear chain: factor A affects factor B, which affects factor C, and so on. So one could argue that sociocultural norms, for instance, affect the task conditions of a given translation (including source text and skopos), and that these, together with the knowledge and skills of the translator, then affect a translator’s decisions and strategies, which in turn affect the profile of the translation itself (cf. Chesterman 1998a). But this is to oversimplify. It would be more realistic to model multiple causality as
a cluster of factors that may all influence each other, at the same time or at different
times. Several scholars have made proposals along these lines, including Toury (e.g.,
2004a: 22). Siobhan Brownlie (2003), for instance, uses four sources of explanation for
observed characteristics in different English translations of some French philosophical
texts: the individual situation, including context of production and translator attitudes;
textuality; norms; and the influence exerted by intersecting fields such as publishing
and academia.

Pym (2006) observes that potentially conditioning factors (we might also think
of these as possible contributory conditions) may influence each other to different
degrees, and that the dependent variable itself (i.e., the explanandum in a given research
design) may also causally affect some of these factors. Such interaction may manifest
what Pym calls “asymmetric causation”, in that factor A may affect factor B more than
B affects A. Examples are readily found in sociocultural research on translation, dis-
cussed by Pym. Sometimes, for instance, it seems that cultural factors have more effect
on social factors than these do on cultural factors, and sometimes the opposite appears
to be the case.

But we can go further than merely stressing the potential of multiple causal explan-
ations. Understanding may be increased by a combination of different kinds of explan-
ation, not just the causal type. As Salmon puts it:

> When discussing scientific explanation, it is important to avoid thinking and talking
> about the unique correct explanation of any given phenomenon. There may, in general,
> be several different correct explanations of any such phenomenon. There will normally
> be many different sets of explanatory facts from which to construct a correct explana-
> tion. […] [A] given fact may have correct explanations of different types, in particular,
correct causal explanations and correct unifying explanations. (Salmon 1998: 360; em-
phases original. Note especially this last point!)

**Conclusion: relations**

This brief conceptual exploration suggests a number of conclusions. We have outlined
several forms of explanation. One feature which they share is the fact that they all take
their explanatory power from the establishing of relations of different kinds, between
the explanandum and various other phenomena or variables. These relations fall into
three broad groups: relations of similarity, cause, and context.

Many explanatory relations have to do with similarity in one way or another. We
could distinguish three aspects of similarity here: similarities expressed via metaphors
or similes, via generalizations, and via correlations. What we could call “metaphor-
cal” relations (where X is seen as Y) can be perceived between phenomena of a different
kind but nevertheless with some salient similar features. We say that translating is like
changing clothes, for instance; or translations carry memes like organisms carry genes;
or chemical transformations can be conceptualized as translations. Relations of gener-
alization, on the other hand, capture similarities between phenomena of the same kind. A given translation can be shown to be like a great many other translations, in certain respects: i.e., we can propose a generalization covering a whole set of translations, perhaps even all translations (a universal feature?). A generalization can also create a more general category that was not evident before: if we show, for instance, that translations are like non-native texts in some respects, we thereby posit a more general category of texts comprising both translations and non-native texts, about which some interesting claims can be made. Finally, a third kind of similarity is a correlation. Correlations show related variation across different variables: e.g., the hypothesis that the more experienced the translator is, the less interference there is (cf. Toury 1995:277).

Not all relations have to do with similarity, however. Some relations are causal, in a strict or loose sense. In addition to covering laws, we can speak of conditioning factors, constraints, background influences, etc., as discussed at more length above.

And some relations are what we could call contextual, showing how the explanandum fits into a broader network of phenomena: this is the unification pattern of explanation. Contextual relations show relevant connections with surrounding networks of phenomena and thus contribute to the formation of a holistic view of the explanandum, which increases our understanding of it.

Explanatory power increases if predictions become more accurate, or if they have a higher probability of occurrence. Explanations are also more powerful if they are more general, so that they are relevant to a greater range of phenomena. We can make our explanations more general by increasing the number of relations encompassed by our hypothesis; by increasing the range of different types of factors with which a relation is posited; or by relating the explanandum to larger networks or systems of factors (cf. Pym 2006). All these expanding relations lead ideally to general theoretical concepts and principles of one kind or another: in the final analysis, it is these that do the explaining. The theory itself is ultimately the explanans.

This observation brings us back to the fuzzy borderline between description and explanation. For is it not true that description, too, is a matter of establishing internal and external relations? After all, we describe a translation by showing its relation with the source text, with the target language, with other translations, perhaps also the social and cultural context, and so on (recall the classic descriptive model offered by Lambert and van Gorp 1985). So what then is the difference between describing and explaining? I think part of the answer is the point I just made about explanatory power. The more relations involved, the more we can generalize away from the particular observed case, the more types of factors are covered, and the wider the systems, then the further we shift along the continuum from the descriptive end towards the explanatory end. As we saw with Croft’s argument about generalization, a generalizing description is already a kind of preliminary explanation. The other part of the answer is that description becomes increasingly explanatory when it becomes more closely related to some general theoretical principle, such as might be offered by a unificatory explanation. Explanation is thus a matter of degree.
There is still one factor that I have scarcely mentioned: chance. Not even our physical world is ultimately deterministic, let alone the social one. Toury’s insistence on the probabilistic nature of what he calls translation laws shows that he is only too aware of the existence of chance. The Nobel laureate physicist Max Born wrote:

I think chance is a more fundamental conception than causality; for whether, in a concrete case, a cause-effect relation holds or not can only be judged by applying the laws of chance to the observation. (cited in Kaplan and Kaplan 2006: 277)

The same reservation actually holds for all our concepts and definitions, including those concerning explanation, causality and relations. As Kaplan and Kaplan put it in their recent book on probability (2006: 289), “[m]eaning’, ‘sense’, ‘interest’, are the statistical signatures of a few rare, low-entropy states in the universe’s background murmur of information.”

From this point of view, it is good to be reminded that “[u]nderstanding is always a journey, never a destination” (Fortey 2004: 25). But the journey does have a starting point: our current state of puzzlement. We might, of course, also wish (like Marx) not only to understand the world, but to change it; but that is another story.

References


Chapter 26. On explanation


CHAPITRE 27

Du transhistoricisme traductionnel

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La prédominance ou l’obsolescence d’une normativité ne prennent sens que de son inscription temporelle et la datation contribue au processus, positif ou négatif, de normalisation. Ce qui a amené Gideon Toury a reconnaître l’importance de l’historicité autant dans sa dimension diachronique que synchronique. Les catégories épistémologiques qu’il a mises en place peuvent parfaitement accueillir d’autres orientations et notamment les considérations touchant à l’historicité des procédures de traduction. Ainsi, les normes de traduction ne sont pas seulement des normes historiques, à savoir historiquement situées, elles sont également réceptrices d’une pensée de l’histoire et du politique dont les conceptions varient selon les sociétés et les cultures. Le concept de transhistoricisme traductionnel proposé dans cet article se veut un enrichissement de la normativité du cadre polysystémique. Il est exposé et illustré à partir du transhellénisme soutenant l’œuvre du poète grec Cavafy, abordée dans son esthétique première et dans ses traductions.

Mots-clés: normes, historicité, Cavafy, transhellénisme, poésie

D’un Gideon à l’autre

Le Gédéon biblique avait un nom prédestiné – en hébreu il signifie « celui qui taille, qui tranche, qui abat » – pour personifier la rigidité morale du croyant qui obéit sans réserve aux devoirs que sa foi lui impose, d’où son exemplarité mentionnée dans l’Épître aux Hébreux et le choix de son patronage par le mouvement évangéliste privilégiant les chambres d’hôtel comme espace de prosélytisme où déposer des traductions de la Bible. D’ailleurs, il serait peut-être opportun de proposer en la personne de Gédéon un nouveau « patron » aux traducteurs, outre Saint-Jérôme, afin de conserver l’équilibre entre Ancien et Nouveau Testaments puisque la traduction biblique a acquis force paradigmatique en traductologie. Quoiqu’il en soit, Gédéon devint certes un des « grands juges » qui présidèrent aux destinées de l’ancien royaume d’Israël mais il ne se priva pas auparavant de discuter avec force khutspa les diktats de l’Éternel. Non seulement il réclama à deux reprises des gages du soutien divin sous forme de miracles (Juges, VI, 17–22, 36–40) mais à l’ange qui vient lui annoncer sa mission, il délivre une leçon de philosophie de l’histoire: « Et Gédéon lui répondit: «Hélas! Seigneur, si l’Éternel est avec nous, d'où vient tout ce qui nous arrive? Que sont devenus tous ses prodiges que nous ont contés nos pères, disant : N’est-ce pas l’Éternel qui nous a fait sortir d’Égypte?
Maintenant l’Éternel nous délaisse et nous livre aux mains de Madian!» » (Juges VI, 13 : Bible du Rabbinat 1967 : 409)

Dans sa démarche traductologique, Gideon Toury, notre Gédéon, adopte la sévérité qui sied à son prénom : translational norms and laws forment la clé de voûte de sa réflexion et les descriptive studies ne laissent pas de place à la fantaisie dans la grille fort ajustée de leur mailles analytiques. Et pourtant, celles-ci se desserrent parfois, ce qui amène notre « juge » à ne pas négliger une rhétorique de la prudence illustrée par ses titres et sous-titres : In Search of a Theory of Translation ou « Towards Laws of Translational Behaviour ». Par ailleurs, la place accordée aux pseudo-traductions et aux traductions indirectes dans sa typologie, même si le polysystème le permet, frise l’hétérodoxie en regard des classifications traditionnelles.

En outre, dans les énoncés internes à ses développements, le théoricien lâche parfois un aveu qui tempère la rigueur de la démonstration: « The difficulties involved in any attempt to account for translational norms should not be underestimated. They, however, lie first and foremost in two features inherent in the very notion of norm, and are therefore not unique to Translation Studies at all: the socio-cultural specificity of norms and their basic instability » (Toury 1995 : 62). Plus loin, la prudence admettant la variabilité normative en précise même les conditions et suggère « [...] a further axis of contextualization, whose necessity has so far only been implied; namely the historical one » (ibid.: 63).

De fait, l’avancée, la prédominance ou l’obsolescence d’une normativité ne prennent sens que de son inscription temporelle et la datation contribue au processus, positif ou négatif, de normalisation. Ce qui amène Gideon Toury a reconnaître l’importance de l’historicité1 non seulement « for a diachronic study [...] but also for synchronic studies » (id.) en s’appuyant sur le fonctionnalisme dynamique d’Itamar Even-Zohar qui reconnaît qu’un système opère en ouverture et que celle-ci est d’abord temporelle : « Therefore, on the one hand a system consists of both synchrony and diachrony; on the other, each of these separately is obviously also a system » (id: 64 n.7). L’étonnement est légitime qu’avec de telles prémisses, l’ouvrage ne revienne pas sur la problématique et que son index thématique ne contienne pas le terme « history ». Par ailleurs, presqu’une dizaine d’années auparavant, Gideon Toury dirigeait un recueil d’articles intitulé Translation Across Cultures dont trois des textes (James Holmes, Mary Snell-Hornby et Itamar Even-Zohar) font une part à la dimension historique du processus traductif (Toury 1987).

