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Functional Approaches to Culture and Translation

Selected papers by José Lambert

edited by
Dirk Delabastita,
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Introduction

José Lambert and descriptive research into literature, translation and culture

This volume contains a generous selection of articles by Professor José Lambert, tracing in large part the intellectual itinerary of their author. Some four decades ago José Lambert started out as a young research student in French and comparative literature, trying to get a better grip on the problem of interliterary contacts, and he rapidly became a key figure in the emergent discipline of translation studies, where he is now widely known and valued as an indefatigable ambassador and promoter of descriptively oriented research. This collection shows how José Lambert has never stopped asking new questions about the crucial but often hidden role of language and translation in the world of yesteryear and today.

Life and works

José Lambert was born in 1941, in the village of Wingene, in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. He studied Romance philology at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K.U.Leuven), where he also obtained his PhD in comparative literature in 1972 with a thesis that was published as *Ludwig Tieck dans les lettres françaises. Aspects d'une résistance au romantisme allemand* (1976). After the defence of his thesis José Lambert was soon appointed as lecturer at K.U.Leuven's Department of literary studies (section: general and comparative literature), where he went on to become a full professor in 1979. His teaching included the fields of comparative literature and translation studies; indeed, he taught what may well have been one of the first courses in Europe on literary translation within comparative literature. He became a Professor Emeritus in October 2006.

José Lambert has lectured and published extensively in both the domains of comparative literature and translation studies. His early interests, as expressed by his PhD research, focused on the interliterary relations between France and Germany during the nineteenth century. The question of translation caught his special attention. Until then, translation had been a largely neglected area in comparative literature, being considered just another possible form of literary contact, and certainly not one that could claim much interest, since it lacked the prestige, visibility and typological features of 'original' writing produced within the various national literatures. Therefore, its major influence on literary and cultural change was more often than not overlooked or downplayed.

In the early 1980s, José Lambert started a research project on the relations between translation and literature in France during the first half of the nineteenth century. He paid special attention to the ways in which translations behave within their new 'home' culture. This functional approach required new methods for the study of translations, which were later also applied to emergent literatures such as Belgium in its relation with France in the nineteenth century or postcolonial literatures in their relation with their European mothers in the twentieth century.

In 1989, he became one of the co-founders, with Gideon Toury, of *Target. International journal of translation studies*, which immediately established itself as one of the leading – many would argue, *the* foremost – journal in the field. In the same year, the need to prepare new generations of scholars in translation research led to the creation of a then unique training format called CERA (later CETRA: Center for Translation, Communication and Culture). The impressive list of CETRA-alumni links José Lambert and his CETRA colleagues to dissertations, publications and other research initiatives in five continents.

José Lambert has accepted important offices and duties in several other scholarly organisations as well, both in Belgium and on the international scene. Among many other things, he has been the European secretary of the International Comparative Literature Association (1985–1991), he served as assistant secretary of the *Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures modernes* (FILLM) (1985–1991), and he was one of the co-founders of the European Society for Translation Studies in 1992. He has been a visiting professor at a wide range of universities (including the University of Amsterdam, the Sorbonne at Paris III and IV, the University of Alberta in Edmonton, the University of Pennsylvania and New York University) and was appointed a research fellow in Göttingen (1989–1990). José Lambert was awarded the prestigious Belgian Francqui Chair at the University of Namur in 1992–1993.

José Lambert has been a very prolific author. The impressive list of his publications which we have included at the end of this volume numbers some 120 items and despite our best bibliographical efforts we dare not vouch for the completeness of the list. For the sake of easy reference our bibliography of José Lambert's writings has been arranged chronologically, with one entry being reserved for each publication quite regardless of size, range or scholarly impact. Of course, the blandness of this presentation obscures the importance of certain data that reveal the true scholarly value and influence of José Lambert's publication list over and beyond the quantitative dimension. As a closer look makes clear, he has published in several languages, in major journals and volumes all over the world, he has published some ten edited or authored books, and he has contributed to the most important series, reference works and handbooks in the field.

The papers in this volume

In the present collection, we have taken care to include the articles that have acquired something of a 'classic' status in the field, but also a few lesser known papers that deserve wider circulation. Let us briefly present our selection.

The first article, "Traduction et technique romanesque" (1977), was not the first one written by José Lambert on translation, but it is no doubt the paper that launched most explicitly the research programme that was to broaden during more than ten years, covering numerous aspects of the descriptive study of literary translation. It starts with a discussion of the relationships between linguistic and literary approaches to translation and makes a plea for a new analytical model for translated texts partially based on insights gained from the work of the Czech scholars Anton Popovič and Jiří Levý. The idea of a *tertium comparationis* – a discursive matrix applicable to both source and target texts, and capable of laying bare the significance of such shifts as may be observed in translated narratives – favours a view of translations as texts that possess a proper identity, express aesthetic choices of the translator and correlate with literary life in general. The second part of the article gives an account of shifts occurring in French translations of Flemish and German prose of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It takes into consideration a number of relevant narrative categories such as register, tense, reported speech, narration and character. Without using the metalanguage of descriptive research being developed at the same time by scholars such as Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, these analyses show close affinities with their work that were waiting to be developed in a more systematic way.

The second selection, "Production, tradition et importation: une clef pour la description de la littérature et de la littérature en traduction" (1980), elaborates on the idea of translated texts as constructs in their own right and integrates it into a larger view on literary communication and interaction. This perspective is profoundly indebted to polysystem theory as developed since the end of the 1970s by Even-Zohar. Three closely intertwined categories are put forward: production, tradition and import. *Production* covers all new messages of whatever textual kind that are being produced within a given system, roughly corresponding to what contemporaries would define as 'literature'; *tradition* and *importation* both comprise elements that are co-present within the system and interact with it, while still belonging to different systems. Translation, then, is a cross-cutting discursive procedure establishing relations and defining configurations between the three categories. For example, texts imported via translation may combine with texts selected from the national tradition to revitalize the centres of production.

"L'éternelle question des frontières: littératures nationales et systèmes littéraires" (1983) critically questions the tenacious equation of *production* and national literature. The paper starts from a critical analysis of political, linguistic and cultural parameters employed in several recent companions to French literary history. Subsequently, Lambert proposes the idea of a *cartography* of European literatures which should give the literary 'provinces' their due place no less than the canonized centres. The last part of the paper focuses on the complex case of literature in Belgium, which seems to elude the parameters of traditional historiography. Historiography might therefore do well to start from the assumption that literatures are auto-organizing systems that produce *their own* parameters, among which the most prominent are norms and models, and internal hierarchical relations as well as relations with surrounding literatures. These remarks pave the way for a brief presentation of a new historiography of Belgian literature from 1800 on.

"On describing translations" (1985), which José Lambert co-authored with his K.U.Leuven colleague Hendrik Van Gorp, was published in Theo Hermans' influential collection *The manipulation of literature*. The paper offers a detailed methodology for the study of translations. It is based on a definition of translation as a communication process within a target system, related with a similar process taking place in a source system. There is no *a priori* qualification of what this relation is or should be, nor of the features of each communication process taken separately. Quite naturally, the heuristic stage receives a central place within the methodology itself: it helps the researcher to discover the most relevant features of translational communication at a given time within a specific literary system (e.g. textual features, aspects of distribution and reception, etc.). The researcher's focus may range from the treatment of linguistic elements to the global rationale of intersystemic relations. This article includes a very practical procedure for translation analysis, proposing a number of successive steps and checklists, and helping the researcher to describe and interrelate preliminary data, macro-structural and micro-structural features of the texts, and broader systemic contexts. As we shall see below, José Lambert and others have subsequently become aware of the serious limitations or even distortions inherent in a binary model of translation that neatly separates the 'source' pole from the 'target' pole, but this has not prevented the 'Lambert & Van Gorp model' from becoming and remaining a popular descriptive tool.

This group of texts is concluded by an overview of "Twenty years of research on literary translation at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven" (1988). It is one of the rare first-hand testimonies about the early history of the emergent subdiscipline of descriptive translation studies in the Low Countries. It helps us understand the role of institutional contexts, including tensions between established disciplines and administrative structures (e.g. theoretical versus comparative approaches to literature; Romance versus Germanic philology). With both comparative literature and national literary histories having failed to treat translation very seriously, Lambert had to start his own work in what seemed like an institutional and scholarly void. Very soon, empirical research revealed the complex nature of translations for which no ready-made answers were available. An 'open theory', designed for historical descriptive research, seemed the best possible way to understand differences and evolutions in translational phenomena. Such a theory, initially designed by Itamar Even-Zohar in the early 1970s as part of his polysystem approach, was elaborated in detail by Gideon Toury around the concept of norm, which helps us grasp the basic patterns of translational behaviour and their relations with target literatures and cultures. Lambert finally indicates how his own research and that of his first-generation disciples took the form of projects on the position and role of translation within literature in France and in Belgium, and later in other cultural settings as well.

"In quest of literary world maps" (1991) takes up the discussion started in "L'éternelle question" (see above) and develops the idea of cartographies from a more fundamental, conceptual point of view. A first version of these insights had already appeared one year earlier in French (see bibliography: 1990d) and the English article was translated almost immediately into Spanish (1991c) and German (1993b). "In quest of literary world maps" certainly broke new ground and belongs to the author's most influential papers. It calls into question the institutionalization of literary research and teaching in terms of 'national literatures'. The near-monopoly of the romantic 'national' paradigm – one territory, one nation, one language, one literature – leads to anachronistic views on the literary world. The fact that literary scholars study literature preferably with the aid of political and/or linguistic maps means that they do not (yet) have models of their own. According to Lambert, the study of literature cannot be restricted to national literatures because developments in language, nation and literature are not well synchronized. The national model is poorly suited for the study of *intra*-national literary phenomena and relationships in multilingual contexts (like Belgium, Switzerland, South-Africa, etc.), and it is no more helpful for the study of complex and multiple *inter*-national (economic and political) relations between literatures. As an alternative, collective historical-descriptive fieldwork is needed to investigate the exact nature of the relations between linguistic, political and literary borderlines and to help us envisage new, multiple maps for past and present literary worlds.

James Holmes's foundational paper "The name and nature of translation studies" (Holmes 1975 [1972]) provides the basis for the next selection: "Shifts, oppositions and goals in translation studies: towards a genealogy of concepts" (1991). This article is the written version of a paper delivered at the Second James S

Holmes Symposium held in Amsterdam in 1990. Not only the "name and nature", but also the sheer existence and future of translation studies were at the heart of the symposium's often animated discussions. Lambert sets out with a historical overview of the various labels used to name the discipline. Among other things, such a genealogy of concepts shows that the discovery of the cultural component in translation studies – nowadays routinely referred to as the 'cultural turn' – is more indebted to the so-called descriptivists than they are given credit for. It also highlights a striking lack of terminological consensus, but, more than 'merely' being a question of terminology, these hesitations expose a lack of agreement on the object, the scope and the goals of translation studies: ultimately they raise the problem of the very status of a theory in general and of theoretical assumptions about translation more in particular. What is at stake for Lambert are the complex relations between theory and descriptive research: a theory deprived of its descriptive component is a vain and sterile enterprise, as the two have to be seen as complementary components, with empirical descriptive research having to test the validity of translation theory. Moreover, theories themselves never operate outside of history. The historical nature of theories again implies a redefinition of translation studies in hypothetical terms on the basis of empirical descriptive research. The article closes on a somewhat lighter note, paying tribute to the person of James Holmes. Lambert recalls how Holmes strongly oriented the discipline, but often in ways which have not been recorded in print.

"Literatures, translation and (de)colonization" (1995; Spanish version 1999b) further develops the idea of literary maps in their complex relationships with translation. Both on a conceptual and on an empirical-descriptive level, the article advances challenging insights concerning the mapping of (power) relations between cultures. Pursuing his intellectual campaign against the static Eurocentric model of 'national' literatures, Lambert envisages dynamic literary world maps, whereby conflicts between traditional and innovating principles of legitimacy act as a principle of change. Translation is a case in point for the discussion of such principles. The internationalization and continuous redefinition of societies are profoundly indebted to translation and communication. However, this fundamental role of translation is often ignored, because many of us keep using restrictive definitions of translation that exclude phenomena such as 'adaptation', 'imitation' and the like, or that necessarily reduce translation to complete texts, produced by individual writers and individual translators. Lambert also pleads for a widening of the source / target model because it reflects an outdated binary world view in which societies are assumed to be *either* one thing *or* the other. The reality of the internationalized world is often incompatible with the idea of binary oppositions in contact relations. In these new and complex contexts, translation behaviour is often correlated with power relations and political options and thus with issues of colonization and decolonization. Enlarging on these insights, the article (re)formulates the (translational) relations between cultures in terms of basic import / export rules that shed new light on power relations between cultures, between colonizers and the colonized. Since 'importing' systems may be seen as 'passive' systems, they often import untranslated discourse which forces given populations to adapt themselves to the idiom and rules of the foreign visitors. This means that *non-translation* is no less fundamental for our investigation than translation. On the other hand, cultures that are characterized by language standardization, that prohibit the import of foreign languages or that submit translation to strict target rules, try to submit language and culture to territorial principles. In this sense, colonization is nothing else than an attempt to extend the territory.

"Translation, systems and research: the contribution of polysystem studies to translation studies" (1995) is again a more historically self-conscious piece, tracing back the origin of polysystem theory (PST) as viewed and lived by one of its first and most ardent advocates (see e.g. 1997b, 1998d, 2005a for later instances of such self-contextualisation). It could be said that José Lambert never changed paradigms and has remained 'faithful' to PST, but always in a critical way, remaining open to new evolutions and to the possibilities offered by interdisciplinary cross-fertilization. Developed in Israel by Itamar Even-Zohar, PST was introduced to a larger European audience at the colloquium on "Literature and translation" which José Lambert organized in 1976 in Leuven. Thanks to PST and building on the strength of this and later conferences, translation research managed to win a position within comparative literature and found more and more practitioners in a variety of contexts and networks, soon also in more institutionalized settings (e.g. the European Society for Translation Studies). Next to these institutional aspects, the article comments on the intrinsic characteristics of the model. One of the strengths of PST, according to Lambert, is that it seeks to provide models for research instead of mere theorizing. The central question is therefore not the ontological status of systems – does a system exist? is French literature a system? etc. – but whether the PS hypotheses can solve more problems than other hypotheses. Lambert also refutes the objection that PST is limited to research on literature and literary translation only (see also Lambert 2005a). True, the model is often associated with these domains, and among the many systemic models PST is the only one to use translation as its starting point, but its scope is still much wider. Thus PST has been successfully mobilized within cultural frames that were not envisaged from the beginning: South-East Asia, Korea, Africa, mass media, etc. Through translation studies more in particular, PST has re-examined the borderlines between linguistics and literary studies, and it is on the basis of PST that an interdisciplinary dialogue with the sociology of language and with sociolinguistics has been made possible. Lambert claims boldly that no other approach has generated more projects, questions and investigations between 1975 and 1995 than PST.

"Problems and challenges of translation in an age of new media and competing models" (1997) is one of several articles José Lambert has devoted to media translation and internationalization (see furthermore Lambert 1989e, 1990a, 1993c, 1996c, 1998b, 1998c, to name but those). The article offers open definitions of translation on the basis of insights into the role and function of translation in contemporary (media) worlds. In international contexts, Lambert argues, 'sameness' or 'symmetry' is incompatible with communication. Perfect communication is impossible. It is often even undesirable, so that the notion of the ideal reproduction of an original had better be discarded altogether. Translation in the new media age becomes a socio-cultural activity that may vary according to socio-cultural parameters. It can never be a totally individual matter, nor can it be limited to strictly verbal communication. Media translation (dubbing, voice-over, speech recognition, translating for the blind or for the hard-of-hearing, monolingual subtitles etc.) has indeed revealed continuous interactions between verbal and non-verbal sign systems, as well as between orality and literacy. Differences between 'national languages' are therefore no longer the key difficulty of media communication. Moreover, in contemporary business and media life, the foreign origin of messages is often concealed and the label 'translation' can no longer be reserved for entire, autonomous texts but has to include all sorts of text fragments that may contain non-translated words, patterns and structures. This means that the classical descriptivist definition of translation as 'something that is considered by a culture to be translation' is no longer satisfactory, since it sidelines an enormous quantity of texts that may not be called 'translation' while still fulfilling important cross-linguistic and cross-cultural functions in contemporary societies. Society itself will of course also benefit from a better understanding of the entire question of media transfer.

"From translation markets to language management: the implications of translation services" (1998; co-authored with Johan Hermans) exemplifies another major direction in which the scope of José Lambert's research interests and publications expanded in the 1990s (see furthermore 1996d, as well as Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert 2004 and forthcoming). Lambert and his co-author argue that if translation studies wants to update its views on culture and society, the discipline can no longer avoid (re)investigating under all possible angles the whole issue of translation in business environments. Given the fact that there was no research tradition to speak of, it was decided to carry out an exploratory investigation into the translation market in Belgium. The article discusses its findings from an interdisciplinary point of view and focuses on the relationships between the various partners involved in different business situations; its conclusions and recommendations clearly transcend the Belgian context. Although the translation market is growing in terms of budgets, it remains in part a low-profile black market, where translation is not necessarily labelled as such and not regarded as part of serious business, so that it can be left to outsiders. Translators, treated as lower-category employees, are hardly ever involved in product planning. What seems to be needed is the integration of translators into the strategic teams, and of translation into the strategic goals of companies. Translations and efficient verbal communication more generally have to be regarded as a potential major *asset* of a company rather than as a financial or economic *liability*. But this presupposes a different view on 'language' altogether because it is in fact the whole language component that comes under pressure in the globalisation movement. A functional approach to language would result, among other things, in the recommendation that companies should accept that a distinction may need to be made between the utilitarian choices of the management (e.g. the convenience of using English as a *lingua franca*) and the needs and expectations of end-line customers in the multilingual market. The authors stress the massive consequences of this line of thinking: far beyond the endeavours of translation studies and translation teaching, the economic world and society at large will have to wake up to the realities of language management in the global marketplace.

"Cultural studies, the study of cultures and the question of language: facing / excluding the new millennium" (2000) offers further illustration of José Lambert's investment in debates about the cultural and societal importance of language and translation. Taking a recent essay by Doris Sommer (1996) as a typical instance, he suggests that most cultural studies programmes are ill at ease with the question of language inasmuch as they appear to disregard the link between language and identity. Other disciplines in the humanities too have tended to neglect the question of linguistic and cultural identity. The underlying reason is that the norm for identity remains territory and that territory refers to the nation. So, when borders start shifting and languages become mixed, the homogeneity of identity is under threat, and language becomes translation, a 'bizarre language' permanently on the move between two places. But in contemporary communication societies, Lambert argues, proximity or movement in space is no longer a necessary condition for communication to occur. Thus, among the principles that allow for a better distinction between virtual and traditional identities, the principles of language and communication become central. In the new world, language options are much more open, with competition and selection between languages replacing the single option of the national language. Translation – including its institutionalization and its new technologies – therefore has a strong impact on the very nature of communities and their identities by conditioning interaction and communication. Studying such mechanisms in the contemporary world is an urgent priority for our universities, but perhaps also a difficult challenge inasmuch as our state-funded universities still seem to owe ideological loyalties to the old nation-based models.

"La traduction littéraire comme problème belge ou la littérature comme traduction" (2004), co-authored with other members of CETRA, derives from a paper given at the colloquium "Littératures en Belgique / Literaturen in België" (Leuven 2000). This programmatic colloquium was the first to be devoted to the study of literatures in Belgium from a functional, dynamic and multilingual perspective, enabling local realities to be assessed in a broader comparative framework. The colloquium largely grew out of more than two decades of research driven by José Lambert at the K.U.Leuven and one hears clear echoes of the pleas he made in much earlier papers such as "In quest of world maps" (1991; reprinted in this volume). Lambert's contribution is therefore both symbolic and programmatic, arguing as it does that literary scholars too often exclude 'minor' literatures from their global cartography or study them with static, monolingual and therefore inadequate models. In other words, it raises fundamental questions about literatures in a mixed culture. Two centuries of intra-Belgian translational relationships have amply demonstrated, according to Lambert, that 'Belgian' literature is an object of study that can never be monolingual. Any analysis that wishes to examine the functioning of literatures in Belgium, regardless even of translation, has to take into account the instability of languages and the competition between different linguistic and cultural options (Flemish, Dutch, Francophone, Walloon, French, German ...). Most of the time, as may be illustrated by their manifold linguistic and stylistic hesitations, translations appear to function within Belgium and are thus a 'Belgian' affair, reflecting the fluctuations and differentiations of literary positions and ambitions. Therefore, the sheer juxtaposition of the respective 'traditional' monolingual 'Flemish' and 'Francophone' literary canons can give us only part of the picture of literatures in Belgium. We need to attend to the struggle between linguistic options in a multilingual context, revealing the permanent hesitation between different centres and the problematic attempts at identity construction.

Beyond the printed page

If it is true that the significance of a scholar's contribution to a research domain seldom resides in his or her publications only, José Lambert certainly offers a striking example.

In addition to being a influential and widely published scholar, José Lambert has also meant so many other things to so many people in academia – as a colleague, teacher, MA or PhD thesis supervisor, mentor, PhD jury member, speaker, debater, administrator, organizer, lobbyist, networker, catalyst, and what not. Anyone even faintly acquainted with the field of translation studies will know that it is nearly impossible to take part in a colloquium where José Lambert has not somehow left his imprint. Travelling from one international meeting to another (sometimes changing suitcases at the airport!), he has functioned as a real ambassador for the field. Inspired and inspiring as a speaker, he is also a generous and critical listener to others' contributions, always ready to offer questions, comments or suggestions (thereby occasionally taking the speaker's ideas far beyond their intended horizon: "*n'excluons rien*" was one of his favourites), and definitely not afraid to engage in a robust polemic where needed.

It is not surprising in retrospect that José Lambert (barely thirty-five at the time!) was the prime mover in the organisation of the aforementioned landmark Leuven colloquium on "Literature and translation" which brought together for the first time several of the most promising people in the field (the roll-call of speakers included the likes of André Lefevere, Raymond Van den Broeck, James S Holmes, Susan Bassnett, Itamar Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury and Hendrik Van Gorp). Or that, in the same year but in a different place (Stockholm), José Lambert stuck his neck very far out by arguing in the distinguished company of linguists and linguistically oriented scholars such as Coseriu, Wandruszka or Wilss that translation was a matter of culture as much as of language.

José Lambert's international reputation was soon established and he went on to accept several important institutional responsibilities in the research community. We have already referred to his involvement in the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), which enabled him to facilitate the establishment of a worldwide network of contacts and to put translation studies more firmly and more centrally on the map of comparative literature. He was indeed one of the people at the heart of a "translation studies lobby in the international comparative literature establishment", a lobby whose endeavours began "to bear fruit by the mid 1980s, when workshops on translation had become a regular feature at the triennial conferences" of ICLA (Hermans 1999: 13). That he became one of the founding members of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST), the first international organisation of its kind in the field, was a perfectly logical later step.

José Lambert understood well enough that research requires forums for debate and for the dissemination of its results. Witness not only his crucial involvement in the creation and the running of *Target* (1989–), but also the role he has played more recently as co-initiator of John Benjamins' online *Translation Studies Bibliography*, or his membership of several advisory or editorial boards of book series (e.g. Benjamins Translation Library, Studien zur Translation) and journals (e.g. *Romantisme*, *Quaderns: revista de traducció*, *Journal of literary studies*, *Transst*, *Filter* …).

José Lambert also realized that research entails the need for research training. We therefore wish to dwell once more on CETRA both on account of its intrinsic importance and because more than anything else it bears the hallmark of what José Lambert has stood for as a person and a scholar. The prehistory of CETRA goes back to 1987 when he initiated the prestigious Penn-Leuven Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies, together with colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania. Research on translation – including then totally under-researched domains such as media translation – formed one of the components of this summer institute. It was the Penn-Leuven Institute that led to the creation by José Lambert of the CERA Chair for Translation, Communication and Cultures in 1989. The Belgian bank CERA was the first main sponsor and gave its name to the initiative. In 1994, when the bank ceased its sponsorship (prior to entering into a merger which marked its end as a corporate entity), CERA was cleverly rebranded as CETRA, a meaningful acronym with the original name still echoing between the letters. Quite appropriately, Gideon Toury was nominated as the first CERA Chair holder in 1989. Later CE(T)RA Professors to date have been Hans J. Vermeer (1990), Susan Bassnett (1991), Albrecht Neubert (1992), Daniel Gile (1993), Mary Snell-Hornby (1994), André Lefevere (1995), Anthony Pym (1996), Yves Gambier (1997), Lawrence Venuti (1998), Andrew Chesterman (1999), Christiane Nord (2000), Mona Baker (2001), Maria Tymoczko (2002), Ian Mason (2003), Michael Cronin (2004), Daniel Simeoni (2005) and Harish Trivedi (2006). The list amounts to the *Who-is-Who* in translation studies in the past two decades.

CETRA organizes an annual intensive doctoral and postdoctoral programme aimed at promoting research training and stimulating high-level research into the cultural functions of translation. After being based in Leuven for the first years of its existence, the operation moved to Italy in 1997, to the Istituto San Pellegrino: Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, in Misano Adriatico. The programme offers a combination of lectures given by the Chair Professor, talks by guest scholars, theoretical and methodological seminars by staff members, individual tutorials with the Chair Professor and the supervisors, reading work and seminars. Selections of the papers delivered by participants were published in volumes edited by Clem Robyns (1994), Peter Jansen (1995) and Jeroen Vandaele (1999). Efforts have been made to add a virtual dimension to the programme, thus helping to overcome the practical space / time constraints of the summer session, by the use of e-mail, internet and Open & Distance Learning (ODL) techniques. Incidentally, as his bibliography shows, ODL teaching has in the 1990s come to add itself to the list of Lambert's main research themes.

In the many years of its existence CETRA has had its share of serious upsets, including the untimely death of André Lefevere in 1996 (less than a year after his Professorship), as well as an earth quake and 9/11 (both occurring in the middle of a session) and a serious airplane incident (keeping a CETRA professor grounded at home). This is not to mention the many practical problems José Lambert has had to deal with and which have ranged from the trivial to the more serious (the permanent search for funding and an adequate institutional framework belongs to the second category). But none of these have ever been allowed to slow down the momentum of the enterprise. The revolutionary format of CETRA has benefited not only countless individual junior scholars by offering them a shortcut to successful research and international visibility, but it has also served the dynamics of the discipline as a whole. Referring to descriptive translation studies, Theo Hermans (1999: 14) has called CETRA "perhaps the most effective vehicle for propagation of the paradigm". Or, as Daniel Gile, himself a long-time CETRA associate but here speaking on behalf of the discipline, has recently put it, CETRA

> has become a mainstream pathway to TS [Translation Studies] to several hundred young scholars, and the links that arose between CE(T)RA alumni, between them and their instructors, and between the regular instructors themselves probably had a major role in giving cohesion to the TS community in spite of the wide spectrum of interests and research paradigms involved.
>
> [José Lambert] may thus have contributed to TS far more than any 'impact indicator' such as citation counts can account for, and the TS community is indebted to him. (Gile 2004: 8)

After having been at the helm of CETRA for what will very soon be two decades, José Lambert should find deep satisfaction in the knowledge that his darling brainchild has created the conditions for ensuring its own future. New generations of translation scholars, many of them issued from CETRA's own ranks, are able and willing to carry it forward entirely in the spirit of its creator.

Lessons for the future

Several of the articles included here testify to José Lambert's conviction that research itself is no less historical than the objects it studies; they document his interest in the history of translation studies, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, which has turned out to be such a crucial stage in its development. Studying this history reminds us that José Lambert has always been in the vanguard of conceptual and methodological evolution. Many of the ideas that he developed or fostered – alone or with others – turn out in retrospect to have had a fairly visionary quality about them. Consider his open concept of translation (and thus his readiness to embrace the notion of interdisciplinary research); his critique of closed and static linguistic and literary models based on the concept of the nation-state; his understanding of the importance of sociology and sociolinguistics for translation studies; his early critique of the binary source / target opposition; his awareness of translation as a hidden mechanism, often operating invisibly below or beyond the text level; the attention given to non-translation; his promotion of a 'cultural turn' in translation studies *avant la lettre*; his fascination with the functions of language and translation in the modern media as well as in business contexts; his experiments with language and translation in virtual-learning environments; his belief in team research; and so on.

Some of the items in this list of ideas and interests may by now have lost their polemical edge or indeed their innovatory character, but this very fact may well be the most eloquent testimony to the importance of José Lambert's work. Whether he pioneered them solely or with others, or even borrowed them from others, he was always among the first to recognize their relevance and put them high on the discipline's agenda. It is good to remember that what is a self-evident and therefore anonymous truth today originated in many cases as a brainwave of creative and perceptive individuals.

Although being much of the time in the forefront of the discipline, José Lambert has never been keen to engage in critical dialogue with scholars waving the poststructuralist or postmodern banner. Nor have the latter seen Lambert as a natural ally or privileged partner – perhaps despite Edwin Gentlzer's (2001:192) interesting claim that there is something distinctly "Joycean" about Lambert's argument "that every text, every word, contains 'translated' elements" while "translated texts may also contain many discursive elements that are *not* translated". In the end, the politicized positions and radical epistemological scepticism of postmodernism are too far away from Lambert's more confident assessment of the potential of scientific research in the humanities for a very fruitful dialogue between them to be possible. For better or worse postmodern approaches have been fairly successful in translation studies since the 1990s, so the effect of this restriction should not be underrated, but leaving it aside, the impression that prevails is that of José Lambert's great openness and sense of dialogue, and of a restlessly inquisitive and prospective attitude which in itself, regardless even of its object, should remain a lesson for future scholars: 'never stop asking questions'.

Much of the research programme of José Lambert can still be made more operational or is waiting to be applied to new corpora and cultural settings. We would therefore suggest that the present book not only has value as a retrospective survey of the achievement of a newly retired colleague, but that it also still holds out prospects and ideas for research in a forward-looking manner. It is in this double view that the three editors would like to offer this collection to the research community: as a record of past scholarly excellence, but also as a research perspective of enduring relevance for years to come. On a more personal note, and in what is really a very paradoxical gesture, we are happy to present this collection of papers to the man who wrote them. May José accept the gift as a sincere token of our respect and affection.

The editors

Editorial note

All the articles included here have been reformatted for uniformity as well as lightly edited to improve reader-friendliness, but we have generally refrained from more radical interventions in the texts that would stop the book being José Lambert's.

The bibliographies of the original articles have been integrated into a double list of references at the end of the volume. It provides bibliographical coverage for the entire book: the first one catalogues *Publications by José Lambert* (including co-authored and co-edited works); the second one, *Other references*, lists all other scholarly works referred to at some time between the covers of this volume.

Acknowledgments

Original sources are specified in the Editors' note at the end of each article separately. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the editors and publishers who have kindly authorized us to reproduce the material included here. Without their generosity this project would not have been possible. Thanks are due also to the Benjamins Translation Library series editors for discreetly welcoming the book in the series, as well as to the competent and obliging staff of John Benjamins.

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Traduction et technique romanesque

(1977)

Les universités de l'Occident n'ont guère exploré, jusqu'ici, un des secteurs les plus complexes et les plus féconds de la communication humaine: la traduction. L'étude du passage d'un système linguistique à l'autre devrait pourtant être instructive à plus d'un titre, notamment en ce qui concerne les liens entre différentes cultures et littératures, mais aussi en ce qui concerne le particulier et l'universel, problèmes-clefs de toute science. Que la traduction ait si longtemps été négligée en tant qu'objet de recherche est sans doute moins imputable aux facteurs invoqués par Henri Meschonnic (une conception idéologique de la traduction, par exemple) qu'aux structures de nos Facultés de Lettres, déterminées notamment par la carte politique et culturelle de l'Europe (et donc indirectement idéologiques, pourrait-on dire). La prolifération actuelle des travaux sur la traduction apparaît en tout cas comme un effet de l'essor de la linguistique et de la théorie de la littérature, qui ne manque pas du reste de mettre en question les cloisonnements traditionnels entre différentes langues et littératures nationales.

Les progrès réalisés depuis la publication des livres de Mounin, Catford, Nida sont certains, mais ils ne peuvent nous inspirer trop d'optimisme. Dans la mesure où le rêve de la machine à traduire se réalise péniblement, il est clair que le processus de la traduction se dérobe à toute systématisation radicale. Dans un domaine où les perspectives internationales s'imposent de manière impérative, on peut du reste regretter les flagrantes lacunes d'information qui défigurent – ou rendent inutiles – tant de publications. Bornons-nous à mentionner ici que nombreux sont les spécialistes qui ignorent *Die literarische Übersetzung* de Jiří Levý (1969 [1963]), ouvrage capital s'il en est.

Cette constatation nous interdit de ranimer la querelle de la traduction comme 'art' ou comme 'technique'. Nous estimons superflu de reprendre des justifications qu'on lira dans les ouvrages de base et dans les études sur lesquelles nous nous

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Editors' note. This article was originally published in the Proceedings of the *XIV. Congresso internazionale de linguistica e filologia romanza* (*Napoli 1974*), edited by A. Varvaro (Napoli: Macchiaroli / Amsterdam: Benjamins), vol. 2, 653–668.

fondons ici. Il suffira d'expliciter les démarches qui nous autorisent à concevoir l'examen de certaines traductions en fonction de catégories littéraires.

Il est connu que la ligne de démarcation entre les traductions 'littéraires' et les autres n'est pas nette et qu'une bonne typologie des textes – laquelle?[1] – pourrait mettre les spécialistes à l'abri d'extrapolations et de dialogues de sourds. Dans les tentatives de défendre la spécificité de la traduction littéraire, on privilégie généralement les caractéristiques soi-disant linguistiques du texte, au détriment de sa fonction. C'est bien parce que Shakespeare occupe, dans les traditions littéraires occidentales (et anglaises), une place spéciale que Letourneur, Guizot, François-Victor Hugo, Gide, Bonnefoy ont eu l'ambition, en le traduisant, de faire œuvre d'art et de rendre service à la littérature française. Le premier objectif du traducteur, face au roman ou face au poème, a presque toujours été d'écrire un poème ou un roman équivalent, et non d'étaler simplement sa connaissance d'une langue étrangère.[2] Ces considérations valent surtout dans le cas des traductions destinées à être diffusées.

En estimant qu'une phrase shakespearienne ne pose pas au traducteur des problèmes *essentiellement* différents qu'une phrase de Bacon, bon nombre de théoriciens ont été amenés à aplatir en quelque sorte l'équivalence. Cette notion de base ne cesse pas de se révéler flottante et, avec elle, la science de la traduction. Dans nos traités didactiques de traduction et dans nos stylistiques comparées, la nature des exemples ne manque pas de déconcerter les spécialistes de la littérature: des phrases empruntées à l'univers de la réclame côtoient la terminologie scientifique et des extraits de romans. Si ceux-ci ont droit à un traitement particulier, c'est uniquement en vertu d''un peu de style' qui les caractériserait. La célèbre formule de Nida (et Taber) cautionne ces méthodes:

> La traduction consiste à reproduire dans la langue réceptrice le message de la langue source au moyen de l'équivalent le plus proche et le plus naturel, d'abord en ce qui concerne le sens, ensuite en ce qui concerne le style. (Taber 1972: 55)

Henri Meschonnic (1973: 327–366) a fait justice de cette conception décorative du style. La question du style est en fait étroitement liée à la question de l'équivalence. Le malentendu sur la nature de ce phénomène est profond. Il le serait déjà moins si, en matière de traduction, une linguistique du texte se substituait à la linguistique des phrases: l'interprétation d'un mot ou d'un bout de phrase ne peut être réalisée à l'écart du (con)texte. Le fait d'isoler les phrases a pour conséquence

1. Il paraît inutile de s'étendre ici sur les pièges de toute typologie. Nous ne sommes en tout cas pas le premier à nous demander pourquoi Katharina Reiss (1971) préfère celle de Bühler à celle de Jakobson.

2. Les traductions 'philologiques', celles des éditions bilingues par exemple, n'échappent qu'en partie à cette vérité.

une réduction du 'sens' à certains de ses aspects (souvent à l'aspect lexical). La phrase de Jakobson: « on n'a pas le droit de restreindre la notion d'information à l'aspect cognitif du langage » (1963: 215), nous estimons urgent de l'appliquer à la linguistique qui s'occupe de la traduction. La gêne qu'éprouvent les spécialistes de la littérature en lisant Nida, Catford, Gipper, Wandruszka et toutes les stylistiques comparées est imputable surtout à cette réduction. Celle-ci a en effet de graves conséquences lors de la transposition d'œuvres littéraires. L'affirmation: « to communicate effectively one must respect the genius of each language » (Nida & Taber 1969: 4), oriente toute la « dynamic equivalence » chez Nida et, sans qu'il y ait nécessairement influence, les conceptions normatives des théoriciens (à l'exception de Koller et des théoriciens littéraires[3]). Elle implique que le texte de départ peut être clarifié et adapté à l'usage. Nous n'entendons pas simplement soutenir le contraire: c'est la généralisation qui suscite des difficultés majeures. Dans la traduction de beaucoup de textes littéraires, expliciter revient à préférer la clarté à la vérité, comme nous le verrons. Loin de nous l'idée de contester les mérites des Nida, Vinay, Darbelnet, etc. Il nous suffira d'indiquer que leurs conclusions demandent à être assouplies de manière à être valables pour *tous* les textes. Il est vrai que la pierre de touche de tout le système, l'équivalence, perd ainsi de sa netteté. Faudrait-il pour autant, au nom de la clarté, faire violence à la vérité?

Que dans la traduction le lexique puisse entrer en conflit avec la syntaxe, le niveau de langue, la succession des mots, les sonorités, etc., on le lit surtout chez Jiří Levý. Le schéma présenté à la page 19 de *Die literarische Übersetzung* pourrait servir de base à la typologie des textes dont rêvent notamment K. Reiss et W. Koller. Étant donné qu'il oriente nos commentaires sur les traductions, nous estimons opportun de le reproduire ci-dessous; en combinant les catégories indiquées sur l'axe horizontal avec celles de l'axe vertical, on voit ce qui doit rester invariable (i) et ce qui peut varier (v):

	Fachtext	publizistische und rhetorische Prosa	Kunstprosa und Drama	freier Vers	gebundener Vers	musikalischer Text (Libretto)	Dubbing
denotative Bedeutung	i	i	i	i	i	i–v	i–v
konnotative Bedeutung	v	i–v	i	i	i	i	i
stilistische Einordnung des Worts	i–v	i	i	i	i	i	i
Satzbau	v	i–v	i	i	i	i	i
Wiederholung von Klangqualitäten (Rhythmus, Reim)	v	v	v	i–v	i	i	i–v
Länge und Höhe der Vokale	v	v	v	i–v	i–v	i	i
Artikulationscharakter	v	v	v	i–v	i–v	i–v	i

3. On remarque aussi une évolution vers plus de souplesse, à ce sujet, chez Katharina Reiss.

Il importe aussi de rapprocher théorie et pratique, théorie et critique. La théorie moderne de la traduction pourrait tirer un profit énorme de l'analyse des traductions déjà existantes. C'est là une démarche historique, c'est-à-dire que la conception de la traduction sur laquelle se fonde le texte est une conception particulière, historiquement déterminée. L'écart entre celle-ci et la théorie qui guide le critique peut être source de malentendus. Il serait par exemple difficile d'appliquer les idées de Nida à une traduction élaborée suivant une autre méthode, qu'elle date de 1830 ou de 1970. Le passage de la linguistique de la phrase à des œuvres concrètes pose de nouvelles difficultés. Comment formuler des conclusions qui portent sur l'ensemble de l'œuvre? Comment résoudre la question des titres qui changent, des phrases ou des mots supprimés ou interpolés? Par le tour de passe-passe classique qui consiste à dire: il ne s'agit plus d'une 'traduction', mais d'une 'adaptation'? Il s'impose alors de vérifier combien de 'traductions' nous resteraient dans l'histoire des littératures européennes. Autrement dit, n'est-ce pas la faillite d'une science qui prétend expliquer la réalité en question? Bannir l'interprétation – car il s'agit bien de cela – du processus de la traduction, c'est retourner subrepticement à la chimère de l'automatisme.

L'article que Félix Kahn a publié dans *Les Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* (1971–1972) devrait à ce propos nous inspirer beaucoup de sagesse. L'examen des différents procédés de traduction (le calque, la transposition, la modulation, l'adaptation...) dégage la « complexité de l'activité traduisante et linguistique », qui exige le recours à des « procédés de traduction indirects », étant donné que « la traduction littérale demeure un procédé d'une application relativement rare ».

En passant des procédés de Kahn – qui remontent en fait à Vinay et Darbelnet – au schéma de Levý, la critique des traductions pourrait partir de bases solides et précises. La fidélité à *un* aspect de l'œuvre de départ étant toujours compensée par l'infidélité à *d'autres aspects* (l'ouvrage de Levý ne cesse de l'illustrer), il importe de reconnaître d'emblée le caractère particulier de la version à étudier:

> Fast alle linguistischen Arbeiten haben eines gemeinsam: daß sie nämlich den Anteil des Übersetzers am Übersetzungsprozeß und an der Struktur des übersetzten Werks übergehen; daß sie, um mit Uriel Weinreich zu reden, die Übersetzung auf den 'Kontakt zweier Sprachen' reduzieren. (Levý 1969: 25)

On comprend que le processus de la sélection – « translation as a decision process » (Levý 1967) – soit déterminé notamment par la nature du message à traduire, et donc par une interprétation globale de l'œuvre. Or, c'est ici que se séparent généralement le traducteur 'littéraire' et le traducteur tout court. Ainsi le montrent du moins toutes les expériences que nous avons faites jusqu'ici et dont il sera question ci-dessous: durant l'élaboration des traductions littéraires, le processus de la sélection, qui n'est pas mécanique, répond notamment à des motivations esthétiques et, de toute façon, il entraîne une modification des caractéristiques esthétiques de l'œuvre.

Jiří Levý, ayant attaché beaucoup d'importance à la personnalité artistique du traducteur, a proposé aux spécialistes une méthode d'analyse qui est essentiellement génétique et, en outre, fort spitzérienne par le fait que les lignes de force de l'analyse se dessinent a posteriori, ou plutôt au fur et à mesure que progresse l'analyse. Ses disciples, Anton Popovič par exemple, montrent que le cadre de l'enquête peut être préétabli, du moins en partie, et dès lors plus systématique. Une série d'autres méthodes sont expérimentées actuellement dans divers centres européens et américains. Celle que nous tenons à présenter ici est appliquée actuellement à des œuvres suffisamment nombreuses et différentes pour qu'elle puisse avoir déjà des vertus méthodologiques.

Délimitons toutefois ses prétentions. Étant donné l'impossibilité actuelle de 'comparer' vraiment, non deux langues, mais l'usage particulier de deux langues – toutes nos stylistiques comparées sont des esquisses –, force est de renoncer à une étude qui jugerait le traducteur en fonction des moyens linguistiques mis à sa disposition. À la question: « Comment faut-il traduire tel mot, telle phrase, telle expression? », on ne peut répondre par une réponse nette (entre autres à cause des différents niveaux et états de la langue). Cela implique aussi l'impossibilité de caractériser la traduction dans son ensemble du point de vue linguistique. Il est vrai que l'œuvre littéraire, voire tout message linguistique, se refuse à cette exhaustivité. Il importe par conséquent d'appliquer aux textes en présence un *tertium comparationis*, une grille de référence. Nous estimons possible d'en utiliser plusieurs. Popovič se fonde par exemple sur un réseau stylistique des valeurs expressives. Pour l'examen des 'Belles Infidèles' et pour de nombreuses traductions françaises du dix-neuvième siècle – bref, pour tout ce qu'on appellerait 'adaptation' de nos jours –, les caractéristiques littéraires du texte de départ peuvent suffire.[4] À mesure que la technique et la méthode du traducteur se rapprochent de la science de la traduction actuelle, les instruments du critique doivent se raffiner (Levý 1969: 160–170).[5] C'est alors que la technique romanesque (et sans doute aussi la technique poétique, la technique théâtrale) se révèle précieuse. Il s'agit, bien entendu, toujours d'une confrontation de deux textes au moins: quiconque oublierait, en scrutant une traduction, que celle-ci prétend représenter une autre œuvre – prétention profondément équivoque –,

4. Cela signifie que la systématisation des méthodes d'analyse ne mettra pas fondamentalement en question les nombreuses enquêtes qui ont été consacrées à ce groupe de traductions.

5. Lors d'une conférence à Louvain (26 février 1974), James Holmes, de l'Université d'Amsterdam, s'est rallié à ces vues.

méconnaîtrait la nature véritable du texte en question.[6] Par son ambiguïté, due à l'intervention de deux langues, deux contextes socioculturels et deux personnalités artistiques, l'œuvre traduite pose un redoutable problème à la critique moderne, qui postule la cohérence du document à étudier. L'approche unilatérale, à partir du milieu d'arrivée, pour être féconde (elle permet de déceler ce qu'il y a de français et de gidien dans le *Hamlet* de Gide, par exemple), ne fait que confirmer cette dualité.

Tout cela explique le caractère apparemment négatif de la première étape de notre analyse: comme Levý, nous sommes à la recherche des glissements – il ne s'agit pas d' 'écarts' – entre le texte de départ (T1) et le texte d'arrivée (T2). Dans une seconde étape, qui ne sera guère illustrée ici,[7] nous situons les glissements dans l'ensemble de T2, pour déterminer leur signification globale par rapport aux deux textes. C'est le bilan des conséquences esthétiques des glissements, généralement négligé dans les recherches entreprises jusqu'ici. Enfin, nous tentons de remonter aux causes (la motivation chez le traducteur: sa personnalité artistique individuelle et ses liens avec le milieu littéraire; le recours à des données extérieures au texte n'est pas indispensable[8]), qui permettent souvent de redécouvrir T2 à un niveau supérieur et de dépasser les 'glissements', ce qui confère à T2 l'autonomie partielle qui le caractérise.

Un des dangers majeurs de toute critique des traductions est constitué par la vision naïvement normative qui envisage T1 et T2 en termes de supériorité et d'infériorité. La seule absence d'une théorie normative solide en matière de traduction devrait ici nous mettre en garde. Il n'en reste pas moins que la fidélité, quelle que soit sa nature, à ce qui apparaît comme l'essence de T1, est reconnue comme un critère – non comme le seul par le traducteur et par le critique. Mais cela ne résout pas toute la question de l'évaluation esthétique. En attendant, rien ne nous interdit de limiter nos ambitions à ce sujet, comme le fait d'ailleurs la théorie de la littérature, et, au lieu de procéder à une franche évaluation, de la préparer à l'aide d'une description systématique.[9]

Nos recherches sur les versions françaises de Ludwig Tieck et de E. T. A. Hoffmann, versions élaborées entre 1820 et 1860, ont mis en évidence que les différences – généralement considérables, parfois réduites – entre original et

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6. C'est quelquefois le cas chez Henri Meschonnic, qui en arrive ainsi à se contredire. Katharina Reiss exige fort pertinemment que le critique envisage aussi bien la traduction en elle-même qu'en rapport avec le modèle.

7. Elle exige l'élaboration de monographies, étant donné que la signification globale des glissements ne peut être fixée qu'a posteriori.

8. On songe évidemment aux querelles concernant la nature des rapports entre l'auteur et son œuvre, rapports que nous n'entendons simplifier ni pour l'auteur ni pour le traducteur.

9. Cela n'implique pas que nous sombrions dans le relativisme. L'évaluation ne peut être notre propos ici.

traduction sont imputables notamment à des conceptions divergentes du récit. Le statut même de la fiction et de la vraisemblance, la façon dont le narrateur se rapporte à elle et à ses lecteurs, le rythme de la narration, l'enchaînement des épisodes, le décor et l'espace subissent des modifications systématiques. C'est le cas aussi bien des traductions littérales, apparemment en rupture avec les 'Belles Infidèles' (Von Stackelberg 1971; Bereaud 1971; Lambert 1975b), que des soi-disant adaptations. Des glissements semblables peuvent être observés dans les traductions modernes, dont on peut naïvement supposer qu'elles se distinguent de leur modèle pour des raisons linguistiques évidentes, et non pour des raisons littéraires (ce qui impliquerait qu'elles soient 'parfaites' sur le plan littéraire: seules les 'mauvaises' traductions seraient du ressort de la critique littéraire). L'objection qu'on est en présence de 'Belles Infidèles' ressuscitées, ou que le fameux goût français est de tous les temps, perd de sa pertinence devant la constatation que les mêmes mécanismes interviennent dans la transposition en néerlandais de romans français ou dans des versions anglaises de romans néerlandais.

