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Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies

Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury

edited by
Anthony Pym
Miriam Shlesinger
Daniel Simeoni

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Volume 75

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.

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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.

Table of contents

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.[1] 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.[2] 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.

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. Recurring 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