Une telle mention de l’historicité non suivie de développements théoriques ou analytiques s’apparente à une dénégation, au sens freudien, dont une manifestation, pour ne pas dire un symptôme, serait le traitement de la littérature hébraïque, en diaspora et en Israel, avec mention minimale et ponctuelle du devenir historique général du peuple juif alors que l’intitulé de l’essai inclut une datation (Toury 1980 : 137–138). L’exemple

le plus flagrant d’un tel évitement me semble être le commentaire à propos de l’étude d’Even-Zohar montrant la substitution, dans la traduction en hébreu de « Spleen » de Baudelaire, de l’image de la tombe à celle du couvercle pour qualifier le ciel : « There is absolutely no reason to assume that the substitution [as?] such of the ‘grave’ pattern for the ‘vessel’ one was intentional. It was more likely a result of a universal of the kind expressed by our law of conversion reinforced by certain needs of the recipient culture of the time » (p. 272). Or, les traductions utilisées datent de l’immédiat après-guerre. La formule « besoins de la culture réceptrice de l’époque » tient de l’euphémisation de la notion d’historicité dont l’éthique scripturaire motiva en l’occurrence Paul Celan à écrire les célèbres mots de la « Fugue de mort » : « wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften [nous creusons une tombe dans les airs ou dans le ciel] » (Celan 1992 : 41).

Le descriptivisme a eu le mérite d’établir un cadre méthodologique et un socle épistémologique solides pour la traductologie. Toutefois, le scientisme ou le positivisme qui peuvent s’y attacher ne doivent pas se dresser comme obstacles à l’extension de ses visées. Les catégories mises en place par Gideon Toury peuvent au contraire accueillir d’autres dimensions et notamment les considérations touchant à l’historicité des procédures de traduction. Ainsi, les normes de traduction ne sont pas seulement des normes historiques, à savoir historiquement situées, elles sont également réceptives d’une pensée de l’histoire et du politique dont les conceptions varient selon les sociétés et les cultures, indépendamment de leur contemporanéité. Ce qui explique que des textes peuvent bénéficier d’une réception positive en traduction avant même une publication dans leur milieu langagier ou national d’origine. Le neveu de Rameau paraît d’abord dans la traduction de Goethe en Allemagne ou, pour notre époque, Vie et destin de Vassili Grossman en France de même que les romans de Milan Kundera et de Reinaldo Arenas, tous trois victimes à des degrés divers de régimes oppressifs.

Traduction et transhistoricisme

« J’ai reconnu avec plaisir, par l’effet qu’a produit sur notre théâtre tout ce que j’ai imité d’Homère ou d’Euripide, que le bon sens et la raison étaient les mêmes dans tous les siècles » (Racine 1962 : 225). La phrase de la préface d’Iphigénie en Aulide résume la position de Racine : reconnaître ce qui est dû à l’Antiquité et défendre l’emprunt au nom d’un humanisme ignorant les époques. Fort d’une langue française désormais établie et surtout soucieuse de raffinement, le classicisme de Racine a délaissé les craintes éprouvées devant les effets pervers des traductions par les écrivains de la Pléiade dans leur désir de fondation d’une langue. Sa doctrine échappe sereinement à l’ambivalence de la Renaissance face à la culture antique qui, bien que source d’inspiration, portait le risque d’étouffer le développement d’une esthétique autonome. Celui qui traduisit Aristote et Platon mais citait comme il convient Isaïe et Saint-Jean en latin dans ses « Réflexions pieuses » affirme sa croyance en une histoire qui ne viendrait pas influencer le système des passions propre à l’espèce humaine – tout en ne réservant pas à la géographie un privilège similaire à en croire ses remarques sur la psychologie des Turcs. Un tel métahistoricisme ne saurait se confondre avec le transhistoricisme, à savoir l’imprégnation d’une époque par une époque antérieure au sens, premier, de fécondation. Passe-passe lexical que ce couple néologique qui ne ferait que dissimuler une resucée théorique comme la traductologie aime tant à en produire, enième variation sur le binaire primitif « esprit/lettre »? Outre que le binaire ne soit pas facilement dépassable puisqu’il incarne heuristiquement et pragmatiquement les deux options offertes à la pratique traductive, plutôt que de chercher à le nier il est loisible d’en reprendre l’exemple à nouveaux frais par la clarification de ses présupposés et implications philosophiques. À un tout autre niveau et par analogie, si la lutte des classes ne peut plus être avancée dans le purisme du marxisme original, elle ne peut guère être abandonnée sous peine de trahir les droits des opprimés et doit être reformulée dans les termes adéquats au nouvel ordre socio-économique mondial (Derrida 1993).

Une justification terminologique s'impose. Le terme d’historicisme ne jouit pas d’une connotation favorable et stigmatise la lecture tendancieusement dogmatique qui accorde à la seule causalité historique le pouvoir d’explication du devenir humain en sacrifiant d’une certaine manière à un fatalisme laïc. Walter Benjamin ne mâche pas ses mots lorsqu’il lui oppose la force révolutionnaire du matérialisme historique qui peut relire et rédimer un « passé opprimé », laissant les amateurs « se dépenser dans le bordel de l’historicisme avec la putain “Il était une fois” » (Benjamin 2000 : 441). Une autre se nommerait sans doute « Ce qui a été a été ». Si Historismus, traduit par « historisme » ou « historicisme », s’attire l’opprobre de Benjamin à qui la langue allemande donne la chance de jouer sur deux termes, Historie et Geschichte, qu’il peut valoriser en opposition, la langue française est plus chiche et la seule historia engendre les concepts pertinents. Je prends alors « historicisme » comme position épistémologique prenant en compte l’historicité (Geschichtlichkeit en allemand) des événements et des sujets, à savoir la situation historique qui les investit de sens et forge « métahistoricisme » pour
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marquer l’attitude idéologique élisant un ordre (métahistorique) de réalité au-dessus du flux temporel ainsi que « transhistoricisme », la position cherchant à établir le dialogue (transhistorique) entre des historicités chronologiquement distinctes et distantes. C’est l’anglais dont nous devons à cet égard craindre et repousser l’influence sémantique puisque transhistoricism, attesté dans le lexique des sciences humaines et sociales, dénonce le jugement selon lequel une structuration sociale donnée perpétue immuablement ses caractères au travers des évolutions historiques, qu’elle traverse l’histoire sans en être altérée, bref ce que je désigne comme métahistoricisme.

Métahistoricisme et transhistoricisme, projetant une praxis sur le plan d’une pensée de l’histoire, permettent de rattacher les idéologies guidant les styles du traduire au contexte philosophique de leurs époques respectives. Faire, par exemple, du XVIIᵉ siècle celui des « Belles infidèles » demande de comprendre que l’absolutisme politique associé à Louis XIV pose aussi un absolu temporel sous la forme d’un aboutissement historique qu’illustre la monarchie du Roi-Soleil. Si Perrot d’Ablancourt – dont la pratique traductive s’attira de la part de Gilles Ménage, le familier du salon de Mme de Rambouillet et l’auteur des Observations sur la langue française, la comparaison avec la femme belle mais infidèle – se consacre à traduire Tacite et César en leur donnant l’éclat de sa prose plutôt que d’accepter la charge offerte d’historiographe du roi, c’est qu’il juge l’Antiquité aussi actuelle que son temps ou son temps d’égale valeur au regard de l’histoire en une posture métahistoriciste, partagée avec Racine, qui le légitime dans son droit à la liberté traductive sans sentiment de trahison. À l’inverse, dans un XIXᵉ siècle européen que perturbent les instabilités politiques et les tensions entre nations, le romantisme français se cherche des fondations et des modèles, il se tourne vers un ailleurs spatial (les cultures nordiques ou orientales) ou temporel (le Moyen Âge) pour accueillir une altérité qui renversera les obstacles à l’émergence de sa modernité. Les historicités doivent se rencontrer, au risque assumé du choc salvateur, et la littéralité traductive s’impose comme stratégie à cette fin, celle qu’adoptent Chateaubriand, François-Victor Hugo ou Nerval.

Le terme de « style », employé plus haut, revendique son usage en esthétique car il en est de l’histoire de la traduction comme de l’histoire de l’art : toutes deux échappent à la chronologie événementielle et à la pulsion téléologique pour adopter des périodicités aux contours flous dont chacune est susceptible d’être revisitée par les suivantes, ce qui situe la notion de style au carrefour des compréhensions synchronique et diachronique. Par ailleurs, l’histoire de l’art pictural reconnaît la transhumance des thèmes, sacrés (crucifixion) ou profanes (la femme au bain), ainsi que la migration des formes (le cube, la diagonale, le pli, …) et nous enseigne que l’artiste est conscient de ce qui l’a précédé au point de considérer le passé comme une étape à partir de laquelle il peut et doit repartir, non comme dépassement mais comme prolongement (ceci à rebours d’un discours majeur en histoire de l’art; voir sur ce point Hazan 1999). Un tel regard transforme la singularité de la toile d’un maître antérieur en élément d’une série qu’il s’agit de développer : la Mise au tombeau du Titien sera repris diversement par Turner, Géricault, Fantin-Latour, Cézanne, Derain, Chagall; Picasso reprend Delacroix
ou Velázquez, ce dernier étant une obsession pour Francis Bacon; pop-art et post-modernisme intègrent la citation dans les principes fondateurs de leur projet esthétique. En peignant, l’artiste inscrit l’histoire de son temps dans l’histoire de la peinture. Ce qui a pu même disparaître de l’intérêt collectif se retrouve dans une conscience esthétique nouvelle interrogeé et mis de l’avant. L’Orangerie des Tuileries accueillait en 1934 une exposition intitulée « Les peintres de la réalité en France au XVIIe siècle » qui, quelle que soit la justesse de la désignation, réinterprétait et réévaluait l’esthétique picturale de la période. La même exposition est reprise en 2006 dans le même musée alors que la relecture de 1934 a désormais imposé sa marque et donne lieu à un nouveau réexamen qui, pour approfondir et prolonger le précédent, présente quinze œuvres des années trente (Balthus, Léger, Picasso, Hélion, Juan Gris, …) dialoguant avec les toiles de leurs prédécesseurs du XVIIe siècle (frères Le Nain, Philippe de Champaigne, Georges de la Tour, …).

Dans cette perspective, une période historique se définit en dialogue avec d’autres et non dans leur négation, justifiant la pertinence du terme « courant artistique » avec sa connotation de fluidité et d’écoulement. Il en va de même en traduction comme le montre le phénomène admis des retraductions dans le cas desquelles la position du traducteur dans son présent est aussi importante que ses deux postériorités : par rapport à l’auteur et par rapport aux précédents traducteurs. Une retraduction est ainsi soumise à une double antériorité historique : l’historicité de l’original et celle des versions précédentes, ce qui modifie le champ de sa transhistoricité. De surcroît, l’auteur étant déjà intégré dans l’horizon culturel du lectorat, sa réception prend en charge cette connaissance initiale et les transformations venues depuis sa compréhension.