À examiner de plus près ces mécanismes et leur origine, on se rend compte qu'ils sont imputables à la nature même de la traduction et des rapports entre les langues.

Les procédés dits implication et explication ont déjà fait couler de l'encre. À leur propos, les notions 'contexte' et 'style' ont constitué de vrais pièges. On ne peut se borner à proclamer heureuses ou malheureuses telles ou telles autres explications ou implications. Les conséquences au niveau de la technique romanesque n'ont pas été entrevues. Dans le roman, les deux procédés se ramènent à un phénomène plus général, la rationalisation des rapports entre narrateur (lecteur) et fiction. Cette rationalisation, quoi qu'il en soit, paraît inévitable et rarement innocente, c'est-à-dire qu'elle a des conséquences significatives pour l'ensemble du roman en tant que roman.[10]

Dans *De oogst* de Stijn Streuvels, les moissonneurs flamands sont en quelque sorte perdus dans l'immensité des plaines du Nord de la France. L'âpre lutte contre les forces de la nature met à l'épreuve leur endurance. Chacun d'entre eux vit avec ses outils et avec le groupe. Par l'usage systématique d'un vocabulaire technique, le narrateur suggère la familiarité du moissonneur avec ses outils, et celle qui relie d'autre part narrateur et personnages. Le traducteur ne peut remplacer impunément le mot « pikke », qui n'a pas de vrai équivalent en français, soit par

10. On lira les pages 117–122 de l'ouvrage de Levý, qui nous servent de base, mais où l'application à la technique romanesque n'est pas encore entreprise. Pour l'ensemble de notre documentation, nous mettons à contribution, outre notre propre inventaire, les mémoires de licence que nous dirigeons à la K.U.Leuven. Nous remercions chaleureusement nos étudiants de leur collaboration, dont la nature est précisée dans notre bibliographie, et qui oriente sensiblement la présente étude. Dans les citations, c'est toujours nous qui soulignons.

« sape flamande », soit par « fauchon »: ce serait porter atteinte à la cohérence de tout un univers socio-culturel. D'où l'embarras de Georges Khnopff devant la phrase suivante, où se reflète toute la monotonie et toute la solitude de la vie du moissonneur:

> Ze verwisselden *de pikke* voor *de zeis.*
> Ils remplaçaient *la faux* par *la faux.*

Évitons de nous tirer d'affaire en parlant d'une 'erreur', car, de toute façon, elle aurait des conséquences. C'est le 'sujet dans la langue' qui, chez Streuvels, crée une connivence entre le narrateur et les moissonneurs, et c'est cette connivence qui est au moins partiellement détruite par la disparition d'un terme technique et de ses connotations.

Il ne suffit pas, à propos de vocabulaire technique ou 'intraduisible', de s'aveugler sur les exigences des deux langues en présence. Il incombe au critique d'examiner les conséquences, au niveau de la technique romanesque, des options prises par le traducteur. Que les temps du discours et du récit ne soient pas identiques en français et en allemand, nous le savons depuis longtemps. Mais cette situation appelle une solution. Il est passionnant de voir que *Michael Kohlhaas* de Kleist évolue sensiblement vers un 'récit scénique', notamment parce que les temps du passé ont souvent été rendus en français par des passés simples. C'est la solution donnée par un traducteur déterminé aux conflits entre les exigences linguistiques et les exigences esthétiques qui procure à chaque roman en traduction des caractéristiques particulières: les glissements sont inévitables, ils ne peuvent être appréciés en des termes comme exactitude, correction, enrichissement, appauvrissement, supériorité, infériorité, mais suivant leur fonction romanesque.

Or, il est significatif que ces fonctions ne changent pas uniquement sous le poids de l'usage, mais aussi à la suite d'interventions délibérées, plus ou moins discrètes suivant le cas, de la part du traducteur. Trahison? Peu importe en réalité, puisque ce genre de trahison, nous l'avons rencontré dans toutes les traductions examinées.

De même que les mots techniques, le dialecte et les 'écarts' (des décalages dans le niveau de langue: langage incorrect, illogique ou inhabituel, etc.) posent au traducteur des problèmes d'ordre linguistique, certes, mais aussi d'ordre esthétique. Cela vaut d'ailleurs pour la poésie et le théâtre comme pour le roman. Mais dans ce dernier cas, l'intervention d'une charnière entre le lecteur et la fiction, à savoir le narrateur, conditionne l'agencement de l'œuvre. Bornons-nous à emprunter quelques exemples à des romans où le style populaire des personnages, déteignant sur celui du narrateur, est à l'origine des liens affectifs qui font participer le lecteur à l'histoire:[11]

> De jongens en 't vroeger bedrijf, 't was alles vergeten, in zijn hoofd droeg hij de opgelegde of gedane boodschappen (...)
> (...) and the boys, together with his previous way of life, had fallen into oblivion. There was room in his head now only for errands, done and to be done.
> (*Old Jan*, p. 272)

> Maar met 't krieken van een anderen morgen was de vuiligheid uit de lucht gevaagd en 't werd te zien dat er nog droge dagen achter kwamen en leefte en zonne.
> But then the dismal weather blew itself out and was followed by a spell of sunshine and dryness. (ibid., p. 123)

> Haar getater zegt Houtekiet iets.
> Son plaidoyer plaît à Houtekiet. (*Houtekiet*, p. 37)

> De vader van haar kind wou zij niet in het gevang klappen.
> Elle ne dénoncerait pas le père de son enfant. (ibid., p. 122)

> Hij zegt niets, blijft altijd even rustig en gelijkmatig aan 't werk, overvalt zijn vrouw, pakt direct weer aan, laat, als hij bewonderd en geprezen wordt, rond zijn ogen een paar rimpeltjes lachen, ziet er onverstoorbaar voldaan uit en altijd maar voort ontstaan rond de hut, grillig door elkaar, nuttige en eigenaardige dingen, het lijkt een kleine foor.
> Au travail il ne souffle mot, reste toujours calme et d'humeur égale; il fait l'amour, se remet immédiatement à la tâche; quand on chante ses louanges et qu'on l'admire, quelques rides sourient autour de ses yeux; il est imperturbable et satisfait. Continuellement s'élèvent autour de la maisonnette, bizarrement entremêlées, d'utiles et de curieuses choses; on dirait une foire en miniature.
> (ibid., p. 40)

Le traducteur rapproche l'expression de l'usage, d'un certain usage, ce qui a pour effet d'éloigner affectivement le lecteur de l'univers évoqué devant lui. Ainsi la rationalisation peut aller de pair avec la 'poétisation', qui est, elle aussi, extrêmement fréquente.[12]

Depuis longtemps, les spécialistes du roman portent un intérêt particulier au style indirect libre et, dès lors, à la transition, dans le roman, de la narration au style indirect conjonctionnel, au style indirect libre et au style direct.[13] Il semble bien que l'enchevêtrement de ces différents discours nous fournisse une des

11. Pour l'identification de nos sources, on se reportera à notre bibliographie.

12. Au sujet de la poétisation, on consultera encore Levý et, en outre, Meschonnic.

13. Nous devons à M. Christian Angelet (K.U.Leuven) et aux travaux qu'il dirige d'avoir entrevu l'importance du problème.

clefs de l'illusion romanesque. En découvrant suivant quels principes le narrateur accorde la parole aux personnages, comment il structure le temps et l'espace, comment il relie dialogues, scènes, commentaires, nous cernons mieux la nature des vérités que contient l'action. Or, il est frappant que ce soit surtout au style indirect (libre) que s'achoppent les traducteurs. Ou serait-ce à l'équivoque qui paraît le caractériser? En l'évitant, soit en faveur du style direct, soit en faveur du commentaire, les traducteurs départagent personnages et narrateur; ils imposent au roman plus de clarté. Mais, à en juger d'après les exemples – fort nombreux – que nous avons pu recueillir, ils touchent ainsi à l'essence même du récit. C'est le cas des versions françaises de *Michael Kohlhaas* par exemple. Cette nouvelle, présentée comme une chronique médiévale, est écrite dans un style faussement objectif dont l'auteur tire des effets bien particuliers. Le style indirect sous-tend ici une relation ironique entre Kohlhaas et le narrateur dont dépend le sens même de la chronique:

> Der Freiherr, sobald er den Roßhändler erblickte, ging, während die Ritter plötzlich still wurden, und mit dem Verhör der Knechte einhielten, auf ihn zu, und fragte ihn: was er wolle? und da der Roßkamm ihm auf ehrerbietige Weise sein Vorhaben, bei dem Verwalter in Lockewitz zu Mittag zu speisen, und den Wunsch, die Landsknechte deren er dabei nicht bedürfe, zurücklassen zu dürfen, vorgetragen hatte, antwortete der Freiherr, die Farbe im Gesicht wechselnd, indem er eine andere Rede zu verschlucken schien: « er würde wohl tun, wenn er sich still in seinem Hause hielte und den Schmaus bei dem Lockewitzer Amtmann vor der Hand noch aussetzte. » – Dabei wandte er sich, das ganze Gespräch zerschneidend, dem Offizianten zu, und sagte ihm: « daß es mit dem Befehl, den er ihm, in bezug auf den Mann, gegeben, sein Bewenden hätte, und daß derselbe anders nicht, als in Begleitung sechs berittener Landsknechte die Stadt verlassen dürfe. » – Kohlhaas fragte: ob er ein Gefangener wäre, und ob er glauben solle, daß die ihm feierlich, vor den Augen der ganzen Welt angelobte Amnestie gebrochen sei? worauf der Freiherr sich plötzlich glutrot im Gesichte zu ihm wandte, und, indem er dicht vor ihn trat, und ihm in das Auge sah, antwortete: ja! ja! ja! – ihm den Rücken zukehrte, ihn stehen ließ, und wieder zu den Nagelschmidtschen Knechten ging.
> (p. 73)[14]

> Les chevaliers firent aussitôt silence, et l'interrogatoire fut un moment suspendu: le baron, apercevant son visiteur, alla droit à lui et lui demanda ce qu'il voulait. Le maquignon découvrit respectueusement son intention d'aller dîner chez l'intendant à Lockwitz, et le désir qu'il avait de ne point être accompagné par des lansquenets, n'en ayant aucun besoin. À cette demande, le baron changea de couleur. « Vous ferez bien, dit-il, en ayant l'air de se contenir, pour ne pas dire autre chose, vous ferez bien de rester tranquillement chez vous, et de remettre à un

14. Heinrich von Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe. Zweiter Band* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985 [erste Auflage 1952]).

> autre moment le festin chez l'intendant à Lockwitz ». Et, rompant brusquement l'entretien, il se tourna vers l'officier de police et lui dit: « Tenez-vous-en à l'ordre que je vous ai donné au sujet de cet homme, et souvenez-vous qu'il ne doit point sortir de la ville sans être accompagné de six lansquenets à cheval ».
> « Suis-je donc prisonnier? demanda Kohlhaas, et dois-je croire que l'amnistie accordée à la face du monde est violée? » Le baron devint tout rouge et se tourna brusquement vers lui; puis il vint se placer en face de lui, et, le regardant dans les yeux: « Oui, répondit-il, oui, oui! » Et il lui tourna le dos, le laissa interdit et s'en revint trouver les hommes de la bande de Nagelschmidt. (*Kohlhaas*, pp. 66–67)

Dans cette version de *Kohlhaas* comme dans tous les textes pris en considération, il s'agit de *tendances* – avec des fluctuations – dans la transposition du style indirect. Elles se font jour avec beaucoup de variantes quant à la façon et quant à leur netteté. Ainsi, dans une version généralement scrupuleuse comme le *Houtekiet* de Roger Verheyen, le besoin d'éviter les anomalies syntaxiques de Walschap entraîne une réduction considérable de la zone où se confondent le narrateur et les habitants du village de Deps:

> Toen hij twintig jaar was had hij zich in het hoofd gestoken pastoor te worden. Tien jaar later was ik het.
> Quand il eut vingt ans, il s'était mis en tête de devenir curé. « Dix ans après, je l'étais ». (*Houtekiet*, p. 246)

> Zijn rust maakte de jonge heer zo bang dat hij alleen nog dacht aan wegkomen. En aan het vinden van een goede boswachter, het enige middel.
> Son calme impressionna tant le gentilhomme qu'il ne pensa plus qu'à s'esquiver. Et à trouver un bon garde: *c'est* le seul moyen. (ibid., p. 44)

> Toch behelzen de argumenten in het voordeel van de hei *zeer veel waars, zeer veel waars*. *Poos*. *Zeer veel waars*. Bovendien, we plaatsen ons niet op rechtsstandpunt.
> « (...) les arguments en faveur de Deps contiennent pourtant beaucoup de vrai, beaucoup de vrai. » *Pause.* « En outre, nous ne nous plaçons pas au point de vue du droit ». (ibid., p. 197)

Dans ce *Houtekiet* français, contrairement à ce que peuvent faire supposer les exemples présentés ci-dessus, c'est le plus souvent le commentaire qui se substitue au style indirect (libre). Dans d'autres traductions, l'inverse se produit. Une hésitation se dessine ainsi, tantôt en faveur de la narration, tantôt en faveur de la scène. Les deux solutions coexistent souvent: c'est le cas dans le fragment de Kohlhaas cité ci-dessus. Il en résulte qu'une meilleure démarcation est imposée à ce qui appartient au narrateur et à ses personnages.

Le même effet est souvent obtenu par l'usage des guillemets entourant un passage en style direct. Il arrive même que cet usage s'étende à des passages en style indirect libre ou conjonctionnel; ou que des tirets isolent les dialogues des commentaires ou des résumés. La ponctuation, elle aussi, remplit une fonction romanesque, et le traducteur ne manque pas de s'en rendre compte.

Très souvent, la scission narrateur-personnage est confirmée par la mise en page. Il ne semble pas que celle-ci devienne jamais plus compacte. Au contraire, dans de nombreux cas, les alinéas se multiplient, soit en fonction des dialogues, soit en fonction de la progression du récit, soit en fonction d'une progression dans les raisonnements. L'évolution vers un récit scénique est souvent décevable à ce niveau (on se reportera encore au fragment de *Kohlhaas*); elle se traduit quelquefois aussi dans une division en chapitres et en épisodes dont seul le traducteur est responsable.

D'autres charnières entre le narrateur et l'histoire sont exposées au phénomène de la rationalisation, telles les incises (dit-il, s'écria-t-il, etc.), tels les adjectifs accolés au nom d'un personnage, tels encore les adverbes caractérisant un comportement ou un événement. En guise d'illustration, voici encore un extrait de *Kohlhaas* où l'évolution vers plus d'intensité se reflète clairement:

> Der Amtmann fragte, indem er ihn *befremdet* ansah, was ihn so plötzlich auf so wunderbare Gedanken bringe (...)
> Le bailli, regardant Kohlhaas *avec stupéfaction,* lui demanda ce qui pouvait le porter subitement à de si étranges idées (...) (*Kohlhaas,* p. 18)

En se substituant à l'auteur, le traducteur modifie donc le sens du récit. Attirons à ce propos l'attention sur les changements de titre qui peuvent être introduits dans la traduction, qu'il s'agisse du titre d'un chapitre ou du titre principal. Le problème peut être élargi à toute dénomination ou qualification qui, dans la fiction, renvoie à un être qui raisonne et qui ordonne; d'où la signification des conjonctions, de l'enchaînement syntaxique, de la succession des mots et des propositions. La première chose que le traducteur s'estime autorisé à restructurer, n'est-ce pas la syntaxe? Ainsi un lien peut être établi entre l'interprétation, sans laquelle il n'y a pas de traduction, et ce que les théoriciens du roman appellent le 'point de vue'. La traduction du roman semble être essentiellement une question de point de vue, ou mieux, de 'vision', puisqu'elle met en cause l'ensemble des relations entre personnages, narrateur, lecteur, auteur et traducteur.[15]

Cette conclusion se trouve indirectement justifiée par la nature des procédés de traduction, étudiés par Vinay et Darbelnet, puis par Kahn: la transposition, la modulation, l'adaptation (!) seraient-elles donc gratuites, n'auraient-elles pas d'incidence sur le sens? Les linguistes se le demandent souvent à propos de

15. Comme le montre Mlle B. Schreurs, les traductions françaises de *Tristram Shandy* offrent une vraie synthèse de ce que nous entendons formuler sur le plan théorique. Mais les travaux sur les textes de Streuvels, Walschap, Kleist, Twain, etc. illustrent aussi sans équivoque nos remarques. Trois enquêtes sur *Houtekiet* entreprises indépendamment l'une de l'autre ont abouti aux mêmes conclusions.

la grammaire transformationnelle. N'y aurait-il vraiment pas de glissement de 'Pierre frappe Paul' à 'Paul est frappé par Pierre'? S'il est vrai que cela dépend du contexte, nos réflexions sur les glissements au niveau de la technique romanesque se trouvent amplement justifiées.

Il va de soi que la combinaison de l'histoire et de la narration en poésie doit nous intéresser au même titre que le genre appelé 'roman'.[16] D'une manière générale, bon nombre de nos considérations sur la technique romanesque valent, *mutatis mutandis*, pour les autres genres de fiction. Elles ne fournissent en tout cas aux chercheurs qu'un cadre d'analyse. Les effets et les modalités de la rationalisation varient d'œuvre en œuvre et de traduction en traduction. C'est pourquoi nous avons renoncé à aborder ici la seconde étape de l'analyse, où les conséquences globales des glissements doivent être envisagées et où, dès lors, la relation à l'œuvre de départ cesse d'être primordiale. Dans la mesure où les interprétations du traducteur remontent à des conceptions artistiques, il va de soi que la littérature comparée peut à son tour compléter l'analyse. Elle nous aidera à déterminer aussi bien certaines causes – chez le traducteur – que certaines conséquences profondes chez le lecteur – des tendances décelées au niveau des textes.

Documents littéraires

Voici les traductions auxquelles nous empruntons des extraits (entre parenthèses, le nom de l'étudiant qui a fait l'étude):

– de Kleist, H. 1888. *Michel Kohlhaas.* Traduction française par l'abbé Beffeyte (...) et l'abbé J. Peyrègne. Paris: Delalain. (Mlle Annelies Renard)
– Streuvels, Stijn. 1936. *Old Jan.* Translated by Crankshaw. London: Allen & Unwin. (Mlle M. Ptaszynski)
– Walschap, Gérard. 1942. *Houtekiet*. Traduction de Roger Verheyen. Bruxelles: Éditions de la Toison d'Or. (Mlle Lieve Leenknecht)

Notre article se fonde en outre sur les traductions des œuvres suivantes (entre parenthèses, d'abord le nombre des traductions s'il y en a plusieurs et ensuite, s'il y a lieu, le nom de l'étudiant qui a fait l'étude):

16. Ceci ressort avec netteté des travaux consacrés aux traductions du *Lyrisches Intermezzo* de Heine par trois de nos étudiants (Mlle Béatrice Lamiroy, MM. Luc Vandeborght et Johan Ryngaert). En lisant Hana Jechová (1970), « La perspective de la représentation littéraire et le problème de la traduction », article encore timide, on verra comment nos remarques pourraient êtres appliquées aux textes littéraires en général.

- Couperus, Louis: *Majesteit* (Mme A. Van Den Broecke).
- Hoffmann, E. T. A.: *Das Majorat* (5 versions: M. R. Waeyaert).
- Hoffmann, E. T. A.: *Mademoiselle von Scuderi* (5 versions: M. C. Van Coolput).
- Sterne, Laurence: *A sentimental journey* (2 versions: Mlle M. Delahaye).
- Sterne, Laurence: *Tristram Shandy* (4 versions: Mlle B. Schreurs).
- Streuvels, Stijn: *De oogst* (Mlle K. Verstuyft).
- Streuvels, Stijn: *Het Kerstekind* (M. L. Lamaire).
- Tieck, Ludwig: une dizaine de récits (parfois 2 ou 3 versions).
- Twain, Mark: *Tom Sawyer* (M. T. Boucquey).

Production, tradition et importation: une clef pour la description de la littérature et de la littérature en traduction[1]

(1980)

Au cours des dernières années, les spécialistes de la traduction se sont souvent interrogés sur la valeur de leurs théories. Plusieurs d'entre eux aspirent ainsi à une théorie qui, au lieu de ressembler à un jeu spéculatif aussi brillant que stérile, se distingue par son efficacité: il s'agit en effet d'interpréter sous tous ses angles le phénomène désigné par le terme 'traduction'. D'où la nécessité de prendre en considération – au lieu de l'exclure *a priori* – la diversité historique et culturelle des traductions, qui a été assez systématiquement ignorée par la plupart des théories, enfermées dans la synchronie et dans des définitions normatives (Lambert 1978b).

Au lieu de méditer *in vitro* sur des phénomènes en grande partie imaginaires parce que non observés, les spécialistes de la traduction devraient organiser des enquêtes *descriptives* de différents types. Bien entendu, elles ont besoin d'une base théorique. Le recours à la théorie n'a rien d'un cercle vicieux aussi longtemps qu'on envisage un modèle hypothétique, et non des schémas statiques.

Sans se fonder sur des théories délibérément fonctionnalistes, Katharina Reiss (1971) et Werner Koller (1972) ont eu le mérite de dénoncer l'absence de travaux 'critiques' – disons 'descriptifs', pour éviter l'orientation normative – comme une lacune inquiétante dans l'ensemble de la science de la traduction. Il est vrai en effet

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1. Le présent article, qui est continuellement à cheval sur la théorie et l'étude descriptive (historique), trouve son origine dans une enquête comparatiste de type descriptif sur les relations franco-allemandes; cette enquête a été sans cesse élargie et revue sur ses prémisses théoriques; elle a débouché sur le projet de recherches: Lieven D'hulst, José Lambert et Katrin Van Bragt, *Littérature et traduction en France* (1800–1850): *état des travaux* (1979). Je remercie vivement Lieven D'hulst et Katrin Van Bragt de m'avoir aidé à mettre à l'épreuve le schéma production-tradition-importation. C'est Lieven D'hulst qui a mis en évidence l'utilité du concept de 'système intermédiaire' (Yahalom 1981, 1983).

que les meilleures publications et les meilleurs colloques consacrés à la traduction, s'ils réservent beaucoup de place à des *exemples* d'enquêtes descriptives, négligent systématiquement d'aborder les perspectives théoriques et méthodologiques de l'analyse des traductions. Le livre de Katharina Reiss, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Übersetzungskritik*, reste ainsi unique dans son genre, même si le résultat atteint appelle bien des réserves. J'ai souligné ailleurs (Lambert 1978c) pourquoi la théorie *générale* de la traduction ferait bien d'intégrer à son objet, à part entière, la traduction littéraire et les études théoriques et descriptives portant sur la traduction d'œuvres littéraires. Les considérations qui suivent concernent essentiellement l'étude descriptive de la littérature en traduction, mais il devrait être possible d'en tirer profit pour l'étude de *toute* traduction.

La plupart des analyses de traductions restent asservies aux théories statiques lancées vers la fin des années cinquante: on examine successivement différents niveaux du texte traduit (jamais, ou exceptionnellement, *des* textes traduits), en commençant par des questions comme le lexique, la syntaxe, le niveau stylistique, à moins de commencer par les procédés de traduction (transfert, modulation, adaptation, ou implication / explication). Parfois les niveaux textuels (par exemple, sémantique, stylistique) sont combinés avec les procédés de traduction, ce qui augmente quelque peu la souplesse de l'approche. Mais c'est en vertu d'un présupposé bien tenace qu'on s'attache *a priori* et exclusivement aux structures microscopiques du texte, alors que le caractère 'dynamique' de l'équivalence – entrevu de trente-six manières, il est vrai – est assez unanimement accepté par les théoriciens. Même chez Reiss, *la fonction* de l'équivalence apparaît comme un élément parmi d'autres, lors de l'analyse, et nullement comme un facteur essentiel. Les aspects macrostructurels de la traduction ne sont pas ignorés officiellement, ils le sont *dans la pratique*, ils interviendront 'plus tard', quand l'observation microscopique aura abouti. Or, une accumulation d'éléments linguistiques ne fera jamais un texte et ne permettra jamais de cerner les principes qui organisent un processus. La traduction n'est pas abordée à partir de ce qui constitue sa raison d'être.

Partons dès lors d'une hypothèse qui n'a rien d'inattendu (mais qui est rarement suivie), suivant laquelle micro- et macrostructures s'interpénètrent et suivant laquelle les microstructures sont *fonction* d'ensembles plus larges (textuels et macrotextuels).

Prenons exactement le contre-pied de la démarche descriptive traditionnelle et envisageons d'emblée les traductions (littéraires, publicitaires, juridiques, etc.) comme un aspect des interférences entre des systèmes de communication (littéraires, publicitaires, juridiques): à l'intérieur de ces systèmes, qui ne sont jamais absolument autonomes et qui sont toujours complexes, un ensemble de lois et de conventions sont acceptées comme (plus ou moins) spécifiques au système et à tout un réseau de sous-systèmes. Les lois (linguistiques, morales, politiques) finissent d'ailleurs souvent par apparaître comme des conventions, ce qui ne manque pas de bouleverser l'équilibre du système. Cet équilibre – ce terme décrit une situation, sans prétendre l'*évaluer* – dépend essentiellement de la cohérence qui caractérise les normes et modèles reconnus comme le centre du système. L'état d'équilibre ou de déséquilibre du système dépend des relations entre le centre (le système dominant) et les (sous-)systèmes environnants. Son fonctionnement et son évolution sont orientés par les interférences entre la production, la tradition et l'importation.

La production désigne *l'ensemble* de la production de messages par les membres du système. Pour la littérature, il s'agit des textes et métatextes de toutes sortes: romans, poésies, documents critiques, affiches, etc. C'est l'élément moteur de la vie littéraire, qui se situe à un autre niveau que la tradition et l'importation, qui désignent *la présence* d'éléments appartenant à d'autres systèmes, mais qui entrent en relation, d'une façon ou d'une autre (peut-être de manière négative, polémique), avec la littérature au sens strict, à savoir la production.

Aucun système de communication n'est, bien entendu, strictement autonome, strictement traditionnel ou entièrement importé. Ces trois catégories – que nous interprétons provisoirement comme de simples instruments descriptifs, et non comme des catégories ontologiques – nous permettent d'observer la stratégie suivie par le système: leur valeur sera donc opérationnelle, ou elle ne sera point.

Notre schéma est sans le moindre doute de nature sémiotique, puisqu'il nous aide à interpréter les interférences linguistiques, économiques, sociales, ou politiques entre deux ou plusieurs cultures. Appliquons-le en premier lieu, maintenant, à la littérature et à la littérature en traduction.

Il paraît séduisant de décrire l'évolution des littératures nationales à l'aide du triangle production-tradition-importation et à partir de la théorie du polysystème. Un tas de relations complexes s'expliquent le mieux, en effet, comme des interférences entre des (sous-)systèmes. Je me contente de puiser dans une série en quelque sorte illimitée d'illustrations, choisies à dessein dans des secteurs très différents.

– La littérature contemporaine de l'Europe est devenue très *internationale*, grâce à l'importation anglo-saxonne par exemple, grâce aussi à la littérature française, qui sert souvent de relais comme littérature dominante sur le continent; en même temps, le poids des traditions nationales (et régionales) a diminué. Comme c'est souvent le cas, la tradition et l'importation se gênent mutuellement.
– L'importation finit souvent elle-même par se confondre avec la tradition. Tel fut le cas des Anciens dans beaucoup de cultures, et surtout dans la France des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles; tel est le cas pour la littérature de jeunesse dans de nombreux pays (Andersen, Grimm, Perrault, en attendant que Walt Disney importe une littérature non-traditionnelle).

– Production, tradition et importation sont en réalité polyvalentes; leurs sous-secteurs s'allient ou se combattent, suivant les circonstances, mais la nature des alliances nous permet de mesurer la stabilité ou le déséquilibre du système. Le romantisme, dans la littérature européenne, importe des modèles et des normes théoriques (celles que défendent, par exemple, les frères Schlegel ou Mme de Staël) à partir de cultures étrangères qui auront pour objectif et pour résultat de combattre le classicisme. Les littératures romantiques s'efforcent de substituer à la tradition classique, devenue traditionnelle, une tradition nationale, ressentie comme novatrice, qui épouse sans trop de difficulté les traditions populaires étrangères et les productions étrangères modernes. Au même moment, une production 'traditionnelle' se maintient: elle se distingue essentiellement du renouveau par les relations qu'elle entretient avec la tradition classique (/ populaire), puis avec l'importation traditionnelle (/ novatrice).
– Dans des situations exceptionnelles, une des trois catégories prend le dessus sur les deux autres ou sur une des deux autres. Ainsi les lettres françaises et néerlandaises de Belgique n'ont cessé de lutter contre l'importation (en grande partie française, partiellement néerlandaise; même l'importation allemande ou anglaise était filtrée partiellement à partir de la France) au cours du XIXe siècle, afin de se faire accepter comme une seule littérature soi-disant nationale; la production cherchait à échapper à la destruction en se donnant une tradition. L'histoire des genres et des sous-genres modernes en France se prête admirablement à une interprétation suivant notre schéma. Le roman historique, le conte fantastique (et, au XXe siècle, le roman policier, la bande dessinée ou la science-fiction) se sont implantés en France comme des genres étrangers, en attendant qu'une francisation progressive se fasse jour, notamment par l'intermédiaire de pseudotraductions: on a cherché systématiquement à leur attribuer une paternité française, dès que leur succès était assuré.

Jusqu'ici, il n'a pas été question de la traduction comme un des secteurs des interférences entre production, tradition et importation. C'est à dessein que nous envisageons par 'importation' un groupe de textes plus vaste que celui des seules traductions.

Si j'envisage l'ensemble des œuvres littéraires traduites dans une langue déterminée comme un système à part, selon les hypothèses formulées par Even-Zohar (1978), je peux envisager l'étude de ce système et des textes qui le représentent selon les mêmes principes. Il se révèle très fécond, en effet, de chercher à déterminer selon quels normes et modèles les textes importés sont d'une part sélectionnés, d'autre part traduits au sens propre: ce sont là les deux critères qui nous autorisent à parler d'un système de littérature traduite. Il s'impose d'autre part de creuser les interpénétrations de ce système et des systèmes environnants, parmi lesquels la littérature de départ et la littérature d'arrivée. À l'aide de cette hypothèse des interférences, je pourrai expliquer pourquoi le Shakespeare de Ducis et de Voltaire nous rappelle Racine et Corneille, ou pourquoi Homère en français ressemble à Ossian en français.

En tant que *sélection* de textes *importés*, le système de la littérature traduite peut relever – et relève en général – aussi bien de la littérature traditionnelle que de la littérature novatrice. Contrairement à ce que les comparatistes tendent à souligner, la littérature importée favorise souvent la tradition plutôt que le renouveau; la littérature classique en France s'est longtemps alimentée par les textes latins et grecs qui étaient susceptibles de confirmer les traditions nationales. Lorsque la sélection des textes importés *change*, la tradition et la production traditionnelles risquent d'être revues. La formule utilisée par tant d'histoires de la littérature, la 'découverte' des littératures étrangères, s'applique en réalité à la sélection *nouvelle* et néglige l'importation de textes déjà connus.

Les théories de la traduction ont presque toutes ruiné l'idée d'une traduction-copie: la traduction équivaut à une *production* de textes d'un type spécial (production de métatextes); elle est le résultat de sélections et de priorités établies lors de ces sélections. Les matériaux textuels – non exclusivement linguistiques – sont choisis par exemple surtout à partir du système d'arrivée (version 'dynamique'), ou surtout à partir du système de départ (version 'adéquate'). Le dilemme dynamique / adéquat est un des multiples canaux qui conditionnent la production des traductions.

L'analyse des traductions portera donc:

1. sur *tous* les niveaux textuels imaginables (lexique, syntaxe, niveau / état de la langue, sociolecte, idiolecte, découpage en séquences, structures narratives, poétiques);
2. sur les priorités établies entre ces niveaux (le lexique peut être sacrifié aux schémas métriques, ou à des structures narratives; dans les versions bilingues, c'est souvent l'inverse qui se présente);
3. sur la priorité adéquat / dynamique quant aux solutions dans 1 et 2.

D'après les options (dominantes), on peut représenter la stratégie du traducteur et la situation du texte traduit dans un schéma.

littérature de départ	**niveaux textuels**	**littérature d'arrivée**
	lexique	
	sonorités	
	syntaxe	
	rythme	
	versification	
	paragraphes (strophes)	
	personnages	
	niveau de langue	
	état de langue	

Sous beaucoup d'aspects, les textes traduits occupent néanmoins une place équivoque dans l'ensemble des littératures – c'est ce qu'illustre d'ailleurs leur position dans les discussions théoriques actuelles – et *entre* les systèmes littéraires: ils représentent une sorte de non-système ou de système intermédiaire. Où situer au juste la multitude des textes traduits en français entre 1800 et 1850, à partir d'une bonne dizaine de langues? Beaucoup d'entre eux n'ont nullement été conçus comme des textes littéraires (ce qui ne les empêcherait pas de fonctionner comme tels, le cas échéant), et le nombre auquel on a reconnu une fonction littéraire est sans doute limité. La poésie japonaise, Rabindranath Tagore et toute poésie 'exotique' en traduction échappent en partie aux catégories descriptives en vigueur dans nos systèmes occidentaux. Pour le XVIIIe et le XIXe siècle français, le véritable Shakespeare français, celui qu'on pouvait jouer (à la rigueur), c'était le Shakespeare en vers de Ducis et tant d'autres, et non celui de Letourneur ou de François-Victor Hugo, une tragédie en prose étant du non-théâtre. À y regarder de plus près, nous retrouvons ici notre triangle production-tradition-importation sous un jour nouveau, ce qui nous amène à mieux situer la traduction dans l'évolution (ou la stagnation) des littératures. Selon les circonstances, le texte traduit remplit une fonction dépaysante (importation non voilée), une fonction traditionnelle (soumission aux conventions de la littérature d'arrivée) ou une fonction a-systémique (le caractère conventionnel ne pouvant être attribué ni à la littérature d'arrivée ni à la littérature de départ). C'est ici, dans cette dernière option, que l'activité traduisante a le plus de chances de rencontrer la littérature nouvelle, qui se situe, elle aussi, en dehors ou contre les conventions du moment; d'où le besoin des grands écrivains d'expérimenter avec des textes importés à traduire; d'où aussi la tendance des littératures en crise à repenser leurs conventions à l'aide de l'activité traduisante.

Un des multiples avantages de notre approche systémique est de nous fournir autant de prise sur les textes adaptés, parodiés ou sur les commentaires, bref sur tous les métatextes intersystémiques, que sur la traduction proprement dite (qu'on ne parvient d'ailleurs jamais à distinguer nettement des autres métatextes): l'étude de la traduction est ainsi intégrée à l'étude de la littérature, sans que ses aspects linguistiques, socioculturels soient ignorés.

L'insertion des textes traduits et autres dans des schémas de communication, littéraires et autres, nous fournit des cadres de référence dans lesquels les procédés et processus de base peuvent aisément être cernés. Comment les littératures française, anglaise, allemande d'une certaine époque conçoivent-elles le discours narratif, les dialogues, la langue populaire, le personnage tragique ou les différents genres poétiques? La réponse à tant de questions si diverses peut être fournie avec une rapidité et une netteté incroyables si l'on observe un corpus de textes traduits et si l'on juxtapose ces textes et des textes représentatifs des différentes littératures. L'essentiel est de disposer d'une bonne bibliothèque et de procéder à des observations en série plutôt qu'à des observations atomistes.

L’éternelle question des frontières: littératures nationales et systèmes littéraires

(1983)

Dans le présent article, nous nous proposons de mettre en question le concept des ‘littératures nationales’, qui continue à orienter nos recherches et notre enseignement de la littérature. Nous estimons que ce concept est fondé sur une idée naïve des frontières entre les littératures, qu’elles soient de nature politique ou linguistique. Toutefois, comme la plupart des conceptions naïves, les ‘littératures nationales’ nous aident à déceler l’organisation des littératures et nous amènent à la reformuler en termes de ‘systèmes’.

L’(in)actualité du sujet

À première vue, il n’est guère opportun d’aborder la question des frontières entre les littératures dites nationales. En effet, elle est apparemment du ressort de l’histoire littéraire et celle-ci, en dépit d’une série d’efforts récents,[1] a bien mal résisté aux attaques d’une certaine théorie littéraire.[2] En fait, s’il fallait réellement nous préoccuper de *l’opportunité* des sujets scientifiques, nous reconnaîtrions par la même occasion que les études littéraires suivent, elles aussi, certaines modes; elles perdraient ainsi une part de leurs garanties d’objectivité et de sérénité.

Il serait d’ailleurs bien naïf d’exclure des réflexions théoriques le problème des littératures nationales ou celui de leur évolution. Une théorie de la littérature digne de ce nom se doit d’expliquer aussi les particularités culturelles (sur le

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1. Mentionnons par exemple: les travaux de Felix Vodička, de Hans-Robert Jauss, un périodique comme *New Literary History*, les congrès de l’AILC et notamment le colloque de Montréal (*Renouvellements dans la théorie de l’histoire littéraire*, McGill University 1982).

2. Et ce depuis les Formalistes russes jusqu’à notre époque, le dernier sursaut spectaculaire étant la Nouvelle Critique française et le néo-structuralisme français.

plan synchronique et sur le plan diachronique) des phénomènes littéraires; une interprétation historique des phénomènes implique des bases théoriques, tout comme l'interprétation théorique implique une prise de position devant l'histoire et devant la culture. On connaît, bien entendu, les difficultés d'une telle entente, qui paraît quelque peu utopique de nos jours (Lambert & Van Gorp 1981). Au niveau des recherches comme au niveau de l'enseignement de la littérature, la théorie et l'histoire littéraires se comportent comme deux mondes séparés, qui entretiennent des rapports éphémères sinon inexistants; les cours d''explication de textes', heureusement, favorisent un certain rapprochement entre les deux démarches. Les cours de littérature comparée, quant à eux, optent soit pour l'orientation historique traditionnelle, soit pour l'orientation théorique, dite plus moderne. Dans la plupart des universités occidentales,[3] le dialogue entre historiens et théoriciens de la littérature reste essentiellement un dialogue de sourds.

Les théoriciens éviteront, bien sûr, de nier l'existence même de 'frontières' entre les littératures, ou l'existence de changements en littérature. Il s'agit là d''évidences' dont le statut scientifique ne semble pas appeler de précisions. Il est vrai que certains traités théoriques sont consacrés essentiellement à l'évolution en littérature (songeons aux grands textes de Y. Tynjanov par exemple); le hasard veut qu'ils n'avaient pas manqué d'embarrasser bon nombre de théoriciens (tel T. Todorov, qui a aidé à diffuser les idées des Formalistes russes tout en les soumettant à une réinterprétation assez unilatérale). Les dernières années, l'assouplissement des positions théoriques a eu notamment pour effet de mieux faire prendre en considération les changements, les (r)évolutions littéraires. Songeons aux travaux sur la 'réception' (selon les différentes formules lancées par Jauss, Iser, Groeben et tant d'autres), ainsi qu'aux travaux d'orientation sémiotique (Eco, Lotman, Bakhtine, etc.), qui exercent une influence rajeunissante notamment sur l'étude de la périodisation (abordée désormais en termes de 'code(s)').

Les théoriciens en question se révèlent généralement bien plus sensibles à la question des ruptures sur le plan diachronique qu'à la question des différenciations sur le plan synchronique. Citons, à titre d'exemple, le célèbre article de H.-R. Jauss (1971) sur le *Traditionsbruch* à l'époque de Stendhal, de Victor Hugo et de Heine; qu'il y ait rupture à peu près au même moment dans différents pays européens paraît sûr, mais les traditions allemandes ne ressemblent que sur certains points aux traditions françaises...

Les spécialistes de l'histoire littéraire (traditionnelle) ne se prononcent guère sur les principes qui les amènent à séparer une littérature déterminée d'une autre, si ce n'est pour polémiser avec ceux qui apportent des subdivisions d'une

3. Il semble que cette remarque ne soit pas réellement valable pour les universités italiennes, qui se sont familiarisées depuis des années avec les sémiotiques culturelles.

autre nature. En s'enfermant généralement à l'intérieur d'une littérature bien déterminée, ils peuvent difficilement prétendre formuler des règles universelles en ce qui concerne les limites entre les littératures 'nationales'.

Quant aux comparatistes, qui devraient en principe être beaucoup mieux situés que les historiens 'nationaux', ils se sont également efforcés de développer des théories sur l'évolution littéraire plutôt que sur les découpages géographiques (politiques, etc.). Ayant été longtemps orientés par des attitudes nationalistes, ils ont fini par se rendre compte de l'insuffisance des critères politiques et/ou linguistiques. Très peu d'entre eux sont parvenus toutefois à formuler de manière explicite les principes qui les amènent à distinguer différentes littératures nationales et des groupes de littératures. Lorsque l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée a lancé son Histoire internationale des littératures, elle a organisé des colloques destinés à jeter des bases théoriques et méthodologiques solides; c'est ainsi qu'elle a proposé de diviser le globe et ses unités culturelles, littéraires en 'zones' (*Neohelicon* 1973). Mais la difficulté fondamentale subsiste: comment distinguer une zone d'une autre?

Les incertitudes et silences que nous venons d'évoquer illustrent la nécessité d'une explication théorique globale du fait littéraire, qui envisagerait aussi bien ses changements sur le plan diachronique que ses variétés sur le plan synchronique, à l'intérieur d'une culture déterminée (nation, groupe, etc.) comme dans différentes zones culturelles; pour répondre aux exigences scientifiques, elle devrait d'ailleurs interpréter aussi bien les données macrostructurelles (périodisation, genres, etc.) que les données microstructurelles (les styles, le style d'un seul auteur, la technique des dialogues et du point de vue, la mise en scène, la versification, etc.). Si nous disposions d'une telle théorie, nous pourrions envisager sans crainte la confrontation entre historiens et théoriciens.

Avant de désigner des théories semblables qui sont déjà systématiquement mises en pratique, nous entendons démontrer que les solutions apportées au problème dans nos manuels d'histoire littéraire – même les plus spécialisés – se révèlent décevantes.

Les manuels d'histoire littéraire

À titre d'illustration, examinons la littérature 'française', telle qu'elle est évoquée et synthétisée par les historiens. Jusqu'à une époque assez récente, il s'agit toujours de la littérature pratiquée *en France*, ce qui risque de constituer un anachronisme; il s'agit même, dans la plupart des manuels, de la littérature pratiquée *à Paris*. Acceptons pour l'instant, à titre d'hypothèse, le bien-fondé de ces restrictions géographiques et culturelles. Les auteurs des manuels croient pouvoir les justifier en soulignant le rayonnement de la capitale, de Louis XIV à nos jours. C'est du reste selon les mêmes principes que les lettres 'françaises' du Moyen Âge et du XVIe siècle se trouvent situées, par les mêmes historiens, dans de multiples centres. Mais comment interpréter dès lors la volte-face manifeste que nous pouvons enregistrer dans les ouvrages consacrés aux lettres françaises contemporaines (songeons par exemple à celui de Germaine Brée [1978] et au manuel de Bordas, dû à Jacques Bersani et à ses collègues [1970])? Le décentrement, la décentralisation y sont si évidents qu'on se voit obligé de parler d'une 'crise de la francité'. Dans cette littérature française au visage renouvelé, la banlieue parisienne trouve une place à côté de la province (bretonne, provençale, etc.) et à côté de la Suisse, de la Belgique et du Canada francophones. La révolution se fait jour dans les flottements terminologiques: à la 'littérature française à l'étranger' succèdent 'les littératures françaises' désignant, à l'aide d'un pluriel, une unité géographique et culturelle fort disparate. Aux critères politiques (français) utilisés autrefois s'ajoutent ici des critères linguistiques et culturels tout nouveaux.

Pour étudier les lettres françaises actuelles, il s'imposerait donc de dépasser les frontières politiques de la France. Il serait fâcheux, en effet, d'ignorer les mouvements de va-et-vient entre les surréalistes belges et français, ou entre les poètes suisses (tels Gustave Roud et Philippe Jaccottet) et leurs confrères provençaux ou parisiens. Et cependant, les seuls critères linguistiques ne nous autorisent pas à envisager une 'francité' cohérente: les distances littéraires restent énormes entre le Canada et la Suisse, ou entre les différentes littératures françaises de l'Afrique. Ni en termes de courants ni en termes de genres ni en termes de styles, on ne peut mettre sur le même pied les phénomènes littéraires envisagés à un moment précis de l'histoire – 1980 par exemple –, tels qu'ils se présentent à Paris, en Suisse francophone ou en Algérie.

Que signifie dès lors le terme 'littérature française'? Selon les moments et selon les témoins interrogés – car des hésitations se font jour à propos des époques antérieures –, il s'agit d'un phénomène linguistique (essentiellement), ou d'un phénomène politico-culturel, dont les frontières et les définitions se révèlent de nature erratique.

Les incertitudes auxquelles l'histoire littéraire est en proie se révèlent plus inquiétantes encore dès qu'on constate la présence dans ses bilans d'auteurs 'étrangers' qui ne pratiquent pas le français. Dans le manuel de Bersani et al. (1970), il est abondamment question aussi de Kafka, de Faulkner, de Bertolt Brecht, c'est-à-dire des « influences étrangères qui supplantent en quelque sorte les lettres françaises ». Le phénomène n'est pas nouveau; de tout temps, les littératures nationales ont eu des interférences entre elles. Toutefois, le domaine linguistique français du XXe siècle est bien plus cohérent qu'il ne l'était au Moyen Âge, lorsque l'unité culturelle de l'Europe était fondée en grande partie sur l'héritage latin. Nous constatons du reste que les spécialistes de la littérature médiévale s'efforcent de prendre systématiquement en considération cette 'spécificité' de la littérature médiévale; nul ne saurait être médiéviste s’il n’était en même temps comparatiste. Ainsi le découpage des littératures européennes selon les frontières politiques qui seront de rigueur depuis le XVIe siècle environ (ou plus tard) apparaît comme une absurdité. On l’a écrit maintes fois. Mais nos habitudes modernes ont eu raison des perspectives historiques: toutes les histoires des littératures « nationales » remontent loin dans le Moyen Âge, jusqu’aux origines des langues dites nationales. Ainsi les hésitations des historiens devant la question du découpage deviennent éclatantes dès qu’on les examine sur un large plan diachronique.

C’est à tort que nous sommes amenés à reconnaître que la littérature française du XIXe siècle, par exemple, serait essentiellement la littérature de Paris. Une telle réduction géographique a été contestée à l’époque même – comme durant les siècles précédents – par les écrivains et les historiens dits ‘de province’.

En vertu de considérations semblables, la carte littéraire de l’Europe et du monde s’est enrichie, à certaines époques, de littératures nouvelles. Les littératures de province, par exemple, ont pris du prestige en se vantant d’avoir eu leur histoire et leurs maîtres; et elles se sont consacrées elles-mêmes en s’honorant de manuels destinés à traiter l’histoire littéraire locale. Parfois, de véritables littératures *nationales* ont surgi, telle la Belgique francophone, qui avait jusqu’alors échappé à l’attention des spécialistes de la littérature française. La grande bibliographie de Hugo P. Thieme accepte moins de dix écrivains belges parmi les centaines de Français retenus; les histoires littéraires récentes ne se montrent pas plus généreuses devant nos régions; seule la bibliographie courante d’Otto Klapp inscrit très officiellement « la littérature française hors de France » et donc les lettres françaises de Belgique dans ses programmes réservés à l’ensemble des lettres françaises. La Belgique s’est évidemment efforcée de réagir contre les ‘injustices’, et elle dispose, depuis 1830, d’une série assez impressionnante d’histoires littéraires. À l’instar des autres nations, elle s’est proposée aussi d’exiger la révision de l’histoire en remontant dans le temps, et de réclamer par exemple la restitution de nos Philippe de Commines et autres Jean Lemaire de Belges, que le pays voisin entend toujours compter parmi ses illustres ancêtres. Est-il besoin de souligner à ce propos combien les découpages en termes politiques (soi-disant culturels) répondent au jeu de la politique et de l’idéologie?