D’où la pratique d’intégration de traductions antérieures, éventuellement révisées, dans de nouveaux projets de traduction. Si l’historicité d’une traduction est encore activement significante, elle se prolongera dans celle d’une nouvelle traduction et chacune trouvera profit à se refléter dans l’autre. Le tome III des Œuvres de Hermann Melville dans la Pléiade accueille en 2006 une nouvelle traduction de Moby Dick, due à Philippe Jaworski, mais reprend, revue, celle de Pierre Leyris pour Pierre; or, the Ambiguities. La retraduction d’Ulysse publiée par Gallimard en 2004 donne de nouvelles versions aux dix-huit épisodes à l’exception du quatorzième, conservé dans le texte qu’en donna en 1929 Auguste Morel, aidé de Stuart Gilbert et Valéry Larbaud. Ce choix n’est pas anodin puisque Oxen of the Sun se compose d’une série de pastiches littéraires allant du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle, épisode dans lequel Joyce revisite précisément la littérature occidentale dans une optique transhistoricale.

Là où l’historicisme fonctionne selon une logique du dépassement et de l’obsolescence, le transhistoricisme reprend du passé ce qui lui semble encore actuel. Il est significatif que traductologie et histoire de l’art, privilégiant toutes deux une approche de l’histoire proche du relativisme postmoderne, ont en commun à la fois une autonomisation institutionnelle datant des années 70 ou 80 et une dimension intrinsèquement multidisciplinaire vécue parfois avec difficulté. Par ailleurs, la genèse théorique des deux disciplines doit beaucoup à l’idéalisme et au romantisme allemands, ce qui
les oriente pareillement dans une direction épistémologique hésitant entre le spéculatif d'une intelligibilité abstraite et l'empirique imposé par leurs objets, œuvres d'art et textes, et les dispose là aussi en phase avec une sensibilité postmoderne.

**Cavafy et le transhellénisme**

De même que Benjamin examinant sous le signe de la survie, compris comme le travail de l'histoire, le rapport entre un original et ses traductions promet à celui-ci « un constant renouvellement » et à sa langue une « post-maturation » due à « la croissance de la langue » (p. 18) traductive, c'est-à-dire à ses mutations, il dira plus tard à propos de l'œuvre d'art : « [Son] unicité et son intégration à la tradition ne sont qu'une seule et même chose. Mais cette tradition elle-même est une réalité vivante, extrêmement changeante » (Benjamin 1997, 2000 : 279). De ce transhistoricisme que Benjamin continuera de théoriser dans *Le livre des passages* et dans son ultime essai « Sur le concept d'histoire », Constantin Cavafy fit le principe de sa poétique et approcher son œuvre, loin de détourner de la traduction, sert à en affermir la considération. Le transhistorique dessine l’horizon vers lequel tend la transcréation que doit être la traduction.

Pour Cavafy (1863–1933), la dimension transhistorique répond au devenir national grec partagé entre une lourde tradition et l’appel de la modernité. Né à Alexandrie, il passe son adolescence en Angleterre d’où il gardera une touche d’accent britannique et un bilinguisme que sa maîtrise égale du français transformera en polyglottisme. Il partage avec Pessoa et Kafka – ces deux autres maîtres de la littérature européenne moderne – une existence assurée par un travail de bureau et un enracinement quasi-ontologique à sa ville natale. Géographie et histoire sont inséparablement liées chez Cavafy. Qu’il fût un Grec d’Alexandrie et le soit resté au long de sa vie lui accorde le privilège d’un décalage spatial le prédisposant à la souplesse d’une mobilité temporelle. Grec non attaché territorialement à la Grèce, il en devient un Hellène non attaché chronologiquement à son époque. Pour et par cet hellénisme nomade, il fait de la langue grecque un vecteur de médiation apte à superposer les strates chronologiques et à croiser les figures réelles et fictives, si bien que son œuvre s’écrit sous le signe d’un transhellénisme revendiqué. Ainsi comprise, elle occupe une place particulière d’un point de vue descriptiviste puisque proclamée poésie majeure de la littérature grecque moderne mais délibérément attachée à la Grèce provinciale d’Orient, elle brouille le dispositif athénien de domination du système littéraire de même que, appuyant sa modernité sur l’antique, elle en parasite la normativité temporelle. Son transhellénisme croise diachronie et synchronie pas moins que, sociogéographiquement, centralité et périphérie.

« Historien-poète », ainsi qu’il aimait à se présenter, il procède non par reproduction ou imitation mais par une poétique traductive transhistoricieste où le monde alexandrin renait dans la sensibilité d’un début de XXe siècle et le présent du poète trouve écho dans la Grèce orientale et cosmopolite des descendants d’Alexandre. Le transhellénisme de Cavafy se prolonge en cosmopolitisme, à quoi sa ville polyglotte l’inclinait natu-

154 poèmes constituent le canon de l’œuvre cavafienne – établi de manière posthume, ce qui complexifie encore l’assise polysystémique – composée de poèmes courts, allant de moins de 10 vers à une cinquantaine. Des vignettes tracées sans fioritures, d’un ton anecdotique, sises dans le présent ou dans l’antique, mettant en scène des personnages anonymes, historiques, légendaires ou imaginaires ou encore un je dénué de tout lyrisme romantique. Tout au long, le rendu de ces croquis de vie nie l’effusion sans effacer l’émotion dont une gamme réduite appelle une expression touchant parfois à l’abstraction : détresse devant un sort funeste, déception devant les tromperies, culte de la beauté et de l’art soutenu par le désir homosexuel ou mélancolie nourrie par le recul des jours anciens. L’œuvre entière – que Cavafy classa dans l’ordre chronologique et par périodes – se livre sous le signe de l’histoire et du flot temporel, ce qu’indique nombre de titres de poèmes intégrant une indication chronologique, soit une date (« Théâtre de Sidon (400 APR., J.-C.) »; « Jours de 1908 ») soit l’âge d’un personnage (« Un jeune écrivain – dans sa 24e année ») mais le temps n’est pas le décor des poèmes en une contingence qui leur resterait extérieure; il infuse et soutient leur énonciation, ce qui justifie Yourcenar avançant qu’il est permis d’affirmer que tous les poèmes de Cavafy sont des poèmes historiques et qu’ils sont tous des poèmes personnels (Yourcenar 1978: 37, 53). Le poème « Cesarion », né d’une lecture d’un recueil d’inscription des Ptolémées » l’atteste : « Et je t’ai imaginé avec une précision si complète/qu’hier, tard dans la nuit, au moment où ma lampe/ allait s’éteindre – je l’ai laissée s’éteindre exprès – j’ai cru que tu étais entré dans ma chambre […] » (Grandmont, pp. 109–110). Au demeurant, la réception publique ultérieure des recueils, alors que seuls des poèmes isolés circulaient en cercle restreint du vivant de Cavafy, prolonge cette dimension puisque, posthume, elle met en jeu la rencontre de l’historicité de l’écriture et celles, postérieure, de la lecture.

Sa langue confond les registres, marie l’oral et l’écrit de même que la demotiki, la langue commune, populaire, et la katharévousa, la langue puriste et officielle, plus pro-

2 Pour les références aux traductions indiquées entre parenthèses dans le corps du texte, voir la liste bibliographique en annexe.

che du grec ancien, instillant dans le matériel lexical la tension transhistorique à la
quelle se voue son projet poétique, avec toutefois le souci que les termes ou tournures
archaïsants qu’il insère puissent être compris de ses contemporains car sinon leur ma-
gie n’en serait pas effective. La norme opérationnelle en traduction devra elle aussi, sur
L’oreille de Cavafy à une parole antique encore énonçable/écoutable illustre une pro-
priété spécifique à l’oralité, sa disposition transhistorique qui l’investit d’une portée cri-
tique à l’endroit des normes de l’écriture soumises à une lenteur structurelle dans leurs
éventuelles transformations, ce dont la traductologie ne tire pas assez les conséquences
épistémologiques, à l’étroit dans le carcan qu’elle s’est imposée en séparant pratiques
écrites et orales (Tymoczko 1990).

Sans ornementation, la simplicité et la délicatesse de son style ne sont pas sans rapp-
peler celui de Verlaine et comme pour l’auteur des Poèmes saturniens – ou comme pour un Nerval – le passé revient dans le présent des poèmes de Cavafy revêtu d’un charme
spectral qui échappe à toute fixation commémorative. Dans un geste similaire à l’usage
proustien de la réminiscence, la vérité portée par le poème apparaît sous la forme d’une
traduction. Le réel du passé ou celui de son vécu passent par ce tamis dont la langue est
le crible si bien que le matériau du poème provient toujours de la mémoire du poète
qui semble recueillir aussi bien des souvenirs ayant trait à sa biographie (« À l’entrée du
café » ou « Devant la vitrine du bureau de tabac ») que des images et scènes datant de
plusieurs siècles (« Le sculpteur de Tyane » ou « Les dieux n’avaient qu’à y pourvoir »).
D’où la tâche imposée à la traduction : « Or, tout en maintenant une stricte correspon-
dance entre l’expression et l’exprimé, le traducteur doit toujours se souvenir que, dans
l’œuvre de Cavafy, le passé atteint la force d’un symbole et que la meilleure part de sa
poésie est, selon le mot de T. S. Eliot, ici justement évoqué – “celle où les poètes morts,
ses aïeux, affirment le plus vigoureusement leur immortalité” » (Cattaui, p. 101). La
marque d’immortalité prend la forme d’une inspiration avouée ou aisément reconnaiss-
able, voire d’une citation, provenant d’Homère, Plutarque, Suétone, Hérodote, Flavius
Josèphe ou d’autres auteurs moins connus. Immortalité acquise plus récemment dans
le cas de Sully Prudhomme (« Nous n’osons plus chanter les roses »), Georges Roden-
bach (« Dans la maison de l’âme », « Jeunesse blanche ») ou Baudelaire (« Correspondance
selon Baudelaire »). Un tel dispositif scripturaire s’apparente par sa constance à
un mode traductif où l’intertextualité fonctionne comme un indice de transhistoricité,
ce qui ne saurait étonner puisque Cavafy traduisait, à partir de l’anglais et du français,
et que son frère aîné John écrivait de la poésie dans ces deux langues.

« Aphrodite une nouvelle fois jaillira de la vague » (Séféris 1989 : 161). Séféris qui
dans « La Grive » citait Homère, Sophocle, Platon pour dire le malheur de la guerre et
les souffrances de la Grèce, ne pouvait que comprendre intimement le rapport de Ca-
vafy à l’histoire. Il y consacre un essai sous la forme d’une lecture comparée d’Eliot et
de Cavafy, le puritain et l’hédoniste, « œuvres parallèles » pourtant qu’il a abordées à
l’instar de Plutarque dans ses Vies parallèles (Séféris 1982: 12). Élaborée en 1946, sa ré-
flexion même s’indexe sur l’histoire, invitant à lire Cavafy « dans le cadre de la tradition
grecque, une et indivisible» qui accueille auteurs antiques et modernes « tous vivants au même moment, dans les conditions d’existence de l’Europe d’aujourd’hui et regardant nos maisons dévastées » (p. 56). Il faut admettre que la transhistoricité n’est pas une construction spéculative dans le cas des littératures s’écrivant dans une langue qui, quelles qu’en soient les évolutions, a assuré sa permanence au long des siècles et des tourments de l’histoire : le grec, l’hébreu ou l’arménien dont l’usage moderne, de par le poids de cette antériorité séculaire, assume toujours une fonction de traduction, celle, précisément, d’une telle antériorité. La diachronie trouve ici une modulation spécifique.

De la convergence entre l’auteur de la *Terre vaine* et « l’Alexandrin », Séféris retient deux aspects. L’identification du passé et du présent, devenus dans et par le poème contemporains, sous une condition qui revêt aussi une valeur causale : « Diéos, Critolaiüs, […] l’Achéen sont parmi nous, à l’instant présent : c’est peut-être vous et moi, et tous ceux qui ont quelque peu conscience du mal et de la fatalité » (p. 21); et pour Eliot : « Habitants de la “Terre Vaine”, nous le sommes tous : vous et moi et tous ceux qui ont quelque peu conscience du mal et de la fatalité. Le dieu mort n’est pas un conte de fées oublié, il est en nous, il s’identifie à nous, à notre moment présent » (p. 27). Ainsi, leur souci transhistoriciste qui gagne pareillement le lecteur ne tient aucunement de la complaisance nostalgique des symbolistes dont tous deux subirent l’influence mais les installe dans une contemporanéité qu’ils interrogent dans nulle autre perspective que politique, quel que fut le degré de leur engagement social. Séféris écrivant au lendemain de la Seconde guerre mondiale (en 1946) n’hésite pas à voir dans le sentiment que véhiculent leurs œuvres « le goût d’une certaine horreur » (p. 47).

Le second aspect commun relevé par Séféris touche à l’équivalence de la pensée et du sentiment, au fonctionnement de l’intellect sur un mode émotionnel, qui entraîne l’expression des idées par la « distillation » du vécu. Une telle contamination des exercices spéculatif et sensible modélise l’acte traductif, en renvoyant à son inanité la volonté si souvent affichée dans le domaine de respecter à la fois le fond et la forme puisqu’elle s’appuie sur une dissociation qui n’a pas lieu d’être tant les deux niveaux sont contigus. En revanche, leur continuité trouve une correspondance qui la dynamise dans la conjonction du penser et du sentir. Un poème de 1921 le pose explicitement en imaginant dans un petit état de l’ancienne Syrie à l’époque byzantine un poète vieillissant se consolant des blessures de l’âge grâce à « l’Art de la Poésie » qui calme la souffrance « *en fantasia kè logo* ». Or le conseil traductif n’est guère suivi par les traducteurs français qui succombent à l’abstraction désincarnée, influencés peut-être par les majuscules de l’original qu’ils reproduisent au demeurant – presque tous – fidèlement : « par l’Imagination et par le Verbe » (Papoutsakis, p. 153; Vlachos 123), « par l’Imagination et le Verbe » (Grandmont, p. 153), « par l’imagination et par le verbe » (Yourcenar, p. 178). Les anglais se font plus « imaginatifs » et changent la conjonction : « in Imagination and in Language » (Keeley 113), « in Fantasy and in the Word » (Theo, p. 120) mais demeurent dans un registre solennel et, sauf Keeley, chrétiennement connoté. Or, *fantasia* est lié au domaine du sensible dans le champ sémantique de l’apparition et y trouve la force
de son alliance avec la signification plurielle bien connue de logos. La tension résolue et féconde pourrait alors être rendue par les propositions suivantes : « dans l’Image et dans l’Argument », « dans l’Imaginaire et dans le Rationnel », voire « dans la Figure et dans le Discours » (à la manière de Lyotard) ou « dans le Fantasme et dans la Raison » (à la manière freudienne); une stratégie du calque oserait : « dans la Fantaisie et dans le Logos » et une manoeuvre paraphrasique : « par ce qui vient aux Sens et ce qui vient à l’Esprit ».

Le poème « En 200 av. J.-C. » célèbre la « prodigieuse campagne panhellénique », les batailles victorieuses d’Alexandre en Orient et en Asie à la suite desquelles naît « un monde grec nouveau, plus vaste » (Grandmont p. 225) regroupant des peuples de cultures diverses mais partageant la « Langue Grecque Commune ». Le vers mentionnant l’expansion territoriale et culturelle est diversement rendu en français et en anglais :

Avec l’action diverse de nos adaptations habiles (Papoustakis, p. 227)
Avec l’action subtile de nos avisés gouvernements (Théodore Griva in Cattaui, p. 179)
Avec le jeu varié des assimilations savantes (Yourcenar, p. 234)
Avec notre action riche de judicieuses adaptations (Vlachos, p. 183)
Par une gamme variée de compromis savants (Grandmont, p.220)
[With] our flexible policy of judicious integration (Keely, p. 176)
with a versatile process of judicious adjustment (Theoharis, p. 182)

Si le vers livre une des clés de l’imaginaire hellénique du poète, il anticipe aussi l’échantillonnage de sa propre traduction où l’orientation traductive de chacune des versions affiche dans son déroulé lexical le choix sémantique qui la guide.

L’exigence traductive de transhistoricité, inhérente à l’œuvre même, ne semble pas relayée par tous les projets traductifs alors qu’aucun d’entre eux ne se prive d’un riche appareil de notes explicitant les allusions historiques. Dominique Grandmont en est conscient : « L’exemple de Cavafis s’avère communicatif. On emprunte le chemin qu’il a lui-même pris. […] On finit par déceler ce qu’implique un titre ou la proximité d’une date, par réaliser à son tour une scrupuleuse mise en écho de l’œuvre entière » (Grandmont, p.302). Yourcenar, sereine et souveraine, évoque – naïveté ou provocation – « la chimère d’une traduction fidèle à la fois à la lettre et à l’esprit » (Yourcenar, p. 57) tout en défendant son option d’une traduction en prose pour l’étrange raison pseudo-historique que « la traduction en vers semble à tort ou à raison, en France du moins, démodée depuis plus d’un siècle » et pour une motivation prosodique, à savoir que « les mille discrètes combinaisons rythmiques cachées à l’intérieur de la prose se prêtaient mieux à l’approximation des coupes et des mouvements de l’original » (p. 16). Le choix de rendre en prose les poèmes, cassant la disposition typographique des vers de l’original, « arrangement sans valeur dès qu’un exact contenu de pieds et d’accents ne le justifie plus » (id.), ne relève pas que d’une décision formelle, même si ce point l’autonomie de la métrique et du découpage est loin d’être aussi évident qu’elle le prétend, ce que « depuis plus d’un siècle » nous apprend la modernité poétique. Le vers de Cavafy s’inscrit dans une tradition poétique qu’il subvertit de l’intérieur et le passage à la prose efface ce travail où se déploie le travail transhistorique. Aucune des deux versions
anglaises de référence ne prend cette direction et toutes deux cherchent au contraire à retrouver une métrique et un découpage similaires à l’original tout en abandonnant le souci de la rime et des assonances. Il est vrai que l’iambe cher à Cavafy appartient aussi aux ressources de l’anglais mais la métrique française offre plus de possibilités que le seul alexandrin comme l’ont justement montré les auteurs fin-de-siècle que goûtait Cavafy.

Étonnamment tolérantes, les critiques du travail traductif de Yourcenar négligent cet aspect et s’attardent sur les déformations formelles qu’elles justifient en arguant d’un principe de licence créatrice allant jusqu’à citer Henri Meschonnic sur la non-séparation entre auteur et traducteur alors que celui-ci fonde toute sa théorie sur la signification de la forme en tant que vectrice d’historicité (Poignaut & Castellani 2000). Le vers creuse une distance par rapport au réel alors que la prose tend à s’y plier, du moins à adhérer à ce qu’elle croit saisir comme son fidèle reflet. Que cette distance puisse être inflexion pour accueillir la visée d’une transcendance – et ainsi fuir la confrontation avec la concrétude du monde – demeure une possibilité qui n’obstrue pas l’alternative : l’inquiétude face au réel qui séduit et attire tout en refusant son hospitalité, ce qui décrit exactement la position instable, jamais assurée, de Cavafy. La différence entre les paragraphes en prose, adoptées par Yourcenar, et les strophes versifiées est similaire à celle que Bonnefoy avance, quant à la traduction de Shakespeare, entre le vers court et le verset de type claudélien dont les réceptions respectives entraînent des expériences divergentes : « En lui [le verset] la forme pèse bien moins sur la matière du mot, ce dernier est moins fortement perçu comme présence sonore, il tend à se réduire à la notion dont il est le véhicule, et cela favorise un tout autre rapport au monde » (Bonnefoy 2005 : 91). Un rapport de maîtrise, si ce n’est de domination, une volonté d’ordonner et de limiter qui valent comme stratégies d’enveloppement et de contrôle des pulsions sauvages d’un devenir transhistorique. La versification dramatise la brièveté des poèmes de Cavafy, elle les insularise selon une logique d’individuation qui, sur le plan temporel, privilégie l’instant sur la durée et l’ouvre à la transhistoricité. La métaphore marine s’avérant facile mais toujours efficace en regard des poètes grecs, on ne la refusera pas en la retrouvant chez Bonnefoy : « Au bout de ses suites de mots, à la retombée de ses vagues, c’est comme si le poète [du verset] s’établissait sur une plage décrétée neuve et propice avec l’assurance énergique, mais soupçonnable, du conquérant ou du missionnaire » (p. 192).

La transhistoricité ne saurait toutefois être invoquée pour justifier des glissements lexicaux suspects. Un poème de 1912, publié en 1919, est intitulé : « ΤΩΝ ΕΒΠΑΙΩΝ (50 M.X.) ». Le titre est ainsi traduit :

1. UN JUIF, EN L’AN 50 APRÈS JÉSUS-CHRIST (Marguerite Yourcenar et Constantin Dimaras, Gallimard, 1958 ; 1978 ; Poésie/Gallimard, 1978, p. 158)
3. HÉBREU, FILS D’HÉBREUX (50 APR. J.-C.) (Dominique Grandmont, Gallimard, 1999, p. 133)

Il est évident que les versions 2 et 3, celle-ci avec un écart, sont les plus justes, terminologiquement et grammalement, mais surtout parce que cette justesse se fonde dans la transhistoricité de la poésie de Cavafy qui trouve sa condition dans les flux et reflux de la culture hellénique au fil des âges. Vlachos rapporte d’ailleurs que Cavafy pouvait à table se lancer « dans une longue comparaison historique entre la juiverie d’Alexandrie au temps des Ptolémées et au temps des Anglais » (Vlachos, p. 10). La charge sémantique des mots choisis par ces traducteurs de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, après ce que l’on sait advenu du destin juif, ne laisse pas de peser. Il faut alors s’interroger sur la motivation de ceux qui, prenant l’anachronique pour du transhistorique, ont ici choisi le signifiant « Juifs ».