Les écrivains français de Belgique mériteraient-ils d’être plus nombreux à figurer dans les bilans français? Devraient-ils être traités à part dans les synthèses où les écrivains mineurs trouveraient également leur place, en vertu d’une autonomie littéraire liée à la politique (depuis 1830 et même plus tôt)? Évitons de trancher la discussion – qui a fait beaucoup de bruit en Belgique – en faveur de l’une ou de l’autre des deux positions. La réponse au problème est liée à une difficulté bien plus embarrassante encore, qui divise les historiens des lettres depuis qu’on étudie la littérature: comment choisir les auteurs ‘importants’, les groupes ‘importants’, les zones ‘importantes’? Le découpage géographique et culturel est étroitement lié à *la sélection* des auteurs, des groupes et des œuvres à décrire. En effet, les Belges ont été exclus des bilans historiques au même titre que les Bourguignons, les Picards et les Suisses: ils seraient moins importants sur le plan qualitatif ou, sinon, leur importance *historique* (leur réputation) serait moins éclatante que celle des Parisiens. Il s'avère que les historiens des lettres ont simplement suivi sur ce point les classements proposés par les groupes dominants (situés, bien entendu, à Paris). Au lieu d'expliciter leurs propres règles, ils ont emprunté leurs normes esthétiques et littéraires à l'objet étudié.

Les historiens utilisent généralement ces deux critères (la qualité et l'importance historique) pour justifier la sélection imposée à leur documentation. Toutefois, ils définissent de manière très capricieuse, à la fois individuelle et collective, ce qu'ils entendent par qualité et importance historique. Nous découvrons ainsi un nouveau sujet d'inquiétude à propos des méthodes de l'histoire littéraire: les cadres géographiques et chronologiques, les auteurs et les genres sont choisis en fonction de normes qui ne sont jamais explicitées, sinon en passant. Nos historiens n'étudient pas les phénomènes littéraires dans leur organisation; ils analysent des liens entre *certains* phénomènes, réunis d'une façon non-systématique. Il serait rajeunissant pour l'ensemble des études littéraires de retenir par exemple l'hypothèse suivante: que l'évolution des littératures ne saurait être interprétée à partir des seuls 'grands écrivains' et que seules les interactions entre écrivains originaux et moins originaux permettent de décrire les changements en littérature. De manière analogue, les zones littéraires soi-disant périphériques devraient jeter une lumière nouvelle sur les grandes littératures.

Les systèmes littéraires

Quels que soient les critères du découpage appliqué à la carte littéraire de l'Europe – ou à d'autres parties du monde –, il s'agit jusqu'ici essentiellement de *critères non-littéraires*: la langue ou la situation politique seraient-elles toujours et nécessairement des facteurs essentiels dans la vie littéraire d'une certaine culture? Rien ne nous autorise à l'affirmer, sinon la seule tradition acceptée plutôt tacitement par les spécialistes des études littéraires. Serait-il donc inimaginable qu'à l'intérieur d'une seule et même zone linguistique – ou politique – deux ou plusieurs 'sortes' de littératures cohabitent; ou qu'une seule conception de la littérature se maintienne en dépit du morcellement sur le plan linguistique et – ou – politique? Qu'est-ce qui nous permettrait d'affirmer l'existence d'une littérature italienne avant l'ère romantique, alors que ni l'unité politique ni l'unité linguistique n'étaient un fait?

C'est le concept de *système* qui nous fournit une clef permettant de mieux caractériser les soi-disant littératures nationales ainsi que les caprices auxquels elles semblent être soumises. En tant que *système de communication*, les littératures 'nationales' paraissent s'organiser comme des ensembles auto-organisateurs.[4] Les collectivités littéraires s'organisent selon un ensemble de règles conventionnelles susceptibles d'être revues et mises au point.

En réalité, l'idée de système a été appliquée aux phénomènes littéraires depuis bien longtemps. Cependant, il s'agissait principalement de phénomènes plus limités, moins macrostructurels, tel le texte individuel ou, à la rigueur, les genres. Ainsi les romanciers recourent à un 'système narratif'. L'extension du concept de système à d'autres niveaux et à tous les niveaux du phénomène littéraire est appelée à ouvrir des perspectives révolutionnaires.

L'application du concept de système à l'ensemble des phénomènes littéraires est évidemment une des conséquences des progrès de la sémiotique: on a cherché à cerner les constantes qui permettent de décrire l'organisation à la fois individuelle et collective des littératures et des phénomènes littéraires. C'est dire qu'on renonce à définir la littérature en termes d'essences, pour la caractériser plutôt en termes de relations (Even-Zohar 1978, 1980; Toury 1974; Lambert 1983c). Et les spécialistes s'efforcent de faire le tour des constantes qui se présentent dans les différents systèmes littéraires existants (et possibles).

Les difficultés théoriques d'une telle interprétation du fait littéraire se trouvent expliquées ailleurs. Nous nous proposons simplement d'indiquer ici en quoi elle constitue un progrès en ce qui concerne la question des littératures dites nationales.

L'existence d'un 'système littéraire' pourrait être observée dès que sont plus ou moins cohérents, à l'intérieur dudit système:

– les normes littéraires;
– les modèles correspondant à ces normes;
– les oppositions entre haute et basse littérature, littérature périphérique et centrale, etc.;
– les relations avec les systèmes environnants.

À l'intérieur de ce système se développent des sous-systèmes, c'est-à-dire des organisations plus limitées (p.ex. les littératures provinciales; la littérature de jeunesse) qui acceptent implicitement – parfois explicitement – les normes et modèles du système central, qui reconnaissent son prestige, tout en prétendant représenter un secteur particulier du même système. L'idée de système et de sous-système implique dès lors l'idée de hiérarchies et d'oppositions hiérarchiques. Elle

4. Lotman estime que le système est *auto-organizing*; c'est en ces termes qu'on pourrait interpréter la plupart des littératures nationales comme des systèmes relativement indépendants.

implique en outre la relativité – sur l'axe diachronique et sur l'axe synchronique – des caractéristiques du système et des sous-systèmes.

Grâce aux concepts signalés ci-dessus, nous pouvons décrire et situer les phénomènes littéraires par rapport aux phénomènes environnants, qui servent ainsi de cadre de référence. Il devient ainsi possible d'indiquer de façon fort empirique *dans quelle mesure* un groupe d'œuvres ou d'écrivains fait partie d'une communauté, ou fait partie de sous-groupes distincts à l'intérieur d'une même communauté. Grâce au cadre systémique, il devient possible de réaliser le rêve des comparatistes d'antan: comparer 'des littératures' et des phénomènes littéraires de toute sorte.

La validité d'un tel cadre théorique et méthodologique ne pourrait être discutée en termes purement théoriques. Il importe de le mettre à l'épreuve, voire de le compléter ou de le corriger sur certains points si cela se révèle nécessaire.

En guise de test, il paraît opportun de choisir une situation littéraire complexe, celle de la Belgique par exemple, où les frontières politiques, linguistiques et culturelles n'ont cessé de se déplacer. Quelles seraient les conséquences littéraires des métamorphoses subies par nos régions durant les deux siècles derniers? En quoi la littérature se définit-elle autrement, chez nous, depuis qu'existe la Belgique? La création d'une unité politique entraîne-t-elle *nécessairement* la création d'une littérature 'nationale'? Nous aurons sans doute une réponse à cette question après avoir examiné *dans quelle mesure* les phénomènes littéraires 'belges' se définissent en termes de spécificité par rapport à la littérature qui nous environne.

Un objet privilégié: la littérature en Belgique

Limitons-nous d'abord à la critique et à la théorie littéraires des deux siècles derniers, telles qu'elles se sont développées dans nos régions. Nous examinerons ensuite dans quelle mesure elles permettent de formuler des considérations valables pour la création et pour l'ensemble de la vie littéraires en Belgique.

Dans les commentaires critiques et théoriques en question, le problème de la 'belgitude' est un problème majeur, principalement au XIXe siècle, et beaucoup moins au XXe siècle; à notre époque, il l'est resté bien plus du côté sud de la frontière linguistique que du côté nord. En exagérant quelque peu les transformations auxquelles nous faisons allusion, on pourrait estimer que le concept de 'littérature belge' est devenu une absurdité, *aux yeux des critiques*, à notre époque, alors qu'il ne l'était nullement au XIXe siècle; d'autre part, si les critiques (et savants) francophones parlent sans difficulté des 'lettres françaises de Belgique', leurs collègues flamands ne tiennent nullement à établir une équivalence en recourant à un concept comme 'Nederlandstalige literatuur in België'; ils tiennent plutôt à se mettre sur le même pied que leurs collègues néerlandais, en réclamant une place au sein d'une littérature néerlandaise (qu'on voudrait bien croire plus unifiée qu'elle ne l'est en réalité).

Ces positions critiques sont connues de manière globale, mais non de façon vraiment synthétique, ce qui nous interdit de bien observer jusqu'à quel point elles ont évolué. Même les professeurs qui enseignent la littérature tiennent généralement à prendre position pour ou contre une littérature (francophone / néerlandophone) 'de chez nous'; contrairement à leurs collègues du siècle précédent, ils tiennent à s'intégrer à l'unité 'supranationale' plutôt que de se faire taxer de provincialisme.

Une série d'enquêtes nous permettent d'enregistrer de près les orientations de la critique face à la question de la nationalité. Il est frappant que, au moment où notre pays se libère de la tutelle européenne, vers 1830, les critères appliqués par la critique aux œuvres littéraires changent de façon spectaculaire: le nationalisme domine brusquement dans tous les périodiques et dans les recueils critiques. Partout on entend mettre les lettres au service d'un État nouveau; on se cherche et on invente des principes et des maîtres qui correspondent à un idéal littéraire national, et qui permettent de les opposer aux normes et modèles des pays environnants, principalement à ceux de notre ennemi par excellence, la France. Avant 1850, les Flamands n'insistent guère plus que les Wallons sur les rapports linguistiques évidents avec les voisins qui pratiquent la même (?) langue. Et la fierté nationale autorise les littérateurs à exalter les meilleurs d'entre eux, tel Conscience, comme des écrivains 'nationaux': *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen* par exemple, n'est nullement interprété comme une insulte aux francophones belges, mais comme un défi lancé à l'ennemi de la *patrie belge.* Le cliché: « Il apprit à lire à son peuple » montre combien la fonction nationaliste détermine la réception de ses œuvres. Que ses textes aient été diffusés dans les deux langues constitue d'ailleurs un facteur favorable à ce culte. Nous avons pu observer que Conscience est moins isolé qu'il ne semble l'être à première vue. Tout au long du XIXe siècle, bon nombre d'auteurs flamands sont traduits en français par des Belges et diffusés essentiellement en Belgique francophone (ce qui explique le nombre élevé d'éditions francophones de Flandre) (Lambert 1980a).

Il est vrai que l'unité nationale en matière de littérature n'a jamais existé qu'à l'état d'aspiration, jamais comme une situation de fait. Mais la disparition quasi totale de ces aspirations donne à réfléchir, ainsi que la disparition fort curieuse de contacts directs entre les deux communautés littéraires. Au XIXe siècle, plusieurs périodiques francophones comptaient parmi leurs collaborateurs des littérateurs d'expression néerlandaise; la pratique du français, chez les autres littérateurs, n'était évidemment pas exceptionnelle, tout comme elle était assez courante au niveau des lecteurs. La communauté littéraire était une situation de fait, sans doute quelque peu unilatérale, mais elle favorisait les rapprochements. Au XXe siècle, les barrières linguistiques et culturelles étant devenues plus strictes, il est rare que des littérateurs ayant une renommée dans les lettres néerlandaises participent activement à la vie littéraire francophone en Belgique. Les auteurs néerlandais et flamands traduits en français sont destinés principalement aux lecteurs *français* (en dépit de la situation privilégiée de traducteurs comme Maurice Carême et Liliane Wouters), et exceptionnellement aux Belges. Les traductions faites à partir de la langue française sont choisies et fournies par la France, et non par la Belgique francophone. Il serait erroné de prétendre que Simenon, le seul auteur 'français' d'envergure en édition néerlandaise, constitue une exception, car c'est la France qui l'a rendu célèbre.

Bref, la Flandre littéraire et les lettres francophones de Belgique se sont tourné le dos. Il ne faut pas chercher loin pour localiser dans le temps les traces de cette double volte-face. C'est vers la fin du XIXe siècle que la *Jeune Belgique*, d'une part, et le mouvement des 'Tachtigers', d'autre part, ont rompu avec les ambitions nationalistes. Des deux côtés de la frontière linguistique, on relève des témoignages favorables à un renouveau qui ne devrait plus rien à l'inspiration nationale; certains d'entre eux – ils sont parfois collectifs[5] – vont jusqu'à prôner ouvertement l'union avec la culture voisine. Désormais, le Nord de la Belgique opte pour une inspiration plus nordique, le Sud pour une inspiration plus latine, bref française. Au XIXe siècle, beaucoup de polémiques se rapportaient aux liens entre les cultures littéraires à l'intérieur de la Belgique; au XXe siècle, les querelles littéraires entre les Pays-Bas et la Flandre, ou entre la France et la Belgique francophone font couler beaucoup d'encre; cependant, ces polémiques ne se rapportent pratiquement jamais aux liens entre les francophones et les néerlandophones de Belgique. Ces liens 'belges' ne constituent plus un problème, ils font partie des causes entendues.

Les orientations que nous venons de mettre en lumière sur le plan des commentaires littéraires – au niveau de la critique et de la théorie – correspondent *en partie* aux orientations de la création littéraire. C'est-à-dire que les écrivains puisent leurs normes et modèles littéraires, d'abord dans le stock recommandé par la critique nationaliste, ensuite dans des stocks beaucoup plus vastes imposés essentiellement par les deux centres dominants: la France d'une part, les Pays-Bas de l'autre. Il semble toutefois que la création littéraire corresponde en partie et de façon négative aux aspirations de la critique. Avant la fin du XIXe siècle, elle parvient difficilement à justifier le nationalisme littéraire préconisé par la critique, pour la bonne raison que les grands génies recherchés sont difficiles à trouver: ce qui entraîne, malgré tout, une attitude passive à l'égard de la France. En effet, les auteurs qui sont lus et imités viennent de Paris; ils sont critiqués et adaptés au code moral de chez nous, mais ils ne cessent d'influencer l'inspiration littéraire de nos écrivains. Tout au long du XIXe siècle, les deux littératures

5. Comme le *Manifeste* du Groupe du Lundi (1937).

dites nationales se ressemblent le mieux dans leur attitude passive et éclectique devant les pays environnants et surtout devant la France littéraire. L'évolution littéraire, par exemple, accuse un retard évident sur les différents pays européens, du romantisme au symbolisme; d'autre part, les mouvements novateurs venus de l'étranger (il y en a peu qui soient d'origine 'autochtone') sont assimilés de manière éclectique. Cet éclectisme est souvent justifié à l'aide d'arguments nationalistes ('il nous faut une littérature nationale') ou sociaux.

En dépit des volte-face signalées plus haut, les deux littératures continuent, au XXe siècle, à maintenir leur attitude passive devant l'étranger. Bien entendu, on ne cultive plus les mêmes modèles et principes des deux côtés de la frontière linguistique; mais les modèles dominants sont toujours assimilés avec un certain retard et avec un éclectisme évident, souvent aussi, d'ailleurs, à partir de positions moralisatrices. La 'belgitude' littéraire, si difficile à saisir lorsqu'on observe les lettres néerlandaises et françaises de chez nous, devient donc manifeste dès qu'on observe les interférences avec les systèmes littéraires environnants.

Ainsi, on pourrait accepter qu'il existe bel et bien un système littéraire propre à la Belgique, au XIXe comme au XXe siècle, dans la mesure où les lettres néerlandophones et francophones se comportent d'une manière parallèle par rapport aux systèmes environnants. Ce sont là des caractéristiques négatives, dira-t-on, la Belgique littéraire étant ce qui la distingue des autres littératures: c'est une littérature de transit, un *no man's land* littéraire. De telles constatations ne devraient avoir rien de péjoratif, car l'histoire a souvent mis en évidence le rôle privilégié des zones intermédiaires. Les historiens de la politique et de la société ne seraient d'ailleurs nullement surpris d'entendre que les comportements littéraires des Belges se révèlent être en harmonie avec l'ensemble de leurs attitudes culturelles.

Dans la mesure où les lettres néerlandaises du Nord fonctionnent actuellement dans de multiples secteurs comme un centre dominant pour les lettres en Flandre, et dans la mesure où les lettres françaises remplissent un rôle semblable pour les lettres françaises de Belgique, l'ambiguïté de notre univers littéraire devient éclatante.

Ensembles supra- et infra-nationaux

C'est à tort qu'on interpréterait une telle crise de notre identité littéraire comme un phénomène spécifiquement belge. Il semble plutôt s'agir d'un phénomène caractérisant les littératures marginales (le terme désigne simplement des relations et des comportements) et les comportements marginaux (qui se présentent aussi au sein des littératures dominantes). Il suffit de parcourir l'histoire des grandes littératures occidentales pour relever les traces des crises d'identité. L'Allemagne de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, et après elle tant de littératures romantiques, ont prétendu se libérer de la tutelle française; la France des années 1830, quant à elle, a tonné contre le romantisme, cette invention des esprits anglo-germaniques. La France du XXe siècle ne cesse de combattre le 'franglais' et ses équivalents littéraires, surtout depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Les genres et les modes littéraires de notre époque se révèlent souvent très internationaux (le monologue intérieur; le théâtre épique). Une certaine paralittérature (le roman policier, le roman d'espionnage, la science-fiction, la bande dessinée) s'est répandue à partir de certains foyers internationaux, ce qui ne lui interdit pas de prendre ensuite des caractéristiques locales.

L'identité des littératures nationales semble ainsi correspondre à des réalités relatives, et nullement à une essence. Elle serait déterminée par les tendances dominantes qui orientent le système en question, qui pourraient même avoir pour effet l'autodestruction du système (elle se présente quelque peu chez nous). Ces tendances seraient imposées par les centres dominants, qui pourraient être internes ou externes au système, de nature littéraire et/ou extralittéraire. Ainsi s'expliquerait aussi le rôle-pilote de certains systèmes dans des ensembles macrostructurels. Le XVIIIe siècle européen, par exemple, subit la domination française, sur le plan littéraire comme sur le plan culturel en général; dès les années romantiques, l'unité littéraire de l'empire français est détruite par le seul développement de foyers nouveaux (l'Angleterre et l'Allemagne littéraires, par exemple). Une telle interprétation des cadres littéraires et culturels permet, on l'imagine, d'identifier les centres dominants et les zones périphériques, sur le plan européen comme sur le plan national, même à l'intérieur de cadres plus limités.

Le refus des options 'nationalistes' nous amène à reposer la question des littératures 'régionales' ou 'dialectales'. Les linguistes s'en sont préoccupés bien plus que les spécialistes de la littérature. Ils acceptent d'ailleurs sans difficulté que les frontières entre la langue et le dialecte ne correspondent pas à une essence, mais à des données culturelles, par conséquent relatives. L'existence d'une littérature écrite a souvent été acceptée comme un critère justifiant le passage d'un dialecte au statut de langue... – Les historiens de la littérature ont généralement négligé d'accorder une place aux expressions littéraires locales dans leurs synthèses nationales. C'est l'indice d'une démarche normative et, ainsi, non-structurale par définition. Une véritable analyse de la littérature dans un ensemble culturel déterminé nous impose le refus de toute sélection imposée *a priori*. Dans une approche structurale (systémique), le spécialiste de la littérature a pour mission de caractériser les relations entre toutes les zones appartenant à un système déterminé. Il importe d'ailleurs en tout premier lieu d'établir si et dans quelle mesure les littératures locales suivent les orientations d'un centre national ou culturel. Il existe des régions littéraires ou des pratiques littéraires qui fonctionnent en vase clos (le haïku, par exemple, qui se comporte comme un système international indépendant; certains types de théâtre populaire; le monde de la chanson). Le seul fait de prendre en considération les rapports entre les zones périphériques et les foyers dominants permet souvent de localiser les orientations avant-gardistes et les orientations conservatrices à l'intérieur d'un système littéraire donné. Les révolutions déclenchées par certaines zones marginales apparaissent, dans une telle perspective, non comme un fait inquiétant ou heureux, mais simplement comme un fait lié au fonctionnement des systèmes littéraires. Les littératures dialectales ou populaires apparemment autonomes se distinguent d'une manière graduelle et non d'une manière radicale des autres systèmes.

En termes sociolinguistiques, la littérature classique du XVIIe siècle français est une littérature autrefois dialectale qui a fini par s'imposer comme norme aux autres zones dialectales, et qui s'arroge ainsi le statut de littérature nationale. Il serait passionnant d'étudier dans quelle mesure les autres zones dialectales modifient, dans les siècles qui suivent, leur stratégie par rapport au centre nouveau, ainsi que de déterminer si la crise de ce centre, dès le XIXe siècle, donne lieu à une réorientation de la France littéraire entière ainsi que des systèmes qu'elle n'a cessé d'influencer.

La prise en considération du rôle dominant / dominé (central / marginal) des différentes zones régionales, nationales et supranationales devrait nous conduire vers une vue plus organique et plus panoramique de la littérature, dans sa structuration hiérarchique comme dans son devenir.

On describing translations

(with Hendrik Van Gorp, 1985)

1. Theoretical and descriptive studies

In the course of the last two decades or so, translation has gradually come to be viewed as a legitimate object of scientific investigation. Generally speaking, the most important recent contributions to translation studies have been made in the field of translation theory. However, the links between the different branches of translation studies still have to be established more firmly. During the last ten years, for example, Gideon Toury (1980) and a few other scholars have repeatedly pointed out the fundamental weakness of any translation theory which fails to take account of the findings of systematic descriptive studies. In spite of this, the importance of descriptive studies for translation theory has not been sufficiently recognized. This explains why the concrete study of translations and translational behaviour in particular socio-cultural contexts has often remained isolated from current theoretical research, and why there is still, on the whole, a wide gap between the theoretical and the descriptive approach. We should ask ourselves, therefore, how translations are to be analysed, in order to make our research relevant both from a historical and from a theoretical point of view. Indeed, our methodology in this respect too often remains purely intuitive. It is symptomatic, for instance, that the recent Dutch study *Uitnodiging tot de vertaalwetenschap* ("invitation to translation studies") by Raymond Van den Broeck and André Lefevere (1979, [2]1982) stresses the need for descriptive studies, but omits to specify how they should be carried out.

Among the scholars who have been arguing for better collaboration between historical and strictly theoretical translation research, some have tried to elaborate methodological schemes and principles. Rather than discussing or summarizing them here, we shall present a comprehensive methodological framework of our

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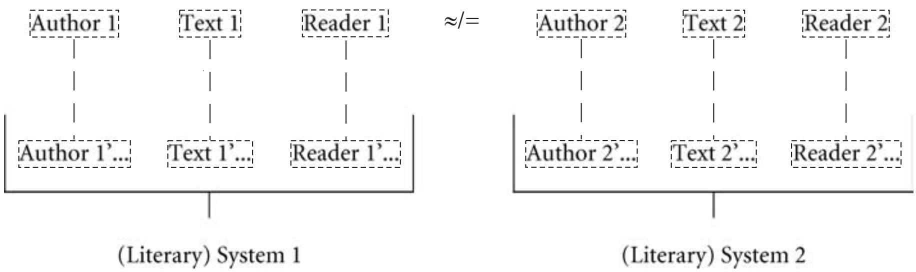
own, which will enable us to study various aspects of translation within the context of a general and flexible translation theory.

2. A hypothetical scheme for describing translations

Rather than starting from any preconceived definitions or evaluation concepts, we base our research on a scheme (Lambert & Lefevere 1977) which contains the basic parameters of translational phenomena, as presented by Itamar Even-Zohar (1978) and Gideon Toury (1980) in the context of the so-called polysystem hypothesis. The scheme is as follows:



Explanation:

- Text 1: source text;
- Text 2: target text;
- Author 1 and Reader 1 belong to the system of the source text;
- Author 1 is to be situated among the authors of the source system;
- Text 1' and Reader 1' are to be situated within the source system;
- System 1 refers to the system of source text, source author and source reader; this system is not necessarily a strictly literary one, since literary systems cannot be isolated from social, religious or other systems;
- Author 2, Text 2, Reader 2, etc. are to be situated within the target system;
- : all elements of this communication scheme are complex and dynamic;
- the symbol ≈/= indicates that the link between source and target communication cannot really be predicted; it stands for an open relation, the exact nature of which will depend on the priorities of the translator's behaviour – which in turn has to be seen in function of the dominant norms of the target system.

The target system need not be restricted to the *literary* system of the target culture, since translations of literary works may also function outside literature, within a translational system. In most cases, however, the target system will be (part of) the literary system of the target culture, or at least overlap with it. The exact relations between the literary systems of the target and source cultures have to be examined, which is precisely the aim of our scheme. Both source (literary) system and target (literary) system are open systems which interact with other systems.

All relations mentioned in the scheme deserve to be studied:

- T1 – T2 (relations between individual texts, i.e. between the original and its translation);
- A1 – A2 (relations between authors);
- R1 – R2 (relations between readers);
- A1 – T1 ≈/= A2 – T2 (authorial intentions in the source and target systems, and their correlation);
- T1 – R1 ≈/= T2 – R2 (pragmatics and reception in the source and target systems, and their correlation);
- A1 – A1', A2 – A2' (situation of the author with respect to other authors, in both systems);
- T1 – T1', T2 – T2' (situation of both the original and the translation as texts with respect to other texts);
- R1 – R1', R2 – R2' (situation of the reader within the respective systems);
- Target System – Literary System (translations within a given literature);
- (Literary) System 1 – (Literary) System 2 (relations, whether in terms of conflict or harmony, between both systems).

As every translation is the result of particular relations between the parameters mentioned in the scheme, it will be the scholar's task to establish *which* relations are the most important ones. Among the priorities to be observed, especially the target-oriented (or 'acceptable') translations and the source-oriented (or 'adequate') translations stand out. But groups of 'acceptable' translations can still show very different characteristics regarding the T2 – T1, T2 – A1, or T2 – R1 relations. From an empirical point of view, it can safely be assumed that no translated text will be entirely coherent with regard to the 'adequate' versus 'acceptable' dilemma.

On the basis of our scheme, we can study such problems as:

- whether a particular translation of a contemporary or ancient text is presented and regarded as a translation or not (it may be called, say, an adaptation or an imitation);
- the vocabulary, style, poetical and rhetorical conventions within both T2 and T1;
- translation criticism and translation theory in particular literatures at particular times;
- groups of translations and groups or 'schools' of translators;
- the role of translations in the development of a given literature (conservative versus innovative functions; exotic or non-exotic functions, etc.).

The main advantage of the scheme is that it enables us to bypass a number of deep-rooted traditional ideas concerning translational 'fidelity' and even 'quality' (is a given translation good or bad?), which are mainly source-oriented and inevitably normative. The reasons why normative comments on translation can have hardly any scientific relevance have been explained at length elsewhere (e.g. Toury 1980; Van den Broeck & Lefevere 1979), although it must be admitted that both the theoretical and practical implications of the new approach to translation description are still very confused, and in many cases the analyses still turn out to be inspired by an underlying idealistic conception of what translation ought to be.

3. Relations and equivalence

Our scheme is a theoretical and hypothetical one: it shows which relations can play a part in the production and shaping of actual translations, and which ones may be observed in translation description. In other words, it represents a comprehensive set of *questions* (how has text 1 been translated into text 2, in relation to which other texts?, etc.) rather than a series of theses. Being no more than a heuristic tool, the scheme obviously has no ontological status. Nevertheless, it comprises all functionally relevant aspects of a given translational activity in its historical context, including the process of translation, its textual features, its reception, and even sociological aspects like distribution and translation criticism.

It will be clear that in every concrete situation the basic aspects of the scheme should be interpreted in terms of specific priorities. The central question then becomes that of equivalence: what kind of equivalence can be observed between both communication schemes, or between the particular parameters in them? Is the translation in question target-oriented (i.e. 'acceptable') or source-oriented (i.e. 'adequate')? This basic priority is examined in terms of *dominant* norms, for there is reason to believe that no translational activity is completely coherent with respect to the dilemma 'acceptable' versus 'adequate'. While, say, the stylistic features of a given translation may be primarily target-oriented, its socio-cultural references may still be drawn from the source text. Since translation is essentially the result of selection strategies from and within communication systems, our main task will be to study the priorities – the dominant norms and models – which determine these strategies. The basic 'acceptable' versus 'adequate' dilemma will, in turn, lead to more concrete questions concerning priorities at different levels of both systems. The translation process as well as the resulting text and its reception can be studied from different points of view, either in a macro-structural or in a micro-structural way, focusing on linguistic patterns of various types, literary codes, moral, religious or other non-literary patterns, etc.

Every critical statement on translation can be situated within the limits of our scheme. There is, however, an important difference between traditional statements of this kind, including those that strive for explicitness and intersubjectivity, and the type of analysis we wish to propose; indeed, we aim to replace an atomistic approach with a functional and semiotic one.

4. Binary versus complex relations

Traditionally, translation criticism has been viewed in a strictly binary and one-directional way, as a straightforward confrontation between T1 and T2. In many cases it has been reduced not only to (some) linguistic aspects of the equivalence problem, but even to the particular question whether or not certain linguistic features in T2 are (appropriate) equivalents of corresponding linguistic features in T1. 'Literary' translation criticism more often than not behaves in exactly the same way, at most extending the analysis to include some literary features.

While these binary approaches undoubtedly bring important aspects of the translational problem to the fore, they fail to respect the complex nature of equivalence, if only because the translator, working in a particular translational situation, does not necessarily use T1 (or S1) as the dominant model. Furthermore, no translation ever accepts either T1 or S1 as its exclusive model; it will inevitably contain all kinds of interferences deriving from the target system.

Our attempt to build up a synthetic commentary may well appear utopian, since it is impossible to summarize all relationships involved in the activity of translation. We are fully aware of this. Indeed, the scholar, as well as the translator, has to establish priorities. In our working scheme, however, he can at least find the means of being systematic instead of being merely intuitive: he can avoid *a priori* judgements and convictions (*theses*!), and he can always situate the aspects and relations to be observed within a general equivalence scheme.

In principle, relations within and between S1 and S2 should be taken into account. In every analysis with systemic aims, we have to try and determine which links are dominant, and what their precise functions are. But there is no reason why we should avoid studying separately particular links, such as linguistic features within T1 and T2 (perhaps in their relationships with linguistic features within T1' and T2') or particular aspects of the links between T2 and R2 or R2'. It will be obvious, though, that in a synthetic approach the dominant norms deserve to be dealt with most systematically. When accounting for an 'acceptable' translation, for instance, it will be advisable to consider in some detail the exact state of affairs within the target literature rather than the 'differences' with the source literature. In any approach we should avoid the most glaring shortcoming characteristic of most traditional commentary: the exclusion of some – or most – of the relationships to which our scheme refers.

5. The aims and limits of text comparison

The comparison of T1 and T2, to the exclusion of other factors, has often been responsible for the reductionist approach we have been criticizing. However, it still remains a crucial point, even in a systemic analysis. We often have hardly any other material for our study of translation and literary systems, and even if we do, the different translational strategies evident in the text itself provide the most explicit information about the relations between the source and target systems, and about the translator's position in and between them. Furthermore, the translated text is an obvious document for the study of conflicts and parallels between translational theory and practice. The comparison of T1 and T2 is therefore a relevant part of translation studies – as long as it does not obscure the wider perspective.

As Gideon Toury (1980: 112–113) has pointed out, any text comparison is indirect; it is always a comparison of categories selected by the scholar, in a construct which is purely hypothetical. We can never 'compare' texts by simply juxtaposing them. We need a frame of reference to examine the positive and/or negative links between T1 and T2, and to examine them from the point of view of both T1 and T2. This frame of reference cannot be identified with the 'source text'. It is, rather, a combination of categories drawn from both the source and the target text, and it could even be enriched by questions arising from the source and target systems. Such a frame of reference has no significance as a normative standard (what has or has not been translated?). Reducing the confrontation to a differential observation which refers to the source text only would allow us merely to establish what the translation is *not*. Our reference scheme should be a hypothetical standard which allows us to characterize, not just one or two texts, but translational and textual strategies, i.e. norms and models. The differential approach will, at best, be useful as a stage in the descriptive work, insofar as it is not limited to a one-directional negative approach. In order to obtain a complex rather than a reductionist model, the relationships between S1 and S2 can be used as a general background for the text comparison (e.g. is a particular prose translation of verse compatible with the function of prose in the target system?).

Our own descriptive research has given us the opportunity to elaborate a practical model for a type of textual analysis in which we try to describe and test out translational strategies. In this model (see the Appendix at the end of this chapter), the student first collects information about the general macro-structural features of the translation. Is the translation identified as such (as a 'translation', or as an 'adaptation' or 'imitation'), and what do these terms mean in the given period? Is the translator's name mentioned anywhere? Can the text be recognized as a 'translated text' (linguistic interference, neologisms, socio-cultural features)? Are the general text structures of the 'adequate' type (total / partial translation)? Does the translator or the editor provide any metatextual comment (preface, footnotes)?

A survey like this already gives us a rough idea of the overall translational strategy and the main priorities in it. Since translation is determined by selection mechanisms on various textual levels, we assume, as a working hypothesis, that a translated text which is more or less 'adequate' on the macro-structural level will generally also be more or less 'adequate' on the micro-structural level, but that it cannot be 'adequate' on every specific level. In the same way we assume that a translation which is 'acceptable' on the macro-level will probably also be 'acceptable' on the micro-level. Of course, we need to test out whether this hypothesis helps us to gather relevant information about the translational strategy and its priorities, or, to put it in more ordinary terms, we have to observe, in this initial stage, both the text in general and a number of concrete text fragments.

It would be naive, however, to think that an exhaustive analysis of every textual problem is feasible. We therefore have to follow a certain order in our investigations. It might be wise to begin by looking at different fragments, and then to analyse them again from the point of view of particular textual rules. Does the translator translate words, sentences, paragraphs, metaphors, narrative sequences? He will hardly have been able to translate all these text levels to the same extent and with the same degree of subtlety. Most likely, he will have sacrificed specific text levels (e.g. lexis) to other levels (e.g. literariness). Such a microscopic analysis, which could in some instances be supported with statistical data, enables us to observe the consistency and the hierarchical structure of the translational strategy. It may also allow us to formulate hypotheses concerning the origin and position of this strategy (source text? target text? target system?). And it will be easy to draw provisional conclusions about individual fragments.

These conclusions can be used at a second stage to guide the analysis of other extracts. Does the translator add or delete paragraphs, words, images, literary features, etc. throughout the text, or only in certain passages? If the latter, how to explain the discrepancies? In order to reach a more general and panoramic view of the translational method, we can bring in fragments in which new difficulties appear, in order to check our hypothesis or to reconstruct in more detail the exact priorities which govern the translator's activity.

By adopting a flexible method of this type the scholar will gain an insight into text rules and translational rules; he can test them throughout the text and classify them according to specific parameters, without having to accumulate random examples. Clearly, these rules will ultimately have to be linked with other rules or, better still, with the entire system. This will then lead to questions like:

- Does translator Y always translate according to these rules? If not, can we explain the exceptions?
- Does he write his own 'creative' work according to the same rules? If not, why?
- Does he, in his 'creative' work or in his translations, behave in the same manner as his fellow translators?
- Does he show a conscious awareness of rules, norms, models? Does he theorize about them? If so, are there any conflicts between his theory and practice, or between his own theories and those of others? On which points?
- Is his work as a translator more innovatory, or less so, than his 'creative' writing?
- Are there any conflicts between the translational norms and the norms and expectations of the receptor audience (critics, readers)?

These questions, like the whole reference scheme for comparison, could of course be further developed and diversified; they are part of an open-ended research programme about translation as an instrument of mediation between literary systems. The systemic approach enables us not only to comment on translations with the same terminology we use for commenting on literary systems, but also to make general descriptive statements on all levels of both the translational and the surrounding literary system (author, translator, readers, texts, micro- and macro-levels).

While describing particular translated texts in some detail, we can point the way to large-scale macro-structural research, or formulate hypotheses to guide such research. But we can and should also do exactly the opposite. General descriptive studies – like the Louvain project on "Literature and translation in France, 1800–1850" (e.g. Lambert, D'hulst & Van Bragt 1985) or other similar projects – have to be tested by confronting them with findings extracted from particular texts and phenomena. This can be done provided the scholar employs hypothetical schemes for all aspects and phases of the translational problem.

6. The implications of a systemic approach

One should bear in mind that nearly all these aspects of the translational problem have been and are still being discussed by scholars involved in translation studies. It is new, however, to stress the need to combine and connect them systematically, and to insist upon their systemic nature, both on the *intersystemic* and on the *intrasystemic* level. This means that every particular aspect of the translational process should be described and discussed not only in terms of the Author-Text-Reader system, but also in terms of the translational system (in so far as it is distinct from the literary system) and, perhaps, other cultural systems; this is especially the case when we are dealing with the translation of literary texts or the literary translation of texts which the source system does not regard as literary. The very use of the concept of system implies that we are aware of conflicts and parallelisms between systems and subsystems.

By focusing on norms and models, the most individual translational phenomenon can be described both as individual and as collective. This is one of the essential reasons why we should avoid an exclusive preoccupation with individual translators and with individual texts or their reception. It is part of the 'atomistic' approach to examine translated texts one by one, instead of looking at a series of texts, or a series of translational problems. When dealing with individual phenomena, we are likely to overlook their general characteristics if we confine ourselves to a single descriptive category (e.g. the rhyme schemes in verse translation at a given moment: clearly, they also refer to rhyme schemes in both the source and the target literature). A systemic approach on the other hand, enables us to distinguish between individual and less individual or collective norms.

The importance of large-scale research programmes should now be obvious. We cannot properly analyse specific translations if we do not take into account other translations belonging to the same system(s), and if we do not analyse them on various micro- and macro-structural levels. It is not at all absurd to study a single translated text or a single translator, but it is absurd to disregard the fact that this translation or this translator has (positive or negative) connections with other translations and translators.

Once we have adopted this position, we can hardly go on talking simply about the analysis of translated texts, and still less about the analysis of 'a translated text'. Our object is translated literature, that is to say, translational norms, models, behaviour and systems. The specific T1 and T2 analysis should be part of a larger research programme focusing on all aspects of translation. Even the distinction between literary and non-literary translation turns out to be a purely theoretical problem, since we have to determine to what extent translations belong to a translational or to a literary system or to both.

In fact, we are convinced that the study of translated literature, if approached from such a broad, systemic angle, will contribute substantially to a more dynamic and functional approach to literature as such, for there is no doubt that the analysis of literary translations provides an important key to our understanding of literary interference and historical poetics.

Appendix: A synthetic scheme for translation description

1. *Preliminary data:*

- title and title page (e.g. presence or absence of genre indication, author's name, translator's name...);
- metatexts (title page, preface, footnotes – in the text or separate?);
- general strategy (partial or complete translation?).

These preliminary data should lead to hypotheses for further analysis on both the macro-structural and the micro-structural level.

2. *Macro-level:*

- division of the text (chapters, acts / scenes, stanzas...);
- titles of chapters, presentation of acts and scenes...;
- relation between types of narrative, dialogue, description; relation between dialogue and monologue, solo voice and chorus...;
- internal narrative structure (episodic plot?, open ending?...); dramatic intrigue (prologue, exposition, climax, conclusion, epilogue); poetic structure (e.g. contrast between quatrains and tercets in a sonnet);
- authorial comments; stage directions...

These macro-structural data should lead to hypotheses about micro-structural strategies.

3. *Micro-level:* Shifts on phonic, graphic, micro-syntactic, lexico-semantic, stylistic, elocutionary and modal levels:

- selection of words;
- dominant grammatical patterns and formal literary structures (metre, rhyme...);
- forms of speech reproduction (direct, indirect, free indirect discourse);
- narrative, perspective and point of view;
- modality (passive or active, expression of uncertainty, ambiguity...);
- language levels (sociolect, archaic / popular / dialect, jargon...).

These data on micro-structural strategies should lead to a renewed confrontation with macro-structural strategies, and hence to their consideration in terms of the broader systemic context.

4. *Systemic context:*

– oppositions between micro- and macro-levels and between text and theory (norms, models...);
– intertextual relations (other translations and 'creative' works);
– intersystemic relations (genre structures, stylistic codes...).

Twenty years of research on literary translation at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

(1988)

Reception studies in comparative literature

This paper looks into some aspects of historical research on translation. It is not an attempt to list encyclopaedic or anecdotal information about our own past, but a discussion of the principles and aims of research and research methods connected with translated literature from different cultural areas. It is also a report on the evolution of a certain approach and its implications. However, this paper does not pretend to teach a specific methodology on the basis of my own historical analysis. Whether particular parameters and paradigms can be useful to other scholars, the future will tell. Of course, my report does not just refer to one person's research but to several projects in which graduate and doctoral students as well as many colleagues play an important role.[1]

In the mid-1960s, I started working on a doctoral dissertation about the reception of German Romanticism in France since 1800, focusing on the case of Ludwig Tieck, one of the leading writers of the new romantic generation (Lambert 1976). In trying to link the aims of such a study with the models available in comparative literature, I had to recognize that literary contacts, as studied by most comparatists, excluded rather systematically the problem of translation.

At about the same time, an excellent doctoral dissertation on the general, theoretical problem of literary translation was being written in Germanic Philology at

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1. Since I report both on my own research and on collective research, I shall use the plural for the latter, and the singular when dealing with my own individual contribution.

the same university (Van den Broeck 1970).[2] There was hardly any contact between the two students, both their dissertations dealing with literary translations: one, in Germanic Philology, investigating literary translation in general; the other, in Romance Philology, focusing on particular French translations of the nineteenth century. Nowadays, this lack of contact may look strange, but it was not at all unusual at the end of the sixties;[3] and, given the circumstances, it cannot surprise us how insecure the two respective boards of examiners felt when commenting upon the study of (literary) translations. In fact, there was a twofold division: first, between the theoretical and the comparatist approaches, secondly, between the distinct traditions of Germanic Philology and Romance Philology.

When studying literary contacts, comparatists in most countries tended to deal with the issue of translation in several ways:

1. they ignored it completely and reduced literary contacts to explicit discourse on a particular writer and/or text in a foreign literature;
2. or they reduced it to the question of how translators and critics commented upon given translated texts;
3. or, in exceptional cases, they tried to analyse the translations. Such an analysis, however, never relied upon an explicit methodological scheme. It was often limited to a basically atomistic discussion of translation 'problems'[4] or even translation 'errors', which implied that the approach was obviously source-text oriented.[5] Sometimes the literary historian felt obliged to quote from some of the most famous texts on translation by Saint Jerome, Luther, Schleiermacher or Valéry Larbaud. The very idea that research on translation should imply the use of a theory or method was not accepted.

The explicit theoretical stance taken by comparatists dealing with translation as an aspect of literary contacts corresponded with the practical schemes applied by their colleagues in the context of descriptive reception studies. The number of handbooks of comparative literature has multiplied since the sixties. Most of these

2. This doctoral dissertation was never published as such, although it was probably one of the best, if not the best, statement available on the question of literary translation. Since then, Van den Broeck's work in translation studies has been widely recognized, but the publication of his PhD thesis in the 1970s would probably have accelerated the evolution of translation theories.

3. The situation in our university has changed quite radically since the seventies; linguistic and literary departments are now expected to organize research beyond the borderlines of the traditional 'philologies'.

4. On the question of the atomistic approach in literary studies, see Lambert (1983b).

5. For the dilemma 'source-text oriented' versus 'target-text oriented' research, see Toury (1978); in fact, for about ten years, it has been one of the main issues in discussions of translation studies.

devote long and even polemical chapters to literary contacts, but many of them do not even mention the question of translation, except, from the sociological point of view as an aspect of literary distribution (as understood by Robert Escarpit and his followers in the 1950s and 1960s),[6] and as a privileged way of importing and exporting literary texts. A few theorists refer to translation theory as such by using Georges Mounin's *Problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (1963) or even by quoting from his *Les belles infidèles* (1955), mainly in order to stress the very impossibility of translation. Even the question of machine translation is occasionally alluded to as one of the new developments in linguistics. In one book only, namely in Dionýz Ďurišin's *Vergleichende Literaturforschung* (1976b),[7] a systematic attempt is made to situate literary translation at the heart of literary communication and reception in general, both as a theoretical and as a historical problem. In fact, as far as the question of translated literature was concerned, the embarrassment among comparatists in the sixties and in the early seventies corresponded with the embarrassment in translation studies as a whole. The theoretical linguistic schemes adopted at that time were not at all compatible with the historical phenomena the literary historian had to deal with. For comparatists, as well as for theorists of translation and of literature, translated literature remained a no man's land until at least 1975.

Working in this no man's land, I had to (re)study as systematically as possible a number of translational phenomena in a specific cultural situation. Among the best models available at that time, covering both the question of reception and that of translation, was the dissertation of Claude Pichois on Jean-Paul Richter's work in France (1963). In this book, as well as in many pages of the Pichois / Rousseau handbook on *La littérature comparée* (1967), an attempt was made at least to identify the schemes adopted by French writers, critics and translators when assimilating certain sophisticated and very 'German' texts.

Faced with the Tieck translations, I avoided from the beginning reducing the discussion of the French texts to categories such as 'right' and 'wrong', which would have presupposed an ideal interpretation of an author's works and world. It was clear from the outset that the French translators had other things in mind than an ideal rendering of a German writer's texts, and that they referred, often explicitly, to quite different principles. I identified some techniques of translation and of text production which, obviously, were linked with the receiving culture and literature

6. Escarpit's sociology of literature reduced the question of literature mainly to the question of literary distribution ('la consommation littéraire'). For a synthetic view on literary contacts in general, see Lambert (1986a).

7. In English: *Sources and systematics of comparative literature* (1976a). Ďurišin's *Theory of literary comparatistics* (1984) presents a more elaborate version of the same concepts.

(the 'target system', as we would call it now) rather than with the very particular and unique problem of one particular foreign writer. On the basis of the Pichois model I tried to understand the norms and motivations of a given literature, rather than to judge it. In fact, there has been a tendency among comparatists studying bilateral literary relationships to contrast one writer (literature) with another in a normative way, instead of looking for principles of literary assimilation and integration. The very ambition not to identify with the object of study, which was to be promoted in many disciplines during the seventies, was noticeable at least in some comparatist work before 1970; it became one of the leading principles of my own doctoral dissertation, not only in connection with translation but in relation with literature in general.

Looking for adequate tools to analyse the French Tieck translations, I had the choice between at least three groups of theoretical models:

1. the (too) literary and/or philosophical models provided by the great translators of the past; they could obviously not be applied to a concrete nineteenth-century body of texts;
2. the schemes developed by specialists in applied linguistics, which excluded, more or less openly, most literary phenomena;
3. the new approach practiced by Jiří Levý (1963/1969),[8] in which theoretical and historical, linguistic and other parameters were taken into account.

Clearly, the only reason for selecting and/or rejecting theories had to be their relevance to particular cultural situations, their applicability to a given historical object: theory as a means, as a hypothesis, not as an aim. The choice for Levý was easy to make, but even Levý's very flexible principles did not solve all the problems. How to account, for instance, for the extremely erratic behaviour of some translators working in the same culture and during the same period? One and the same translator (Mme de Montolieu) totally changed her strategy on several occasions within the same translation of a *Bildungsroman*; very literal translations were produced besides very free adaptations; German translators in exile did not necessarily behave differently from their French colleagues; and so on. However, it appeared that a certain regularity was associated with the relative position of genres, the genre problem being very prominent during the first half of the nineteenth century. Especially in prose works, certain rules were applied quite schematically to very different texts and by different translators (e.g. the condensation of time, the reduction of the number of characters, the use of elevated language). Were they linked to characteristics particular to the

8. First published in 1963, it became well-known in the West after the publication of its translation into German in 1969.

structures of Tieck's (or the romantics') prose works, or – as was often assumed by comparatists and even by historians – to some characteristics of the French (and German) mind?

A more general frame was needed to determine to what extent certain strategies were or were not specific (to a given translator, text, genre, country). This was the starting point of a much larger project, carried out mainly in seminars with graduate students. On the basis of certain expectations and observations (hypotheses) drawn from the Tieck translations and from other books about translations into French, they had to answer some general questions about translational behaviour in France during the first half of the nineteenth century. Further material and arguments were drawn from recent publications (e.g. Mounin 1955; Bereaud 1971; Stackelberg 1971). We came to the conclusion that various and very different translational strategies and translation theories had coexisted at the same time, and that some clear changes had occurred in certain areas, but not in all of them. Not one modern theoretical explanation known to us really accounted for such a complexity. On the other hand, we became convinced that a general theoretical explanation was necessary, especially since our approach failed to work as soon as a translation seemed to be very 'faithful', that is to say, very literal and modern. As there were no adequate theoretical models, we had to struggle against the notion that 'literal' translations are an object of linguistic study only, whereas when dealing with so-called adaptations, the competence of a student of literature is required. We realized that, in order to account for older translations, we also had to be able to deal with contemporary ones; otherwise, instead of studying the very principles according to which specific texts had been produced, we were afraid we would simply support modern norms against old ones. In other words, it was on the basis of historical descriptive work, and not at all from a strictly theoretical point of view, that we went in search of a theory. Furthermore, our research on translation started as part of comparatist projects investigating literary relationships: translation was considered as one of the problems of literatures in contact, and not just as a (historical) linguistic problem or as an end in itself.

During the early seventies, we gathered more evidence of the function of very sophisticated narrative patterns in prose translations, even in modern ones (Lambert 1977d). While extending our corpus of study far beyond French-German relationships (during the Romantic period), we also discovered the impact of certain literary and cultural rules on the use of linguistic and textual material and on translational behaviour: style and language were handled according to very strict conventions in plays translated into French, whereas novels were reorganized in a more incoherent way, but also mainly in accordance with a specific narrative model (clearly identified chapters, clear separation between dialogues and the narrator's discourse, no digressions, more action than discourse, hardly any slang or jargon, not even in dialogues). While such narrative models have apparently still been observed by many French translators in the twentieth century, their impact appears to have been much weaker in Belgium, even in the nineteenth century.

The more we tried to enlarge the scope of the investigation and increase the number of questions to be answered, the more we had to acknowledge the need for a larger project and for a general theory.

Translation theories and literary systems

Our questions on translation reached far beyond translation itself, as did our answers. Our empirical research on translated novels, for example, demonstrated the importance of narrative and literary schemes. If translation had anything to do with literature and with the use of languages in literature, our search for models (not just theories, but both theories and schemes for research) had to focus on literature as well as (if not mainly) on translation.

Such schemes were being elaborated by some Czech scholars, partly following Levý and the structuralist tradition. They were quite unknown in the West, although René Wellek, Russian formalism and Czech structuralism became very successful in Western Europe and in the United States. Their reception in 'Western' literary departments was rather eclectic, and the implications for the study of translation – and of the borderlines between literary systems (Popovič, Ďurišin) – remained largely unknown, except to a small group of scholars from the Low Countries and from some other centres (Holmes, Van den Broeck, Lefevere, Jechova, Meschonnic; Tel Aviv, Leuven).[9] By the end of the sixties, this group of scholars had already organized meetings on literary translation, and some new publications started circulating among comparatists and literary scholars (Holmes, Lambert & Van den Broeck 1978; Popovič 1976).

The 1976 Leuven colloquium on "Literature and Translation. New Perspectives in Literary Studies" was an exceptional occasion where the theoretical discussions among scholars from different countries, familiar with the various linguistic and literary approaches, were summarized. This proved to be the start of a long se-

9. It is well-known that James S Holmes, an American translator and translation scholar living in Paris, played an important role as an intermediary between Czech and other East-European, Belgian, Israeli scholars, etc. The Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs also functioned as a forum for scholars from different countries. Itamar Even-Zohar, who finished a dissertation on literary translation in 1972, was Gideon Toury's supervisor in 1976. Their first systematic contacts with translation studies in the West were favoured by the Low Countries. Since 1976, the International Comparative Literature Association became another forum for meetings in translation studies, even beyond literary translation.

ries of colloquia and meetings all over the world, devoted to the question of literary translation, and to questions of literature and of translation more generally. It was also a new departure in the area of (literary) translation studies, as was shown nine years later in Theo Hermans' *The manipulation of literature* (1985).

The proceedings of the 1976 conference (Holmes, Lambert & Van den Broeck 1978), however useful and interesting they may be, only provide an indirect and incomplete idea of what the conference really meant to the participants, and to their further research. First, there was a systematic discussion on the basis of the best known (including East-European) translation theories; secondly, there was a confrontation between theoretical and 'historical' assumptions and research. The key issue proved to be the demand for a new kind of theory – an 'open' theory – which limited itself to being a model for historical descriptive research. As was argued especially by Toury (1978) and Even-Zohar (1978a), translation theory was not able to provide anything more than schemes and questions for research; instead of imposing any norms upon translators (past and present) and scholars, translation studies had to accept as their very object translational norms and models in given cultural situations, and to look for regularities in translational phenomena. Translation itself was assumed to be a cultural phenomenon, and the borderlines between translations, adaptations, revised texts, etc. could fluctuate according to a more or less clear consensus among groups (systems). Translated literature itself was not considered to be – *a priori* – of a universal nature, since not all translations of literary works function within a given literary system (e.g. they may have been produced to function within didactic, moral or religious systems). Even the technical use of linguistic material in translation is submitted to norms, and the nature of translational equivalence is a decidedly empirical and cultural phenomenon (as had in fact already been stated by Catford in 1965). What is accepted or refused as 'equivalence' or as 'translation' is basically dependent on cultural (literary, etc.) agreements, not in connection with the source text, but in connection with the receiving cultural (literary) system, pseudo-translations being a case in point.

This theory implied a radical shift from an *a priori* definition to a set of questions and hypotheses: we cannot define translation before having studied it, and we cannot study it without the aid of hypotheses and working schemes. Thus, the study of translation has to proceed from new premises, although many statements by well-known theorists, past and present, prove to be quite useful, in certain circumstances. Translation theory, now, attempts to shift from an explicitly or implicitly prescriptive approach to a descriptive approach, its aim being the production of theories as models for explanation, and not as an end in themselves. This presupposes that the history of translation is more than an accumulation of data and names; it emerges from the analysis of the basic assumptions on translation through the ages and cultures. Translation theory, in its turn, cannot survive without a systematic investigation into the cultural complexity of translational phenomena.

In keeping with the new theory, literary translation must be accepted as a special kind of literature – from the point of view of the target literature – insofar as it conforms to the literary norms and models of that literature. In many cases, translations of literary texts rather function within didactic or moral areas of a given culture, and they hardly relate to literary life. In order to define *literary* translations, the scholar should no longer invoke his own (modern and personal) standards, but rather examine whether the object of study conforms to the historical standards more or less prevailing in that culture (literature).

Moreover, since it is hardly possible to define literary translation in any other way than by referring to literary and historical norms, the very phenomenon of translated literature teaches us a great deal about (the receiving) literature. It shows how translators/writers/critics proceed when introducing less familiar (foreign) items into their own system; they are obliged to (re)construct texts and messages according to their own rules and habits, even when trying to create a new literature. Hence the necessity of a functional approach, not just to translation, but also and mainly to literature(s), in its (their) relationships with other (literary) systems. Descriptive research shows that translations are never just a copy of the original, that they often attempt to hide their very origin (sometimes with success), that they are always a combination of norms and models from source and target systems, if not from other (intermediary) systems as well, and that the combination of these models – in terms of prestige and power – seems to be the key to the behaviour (the poetics) of (literary) systems. In order to overcome the old-fashioned and irrelevant model of the nationalistic and philological approach, which *a priori* confines literature to languages and to nations,[10] the study of literature(s) has to take a fresh start by defining to what extent literary systems belong to central or more peripheral systems, by scrutinizing the changes of literary borderlines and systems.

By situating the question of translation, of literature and of language in the context of systems of conventions, this *systemic* approach clearly moves into a particular kind of semiotics, and it redefines at once theory, practice and research in all these areas of scholarly activity. If taken seriously, such a theory, chosen not for theory's sake but for the sake of (historical) research, has to give birth to new sets of questions and to collective research. It should also provide a better and

10. Our reaction against the philological or nationalist model was (and is) widely shared by translation scholars. Strangely enough, it has not led – so far – to a new concept of 'literature' or of 'world literature', neither on the side of comparatists nor on the side of theoreticians. (See Lambert 1983a, 1983b, 1986b.)

more complete insight into *all* translational phenomena at a given moment: if not, it will have to be rejected or improved.

If, according to the new theory, *all* translational phenomena deserve to be studied, the whole history of translation (and culture) is open to research. But, from the beginning, certain priorities have been observed: the systematic enquiry into principles and models supersedes the 'old' philological model which is more interested in accumulating names, dates and facts, than in the understanding of the underlying principles.

It is on the systemic basis, with more or less emphasis on the explicit theory and/or methodology, that research on translation has been organized as *team* research since 1976, first by students from Leuven, as before, then by colleagues from other universities and countries dealing with similar historical, theoretical or methodological data, and still later by research organizations.

From descriptive models to projects

Having devised an explicit theoretical and descriptive model, a thorough discussion of objects, aims and tools became necessary before research could really start. At that time, many disciplines in the human sciences, especially literary studies, were not (and, still, are not?) accustomed to establishing explicitly and in advance the rules governing work in a given field of research (because that would have looked too theoretical?), nor were they accustomed to working within the frame of a team. The familiar notion of the solitary scholar working in splendid isolation – "Die Forschung ist Sache des Einzelnen" – continued to have a strong impact on our academic habits, although the positive sciences and many areas in linguistics had already shown how successful planned and collective research can be. Nevertheless, we took the first step from *historical* (supposedly a-theoretical, as if this was possible) investigation toward *descriptive* investigation (in which an explicit working scheme links theories and hypotheses).

The models proposed for the study of translation had the advantage of being applicable within a range of priorities; also, they could be corrected and improved if necessary.

Coincidentally, during the seventies, research foundations in the humanities shifted rather radically from the individualistic to the collective and programmed approach, thus creating new financial possibilities for research projects. Under these circumstances, projects on translation, even on translated literature, had a better chance of being funded than projects on purely literary topics.

On the basis of our previous work on the French nineteenth century, a small group of scholars was able to set up a research programme on "Littérature et traduction en France: 1800–1850."[11] Correcting previous goals, the project proposed to study the function of translation in French culture and literature. In the event, the traditional bilateral model – focusing on translations from one language into another – was replaced by a target-oriented approach. Instead of examining whether Shakespeare had been translated 'faithfully', it seemed important to ascertain the fundamental rules of Shakespeare translation prevailing in France during the chosen period, to apply them to other translations and relate them to other activities. The most reasonable connections proved to be connections within French culture (literature) and – far less – within the English (source) culture.

Reference to an open descriptive model proved more efficient than any previous approach because it added numerous new questions and corrected previous wrong assumptions (e.g. about the so-called innovatory role of translations, about the linearity of evolution in translation, and about the parallelism between literary and translational evolution).[12]

The advantage of the systemic approach over previous models can be demonstrated by our Shakespeare studies. In former years scholars had observed the 'progress' in Shakespeare translations, expecting one day to discover some 'ideal' model for the French Shakespeare. Our new paradigm obliged us to ask more fundamental questions about other drama translations (from which languages, periods, genres? by which group of translators?) and about theatre in general, about translational poetics and about the poetics of drama, etc. Instead of listing chronological, biographical and editorial data, we discovered the revolutionary function, not just of Shakespeare translation, but also of Greek and popular French theatre, as well as very general trends – from a functional point of view – in the European theatre traditions during the romantic period (Lambert 1982). What does Shakespeare translation, and what does translation in general, mean for (French) literature at a given moment? If Shakespeare represents revolutionary literature, what, then, is the nature and the role of revolutionary theatre at that moment in France, or in the surrounding countries?

The explicit use of a research programme – whatever its exact nature – and the reinterpretation of our previous investigations provided us with a much larger scope and with explicit techniques. The selection of precise topics, also by our

11. Officially, three scholars are responsible for the project: Lieven D'hulst, Katrin van Bragt and myself (see bibliography). In fact, between 1970 and 1986, some forty M.A. students have dealt with particular areas of the project, selected according to various parameters. So far, the results of the project have been published in isolated articles, but Hermans 1985 provides a very general synthesis.

12. See my discussion of Bereaud in Lambert (1981b); it was written long before we used explicitly the systemic approach; see also D'hulst et al. (1979).

graduate students, was no longer determined mainly by personal and subjective motives; it had to be functional and, indeed, it proved to be so, even if students, inexperienced in matters of theory, just tried to apply the working schemes. Theories and methods were used here – again – as means, and not as an end in themselves. The relevance of our working schemes had to be tested, of course, and we had to complete them from several points of view, according to the progress of our research.[13]

The advantage of our descriptive scheme can be demonstrated even more clearly by the analysis of Greek and Latin literature in French translation during the romantic period. Strangely enough, translated literature changes more radically in certain areas of so-called 'classical' literature than in modern literature (Dante, Shakespeare, Hoffmann translations): the most revolutionary texts of the romantic age may have been, not Petrus Borel's 'surrealistic' works, but *L'Ane d'or* and Herodotus in Paul-Louis Courier's translation, or Émile Littré's *Iliad* translation. The paradoxes of literary life and of translational policy would have escaped our attention had we not been able to use a sophisticated set of questions and hypotheses about apparent accidents which are not, upon closer inspection, accidents at all, as may be discovered in prefaces and criticism. In a similar way, we were able to analyse the strange and irregular behaviour of criticism in connection with translation, and even the penetration of new areas by translation criticism, or its non-existence in others.

Although we knew from the beginning that any exhaustive account of translational policy in a given culture is utopian, we believe we have succeeded in establishing rather systematic views on the main aspects of (literary and other) translation in France over a period of more than fifty years, even to the extent that a high degree of predictability can be reached.

Some of our most representative work has been published; the most important results are summarized in our contribution to *The manipulation of literature* (Hermans 1985) and discussed quite explicitly by D'hulst (1987a; 1987b).

One of the striking observations we made was the impact of genre rules, genre positions and genre conflicts on the development of (French) literature. At least in nineteenth-century France, and probably in many other cultural situations, the deeper motivation behind text selection and translational policy is often directly related to the genre system in the target literature and to what it could and could not generate (Lambert 1986a); and, for the same reason, genre rules and policies indicate central aspects of literary policy in general. In fact, our research on translation and translated literature developed more and more into

13. See our more explicit schemes for translation description (Lambert & Van Gorp 1985a; included in the present volume).

the study of literary strategies. Translated literature apparently behaved like literary imports which, as economists know, may play a key role in a given economy by their complex relationships with exports and production movements, or with autochthonous traditions.

It was on the basis of such hypotheses, especially about literary 'interference' and about literatures in contact, that we started checking systematically the differences between translation policy in Belgian French literature and society, on the one hand, and in France, on the other. Here, again, the shifts in translation policy indicated a sudden shift in literary and in cultural behaviour. Some statistical work and the analysis of a series of translations and literary works demonstrated that in Belgium – in Flanders and in Wallonia – literature and translation were submitted to quite different rules than in France and that these rules, at least in certain aspects (e.g. the use of more local or more standard language), were surprisingly predictable.

In connection with historical (literary) studies the very idea of predictability may seem strange. In fact, predictability is neither more nor less utopian in connection with the past than it is with the future: it is purely a matter of a thorough knowledge of norms and models; and predictability in literary or translational behaviour, as a rule, should not come as a surprise if (and *only* if) literary and translational behaviour are submitted to norms and models. Being a prophet of the past, according to Friedrich Schlegel, is not any easier than being a prophet of the future.

The search for predictability (regularities) in (systemic) behaviour also led to rather spectacular tests in quite different historical circumstances; it seemed possible to check which historical (linguistic, social, moral, generic, etc.) parameters prevailed in France, in Germany, in Holland, Belgium, etc. during the same period, or later. If scholars focus on norms and models, and not on an encyclopaedic accumulation of data, they will find the systematic 'grounds for comparison' of which they have dreamed so often.

If translation really functions as a symptom of the power and prestige relationships between different literatures, a thorough observation of the selection and translation strategies, at any moment, in any literature, should lead to a better understanding of the patterns and structures of dominance in world literature.

In the context of similar discussions, hypotheses and tests, new projects about literature(s) and translation(s) were developed in the eighties by other scholars and groups of scholars: literatures in Belgium; poetry in Flanders; translation in Dutch literature; the function of translated literature in European literatures; narrative models in Spanish-American literatures; film adaptation.[14]

14. There are no explicit links between these projects, except for the basic theoretical and methodological assumptions. Just a few scholars participate in more than one of them. While

A detailed discussion of the many different projects would be of no use here, since (by definition?) translations play different roles and functions according to historical circumstances. However, the general contribution to translation studies drawn from so many cultural and theoretical areas has a clear trans-historical and theoretical significance; it has corrected well-known theoretical assumptions which do not correspond at all with the analysis of historical phenomena, and which refer to imaginary concepts rather than to actual translational phenomena (Lambert 1978a). But the exact use, from a theoretical point of view, of our research experiences leads back to theory and to methodology, although these are not, and have never been, our main concern. Let us, nevertheless, consider certain methodological consequences and recommendations.

Methodological discussions

Ever since we started the study of translated literature, and from the moment we identified our work systematically with a given methodology and with a given theory, we have had the opportunity to discuss our general frame and our strategies with many scholars from different countries, mainly at conferences, and also with our own students and colleagues, in seminars. Let us just sum up a few 'traditional' topics for discussion, without insisting here on 'possible' or 'best' solutions. On the basis of the history of our research, we even believe that the

translation is not the main focus in every research project, it is in most cases considered to be an essential phenomenon in the way literatures function:

– "Literatures in Belgium" (Victor Nachtergaele and others) deals with the interactions between literatures within Belgium since 1800;
– "Poetry in Flanders" (Hugo Brems and others) deals with contemporary poetry, its norms and models, its relationships with poetry in Holland, with the other arts, etc.;
– "Translation in Dutch Literature" (André Lefevere, Theo Hermans, Raymond van den Broeck, and others) is examined by a research group sponsored by the National Research Foundation: bibliographical work, readers and monographs are in preparation;
– "The Function of Translated Literature in European Literature" (José Lambert, Gideon Toury and many others) is an ICLA project: cf. ICLA Bulletin (1984), and Lambert and Van Gorp (1985b);
– "Narrative Models in Spanish-American Literatures" (Christian De Paepe, Luz Rodriguez and others) studies the development of narrative models and their function within the Spanish-American world;
– "Film Adaptation" has been studied by several PhD students (among them Patrick Cattrysse) who apply to film adaptation the basic schemes of the systemic approach. There are similar plans for the study of subtitle translation in cinema and television programmes.

answers cannot be just theoretical, and that many excellent solutions are to be found in our publications or in our research:

- Should we study translations as texts, or should translation be studied as a concept, as a 'system'?
- Why should we insist on the 'target system', and neglect the source text (writer, author), since translations refer (do they?) to a 'foreign' origin?
- Irrespective of the meaning of translational norms and models, how should we deal with a given translation? How to start? And how to connect this very particular text with 'translational systems', with 'literatures in contact', with 'genres' and with (world) 'literature'?
- Normative versus 'a-normative' approach? From the beginning, many colleagues have objected to the very idea of an 'a-normative' approach arguing that it reflects naive assumptions about scholarly and other knowledge. Whatever the techniques used in a systemic approach may be, the necessity of a 'scholarly' approach and the dangers implied in an *a priori* evaluative approach are rather obvious. In recent times, some of our students have argued that the only possible alternative to a 'scholarly' attitude can be an explicit ideological theory. It is an interesting paradox that the university (or its students) should argue against scholarship, and it is striking that they should consider the '(poly)systemic approach' to be the most symptomatic kind of scholarship (in their field).
- How can any scholar believe in the possibility of dealing with literatures, texts, translations, styles, languages, etc. without identifying the particular norms according to which these phenomena function? Or: how to carry out scholarly work, if it is true that there is no literature, no translation, no communication beyond value systems, and that, therefore, the very understanding of literatures and texts implies the understanding of values?
- How can we pretend to deal with 'literary systems' and not with (very limited) elements of such systems? And how to reconstruct systems from centuries ago? How to deal with 'literature' and not with particular texts, writers, critics, readers, even in the best libraries in the world?

The discussion of such problems, obviously, can lead very far. The best reply, for the time being, is that our model of research, whatever its shortcomings, has at least the merit of provoking very fundamental discussions. We are no longer allowed to live or work without taking them into account, whereas, so far, all other approaches have tried to ignore them – especially the problem of values and evaluation. The best discussion can be illustrated by actual research, and not by *a priori* statements or by rhetoric.

In quest of literary world maps

(1991)

In this paper I will not only speak of world maps, but also of maps of countries and regions, and also of maps *as such*. World maps and world views presuppose views of more limited areas. Without coherent principles, the view of the parts is as potentially misleading as the view of the whole, the universe. It takes precisely such a roaming, panoramic view to recognize greater or lesser regularities on both the large and small scales. I will, therefore, be equally concerned with microcosm and macrocosm.

My purpose is not to simply defend or explain existing world maps: I am *in quest* of world maps. Indeed, I am more pessimistic than the many literary scholars who seem to think that surveying the literary world is an easy matter. I am convinced that we need better world maps than the ones we have – inasmuch as we have any. This is why I shall raise issues and questions which may enable us to have better and more fundamental views of literature, or rather, literatures. As I will argue, the answers cannot be provided by the individual researcher but only by the entire community: it takes a collective reorientation for literary science to transcend local research.

I also assume that literary scholars would essentially agree that literature is more than just an accumulation of facts, that writers, reviewers and readers acknowledge conventions as being basic to communication, and that facts are relative inasmuch as they point to more general facts. The question is: which particular facts and which general facts?

I will begin in a destructive vein as a necessary first step towards being constructive; and I do want to be constructive, for in a country where the concept

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Editors' note. This chapter was originally delivered as the Dean's Lecture during José Lambert's stay as Visiting Scholar at the *Sonderforschungsbereich "Die literarische Übersetzung"* (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) and subsequently published in the volume *Interculturality and the historical study of literary translations* (Göttinger Beiträge zur internationalen Übersetzungsforschung 4), edited by Harald Kittel and Armin Paul Frank (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1991), 133–144. For a French and a Spanish version, see Lambert (1990d) and (1991c). Like the first published version, the revised text presented here preserves features of the original oral style.

of *Weltliteratur* has been developed, I would be loath to act the part of the iconoclast.

The principle of maps

In our field, we frequently employ geographical, political and other spatial categories, such as French, or English, or American literature. But we hardly ever use maps, regional ones or others, as we did when we were kids in primary school. Are the geographical categories extraneous or are they essential to literature? Is literature, are writers really conditioned by the socio-cultural context, or are the relations in space and time mere accidents?

The answer is rather clear-cut: universities everywhere organize teaching and research in literature primarily in terms of national divisions. Or at least, such is the tradition. Reasons are hardly ever given, and maps are hardly ever used to pinpoint literary facts geographically. And since geography is not really subject to very rapid change, the study of past literature is hardly ever consistently backed up by geographical data. The ensuing danger is a mixture of contemporary and anachronistic perspectives in our views of the socio-cultural situation.

Indeed, ever since leaving primary school, we academics have been rather negligent of maps. In the old days, we were made familiar with political, linguistic, economic, even religious and other images of the world. Today we have only television to remind us that the world consists of parts, and that we are part of it. It is due to the so-called internationalization of communication, of politics, of economics, and other facts of life that the man in the street gains the impression that he and the rest of the world are next-door neighbours. Students of literature cannot bypass the question whether the literary world is also being internationalized, and if so, what this means for our field of study. Political and economic scientists routinely deal with problems at a global level, but what about literary scientists?

My claim is that most of us have an indistinct, even medieval image of the literary world, and that we need to use more than one map in order to gain a more realistic and detailed view of literature and literatures. To play around with such maps is more than child's play.

So we have to begin by asking ourselves quite seriously: if it is true that literary activities have been – and still are – characteristic of most cultures, is it realistic to assume, as we usually do, that these activities and traditions are connected with nothing but nations, languages or 'national literatures'? Let us first look at linguistic maps.

Linguistic maps

It is not easy to find a world map of languages. If you are looking for one, turn to a school atlas, to history departments, or – strange place? – a translator-training school. You will be surprised to learn that not every linguistic department owns one.

Another surprise: since most of us unconsciously regard the map of the political world as prototypical of world maps, every linguistic map looks like the map of an alien planet. The interplay of colours marking territories and borderlines produces unexpected relations. Thus, (1) areas widely apart show the same colour, indicating that the same language is spoken in them. (2) Large areas which we normally regard as unified are really a quilt of many colours: Russia, for instance, or India, and even France. (3) Old Europe looks like a patchwork indeed, but North and South America are quite homogeneous; we are less surprised by the vast blanks and the muddle of many colours which is Africa.

On closer inspection, we have to acknowledge that the linguistic maps do not correspond to reality. Some of the well-known complexities are represented in a rather over-simplified manner. The best known linguistic minorities can normally be found on linguistic maps of Western Europe, but the smaller minorities are as a rule ignored. (How many people are needed to form a recognized minority? Would this also be a question of the availability of colours?) Thus, in official records, Belgium and Canada are described as being (at least) bilingual, whereas sociolinguists claim that Belgium is really made up of at least two times three different linguistic systems, and on linguistic maps of Canada you will not find the slightest trace of the several small language groups, probably because they are not localized. The new immigrants in Western Europe cannot be found anywhere either, although every single cabinet minister and journalist is very well aware of their existence. (How can we put such an important phenomenon as language migration on the map? We need a chronological series of maps ... but do we have them?)

There are, thus, quite serious limitations to map-making. There is the case of Africa. Specialists tell us that more than 80 languages are spoken at the Ivory Coast; more than 300, even 400, are reported from Nigeria (India is comparatively language-poor, with just eighteen). Maybe a cartographer can imagine such polychromy; but he does not have the colours to represent it in the language of his trade.

Looking more closely, we recognize that the maps show only standard languages characterized by a written tradition. This is what makes our language maps so interesting in terms of ideology: they are based on a familiar tradition according to which a language needs to be well institutionalized in order to be recognized as such.

There are other technical reasons which impose further restrictions on the concept of language. Thus, there is no way of showing how language traditions may cut across one another, as, for instance, in Flanders in the nineteenth century when intellectuals spoke Flemish and wrote French. Language interference and language stratification and variation, too, are notoriously difficult to record on a map. Unfortunately, these technical limits of graphic representation reflect the limits of our imagination, and linguistics, so far, has done little to help us transcend them:

– we imagine that a given language corresponds with a given territory, even a coherent territory (the Belgian state legalizes this rule precisely because the linguistic reality is more complicated);
– we tend to forget the rapid changes in language distribution, whether immigration is involved or not;
– like the conventional language maps, we tend to reduce 'languages' to '*canonized* languages';
– we should not overlook the fact that there have always been languages serving as major international languages (English is the first example to spring to mind) and that today they are more influential than ever.

I apologize to the poor cartographers for first using their work as a model and now for claiming that we need something new. *Ne tirons pas sur le pianiste.* If we may believe Jean Cocteau, we have both the parents and the children we deserve ("on a les enfants, mais aussi les parents qu'on mérite"). It is a matter of some significance that neither society nor science has called for a more differentiated presentation of linguistic realities. When generalizing about languages, even scientists exclude anything but the canonized and institutionalized languages. Looking at maps has the advantage of making us see these limitations and, by the same token, revealing an enormous no-man's land ready to be explored. We might begin by making several maps in a diachronic series, in order to depict language change.

I hope that our imaginary toying with maps has at least served to make us more conscious of certain relevant distinctions and difficulties, but so far we have not said a word about maps of the literary world. This should definitely not be taken to suggest that literary maps are identical with language maps. This is precisely the main question: what relations exist or may exist between linguistic, political and literary borderlines? There *are* such relations – but what is their exact nature? And what about other maps we might have overlooked?

Literary maps, old and new

There are two reasons why the case of the relations between the different kinds of maps has to be reopened. First, while the man in the street and the scientist hold opinions – even convictions – on this point, they do not have a proper explanation or a proper scientific theory underlying them. Second, there has always been a process of internationalizing literature, and this process has accelerated considerably since the Second World War. These transformations require a redefinition, a view which must supersede the local, 'partial' image of literature which we still perceive. It just will not do to continue the traditional local, atomistic way of approaching literature at a time when literature – like the economy (within which it constitutes a huge market!) – is increasingly homogenized and internationalized.

There is insufficient space here for a detailed discussion of literary research in relation to the demands of a changing world. Though oversimplified, the truth of the matter is that literary scholars, while assuming the existence of literature in each and every culture at all times, normally restrict their interest to written literature, and even to one type of written literature, the one published in books. And comprehensive surveys are normally focused not on the units which are truly buzzing with literary life and where local and international features meet – cities, regions – but on the national literatures (or at least this is the main trend). Even the few attempts at describing literature worldwide remain faithful to the national paradigm (and here too, exceptions to the rule may be found).

National literature as unit

I will begin by explaining why the model of 'national literature' has insufficient explanatory power, and then go on to suggest the real nature of national literature and the limited though distinct relevance it continues to have.

In terms of research strategies, 'national literature' has always been regarded as a normative and therefore restrictive concept. It is true that, in recent years, it has lost its earlier exclusive restriction to *les Belles-Lettres*. Yet, even if the concept of literature is increasingly employed in a more flexible sense, non-canonized literature continues to be treated selectively. Literary forms which are almost invariably sidelined include: literature in 'foreign languages'; translated literature (which, in some cultures and for certain types of readers, accounts for more than eighty percent of their reading matter); special types of traditional but isolated literature (dialect literature, literature of the provinces); oral traditions; other non-written literature (film, television, *chanson*); 'literary life' (as understood by Eikhenbaum); and 'commercial' literature. As a matter of course, standard language and written language are recognized as norms; 'new' or 'original' forms of literary expression are not excluded either; but 'popular' and 'low-brow' forms destined for mass consumption *(vide* Agatha Christie, Konsalik) are regarded as marginal.

One may doubt whether it is possible or even necessary to broaden our view of literature. Does this 'marginalized' literature really have to be recognized as 'literature'? It seems to us that this question of who legitimately 'belongs' to 'literature' (e.g. does Benjamin Franklin?) cannot be answered by academics safely entrenched in their office. The least one needs to know is the answers provided during the author's own age (Franklin's age). So we need empirical field work based on historical documents.

Instead of pleading for or defending an expansion of the concept of literature, I will give a few examples to indicate the consequences of a narrow view of literature. Since literary scientists hardly ever recognize non-written literature (e.g. oral traditions), official literary studies institutionalize what may be called a pre-Columbian world view, with some of the continents still missing, and not only for the period prior to the Renaissance, but all the way until the present. For contemporary research is primarily restricted to written traditions (old and new), as well as to traditions employing western, non-autochthonous languages. Oral traditions are explicitly excluded because of the alleged difficulty of writing a period-based history of oral traditions. But it is easy to see that oral traditions are very important to this day in many parts of Africa, including South Africa but also Nigeria, Algeria, etc.

A second example: many forms of literary exclusion are found on the European continent too. Large and important areas of European literature, past and present, are slighted: Latin traditions after the Middle Ages; traditions which have disappeared without our noticing (e.g. the classicism of the French nineteenth century); and, more importantly, the literatures of the marginal linguistic no-man's cultures (e.g. Alsace, Lyon, Rennes, Lille, Mons, Luxembourg between 1820 and 1860 – all of it a big gaping hole). The list can be easily extended (Belgium, Catalonia, Yugoslavia, etc.). The paradigm of national literature is a paradigm of the nineteenth century, and this is precisely why it is based on historical revisionism. What it cannot account for has been forgotten, excluded or marginalized. This is why nations with no single language of their own (Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, etc.) are pushed into the literary periphery. Wherever political and linguistic borderlines do not coincide – and they never do – the principle of national literatures does not work. The maps of European literatures, past and present, look like a piece of Swiss cheese.

A third example: since imported literature, translated or untranslated, is only rarely regarded as a proper object of literary study, the exchange between national literatures is, as a rule, reduced to a small number of 'special cases' (Shakespeare, Rousseau, Walter Scott, Agatha Christie, and the like). This approach makes it difficult to decide on questions of influence, for, on the whole, it is difficult to explain new trends in any literature by pointing to a single foreign example. The real importance of international exchange can only be understood by bracketing outstanding individual writers with collective movements. Consider, for instance, the development of narrative prose from the eighteenth century on. The novel, to be sure, has changed; but so have the genre principles and the entire genre hierarchy, and the whole world has adopted the novel that originated in Western Europe as the most important literary genre. No single author can be credited for this development; it took the effort of many groups and classes, and it is no accident that the English-speaking world has led the way. Literary life actually lived is a striking hodge-podge of foreign and native literatures, as can be seen by studying the repertories actually in use in any given culture. Most of our modern repertories (film, television, theatre programmes, anthologies, etc.) fly in the face of the traditional departmentalization and its values. The full implications of this reorientation of research are mind-boggling, but all I intended to do is to show that narrow (closed, *a priori*) definitions block the road to more fundamental explanations. The first step forward is to realize that the concept of national literature is an insufficient basis for the study of literature.

What is this fuss all about?

The concept of 'national literature' on which our traditional views of literature are based does not suffice. It is too limited. It has probably been derived from a modern view of literature which ignores the more complex differentiations actually existing in cultures. Connecting links in literatures cannot always be explained by the concept of a nation, or by language.

As long as we do not have a clear or better principle for classifying literature, the only logical consequence is to assume that we have none – or, better, many *possible* principles. To have no basis for classification or regularities would result in absolute relativism – and this is just another *a priori*.

The debates and new historical-empirical research indicate that the old questions must and can be complemented by new ones. There is no reason why research should exclude the possibility that our fundamental questions can be answered in more than one way. It is quite normal to look for new questions and models. I will now sketch some of these questions and models. There may be others. Which of them serve literary studies best?

The nationalistic reductionism can probably be explained by the institutional origin of literary research. It all started in those western nations characterized by a strong literary tradition. Speaking in terms of systems theory, I would claim that the principle of explanation has been reduced to language and nation, and that there are good reasons for testing other explanatory principles. For it does not do to either posit them or exclude them on the basis of sheer theoretical speculation; only historical-descriptive fieldwork can lead us any further. Why not, for instance, base research on the assumption that *international* political and economic principles are just as important as national ones, as we can see from the transition of oral to written literature?

The main problem is that relations between literatures have not yet been sufficiently explained. Even public manipulations of research have not helped much. Researchers themselves must try to introduce complementary or better explanatory principles. The claim that, up to now, incoherence predominates would only hold true if no convincing explanations can be found. I for my part believe that a combination of national, linguistic, religious and economic factors frequently suggests convincing explanations.

Elements of a new world picture

Without discussing in detail the fundamental relations between language and literature, we can assume the following analogies between literature and language in their relation to society and nation:[1]

(1) Every society tends to subordinate the non-political activities such as literature and language to its own purposes. This is why multilingualism and artistic pluralism are often regarded as a political danger.

(2) Even if not explicitly organized, standardization is a normal consequence of people living together, not only in a nation but at all social levels (e.g. even in a family context). Without standardization or conventionalization, no communication is possible. It is precisely for this reason that no public administration institutionalizes bilingualism or multilingualism as an ideal. At best, a country will accept two official languages in order to exclude further differentiation.

(3) Looking at the matter from a purely semiotic point of view, we can assume that standardization will also generate de-standardization. To take an example from everyday life: as soon as children sense that parents object to a word, they will play the game of 'language conflict', and the very moment they go to school they will start testing the use of dialect words and other unorthodox forms picked up in the playground.

(4) In addition to new and newer linguistic differentiations and antagonistic trends in literature and the arts, most societies are also characterized by older,

1. For practical reasons I must restrict myself to making some claims; my claims may be wrong; their advantage over the traditional claims is that they are more cautious and relativistic.

pre-national, autochthonous language and art traditions. For most nations change more rapidly than, for instance, languages. Language, nation and literature are poorly synchronized. They can hardly be expected to share the same periodization. It is inconceivable for a given culture to have a single scheme of periodization or a universally accepted genre scheme. Based on what we know, it is hardly realistic to assume the existence of societies from which linguistic or cultural pluralism is absent. Where there is pluralism, there is also an inclination to produce canons and hierarchies, partly brought about by the institution as such. Every society is characterized by language varieties and conflicts, sometimes even by more than one official language. But so far it has remained a purely theoretical idea for each language use to have the same rights and the same status, even if this principle of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* is enshrined in the society's laws. The coexistence of newer and older traditions is a normal, possibly unconscious, fact in each literature. This variety frequently includes oral, and hence almost always pre-national literature (i.e. literature that had arisen before the political institutions were created). Furthermore, we will also find local literature, as well as imported literature (in translation or in a foreign language) and deported literature (literature in exile). Another fact of this coexistence is hierarchization as well as isolation and ostracism. This is not only true for Africa. As a matter of course, a bit of chaos does exist outside the literary network.

It is possible to claim that the development of modern western nations has had important effects on literature. Some, but not all pre-national forms of culture have remained in isolation; they may even have been stifled, slowly or more rapidly. Nationalization has had an obvious influence on the production of culture. It has provided a new context. We also observe an increasing 'globalization' (think of phenomena such as *Reader's Digest* and the agents working for magazines). There is, however, no reason for researchers to identify with the imperialism of the national or the global paradigm. Scholarship has to study both the pre-Columbian world and the new literary International.

With regard to literature the claim might be made that every literary activity and every literary work is located in some socio-cultural context, but that the rules of the literary game are not necessarily representative of the society in which they have arisen or in which they are practiced. Thus it might happen that a literary work is not recognized *as such* in the culture in which it originated, whereas it is ranked among the masterworks in some other or later culture (imported or deported literature). The more history progresses (I do not mean to say: improves), the more chances we have to find out that our best literary neighbours do not necessarily live next door. Literary communication is capable of transcending space and time.

Cases in which a wider explanatory frame than 'national literature' is required fatally demolish the paradigm of national literature as an explanatory frame for the whole of literature. This is why the following claims can safely be made.

New research objectives

Is there a way to imagine the new literary world picture, or to work it out in a scientific fashion?

It is a significant fact, at this moment in history, that we feel our literary world may be in danger of collapse as soon as the national principle is questioned. What does it mean that political or linguistic structures are required for the study of literature? Presumably, it means that literary scientists *do not yet have a model of their own*, and that literature is not their real subject, or that the discipline is still in quest of its objective. I do not claim that political, linguistic, or other principles are unimportant; all I claim is that they are insufficient. It is an assumption widely shared – not only by semioticians but also by economists, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, and even political scientists – that there will always be interchanges, and hence also conflicts, between language, society, religion, etc., entailing a struggle for autonomy or hegemony. This is precisely why the political, religious, or social borderlines are constantly fluctuating.

How should literary scientists have better reasons than linguists and others for accepting the nation as basic principle? This is why I would like to suggest that we speak about 'literature *in* France', 'literature *in* Germany' or 'literature *in* Italy', instead of 'German literature', 'French literature', 'Italian literature', and so on. This is a way to indicate that the relationship between literature and socio-political structures is not a self-evident matter but *needs to be investigated*. When studying their object in culture, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, etc. do not normally content themselves with trying to accumulate data (persons, chronology, etc.); to be sure, the collection of data is a stage in each research but not the main objective. Unfortunately, much literary research is still looking merely for facts, and the more we work towards a conspectus, the more one concentrates on national and international 'literary' history, and the more these collections of facts serve merely as evidence. It is easy to imagine more fundamental objectives, for instance:

(1) What types of literature do we find in a given socio-cultural area? It is quite important to assume that things are, at all times, different and that important literary phenomena may not even be recognized as literature in the culture in which they occur. (Lotman and other semioticians distinguish, in each culture, not only canonized and non-canonized, but also extra-systemic culture.) This is why a scholar constantly has to test and revise his concepts and hypotheses. We should,

therefore, not begin by asking: who or what is part of literature (static concept), but rather: what use of literature can be identified, theoretically or practically? And the first – in fact, the most important – questions aim at identifying the repertory or the repertories (the collections of facts which are always published by the culture itself).

(2) Where is literature localized (production, reception, etc.)?

(3) Are there any relations (relations in the researcher's mind or in history: both may be important but should not be confused) between literary phenomena? No contacts? Many contacts? Unidirectional or multidirectional ones? Do contacts reveal hierarchical relationships, i.e. is one kind of literature more prestigious than the others? Do we encounter the formation of groups and their countervailing trends? This applies to both internal and external relations.

(4) The key problem of any description of literature is: what norms and hierarchies of norms exist? We have to look for classifications but we must not restrict the problem of genres to strict formal categories – certainly not to the post-Aristotelian ones. In a study of 'world literature', this canonization and classification can serve as a test for identifying diverse groups and traditions (e.g. theatre in Africa, the difference between oral and written traditions, differences between French and English literature, etc.).

These questions are not in themselves new, and some of the answers are known, at least in part. Our 'pre-scientific' (as it were) knowledge of literature in the world is much richer than my presentation has shown. The problem is that it has not yet been coordinated. My questions justify the claim – analogously with Immanuel Wallerstein's economic theories – that the more recent cultures exert an increasing reciprocal influence upon each other, and that oral and other cultures have continued to function up to the present day in isolation outside world civilization, which is to say, western civilization. This is why the problem of literature in the world is always different – as a consequence of the introduction of print technology, as a consequence of colonalization, as a consequence of the emergence and mass circulation of newspapers and television, as a consequence of the international cooperation of our publishing houses in an effort to produce serialized work. These facts may seem banal, but only as long as we forget that the more or less isolated cultures continue to exist and continue to form part of our world too.

What we need most of all is a better coordination of research, and hence a clear view of earlier research and its objectives and of new areas for research. This is why we need maps of the world, not one, but many of them (synchronic and diachronic ones). While the presentation of a research conspectus in books is almost necessarily closed, maps may be excellent constructs for presenting a panoramic view of what has been achieved, of where research is in progress, and where there are still gaping holes. The pre-Columbian map will help us keep in mind that some of our colleagues are anthropologists.

Stereotyped or machine-like forms of team research can only parody what proper research should be about. Even so, scholars must strive for a better understanding and coordination of their objectives, tools and methods. This is not only true for macroscopic research projects; as I suggested earlier, we also need a coherent basis and method of description in order to talk scientifically about our immediate literary environment.

The obvious question that arises here is: what a scholarly superman is required for such a task? Should we call back Atlas?

Part of the moral of my tale is directed against the widespread belief that individual researchers have their own priorities and need not worry too much about larger responsibilities. If the community of researchers and the research organizations do not take heed, the products of our research will not be taken seriously. Without proper planning the study of literature will continue to look like an art more than a science. This would have negative consequences for us, and not only for us, for the insights of literary science are important for other disciplines, as well as for society as a whole including politics and the economy (as Bourdieu said, "La littérature est le royaume de l'Absolu"). For all these reasons I insist: "La recherche sera collective, ou elle ne sera point".

Let me end on a lighter note. There is a poem in Heine's *Buch der Lieder* which may have been written for me, but probably not for me alone:

> Zu fragmentarisch ist Welt und Leben,
> Ich will mich zum deutschen Professor begeben,
> Der weiβ das Leben zusammen zu setzen,
> Und er macht ein verständlich System daraus;
> Mit seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrockfetzen
> Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbau's.

Shifts, oppositions and goals in translation studies: towards a genealogy of concepts

(1991)

Although James S Holmes never intended to provide a *summa translatologica*, neither as a translator nor as a scholar, the analysis of his role in the development of the discipline is itself a challenge for what he called systematically (unlike most of his colleagues) and with special emphasis “translation studies”. On the basis of Holmes’s concepts, I shall try to demonstrate how translation theoreticians until now have agreed and disagreed on certain questions of terminology and, beyond them, on the tasks of the discipline. My focus will be on ‘descriptive studies’, and more specifically its function within ‘translation studies’ (the term is understood here along Holmesian lines as defining in the largest possible way scholarly activities linked with any kind of translation), its relationships with theories, and the interdisciplinary orientation of those who have promoted and are promoting ‘translation studies’.

When James S Holmes finished his programmatic paper on “The name and nature of translation studies” (1975 [1972[1]]) with the sentence: “Let the meta-discussion begin”, he probably did not imagine how prophetic it was going to look in the 1980s, nor how fast and how strongly the meta-theoretical discussions on translation were going to expand. Hence the necessity of a confrontation between our contemporary situation and the discussions from 1972. Holmes’s text will be used here as a starting point for an analysis of a few key problems of the discipline and its self-definitions. When referring to “The name and nature of translation studies”, I know that ‘translation studies’ (like translation itself for that matter) can never be studied on the basis of *mere texts*, and no case illustrates this better than

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1. Holmes’s landmark article (Holmes 1975; reprinted in Holmes 1988: 66–80) was first presented in 1972 as a conference paper at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Copenhagen.

Holmes's career. If we want to observe what is going on, it is necessary to examine not only texts but also the contexts and pragmatics of translation and translation studies: for instance, exactly where and when have given statements been produced (and published, if at all), for what reasons, etc.? It would not be easy, however, to indicate with clear references to what extent and in what direction Holmes's career changed a few years after "The name and nature" – for example, after what he often called "the historical Leuven Symposium" from 1976 (proceedings published as Holmes, Lambert & Van den Broeck 1978).[2]

The name and nature of the discipline

Whatever Holmes may have had in mind when dealing with translation studies, there was no consensus in 1972, as there is none today in 1990, about the use of this term, or about the discipline it is supposed to refer to. Is this a mere question of words, or is there a deeper meaning behind these terminological hesitations and squabbles?

It was a main concern for the American-Dutch scholar-translator to find the right name for what everybody keeps calling a 'young' discipline. He preferred the label 'translation studies' to more ambitious names – science of translation (Nida), traductology (Harris), science de la traduction, traductologie, Übersetzungswissenschaft, Translationswissenschaft, etc. – which did not reflect the state of the discipline. Holmes definitely wanted to react against the idea that translation was a well-known phenomenon, that the scientific study of translation was simply and only to be designated as 'theory', that translation theory was a well-established research area whose only aim was to serve theory-building. He rejected the binary and unidirectional view on theory and practice in which one was to be evaluated in terms of its efficiency for the other, by introducing other areas within the discipline. In his programmatic survey scholarship could be reduced neither to pragmatism ('how to produce good translations?') nor to theory-building. At that moment the use of 'theory' as the equivalent of 'science' was not uncommon at all, at least in matters of translation. In Holmes's mind 'translation studies' was supposed to give a more tentative and open range to scholarly activities than 'science', 'theory' and the like. His distinction between research and theory was also the occasion for further, rather new distinctions between various kinds of theo-

2. For practical reasons, it was impossible to publish the very rich tape-recorded discussions from the 1976 Symposium, during which questions about theory-building, description, history vs. theory, theory within culture vs. scholarly theory, normative vs. prescriptive attitudes, texts vs. norms, etc., were intensely debated, causing several established scholars to change their initial positions according to a so-called new paradigm.

ries. Beyond the strictly terminological matter, there is in Holmes's article one of the very first attempts to (re)consider the internal and external organization of the *entire* discipline as a set of scholarly activities, along lines parallel to other scholarly disciplines.