La traduction de Ange S. Vlachos vaut mention puisqu’elle est parue aux éditions Ikaros qui ont publié l’édition de référence en grec. Pour l’auteur qui a côtoyé Cavafy dans sa jeunesse, la visée consiste à ne pas trahir « ni le songe du poète [...] ni sa manière » et pourtant il avoue : « Pour le respect de la forme (lire la versification), je n’en ai cure » (Vlachos, p. 17), et de justifier sa liberté de réaménagement typographique en accord avec les usages de la poésie moderne. Étonnante permissivité face à un poète qui n’eût cesse de fuir l’aliénation au présent. Un aspect remarquable du volume reste cependant à signaler : « Enfin, je dois ajouter que, pour la plupart des notes et références historiques, j’ai utilisé la traduction de Plutarque par Amyot. Je crois que cela est légitime, puisque Cavafy lui-même a employé pour titre de certaines de ses poésies des phrases de Plutarque en grec ancien » (id.) Légitimité qui l’amène à une superbe construction transhistoriste appuyée sur deux piliers de l’humanisme occidental : les poèmes de Cavafy le cosmopolite éclairé par Plutarque qui dans ses Vies parallèles des hommes illustres chercha à unifier cultures latine et grecque, cité dans la traduction, à partir du grec, de Jacques Amyot dont l’influence fut majeure dans le développement des idées d’universalisme propres à la Renaissance.
De ces personnages dont les poèmes font miroiter un éclat de vécu, on a pu dire (Grandmont, p. 10) qu’ils étaient pour Cavafy des hétéronymes à la façon de ceux de Fernando Pessoa, le rapprochement se soutenant de la similarité des destins d’écrivains de ces deux contemporains (polyglottisme, œuvre posthume, Lisbonne et Alexandrie jamais quittées, le Portugal et la Grèce entre un glorieux passé et une modernité difficile). Pessoa n’existe pas en dehors de ses hétéronymes, ou plutôt : il n’existe que par ses hétéronymes, ce qui n’est pas vrai de Cavafy. Il n’empêche que leurs deux exemples permettent de définir l’hétéronymie comme une pratique traductive, déployant dans le cas de Pessoa une transhistoricité horizontale, ses hétéronymes lui étant contemporains, et dans celui de Cavafy une transhistoricité à la fois verticale (personnages antiques) et horizontale (personnages issus de son présent alexandrin).

L’hétéronymie éclaire la nature de la relation entre auteur et traducteur, si difficile à saisir comme en témoignent l’établissement juridique des droits de traduction ou la réception des textes traduits, ainsi la recension journalistique d’un livre ou d’une représentation théâtrale qui louera le texte en passant outre le transfert linguistique (voir Basalamah, ce volume). Pessoa comparait le rapport qu’il entretenait avec ses hétéronymes à celui de Shakespeare et de ses personnages : « Ce que j’appelle littérature insincère n’a rien à voir avec ce qu’écrivent Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis ou Alvaro de Campos […] Cela est senti par l’intermédiaire “ d’une personne autre“ ; cela est écrit sous forme “ dramatique” mais sincère (au sens grave que je donne à ce mot) comme est sincère ce que dit le roi Lear qui n’est pas Shakespeare, mais l’une de ses créations » (Pessoa 1993: 13).

La référence théâtrale est précieuse et l’analogie se retrouve sous la plume de Yves Bonnefoy méditant sur la traduction de Shakespeare : « [Il] a imaginé les principaux personnages non par l’observation mais par la projection de soi et le risque; il a vécu chacun d’entre eux comme la métaphore autonome, vivante, d’une partie de ce qu’il était lui-même en puissance […] » (Bonnefoy 2005 : 198). Pour Bonnefoy, cette expulsion qui accorde liberté à ses émanations psychiques – il faudrait encore examiner ce qu’elles charrient de matériau inconscient – leur permet de rejoindre l’expérience commune, partageable et dès lors de s’offrir à la saisie du traducteur. Dans la perspective transhistoriciste, les acteurs sont des acteurs de l’histoire et les traducteurs en sont d’autres qui ont le pouvoir de jouer dans cette dimension avec les normes discursives et poétiques.

Le comédien français Philippe Caubère qui a vertigineusement mis en abyme son travail d’acteur en s’inventant un double incarné au travers de plusieurs spectacles remarque : « Peut-être qu’un acteur juste, c’est celui qui écrit la pièce en la jouant – peu importe que le texte soit de lui ou non » (Le Monde, 15 septembre 2006, p. 25). Barthes affirmait déjà que chaque lecteur écrit le texte qu’il lit. Le traducteur lui aussi jouierait le texte qu’il traduit au sens où il l’interprète, où il joue la partition originale sur son instrument propre et dans ses tonalités spécifiques mais il serait non moins une des personnifications théâtrales possibles de l’auteur, l’identité de ce dernier ouvrant à une multiplicité subjective dont seule une pluralité expressive – linguistique en l’occurrence – rendrait compte en donnant la parole à l’ensemble de ses « sous-personnalités », selon l’expression de Pessoa (1993).
Pluralité linguistique mais aussi pluralité intra-linguistique transhistorique qu’il convient d’invoquer face au problème des diverses traductions d’un même texte en une même langue. Il n’y a pas à choisir entre telle et telle traduction pas plus qu’il n’y a à choisir entre Macbeth, Falstaff ou Lear pour décider de la personnalité de Shakespeare. La liberté de comparaison engage certes celles du jugement et de la préférence mais le classement hiérarchique n’est pas de mise. Outre la fonction introductive d’une traduction, quelle que soit sa qualité, les différentes versions renvoient à une multiplicité d’énonciations contenue virtuellement de l’original (Meschonnic 1973). En 2004 paraît la traduction intégrale (après les deux premiers volumes en 1998) de Guy Jouvet du *Tristram Shandy* de Laurence Sterne qui réussit à recréer l’écriture en mouvement perpétuel de l’original, précurseur d’un Diderot, d’un Joyce ou d’un Rushdie. Supplante-t-elle celle de 1946 due à Charles Mauron qui, modifiant le découpage et la ponctuation, aplanit le rythme et tempère l’exubérance du pasteur d’York? Elle est incontestablement meilleure du point de vue stylistique et structurel mais la rationalisation de la version de Mauron rappelle que Sterne était un contemporain de Voltaire et en expose une lecture qui ne jure pas avec un double contexte historique, celui du XVIIIe siècle et celui des lendemains de la dernière guerre. Prêter à la voix de Shandy les accents de celle de Candide n’est pas plus faux qu’y entendre les intonations de celle de Jacques le Fataliste. La transhistoricité goûte autant la synchronie que la diachronie et appuie donc la conception du polysystème développée par Gideon Toury et Itamar Even-Zohar.

En revanche, elle guide un processus qui doit demeurer ouvert. Une traduction donnée tentera le dialogue avec une période précédente mais ne s’inscrira dans un devenir transhistorique que si elle est recevable ultérieurement, ce qu’une esthétique trop ancrée dans son environnement culturel, nonobstant sa qualité et son intérêt singuliers, lui interdira. Trois œuvres du compositeur Ambroise Thomas adaptèrent Shakespeare (*Le songe d’une nuit d’été*, *Hamlet* et *La Tempête*) sans que la postérité ne retienne ces opéras, non tant pour des livrets en français gommant les complexités narratives que pour le traitement musical. Si le *Hamlet* créé en 1868 connut un immense succès à son époque, c’est qu’il correspondait à la sensibilité de son public mais la musique parfaitement Second Empire peut difficilement traduire pour nous aujourd’hui les ombres et les fantômes de la tragédie. Les lustres et les parquets cirés qu’elle évoque demeurent bien loin d’Elseneur. À l’inverse, la musique de son contemporain Verdi pour Macbeth, Otello ou Falstaff restitue, avec outrance parfois, l’atmosphère sombrement passionnée des pièces originales. Outre le talent des librettistes, il semble évident que le climat politique agité de la période du Risorgimento transpire dans l’écriture verdienne et en infuse l’esthétique d’une actualité qui ne perdra pas de sa vivacité. Autre dispositif de transposition, dès le début du XXe siècle le cinéma naissant, art de la modernité, s’empare de l’œuvre shakespearienne et y pusera ses plus grandes réussites, trouvant dans ses ressources formelles l’adéquation aux exigences de la tragédie élisabéthaine, depuis *Le duel d’Hamlet* (1900) avec Sarah Bernhardt dans le rôle-titre jusqu’au *Romeo + Juliette* de Baz Luhrmann (1996).
Conclusion : l'éthique transhistoriciste

L’hétéronymie n’est pas qu’un jeu fantaisiste de ces illusionnistes par nature que sont les écrivains. Une affaire sérieuse puisqu’un siècle plus tôt un philosophe du royaume hamletien y eut recours : Constantion Constantius (pour *Recommencements*), Johannes Climacus (pour *Les miettes philosophiques*), Johannes de Silentio (pour *Crainte et tremblement*), Anticlimacus (pour *La maladie mortelle*), Vigilius Hafniensis (pour *Le concept de l’Angoisse*), et encore Nicolaus Notabene ou Hilarius le Relieur, offrant à Søren Kierkegaard une diversité de perspectives sur des problématiques qu’il refuse de saisir dans les rets conceptuellement trop rigides de la philosophie de son époque et qu’il aborde donc sous des noms que leur facture attache à un passé antique ou médiéval.


Être acteur de l’histoire et non simple spectateur implique une volonté, une conscience et un engagement qui pour le traducteur relèvent d’abord du niveau individuel, ce que le descriptivisme de Gideon Toury nommera le comportement idiosyncrasique. Certes, mais une telle restriction, méthodologiquement légitime, n’entraine pas une absence de normes qui, en l’occurrence, seront des normes éthiques. C’est précisément dans l’articulation entre normes traductionnelles et normes éthiques et leur possible conflictualité que le principe de transhistoricité est appelé à exercer pleinement son rôle.

Les normes, aussi solides se présentent-elles, peuvent être brisées. Comme les idoles. Le récit biblique aime à le narrer. Abraham et Moïse, exemples fondateurs. Mais aussi un certain Gédéon qui à Ofra démolit l’autel de Baal construit par son père, Joas. À la foule menaçante venue réclamer vengeance et lui demandant de livrer son fils, Joas répliqua : « Si [Baal] est Dieu, qu’il se défende puisque son autel a été démoli » (Juges VI, 31; ma trad.). Suite à quoi Jerubbaal (Yéroubaal : que Baal se défende) fut un second nom que reçut Gédéon.
Chapitre 27. Du transhistoricisme traductionnel

**Traductions de Cavafy**

Cattaui: Georges Cattaui, *Constantin Cavafy*, Seghers, Poètes d’aujourd’hui, 1984 [1964]

**Références**

Daniel Simeoni: Could you please describe the progress that you’ve made in your work since your first book — the first book in English at least — *In Search of a Theory of Translation*, published in 1980. Specifically, what I would like to hear you talk about is how you evolved from a view — a certain conception — of Translation Studies, which appears to me to have been something quite formal, theoretically, to the point that you’ve reached now. Maybe it’s a personal feeling but I think you’ve evolved considerably between the kind of work that you were doing towards the end of the 1970s and what you are doing now. Could you please say a few words about this.

Gideon Toury: I think it’s not completely correct, the way you described it, one reason being that most of the world maybe — many people — share your view, but one of the drawbacks you all have is that you cannot read my first book which is in Hebrew. At first I did an actual descriptive scientific study for which I had to develop some theoretical–methodological basis because the existing one didn’t prove useful. But the main thing was to study a historical period in the development of a culture. So it was very sociologically oriented, that dissertation, that book; which is something I came back to more than ten years later, even though I never left it completely — because the notion of “norms” is a sociological one. But, if I read now my first 1977 book, which is based on my dissertation, I’m sometimes surprised to find that things I have come back to thinking about in the last few years — their roots are already there but I’d completely forgotten. I came back to it little by little. So, the question is wrongly put, but I understand why. All you could read about my dissertation was about a 20-page summary of my theoretical approach and the whole 200 pages were summed up without any detail, without any discussion of the way that I got to these conclusions.