Although the term 'translation studies' is sometimes used nowadays, probably for stylistic reasons, as a vague and comprehensive equivalent of 'the science of translation',[3] it has not really been accepted by the majority of theoreticians as the official label for the discipline. Strangely enough, it is often used in a particular sense that Holmes would have keenly disapproved of, namely as the equivalent of (a particular kind of) *literary* translation studies. True, it has been adopted recently as a programmatic label in Mary Snell-Hornby's *Integrated approach* (1988). But Peter Newmark seems to be convinced that 'translation theory' fits better. He is one of the few who seem to keep doing exactly what Holmes and others wanted to avoid, namely reducing research on translation to 'theory', but his book is not entitled 'theory' and his *Approaches to translation* (1981), after all, have a function similar to 'studies'. Both Newmark and Holmes warn their colleagues against too optimistic a view on translation, especially against the notion of 'science'. The striking thing is that, in Newmark's opinion, 'translation studies' is common only in Holland and in Belgium. In a recent article, Werner Koller (1990) also assigns a particular position to 'translation studies', linking it with Gideon Toury and, apparently, with the study of translated literature only; one has the feeling that he refers to the same scholars – from the Low Countries – as Newmark did. In another survey of contemporary translation research Gisela Thome (1990: 2) also refers to "die literaturwissenschaftlich-komparatistisch geprägten 'Translation Studies' ".

These hesitations and comments indicate that most theoreticians are familiar with the term, but that they do not feel the need to use it as an official and general designation, which also implies that Holmes's (and Toury's and maybe other people's) views on the theory and study of translation are not really shared. There is even a marked tendency to link translation studies with the (comparative) study of literary translation, maybe because many among those who use the label happen to be affiliated with departments of literary studies and are for that very reason supposed to deal with matters of literature (only) – even if they are in reality proposing models of a more general nature.[4]

3. For instance, it may be found in the journal *Language International*, but also in publications by scholars such as Wolfram Wilss, who elsewhere prefers the 'science of translation' and 'Übersetzungswissenschaft'.

4. It is of course true that many research projects developed by this group of scholars have dealt with the question of 'literature' and 'translation'. In many cases, however, their work goes beyond the borders of literature and pleads the case of an interdisciplinary approach. See especially Toury's work and also: "On *Target*'s Targets" (Lambert & Toury 1989). The exact status of this

Of course, this terminological issue could be of a strictly linguistic kind. How about possible equivalents of 'translation studies' in the various languages used by international research? '*Études* littéraires' has a certain currency in French, but something like '*Études* sur la traduction' seems too cumbersome to be useful as an official term. 'Traductologie' (and its English equivalent 'traductology') does not seem to frighten the theoreticians too much, and nor does 'science de la traduction'. It is interesting to observe that the strong German research tradition from Neubert to Vermeer, (say) from 1965 to 1990, has never been worried by the claims implied by 'Wissenschaft' as in 'Übersetzungswissenschaft' or 'Translationswissenschaft': Holmes's and Newmark's warnings have apparently not been heeded here. It is worth mentioning that German-language scholars in other disciplines have occasionally preferred 'Forschung' to 'Wissenschaft' (e.g. 'Vergleichende Literaturforschung') in order to avoid the optimistic notion of science. This may suffice to show that the resistance to 'translation *studies*' cannot be justified only by usage or by *le génie de la langue*.

What is at stake, of course, beyond lexical tradition, is the definition of the object, the scope and the goals of the discipline. How could there be a clear designation as long as there is no clear agreement about the very object that is being designated? Certain theories avoid dealing with interpreting or any kind of oral translation; as a reaction, scholars such as Hans Vermeer or Katharina Reiss have preferred 'Translationswissenschaft' to 'Übersetzungswissenschaft' in order to stress how important interpreting is for them. Others deal with translation in what they call the 'proper sense', or they even reduce 'translation theory' to a set of rules and models for translation *practice* (Newmark 1981). There is no agreement at all on the question whether translation must be studied in a narrow connection with linguistics (only), or whether it is definitely a matter for an interdisciplinary approach within cultural studies, or maybe within semiotics. Would there be any room at all for the translator or for translation training (didactics, applied translation studies) in 'translation studies' or in 'the science of translation'? And why is machine translation (studies) so often located outside the discipline? In other words: can these various groups of specialists be satisfied with 'studies'? According to Holmes, Toury and others, the answer to this question is definitely positive, but one imagines that the word 'studies' may irritate practice-oriented scholars.

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kind of (comparative) literary studies appears to be controversial: it is a (conventional) branch of comparative literature for a scholar like Mary Snell-Hornby (1988: 22–26), but not at all for representatives of comparative literature itself, some of whom have called it the most radical trend in their field (Vajda & Riesz 1986, introduction). Let me suppose that neither of these opinions can be neither totally wrong nor fully satisfying.

This illustrates how sensitive it is to try and unite quite different expectations and activities under the umbrella of a terminology which is apparently innocent and equivalent. It is not only the well-known theory / practice dilemma which divides the theoreticians. As has been mentioned recently in a discussion on the aims of the discipline, there is an enormous distance between 'Übersetzung im eigentlichen Sinne' and what Toury has defined[5] as "any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds" (Toury 1985: 20, quoted in Koller 1990: 21). Nothing is less clear than the exact nature of translation, and the least we can say is that Holmes had excellent reasons for recommending the *study* of the phenomenon before, or in conjunction with, any kind of theorizing.

Whatever may be specifically stressed in the various theories and whatever they may have in common, they obviously do not represent one and the same discipline, let alone a homogeneous one. This can be illustrated partly by the status of *literary* translation studies (although a remarkable shift has taken place in recent years: Lambert 1990b). In the 1960s several theoreticians simply excluded the question of literary translation (often reduced to the question of *poetry* in translation) from their science; or at least they excluded from the realm of scholarship those who dealt with literary translation, partly because there was hardly any scholarly model available for the study of translated literature. The very intention to provide a unified and homogeneous picture of the discipline is in contradiction with the fact that so many of these pictures (*states of the art*) pretend to have the same aim while being so different. Hence the key problem might be just the very status of theory. What are its underlying principles and aims? What is the status of theoretical assumptions about translation? Is there any empirical basis, as there is in most 'sciences', and can any scientific theoretical model be (just) prescriptive? In "The name and nature of translation studies", Holmes distinguishes between various theories, partly because in order to be of a scholarly nature they must inevitably rely on scholarly *research*. It is precisely for this reason that he insisted so much on the necessary and complex interactions between all areas of translation studies: between translation theories and the systematic observation of historical translation phenomena from all cultures and all ages, but also between theory, description and practice.

It seems that rather few translation theories and meta-theoretical discussions are based upon such requirements. The aims of the discipline are often defined from a different point of view, or at least with different priorities. Today – in 1990 – few theoreticians define the entire field of scholarly work linked to translation as 'translation theory'. Very few among them would insist on the need of the

5. There is no evidence at all that Toury reduces translation to this definition.

descriptive study of translation *for the sake of theory.* The reference to descriptive linguistics is often and systematically stressed (see e.g. Wilss 1982: passim), and linguistics has often been used as the obvious model for the scholarly study of translation. Nevertheless, although 'descriptive linguistics' is a well-established specialization, the *descriptive* study of translation is hardly mentioned in the index of terms at the end of many key books. The descriptive or empirical analysis of history and culture and its links with theory thus seem to be among the key problems in contemporary research on translation. Whatever is said about the links between linguistics and the science of translation, any theory deprived of its descriptive component falls short of the linguistic model. The question then becomes exactly what kind of scientific model is used and for what reasons.

Criticism vs. descriptive studies

It seems that in many theoretical works the descriptive component is designated by another label, which probably also implies another task. Whereas references to 'description' are often lacking, translation *criticism* ('Übersetzungskritik', etc.) is supposed to be an important area of the discipline. It is generally linked also with 'text comparison', not as a basis for the scholarly study of translation, but as a basis for practice. It is often assumed that translators are the ones who need text comparison, whereas researchers are supposed to need theories rather than tools for description and analysis. Would they have any historical-empirical role at all? Would *criticism* then have the same function as *descriptive studies*? Theoreticians like Holmes and Toury distinguish clearly between the two while assigning a scholarly function to historical descriptive studies only. It is especially since Katharina Reiss's *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Übersetzungskritik* (1971) that translation criticism has been acknowledged as a legitimate area of specialization. For obvious reasons, criticism cannot do without evaluation and cannot easily be integrated into theoretical frames where the 'normative' and 'descriptive' perspectives are separated.[6] For scholars who promote the descriptive study of translational phenomena, translation criticism is just one of the translational activities within culture and, as such, it is part of the object of study, just as translation practice is. However subtle it may be, it cannot have the same aims or rules as scholarly discourse on translational phenomena. While focusing on texts and text relations only, criticism cannot account for translation communication

6. As has increasingly and more explicitly been the case from Holmes's "The name and nature of translation studies" onwards. See e.g. Koller (1972, 1979); Wilss (1977, 1982); Van den Broeck and Lefevere (1979/1984); Toury (1980); Hermans (1985); Vermeer (1986, 1989); Kittel (1988); etc.

as it is defined by the majority of descriptivists. According to the same groups of researchers, the descriptive study of translations is linked to aims of empirical *research*; this is why it has to rely on theoretical models which, among other things, exclude the evaluative aims of criticism. Although not accepted by all translation scholars at every moment (see Popovič 1976), such distinctions between various kinds of discourse are common in other disciplines. For example, in literary studies and linguistics, 'criticism' and 'normative treatises on language use' will never be assigned a scholarly status.

Besides the question of criticism and/or historical-descriptive research, it is the exact role of theory within the discipline that matters. Is there a one-directional connection between theory and research, or do theoreticians accept – as Holmes did – the necessity of an interaction between both? In 1981 a French theoretician stated that the historical study of translation is of no real use whatever for translation theory (Ladmiral 1981).[7] In such a theoretical frame, culture – and all really existing translations – are separated from theory, and it becomes obvious how much we are dealing not with existing translations but with translations-that-are-still-to-be-produced. In fact, more than was the case in the 1960s and 1970s, most modern theories try to integrate history into the field of study, but the precise historical status of theory is hardly ever defined, which implies that it is regarded as to be closed and static. Could a theory exist and operate outside of history? Could the universal status of our concepts be taken for granted, while we know so little about translation through the ages and cultures? Does scholarship function outside of culture? Certain translation theories prove to be relevant in certain situations and not in others, due to the fact that translation is submitted to cultural differentiation.

Already in 1976 I insisted on the problem of diachrony in most linguistically oriented translation theories and on the crucial contribution to be made by the *historical-descriptive* study of translated literature to the study of translation *in general* (Lambert 1978b). Although there has been a clear evolution in recent years towards a functional and cultural explanation of translational phenomena (Vermeer 1986, 1989; Holz-Mänttäri 1984; Nord 1988), there is still only a rather limited awareness of cultural complexities and of the necessity of systematic

7. In 1981 Jean-René Ladmiral linked 'description' to the comparative stylistics model of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), while excluding any kind of historical-descriptive *research* (not criticism) from his meta-theoretical programme. In the oral presentation of his paper Ladmiral stated explicitly that the historical study of translation was of no use for theory. More generally, it would hardly be an overstatement to say that only those scholars who currently use 'translation studies' acknowledge so-called 'descriptive studies'. Typical recent cases would include Hatim and Mason (1990) where 'description' appears only as a narrative category to be used by the translator in his text analysis, i.e. on the level of the production of translations.

research on translation in all cultural frames from past and present – except within descriptive studies, a branch which is considered to be peripheral because of its literary origins. Would it then be right to suppose that, given their rather erratic links with cultural observation, most theories still tend to be practice-oriented, or 'applied', which is another name for their being implicitly normative?

Descriptive and/or literary research?

It may have become obvious in the above paragraphs that Holmes and several other promoters of 'translation studies' are also those who promote the descriptive study of translation – without excluding 'criticism', which they locate at another level – and that they happen to be designated by several theoreticians as 'literary scholars', although they do not reduce their descriptive work (or translation studies in general) to the 'literary' study of translation. Would empirical-descriptive research not be relevant to, say, translation teaching, or to commercial translation practice? Why would it be useless to test out the best possible strategies for practice and to do so on a systematic basis (see House 1977)?

In the sixties, certain conflicts about the orientation of translation research rather clearly opposed the 'linguistic' to the 'literary' approach. This certainly had to do with the fact that many books on literary translation had been written by writers / translators, and with the fact that literature and literary translation have so often been supposed to be a matter of 'art', even in scholarly discourse. In the West-European countries it is above all since the publication of (the German translation of) Levý's *Die literarische Übersetzung* (1969, orig. 1963) that the study of translated literature has really changed (although slowly and not everywhere: see Lambert 1990b). From then on, the study of literature and translation is increasingly undertaken by scholars who no longer trust their intuition or artistic talents only, but who accept the need for theoretical models, and who often work within a team, which implies that there is a more or less clear agreement on the aims, the object and the method of research. I am referring not only to what has been called – first as a joke[8] – the 'Manipulation School', but also to the Göttingen *Sonderforschungsbereich* (Kittel 1988; Frank 1989; etc.) and to other groups of scholars in various countries who undertake descriptive research. What they basically have in common is precisely the belief that there is much more in the discipline than 'theory' and 'practice' and that both are ultimately culture-bound. It is true that much of their work happens to be undertaken within literary

8. This probably happened first in Göttingen in 1986, as a clear example of wordplay. Rightly or wrongly, it has since been taken seriously.

research – where the historical focus has remained central – without however being implicitly or explicitly reduced to it.

Since a rather broad international wave of this new kind of research has changed the question of translation within literary and cultural studies, the time has come for a systematic reconsideration of the entire question of literature and translation.[9]

It is quite striking that the conflicts about the definition and scope of translation research stopped simply coinciding, in the 1980s, with borderlines such as linguistics vs. literary studies. Such changes in partnership may be indicative of more profound changes in the scholarly landscape. However, although the claim for interdisciplinarity has become stronger all the time, because translation is not supposed to be a simple matter of language(s),[10] the fact that scholars like Holmes are rather linked with *literary* translation studies illustrates how erratic the integration movements have been within the discipline as a whole. Whatever Holmes's image as a scholar and as a literary translator may have been, his essay claims to – and does – cover the entire scope of the discipline. Before 1975 hardly any publication had ever dealt in such a fundamental way with such items as general vs. restricted theory, history, applied translation studies, and so on.

Holmes, disciples and successors

There has been no more radical attempt to reformulate the question of translation and the question of translation *theory* than Gideon Toury's book *In search of a theory of translation* from 1980 (but known by insiders since 1976),[11] where most of the key concepts appear to be used in a way similar to Holmes's, but con-

9. As far as I know there is hardly any attempt outside the realm of descriptively oriented translation studies to define the question of literary translation and translated literature *in functional cultural* terms.

10. I hope I may be allowed to correct slightly Mary Snell-Hornby's discussion (1988: 23) of Theo Hermans' statement (1985: 10) on linguistics and the study of translation: in Hermans' opinion, what is at stake is not the use of linguistics, but the *exclusive* use of linguistics as a sufficient basis for (literary) translation studies. The evolution of the discipline has shown that there is nothing extreme in such a statement.

11. Toury's first programmatic work in English was presented during the *Literature and Translation* Symposium at Leuven in 1976 (proceedings: Holmes, Lambert and Van den Broeck 1978). His *In search of a theory of translation* (1980) brings together revised versions of papers that had been circulating before. As Snell-Hornby (1988: 22) has argued, the work of Holmes, Toury and members of the 'Low Countries group' was distributed through various channels, which makes a clear survey difficult.

nected with a new central concept. Toury tries to put the world upside down while insisting on the historical nature of all theories and by redefining the study of translation in hypothetical terms on the basis of empirical descriptive research, focusing on the various kinds of *norms* (a concept which had in fact been introduced by Itamar Even-Zohar). There can be no stronger defence of 'translation *studies*' and there has been no more explicit distinction between translation as a scholarly discipline (including applied translation studies) and translation practice. At that very moment – 1975–1976 – the distinction as such between normative and descriptive approaches was rather new.[12] But it is in Even-Zohar's and in Toury's work that we can discover the first conceptualization of norms as an open and functional basis for the structure of the discipline and for the distinction between various kinds of cultural activities linked with translation. As long as scholarship had not provided any clear grounds for absolute norms, how could it recognize any absolute borderlines for, say, equivalence, genres, typologies, strategies, the behaviour of readers and speakers, or for the very nature of translation? Although this kind of approach has often and erroneously – as in Holmes's case – been linked with translated *literature*, its scope was interdisciplinary by definition. It developed first of all in more historically oriented disciplines such as literary studies as a solution to the conflicts between theoretical and historical models; for this very reason, this functional approach has been used with success, for instance, in comparative literary studies.

For rather simple reasons, Holmes's work has been connected with the 'Low Countries group' – in Holmes's terminology.[13] The mere use of the label 'translation studies' was at least a partial justification for that link. It would be too simple, however, to explain Holmes's programmatic article and his own (quite limited) descriptive work with the aid of Toury's and Even-Zohar's functional approach and with the aid of Theo Hermans' *The manipulation of literature* (1985). The "Manipulation" book is a collection of articles that are more or less representative of the kind of translation studies that developed after the Leuven 1976 Symposium on "Literature and Translation".[14] The volume is a synthesis of that renewal to a certain extent only: certain important representatives of the descriptive-systemic

12. Cf. note 2 above. In 1976 the concept of norms appeared to be quite new and controversial in translation studies. Since then it has spread out rather systematically and as a matter of course, often without any explicit reference to its precise origins, which may mean that it has definitely been integrated.

13. It is worth providing some unofficial information on the 1976 Symposium and on the interest Holmes and Toury took in 'description': Holmes insisted on dealing with it himself rather than leaving it to his Israeli colleague, because it was 'his' topic.

14. It would be easy to show the impact of the Even-Zohar / Toury approach within the conceptual tools of several among the Leuven participants as well as in larger circles: the

approach are lacking, while not all the contributions are an unambiguous illustration of the new model.[15]

As far as Holmes is concerned, his work is not to be explained by the often quoted passage from Theo Hermans' introduction to *The manipulation of literature* (Hermans 1985: 10)! In the articles published after 1976, Holmes hardly referred to the concept of norms, to the distinction between source-oriented and target-oriented translation studies, or to the 'systems' model. The references he made in his early papers to systems were borrowed from Levý and Popovič, and neither the polysystem idea nor long-term empirical research really fascinated him.

It is a commonplace to state that research and disciplines have their history and that a given kind of historiography may shed light on theoretical concepts. Holmes's exact position is not widely known nor has it been very influential except among 'literary' translation scholars, but it is symptomatic of the development in several sub-areas in 'translation studies' as a whole. On the other hand, it illustrates by contrast what several among his 'disciples' came to accept during the same period and where they went beyond "The name and nature of translation studies". Much better than an analysis of names quoted and/or criticized, such a historiographical contribution to the study of oppositions and distinctions may lead into a genealogy of concepts. This may reveal that the recent sudden discovery of the cultural component in translation matters is more indebted to the so-called descriptivists than translation studies has so far acknowledged. As for James Holmes, he really oriented the discipline, but in ways which went beyond written textual communication and whose description would require quite different historiographical techniques.

terminology, the oppositions and the goals of research underwent clear shifts, and collective research projects were formulated along such lines.

15. Of course, this applies to many other collective publications.

Literatures, translation and (de)colonization[1]

(1995)

This article is part of a wider effort to integrate the question of translation into the question of literatures and cultures in general, or into what I have called in several articles literary maps and cultural maps. The entire problem of the location of literary phenomena in space and time and of the links between real and imaginary territories and identities has recently become a question of *world* maps. As is demonstrated by conflict situations all over the world, societies are never totally homogeneous nor static, and it is exactly the conflict between previous and new principles of legitimation in given societies – their archaeological structure – that works as a principle of reshuffling. Such an observation is a sufficient argument against the static and mainly Eurocentric principle of national literatures, by which we mean the assumption that literary traditions coincide with linguistic traditions, that all linguistic traditions coincide with the principle of nations, and that all over the world other kinds of borderlines are exceptions, in the worst case.

Translation is a case in point for the discussion of such principles because, by definition, translations work both within particular nations and outside of them, but also within particular languages while importing at least certain aspects of an-

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1. The question of translation has hardly been connected with colonization so far, at least in publications linked with a scholarly view on translation. The theoretical and methodological basis is totally lacking so far. I am indebted on several points to Susan Bassnett's lecture (Leuven, CERA Chair Lectures, 1992). Cheyfitz (1991) focuses explicitly on colonization and on the development of the North American society, but, as is illustrated by his bibliography, there is hardly any connection with existing research on translation. Many among the Indian scholars discussing translational matters from their own cultural background deal exactly with the colonial functions of the phenomenon. Tzvetan Todorov's *La conquête de l'Amérique* (1982) provides interesting notes on pseudo-translations within a colonial context. There have also been interesting recent efforts to read the entire Latin American culture as a text and as translation.

other language or from several languages. This illustrates again that languages cannot have just the same borderlines as political units since every translation involves partly a mixture of languages. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that it is precisely this ambiguity which provides various literary and cultural traditions with their dynamic force and sometimes with their differential specificity (namely, insofar as they are different from their environment exactly by their pidgin features). The well-known facts of the internationalization and the continuous redefinition of societies are much more profoundly indebted to translation and communication than is commonly believed. The matter has hardly been investigated, because the cultural awareness of translational phenomena is still insufficient. Not even scholars have been aware of it because it is often one of the functional strategies of translation to remain unidentified as such, to escape being identified as a foreign text.

Why translation is often unknown and unnoticed

There are very strong reasons for a basic reconsideration of translation within literatures and cultures in the light of this paradox: in part translation strategies aim to be different from what is supposed to be translation.

First of all, we cannot understand the translational phenomenon as long as we try to separate it from 'adaptation', 'imitation', etc. In cultural terms, translation is one of the answers to the unavoidable question of multilingualism or linguistic differentiation. It is hard to understand the so-called translations and their deeper functions without taking into account the hesitations and conflicts between translations and imitations – for instance, we do not understand why writers from the nineteenth century 'adapted' Shakespeare if we do not know how their contemporaries 'translated' him, and vice versa –, or to understand them without taking into consideration what has *not* been translated. The systematic observation of translation implies the study of selection principles (in the way a given text is treated by the translator, but also in the very selection of texts) and hence the study of what has *not* been selected (textual principles and texts).

We are totally wrong in reducing translations to complete and well identified texts, produced by individual writers and individual translators. Their impact is often much deeper and stronger in the case of text fragments, isolated words and colloquial expressions which penetrate our discourse and replace the so-called normal and original discourse (which in its turn may have long forgotten imported origins). Translation processes may shape hidden aspects of any kind of discourse, along well patterned lines. We have no formal or rational reasons for excluding text fragments from the realm of translation studies, or for reducing the concept of translation to autonomous, entire and well identified texts. Most scholars have not recognized the continuity of discourse in general as the key problem in translational matters because they have implicitly adopted the idea that whatever is not considered to be translation by a given society would therefore fall outside the translation scholar's scope as well.

Nothing is more threatened by translation than the very idea of clear-cut and coherent constructions existing side by side, and this is precisely why translation, as part of the collective unconscious, is part of cultural dynamics.

I am aware that my view on translation is clearly cultural and functional rather than formal or technical. It is fairly common now in translation studies to emphasize questions like '*by whom are these translations used and produced?*' rather than questions like '*is this a translation or not?*' It seems that the latter kind of question cannot be solved without the former, while the opposite is not true. But so far the consequences of these new priorities for the cultural study of translations within literatures and societies have not really been taken into account, neither by translation scholars nor by literary scholars, nor for that matter within the Humanities as a whole.

Translation as politics

As part of this general argument I want to support the idea that, especially in cases of sudden social and political changes, translational activities of all kinds tend to borrow their rules and values, if not their very existence, from the dominant political environment, to the point that they are part of what could be labelled as 'colonial' patterns.[2] I know very well that this thesis may be an overgeneralization. It is really a hypothesis (and not a 'theory') intended to plan tests and to observe more adequately how translations function in various historical circumstances. In this article I shall mainly focus on theoretical-experimental questions, but I shall finish by providing some examples. It will become clear at that moment why my general thesis can be useful and what it teaches us.

2. It can be accepted that in most societies – especially in the modern Western ones – and even in the most liberal ones among them, political forces tend to coordinate public life even in apparently non-political matters (language, marriage, religion, etc.). We can imagine the more or less strictly pyramidal structure of norms in society, according to the subordination of social, moral, religious, artistic norms to the political definition of society. In the most totalitarian type, *any* conflict, even in private matters, with the overall dominating political principle will be disapproved of and even repressed: the territory principle will be the best justification of the basic rules and it will be compromising to share a certain taste with members of other societies rather than with the 'own' community of (political) values.

Two introductory remarks will prepare the discussion. My thesis may look at the same time trivial and obvious, or quite novel and astonishing, depending on one's perception, experience and position.

Why obvious and trivial? Why would translations escape the well-known tendencies of most political structures to control at least partly the relationships on their territory with other cultural and political units? Why in particular would translated communication escape the rules of the power game, given the fact that at least the potential link between language and power is well-known (although often overlooked)? It seems that linguistic, literary and most cultural intersystemic relationships are at least partly submitted to the general political structures in the positive and negative selection of their neighbours (who are not necessarily neighbours from the spatial point of view). It has been shown time and again that literary relations between various traditions follow rather systematically the fluctuations of political relationships.[3] The question is not exactly *whether* but rather *how* and *when exactly* (or *when not*) translational activities are submitted to political principles and to what extent they have colonial features. Indeed, formulated in too general terms, my main thesis remains quite trivial. It becomes interesting in the first place when used as an empirical heuristic tool which allows one to specify with greater precision where activities such as translation are part of the literary system or also (or even in the first place) of other systems, such as the political one.

But why then would this political view on translation be novel and astonishing? To the extent that translation is often supposed to be only or mainly a linguistic (and/or literary) activity, or even a purely personal activity or skill, it may, indeed, be strange that political and in particular colonial rules should apply to them. It is precisely this traditional and casuistic conviction about the very nature of translation in strictly linguistic and/or literary terms as well as the casuistic view on the nature of language that have to be corrected among students of literature. Many translation theoreticians will easily accept that the question of translation is a matter of *norms*, but the enormous implications of this concept for the status of translation studies (and literary studies) have not been taken into consideration: translational norms may be predominantly linguistic, or religious, or political, but they never belong exclusively to the realm of language or literature. Norms can also be more or less individual, and even the concept of individuality is a relativistic concept.

3. Let me just refer to the traditions of comparative literature, e.g. in the well-known area of French-German relations. It could easily be shown that between 1955 and 1975 the favourite American writers in Bulgaria, China, the USSR or East Germany were precisely those writers who were hardly known at the same moment in West Germany or in Western Europe: the explanation by a particular political model is simple.

My first task will be to show how translation can be part of politics. Next I want to show how and when it can be part of colonial strategies.

The general statement that there are basic links between colonial power and translational phenomena will hardly surprise those who are familiar with recent developments in the discipline, especially since the focus has moved from questions such as '*how to translate?*' or '*is this a good translation?*' towards questions such as '*what links are there between a translator's original writings and his translations, and between his translations and other people's writings, or their expectations?*' It is the key principle of *norms* that has made scholars aware of the conventional features of translation as just a particular kind of communication with certain literary, political, religious or other features, quite often in very mixed and erratic forms. No translation, no communication is possible without conventional principles which turn out to involve value principles as well. The interesting point is that in the situation of translation, at least from the point of view of the scholar, there are generally clear juxtapositions of value principles from various cultural backgrounds; hence value oppositions (conflicts) may become systematic, in lexical, syntactic, socio-cultural, generic matters, and so on. Conflict situations tend to be solved along certain principles to the point that the trends become predictable (e.g. the treatment of foreign names, of dialects, archaic or technical language, oral discourse). Instead of being a matter of mere technical communication (or of language systems only), translational activities are inevitably influenced by traditions and norms of *all* kinds.

The same scholars who discovered the relevance of the norms concept have also insisted on the symptomatic oppositions and interactions between the so-called source and target traditions ('cultures', 'systems'), and on the hierarchical relationships between them, even in the case of more complex situations in which intermediary traditions connect various other traditions, either in one-to-one relations or in larger and more differentiated 'international' situations.[4] One of the revolutions in recent discussions has been to observe how paradoxical the contribution is, or can be, on the target side, which quite often tends to dominate the source system, although the movement of giving / borrowing is supposed to be

4. It would be worthwhile to start from the beginning the discussion of the so-called target-oriented approach (initiated by Gideon Toury, supported by many others), especially by members of the Göttingen *Sonderforschungsbereich* (Kittel 1988; Frank 1989). Besides the changes in the international relationships due to modern internationalization processes, the phenomenon of indirect (intermediary, second-hand) translation shows that the reduction to bilateral relationships is an oversimplification. The best example of such an intermediary tradition is probably the German eighteenth century, where the entire initiation into English took place via French translations. See the many publications by J. von Stackelberg, W. Gräber, G. Roche and others on these 'second-hand translations' and their fluctuations.

unidirectional. When selecting and processing imported messages, a given 'target' culture[5] tends to make the imported text readable (i.e. conventional!) according to its own principles.

It is true that examples of very different strategies are also well-known and quite striking, exactly for the same reasons: there is no better way of struggling against home conventions than the sudden use of exotic habits and conventions, as can be illustrated by pseudo-translations or by the recourse to 'literal' and hence strange-looking translations. This 'variational strategy' can be accounted for by the same basic hypothesis about norms, requirements and traditions, which is in fact a variant of the Jakobsonian principle of desautomatization. Here again, since the principles at stake cannot be true simultaneously for the same text (level), research is necessary into various cultural situations in order to establish which trend prevails at a given moment.

Source/target relations, binarism, new worlds

The political implications of the source / target / intermediary dilemmas are enormous. If the receiving society treats translations according to its own norms rather than those of the so-called foreign text, then it means that the cultural phenomenon of import – which translation necessarily is – is counterbalanced, to some degree, by the target society which hence proves to remain more or less autonomous. Although one must avoid the pitfall of reducing these oppositions to ridiculous simplifications (autonomous vs. non autonomous), the general source / target explanation model has proved to be very enlightening in many circumstances, at least as a reference frame. But it has to be widened, especially because, when understood in mechanical terms, it seems to reflect a world view in which societies (which are not necessarily nations) are assumed to be *either* this *or* that, depending on one's frame of perception and analysis.

Needless to say, our contemporary world is often incompatible with the idea of binary oppositions in contact relations, but even the more static societies from the past are not always compatible with the idea that translation strategies could be adequately described in terms of binary relationships between societies, although political oppositions are often black-and-white and hence easily seen as being of a binary kind. And this is precisely what the idea of norms is about. Norms, models, traditions, systems have made us aware of the political and other frames underlying any kind of cultural exchange. They are not supposed to have any

5. Who exactly? That's the question! Translators living within the target community generally follow other principles than those who live elsewhere.

ontological value as norms of the scholar. They are tools for the observation of interdisciplinary and intercultural interactions, distinctions, legitimations. And the first kind of norm to be taken into consideration, even in the case of art and literature, refers to the most stringent sociocultural patterns. *Many literary scholars tend to forget that the very first kind of norm that is likely to shape any kind of communication and hence also translation is a norm that has been established by political forces.*

A privileged diaspora: Belgium

When looking for a cultural situation that might illustrate the complex and stratified, sometimes erratic relationships between translation, literature, economics, politics, and probably colonization and decolonization, one could select any period or any geographical area. If I select my own country and culture, it is just because it provides a nearby situation, not because it is supposed to be exceptional. I could easily move into surrounding cultural situations past and present and illustrate similar trends.

This particular corner of Western Europe looks quite familiar to comparatists from all countries because Western Europe has been their teaching and training object. However, a confrontation with the Belgian situation is a refreshing experience since the lack of homogeneity of all kinds in the heart of Western Europe is in itself a political problem. If it is correct that a similar lack of homogeneity can be observed via translation in all surrounding countries, in the past and the present, and that some of the most basic cultural changes on other continents can be analyzed in similar terms, then we are supposed to start again the discovery of the entire world, and not only of translational phenomena.

In recent times neither the Flemish nor the Walloons have undertaken to translate the international bestsellers and international top-writers into Dutch or French. The contrast with all surrounding countries is very clear. The international successes are available in book shops, but they have been imported, often translated and distributed via Dutch and French networks. (It is striking that such rules do not apply automatically to children's literature.) I do not want to insist here on the economic and political implications of this phenomenon. The selection, the translation and the distribution of international masterworks are generally in the hands of publishing networks inside a given society (true, this tends to change also in our contemporary societies). The striking point to be made with respect to Belgium is that, in very different cultural situations, namely during the nineteenth century, the translations had similar political and cultural functions, while being determined by very different value systems:

1. Between 1830 and 1850 the political institution promoted systematically the translation of the historical (medieval) masterworks from Dutch into French and from French into Dutch.
2. Until the beginning of the twentieth century more than 50% of the French translations from Dutch were undertaken by francophone Belgians, who often lived in the Flemish-speaking part of the country, and they were mainly distributed in Belgium. Translations into French of Dutch literary works were not distributed in Belgium but in France, and only exceptionally were they translated by Belgian translators (exception: the internationalist socialist movement around Cesar De Paepe and the *Société Nouvelle*).
3. There are hardly any translations of French works into Dutch, except between 1830 and 1850, for these books were (and still are) read in the original French language by all (most) Belgian intellectuals. In this case *non-translation* (as I shall call it) is not at all due to cultural autonomy, but (on the contrary) to the systematic penetration of the French book production and the French cultural dominance in Flanders and more generally speaking in Belgium.
4. Since the Second World War the phenomenon of the *systematic non-translation* of French literary works into Dutch, at least within Flanders, has taken a very different meaning: the lack of translations from French and French Belgian literature into Dutch by Flemish writers / translators is part of the increasing autonomy (isolation) towards French culture in general, as can be illustrated by the (ever growing) absence of the original French-language books in Flemish bookshops.[6]

Rather than analyzing the Belgian case for its own sake I would like to reflect on some particular principles used by many societies in their treatment of translations. Would *all* translations carried out within Belgium (or elsewhere) by Flemish or Walloon translators be subject to some political impact? Of course not, but in certain situations the political impact is both obvious and very systematic, being visible on all text levels and in the very distribution and communication of texts. This allows us to formulate more explicit rules about the degrees, kinds, levels, etc. of political impact upon translations.

6. There is no time here for a more detailed discussion, e.g. of the links between the kind of language used, the translation methods, and the more sociological question of selection and distribution.

The extremes of political impact: hypotheses as games

It is easy to imagine extreme cases as well as variants of such cases and then to note from the beginning why and how these cases are exceptional within a literary frame, and maybe less so in other areas.

A given text can be distributed / translated by the order of political agents, or at least under their influence and supervision. The question arises whether such a policy is applied only to translation(s), or also to the autochthonous text production, and why in fact imported and translated texts are important enough to be preferred in this respect to local ('own') production. At first sight such a situation looks rather exceptional since the opposite, a negative attitude towards translation, seems to be much more common; translations and other forms of cultural import may be prohibited either selectively (in the case of censorship) or systematically (in the case of real protectionism). The key to this distinction is of course: who is in power? It is the very origin and history of the political institution, whether it has been long established, recently created or newly imposed, either by internal agreement / power or by invasion (maybe by invitation), that decides about the translation being subversive or not. It is here that, for the first time in my discussion, distinctions between political norms of the colonial type and others become important, as well as distinctions between more or less autonomous political structures.

Anyway, in case the initiative has been taken by political authorities (e.g. for religious texts), we may also assume that the result of the translational activity as well as the book product once finished will be supervised by those who commissioned it. Those who order generally also pay, those who pay and who are in charge are generally also the ones who order. Even if such an example was totally imaginary (and it is indeed not representative of common situations within literature), it shows that the relationships between political institutions and the translational process as a whole have to be taken into consideration, either in a negative or in a positive way. Second: these relationships can be rather limited (e.g. when the political administration is satisfied just with having its stamp on the title page of the finalized book), more aggressive (e.g. when politicians want to replace an existing translation by a new one), or nearly total (when official employees themselves translate, produce and distribute the book, as would happen in the European institutions). Even in the extreme case of 'totalitarian' countries (whatever the kind of 'totalitarianism' may be, and however strict it may be), there is never an absolute subordination of the translated communication to political principles. Even the strictest censorship can never be absolute (not even when the author or translator happens to be the dicator himself), and in many societies censorship is stricter for the autochthonous production than for translation. Although everything imported may be considered dangerous in certain nations, translations are likely to escape censorship more easily than the writings of the local population.

I have just wanted to show how many degrees of political impact upon translation can be distinguished, as well as how different the situation becomes when translated material is or is not treated as autochthonous production. The advantage of such exercises is that we start thinking about the hidden formulas of political impact, willingly or unwillingly accepted by those who produce or distribute texts. And we realize of course that it is hard to imagine societies without any selective import since censorship starts through anticipation as self-censorship during the text production itself. The key questions are: where, when, how and why does censorship occur and who is responsible for it? It is again a basic question whether translations are submitted to specific rules or not, and whether such rules change as soon as a given society is governed by a so-called foreign political power, or whether these rules change as soon as we cross a given political border.

Many examples of this kind of change and shift could be provided, but we need to keep in mind that very often political borderlines do not really affect translation policy (e.g. within the contemporary West-European context, and even in the case of the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia between 1960 and 1980) and that institutions other than the political ones may be at least as influential (e.g. private companies, especially multinationals).

If we have to avoid the danger of overemphasizing the political function of translation methods and strategies, there is also the danger of underestimating the cultural and political function that certain readers may give to very isolated translational solutions. The use of one single loan word may compromise somebody in a business discussion or in a political meeting. The use of the word 'modernization' in 1925 in China inevitably betrayed a given speaker as belonging to a particular political and cultural group. Whatever individual cases may indicate, we can assume that in any culture it is worthwhile to establish the systematicity of translation behaviour from the point of view of cultural identity and from the point of view of its links with political options: in individual texts, genres, in various kinds of literature, in any kind of public discourse and especially in the so-called implicit discourse on translation, which is likely to be better developed than explicit discourse.[7] As in all investigations of norms, sudden changes, and even isolated cases and areas, deserve special attention.

7. Hardly anybody so far has made the distinction between explicit and implicit discourse on translation. I borrow the concept 'implicit discourse' partly from our own research on nineteenth-century French translations (I refer especially to an MA thesis by Stefan Wauters): there are obvious links between the importance of implicit discourse on translation and the fact that translations often do not look like translations.

We are thus turning upside down the widely held conviction in literary studies that literary behaviour is, or should be, individual and particular, by asking first *to what extent* it is individual. This implies that no individual or particular behaviour can be studied without a systematic contextualization and that more or less *isolated* norms can only be described as such by relating them to more *general* norms, especially the institutionalized ones.

It is obvious that these questions are not specific to translation studies or to (comparative) literary studies. This is precisely the point. There are no serious grounds for isolating translation studies and/or literary studies from the study of cultures and societies, especially since there is strong evidence that translation and literature (and translated literature) are in a steady interplay with cultural frames.

A certain kind of import

The same consideration applies to another enormous difficulty, namely, to the distinction between translation, imitation, adaptation, etc., or between translated texts, messages, words, slogans, quotations, etc. Rather than the conceptual borderlines between these parallel intertextual operations, it is their common basis, origin and function that deserves our attention, and it is probably only part of this problem why given messages coming from another language (and probably also from another country) are treated as 'adaptations' rather than as 'translations'. It may be very instructive to construe translation first of all as a phenomenon of *import* (and of *export*), i.e. an economic phenomenon (Lambert 1980b). After all, few translational activities take place without at least the support of economic principles, even when the translator does not receive any payment.

The idea of 'import' may seem metaphorical, but even economic phenomena can hardly ever be reduced to mere economics. Why would the very concept of 'import' necessarily belong to economics only? What is at stake here is the very idea that translation would *not at all* be a matter of economics, and that it would have to be located in 'other' kinds of communication. Since translation has been redefined with the aid of norms, neither linguistics nor literary studies offer sufficiently large frames for the translational phenomenon. Hence scholars should exclude fewer patterns and leave more interpretations open when considering the translational phenomenon in terms of (cultural) import / export. If it turns out that in certain cases this is the wrong option, it will prove fruitful and relevant in other ones. Let us correct even more radically the general question of translation by asking to what extent the movement of import / export has to be accounted for in economic, religious, political, moral, linguistic, literary or other terms. There is no way out. As long as we accept that translation is communication and hence a matter of norms, hence also of prestige and power, we cannot escape these consequences.

Economists use the distinction between export and import as a key to the stability of economic systems. Whoever deals with 'systems' (or traditions) insists on the importance and relativity of 'autonomy': systems are supposed to be self-sufficient, but they are never in non-contact with the surrounding systems; on the other hand, contacts getting too close and systematic may lead to the absorption of a given system by a neighbour system. In these circumstances, import and export movements are nothing else than the name given to the relations and their movements (direction) between systems. It is on the basis of such relational movements that I will try to reformulate the question of translation as a power problem and partly also as a problem of colonization and decolonization.

Patterns of translational import

Applying the principles introduced by Itamar Even-Zohar (1978: 45–53) and developed in some of my own articles, I will now try to formulate some basic import / export rules regarding the exchange between cultural traditions. It will be clear that they can be used as hypotheses only and that several individual rules may be in conflict with each other, or may apply to certain situations only. However, the need for such rules and the empirical study of their relevance will probably be obvious:

- exporting or 'active' systems are in a power position from the point of view of the importing or 'passive' systems; this applies first of all to *non-translation*, i.e. to the import of non-translated discourse, which obliges given populations to adapt themselves to the idiom and the rules of the visitors; in translation itself the same flexibility on the side of the importing society may be required, even though this process remains largely unperceived;
- important differences in power relationships are normally correlated with major differences in stages of development (periodization); they favour dominance in several areas rather than in isolated ones; and import is likely to be offered in large and undifferentiated packages (e.g. anthologies) rather than in precise and well focused selections;
- the more a given society imports (textual production), the more it tends to be unstable;
- the more a given society exports (textual production), the more stable it will be, at least in its relationships with the receiving systems;
- the more a given society imports from one and the same neighbour, the more it is in a position of dependence;

- the more this exporting neighbour is also a neighbour in space and time, the stronger the possibility of a (partial / global) absorption of the importing systems by the exporting one;
- the more the receiving system is in a unidirectional relationship in matters of import / export, the more it depends on its 'big brother';
- the more the receiving system is part of a group of receiving systems that borrow their cultural products from one and the same exporting system, the more they are subordinated to a coherent network and to (a hierarchy of) other weaker target systems (as could be illustrated by indirect translation, where a receiving system is no longer in a one-to-one relationship but in a tertiary position, or by multinational strategies); this applies to most East-Asian situations and probably to all colonial ones;
- the more static these partners are in terms of space and time, the more dependent they are on their big brothers; the more mobile they are, the stronger their chances to have multilateral and autonomous import principles;
- as a kind of mobility by necessity rather than by option, *migration* does not favour stability but at least passivity or import;
- active *biculturalism* or *multiculturalism*, on the other hand, implies the physical and mental possibility of options in favour of more than one tradition and hence the preservation of at least a relative autonomy; import in this case is selected rather than imposed;
- hence the distinction between active exile (self-exile by a free decision) and passive exile (by necessity);
- exile can be merely physical, it can be both physical and mental (e.g. predominantly political or cultural or linguistic), but it cannot be conceived of as 'total'; our modern technology has loosened the ties between physical and mental forms of exile, but only rich groups have access to this kind of technology (travel, fax, telephone, etc.); hence the degree and the extent of biculturalism are more or less linked with a certain level of material comfort, just like import (only independent and powerful people can select their values and hence also their import);
- flexibility and mobility in space and time being instruments of avoiding subordination, the active / passive selection of value scales and especially the part of import in people's value scales are symptomatic of their autonomy / colonization;
- any kind of explicit discourse on the import (translation) phenomenon is likely to be produced on the side of the exporter rather than on the receiving end, at least as long as the moment of decolonization has not started.[8]

8. The reader will notice how 'historical' and how 'culturally open' our theoretical models have to be and how much they require continuous historical-empirical research. Dominant

The basic problem is nothing else than the construction of value scales and hierarchies and, secondly, their foreign / borrowed / imposed origin. Indigenous values and principles have more chance of being accepted by a given community than imported ones, but systematic and overwhelming import has more chance of being rejected – at least after a period of domination – than eclectic and freely selected import. In fact, translation, as one of the most obvious kinds of import, is rather strongly submitted to the basic organization of societies in general and especially to their homogeneity / heterogeneity. Strongly homogenized (totalitarian) societies tend to organize and control as much as possible all activities, even religious and artistic ones, whereas the liberal (overtly heterogeneous) ones limit homogeneity to a few well defined areas. The very ambition to standardize language and to prohibit foreign languages (or to submit translation to strict target rules) is part of the attempt to apply territorial principles to all values. The principle of colonization is nothing else than an attempt to extend the territory, and the restriction to the economic patterns is obviously not very natural. Strictly economic or political colonization belongs to the liberal and heterogeneous kind. Since most colonial organization has been established to a large extent by power and hence by rather strong hierarchical values, it is hard to imagine it without some cultural component, i.e. without the dominance also of cultural import. Modern multinationals offer a clear illustration of the eclectic way of colonizing: international trade and international export networks do not necessarily require political power (although it may help), but economic markets are generally and rather inevitably linked with moral, linguistic, even artistic and social import.[9] Hence translation cannot be disconnected from other import waves or movements. It is only part of the general phenomenon of colonization to the extent that it can be more or less autonomous and isolated (the opposite would be: part of a general acculturation process). In certain cases, however, translation movements may play a very active role within colonization as the origin of larger exchange waves. It cannot even be excluded that translation waves can be part of a decolonization movement, as in Latin America or even, at a given moment, in nineteenth-century Belgium.

tendencies in given cultural situations have to be investigated from a synchronic perspective ('within the system') and not with a construction of *a posteriori* collected material, as often occurs in historiography.

9. The best possible illustration we can imagine is the so-called European *Economic* Community [predecessor of today's European Union, *editors' note*], which first extended its geographical territory in several phases (from Benelux to six countries, then to twelve, etc.) and little by little also its political and cultural territory (defence, education, arts, etc.).

Some features of colonization: from East Asia to Europe

Among the most recurrent features of the recent Asian traditions of translation, at least from the Western world, we have to mention their systematic and widespread 'organization'. The word 'organization' is wrong to the extent that it creates the impression of a human and personal enterprise (one wonders then who could have been behind it). But so many books and texts are being transported and translated from one part of the globe into another part through similar channels and from similar sources, periods and languages, that the idea of a certain organization is not at all absurd. Furthermore, there is a striking collectivistic reception on the Asian side. Korea, Japan and China (and probably many other countries) often discover the 'Western world' via each other's mediation. They seem to be part of a conglomerate, which they are in fact via their information channels. Even the languages used are at least partly interchangeable, since Japanese readers may use classical Chinese in order to assimilate German or French masterworks. The West-East hierarchy is to a certain extent analogous to an internal Asian hierarchy whereby Korean nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture can use Chinese or Japanese, but not vice versa. The other typical feature is that the cultural distance between the texts and cultures in contact is enormous and hence that quite different genres and traditions are offered to their new audience as a package, especially in anthologies used as real Bibles or introductions to the Western world. These partly sacred books are the keys to modernity, or to modernization. Nowhere in the West European or American world at the same time could they be offered as a coherent set of texts. The various items are not compatible from the point of view of the exporting world, but they are perceived as being constitutive of another world order, in literature and art, as well as in politics. Literary works are much more than literature. It is this very high prestige of such a hybrid cultural production that confirms the passivity of the importing populations.