DS: I think the natural question to ask then would be: “What made you adopt the stance that you took in your first book in English, given that just a couple of years before, you had written something which was much more in line with work that developed close to a decade and a half later in the field?” Would you say it had something to do with switching working languages — from Hebrew to English — and trying to write
in a way which related more closely to the kind of work that was being produced those
days, in a semiological vein?

GT: The answer is “yes” to both thoughts. The need to write in English instead of in
Hebrew prevented me from remaining within the Hebrew sphere because it was very
difficult to analyze in English texts that were written in Hebrew. Not only that... most
of them didn’t even have English as their source language. So, to mix up languages is a
practical difficulty, but there is also another side to it: in those days if somebody came
and gave a lecture about the phenomenon of translation — let’s say, not into Hebrew,
but into Hungarian — it would have been in a very similar status to mine. And people
from Hungary, as a matter of fact, started theorizing — that trend was there and I did
develop things as well — even in my dissertation which preceded the English. But, as I
said, that was out of necessity, because right from the start I came to the conclusion that
there was no way I could study translations into Hebrew which was what I was inter-
ested in without the historical and developmental side of it. I asked myself, “OK, what
am I going to include in my corpus?” and I had no answer. And I read all of the differ-
ent theories that could be found in English and in German and, by proxy, some of the
Russian as well and the Nitra School. And the Nitra School was maybe the closest to
mine, but it was much more ideologically laden than I was at that time prepared to ac-
cept. But, when I read the Skopos theory which was very new — it was in its infancy in
the mid-70s — none of them gave me the possibility of distinguishing in theory — or
even in practice — between translation and non-translation. So I had to theorize for my
own good, for my own possibility... making my choices more than just intuition.

DS: You’ve always insisted on working on the basis of case studies. How do you se-
lect your cases? Because this is something that every one of us in the field — if we are
honest — we ask ourselves, are we sure that what we’re working on will be relevant? In
graduate courses, this is certainly one question that students like to ask. That is, how do
you know that the case that you are working on will be productive?

GT: First of all, I don’t. But before I go back to that I have to correct something else
in the formulation of the question. It is not that I have a theoretical point which I am
developing and then I look for cases, but it’s normally the other way around. I under-
stand how and why it is not always visible, because in many cases I publish the theoretic-
al discussions first, or maybe even only. There are many studies that I have already pub-
lished “theoretically” — some of them haven’t been finished yet. I don’t select test cases
on the basis of the assumption that they will be interesting or relevant. I think every
case is relevant — every test case is instructive. In retrospect, you could say that case ‘x’,
was more illuminating, had newer things about it than case ‘y’. But, a priori, every case
is of interest. However I do think that after having worked for more than 30 years in the
field — I have informed intuitions. Maybe at the beginning I couldn’t base them on very
much... why they are potentially more illuminating than another. I think that this is
the whole point about intuitions. You have to have them in every kind of research, not
only in Translation Studies. But, as you go along and you become more conversant with
the field, your intuitions get more and more informed. They are still intuitions, which
means that they are not completely conscious. But, it is wrong to presume that I pick up a case which I know will be interesting. I’ll give an illustration. A version of this article exists in English so you will be able to follow it, if you remember it, or you could check it later on. I once was invited to a national Israeli conference on the poet Bialik, the national poet — modern Jewish poet from the late 19th–early 20th century. And I was asked to talk about his translation or adaptation — for me it’s kind of a translation, but I don’t want to digress too much — of *Don Quixote*. I don’t know Spanish, but he didn’t translate it from Spanish; he translated it from either Russian or German or while looking at both versions. And I happened to find in the Bialik archives two notebooks with a draft version of his translations of *Don Quixote*. This is, by the way, one case study which is still going on and will take years to finish, if at all. I was invited to that conference as a translation scholar with the focal point “Hebrew literature”, because it was organized by the Department of Hebrew Literature. And of course they presumed I’d be talking about translation, because I have very little to contribute in any other field… Bialik has been studied by so many people, it’s almost like studying Goethe or Shakespeare. So, I said to them, “How long do I have?” — “20 minutes or 25 minutes.” It was going to take place about two or three weeks later. And I said “No, I won’t be able to study *Don Quixote* in two or three weeks. Let’s postpone it. I’ll skip this conference” — then they said, “No, no, find something else.” So, I took something which was on my desk, but I had never started working on it. I sensed that there was something interesting there, because there was a book of ten short stories for children that Bialik translated from German. And one of them looked different from the others because it was a story in verse and all the rest were not. So I looked at the German original — to see if this one was different from the others and the answer was “no”. So I said, “OK, now I have a topic. I have something to search for. Maybe I won’t find anything, but I have something that intrigues me.” I started working on it and found a gold mine of phenomena which were the clearest indication that I had so far that translations from German into Hebrew in this period went *via* at least *thinking* about Russian literature.

DS: I feel like asking you at this stage how important teamwork has been for you in your investigations, because you have also been a member of a very influential school. How important has the intellectual climate in that school been in helping you formulate some of your theoretical aspects based on the kind of intuitive sense you just described?

GT: What school do you have in mind now? What is called the Manipulation School or what is called the Tel Aviv School?

DS: I was thinking more of the Tel Aviv School. But of course, what you refer to as the Manipulation School was also the frame of thinking that some people associated you with for a long time.

GT: I don’t think there ever was a Manipulation School — not in the sense of a *school* — it was just a group of people who found two common denominators: (a) it was about a group of people of about the same age who liked to be with one another and to talk. And (b) what we had in common was displeasure with the existing situation and
a general direction of thinking about how to change it. But it never crystallized into a school. And I think that it’s a direction which sometimes prevents us from seeing what actually happened. Because we are all falling into the same category and people think that everybody does exactly the same thing… and thinks about the same things in the same way. So, let’s not talk about a Manipulation School. I’ve tried to influence people not to write about it. They still do, but I don’t think there was anything like that. In Tel Aviv at least, there was a group. A very small one, but rather tightly knitted. And some of us are still working together, but I don’t know how big a group has to be in order to be a group — and we were always only two, three, four people and not more than that. I have to mention here the extensive and thorough influence of Itamar Even-Zohar, who is not the reason why I am in Translation Studies, but he is to a certain extent the reason why I am in Translation Studies in a non-traditional way, or at least what was non-traditional in the 70s. I was interested in translation — and in thinking about translation — before I even met him. That you can find in the interview I did with Miriam (Shlesinger) (http://www.tau.ac.il/~toury/interview.html). And I was highly influenced by at least two books — two very different books — and very different from my own work: Nida’s book of the 60s on Bible translation — not the Nida-Taber book, but Nida, the real one, and then there was Catford. And I’ve never been a Nidean, nor a Catfordian, but they were an important thread: they told me there are interesting things to be said about translation — of course, I translated myself before that so I knew what was involved and I was very much interested in it. But the real impulse was when I read Even-Zohar’s doctoral dissertation of 71, or 72 — I’m not sure now — which was a completely new thing. And up until today I blame him for not having it published. It really brought in a formalized way textual analysis into the social field, the socio-cultural field even. So, again, the roots of many things he said later on are also in his dissertation. And then, the word “norms” — which I haven’t invented, neither has he — he mentioned it in one or two pages on the basis of work done by Jiří Levý and even gave one or two small examples. And since then I’ve been going step by step in — not in a short, straight line but in a helical way — forward and not backwards, I hope. I don’t return to the same point. I hope that if I return to the similar thing, it will be a bit advanced. But Itamar stopped doing research into translation per se. He still keeps himself informed about new things. And he was always somebody I could talk to. And, the rest of the group — to the extent that we are a group — were already students of us both.

DS: I am also interested in the very practical ways in which you worked with Itamar. You’ve been referring to the influences that his writings had on you and on other people but in very practical terms, how did the group (if not the school) meet? How did the two of you and a few others — your students, but also colleagues and students turned colleagues — meet? Did you hold seminars together? Did you pick up on each other’s ideas?

GT: We did have one or two joint seminars that I gave with Itamar. One of them was very interesting, because we had only two students, but both of them became pro-
fessors later on. One was Zohar Shavit, the other was the late Rina Drory. We talked about various things and these things were always professional, academic, scientific, theoretical all mixed up.

DS: A sort of think tank…

GT: Maybe, but… Yet, you know, we are also very great friends. We could talk for two hours, talk about computer studies, about the use of computers for drawing or for voice recognition. And then, all of a sudden, ask a question about a new article about literary contacts, or about bilingualism, or about what so-and-so said about Yiddish lately. And the discussion — the conversation more than a discussion — would develop. What we did later on, was we gave each other our manuscripts to comment on. This was a more formal thing, because then you had to give local — general or local but precise — comments to what was already written. And we did criticize each other, sometimes very harshly. In fact, I used to tell him… He, of course, being my senior, I don’t think he had many scruples in telling me things that he thought about my writing. But little by little, I started doing it to him as well. Not as a revenge — a kind of revenge — but I simply saw the point in it. And the paper he wrote on the transfer thing… he wrote it for a conference that we organized… in Tel Aviv in 78 so it was rather early. I was the editor of it … being editors of the volume together he edited me… Actually he almost didn’t edit me, but I edited him. But all our attempts to write joint articles failed. We are too individualist as persons and also in terms of writing. We did try, though, not in translation … because that was when he didn’t work in translation any more, it was about cultures in contact. So, we went back to commenting on each other’s work and we never found a modus … we still want to … but we can’t seem to find a modus of cooperating.

DS: How do you reflect — some 30 years after you became interested in the topic — on the persisting lack of departments of Translation Studies as such throughout the world — the slowness of the process? There are schools of translation. We are having this exchange in such a school right now. And, in many other places, Translation Studies has acquired a status in host departments … from Comparative Literature to Departments of English or French Studies, that is. But overall there hasn’t been any materialization of an institutional interest on the part of the university for this field, which is expanding, I would say, almost exponentially, in terms of research, not teaching. You can open so many books and read so many articles these days written by people who have a position in departments that have nothing to do — in title at least — with translation and that deal with Translation Studies. This might even have important implications, I think, because some of those people often write very interesting things, but they don’t seem to take into account much of the work that’s been done over the last 25 years.