The overwhelming features of such international export (rather than import) are quite typical also of the contemporary cultural and economic colonization. It is quite striking that multinationals for a long time used to sell their products in many countries in the English language, and that gradually they have been forced to adapt to the linguistic and cultural habits of their conquered markets. Within the contemporary central European world, Western companies first try, as a compromise, to use German or other intermediary languages other than English. This strategy could be called the 'package' (or anthology) strategy: not the target audience selects the components of the package, but those who plan and put it together and distribute it. Individual and more selective market strategies will develop as soon as competition with other channels gets stronger. This is the typical shift from the package deal and from the series production to the more demanding and prestigious model of individual treatment: it is no longer permitted to confuse a given customer with his neighbour, who happens to speak another language and who happens to have his own habits. More selective and eclectic attitudes will develop and destroy the mechanical and massive distribution from one source or from a limited number of sources towards a chain of markets. This has been exactly the evolution of the Hollywood movie distribution within Europe during the 1930s. In order to avoid the language problem, movies have been gradually produced '*en versions multiples*', either in the United States (centralization) or within Europe (decentralization) but still in a limited number of languages. The Scandinavians and the Low Countries were never deemed worthy of their own treatment. Only later on have they organized themselves their subtitling and dubbing traditions. At that stage the various cultural groups in Europe had developed a relative autonomy in the reception of American and other movies. But until now a certain number of linguistic communities (e.g. Flanders and Wallonia) have been satisfied with the assimilation strategies adopted by their neighbours: the colonial model has not disappeared.

In scholarly and even in intellectual language it is quite hard to evaluate colonial strategies in terms of 'good' and 'bad', since hardly any culture has ever developed without a minimum of colonial traditions. The question is rather *for whom* it is good and *for whom* it is bad at a precise moment and in a specific situation. What is supposed to be bad at a given moment in history may be good at another moment, or for a given group. It can be stated that at least for the time being there are no criteria justifying a less relativistic point of view. Import would probably never occur without a certain degree of (even political) heterogeneity within societies or without value conflicts, i.e. without strong disagreements about the best way to develop society (the word 'collaboration' may sound awful, but the political meaning has functional equivalents in economics and in all other areas). Protectionism belongs to the basic trends of any society, but it always coexists with its opposite: liberalism. Both cultural history and economics have taught us not to exclude one in favour of the other. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that one can establish for which groups exactly import has turned out to be fruitful.

Decolonization, or a few words about the (long) day after

What is called 'decolonization' is in fact just the tendency to resist globalization, or internationalization, which is the evolution towards a 'global world'. It seems that our contemporary world is heavily influenced by this trend. Technology is a powerful instrument supporting the construction of such a new world. It is well-known that colonial trends and periods have always been ended by (anti-)revolutionary movements. One of the reasons why decolonization is inevitably trapped is that power games are made possible with the aid of technology (weapons, writing, language knowledge and other skills) and that the success of resistance and revolution depends on a similar and better technology, the first invader just dies out. It seems that there is no way out of the unifying and colonizing world, except in the case of still isolated societies and through the growing weakness of the dominant groups. But when the dominance of one group has been overcome, another group will be tempted to take over the leading position. The possibility of a totalitarian world is in fact itself utopian because there can be no chances for a dominant centre to be so absolute and universal that it controls and inspires all value scales. On the other hand, nothing looks less realistic than the sudden decrease of power ambitions after they have been steadily growing for centuries, materializing into ever more massive world empires.

Translation, systems and research: the contribution of polysystem studies to translation studies

(1995)

> My own work has naturally advanced in stages and has, deliberately, not offered a synthetic view. (Itamar Even-Zohar)

Since about 1975 many articles on translation have dealt with the so-called polysystemic approach, known also under several other labels and often associated with a 'group' or even a 'school' of scholars. The very fluctuation in the names given to an approach or to scholars who are supposed to behave as a group or a school is interesting in itself, but it generally implies simplifications, value judgments and also polemics. Hence some clarification and first-hand information are definitely useful. But who can provide them without being personally involved? Given the fact that I have written many articles in favour of the Polysystem (abbreviated below as PS) approach, I am obviously embarking on a delicate if not utopian enterprise, being both assessor and object of the assessment. But the exercise may give us an opportunity to demonstrate how the PS approach is perfectly aware of the fact that the scholar, while trying to describe and explain cultural phenomena in terms of values, does not himself function in some ideal world without norms. Anyway, dealing explicitly with PS after having kept silent[1]

Editors' note. This paper was initially published in 1995 in the journal *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 8(1): 105–152. The original version is concluded by a substantial bibliography (11 pages), which, as for the other articles included here, we have completely incorporated into the double list of references at the end of this volume.

1. Theo Hermans (1994) has recently pointed out that the advocates of the PS approach have more or less stopped mentioning this theoretical model. In fact, they may be convinced (as I am myself) that the best way of serving it is not necessarily to keep theorizing about it, but rather to use it as a heuristic and methodological tool. It is also the best way to avoid polemical discussions.

on this matter for a number of years is more than just a challenge. Hence my effort to proceed *sine ira et studio*.

Back to the origins

One of the first difficulties specific to the reception of the PS model is that although its aims have always been interdisciplinary, the history of its perception cannot be isolated from the history of more individual disciplines. PS is known mainly within literary studies and especially within translation studies, which may give the impression that its range and ambitions are limited to some particular disciplines and even more to one discipline, since specialists in translation are not necessarily specialists in literary research and vice versa. While reacting against such a reduction of the scope of PS, I nevertheless feel entitled to deal here mainly (though not exclusively) with translation studies. One of the consequences will be that Gideon Toury's name will be used much more often than Itamar Even-Zohar's. Due to institutional as well as personal factors, Toury has been involved in translation whereas his master has dealt more generally with semiotics and with PS. The personal history of scholars plays a role in the institutionalization of research and vice versa: the father of the PS theory has been more influential in literary studies than in translation studies. One of the paradoxes is that Toury has never behaved like a propagandist of a given scholarly model and that he has rather avoided putting his own key concepts under any label that might have alienated him too radically from others. The personal history and career of many other disciples of the PS theory have influenced its contemporary status in a similar way.

Like most historical phenomena 'Polysystem' is a problem in itself and as a concept. Let us look at the name and the thing again. Many colleagues dealing with translation know it from Theo Hermans' *The manipulation of literature* (1985), which was a successful attempt to summarize some of the main trends in an approach which had started at least ten years earlier. Theo Hermans himself was in a privileged position since he had attended – as an observer rather than as an active participant – one of the first key events, namely the Leuven symposium on *Literature and translation* (1976). The central word in the title of Hermans' book, 'manipulation', and the name 'Manipulation group' find their origin in a sequence of insiders' and outsiders' jokes rather than in any programmatic perspective, but it is used more or less commonly in translation studies, especially since Mary Snell-Hornby discussed it in her well-known *Integrated Approach* (1988).

Confusion starts as soon as new trends are linked with individual scholars or groups of scholars who are supposed to work in a given country. The label 'Low Countries group' often refers to the PS approach, but it was coined and distributed mainly by James S Holmes, the American-Dutch poet-translator-scholar, who actually, like several other colleagues in the Low Countries, rather disliked the PS hypothesis (Lambert 1991a). Whatever the contribution of the Low Countries – or rather: Flanders – may have been, PS theories developed in Israel, first in Itamar Even-Zohar's work, then also in Gideon Toury's. They happen to have been revealed for the first time to a larger international audience[2] in Belgium. Since then, the promotion of the PS model has been rather strongly indebted to several individual scholars from the Low Countries who happened themselves to travel and to publish world-wide.

The Leuven symposium was organized by one single department – the Literary Studies department of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven – and many other representatives of the PS approach, while claiming more or less systematically that they want to question or revise disciplinary borderlines, have been working from within similar departments (literary studies, or even more specifically, comparative literature). The proceedings of the Leuven symposium came out with a programmatic title: *Literature and translation. New perspectives in literary studies* (Holmes, Lambert & Van den Broeck 1978). The book's distribution and promotion quite naturally followed international channels of literary scholarship such as the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA).[3]

Hence it has often – but quite wrongly – been assumed that PS is a matter for literature and for literary translation only, and not at all for translation in general, or for communication, semiotics, etc. But whatever the general ambitions of Even-Zohar, Toury and, later on, myself, André Lefevere or others may have

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2. The audience was actually fairly small (not more than fifty) and so was the number of speakers (fourteen). Besides the speakers, several participants who did not deliver a paper have since established their reputation as scholars (Lieven D'hulst, Jürgen Fechner, Theo Hermans, Kitty van Leuven-Zwart, Maurice Pergnier, etc.). Some among the speakers, in particular Gideon Toury himself, started their international career in translation studies at the Leuven 1976 colloquium.

3. The distribution of PS ideas within comparative literature started from 1979 on, during the Innsbruck congress of the ICLA, and it has developed in a more or less programmatic way since 1982 (i.e. since the New York congress and the congress in Montreal) until today while remaining controversial and being systematically linked with literary research on translation. Even-Zohar (1990) and Tötösy de Zepetnek (1992) offer a still limited survey of the PS research carried out within the ICLA frame since 1980. Most of the recent books on comparative literature devote explicit discussions to PS research (Guillén 1985; Brunel & Chevrel 1989; Kushner 1984). The PS approach has even been considered to be one of the most central innovations in the comparative study of literature: see Dimič & Garstin (1988), Moisan (1987, 1990), Pageaux (1994), and especially Lambert (1981a) and Bassnett (1993). It is well-known that theoreticians of comparative literature have traditionally tended to sideline the question of translation. On the other hand, several introductions to literary theory deal with PS theories more or less explicitly (e.g. Fokkema & Ibsch 1992) without taking into consideration the question of translation.

been, the real history and backgrounds of the 'movement' have influenced its orientation and its image ('*nos actes nous suivent*'). Whereas translation used to be the guilty conscience of comparative literature,[4] nowadays it has won a position within the International Comparative Literature Association which is inevitably linked with the PS model. Though still controversial from the point of view of both literary research and translation research, its basic features are at least known and hence partly established. One of the consequences is that even in translation studies many scholars still tend to reduce PS to its literary backgrounds. But those who started the *Literature and translation* Symposium in 1976 today support translation research in an interdisciplinary way under the name 'descriptive translation studies', they edit *Target* or publish in it, they train researchers from many cultural and scholarly backgrounds at CETRA (the former CERA Chair), and they contribute articles to international handbooks for translation studies. Clearly, the literary background is not forgotten, but it gives a much too narrow idea of the PS model and its real scope. One of the problems may be whether PS itself, hardly mentioned any more in the contemporary writings of its first promoters (Hermans 1994), has also been forgotten.

Goals of the discussion

In the present discussion and position paper no attempt will be made to summarize once again the basic principles and claims of the PS approach. In addition to the programmatic key books (Even-Zohar 1978, 1990; Toury 1980, 1995) and a few programmatic articles (Even-Zohar 1978; Toury 1978; Lambert 1981a, 1983b), several books and recent discussion papers (Hermans 1985; Dimič & Garstin 1988; Tötösy de Zepetnek 1992; Iglesias Santos 1994) have been published, in very different countries, much too often in isolation, sometimes reducing PS to certain of its components and to certain cultural areas, and simply treating PS as just another new theoretical model.

My main intention is to reach those who want to re-examine the matter and those who want to learn more about it. I aim to demonstrate that PS has greatly contributed to the establishment of systematic research on translation, from within translation studies, but also opening up the field from the point of view of other disciplines. The question whether PS works *itself* as an established paradigm, as a school or as an operational theory, will be left open. It is simply accepted that when research models have been operational in the past they may

4. André Lefevere used this idea as a *leitmotif* in a brilliant paper given to the British Comparative Literature Society at Norwich in December 1975.

have a future. And this is the very reason why PS and its basic hypotheses deserve to be taken seriously by colleagues interested in research, whatever the name of the approach may be.

What PS means exactly may be reflected by the terminology used here. I shall distinguish the first basic theory, called also the PS hypothesis, i.e. the idea that there is a systematic distinction or even opposition between various theoretical / practical concepts of literature, translation, communication, and that such oppositions tend to produce hierarchies. This theory has been used as a programme for research, and not simply as a theory for its own sake. It is not a closed theory, which offers definitions once and for all (all definitions have to be discussed and tested). This implies the use of criteria and parameters for research (PS research, the PS model or frame). This is one of the key features of this theory: its aim is not to theorize but to provide models and methodology for research.

Additional hypotheses and theories have been developed with reference to the same frame, which means that PS is more than one single theory or hypothesis. The research has been carried out by many scholars in several centres and countries, sometimes with the help of collective publications. This might explain why certain colleagues have taken it for a 'school'. However, the idea of a school obviously simplifies the relationship between the various publications, projects, centres and scholars (especially as the PS label is certainly used much less nowadays than between 1980 and 1990). Certain scholars (Even-Zohar, Toury, Lambert, Hermans, Lefevere) and centres (Tel Aviv, Leuven) have been identified more directly with the PS theory than others, but, although the exact origin of most particular concepts and hypotheses can easily be traced, the idea of monopolies or orthodoxies is highly problematic. The relevance and the fruitfulness of the various hypotheses and methods developed along these lines is not at stake, however. The quotation that opens this article is a programme in itself: it indicates that Even-Zohar himself did not want to offer a finalized system or theory. It would be strangely paradoxical for those who want to pursue the ideas of Even-Zohar to be more dogmatic than their guide.

Since articles are by definition supposed to be short, many key problems will be formulated and discussed in terms of (hypo)theses. Theses and hypotheses may favour discussion by making explicit what is often kept implicit.

It is a well-known fact, especially since Kuhn, that research is anything but a peaceful enterprise. Competition is everywhere, whether we like it or not, and so are attempts to change the scholarly world. For many of us the idea of competition is not strange at all, but this does not imply that we are always aware of it. The behaviour of scholars in general as well as their use of the PS model illustrate at least one of the key principles in socio-cultural matters that happens to be a key principle also in PS theory: the struggle for power. This very fact is interesting in itself because the PS model has at least certain qualities lacking in most of the other contemporary theories developed in the Humanities since the 1960s: it seems to shake, to divide and also to influence a rather large number of scholars; it is in the worst of cases a polemical matter, and many among those involved in the – often unwritten – polemics have a rather erratic behaviour since their praxis often contradicts their own theory. One of the strong arguments in favour of a model like the PS theory is that its relevance is confirmed rather than contradicted by the behaviour of scholars themselves: the idea of competition is operational not simply in relation to texts or writers, but also in the world of scholarship.

PS theory teaches us a lot about a particular kind of social organization, i.e. scholarship. Whatever this may mean for its general relevance, it also teaches us how new hypotheses may help provide new insights in areas that are not officially at stake. Assuming that the PS model applies to the behaviour of scholars and to the scholarly world, we may conclude that its relevance cannot be reduced at all to literature or to translation and that it also explains something about (very sophisticated forms of) social behaviour. Is it correct, then, to oppose PS to 'theories of action' (like Habermas', Schmidt's, Bourdieu's, etc.), assuming that PS applies to 'communication' and not to 'action' (De Geest 1993)?

Scholars' reactions to theories like the (poly)systems theory reveal a lot about their own positions and goals. It is clear that there have been many positive and negative reactions to the various systemic approaches and in particular to the PS approach. The lack of official (written) reactions on the side of many colleagues who have uttered their opinion in an unofficial (and oral) way cannot be without significance. Why do scholars react in an emotional rather than a scholarly way when new models develop in their field? The answer in systemic terms would be that new models are inevitably in competition with the previous ones and that they threaten established (power) positions. PS has no particular privilege in terms of its explanatory power or its controversial position, but it seems to be relevant in its hypotheses about human behaviour. Scholars and scholarship are not 'innocent' at all, they struggle for recognition and "distinction" (Bourdieu 1979) and hence for prestige and power.

When looking for an explanation of this social behaviour in the scholarly world, we do not necessarily need the PS hypothesis, implying that other models are at least compatible with the PS theory. Another consequence of the relevance of the PS hypothesis in matters of scholarly behaviour is that this particular theory may offer models and solutions for the observation of social behaviour generally, and not of literary or translational phenomena only. What kind of a theory is it then, if it appears to be relevant beyond the borderlines of disciplines such as literary studies and translation studies?

Even-Zohar often claims that most of the PS hypothesis can be traced back to the Russian Formalists' work and particularly to the 1928 writings of Tynjanov. Besides serving to acknowledge sources, such references also belong to the rhetoric of theoretical thinking in research and in culture. Theoreticians, as well as societies, need to have their own tradition and they may even need to create it. Russian Formalism and even Eastern Europe (cf. Segal 1982) are certainly an important background of PS. But the exact links with Russian Formalism are interesting for many other reasons. The Shlovski-Tynjanov-Jakobson group was also something more than just a body of theories: it was above all a socio-cultural phenomenon, a group of artists-theoreticians-scholars that never really pretended to offer a finalized body of theoretical models and still less a systematic enterprise of theory-based research. Secondly, the intellectual heritage of the Formalists (and Structuralists) has remained unclear and controversial until this very day.

It may seem exaggerated to compare the PS movement with the Formalist tradition. Yet both are the illustration of unsystematic collective activities where theory and practice do not always coincide. Above all, the use of history reveals in both cases how the past of theories belongs to the manipulation of history. Let us use one simple illustration: whatever Even-Zohar may have written, the Formalists and Tynjanov in particular did not develop their theories on the basis of translational experiences.

The heterogeneity of cultures

Rather than looking for historical relations, let us focus now on the PS programme and its implications, with special reference to the question of translation.

Unlike most other theories on language, literature and culture, including those having a systemic orientation, Even-Zohar's discussions started on the basis of general considerations on the interaction between languages, literatures, societies and cultures, while considering the heterogeneity – and the dynamics – of translated communication as a more or less particular kind of communication in and between societies and cultures. Many systemic models have been applied to literature and to society (from Bertalanffy to Luhmann), but hardly any of them have ever dealt with translation, and other recent attempts (Kittel 1992)[5] have not proved very fruitful. Only PS theory uses translation as its starting point.

5. Kittel (1992) offers the Proceedings of a symposium held in Göttingen in 1990 on 'histories' and 'systems' which cannot be isolated from the negative evaluation of PS in Frank (1989b, 1990). See De Geest (1993: 26–47). In fact, the Göttingen symposium brought together several systemic approaches – some with hardly any tradition in research on translation – and gave only a limited space to PS. Within descriptive translation studies, the complex relationships between the important Göttingen SFB (Sonderforschungsbereich) *Die literarische Übersetzung* and the PS model could be used as an interesting test. For the impressive bibliography of the Göttingen SFB, I refer to the publications by Frank, Kittel, Poltermann and others, many of which have appeared in the series *Göttinger Beiträge zur Internationalen Übersetzungsforschung*.

The idea of heterogeneity and hence of competition in literature, in language and in communication leads directly to the concept of norms. The only way to deal with heterogeneity is to look for regularities, hence for norms, maybe also for regularities within the norms observed. But norms themselves are not obvious phenomena. How could we observe them without parameters, hence without hypotheses?

The use of hypotheses rather than more 'traditional' (i.e. more closed) theories, distinguishes the PS model from many but not from all other approaches to cultural phenomena. It implies the need for research: hypotheses have no relevance on their own, but they may prove efficient – or irrelevant – in research practice. Only systematic and organized research can provide more established and more panoramic (but still hypothetical) theories. The very idea of research introduces a new status for theories in the Humanities at a moment when static (i.e. closed) and eclectic or partial theories are rather popular. The ambition of PS was not at all to offer an attractive theoretical model for its own sake, but to provide scholarship with concepts and tools that would allow a better and more systematic analysis of translational, literary or cultural phenomena.

Given its programmatic openness and its use of hypotheses rather than of theses, PS theory can be only one among the (many) theories in disciplines dealing with literature, translation and/or communication. Notwithstanding its very general principles, it cannot lay claim to any universalistic relevance nor monopoly.

One of the difficulties has been (and is bound to remain) the exact status and aims of such a theory. Is it to account for translation and/or communication, language, sign systems (semiotics), literature? Given its backgrounds, it cannot be disconnected from semiotics, literature, translation, but from the moment its hypotheses have a certain relevance in – say – social behaviour, media communication or politics, the protean status and ambitions of PS theory come to the fore.

It has been shown that PS theory is linked with a certain cultural (East-European) background (Segal 1982). Literature, linguistics, translation are other

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Armin P. Frank has often reacted strongly against PS and he has opposed his 'transfer-oriented' approach (defined mainly in negative terms, even in Frank 1989) to Toury's 'target-oriented' one, being supported in this by several among his colleagues from the SFB (whereas others have adopted more flexible positions: Döring 1989; Poltermann 1992; Lönker 1990). On the other hand, some of the PS concepts and distinctions (such as source-oriented vs. target-oriented) are commonly used in the same publications of the SFB. Certain typical questions discussed by Even-Zohar – e.g. the position that translated literature may occupy in a given culture – have left hardly any traces. All of this simply confirms that PS has been a real neighbour of the SFB and that it has been treated in an eclectic way.

aspects of such a background; it is not at all clear to what extent the systemic rules apply also to oral communication from the Middle Ages or from modern times. Such background problems seem to reduce the scope of any kind of theory, but the difference may be the way PS theory takes into consideration that theories are never developed or can never exist in a historical vacuum: when approaching any kind of object scholars are expected to bear in mind that their categories are themselves part of history and that their relevance needs to be tested in empirical terms. Theoretical thinking itself will always have difficulties in escaping universalistic and thus static ambitions. Hence PS scholars will probably often overlook how limited and research-bound their models remain. This leads to some not unimportant quarrels about the exact status of systems (cf. Döring 1989): are they mere hypotheses in themselves or would they exist as such in their *Da-sein?* How systematic and how coherent are systems in their dynamics and hence in their heterogeneity? If the general idea of norms and thus of hierarchy seems to be confirmed in many cultural situations – including translations –, it is not clear whether *all* cultural phenomena in *any* cultural situation are clearly submitted to hierarchies. The extent to which such relationships between, say, writers, translators and their audiences are also submitted to regularities between norms and hence to models (or schemes) is another matter for discussion.

The basic idea that literature (and/or communication, and/or any kind of action) is not a matter of substance, but rather a matter of relations, and that the aim of research is to study the principles underlying such relationships was indeed formulated by Tynjanov a long time ago, but also in Pierre Bourdieu's work from the 1970s onwards (cf. Bourdieu 1994). PS theory does not have the monopoly on such a 'relational' or 'functional' approach to cultural phenomena, but probably no theoretical approach – besides Bourdieu's – has made this more explicit. The exact relationship between various more or less explicitly systemic approaches like Siegfried Schmidt's and others (for a bibliographical survey, see Tötösy de Zepetnek 1992) has hardly ever been discussed among the promoters of the various systems theories. In fact, the key theoreticians rather seem to be avoiding one another (which may in itself be an interesting confirmation of the competition / distinction principle).

On the other hand, the systems concept is not the only way to deal with relations. Many more traditional approaches to language – such as sociolinguistics – or to literature are accustomed to the idea of relationships and conflicts. Hence many kinds of research appear to be compatible with PS or systemic approaches as long as their focus is on relations rather than on substances. This is why many disciples of the PS model hardly care (any more) about the (often too fetishistic but sometimes also too artificial) use of the word 'system'. The advantage of the PS frame seems to be that it provides scholars with a number of explicit schemes and methods. The question remains how limited or unlimited the resources are of a theoretical model that is flexible while being abstract and functional.

The evaluation of the PS model and its contribution to research in (at least) two disciplines is made difficult by the complex dissemination of texts and ideas via many isolated channels and in many different countries. While several theoreticians have adapted or innovated the model in several countries, often without any mention of their backgrounds, hardly anybody (not even Even-Zohar 1990 or Tötösy de Zepetnek 1992) has a world-wide panoramic view on PS research.

Although many research programmes have been elaborated in recent years in order to account for the heterogeneity and the mobility of cultures, from deconstruction to pragmatics, it appears that none among them focuses more explicitly on the use of verbal communication as an aspect of language systems, literary systems and communication in general. The interaction between these different programmes is a basic need for research as such. The only one, however, that integrates the matter of translation into the question of culture is the PS model.

The heart of the matter: PS research – rather than theory

According to Even-Zohar (1978), one of the first criteria for a discussion of the relevance of theoretical hypotheses is to establish whether they solve more problems in a satisfactory (systematic) way than other hypotheses. This is a very pragmatic position. Without further basic questions we might accept that the PS approach has had a positive impact on research from the moment it proved to be efficient. Given the fact that the focus has been on cultural phenomena like literature, translation and communication, it would be sufficient to indicate where successful research has developed on the basis of PS.

Only a few aspects of the recent history of translation studies can be traced here and it is impossible to discuss any of them at length. It will lead us into the history and historiography of the discipline (it could and should lead into other disciplines as well), where some developments described might be linked also with other models. Historians are aware that history cannot be accounted for in monogenetic terms. It would be contradictory and counterproductive to provide polysystemic explanations while reducing the dynamics of research to one single paradigm. In certain particular matters, however, the dominant impact of PS in the renewal of our field remains quite obvious.

Conceptualization

Immediately after the Leuven symposium, the distribution of the new PS theory linked rather than separated literature and translation. In the various international channels where PS penetrated and survived (often under other names), translation and literature have quite often been separated, which explains why many groups referring to the same basic texts ignore each other more or less systematically. This is in itself a sufficient justification for the present discussion.

The concept of 'translation studies' was promoted first by James S Holmes and has come to be accepted more widely. It is true that the term 'traductology' (or 'translatology'), notwithstanding its French backgrounds, is also quite common. One of the arguments against 'traductologie', 'traductology' and 'translatology' is that it widens and simplifies the field since no distinction is made here between the research perspective and the practice-oriented and didactic perspectives. The German 'Übersetzungswissenschaft' and 'Translationswissenschaft' do not make such a distinction very explicit either, but the idea of 'Wissenschaft' is so prominent in this case that it refers more explicitly to research than 'traductologie'.

In fact, the very distinction between the research-oriented approach and practice- or teaching-oriented approaches is heavily indebted to Gideon Toury's norms concept and to his arguments in favour of a so-called descriptive approach. Whatever may have been written before 1976, the very idea that translation cannot really be defined without research and without a largely cultural and historical research programme is due to Gideon Toury, who borrowed most of his key concepts (norms, models, systems, theory vs. descriptive research, etc.) from Even-Zohar. Distinguishing between many possible perspectives (the translator's, the reader's, the scholar's, the critic's) and locating them all in history, Toury and Even-Zohar have corrected the unilateral view on translation and go far beyond the translator's inevitably prescriptive point of view. This is a clear illustration of their struggle against a narrow view on communication in general which focuses quite unilaterally on those who produce communication. Redefining the components of any translational activity and discovering a large network of parameters that may influence the translation and the communication process can be considered as the first research programme for translation studies, and hence as the most explicit programme of the discipline. Other approaches could have opened similar paths, but in the mid-1970s there were hardly any other research-oriented approaches. Nowadays the adjective in '*descriptive* translation studies' sounds redundant (which was not at all the case in 1976), and 'translation studies' has become quite common even in publications on translation training. Such a change indicates in itself how scholars dealing with translation have changed their position.

The opposition between 'descriptive' and 'prescriptive' perspectives is also rather common in contemporary translation theory, although it is not necessarily connected with the programme of descriptive translation studies (Bell 1991; Gutt 1991; Hewson & Martin 1991). Since the beginning of the 1980s, the very influential Finnish-German Skopos theory has also argued in favour of a more functional view on translation and interpreting. Justa Holz-Mänttäri and Hans Vermeer have insisted very strongly on the 'Skopos' (function / goal) of all translations, and their major impact on the German tradition has proved to be parallel to Toury's target-oriented approach. However, their main goal was not to develop research but rather to develop translation and to improve its quality via didactics. Their theoretical background may look very different (e.g. it is indebted to Habermas and other German philosophers), but the important book by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (1984) discusses at length the new concept of 'norms' as used in Toury (1980). In fact, many theoreticians have come to use the norms concept after and via Reiss and Vermeer (1984), but without referring to Toury or to any PS frame.

I assume that the most crucial innovative impact in a discipline occurs in just such cases: when new concepts are used in a new frame and especially when such a usage has lost its own memory, i.e. when the new concepts look like the only possible ones, or appear to be 'universals'.

The impact of these new concepts cannot be reduced to the question of norms. It is the whole frame of oppositions and distinctions used nowadays by scholars dealing with translation that is more or less indebted to Toury's conceptualization and hence at least indirectly to the PS programme, either in an explicit or in an implicit way. It is not the least interesting paradox that the impact of this conceptualization is particularly obvious when scholars and groups argue against it. The distinction between source-oriented and target-oriented translation strategies has been borrowed – often unknowingly and tacitly – from Toury and other PS-based scholars by many colleagues who have argued against PS; such a distinction has an older history than the PS model but it has been conceptualized there as part of an entirely new programme. Other such distinctions and categories have been borrowed directly or indirectly and overtly or covertly from the PS research programme, which, again, may betray how basically the conceptualization of translation has changed since the 1970s.

What exactly has changed?

It is quite normal that scholars involved in discussions and following the flow of life do not perceive too well how their behaviour and their concepts keep changing. Like other human beings, scholars may have excellent reasons for denying change or for denying influences by particular people or events. According to Bourdieu a new anthropology is needed, also for the study of scholarly behaviour: sociologists, anthropologists and hence the Humanities in general tend to distinguish too simply between what is individual and what is collective, conscious or unconscious (Bourdieu 1994). With the help of particular methods, it is not always too difficult to establish when and where exactly new views have developed and how they may have conquered new individuals and groups. In the case of scholarly discourse on translation, a few sudden shifts can be located with considerable precision, being clearly linked with the use of the PS approach. Many of these shifts first occurred during the 1976 symposium in Leuven, where suddenly the following questions were reformulated by several participants (as can be demonstrated on the basis of their subsequent publications):

- What do we mean by translation?
- How can we plan research when we assume that there is no satisfactory theoretical model for the study of translation? What is the aim or the use of a theory?
- When does a theory meet scholarly requirements?
- What is the relationship / distinction between theory and research? Why is (historical) research needed?
- How can we distinguish between normative and scholarly theories?
- What exactly is to be studied when we want to do research on translation?
- How can we account for translational phenomena in terms of norms?
- How do we relate the translators' and the critics' statements to translations?
- To what extent do societies and cultures play a role in individual translation processes?
- How can we relate the position of translations / translators to the translation method?
- How can we account for incoherence and conflicts in translation processes?
- How do source and target cultures play a role in the selection, the production and the use of translations?
- How can we prepare historical research on translation?
- Why do we care more about the position of translations and translators than about 'quality' as such?
- How can we deal with 'quality' (norms) in translation without using our own norms as a basis for evaluation?

A much longer list of such questions could easily be established referring to the publications issued soon after 1976 by the people who took part in the Leuven symposium: I refer in particular to James S Holmes, Susan Bassnett, Hendrik Van Gorp, André Lefevere, Raymond Van den Broeck and myself (all of whom delivered a paper) or to younger observers like Theo Hermans and Lieven D'hulst.

Some among these participants revised some of their basic concepts during the symposium itself (e.g. Van den Broeck, who started distinguishing between 'prescriptive' and 'descriptive' and who planned descriptive research). Others, like Holmes himself, were hardly influenced. Bassnett, Lefevere and Van den Broeck adopted some of the PS positions while refusing other ones.

Similar observations might be made about (e.g. Canadian or South African) scholars who have assimilated the PS approach from a distance: their information channels and their research options are strongly differentiated. As can be seen especially in Snell-Hornby (1988, 1995), it is mainly Hermans (1985) – rather than Toury (1980) or Holmes (1975)[6] – which is used for information on the 'Manipulation group'. But the PS disciples from Tel Aviv (in particular Zohar Shavit, Shelly Yahalom and Rakefet Sheffy) go back to the first-hand Israeli generation and combine them with European models (such as Bourdieu, in Sheffy's case) without using the PS contributions from the Low Countries at all. As a whole, the list of names and centres, the channels used, and the various questions asked indicate that, if there is a sociological phenomenon like a PS movement at all, it is anything but a 'school'. There are more common grounds than common aims.

Many scholars and groups of scholars have borrowed their research programme very clearly from the new theoretical discussions started by the PS disciples. They have done so in many countries and in many departments, often with reference to Even-Zohar, Toury, myself, Lefevere and others but also quite often without any explicit acknowledgment, or perhaps referring to the more occasional promoters of the PS approach. It can be assumed again that many occasional contributions to PS research, though often somewhat disappointing, are the best illustration of the innovative force of the new theoretical model (e.g. Cheung 1996 applies descriptive translation studies to didactics).

Even the explicitly negative discussions have contributed to the development of research and often also to a further refinement of concepts. Among the most efficient disseminators of the new conceptual frame are the many colloquia on translation in various countries. Scholars are also social beings: many individual and collective research initiatives in the field of translation studies have their direct origin in the colloquia that have been held around the world. The best way to document this process would seem to be a diachronic and synchronic analysis of the conceptual positions taken in the keynote papers before and after such colloquia.

6. Many publications by members of the so-called 'Manipulation group' are indeed hard to find, Holmes et al. (1978) included, as pointed out by Snell-Hornby (1988): lack of power and lack of infrastructure are common features of new approaches.

Institutionalization?

The theme of the lack of research on translation has become a kind of *leitmotif* in certain areas of literary studies, but hardly so in linguistics for instance (where it might be much more needed). The feeling that research was needed had no reason to develop within the institutes for the training of translators and interpreters; it is within the academic world that the need for research and for institutionalized research programmes had to be expressed first. Institutes for translator training have been kept out of the university in most countries; they have been created mainly in order to provide societies with translation services and they are generally supposed to offer professional competence rather than to question the commissioner's commands. The training of translators and interpreters has tended to be kept away from universities (and research centres) up to the present day and hence it is not yet accepted by societies as a valid research domain.[7]

The beginning of the conceptualization of research on translation started before 1975 (and thus a certain time before any PS ideas were published internationally), among others in the articles by James S Holmes (later collected in Holmes 1988). But in the case of PS research, it was from within a university and from within university networks that the question of translation gained recognition and that it was treated as a matter for research, also being provided with technical and methodological tools and, little by little, channels for communication. It is more than a coincidence that *Transst* (i.e. James S Holmes's newsletter) was created after the Leuven symposium and was taken up again by Toury more than ten years later; it has become known world-wide. The institutionalization of channels promoting research on translation has taken several years and nowadays it is no longer very clear where exactly it started, but insiders can locate a few decisive moments.

It is hard to imagine how the establishment of the first society for research on translation (EST, i.e. the European Society for Translation Studies) would have been able to occur without the sudden connection between the institutes for translation training and the universities, represented mainly by small groups.

7. I am well aware that this statement looks much too general. First of all, certain countries have integrated the training institutes into their universities. Canada has given an academic frame to translation training; Spain did so quite recently; some German centres are part of the university; the University of Amsterdam could boast the most important Dutch centre (but then decided to economize it out of existence); Italy has created more than a dozen new centres (though partly outside of the universities). But the non-academic position of these institutes is confirmed by the fact that in many countries (Belgium included) the training institutes have no official access to the national research foundation and their staff are often not supposed to have a PhD degree or to be answerable for their research activities.

Similar connections have probably been equally decisive, for instance the creation of the SFB (*Sonderforschungsbereich*) in Göttingen, probably the first real research group in translation studies outside of the machine translation projects. Neither in the establishment of the Göttingen SFB nor of EST, the PS theory was explicitly mentioned, but the impact of descriptive translation studies is obvious in the formulation of research goals by these new institutions. The idea of collective research based on explicit theoretical models and systematic corpora has in itself nothing specific to PS, but it has been strongly promoted by those who initiated the idea of research on translation. This implies that neither the PS model nor any other model can claim to have changed the whole world of translation studies on its own, but that their combination and interaction have provided a basis for a more institutionalized research context. This aspect of history and of the history of research in general cannot be undone any more, although many universities and countries continue to regard translation and interpreting as a mere 'service' and as a 'technical' matter, as if in societies with competent translators no research were needed...

World-wide

It has been argued (e.g. Frank 1989b, 1990) that the more or less universalistic claims of PS cannot be taken seriously given the fact that only very limited cultural situations (predominantly French and Israeli ones) have been explored so far. It is true that the descriptive research started after 1975 is still too limited. But it is first of all hardly known and certainly not well promoted, and promotion is a matter of power. In fact, many projects had dealt with various West-European, African and even Asian situations before 1990. It is due to a lack of systematic information and interaction that barely anybody knows where the model has been tested and used so far, but it seems that hardly any continent has escaped.

It might be assumed that the only fair way of refuting or supporting new models is to put them to the test. It is a much more delicate matter to evaluate the exact relevance of the historical descriptive work carried out under the PS label and to establish to what extent it confirms, corrects or contradicts some of the basic ideas. Disseminating PS research may prove more or less successful but not necessarily revolutionary nor efficient, yet no scholars would refer to it if they were not convinced that it is preferable to other approaches. Research in the Humanities remains very amateurish to the extent that the frame for world-wide and permanent interaction on the basis of explicit questions and methods is hard to find (bibliography, journals, etc.).[8] In recent years, however, more such opportunities have been developed than could ever have been expected, due to the support of some international societies and some new channels.[9]

One of the most interesting confirmations of certain PS hypotheses is provided nearly every time that scholars unaware of such hypotheses discover rules of translational behaviour. PS hypotheses cannot be confirmed unknowingly, but they may gain evidence when a better interaction with other approaches is favoured by the opportunities of open research. Other models might benefit if frames for systematic interaction were available. The idea that particular projects ought to be related to more general frames is not uncommon in other research traditions. The very search for efficient hypotheses within young disciplines is obviously not well developed. Such cases offer evidence to suggest that the use of more explicit methods and hypotheses would favour more efficient research plans and a more explicit discussion of possibly general (universal?) principles.

In a similar way disciples of the PS model have often noted with interest how their colleagues – sometimes even while arguing against functional principles – end up confirming some of the leading principles developed by Even-Zohar, Toury or others: for instance, the role of prestige, power and politics in the traditions of translation; the importance through the ages of the *belles infidèles* principle as an aspect of the source / target conflict; fluctuations in the position of translation and their impact on translation strategies; and so on.

But a few spectacular illustrations of PS research have been provided in cultural frames that were not envisaged from the beginning. Particular areas in the history of South-East Asian, Latin-American and African societies have been investigated with the help of PS-oriented questionnaires (e.g. Lambert 1985c; Hyun & Lambert 1995). Although in many circumstances new and unexpected problems arise, some of the most basic hypotheses prove relevant in quite particular cultural situations. On the basis of what has been demonstrated about the development of writing (scripture, alphabet) and of religious or legal traditions in Korea

8. Although there are many excellent international bibliographies in disciplines such as linguistics or pragmatics, others (like literary studies and in particular literary theory) lack such basic tools, and the interaction between disciplines is hardly integrated into the best bibliographies that may be found. But how can one establish, on the basis of repertoires, how intercultural our theoretical publications are in (say) sociology and what kind of theoretical models they use? Let us hope that the digital era will soon promote better systems for the detection and classification of relevant information.

9. Besides international societies like ICLA or EST, the activities of research groups, scholarly journals, and even centres for research training like CETRA (previously CERA Chair) have had an obvious impact on the development of projects, PhD research and a more organized approach to translation in general.

through the ages, it is obvious that even very traditional and 'closed' societies borrow some of their most central and canonized texts from other languages, building their own tradition with the help of translations, and at the same time setting different translational models against each other.[10] It also seems that the treatment of neologisms and foreign names in the Korean, Chinese and Japanese languages is in itself an illustration of the well-known source / target conflicts. An exploration of the history of missionary activities in Korea even leads to the observation that Canadian missionaries from the end of the nineteenth century supported their translation project with a target-oriented translation campaign very similar to Eugene Nida's! Larger and collective investigations might help translation studies to discover more general principles underlying translational activities through the ages. Areas of special interest might be the treatment of constitutions and religious texts, those key texts of civilisation that have generally been imported and translated, and that are finally considered to be the heart of societies ... though in fact being of foreign origin.[11]

Even our modern age cannot avoid the discussion of general cultural rules and their fluctuation in translation. Since the rise of the mass media and worldwide communication channels it has become possible to observe international strategies and the changes they have undergone. It seems that the treatment of foreign names (in translation and elsewhere) in various cultures might easily be approached with the principles provided by the PS model: target-oriented vs. source-oriented strategies seem to be influenced by the openness / closedness of the receiving culture and by the prestige of the imported data. It is at least a sufficiently strong argument that so far very little seems to contradict the PS hypotheses on this matter. Why then not use them as a start for further discussion, maybe also with a view to refining them?

It is again on the basis of the PS model that research has begun on film adaptation and also, more systematically, on media translation. From the moment communication transcends individual languages and nations we have the opportunity to re-examine how specific the relationships are between nations, societies,

10. Theresa M. Hyun organized a conference at the University of York, Canada, in June 1994 where scholars from many disciplines examined the contribution of translation to the development of writing and language in Korea. No explicit reference was made to the PS model but the most obvious results of the discussions appear to be at least compatible with many of its key arguments.

11. I refer to the PhD research project of Jean-Baptiste Bigirimana (Université Catholique de Louvain) on the Constitution in Burundi. The development of constitutions and sacred texts is an aspect of the canonisation and colonization problem which has been approached from many angles in contemporary scholarship and where PS research offers at least some new contributions (Hyun & Lambert 1995; Lambert 1995b).

literatures, etc. (Lambert 1989e). Moreover, the use of the new media technology places us in new cultural situations which allow us to redefine (or to question) the relevance of particular hypotheses. It is in this context that one of the most explicit PS hypotheses about the source / target relationships may need to be reformulated. It seems indeed that although in most cultural situations translations fulfil a need from the target group's point of view, most contemporary forms of international communication are needed from the moment such a need is created by a given source group (Lambert 1989e). Actually, contemporary societies redefine the whole game by disconnecting space, time, language, nation, etc. to an ever greater extent: source and target positions remain relevant but within new cultural, political, linguistic and economic frames. Within translation studies neither the question of mass communication nor that of media translation has been simply discovered by PS, but the general research programme as it is being elaborated nowadays has already been enriched by questions borrowed from PS.

In the course of our work with several colleagues to formulate general question schemes for a planned international encyclopaedia of translation studies (Frank et al. 1994), we have been well aware that one of the most basic questions ('what exactly does translation mean in a given society?') has often been asked in the past by scholars and intellectuals from many different cultures and disciplines. However, the tools now available for the organization of such questions and research programmes have been formulated only quite recently. In their conceptualization, PS theory has obviously played an important part, maybe simply because it has offered the first explicit research programme. Twenty years ago scholars would have reduced such questions to the problem of 'quality' and hardly tackled the problem of functions. It is due to such assumptions that translation was considered to be a matter for translation scholars only – if at all – and not for the Humanities in general. The idea that translation is a matter for scholarly disciplines like sociology, linguistics, media studies, bible studies, colonial history, etc., is heavily indebted to the new questions raised since the 1970s under the influence of the PS approach. There is no doubt that a 'cultural turn' – as certain English-speaking scholars like to put it – has taken place, but its origin goes back to the many articles written in the mid-1970s about the way societies construct concepts of translation along their value scales and on the basis of prestige and power.

Beyond translation: neighbouring disciplines

From the moment the concept of norms is taken seriously, it is hard to conceive translation studies in static terms, i.e. independently of other disciplines. This is indeed one of the implications of Toury's thinking on the central role of norms. Before these considerations were known, the so-called 'literary' approach and the so-called 'linguistic' approach to translation were clearly separated or even believed to be incompatible. Since then, many conferences on translation have in vigorous debates re-examined the borderlines between linguistics and literary studies as far as translation is concerned. It took quite some time before the redefinition of borderlines and competences was taken seriously, but nowadays it is no longer an issue at all except among those who have failed to keep up with the evolution. Attributing such a shift solely to the discovery of PS or to Toury's influence would be foolish, but then, without them the norms concept would not have been adopted so suddenly.

It is a strange path that leads from psychology – where important aspects of systems theory have developed since the 1950s – into sign systems, linguistics, literary studies, translation studies, and then back to psychology. Disciplines that have their own history are now establishing new contacts and exchanging their experiences in an interdisciplinary way. Strangely enough, colleagues from (social) psychology dealing with the language problem become extremely critical from the moment other disciplines apply 'functional' (i.e. 'systemic') approaches. In their mind, functional approaches are typically 'mechanical' or 'instrumental' views. They distinguish between 'cultural' and 'instrumental' (or 'mechanical') views on language in their discussion of the extent to which language is a distinctive feature of societies.

Sociologists have similar objections to functional(ist) views,[12] with systemic views supposed to be one of the extreme options of functionalism. It is on the basis of such considerations that they argue against any *a priori* definition of societies and their links with religion, language, politics, race, etc. But then, they also look for the values (norms) and models that underlie societies with the help of strongly empirical methods. Only the consensus on norms (values) offers a sufficient basis for 'societies' of any kind, which leads us back to the PS hypotheses on literature, communication, language, culture, etc. Such a reconstruction of societal principles beyond nation / language traditions offers a new tabula rasa, inviting us to reconsider the principle of communities (see the idea of 'world maps' in Lambert 1990d, 1991b [included in this volume]).[13]

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12. The entry on "Fonction et fonctionnalisme" in the *Encyclopaedia universalis* (1985) (vol. 7, pp. 1086–1090) gives a panoramic view on the discussion.

13. Besides the many handbooks on linguistics, see Joshua Fishman's work, his *International Journal for the Sociology of Language* (1974–), Jan Nuyt's and Jef Verschueren's *Comprehensive Bibliography of Pragmatics* (Benjamins 1987, 4 vols), and so on. A simple look at their subject indexes confirms that the question of translation is not considered to be a central issue. One may add that in the very successful area of intercultural communication, basic texts such as Geert Hofstede's books (e.g. 1980, 1991) and the *International and Intercultural Communication*

Language is just one of the values underlying societies and it is assumed that societies do not just 'have' languages: they produce and manipulate and organize them. It is one of the fascinating experiences offered by the PS approach to translation that it leads into exactly the same positions as business communication and business management in the era of globalization. In this new world view, languages do not coincide with standard languages, nations offer no clear borderlines for languages and not even for societies; national societies are just one of the institutionalized societies, and when they are changing or being reshuffled, languages often become a key factor (see Steyaert & Janssens 1997). Whereas systems thinking of the traditional kind appears to be strictly deterministic and to exclude heterogeneity – this is at least one of the common objections, sometimes even against Luhmann's and Schmidt's work –, PS research on language, translation and literature stresses the dynamics of norms and value scales, actually starting from the idea of heterogeneity. The cooperation between disciplines such as marketing research, business communication, management studies and social psychology, on the one hand, and translation studies, on the other, opens fascinating new perspectives. Again, functional principles are not that new, not even in translation studies, but they were not formulated as a basic matter for translation before the mid-1970s.

Sociolinguistics has provided the PS theorists with some of their most basic ideas. It is rather surprising after all that contemporary sociolinguistics and pragmatics (and the leading trends in research on intercultural communication) are still keeping translation out of their realm. One would assume that such an observation in itself is enough to establish that the questions asked by sociolinguistics, the sociology of language and also pragmatics are still very limited and artificial, and that they have so far failed to tackle the internationalization process. An approach to the concept of language must be a narrow one if it excludes the question of translation. It is again on the basis of PS that a dialogue with sociology, with the sociology of language and with sociolinguistics has started. This happened first of all via the interaction between Pierre Bourdieu's work and PS, for example in Rakefet Sheffy's work (1990), but also in Even-Zohar's and in my own recent research. Furthermore, it is obvious that Anthony Pym's refreshing views on translation as an aspect of international societies find their best neighbours in translation studies among the PS disciples (see Pym 1992a, 1992b).

Media studies and communication studies have also been using systemic models of different kinds, exploring PS as a new ground for research on film adapta-

Annual (Newbury Park, London and New Delhi, Saga) seem to be relegating to a peripheral position not only the question of translation but even the question of language.

tion, film translation and media translation in general (cf. Cattrysse 1992).[14] The strongest argument to demonstrate how much translation studies needs to be interdisciplinary indeed consists in its use for research on the new media. This is simple in principle, since specialists in (mass) communication have for a long time used the well-known schemes that linguists and literary scholars, and now also scholars in translation studies, apply to their object. But, however obvious the task of translation studies may be in matters of media and communication, the institutional traditions of universities and other centres do not make cooperation plans too simple. In countries like Belgium and Spain research and even teaching programmes have been opened to media translation. It seems that the basis for a programmatic treatment of language, translation and the media can again be borrowed partly from the PS views on intersemiotic communication.

It is of no use to mention every particular new use or application of PS models in the field of translation studies, not even in order to demonstrate how many different areas have been discovered and explored. It would be naïve indeed to conclude from this proliferation of initiatives and from its diversity that PS can function as a magic tool. Just like other approaches, it requires continuity and follow-up. Yet it has stimulated innovation. Hence one basic merit is clear: no other approach in translation studies – let us keep other disciplines for other occasions and debates – has generated more projects, questions and investigations during the last twenty years.

Limits, shortcomings, debates

Rather than discussing the basic relevance or irrelevance of the PS approach, I have just indicated in which areas it has claimed to innovate research and in what areas it has indeed produced new investigations. It would be counterproductive to try and examine in merely theoretical terms to what extent PS theory is 'right' or 'wrong'. Those who want to clarify such matters without having tested them, have by definition missed one of the starting points of this particular research programme.

But there are definitely some weaknesses and shortcomings in the research carried out so far under the PS label or on behalf of PS. Besides possible – or inevitable – shortcomings in the formulation of its goals, PS theory has to rely on systematic (historical-descriptive) research. More than any other model in this area, it is useless without research. This implies a strong interaction

14. See also the work by David Bordwell – alone (1988) or with colleagues (1985, 1993) – on the Hollywood traditions.

between theory, methodology and actual research, which in turn presupposes an infrastructure in terms of manpower, institutional frameworks and budgets. The strength of such approaches is also their weakness. How could new models for research meet such requirements from the beginning? Interdisciplinary research has a tough time in our rather feudal-looking academia, where lobbies rather than scholarly arguments decide about disciplines. Moreover, collective research as such is hard enough to start up in the Humanities. Would this, then, mean that real research is not possible at all in the Humanities? Whatever the answer may be, PS research itself, like other functional research models, explains quite well why research as such is in trouble and why research focusing on norms and power without trying to support them will always be perceived as a threat. It is so much easier, after all, to use research as a way of celebrating heroes, stars or morality.

The goals of PS research are or can be made so general that one may wonder whether they can coincide with any particular discipline. They focus on the basic rules of communication and hence also of societies. To the extent that they deal with relationships rather than with substances (in line with Tynjanov but also with Bourdieu), they can hardly be alien to any kind of socio-cultural research or anthropology.

Rather than discussing these very basic and general questions, I have tried to locate some more particular results. I have avoided discussing again particular arguments from the rather isolated debates, partly because they do not seem to compromise the use and the possible efficiency of the approach as such. Whether the 'system' / 'mega-polysystem' has any status in itself, or whether it is just a beautiful hypothesis, stops being the (main) point from the moment it allows new kinds of relevant research. Whether it implies an 'anti-humanistic' view on literature and culture – as a few comparatists have tended to say (thereby revealing how they submit to values rather than to investigate them) – is not the point either: research itself is probably anti-humanistic inasmuch as its first aim is to promote knowledge rather than to improve mankind (but then, such improvement may follow from better knowledge). How could one avoid being deterministic – and anti-humanistic – if one is prepared to assume that a factor (x) may have a given impact on (y)? For many literary scholars the real enemy is simply research itself. The attempt to demonstrate (Frank 1990; see the discussion in De Geest 1993) that PS cannot work since it does not conform to a Saussurean concept of system (or to a pseudo-Saussurean one?), is not the point either, since there are obviously many other non-Saussurean concepts of system (Kittel 1992). More local misunderstandings – for instance, about the opposition between source-oriented and target-oriented translation strategies, or the necessity to study translations in relation to 'the original' – do not even need to be re-examined: it may be sufficient to re-read some of the key texts (more) carefully. Many misunderstandings about the possible relevance of the PS model are indeed due to simple misreadings or to eclectic information, generally limited to particular theoretical discussions and excluding historical-descriptive work. It is unfortunately true that neither the theoretical nor the historical-descriptive work is accessible to everybody.

A few key issues (some of them clichés) among the objections against the PS model deserve to be listed here:

– before dealing with systems, one ought to know whether they are just heuristic tools or whether they have an ontological and hence an *a priori* status (Döring 1989; Geldof 1986);
– before assuming that systems exist and that systemic patterns can be observed, we should assume that only certain particular, i.e. closed or static, systems can be taken into consideration (Frank 1990);
– decisions, behaviour and norms are idiosyncratic (and hence not systemic), which also means that translations and translators, especially in the case of translated literature, are mainly individual (Frank 1990);
– translations and translators cannot be explained by target-oriented principles (the idea that translations and translators cannot be explained – only – by source-oriented principles is rarely used against Toury, although it would make nearly as much sense as the anti-target-thesis);
– translations and translators are not peripheral phenomena (see Berman 1995);
– translations and translators are not central ('important') phenomena (see the traditions of comparative literature);
– 'descriptive' research is impossible since it would demand (total) objectivity (this objection is often used by historians of national literatures, albeit hardly ever in writing);
– Toury's target-oriented approach is compromised by the discovery that there are many (mainly) source-oriented translations; the PS approach to translation excludes the observation of the relationships between translational phenomena and the source culture / text (Frank 1990);
– descriptive research does not make sense since it does not lead to evaluation or quality judgments (Berman 1995; Snell-Hornby 1995);
– the PS approach to translation is too narrow because it excludes translational phenomena that are not labelled as such in a given culture (Cattrysse 1992).

By listing here obvious misunderstandings and misreadings together with more serious difficulties – such as the last one in the list –, we intend to indicate among other things that objections are interesting in most cases, often just because they reveal basic aspects of common belief. The most interesting misunderstanding is probably the idea that theoretical models are compromised as soon as they have to be revised, or just tried out, and/or that they could be seriously examined in terms of 'good' and 'bad'.

Such misunderstandings have hardly any direct connection with the particular models at stake. Superficial concepts are not at all the monopoly of those who discuss PS, in negative or in positive terms. The careless and naive use of the PS model has often rather compromised it, in particular when 'system' turns out to be just another name for 'country', 'literature' or 'language'.

It would be a much stronger argument in favour of a systemic approach that our traditional approach to languages, literatures, countries and nations appears to be far too static in our media age. This is why the idea of a new 'cartography' of cultures has been one of my own favourite themes in recent times, as a consequence of the evidence of the mobility of nations, languages and traditions in general. In fact, neither Even-Zohar nor Siegfried J. Schmidt, nor for that matter Bourdieu or Fokkema and Ibsch (1992), try to make explicit with what kind of concrete institutions their systems concept coincides. The exact relationship between systems and (political) institutions may become the heart of the matter in a contemporary world where the new societies (as in the case of multinationals and information societies) and new nation-states are developing all the time. In case there actually are 'systems' on our planet, where exactly could we locate them? Where are their borderlines? Would such borderlines be space-bound at all?

Whatever the answers may be, whatever the compatibilities and incompatibilities may be between the various approaches that claim to tackle such problems, the most striking contribution of (poly)systemic thinking on translational phenomena is that it has generated a methodology, maybe various methodological models for research – not on its own, but perhaps in a more pervasive way than any other well-identified model. The exact name and origin of such contributions to research are obviously less important than their role.

Survival: 1975–1995, and beyond?

Until 1980 the limited number of scholars who referred explicitly to the PS frame as a basis for their research organized three colloquia (Leuven, Tel Aviv, Antwerp); from then onwards they did not feel any further need for 'separate' colloquia and they have rather used other channels (such as ICLA). Little by little, they have retained from the PS approach a large number of questions, ideas or methods, rather than the name. At the same time, they have stopped behaving as a social group and have continued their work with new partners following compatible principles. The paradox is that PS has probably been transformed into research under various labels and that it has probably lost its programmatic identity, just promoting research more than the institutionalization of particular research labels. It wants to be future-oriented, not unlike descriptive translation studies. Witness the title of Gideon Toury's 1995 book: *Descriptive translation studies and* *beyond*. Which probably indicates that PS does not exist on its own, certainly not as an organized frame, but that it has changed the scope of translation studies and that it has probably contributed to changes in other ones. Under what kind of a label it has chances to survive is not the main point.

Problems and challenges of translation in an age of new media and competing models

(1997)

The rules of the debate: terminology and discourse

It is quite difficult to discuss any topic in a scholarly manner without prior agreements. Thus, the origin and status of our discourse, that is, the kind of terminology and concepts we will employ, form an initial problem for us. When entrusting ourselves simply to the words and discourse in everyday language or even in the language of dictionaries (assuming direct linguistic equivalents exist for such everyday language and for such dictionary language), we assume from the beginning that the topic under consideration is not really problematic and that our language appears to have universal relevance. As any dictionary can illustrate, the phenomenon of translation is first of all a problem of everyday language. Without a consensus on the concepts, and one that is certainly more than a consensus on terminology, we may be trapped from the beginning if we simply assume that our own discourse could be viewed as neutral and scientific.

Another problem to be solved is the question of scholarly discourse. After all, scholars cannot even discuss 'scholarly discourse' without having first reached an agreement on the kind of language, terminology or concepts to be used. It is thoroughly possible, though, to expect that agreements on the status and goals of our scholarly language may lead to a systematic approach, whatever differences between languages may exist, even when a topic such as translation is at stake. In fact, other disciplines such as linguistics or intercultural communication have to overcome similar difficulties. What is more, if we assume exactly the opposite, namely, that communication beyond language barriers is not possible at all, we would face

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an *ex absurdo* starting point. And from the moment international audiences understand that language differences may reduce international understanding, they may have solved the problem. In short, then, any scholarly discussion of translation – or of any other topic – would be simply absurd if not supported by a basic and preferably explicit agreement about the discourse to be used.

What kind of agreements may be called for

As a starting point, we suggest agreement on a negative consensus that is not necessarily shared by all experts in the field. This consensus states that many theories cannot serve as a basis for the discussion of translation as a cultural phenomenon, since they do not (all) define 'relevance' as a concept based on empirical research, but rather on the basis of normative evidence. In other words, they deal with an idea of translation rather than with the features of actual translational phenomena.

We further suggest that there are no solid grounds for revising today the assumptions underlying Gideon Toury's quest for norms (Toury 1978, 1980) – a quest whose first formulation of concepts goes back as far as 1975 and whose first public discussion took place at the Leuven Symposium on *Literature and translation* in 1976 (Holmes, Lambert & Van den Broeck 1978). There are still a large number of different views on translation and many different theories, many among them claiming a scholarly status. Even so, not all are (totally) compatible with each other, since among other things they often aim at very different goals. Hence the only way to avoid chaos and to talk with each other in an understandable language lies in the search for 'norms' and 'models' that make interaction, dialogue, cooperation and discussion possible, although in many cases dialogue and cooperation are not even possible.

Without a satisfactory encompassing theory, scholars ought to test the validity of various approaches in two ways: by a confrontation of the various approaches among each other; and by a confrontation, in empirical terms, of their relevance with respect to the topic(s) under discussion. The only way to make such scholarly operations possible is, of course, to work out common rules for discourse. This is the first meaning of the norms concept, as worked out by Toury (1978, 1980) along the lines of principles borrowed from other disciplines like sociology and sociolinguistics. Toury notes that speaking about translation would be quite utopian if we had no conventional or even hypothetical tools that enable systematic discussions among scholarly partners to take place.

A second function of the norms concept refers to the features (regularities) of the phenomenon studied and (often, but not always) called 'translation' and 'translating'. It would not be possible to work out general models for the study of such a phenomenon if we did not assume from the beginning, and in a hypothetical way, that at least some common features occur. But it may turn out that the first hypotheses in terms of norms and models need to be revised afterwards. Anyway, rather than prestige and power, research and empirical evidence are needed, even when different approaches claim to have provided already some (partial?) evidence in favour of their concepts.

Whatever the confusion and contradiction between the various approaches, scholarly discourse on translation does not necessarily face chaos. Several partial or even conflicting theories may each have a certain relevance, and some would-be global theories may have their relevance under certain conditions. But at this point questions arise. Does our first consensus about our own scholarly discourse lead to counterproductive consequences? Do we even have the right tools and instruments for comparing and confronting the different theoretical approaches if we do not define the exact topic under observation? How could we have any parameters that allow for a confrontation of the various approaches when we cannot circumscribe the topic itself?

The only or first possible exit from this vicious circle is probably to assume that our scholarly discourse can at least be compared and discussed on the basis of some common concepts and goals. Whether they have any empirical relevance, i.e. whether they allow for the analysis and explanation of translation or translational phenomena, will depend on further rules and agreements. The inevitable attempt to put some order into translation theories has enormous consequences because several theories do not aim at achieving scholarly goals and hence do not have any scholarly status. From the moment we require empirical evidence in real-life situations rather than simply evidence that exists in the mind, it will be much more difficult to reach an agreement with many so-called theoreticians. Some among them, together with their theories, will be excluded from our discussion. They may hold interest for extremely different reasons, for instance as expressions of a remarkable individual or collective approach. But there are no grounds for taking them into consideration if we want to deal with translational phenomena in culture, that is, in real life, and in historical space and time. After all, they do not aim to account for actual phenomena. On the other hand, several apparently very different theoretical utterances and concepts may be compatible, even though they deal with very different aspects of translation, or only with part of them.

Before any real dialogue can occur, we need a comprehensive theoretical-hypothetical model in order to observe and to explain (all) translational phenomena, from all ages and times. Partial theories may be relevant without being sufficient. This has enormous consequences for our definition of the object of study. Narrow definitions exclude some aspects of translation, or particular translations and 'adaptations', on the basis of *a priori* definitions. Marginally, we may note that the question of 'adaptation' is a real hobby-horse for the advocates of descriptive translation studies. And it provides an interesting test for our concepts since it reminds us of the necessity to question the concept 'adaptation' rather than the term. The phenomena referred to with the aid of 'adaptation' are not necessarily different from what others call 'translation'. It is easy to imagine how such distinctions may apply to many other terms (like 'imitation', 'parody', but also 'copywriting'). What is at stake is our very idea of translation. No scholarly discussion is possible when it is assumed that 'translation' itself is an unproblematic word and concept.

As long as no satisfactory general theory is available, only open, hypothetical theories can be accepted, theories that can be revised and corrected. This implies that the theories needed are meant to stimulate observation, analysis and explanation. They ought to be research-oriented, and they cannot offer any basis for the evaluation of translational phenomena before a better descriptive knowledge and mapping of translational phenomena has been provided. Hence the start of descriptive translation studies in the mid-1970s and its success since the 1980s. Theories that have other goals are not necessarily wrong or uninteresting, but they serve purposes other than research.

Bible translation and/or general translation

Long before Eugene Nida started his pioneering work, many considered Bible translations to be a key area of translation in general, and in most cultures. Interesting evidence of the cultural impact of Bible translations was given at a fascinating conference held in Toronto in 1994 and devoted to the development of writing in Korea. There the role of Bible translation appeared to be central for the development of cultures in East Asia. Although in most cultures explicit academic discussions on translation have generally occurred less frequently than the practice of translation, the question of Bible translation has provided a privileged area for the confrontation of translation concepts and ideologies, as may be illustrated by the cultural history of England, France, Germany, Holland, Korea and Africa. We assume that translational practices and oral discourse on translation occur in all cultures, and that written comments are much more exceptional, while remaining also inevitably implicit. One expects scholarly discourse to be as explicit as possible but knows that it can never be fully explicit.

The question arises, however, whether we should reduce the question of translation to Bible translation as such. Nida and Taber (1969) claim that hardly any kind of translation is lacking in the history of Bible translation. But is it really accurate to say that the Bible contains all possible text genres and that, even if this were so, we would have a sufficient argument in favour of a biblical approach to translation in general?

Without answering such a basic question on the legitimation of our models, I would rather stress how particular and limited is the point of view that Nida and Taber adopt in their discussion. Even if Bible translation were indeed the best possible synthesis of translation types in general, we still have not shown that the Nida-Taber approach to Bible translation can represent all possible approaches. There are indeed strong indications that in this particular case the theoretical aims are linked to quite particular circumstances, options and goals. Moreover, not all translators of biblical texts want to fulfil a religious function. Some may rather be inspired by literary motives.

In fact, the distinction between Bible translation and other kinds of translation is only one of the many possible distinctions accepted nowadays by experts in translation studies. While generalizations in scholarship as well as in everyday life are hard to avoid, the fact is that in scholarship they have to be justified by empirical evidence. And as long as the opposite has not been demonstrated, we may assume there is no satisfactory universal model for approaching the translational phenomena. Before it even makes sense to discuss relevance, we must examine the very possibility of making distinctions as well as the criteria (norms, models) for such distinctions.

From an historical vantage point, the first real attempts to develop translation studies as a scholarly discipline go back to the beginning of the 1970s (e.g. Holmes 1975 [1972]). One of the main results of these attempts was that a growing – though still limited – agreement was reached on some basic points and that a growing institutionalization of translation studies took place on the basis of such agreements. One of the illustrations of this institutionalization has certainly been the distinction between research on translation and professional and didactic translational activities of many kinds, including for instance the production of translation as such, translation teaching, criticism and machine translation. The use of new labels such as 'translation studies', or 'descriptive translation studies', though too often mixed up with 'translatology' (where no such distinction is being made), is another strong indication of the establishment of a scholarly tradition.

Distinguishing between translation as skill, art, science and object of research

The categories, oppositions and distinctions used so far do not at all originate in the naive belief that we can directly grasp an object of study. Rather, they reflect the state of the art, more or less institutionalized by publications and by research. Without claiming to be the only possible or existing distinctions, or to have any monopoly position, they refer to positions that scholars have gradually accepted in publications, conferences and handbooks.

Although translation is one of the oldest professions on earth, and although an impressive number of intelligent books have been devoted to translation, the beginning of a scholarly approach to translation is a rather recent phenomenon. Not unlike many other intellectual and professional activities, those responsible for its production were among the first to analyse translation. The first theoretical explanations owe a heavy debt to a particular group of agents in the translation process: those who have *produced* translations.

Practices of all kinds have always preceded theoretical thinking. Most academic and scholarly disciplines – from medicine and law to economics and philology – have first developed on the basis of the expertise accumulated by professional practitioners and then by theoretical thinking. Theoretical thinking on medicine, on society, on language and on translation has developed gradually, first among those involved in health care, in politics, in language teaching or in translation, and only much later by people and groups not involved in any action. For this very reason, theoretical thinking on these various disciplines has closely followed the perspective of those who produce, along the basic principle: *Fecit cui prodest.* The very idea of independent research is of course rather recent in our Western societies.

In fact, throughout the ages and various cultures, translation practice has been much more widespread than discourse on translation. Until this very day, many consider it a technical skill rather than a matter for intellectual discussion, unless heavy cultural values, as for example those embodied in the Bible or Greek classics, were at stake.

Little by little, people rejected the idea of translation as an 'art' since no one could reach agreement on how to judge the quality of a translation. Even the distinction between a 'good' and a 'bad' translation or between 'translations' and 'adaptations' remained problematic. The conflicts and hesitations due to matters of translation have gradually generated some independent and more general discussions in most cultures. Among these discussions, some have acquired a sufficient general scope and have gained standing as statements with a more general value or even with a scholarly status, about one of the most complex among all human activities.

Given the lack of an established tradition, people or groups already involved in the translation process initially produced most of the discussions. Hence some may generally consider them as interesting but *ad hoc* discussions, or as philosophical considerations rather than as scholarly contributions. Just like many literary treatises, they have often functioned as apologies (for example, Du Bellay's *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse* from 1549), or as philosophical treatises (for example, many eighteenth-century German books). But they were not scientific, not even for practitioners and users, and hardly ever for scholars. *Nemo iudex in propria sua causa.* We are well aware of the ambiguity of all historiography. Most scholars would like to rewrite the history of their discipline according to their own parameters. In this case I borrow explicit criteria from Holmes, Toury and descriptive translation studies, distinguishing between Nida's 'Science of Translating' – which is older – and Holmes's 'Translation Studies' on the basis of their goals: one tries to promote a systematic translation methodology, the other wants to organize scholarly discourse.

The idea that independent people and agencies were needed in order to approach the translational phenomenon had hardly ever been formulated explicitly before the 1970s (Holmes 1975 [1972]; Toury 1978). Today, however, it has been formulated very systematically and in a redundant way within descriptive translation studies rather than in translation teaching (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958; Hönig & Kuβmaul 1982; Newmark 1981) or in the linguistics-based tradition (Nida 1964, 1969; Koller 1972, 1979; Wilss 1977; Vermeer 1971, 1983; Snell-Hornby 1988). Rather than providing here the rich bibliography of this tradition in translation theory and translation training, I refer to some of the recent key books, like Snell-Hornby (1988) and Pym (1992a). In fact, this differentiation in the options of the various theoretical models is not strange at all. One can understand quite easily that the development of the programme and the goals of 'a discipline' had systematic links with the academic or non-academic position of the various experts. It seems too that many disciplines with a rich academic tradition (such as linguistics or literary studies) have developed in a similar way, and that the (weak) institutional position of those dealing with translation has had enormous consequences.

Translation was first taken seriously only after the Second World War, and then mostly by private companies in need of quick and efficient translation services. At that moment, linguistics, literary studies and other disciplines turned translation over to 'technical' institutes where, by definition, training and education came first, and where conceptualization was supposed to be counterproductive. At that time, only 'practice', experience and efficiency were supposedly needed, while conceptualization and the very idea of research were judged irrelevant. Hence 'theory' stood in opposition to 'practice', but not in opposition to 'research', as could be exemplified by many books published between 1960 and 1990. On the other hand, the academic world itself had excellent reasons for keeping its distance and for not taking seriously the question of translated discourse. First, it considered translations to be secondary texts, that is, texts subordinated to the ('holy') originals. Second, it felt that only second-rate intellectuals produced translations. Third, the structure of the academic world map of languages (and literatures) favoured a systematic exclusion of translation because it was not compatible with the idea of homogeneous Western and written languages.

Until this very day most of the famous linguists and most of their handbooks deal with translation haphazardly and in an intuitive way, and hardly ever on the basis of any empirical research. One of the other consequences of this situation is that discourse on translation remains in the hands of very dispersed groups often representing the professional world with its didactic traditions (as well as its money), rather than in the hands of intellectuals. In sociological terms, these various groups often work in isolation. But mainly since the 1980s the institutionalized publications and conferences have indicated a growing trend towards interaction, cooperation and even common planning. For example, publishers have created very important new channels such as book series in various countries as well as scholarly journals and newsletters. In these publications as well as during the many conferences of experts from the various traditions (teachers, literary scholars, linguists, media experts, even specialists in 'machine translation'), the level of cooperation has improved since the 1970s, when even contacts between the subgroups were rather exceptional.

It is fascinating to notice how research on interpreting slowly follows more general trends. For instance, international copyright rules, which support those who defend the profession against research, represents one of the last vestiges of an old monopoly which established that discourse on translation is a matter for those who produce it, and not for those who observe or study it, nor for those who study or observe language and communication.

In recent years – in fact, since Holmes, Toury and several others began to publish in the mid-1970s –, the dominant trend in research on translation has redefined the very goal of research and theoretical models, disconnecting them from didactics and from applied research. Rather than trying to answer the question 'How to translate (well)?' – which seems to imply a normative and ideal(istic) view of translational phenomena – contemporary research first wants to solve more basic questions such as 'How does translation work exactly?' and 'Why is disagreement on translation so systematic?'.

On the basis of this new paradigm I assume that any discussion of translation will fail as long as the role played within such a discussion by the various partners – for instance, translators, their audiences, their sponsors, their distributors, their intermediaries, their critics – has not been made explicit. It will also fail if people allow only a normative approach to the theory and practice of translation. The best way towards a better understanding of the various points of view will first make clear the goals and the position of those who take part in the discussion and then examine to what extent these goals and positions condition their basic norms.

Since Gideon Toury (1978, 1980) developed the concept of norms, the distinction between prescriptive-normative and descriptive perspectives has been more and more accepted, and the very idea of research has become common, even within institutes for translation training. This may be illustrated by the orientation of conferences in some of the most experienced countries such as Germany, Canada and Finland, where empirical research on the behaviour of the target audiences, as well as research on cognitive aspects of the translation and interpreting process, represent the common trends. Twenty years ago, one had to stress that translation studies needed a descriptive branch, to be distinguished from the prescriptive point of view. Nowadays, the opposition with the normative-prescriptive options has become largely familiar and the need for a label like '*descriptive* translation studies' has become less obvious, simply because the danger of confusion with a monopolizing didactics-oriented approach is not that common anymore.

Toury's work on norms has led to the establishment of several other distinctions and to an abandoning of a unilateral perspective on translation from the point of view of those who produce or generate it. Today most scholars accept that not only translators take part in the translational process, but also their recipients, and the target and source traditions. Translators and their business and media partners believe more or less that translation and translational equivalence are possible (the 'equivalence postulate'), but on the other hand they realize that their target audience(s) or those who use translations may have quite different considerations. In terms of scholarship this implies that there is no perfect communication (neither in translated communication nor in other kinds of communication) and that research may help to locate the communicational difficulties and conflicts. Those who produce translations want to know how to guarantee 'quality', although in fact they often accept that 'quality' simply refers to 'efficiency' and not at all to any kind of metaphysics. And many realize that quality does not necessarily coincide with the idea of a perfect original model. Those who study translations have learned that no ideal reproduction of an original is possible, if wanted at all, since the very idea of 'sameness' or 'symmetry' is incompatible with communication. The systematic distinction between the various points of view of the different partners does not imply at all that interaction and cooperation cannot exist. Rather, questions and goals have become pragmatic and functional. What is more, translation itself is no longer always confused with scientific research on translations, as it was in the Vinay and Darbelnet tradition. Today, most believe that translation research supports translation. Even computer-aided translation has dropped the idea of a perfect mechanical activity or product. Strangely enough, computer-supported translation suddenly gathers new chances and energies from its improved cooperation with the human world.

Although both theory and research have demonstrated that 'quality' as such does not exist but rather that quality exists for somebody in given circumstances, translation practice, translation didactics and translation research (theory and historical-descriptive study) may very well go hand-in-hand as long as they understand each other's aims and positions. Quite a new insight (borrowed unofficially from marketing research) holds that one may describe and even predict the relationships between particular strategies (options) and the expectations of the recipient. However, the conviction that translation itself might constitute a science results from a confusion of the levels to be distinguished: the object of study on the one hand and the approach to the object on the other hand.

Some main positions have developed out of several theoretical traditions. These positions describe only a state of the art along dominant and research-oriented perspectives and have their origin partly from within the so-called discipline, and partly within neighbouring disciplines. Plainly, translation studies cannot be a discipline in its own right since translation does not seem to have clear specific features and since it seems to function within other discourses, often without being identified as a specific type of discourse.

As long as the opposite has not been demonstrated we may accept that:

(1) Translation is supposed to be a particular (?) activity. As such, it no less than other kinds of communication reflects (most of) the complexities and paradoxes of human behaviour as observed and analysed by psychologists and sociologists. This implies that it is a socio-cultural activity whose behaviour may vary according to socio-cultural parameters. This also implies that it can never be a totally individual matter since partners must be involved. Hence, one of the key questions will always be the identity of the different partners, their role and the location of that role in the activity (Bourdieu 1994).

(2) Translation is also a particular (?) kind of verbal, but never strictly verbal communication, in which (most of) the basic rules of communication are supposed to be relevant. As a form of communication, translation inevitably involves complex intentions, never sufficient for the full comprehension of the communication since there is no communication beyond the intended or real perception on the side of the target partners. This implies that observers, scholars and critics who attempt to understand a given communication event will have to reconstruct the entire communicational situation and context.

(3) Translation is also a particular (?) kind of textual phenomenon and a kind of textual communication, which again implies that it submits itself to (most of?) the rules of language, text and textual traditions such as genre, distribution and audience.

We assume in the three definitions that translation is a norm-bound and culture-bound phenomenon. We could not even speak about translation without using principles such as the ones labelled here as 'norms'. The three complementary definitions imply that:

– Practice and theory are linked within the translational activity itself, but practice should precede theory in most cases.
– Theoretical considerations and utterances are generally speaking not systematically explicit; they often remain oral rather than becoming written.

- Written reflections on translation occur much less frequently than translational activities; historical-descriptive research has already formed strong hypotheses about the situations in which such reflections occur.
- Due to the rules accepted or rejected, most of the written utterances on translation, whatever their claims, do not function like scholarly discourse; they often have links to protectionist or polemical positions.
- Even very systematic and scholarly discourse can never be totally explicit; hence, discourse on translation will never fail to remain at least partly implicit.
- It is even hard to assume that any of the various possible statements, even the scholarly ones, could ever be totally individual (what is it, to be 'individual' after all?); according to the situations and degrees there will always be a part of unconsciousness involved.
- One of the requirements of scholarly discourse, however, will be that explicit and systematic thinking are not just possibilities any more; they have become requirements.

Back to definitions: what is 'translation' after all?

Given the hypothetical starting point of translation research, we have constantly to reconsider our definitions, which in fact only manifest a state of the art. If we knew what translation was and how it actually worked, no research would be needed.

In descriptive translation studies we begin with the idea that we do not know what constitutes the components and features of translation. Translation is supposed to be the kind of text (activity, process, communication) called so in a given target culture. How given cultures approach the phenomenon, how they change their definitions and distinctions is a matter for discussion and research.

Such a starting point is narrowly conditioned by an attempt to avoid any normative and *a priori* definition of what translation is supposed to be. At the same time, it remains open to some doubts and criticism. Certain texts may be viewed as translations since they simulate them. These are called pseudo-translations. The fact is that often texts and activities seem to have many features of translation without ever being treated so: advertisements, copywriting, business letters, adaptations, quotations and text fragments. Hence the category of 'translation' may need to become much larger and more open. This is even more obvious if we do not postulate from the beginning that a 'translation' or 'translated phenomenon' can only be complete texts. On what basis would we do this anyway? After all, even the most famous translations in the history of humankind are never entirely translated since they contain non-translated words, patterns and structures. Furthermore, our 'normal' discourse always uses items borrowed at some previous point from other languages. Many contemporary companies sell their imported products in the target language of their customers without indicating at all that both product and discourse have been imported!

If we restrict the label 'translation' to autonomous texts, thus excluding text fragments, and if we tolerate the quite common tendency in contemporary business and media life to conceal the foreign origin of texts, we implicitly ignore an enormous quantity of texts that are not called translations but that in fact play a key role in our contemporary societies. It looks more and more relevant then to take another look at the following tautological definition: 'translation is a phenomenon that cultures consider to be translation'. As important as this definition is, it is not a sufficient kernel for a definition of translation since one feature of cultures is their frequent refusal to consider certain translational phenomena as translation. The characteristics of such phenomena and the reasons for refusing to consider them translations should be studied to determine their relevance for the whole question of translation.

Translation and/as language: verbal and beyond

Due to the development of the descriptive branch of translation studies, it has become possible to redefine translation(s) in culture and to redefine the links with linguistic, moral, social and (many) other norm systems. One of the consequences is that the role of language, whether written, oral, standardized or non-canonized, has been redefined in relation to other sign systems. Neither in contemporary society nor in previous ages has the translational phenomenon ever been a purely linguistic one, though verbal communication has always played a crucial role. The dominant view remains the verbal one, however, as can be attested in dictionaries.

Several other factors explain why translation is, generally speaking, no longer universally supposed to be a language phenomenon. First of all, research on translation began worldwide in centres and departments for applied linguistics. The growth of translation training, however, has gradually stressed the need for a larger, interdisciplinary approach in which the monopoly of linguistics has been questioned. The success of more functionally oriented approaches such as Skopos theory (Justa Holz-Mänttäri, Hans J. Vermeer, Christiane Nord and others) and the polysystems approach has presented the phenomenon of translation as a communicational and a cultural one in which language plays a key role. Also, due to the particular implications of audiovisual communication and research on communication, the systematic interactions and interferences between verbal and non-verbal communication have gradually been recognized. In a way similar to research on literature and cinema, functional-systemic models have dealt with media translation and even with film adaptation (Cattrysse 1992). Not only Even-Zohar's polysystems theory but also and especially Siegfried J. Schmidt's systems theory envisage literature as one of the media. Semioticians, literary scholars and specialists in translation studies realize that even in poetry, in theatre and in prose, traditional text strategies do not necessarily reduce written texts to their language component. The semiotics of space and gesture plays a key role in translated communication as soon as the representation of a real or possible world is involved. The idea of texts in communicational frames has been redefined time and again in recent years by semioticians, in particular by J. Lotman and the Tartu school.

Second, since the hypotheses borrowed from a functional approach to translation seem to be relevant to cases of cinema adaptation and even to the case of dance (Lambert 1995e), we no longer have sufficient grounds for limiting translation to the level of verbal communication, or to the realm of language. As a symptom of the hesitation between the two main advocates of the polysystems theory in the mid-1970s, we may note that Toury has left the discussion of transfer theory to his master, Even-Zohar, who has written some basic studies on the question of transfer between sign systems from a semiotic perspective. The relevance of the concepts of 'equivalence' and 'translation' for explaining transfer phenomena between non-verbal sign systems appears simply a question of generality. How general exactly are the transfer phenomena that occur when translators move from one linguistic and socio-cultural tradition into another one? The thesis that in such cases the rules of intersemiotic relations are also a matter of prestige, dominance and strategies, obviously makes much sense, as does the position that their success depends upon the perception and the traditions of the recipient. Expanding the concept of translation in this way involves much more than a simple metaphor, as can be illustrated by usage. Intellectuals and societies need to adapt to the idea, but this is exactly what happens all the time through history.

Whatever scholars may say nowadays on the basis of their sophisticated contemporary models, culture itself has never had any hesitation. Although the main definition of translation has always linked it with languages, most dictionaries and many sciences also recognize that there are translations in mathematics, in chemistry and in biology. It would be hard to call such implicit definitions nonsensical when we take seriously the tautological definition 'translations are what cultures accept as translations'.

Third, the absurdity of an exclusively linguistic approach to translation is strengthened by the crisis of a reductionist view on language. Media translation has revealed how easy the shift is from oral into verbal discourse and vice versa. Movies can be 'translated' into written subtitles or rendered as dubbing or voice-over versions. Various new techniques of speech recognition make it possible to transfer speech from written into oral texts, or from oral into written formulation. Institutes for translation training have discovered how important this new area is for their curricula. At the same time they have also learned how the borders between other disciplines are being revised. Within translation curricula worldwide, the distinction between interpreting and translation has generally been taken for granted. Since dubbing and subtitling have become part of daily life, the shift from oral into written codes has become more and more common, and digital television as well as distance learning oblige us to try out new combinations. Translating for the blind and the deaf also comes into the new media landscape, together with monolingual written versions and monolingual subtitles (!) of spoken communication. Translation appears everywhere, but the differences between national languages are no longer the key difficulty of media communication.

However, given the very international framework in which these new media are used and produced, the relativity of the various national standard languages is also at stake. It appears that languages do not simply exist as autonomous systems, but rather as the result of institutionalization. The new media world simply pushes us into new experiments with verbal and communicational borderlines. Oral, written, standardized and experimental discourse are constantly submitted to reshuffling in our media world, and it is not clear where innovations will stop. The crisis of the exclusively written language is also the crisis of standard language and the crisis of verbal language. Behind the language crisis, the traditional instances of canonization are at stake. Obviously, the question of translation is never simply a question of translation only.

In a contemporary world that tends to become more global, it is not clear any more how metaphorical the extension of language to the whole world of communication still is. Anyway, we may suppose that the kind of strategies, norms and conflicts that can be observed empirically in the case of translation appear in communication in general. And if this view is correct, the question of research on translation is directly linked with the problem of metaphor: is it a metaphor at all to assume that translation is a matter of communication and not just of language? It is much easier to answer 'No' than with a simple 'Yes' since we cannot know what our language of the future will mean exactly.

The future: from translation studies into media studies

One of the strongest tendencies of contemporary research on translation is to refuse the subservient role. Neither translation research nor translation theory are undertaken in order to offer a *deux ex machina* solution to translation and/or communication problems. What is possible, however, is to observe better what is going on and to offer better predictions. The analysis of conflicts, difficulties and options may allow for a certain predictability in quite a new area, and we may learn from research how predictions can be arrived at and tested.

Who is going to benefit exactly from a better understanding of the enormous question of media transfer? First of all, society itself, since language and communication shifts are never just language or communication shifts. They affect society as such, and the development of self-consciousness ought to enrich decision-making processes and social organization. When contributing to the growing autonomy of societies in their decision process, translation studies has better chances to get out of the ghetto. The main problem will remain an institutional one, however. Who is going to plan and organize interdisciplinary research in our contemporary academic world where interdisciplinarity is constantly promoted in principle but hardly ever put into practice? The trouble could be that private research will take up the challenge, and how will it escape being normative?

From translation markets to language management: the implications of translation services[1]

(with Johan Hermans, 1998)

It is generally assumed that the academic situation of translator training and translation studies is heavily indebted to the boom of translation as a business service since the Second World War. The strange thing is that the dominant groups in translation studies are not at ease with the phenomenon of 'translation for business purposes', which tends to be simplified into 'technical translation' or 'business translation'. Does it constitute a special subarea, and on what basis would such a subarea be established? Are there any features that may be taken to distinguish 'technical' or 'business' translations from translations of other kinds, and what would a 'normal' business translation be like? We are immediately reminded of the many discussions of 'literary translation' where no basis for any formal distinction has been provided thus far (Toury 1995: 166–180). Or would it be sufficient to accept that 'business translation' refers to cases where a translation is commissioned by someone who is willing to pay for it? But then, would the translation of a literary work commissioned by a publishing house not belong in the same category, and would there be many translations in today's world outside of the business context?

Whatever the answers may be, neither translation theory nor translator training are comfortable with such questions. In fact, the business-oriented area has kept – or has been kept? – outside most of the programmatic presentations of translation studies (e.g. Holmes 1975 [1972]; Toury 1980, 1995). The same holds

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1. This paper was first presented in a different form at the colloquium of the Provinciale Hogeschool Gent (*Taal en Bedrijf*, Ghent, 20–22 November 1992: "Language, languages, translation: basic weaknesses in business management"). It grew out of collective research carried out at the CERA Chair (now CETRA) with the support of a large group of colleagues (in particular Peter Jansen, Johan Hermans, Peter Simoens, Catherine Labio, Yves Soen, Anne Verbeke and Inge Dekyvere). A detailed report is offered in Hermans, Simoens and Jansen (1994).

for 'machine translation': it is only recently that it has started being approached as an aspect of the 'discipline' (e.g. Sager 1993), and the tradition of isolated discussions of technical and professional translations has anything but disappeared. In congress programmes, bibliographical information, journals, etc. machine translation as such is hardly ever treated in the same communication channels as translation: the association with 'language' must have seemed easier...

It may be a matter of people as much as of scholarly competence: the professional world of translators tends to form its own groups rather than interacting with academic circles, and even those institutes for translator training which are located outside the university have no clear models for integrating the business component into their general approaches: recourse to the 'text-type' principle ('technical translation') as well as the sociological principle ('business translation') indicates that there is no satisfactory view on the subareas of either the discipline or the profession. Is this a no-man's land in the field of translation studies, which often appears itself to be a no-man's land in the province of the humanities?

It is our conviction that if our discipline really wants to update its views on culture and society, it will need to reinvestigate under all possible angles the whole matter of translation in business environments, whether from the vantage point of the manager, from the viewpoint of the translator, or from the perspective of administrative or communicative file management.

The following is a report on an investigation into the translation market in Belgium, followed by a discussion of the findings from an interdisciplinary point of view, mainly from that of business and communication. The detailed discussion itself, involving a limited number of theoretical considerations, exists in book form but is available in Dutch only (Hermans, Simoens & Jansen 1994).

The situation

The language question is a hot topic in today's world of business life and business training. Language services cover a large market. Not unlike academic structures, business people tend to treat the domain as a mere aggregate of individual languages. When it comes to training, language is often approached in purely technical terms, as a matter for those responsible for execution: managers are hardly ever involved in the discussion since it is supposed to be a technical issue (Jansen & Lambert 1996).[2] It seems that language as an aspect of the *management* of companies still has to be discovered.

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2. The weaknesses in the strategic approach to language are confirmed by the treatment of language(s) in most academic cooperation programmes of the European Union, in particular its distance learning programmes. See Jansen and Lambert (1996).

Anyway, it is clear that a large percentage of West European and other companies have specific budgets for language services and/or translation activities. Although such budgets may go under various headings (e.g. communication, advertising, administration, language service, copywriting...), they have increased spectacularly in the last few decades. Translation scholars have often stressed that this was in fact the origin of translator training and machine translation programmes after the Second World War, which also explains, we are told, why translation finds it difficult to attain a proper academic status. Impressive budget figures concerning the translation market and its predicted development are available nowadays (e.g. Lewin & Lockwood 1993). Be that as it may, the translation market has become a marked socio-cultural phenomenon, and it is strange that scholars dealing with translation tend to find most other topics more important. Dirty money?

It may be strange indeed that the birth of translation studies as a scholarly discipline would be located in the area of 'traditional' cultural matters rather than in the business area. The background of most prominent theoreticians since the 1960s has been basically academic, ranging from biblical studies and linguistics to literary and (sometimes) media studies. The inevitable and rather paradoxical consequence is that 'technical translation' or 'business translation' is not easy to locate in the discipline. The concepts and the kind of questions asked, as well as the aims of the publications in this domain are not really compatible with the dominant trends in translation studies as reflected in leading journals, conferences and books. It is not astonishing at all – for all those reasons – that scholars dealing with translation as a business matter look for partners among (applied) linguists or in branches such as 'file management' rather than in translation studies. This situation has consequences for other neighbours as well, such as communication: when dealing with translation difficulties or with "big business blunders" (Ricks 1983), they focus on practical matters and difficulties rather than on the basic principles of business as communication.

Translators and their trainers in many countries have written a lot about their business experiences. They have done so ever since the 1950s and 1960s, as our bibliographies demonstrate. At the same time, the need for basic research in this area has hardly ever been stressed. In some cases statistical data and other materials were gathered by groups of experts (e.g. Lewin & Lockwood 1993) about the need for translations in business life and other practical issues. However, it is not surprising that those figures raise as many problems as they may be solving. Who exactly translates for whom? What are the basic rules of the translation service offered to the various companies in different countries and languages? To what extent are they static, or fluctuating according to the product and/or the structures of the companies involved, or maybe in function of particular societies?[3] How do translators function as (full?) members of business societies? Are in-house translators very different, in their own eyes and from the viewpoint of their environment, from independent agencies and/or from leased translation teams? How do they behave as business partners, and how do their own business partners evaluate them? Has the language revolution in international business had any impact on business policy in general? If so, what could be the impact of business societies on the evolution of the societies themselves? Anthony Pym (e.g. 1992a and 1994) insists on the particular role played by translators as an international and intermediary society throughout the ages. If such a claim makes sense at all, it does so all the more in our own age.

When we launched our inquiry into the translation market, we wanted to focus mainly on one basic question: why is job satisfaction as low among translators in business environments as it seems to be? Such business questions about the translation market have hardly been tackled, maybe because it is normally translators or translator trainers who approach the issue rather than specialists in business research or even translation scholars. This was the case in the early 1990s, when our investigation was carried out, but the situation seems to have changed very little since.

Given the importance of internationalization and the increasing commercialization of communication, this no-man's land deserves to be taken very seriously from the point of view of communication practices and societal groups, unless it is assumed that it can be a practical matter only (which would mean that poor professional behaviour is the only explanation why translation could ever be a problem for business). Some simplistic attitudes indeed imply that there would be no translation problems if only we had thoroughly professional translators. Our own starting point was exactly the opposite: considering that translation can always be performed in many different ways, there can be no 'necessary' or 'perfect' translation. The question is rather what the relations may be between a given translation option (or strategy) and a given (business) situation. To the extent that such assumptions are meaningful, it makes little sense to tackle translation outside of the realm of business communication.

3. Central Europe can be envisaged as a laboratory situation. Whatever specialists in marketing may have established in this area, some experts in business translation (e.g. Jettmarová 1997) have at least started up the discussion.

The investigation

Our starting point was the translation market in Belgium, in the Flemish and French-speaking parts of the country,[4] in local and international companies alike. Obviously enough, there was no guarantee that the findings would be specific to the Belgian arena. On the contrary, there are good reasons to assume that they would bear a certain relevance for other cultural situations as well, maybe even serving as a basis for an account of contemporary business translation in general. However, similar and compatible tests are needed in order to scrutinize the exact validity and limitations of our initial investigation.

Rather than collecting extensive statistical data – which were partly available from other sources (Lewin & Lockwood 1993; see also Hermans, Simoens & Jansen 1994) – we wanted to focus on the relationships between the various partners involved in the different business situations. Statistical information, if sufficiently refined, may allow for a first approximation to a general survey. But since it was a network of relationships which was our real goal rather than any exact figures, we decided to look for regularities in the – rather predictable – schemes behind the interpersonal relations. From this point of view, it was vital to scrutinize the everyday reality behind the translation market.

Direct contacts in a sufficient number of cases were supposed to offer first insights into the basic rules. Interviews became necessary, treacherous as they may be in such circumstances: the various partners may refuse to cooperate in any kind of (independent) research, they may feel threatened in their professional safety, they have excellent reasons for using research interviews as an appropriate channel for promotion, etc. On the other hand, interviews are appropriate to provide insights into opinions, not necessarily into facts. However, the simple awareness of such limitations was also supposed to be a sufficiently sound basis for the examination – perhaps even the confirmation – of the basic hypotheses.

Further tests with other partners can be organized as a second step in the investigation. And a description of the procedure may always provide a useful basis for an extension of the study. The fact that the real user / customer could hardly be reached at this stage is far from trivial. We fully realize that the perception of the whole process – and all the more so, of its underlying principles – cannot be perceived by the agents of the process only, and that even a nearly ideal analysis of the various topics by the commissioners and the translators would never indicate exactly how the translation process works. The perception, the reception and the use of the translated messages together with the various kinds of products

4. Our information on the French-speaking part is much less systematic than on the Flemish part.

are a decisive factor in the marketing and communication process; still, they have yet to be incorporated into most systems of marketing research, where the prevailing assumption remains that the verbal / language component cannot be of any real relevance in our so-called global market economy. Without trying to solve this problem in a new investigation of the translation market, we simply avoid formulating any conclusions about the language component in consumer behaviour.

Another complex issue was the choice of subjects. In fact, our first interviewees were the translators and their own partners and contacts, rather than their employers, but gradually employers as well were integrated into the population interviewed. The Belgian arena was rather systematically represented by some of the leading translation companies as well as a number of select individuals and translator associations.[5] The employers were represented by some large multinational companies, but also by smaller ones, both local and international. Some among them were complex partners, since they had their own in-house translators as well as external translator teams. Others had been using the same external translators for many years, and many among them employed several teams or individuals at the same time. Some areas could hardly be covered; the advertising market could not easily be approached, and it remains obvious that specific research projects will be needed in order to treat this important branch of (verbal) international communication (see Jettmarová 1997).

The interviews were executed by the same interviewers and on the basis of certain basic rules for interaction. From the beginning we focused on a limited number of hypotheses (e.g. about job satisfaction, instructions given to translators and the implicit norms underlying them, and feedback produced / received). The technique used was the individual interview based on a long list of questions which included several ways of checking and counterchecking. In order to avoid revealing to interviewees what the exact hypotheses were, a simple and open conversation was conducted with each one of them. At the end some of the initial conclusions were made more explicit, and were tested again. Finally, the general results of the investigation were put to the test during a business seminar (Hermans, Simoens & Jansen 1994: Appendix).

In the interviews with the translators / agencies, the questions were structured along some central headings such as:

5. For a full list, see Hermans, Simoens and Jansen (1994: Appendix). Let us mention, in addition to a number of well-established translators and translation agencies, IBM Belgium, Labos Garnier, AG, CERA, ICI Europe, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Philips-Brugge, Viessmann Belgium, etc.