GT: I don’t know where to start. It is a very complex question which touches on many things. Maybe we had better cut it down into components. I wouldn’t talk about it globally. I think we’d better cut it down into smaller parts and see what places do have Translation Studies and what places do not … or are even against having Translation
Studies; maybe there are reasons behind it. It’s like a test case in meta-thinking about translation … not in Translation Studies itself. First of all, let’s take as a case in point, Spain. Spain — the government or the Minister of Education… or I don’t know who… decided at one point that translation was culturally important. Not only preparing people to do it, but also reflecting on it. And they have started one by one… schools of Translation Studies were formed in 15 universities or so — which maybe is already too much because sometimes they compete with each other; even though they try to be different — some of them are different, some of them try to be but are not really very different. Now there is an academic interest in an academic phenomenon. Once you’ve found something more academic, you start having a need for professors and lecturers. And the system says you can’t become a full professor or be promoted in a regular way unless you at least have a PhD. So people are forced to write PhD theses. I won’t say … against their will, because if somebody strongly doesn’t want to write a PhD thesis, he or she cannot write it and they will even give up a position in academia or be given a secondary position as just a teacher of translation. But the system puts pressure on people to write dissertations. Some of them became more and more interested in doing research. In Spain there are now lots of people and lots of groups doing actual research mainly into historical portions of literary and non-literary translation into Spanish. This is one place where there is Translation Studies activity. Let’s take the 70s. Where were the first centres of Translation Studies in the modern sense of the word — not just teaching, but also doing research and theorization? One of the first places was Amsterdam. Again, it’s a small country where people know from experience — the importance of languages, multilingualism and already translation from one language to the other. If you take, for example, England, it is something that they tried to look away from, but don’t. I mean, they are trying to pretend that English could be self-sufficient and they never resorted to translation. Translation seen as something very marginal and not very interesting. But it did change when (a) they saw what was going on in other countries; (b) they started having more and more people in the system coming from other countries. One of the interesting things is that many people who are major figures in Translation Studies work in a country that is not originally theirs, or even sometimes in a language that they acquired. Here, I am not ashamed to give names. One of the main figures in Translation Studies in Finland is Chesterman, he’s British. In England itself, some central names like Kirsten Malmkjær who is Danish, Mona Baker was Egyptian, Peter Newmark was originally from Czechoslovakia…

DS: The same goes on the American continent…

GT: On [the] American continent, it’s just in the process of becoming more and more important. America is the classical example of “pretending”, because it always had and especially in the 20th century — the problem of multilingualism, no less than in Amsterdam. But instead of holding the bull by its horns, they pretended that it was no problem. And if you don’t think about bilingualism, you hardly think about translation. Here, I need to say something which I sincerely think and deplore: which is that universities, which should have pushed pioneering and modernizing approaches to life
and reality, tend to be some of the most conservative places on earth. They do not give room to new things, because innovations detract from the power of already existing institutions.

DS: You’ve been working now for a few weeks in Toronto on a book about “fictitious translations”. I was wondering how you came about wanting to write a book-length study of that phenomenon; I remember that in your 1995 volume fictitious translations were certainly mentioned, but it didn’t look at the time as if it would develop into a book-length study. And so something must have triggered in you the desire to write again on this subject. And I was wondering also how you came to pick this particular issue, which is in fact still considered by many people, first, as not part of translation; and also, as a marginal phenomenon.

GT: First of all, there is nothing wrong in writing about marginal phenomena, because they may be very illustrative, very telling with respect to things that are more central or more general. But, on the other hand, I wouldn’t say that fictitious translations are such a marginal phenomenon. People who have never been into that may think that it is marginal. Since I have been working on it for 25 years, I can say for sure that it’s much less marginal than we thought — both in terms of numbers of cases and in terms of their contribution to historical processes. I picked it up in 1980 purely by chance like many other things. I came across the case of Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf’s Papa Hamlet, which was published at the end of the 19th century under the assumed name of Bjarne Peter Holmsen as a translation from the Norwegian. I thought to myself at first that it was a fascinating case. I’d never encountered anything like it. That was my problem … it stemmed from my ignorance because when I started looking into it, I immediately had a long list of similar examples — I mean a couple of dozen cases — some of them very famous. And then, there was one person who was instrumental in the development of this research, my Spanish colleague, Santoyo, who gave a lecture at one conference that I happened to be at on fictitious translation as a literary device; not as a historical device, or as a cultural device, but as a trick! a literary trick — to build some kind of a framework around a work of art and he had a short list of cases there. Then I started reading… I wrote a little article about Papa Hamlet in Hebrew; about 5 or 6 pages, which looked at it from the literary-history point of view … not in terms of translations at all. Of course, translations appeared many times in the article, because there was an assumed translator there and it was presented as a translation. And there was the question of what it does — to the reader? Or what it does to literature or to culture. And then little by little, I came to Translation Studies where I was working anyways, but not with pseudo-translations at that time. So what about the transition from one status to the next? It is quite interesting to ask what happens when there is such a transition. For instance, in the first gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole, there is a difference of a few months between the first and the second editions. The first edition was presented as a translation, was accepted as a translation, and the second one wasn’t. In the second edition they also disclosed the author’s identity. But the first edition was read in a completely different manner from the second even though
the narrative had not changed a bit. Certainly the claim has been made — long before I studied translations — by me and by many others that translations tend to be read differently than non-translations ... that you allow for instance more license or that you let yourself accept things that in original writing you wouldn't have accepted — you would accept more easily when reading a translation just because it is a translation — the original writer may be a "barbarian", he is not "one of us".

DS: I assumed that you would pick up willingly on this subject. How many such cases have you been working on so far? And, how do you foresee the final appearance of the book?

GT: It depends on how you count them and I don't have a real measurement. As long as we are talking about, let's say, *The Castle of Otranto* or *Papa Hamlet*, the two examples that I gave, you can easily count them, because each of them is just standing alone in this particular moment — even though one of the cases that I make in regard to *Castle of Otranto* is that Walpole was a deceiver as well as a "deceivee" in at least four or five other cases. So, they are not really — except for one — fictitious translations by Walpole but part of the cultural atmosphere that he was working in. So, should I count these cases? Because some of them in the same period were definitely fictitious translations and some of them were not.

DS: For instance?

GT: For instance, already with Macpherson's *Ossian*, it's not 100% clear whether it's a 100% fictitious translation, it's certainly not a 100% genuine text. But, there is another interesting small incident where Walpole forged a letter to Rousseau. And he didn't mean it to get known publicly, it was an inside joke, but somebody printed it anyway.

DS: You mean a letter addressed to Rousseau? By whom?

GT: By Frederick the Great. There's a whole series in Israel — about 300 books of the same series that are all fictitious translations. Should I count them as one substantial case or as 300 cases?

DS: It is very clear to me, and I hope readers less familiar with your work will realize, that you make it part of something — an aggregate of phenomena — that goes far beyond the issue of translation as a practice of text transfer. In fact, however you consider it, you're really talking about a whole transcultural practice — there. Fictitious translations are not isolated items, they are part of a whole set of cultural practices in a particular culture at a given time.

GT: It concerns more than that. It's also part of literary contacts, of cultural contacts. Even if the contact is a fake one, there is contact ... because you use the alleged belonging of a text to "another" culture to make your point. For is it not chance — pure chance — for instance, that the *Castle of Otranto* was presented as a translation from Italian and not, let's say, a translation from Swedish? Or that *Papa Hamlet* was presented as a translation from Norwegian? It could have been just as good to take it from Sweden for that matter, but it would have been completely different had it come from France, because one of the ideas there was to go against French literature by way of the new Naturalism ... the Scandinavian one for a short period of time — maybe 10–20
years — was very central to the development of literature and theater and other things in Germany and in other places in Europe. Or, the fact that Joseph Smith Jr. decided to “translate” the Book of Mormon from Egyptian. Of course, he didn’t know Egyptian and none of his readers knew any Egyptian, but everybody had a picture of what Egyptian writing — in Old Egyptian — meant. It had a cultural function and they were using this cultural function to drive an idea or set of ideas given a certain form in a particular text. I don’t know... it sounded as if you were claiming that this was the first — or the only — attempt to speak about things more generally cultural and it is not.

DS: Would it be fair to say then that “translation” for you has become over the years more and more of a pretext to explore further matters ... a lever of sort, with which you could begin to make sense of cultural artefacts in a way that nevertheless remained organizationally oriented? Is translation in fact a pretext for you to go after something else?

GT: I don’t know exactly what you mean by the word pretext... I mean I understand the semantics but I don’t get all of the connotations, because “pretext” can have very negative connotations. And, if you are asking me whether I use it as a pretext in this sense, the answer is no. If I didn’t want to talk about translation, I wouldn’t have talked about translation. But, I’m certainly interested as much in translation in itself as I am in the wider context and processes similar and different from them, but not necessarily everything. I mean there are many other things that I see the relevance of, but I have decided deliberately not to go in all directions. First of all whenever I do a new thing, I have to train myself anew, because it’s not exactly what I did before. So it’s not an automatic thing. I cannot really pass from one field to any other field. I always do it in rather small steps. For instance, when I came to talking about literatures in contact — or cultures in contact in general — it was for me a rather natural development. It’s not that I use translation as a pretext to talk about contacts. It is that I gradually came to the conclusion that you have to put it in the context of contacts between cultures.

I’ve also become more and more historically oriented. In a sense, many of the things that I’ve been doing in recent years are already part of the discipline that we call — in our stupid academic way of distinguishing things that are not to be distinguished on any essential base — history. I’m sort of an historian. Actually, I was interested in history as a topic in itself — or a cluster of topics in itself — and as a kind of approach to things a long time before. And I might have become a historian ”officially” — had it not been for the fact that my father was a historian. And I deliberately wanted to do something which was close to him, because it was of interest to me, but I didn’t want to compete with him. I can say something here. So, for instance, later when he was already not a very young person we all of a sudden wrote an article together, because we realized that we are both historically oriented even if our orientations differ; we’re slightly different but complementary, not really clashing with each other.

DS: It is interesting for your work has become synonymous for many people — many of your readers — as something rather aloof and detached. Particularly, how you write and you expound your views has often been considered as aiming for the highest de-
gree of objectivity. And of course, as you said earlier, intuition always plays a role, but there are also factors that may come to one's mind after a while, that is, that were for a long time unconscious, an undercurrent of sorts. But that's more of an aside; I'm not asking you to comment on this, although you may wish to add a few words.

GT: First of all, even though it may not seem that way, I do not for a moment — and I never did — deny the existence of personal reasons. The only thing I was saying was that I did not feel qualified to answer that … to study the psychological side of the matter — that's for psychologists. The second book that I'm writing now in Hebrew is a historical book on literary translation into Hebrew from the Bible to these very days. It is a project I decided not to pursue in Toronto, because I need lots of Hebrew material which is not available here. Some of it only is available in Toronto… In this particular case — this is something I normally do not like to do — I wrote a 20 to 30-page summary of that book which doesn't yet exist in 2 different versions. One was published in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies edited by Mona Baker and the other was the opening to the Bibliography of Jewish Translation History by Robert Singerman which was published by John Benjamins in 2002. It is already a revision of the first one. I have the material very organized but with lots of lacunae and gaps, not really written down … it is based on a course I have been teaching once every two years at Tel Aviv University.

DS: As descriptive work has grown, it seems we have been more or less forced, because of the very nature of the new object, to look for examples that were part of history. And so, gradually the concept of “a history of translation” emerged, even though it was not fully conscious on a collective level. Maybe you’re not the only one to have realized that you were becoming more and more interested in the history of the subject.

GT: I think I have to make some reservations or modifications or … not disagree, but I wouldn’t say that there had never been any history of translation before. There have been histories of translation — of specific types of translation — for instance, there were histories of translations of the Bible into English … into English on the one hand … of the Bible on the other … and there were historical discussions of the matter. Later on there were studies on text “x” in 3, 4 or 6 translations, which had a historical element to them because they talked about the first translation and the second translation and the third translation etc.; it was not only chronological, it could also be more historical, talking about different contexts and inter-relationships in the way the translation was done. So, without talking about norms — norms and changes within norms — which are historical notions, they actually did find out what the norms were and what the changes in norms were without saying they were writing history. So, they did descriptive work. Even if they did evaluative translation criticism they sometimes made historical — or quasi-historical — remarks such as: this translation was good for the 16th century but in the 17th century they couldn’t bear it anymore. This is a half-historical observation which could be pursued and turned into a real historical remark. But, you are right in saying that — for me — it is a logical outcome of the development, to such an extent that, actually, there was an interim phase where quite a number of people
who were first and foremost interested in history — history of literature, history of culture — and within the history of literature hit upon a topic which had to do with translation or translators and then they found that they had the need to study a bit of Translation Studies as well in order to be able to do something serious. I’m thinking about José Lambert who came from comparative literature and wanted to write something about comparative situations between Germany and France and he picked a translation as a text case. Or Lieven D’Hulst, who is basically … even nowadays he is regarded as a Roman philologist with a special interest in the historiography of literary translation, but not really as a translation scholar. He is not on the main list of Translation Studies scholars. Not one of the first who would come to mind, even though he is conversant with what is going on; he is the reviewer/editor of Target, which means that he is not only personally but professionally versed into the research area but he never stopped being a Professor of literature.

DS: This leads me to ask you whether you could make some connection between this discussion on translation and history and your final chapter in the 1995 book, entitled Towards Laws of Translation Behaviour? You go a long way in this chapter explaining what you mean by “laws”, you make them both relational and probabilistic. The theoretical project as such remains formidable. Now, as a historian — you said earlier that you are becoming more and more of a historian of translation in the way that you’ve just described — does the task of establishing laws of translational behaviour seem to you to be something feasible in practice or is it receding in the distance in a way? How can the task of being a historian connect with the one that consists in trying to establish laws of translational behaviour? Traditional historians have always been very wary of regularities on the level of laws.

GT: You have a knack for formulating questions that require articles to answer! Bit by bit… You started by saying that it was not accepted by many and that’s true. But, I have a feeling that it has more to do with my choice of the word “law” than with what I say in the chapters, because what many people are against is the notion of “law” even though I tried to characterize it as slightly different from laws made by a government or municipality, or natural laws … which is precisely one of the things that was behind my decision to formulate them as relational or probabilistic. So they are not laws in that sense. “Thou shalt not murder,” is neither a relational nor a probabilistic law. In real life the question can be asked to what extent this law is followed in actual practice. So you can ask then — keeping future behaviour in mind — “What is the probability of such a law being actually followed?” And the answer would be, “It depends on the circumstances.” And the next question would be, “Can you list different possible circumstances. I need to argue with somebody about things like that — or with myself — so I write little by little and talk to myself if there is no answer from other people. And there has been very little serious talk about it because meetings… courses on translation tend to have this very wide range of approaches as well as topics. They used to be called “Theory and Practice” or “Towards x” or … “Changes and Challenges” or topics which say nothing and you have all sorts of people with all sorts of agendas. I didn’t drop the
project but I progressed very little. But it came up again two or three years ago quite massively with [a] small group of people, so we finally had two opportunities to talk about it. This was at the EST Conference and a few months later in the Savonlinna conference. At the EST conference there was a section on universals of translation and at Savonlinna the whole topic of the conference was whether there are physical universals. Now, I’m not sure (I’m still not sure) whether universals — the new notion of universals which I also already used in the 80s before I reverted to “laws” — I am not sure (I really keep changing my mind) whether the notion of universal is the same — or whether it’s any better than “laws” — and maybe for marketing, universals is better, because you can see that had you had a conference on “laws” I don’t know how many people would have taken part in it and what they would have said. But, once we talk about universals, all of a sudden there are about 15 people at least who can speak about it and 3, 4, 5 of them who can also speak about them — and tend to speak about them — in theoretical terms and not just analyzing a case. Now, there’s absolutely no real … [LONG HESITATION] opposition between being historical and being law-oriented because once you insert the notion of “probability” and notions of what features can take part in deciding what would be done or not be done, the only way to find out what the features may be or what the influence may be is to analyze historical cases. Otherwise, it would be all speculation and there has been a lot of speculation — people saying for instance that if you translate into your mother tongue one thing will happen and if you translate into a language that is not your mother tongue something else would happen. It was transferred directly from other wishful thinking or studies about language teaching and language learning, but very few studies into translation itself to see how it really works and why and what are the possible parameters? So, I’m not young enough to think that I would be able to do everything myself but I’m still trying to proceed in that direction as well. It hasn’t been dropped.

DS: Thank you. I realized it was the subject for a book when I put the question. I knew that we were not going to exhaust it like that. Still...

GT: Maybe we can think about writing a book which is a dialogue about these matters.

DS: Before I ask you another question, I have a subsidiary one which relates to the opening you made about the fact that many people were reluctant to discuss those issues because of the word itself, “laws”. In your contacts with the group you work in, at Tel Aviv University, since you don’t use English of course when you talk to each other — what word do you use in Hebrew for “laws”?

GT: [Xukím] It is the almost exact equivalent of “law”. Natural laws [xuke teva], or the country laws [xuke hamed’inà]. Maybe there are some collocations that are possible or even current in one language and not in the other language; but, all in all, it’s about the same word. And we don’t have any scruples using it and really we never mix them up with traffic laws or with the country’s laws. Of course, we discuss things in Hebrew. The group is now very small but since we all write mainly in English, we are well aware of the problems. We have more problems in Hebrew normally than we have in English.
For instance, we—I and Itamar, or Rakefet—do not have any problem with the English word “interference”, but we have many problems if we want to say it in Hebrew, so we don’t say it in Hebrew, we say “interferenzia”, because any other word would be misleading.

DS: You’re providing me with a marvelous transition because what I really wanted to talk about in the continuation of this discussion is how you have written about laws of translation behaviour in ways heavily oriented or re-oriented around the issue of “transfer” and the issue of “interference”. As you know, over the years the concept of transfer and the concept of interference have been reconsidered, let’s say, by people working along lines that are significantly different from the way you and others also work. Certainly approaches that have been labelled “postmodern” and also the forum published in Target in three installments—have shown that beyond slogans or easy definitions there may be… a battlefield of sorts. A field of discussion, anyway, where notions like “transfer” and “interference” are being rejected by some scholars on very simple grounds … simply because they recognize that languages and cultures are not to be distinguished in such a way that things move from one side to the other; or that even items in a given culture—or in a given language—interfere with anything. We could go back to Weinreich who used those words himself 50 years ago. And I’m always reminded—whenever I think of his extraordinary work on Languages in contact—not only that he had a chapter and important things to say about cultures in contact, but that he was working under the supervision of someone who strongly believed that languages formed units that should be analyzed as being self-contained—which probably went against everything that Weinreich believed, given his family history. And it seems now that with the advent of postmodern approaches and also postcolonial studies and the view that—even in linguistics proper, interest in Yiddish and in creoles, so-called “creolistics”—all this seems to have conspired towards an obliteration of the differences between what goes on inside a language or inside a culture and what goes on between them. So, in this particular situation, of course, notions like transfer and interference become problematic. Again a subject for a book but I would like to know how you react to these developments.

GT: I think maybe I should answer by saying something very simplistic. You said that the notions of transfer and the notion of interference have become problematic. And I wonder whether it’s really the “notion” of these two things or the terms? Which means that the way these terms have been used in the last decades—so the problem is really not the words but the semantic load that they carry with them—and the semantic load which came with them has, for instance, to do with the fact that “interference” was almost always marked negatively. But this is not in the nature of the word “interference”, it’s in the nature of the historical use of the word. And yet … here is one problem that I have been struggling with since the 70s, time and again, and I have never written about it. But I have given this as an answer to questions that have been asked many times—not in interviews, but in class or in conferences. When you do something conceptually new—and in a sense, I didn’t invent anything, but I did things that were
regarded as non-traditional in my day — you have to talk about it; you have to write about it; you have to talk about it in your language; you have to talk about it in English; you maybe sometimes have to talk about it in a third language, if you have it. What words are you going to use? There are two extreme positions. One of them if you are talking about new concepts or modified concepts, you invent your terms. OK, there’s a benefit which [is] that you don’t get anybody mixed up. There’s a drawback that nobody knows what the term means and they have to learn the language as they go on reading the text. The other extreme is to use existing terms and redefine them. The advantage is that you can read what is written or you can listen to what is being said. The drawback is that you assume and — automatically even if you know that it is not the case — that you understand what the word means because you have seen it before. And you forget or you have never realized that it is used in a different sense [LONG PAUSE] And I’m not talking about “transfer” or “interference” because what Translation Studies tried to do and almost succeeded in doing was to abolish words like “equivalence”, which in the first decades of Translation Studies was one of the first or the most central terms, issues, notions of the profession, in the discipline. Nida made a name for himself for redefining what equivalence is by using the phrase “dynamic equivalence” — you know as well what it is. It worked to some extent because it was still good old equivalence with a twist. But when I defined equivalence as that relationship — normatively regarded — not as the required one but something which is normatively or socially speaking regarded as a normative one, people said, “but this is not equivalence!” But my answer is, “I’ve re-defined equivalence!” I could have invented a different name, but would you have been in a better place then? I don’t think so. So, I think that “transfer” and “interference” are undergoing the same process now. People who are against them start inventing new terms or taking terms, importing names from other disciplines or from non-disciplinary uses — pre-disciplinary uses — and redefining them and facing the same problem in the future. And those who try to redefine interference think they are doing well, but they may not fare that well because they are misread. When I am talking about interference, I am not thinking of anything bad... by the way, one of the tentative laws — possible tentative laws — of translation is … it always involves some amount of interference … the differences being what the amounts are: high and low; and what levels they are more likely to appear on: linguistic — lower linguistic, higher linguistic — semantic, general… and, of course, the next question would be, “under what circumstances does the one tend to occur and under what circumstances does the other tend to occur?” Now, interference is a problem from a slightly different point of view as well. It was re-imported into Translation Studies this time not from language teaching and language learning, but from discussions of contact between cultures and contact between languages. And, if you look briefly at the history of the models used for the account of cultures in contact, you can see that it goes something like: first, the model is the model of diffusion; then the model is a model of acculturation; then comes a model of creolization, as somebody has suggested. And the model of interference is a logical outcome of the model of creolization. So, maybe we are not at the end of the historical process,
but I think that it’s definitely an advancement; it’s an improvement. If I read Venuti and he has a term like — what is it… “remainder” or something? I know what “remainder” is, but I have difficulty in using it or even understanding it, when it is used as a term. So, he didn’t invent a term, he took it from somebody else (he was not the first one), but it was something which was given a meaning within a certain structure. I don’t have the whole structure, so I cannot use the term “remainder”, I can’t even follow it, because the language is not mine — the “language” in the sense of the academic, I mean the professional language — not the English language.

It seems that the question was very encompassing again. I want to say that the other approaches you mentioned are trying to do things… They have different agendas and I think that they admit it. But one thing that is central to them and which I do not accept as a scholar is that they have an agenda in the sense that they are fighting for something. They want to achieve something. There are hidden and not so hidden objectives beyond what they are doing. And many of these objectives are very near to my heart: like women’s rights, anti-colonialism and things like that. But I think that we had better distinguish between what we want to cure in our society and what we say with a historical or cultural orientation, trying to be objective — and I do not for a minute believe that one can be 100% objective; this is not my claim. The only question for me is, whether, if you know that you cannot be 100% objective, whether you give up objectivism at all or do you try your best to achieve it.

DS: Thank you.
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