- the business situation of the partner:
  individual translator?
  in-house translator?
  external translator?
  member of a consortium / agency?
- since when have you been active as a professional translator?
- on what kind of a legal basis?
- as a specific and exclusive profession, or as part of a larger enterprise (e.g. language service, language training)?
- on an individual or collective basis?
- who brings in the orders?
- with what kind of (written / oral) instructions?
- with what kind of a contract?
- languages involved?
- who controls the competence of the (translator) partners?
  who selects the translator(s), reviser(s)?
  external / internal translators / revisers / experts?
- what do jobs look like in terms of:
  technical / professional topics?
  timing?
  budget?
  payment?
  instructions?
  contacts before / during / after execution?
  is there any explicit evaluation?
- is there any previous planning?
- is planning part of the job design from the start, or only the result of a later development within the business project?
- do the various commissioners impose their own conditions, or do the translators / agencies impose their rules on the various partners?
- is there a large number of business partners, or an exclusive job commitment with a limited number of commissioners?
- is there any direct contact with the real target groups for the various orders: before / during / after?
- is there any obvious evolution in the market in terms of:
  languages involved?
  customers / employers involved?
  market products / segments?
  competition with other translators / agencies?

Individual variants always occurred and allowed for an indirect discussion of questions asked within some of the key sections of the investigation: competition within the official jobs offered by the European Union, governmental policy, changes in the policy of one particular employer, new legal constraints, etc.

In the case of companies that offered jobs to the translator / agencies, a similar set of questions was used, but others were added:

– is translation an important matter / budget for your company?
– where is translation located in your business structure?
– the decision to translate is made:
  by whom?
  when?
  where?
– who maintains contact with the translation team before / during / after?
– what are the budgetary constraints?
  and the experiences with budgets?
– what is the general evaluation of the translation service as a *business activity*?
– can you discuss some examples of particular difficulties?
– does the translation service have any impact on your market share, or on your market image?
– is there any feedback
  from / to your translators?
  from / to your customers?
– has previous experience with translation influenced your planning?
– are there any significant changes in your general policy from this point of view?

It is obvious that only benevolent and well-intentioned partners were willing to offer their cooperation. Which may mean that the results reflect the attitudes of those who have greater than average awareness of the general conditions of translation in a business environment. This in turn may imply that the conflicts described in our investigation are, in all likelihood, even more basic and profound in an average business environment.

Basic insights

Whatever the requirements and the difficulties, a rather large market has indeed evolved, and seems to be steadily increasing in terms of budget. This implies that at least a certain degree of agreement and cooperation must exist between the partners. However, it has been quite easy to register a long list of complaints on the part of both the 'committer' and the 'employee' (i.e. the translator), even and especially in the case of persons playing both roles. The very fact that there are so many complaints and conflicts indicates that 'something is rotten in this translator's state'. But what exactly?

It seems that the following working conditions (referring to 1990–1991) are somewhat specific to the Belgian market, though not necessarily responsible for the general feeling of job (dis)satisfaction:

- translators have no clear legal status (not even when working for the government, although legally assigned): no diploma or test is required and although the idea of quality control is beginning to manifest itself, it is not widespread;
- the dynamics of the translation market looks more obvious insofar as the changing identity of individual translators and agencies is concerned (as revealed by the Yellow Pages);
- there is intensive underground activity of employers who work part-time or for undeclared income, or who work for several established agencies at the same time (often at different rates);
- rates are generally lower than in the surrounding countries (and it seems that payments come more slowly!); 'how much difference is there exactly between a typist and a translator? And how come governments / courts can afford to pay much less than private employers?'

But let us focus on attitudes towards the translator's work, and, in particular, on possible conflicts and disappointments. These tend to be largely one-sided because the employer, when complaining, hardly ever looks for the possible causes of the disappointment within his own company. On the other hand, translators and translation teams tend to be fairly unanimous in their analysis of the dissatisfaction, without being fully contradicted by their employers either. We will start with the most extreme results of the investigation, and then examine to what extent the less extreme outcomes are also representative of a more general pattern.

Although the development of a translation market seems to be an international phenomenon, it is quite obvious that the traditional patterns persist: translation remains in part a black market, since it is not necessarily labelled as translation; secretaries and friends of managers continue in many cases to produce business texts; this is the low-profile market. Since knowledge of a foreign language is sometimes supposed to be God-given, the general view is that there is no reason to spend much money on someone who just happens to know the necessary languages or who enjoys language games anyway. Such a job can be done by an assistant manager or secretary, or in certain cases even by a talented engineer, during working hours. It can also be done over the weekend or at home, when the 'real job' is over. As a result, no partner is happy: neither the commissioner of the translation nor those who perform it on the basis of a gentle(wo)man's agreement. In one company, basically francophone, one of the production managers had to devote a great deal of time to the revision of Dutch translations which had been prepared by a professional team. In another case a full team of in-house translators had to translate a twenty-five-page long text no fewer than twenty-six times (!), simply because the managers kept changing a few lines in the basic file. The boss does not really know what his employees are doing, but he pays for it anyway. For what exactly? And would such a situation have been possible in any other department?

To the extent that these habits have not died out, the tradition of *la Belgique de papa* is continued, whereby the big boss used to shout to his secretary: "Copiez-moi cela en flamand!".[6] Management and the preparation of products have not ceased to be largely monolingual, although money-making is supposed to be multilingual. We might call this the *pre-professional prototype situation*: translation is not regarded as part of serious business, so that outsiders can take care of it.

In less extreme situations, i.e. in most larger companies, translation is not necessarily considered a matter of 'translation' at all, which suggests a conceptual problem. There does not seem to be any general rule, since language(s) can be treated in the communication or simply in the language department. Foreign-language teachers may do the job better than secretaries, but translators' profiles are ignored. However, as soon as questions are asked about multilingual text distribution, it seems that the matter is hardly ever unproblematic. The (in-house or external) position of the translator is much less at stake than the relationship between the technicians (or financial managers) and the translator. On the other hand, there does appear to be job dissatisfaction among translators. Even when working within the company, translators tend not to feel fully at home since they are regarded as lower-category employees. They may earn rather well, but they are not really part of the overall management:

– their social and professional level: the executants are lower-rank people; their location in the company building is rather symbolic in this respect: in-house translators are often located near the rear door, hardly ever in the central part of building;
– the timing and planning of their task: their intervention occurs *after* the general planning and even the formulation of messages have been finalized;
– contact between partners: contacts between those who commission a translation and those who produce it may happen to be regular, but in the average situation they are exceptional, especially in the case of 'package deals' between

6. The "*Belgique de papa*" is a stereotyped representation, quoted mainly in Flanders, of the old-fashioned unitarian country where first-class citizens were allowed to know and to use one language – French – while second-class citizens had more linguistic obligations.

a company and an advertising agency which also carries out the translation / language transfer;

- the timetable is unreasonable or nearly nonexistent (e.g. three months for a 'prototext', but only one week for a translation into five different languages);
- communication is unidirectional, i.e. there is no (or little) feedback before, during and after the fact (i.e. when preparing the next job):
  no integration into the business company
  no way of reaching the person who makes / made the decisions
  no instruction sheets
  no D-base or glossary
  no comments afterwards;
- the overall procedure within a given company: some companies use different systems for different translation jobs performed during the same period;
- the view of the job and of language: although the commissioner requires the translator's expertise, s/he regards the job itself as 'simple' and just expects it to be performed 'correctly';
- the task must be mechanical too (in terms of speed and quality), which implies that although an expert has been hired, s/he is not supposed to establish his or her own norms, rules or instructions;
- not surprisingly, the cost of the job must be low, though the latest technologies may be used; hence the comparison between the mere typographical component and the linguistic skills required reveals strange discrepancies.

Let us examine in more detail how the translation process functions in a standard business situation:

- the production process is planned without the intervention of any language expert, hardly ever with the support of experts in the various languages involved;
- the selection of a translator or team tends to be more thoroughly prepared in the larger, international companies than in the smaller (and more national) ones. In certain cases selection procedures start when the basic text has already been finalized. In such cases there are strong chances that budget will also be a decisive factor. When the employer knows his/her translators, preparations as well as planning tend to start earlier;
- explicit instruction sheets have become more common, but they are still exceptional even in the communication business (e.g. in translation for television);
- once the translation job has started, feedback tends to be common within the translation team itself (among the different translators, the reviser and other parties), but not between the team and the commissioner, except in established frameworks of cooperation;

– explicit evaluation and/or feedback between employer and translator tend to be rare. It is usually generated by an external complaint (on behalf of customers or complete outsiders).

It may be relevant to represent the problem in a panoramic way by means of the well-known equivalence scheme from translation studies (we use 'author' and 'reader' in the most general sense):

$$\text{Author}_1 - \text{Message}_1 - \text{Reader}_1 = \textit{translator} = \text{Author}_2 - \text{Message}_2 - \text{Reader}_2$$

Figure 1.

One can imagine how complicated the scheme becomes in parallel or multilateral translation.

One can also use the well-known scheme for communication that also underlies the equivalence scheme, but which has been made more open by experts in (business) communication, since each (personal) partner (P in Figure 2) is taken into consideration. We simply list all partners involved, whatever their function:

$$P_1 - P_2 - P_3 - P_4 - P_5 \text{ (etc.)}$$

Figure 2.

Here again, the scheme becomes complicated – as in real business life – in the case of multi-point communication.

In translator-training programmes or handbooks it is rather exceptional to find references to the reactions of the real *consumers*, which would clearly be an aspect of marketing research. In most cases the translation is observed per se, and from the point of view of the languages involved, the technical terminology and the text-type. The general environment (the basic norms / strategies of the company that produces messages) is not studied as an economic issue. A discussion of the communication from the point of view of *all* partners involved, and in relationship with their other, i.e. non-translated (text) production, does not take place, which means that even the *intentions* of the text producer (the author) – which are only part of the picture, intentions being treacherous things – are not taken into consideration. This means that traditional translator training also treats translation in a technical way, just like so many business companies.

In the communication schemes worked out for business people, especially since the Total Quality Control campaign, it is recommended that *all* partners in the communication process keep in touch with each other. That is why *double feedback* and collective planning (the factor of time / anticipation) are crucial, as exemplified by Figure 3:

$$
\begin{tikzcd}
P_1 \arrow[r] & P_2 \arrow[r] \arrow[l, bend left] & P_3 \arrow[r] \arrow[l, bend left] \arrow[ll, bend right] \arrow[rr, bend left] & P_4 \arrow[r] \arrow[l, bend left] \arrow[lll, bend right] \arrow[ll, bend right] & P_5 \arrow[l, bend left]
\end{tikzcd}
$$

Figure 3.

This is where the translation component escapes the overall communication management and quality-control principles: even when working within a company as in-house teams, translators are hardly ever part of the teams that plan a given product (IBM and certain other companies claim the opposite, but we have not been able to examine how – or how well – this works), and in most cases they receive no feedback after they have finished their job. Reactions from the outside world (the customer) may reach them, but marketing (including marketing campaigns) hardly ever takes the language component into account. Certain package deals preclude contacts between certain groups of partners. Within most translator teams such feedback is considered part of the struggle. Flexible cooperation between employer and employees is not impossible, but quite uncommon.

The exceptions indicate in what kind of situations the problem has been solved and what the remedy and the didactic principles ought to be: a systematic double feedback is needed between *all* partners involved. To be sure, such a more complex organization, which implies the integration of translators into the strategic goals of the company (and the integration of strategic business thinking into the training of translators) need not be more expensive. Moreover, the reduction of the whole issue to a budgetary item also indicates that managers and companies preclude from the start the possibility that translations – and efficient verbal communication – may be an important *asset* of their company rather than a (financial and economic) *liability.* Why then would they need translations at all? Or international markets, for that matter? Our investigation has demonstrated that many companies, whatever they claim, do not know too well what the exact working conditions and resources of their translators are. And those who have shown the opposite inclination definitely realize that, whatever the outcome may be, they will be able to better locate the reasons for possible trouble.

Although the situation is subject to many variations and although it tends to be more sophisticated in large multinational businesses,[7] its basic features are obvious in business communication as such, notwithstanding the fact that the people, and even the institutions, involved have gradually developed a new status, to the point where they have become independent partners in business-to-business situations.

7. We have positive indications about multinationals that were not part of the investigation. We have learnt, however, that independent observation is needed, and that there is no ideal translation / communication.

It is on the basis of these complaints – on both sides – that we have become adept at reconstructing, at least in part, the ethics and dynamics of the translation business service, so that basic patterns and standard situations have become predictable.

Beyond the local investigation

In a closer examination of the results of the investigation with the subjects themselves in a special seminar, it became clearer and clearer that there are no grounds for assuming that the basic features described so far are unique to the Belgian situation. On the contrary, reports on contacts with foreign employers confirmed that similar misunderstandings are quite common in other international settings. True, there are indications of a better discipline in certain countries (e.g., according to some interviewees, timetabling is better taken care of in Scandinavia), but, on the other hand, there are strong indications that in some specific areas such as advertising, the structural difficulties are actually even greater, given the fact that any contact between the commissioner and the translator is made impossible for professional reasons. Hence the following rhetorical question: would the generalizations established so far *not* be relevant for other countries? Other questions should centre on how we can account for the situation, how we can change it if we wish to (translator trainers and business people are likely to show an interest here), and so on.

Let us look into the specialized literature. As far as communication theory goes, the situation is very simple: communication theories tend not to integrate the language component, and the same applies (still) to the mainstream of linguistics (Dell Hymes, McQuail, etc.).

But what about experts and trainers in business communication? Besides personal contacts with the professionals in charge of the translation job, we have used the information offered by the specialized bibliography. Translation is hardly a topic in the literature on business communication. True, there are some spectacular changes, and this may be an explanation of our own investigation. But in traditional handbooks of business communication, marketing or management, translation hardly appears. And when it does, it may be to offer solutions worse than before. For instance, Harris and Moran (1989) react strongly against the 'typical' North-American lack of awareness of languages, but then go on to recommend reducing the English vocabulary to a maximum of 3,000 words: all the other languages are suddenly forgotten... The *missionary's position*, one might say (for much more encouraging attempts, see Roth 1982: Chapter 8). The reasons may be much more interesting than the observation itself. The lack of interest for the translation phenomenon in international business communication simply appears to be a striking consequence of the lack of interest for the language component in general. While devoting much time and money to 'intercultural communication', business experts (and even business anthropologists) are hardly interested in the language component. (As a symptom, see the Hofstede paradigm [Hofstede 1980, 1991] and the use made of it.) Most of the basic rules in the basic treatment of translation mentioned above could be extended to the language component as a whole.

Towards an explanation: language and/as translation

Indeed, what is at stake here is the basic view on language and languages rather than the narrower issue of translation as such. It is the language component in general that suffers in the internationalization process. This is one of the conclusions to be drawn from our interviews with the various partners and from other contacts with the business world (in seminars on language, in language training programmes, in publications on management, especially within the multi-media world, etc.), and occasional contacts with the world of politics.

According to many managers, it would be much more convenient to make use of one single language worldwide. True, but for whom exactly? Our schemes demonstrate that the manager's convenience as such is no guarantee for efficient business, though the two may be compatible. The efficiency of the monolingual approach (in English? or in another *lingua franca*?) from the consumer's point of view and from that of marketing is hardly ever taken into consideration. Marketing experts tend to reduce the matter to the techniques used in marketing research, where the questionnaires used may fail to meet the expectations of the interviewee, nor are the expectations of the consumers and their possible conflicts with other partners in the business process always taken into consideration, especially in the case of multilateral international distribution. The unilateral point of view of those who produce the messages – rather than of the consumers – is confirmed by the rather widespread attempt to use visual rather than verbal communication wherever possible; some experts tend to postulate – though without necessarily establishing – that visual communication (e.g. in advertising) would be more universal than verbal communication, whatever real-life experience may teach us on such matters. Wishful thinking? The main effort in such a view on communication is expended in ensuring the speaker's or the company's convenience, rather than on consumers or on market competition. The language-policy component in the various market segments is not supposed to be the point, although new symptoms of international (political and economic) language competition are a daily phenomenon in our newspapers. Whenever this view on marketing seems to be in trouble – as in post-apartheid South Africa,[8] for instance –, it is assumed that there may be exceptional situations. But the rules as such are not subjected to any reconsideration.

Concluding remarks

The results of our investigation remain open. They may be corrected, improved or corroborated by similar research projects. We keep testing them in different circumstances, which is possible because we believe to have discovered immanent features rather than superficial ones. But insofar as they are relevant, the consequences are enormous – and not just for translation studies.

One of the first questions is whether it will ever be sufficient to train (just) translators in institutes for translator training, as long as we (who is 'we'?) do not educate society, or, say, businessmen and managers. It is not certain that all of them could make better use of translations, but there are good reasons to assume that many among them could, to their own benefit. It is not just a matter of business translations, for where exactly are the boundaries of 'business'? And since global communication pervades the world, the matter may stop being regarded as a problem for business managers alone: politicians too may become interested, though not always expressing this interest in the appropriate way.

A final, slightly political question: how much time will be needed in order to notice language claims on behalf of consumers in North American societies? And will the principles of marketing and communication change worldwide from that moment on?

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8. Contemporary South Africa may be an extreme and spectacular case, where marketeers have suddenly been obliged to include the language component into their world view. However, it is not an isolated case, and since the 1990s the language component has become increasingly important in many countries for political reasons, whatever the theses about English as the world's *lingua franca* may mean.

Cultural studies, the study of cultures and the question of language: facing / excluding the new millennium[1]

(2000)

> Translation, of course, literally means switching grounds. (Sommer 1996: 80)

In a programmatic book that claims to offer a basis for, at least, the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard, Doris Sommer examines the case of Puerto Rico and its population from the point of view of its language. This population is supposed to be on the move:

> It is the case of an entire population that stays on the move, or potentially so, so much that Luis Rafael Sánchez makes a hysterical joke about Puerto Rican national identity being grounded in the *guagua aérea* (air bus) shuttling across the Atlantic puddle. Literally a nation of *Luftmenschen*, half is provisionally on the Caribbean island, and half on and around that other madhatter island, which has become a homeland of sorts for new nationals. (Sommer 1996: 80)

The language of this population on the move reflects its mobility. They read aloud the English sign for America with an eye for Spanish, they become American: "OUR AmeRíca". In their New World, where commercial, cultural and political border crossings define so many lives, boundary words like *here* and *there*, *mine* and *yours*, "are hardly stable signposts". In fact, their identity can be read in their language, and their language is a continuous mixture, it can be defined in terms of mobility – or translation, which is supposed to be the same thing: the "endless translations of Puerto Ricans from one place and language to the other" (ibid.) are the key to their identity.

Editors' note. This paper was originally published in *The future of cultural studies. Essays in honour of Joris Vlasselaers*, edited by Jan Baetens and José Lambert (Leuven: Leuven UP), 187–197.

1. I am grateful for text revision to Joy Sisley (Warwick University). It is impossible, in this short discussion, to refer to state of the art articles in the various disciplines at stake, and hence we reduce our bibliographical references to a minimum.

It is one of the paradoxes of the fascinating book entitled *Field work. Sites in literary and cultural studies* (Garber, Franklin & Walkowitz 1996) that, while focusing strongly on the role of the nation-state in (Western) culture, it often tends to overlook the language component in the establishment of cultures and identities while also putting it suddenly into a central position. Fully in harmony with the field-oriented view on culture and the negative attitude towards armchair scholarship, statements and/or theories are avoided, but given the more or less explicit assumptions, the (often implicit) definitions or isolated statements, the Harvard book offers an impressive series of positions. How American the contributors really are is not too clear, certainly not on the basis of their names. They are largely known and well-known as 'American scholars', but in the book they systematically extend their range to other continents. A long time before grounding the Harvard Center, several among them had in fact supported the American-European 'Penn-Leuven Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies' (1987–1989), of which the European rather than the American component collapsed.

The title of the book already indicates that many contributors have an anthropological background. However, disciplines are only one explanation of their positions since the implicit cultural starting point often appears to be, first of all, North American, which is an interesting thing on the way to the rediscovery of Ancient Greece, Shakespeare's manuscripts, Russian literature or Outer Mongolia. In certain cases, language becomes the heart of the matter, more than could ever be the case in West European cultural studies, and more than we ever might expect from a large and well-situated American group of scholars. Defining the dynamics of culture and people as 'translation', which Doris Sommer does, is even going far beyond what culture-oriented translation studies would dare to do, except for some particular positions in Canada, Brazil or Western Europe. Anyway, while treating "culture" and "cultures" (Part One), "national" and "global" identities (Part Two) and "national literatures in a global world" (Part Three), *Field work* deals with language in an erratic way, often ignoring it as part of culture, just mentioning it, or suggesting that culture and language are just the same thing, or – in Sommer's case – assuming that culture is nothing else than translation. But what exactly would Doris Sommer mean when linking the 'Puerto Rícans' with a New World?

Europeans – 'we Europeans', to put it in Sommer's terms – tend to have a stereotyped view on the position and status of languages in the United States. Does *Field work* offer a representative view on the American concept of culture, or on cultural studies, or on language in culture / cultural studies?

On the basis of a recent newspaper article in the *International Herald Tribune* (Blume 2000), we have good reasons for rather expecting a different and superior attitude on behalf of our USA neighbours (let us forget Canadians for a while): our attitude towards language and languages is hard to understand from their point of view, not only because we keep so many languages alive, but also because the rationale for our sophisticated use of language is not easy to find. Who else than 'the French' should exemplify this sophistication, in particular in their worship of strong but quite irrational distinctions between *tu* and *vous*? Beyond the problem of pronouns, the whole set of linguistic rules, hierarchies and distinctions underlying social relations is presented as academic and inefficient. It is well-known that quite a few languages express politeness and social distinction by means of their pronoun structures (*Du / Sie* in German; *Usted* in Spanish; *U / jij* in Dutch, etc.): why blame French for it? Maybe because of the contradictions between social hierarchies and linguistic ones: some Frenchmen use *tu* when addressing colleagues, and *vous* at home. . .

Disciplines

The heavy stress on language as an aspect of cultural identity is of course not new at all. It is even rather common in historical and cultural research, in anthropology, history, pragmatics, literary studies, etc. More important are the fluctuations, contradictions and hesitations in the treatment of the basic question: 'Has culture anything to do with language?', or: 'Is language a distinctive feature in matters of cultural identity?' Rather than answering by a simple 'yes' or 'no', I would like to examine where and when the answer tends to become 'yes' or 'no', and what the backgrounds are for such answers, and the consequences for the treatment of cultural matters, especially in the 'age of mobility'.

Most programmes for cultural studies are ill at ease with the question of language since from the beginning their institutional background has isolated them from linguistics and/or the study of language. In the often explicitly literary environment where cultural studies has originated, the question of language was not the real issue. Within universities, for reasons of administration and bureaucracy, language has been left to linguists, which was a reasonable consideration. The difficulty is that, except in branches such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics or discourse analysis, the link between language and identity was not at all a central issue for linguists either, which has put it into kind of a no-man's land. For literary scholars, identity is generally supported by the idea of nation. Literatures and literary activities are supposed to be 'national'; if not, they will lack recognition as long as they have no supranational status such as Pinocchio or Agatha Christie or Bertolt Brecht and Kundera.

It is not sure at all that scholars are much more rational in their considerations and definitions about language than the average Frenchman distinguishing between *vous* and *tu*. Literary scholars and academic institutions have structured their organization of departments and curricula on the basis of national literatures. But the role played by the (national) language is hardly ever questioned: it is taken for granted that national literatures have their national language, once and for all. Modern historiography insists, quite rightly, on the central role played by language in the establishment of the nation-state, but it is only recently that some – including Hobsbawm (1990) and Anderson (1993) – have demonstrated how young the tradition of language standardization and the language ideology appear to be. In social psychology and in communication studies, where cultural awareness has become quite central, the language component is often hardly taken into consideration, while other trends simply and radically envisage language as a key to culture. Communication studies or even economics, even when dealing with globalization, have been submitted to similar conflicts, though often overlooking language and the verbal component as a rather peripheral difficulty, which is at its best good for the more 'literary' (in fact 'cultural') activities in society.

The most striking observation is that the discipline devoted entirely to language, i.e. linguistics, has devoted so little attention to the question of culture and identity. Most of our students worldwide can easily get through a full curriculum of language studies without having discovered – except maybe in their classes on history, or on literature – to what extent language might be constitutive of societies. Of course a few particular areas in linguistics, in particular sociolinguistics, nowadays also discourse analysis or pragmatics, have broken the spell: their degree of expertise is very high, and their contribution to our knowledge of cultures is indeed fundamental. The difficulty is that their insights are not really recognized within the core of the discipline, which explains some strong reactions, either by groups of experts inspired by scholars such as Dell Hymes, Labov, etc. in the mid-1970s, or by more individual theoreticians such as Bourdieu (1982). Precisely, one of the significant shifts in the definition of the object of studies in linguistics is directly linked with culture: the distinction between the study of 'language' and the study of 'discourse' makes more or less official the exclusion of the actual use of language in a large section of the discipline while the other part, on the contrary, redefines its priorities from the point of view of actual language behaviour.

The most embarrassing phenomenon may be that the many links between culture and language may be approached in any area of the humanities (including law, economics, experimental psychology), but that there is no institutionalised nor even widely accepted space for it, and that those who actually take it seriously are very eclectic in reading publications from the other disciplines. The question of linguistic and cultural identity is very fashionable nowadays, maybe more in our newspapers than in research, but it certainly remains a no-man's land in the humanities.

On the field: observing culture in everyday life

Most international politicians, diplomats or business people have to solve their problems in a very different way, i.e. on a moment-to-moment and practical basis. Those who take part in the global society from morning to evening seem to have the same hesitations as scholars. While generally recognizing that cultural differences and barriers are widespread and hinder communication considerably, they are divided as far as language problems go: top managers make use of the new *lingua franca* from morning to evening, often in a quite satisfactory way since they do not feel the need to change their habits. At least it may look so, since the best promotion of English as an international language seems to be international business life. When invited to investigate how the linguistic efficiency of their multinational company could be improved, managers tend to reply that there is hardly any problem: business is not about language. Theoretical positions may again conflict with real attitudes in the field. But it is hard to contradict the optimism of successful people who simply demonstrate in their everyday life that language is not necessarily a basic obstacle to efficient intercultural communication and who belong to actual international networks and/or societies. Successful multinationals demonstrate by their very existence that the relevance of language as a component of cultural identity is limited at least in their case. Those who do not travel every day from Tokyo to Singapore, or from Paris to London, Amsterdam or Copenhagen, may have a different experience, however. When moving with the complete family (say) from Western to Central Europe – to take a simple case – our everyday citizen experiences language as one of the first difficulties (see also Janssens & Steyaert 1997).

In a way similar to business companies, political societies and nations have in fact all answered in their own way the question of language. So-called monolingual countries simply and officially ignore the possibility that their visitors, or even citizens, may have any language problems, whereas so-called bilingual or multilingual societies do the opposite, but usually in a limited way (the more reduced the number of languages, the easier things are). From the point of view of politicians, the constitution is a clear answer to the question. But history demonstrates convincingly that it has never been a sufficient or satisfactory answer since societies have systematically developed training in foreign languages. If one language could ever be sufficient, why then would most nations spend a heavy budget on (foreign) language training? From the historical point of view, again, most countries even tend to increase their efforts in this area: foreign language competence is taken much more seriously nowadays than at the beginning of the previous century. Within a country like Belgium, the redefinition of languages is both clear and spectacular: the number of languages taught within the conventional school system may not have changed too much in one century, except in the francophone part of the country, but training courses for adults are booming and the number of languages involved is even much higher than in the traditional school system. On the other hand, civil servants are supposed to be, indeed, bilingual. The most spectacular and official shift is, of course, the language policy of the European Union (Fishman 1993).

Whatever the underlying theories may be, societies have been obliged to adapt their language policy and hence their language training to new goals, situations and needs, and whether they like it or not, the redefinition of the languages accepted and actively used has consequences for their partnerships, which at least in the eyes of the partners redefines their identities, as far as language is concerned.

New and old worlds, or the language of translation

It is on the basis of her USA experiences that Doris Sommer, and most of her colleagues in the *Field work* volume, envisage the border as an unavoidable component of cultural identity. Borders are supposed to refer to territories, and territory refers to the nation. From the moment borders become mobile and from the moment languages are mixed, the homogeneity of identity is under threat, and language becomes translation. Language is thus supposed to be homogeneous. Strangely enough, this is supposed to be a feature of the 'New World', whereas most Europeans would imagine that the mixture of idioms is widespread in Europe and unknown in the United States (while being quite common in Canada). Who exactly represents the New World? Mary Blume (2000) gives the impression that the USA, Puerto Rico and Europe have the same kind of mixtures and mobility. The norm for identity, however, remains territory, and 'translation' appears to be a bizarre language since it is all the time on the move between two places. Such a mobility is obviously due to the development of technology and the bridge-building impact of air travel. It is not at all Doris Sommer's concern to what extent such views on translation and language are common among specialists of translation, since neither in her essay nor in the whole book for that matter will one find any reference to the established research on translation (leading journals, recent encyclopaedias, the canonized publishing houses or theoreticians). It is not uncommon, anyway, among translation scholars to stick to the idea that languages are to be located in a spatial framework, more common even than to maintain them within nations, as 'national languages'. In most translation theories and research, the concept of 'translation' has kept its primary meaning as 'transfer' from one place to the other. But it is possible, of course, to read 'transfer' as a metaphor that does not exclude the heterogeneity of space and territory as well as its non-coincidence with nations. It is certainly along these lines that Yves Gambier (1996) has replaced 'media translation' by the concept of 'le transfert linguistique dans les médias'. And though polysystems theory has always insisted on the multi-layered character of cultures and societies, it is against Itamar Even-Zohar and his spatial views on 'transfer' that Anthony Pym has written some basic texts (Pym 1998, 1992a).

American and other puzzles: language and identity in the new millennium

A few months ago, the same Even-Zohar attempted to distinguish some of the basic rules of 'culture repertoire' (Even-Zohar 1997). It was rather surprising, again, that in his investigation on the key rules of culture, the theoretician of polysystems theory did not really look for linguistic parameters, nor even for communicational parameters. A few years ago, hardly anyone would have cared and scholars would have accepted without any trouble that societies exist and behave within one given spatial framework, whether called 'nation' or not. And it is of course obvious that many societies have maintained a high degree of stability, including in spatial terms. But the heterogeneity of populations from all ages has become striking for whoever analyses the relationships modern populations, in particular our virtual communities. The more we study the composition and the 'repertoire' of communities who meet and interact by e-mail or via Internet, the more we are aware of the historical and cultural antecedents of our contemporary "communication societies" (Lambert 1998d; Pym 1998). Neither at the beginning of this millennium, nor at the beginning of the previous millennium, nor halfway between both did our worlds have a clear-cut landscape of languages and identities. Historians such as Eric J. Hobsbawm (1990) and anthropologists such as Benedict Anderson (1993) or experts in communication studies such as Walter Ong (1982) have demonstrated how the very development of the nation-state has generated a given language policy and rendered artificially homogeneous the cultural backbone of nations. Or rather, according to Anderson, writers, philologists and (literary) historians have created the myth of the necessary, almost ontological link between (political) society-building and language-building. Nations have used 'language planning' long before the term existed, and it is striking how our contemporary 'language planning' is also applied to new societies, often in a more or less post-colonial spirit, or at least as part of development programmes.

The givenness of 'traditional' societies in terms of space and time has not yet been questioned so far by scholars who investigate the mobility of cultures and cultural identity at present times. In previous ages, no more than in the new millennium, citizens of a given society can hardly select their neighbours (they may be allowed to select their most intimate partners, but not necessarily their mayor, their policemen or their priests). In virtual societies they can drop any new community from the moment they don't like it any more: they can take part in the active construction of communities that may develop mainly, if not only, on the basis of shared communication (Lambert 1998d). Hence the best term may be 'communication societies'. Proximity in space is not a necessary condition any more, and remote partners may cooperate better than family members (which maybe is not that new in history). Without communication they are not even members of the new community, and this is a rather revolutionary principle since many citizens have always behaved as sleeping members. Among the principles that allow for a better distinction between virtual and traditional identities, the principle of communication becomes quite central. It is true that, so far, the technology of communication as well as the institutionalisation of particular communication technologies has been heavily underestimated by sociologists, historians, linguists, literary scholars, etc. (Lambert 1996c).

Another interesting distinction between 'traditional' and 'virtual' communities is that the language options are now much more open in the new worlds. National languages may still be in use, but competition and selection between national languages is quite severe, and quite a few new solutions are being developed: the *lingua franca* principle, but not its distribution, being still a very traditional phenomenon. The institutionalisation of translation (as in the European Union: see Fishman 1993), the technologies of translation and multilingual or monolingual speech production are not only developing very fast, they condition the very nature of the community by conditioning interaction and communication. Hence it becomes more manifest why exactly there is a circular link between language and identity, first in the past, probably still now: the very goals of a given society are being formulated and conditioned in a given language. On the other hand the dominant role of verbal, especially written communication is weakened by new competitors, such as visual communication. The logo of a given company, its colours and favourite icons weaken the authority of written (printed) canons. All this leads to the awareness of the, maybe very ephemeral, goals of communities. Unlike nations and nationalism (Anderson 1993), virtual communities do not claim, so far, any universalism nor eternity.

It is a chicken-or-egg question to what extent 'language' and 'communication' are (still) part of the identity in these new worlds, and whether traditional worlds will be affected by the new idea of society or culture. The very development of virtual worlds out of the traditional ones is already an indication that this shift is forever and that old things will never come back again in their original environment.

Updating cultural studies, or universities

It may have become clear that neither the USA nor Europe coincide with the New or the Old Worlds any more, not even the 'PuertoRícans', and that the so-called Old Worlds are probably part of the imaginary construction of societies on the basis of given models: just "thinking makes it so", as Hamlet would have said. But one of the embarrassing conclusions is that universities are in trouble when trying to discover the right key for dealing with societies and cultures. They do not even deal with traditional societies, they rather tend to deal with traditional societies on the basis of traditional and imaginary models which reflect certain layers only of society. And the fact that they do so unknowingly, while living in a multi-layered and heterogeneous environment, may strongly compromise their competences. Institutes for cultural studies may learn from such an analysis that it is more relevant to promote research on culture in contact with other competences, i.e. in an open, interdisciplinary way, than to quarrel about the exact definition of 'cultural studies'. The difficulties discovered here will remain serious as long as universities are directly conditioned by national institutional knots since the blind spot might be exactly here: how can we avoid the impact of traditional societies, even when, or better: exactly *because* we want to focus, also, on new societies?

La traduction littéraire comme problème belge ou la littérature comme traduction

(CETRA, 2004)[1]

Introduction

Durant les années 1980, la nouvelle Afrique du Sud universitaire était en train de découvrir sa nouvelle identité culturelle; ainsi, au sein des universités, elle ne cessait de s'interroger sur ses propres complexités, en dépit de l'apartheid. Un des professeurs éminents dans le secteur de la littérature d'expression anglaise, Stephen Gray, auteur d'une histoire de la littérature anglaise de l'Afrique du Sud (1979), émit l'opinion que la particularité la plus frappante des lettres anglaises de son pays était: « It all sounds and looks like translated literature ».[2] C'est qu'il estimait retrouver la plupart des caractéristiques des lettres anglaises de son pays dans les activités et œuvres des autres groupes linguistiques, alors qu'il ne les retrouvait pas dans les différentes littératures anglophones à travers le monde: une certaine union littéraire au delà des langues, en quelque sorte, soutenue par

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1. La présente contribution, rédigée pour une bonne part par José Lambert, puise si largement dans les travaux d'une équipe principalement louvaniste de CETRA (http://fuzzy.arts.kuleuven.be) qu'il eût été inconvenant de ne pas l'attribuer à la collectivité qui l'a nourrie, c'est-à-dire d'abord, dans l'ordre alphabétique, à Lieven D'hulst, José Lambert, Reine Meylaerts et Lieven Tack, ce qui d'ailleurs ne nous dispense pas de renvoyer à toute l'équipe CETRA telle qu'elle est présentée sur notre page web, puis à nos étudiants, dont un groupe trouve sa signature dans la bibliographie.

2. La thèse en question ne se trouve pas telle quelle dans Gray (1979); elle a été formulée oralement lors du symposium « Literary Historiography and Systems Description » sur les littératures en Afrique du Sud (Pretoria, août 1986, Human Sciences Research Council); voir la bibliographie courante intitulée *SA Literature / Literatuur 1986*.

(une illusion de) la traduction? En anticipant quelque peu, disons que ce serait le contraire d'un marché mondial des traductions, dont il sera question plus loin.

Pour être admissible, le passage de l'Afrique du Sud à la Belgique exige sans doute pas mal de souplesse intellectuelle. La même remarque vaut en premier lieu pour Stephen Gray lui-même, pour qui la seule reconnaissance d'un cadre culturel commun à plusieurs littératures était, à ce moment, une prise de position politique (bien plus courante dans son pays, durant ces années, que ne pouvait l'imaginer l'étranger). L'avantage de son jugement était au moins qu'il donnait à réfléchir. Et on voit mal pourquoi sa boutade ne servirait pas de défi au début d'une interrogation fondamentale au sujet des lettres dans un pays et une culture mixtes (et instables) comme la Belgique. Sans anticiper sur l'issue du débat: 'Nos lettres auraient-elles pris l'allure de traductions?', l'utilité d'une série de questions analogues pourrait difficilement être mise en cause. S'il était vrai que la question des traductions joue un rôle au sein de la dynamique littéraire de la Belgique francophone et/ou néerlandophone (qui ne représenteront jamais, à elles seules, toute la Belgique littéraire), quelles seraient les zones dans lesquelles la traduction envahit les lettres au point de transformer les activités littéraires en activités traductives? Y aurait-il des situations de ce type, et à quelles circonstances seraient-elles dues? Comment expliquer que, dans un pays qui a attaché tant d'importance à la question des langues, la marginalisation des traductions soit restée une règle? Des questions analogues et non moins fondamentales ont été appliquées à des pays qu'on ne soupçonnerait guère, à première vue, d'être conditionnés par la traduction: la France ou la Grande-Bretagne par exemple (Delabastita 2002).

Car on n'a pas besoin de beaucoup d'arguments pour constater que la traduction littéraire représente – chez nous comme ailleurs – un énorme *no-man's land*. Il y a lieu de se consoler en notant que la traduction n'est pas seule en cause. En théorie, il n'est pas difficile d'imaginer que les sociétés, littéraires et autres, méritent d'être analysées dans leurs rapports internes comme dans leurs rapports externes et que, si la littérature est pour une bonne part liée à la communication verbale, le problème des langues et donc des traductions peut difficilement être un aspect marginal. Depuis le milieu des années 70, Itamar Even-Zohar, André Lefevere, José Lambert n'ont cessé d'insister sur de telles évidences; des publications toutes nouvelles comme celles de Pascale Casanova (1999) ou Johan Heilbron (Heilbron 1999; Heilbron, De Nooy & Tichelaar 1995; Sapiro & Heilbron 2002) exploitent des arguments tout nouveaux pour rattacher les tendances nationales au sein de la littérature aux tendances internationales et pour accorder un rôle central à la question des langues comme à la question des traductions. Nous pensons savoir pourquoi au juste les spécialistes des études littéraires continuent à séparer les littératures au moyen des langues, tout cela en dépit de l'essor de la littérature comparée. Comprenne qui pourra. Le dossier est en tout cas resté plutôt vierge.[3]

Inutile de signaler qu'il serait utopique de traiter dans le cadre d'un seul article toutes les questions que les chercheurs ont négligées durant bientôt deux siècles. Nos objectifs sont larges et porteront sur les tendances et positions globales plutôt que sur les mérites des individualités. Dans de telles circonstances, le soi-disant bilinguisme d'une culture comme celle de notre pays sera une des difficultés principales, alors qu'il entraîne d'ores et déjà des exclusions – toutes relatives, on le verra – comment traiter sur le même pied 'les autres langues' de la Belgique, c'est-à-dire l'allemand, voire même l'anglais (!) qui, au moins à la fin du XXe siècle, fait partie de notre vie intellectuelle. Au lieu de procéder à des analyses vraiment nouvelles, nous allons puiser dans les enquêtes déjà disponibles, malgré tout: elles sont dispersées et souvent peu compatibles entre elles, mais placées dans un cadre de discussion global, elles mènent vers des observations intéressantes et – pour l'instant – bien utiles, en attendant d'être systématisées. À partir de nos questions et – sans doute – à partir d'autres questions. Espérons-le.

Il a fallu un mémoire de licence (Grutman 1988) pour faire examiner – enfin – dans quelle mesure les activités littéraires sur le territoire belge exploitent / n'exploitent pas le bilinguisme. Faut-il s'étonner que le bilan se révèle globalement négatif? Parmi les néerlandophones comme parmi les francophones, au XIXe comme au XXe siècle, la pratique de la littérature en deux langues est plutôt exceptionnelle et, lorsqu'elle se présente, elle est toujours dissymétrique, c'est-à-dire qu'elle accorde toujours la priorité à une des deux langues en exploitant l'autre langue comme un support, comme une valeur ajoutée: les rapports interlinguistiques sont tout sauf démocratiques, et nos littérateurs se sont toujours liés à une seule de nos traditions littéraires. Le recours à une deuxième langue à l'intérieur d'une œuvre donnée, qui semble souvent dû à la construction d'un programme littéraire, a retenu l'attention de Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, voici plusieurs décennies, et son livre sur *La Légende d'Ulenspiegel* est devenu un classique (Klinkenberg 1973). Mais la possibilité qu'il existe des liens entre, d'une part, la construction d'un style – et d'un programme – littéraire métissés et, d'autre part, le phénomène des traductions, n'a presque jamais été envisagée.[4] De manière analogue, on aurait pu s'attendre à une exploitation autre qu'occasionnelle des interactions multilingues et multiculturelles dans lesquelles baigne – par exemple – l'œuvre d'un

3. D'autant plus que la Flandre universitaire a joué un rôle manifeste dans le développement des recherches sur la traduction. À titre d'illustration, voir la liste (sélective) des mémoires de licence consacrés à la question.

4. Reine Meylaerts vient de consacrer un article à la question: « Literary heteroglossia in translation: how legitimate is the Other and its language? » (2006).

Michel de Ghelderode. Elle a été explorée sous tous les angles par Roland Beyen, mais elle est restée une curiosité. Ghelderode et De Coster seraient-ils des curiosités, ou des témoins, sinon des prototypes d'options fondamentales au sein de nos traditions littéraires? Dossiers individuels ou dossiers symptomatiques? Rien que pour poser la question, il faut des modèles d'analyse et des hypothèses. La Belgique des spécialistes de la littérature serait-elle appelée un jour à se rendre compte que son objet d'étude n'a jamais été vraiment monolingue?[5] Nous disposons d'une riche bibliographie – principalement francophone dans sa conception et due à deux Allemands (Gross & Thomas 1989) – au sujet des rapports culturels à l'intérieur des cultures belges, mais les efforts synthétiques et programmatiques sont restés discrets et souvent éphémères.

In medias res: une traduction 'belge' durant l'entre-deux-guerres

Nos tentatives de faire le vide devant l'ensemble des discours face à la question des littératures en Belgique remontent au début des années 1980 et nous ont fait procéder, dans un cadre didactique universitaire, à des exercices de table rase, à des tests particuliers qui méritent sans doute la qualification de 'tests aveugles'. Ils comportent une part d'expérimentation, même ludique, mais ils se révèlent instructifs quant à notre propre perception des traditions littéraires dans lesquelles nous avons grandi. Durant ces expérimentations, nous proposons à notre public d'étudiants habituels, que nous prenons pour des lecteurs plutôt avertis, un mélange de plusieurs textes narratifs de provenance diverse, choisis au hasard et rendus anonymes au moyen de la photocopie, légèrement manipulés en quelque sorte: le papier, le format, la typographie pourraient être de nature à influencer les réponses aux questions à poser. Il va de soi qu'en l'occurrence 'le hasard' est relatif et approximatif, il est quelque peu dirigé: le but est surtout de distinguer entre des textes produits et publiés dans nos régions, dans une des langues de notre pays, par rapport à des textes analogues qui auraient été produits / publiés / traduits ailleurs. D'autre part, la chronologie est, elle aussi, soumise à des questions ouvertes, par conséquent radicales: il se pourrait que certains styles traditionnellement situés au XIXe siècle survivent jusqu'à nos jours. Le lecteur est mis dans l'impossibilité d'identifier le nom de l'écrivain, le titre du texte, le (sous-)genre qu'il est censé représenter, voire même la date de publication. L'exercice se corse dans la mesure où notre panaché textuel comprend à la fois des

5. Nous avons consacré pas mal de contributions à la conception de la langue dans n'importe quelle société en soulignant à quel point il est révélateur que les sociétés entendent présenter la langue et la traduction comme non-problématiques: il est temps d'appliquer ces raisonnements à l'étude des littératures, où que ce soit dans le monde moderne.

traductions et des textes 'originaux', des textes français (de France ou de Belgique) et néerlandais (des Pays-Bas et de Flandre). L'embarras devant un exercice aussi inhabituel est généralement tel que les étudiants se gardent de toute initiative jusqu'au moment où des questions plus spécifiques sont appliquées au dossier: s'agirait-il de documents contemporains ou de documents du XIXe siècle, de genres narratifs bien particuliers et reconnaissables (dont même l'auteur ou le titre pourraient être identifiés)? Trouverait-on, à ce propos, des indices particuliers dans le dossier, notamment quant à l'*état de la langue*? Face à des fragments empruntés à des auteurs obscurs comme à des auteurs / textes connus, l'expérience didactique s'est révélée payante à chaque coup, selon une multitude de paramètres: les étudiants parviennent généralement à proposer certaines dates limites (avant 1850, avant 1900), à déterminer les origines géographico-culturelles, souvent d'abord en termes négatifs (« il ne peut s'agir d'un texte français / flamand / wallon / hollandais », etc.), les marques d'un sous-genre particulier (« un roman régional », « un récit historique », etc.). Bien plus que le caractère correct ou incorrect des réponses, ce sont les marques textuelles relevées par les 'sujets' qui donnent à réfléchir: les archaïsmes, les régionalismes, certaines techniques narratives (l'introspection, un certain discours indirect libre) ou des allusions culturelles (l'espace, le temps). Bref, un tel exercice semble faire sauter toutes les barrières entre l'analyse microscopique de textes d'une part, la périodisation d'autre part, entre l'étude nationale et l'étude internationale des littératures, entre l'étude des langues et l'étude des lettres, etc.

Les ambitions qui sous-tendent de tels exercices sont limitées.[6] Or, il y aurait sans doute lieu de rattacher à une telle expérience, qui rate rarement son but, un argument en faveur de l'étude systémique et fonctionnelle des phénomènes littéraires.[7] Mais en l'occurrence, nos objectifs sont en premier lieu didactiques: il s'agit d'examiner si et dans quelle mesure nous sommes capables de détecter les 'empreintes digitales' de certains discours littéraires que les spécialistes des littératures prétendent avoir mises à nu. L'obligation de désigner avec précision les particularités textuelles, linguistiques, culturelles, soit les 'normes', ainsi que leur possible combinaison avec d'autres normes (par exemple la co-présence d'un certain procédé narratif avec l'usage du dialecte) qui mène à détecter des schémas, des 'modèles', nous force de raffiner nos techniques d'analyse, comme dans un test par élimination.

On échappe mal à l'évidence suivante: les textes des deux derniers siècles, et principalement les textes (francophones / néerlandophones) 'de chez nous' por-

6. Des expérimentations analogues ont été mises au point dans de tout autres secteurs de la recherche sur la traduction: on consultera Low (2002).

7. L'on se référera en particulier à Lambert (1980a, 1983b).

tent certains signes culturels, littéraires, linguistiques, ... susceptibles de dénoter avec plus ou moins de précision leurs origines historiques, sinon leur appartenance systémique.

Il va de soi qu'un des pièges de l'exercice évoqué ci-dessus est qu'il dépend de nos propres compétences de lecteur-chercheur. Mais son mérite est d'ouvrir les yeux et de susciter des questions. Voici le début d'un récit qui constitue tout un programme dans la mesure où il déroute le lecteur. Mais quel lecteur sommes-nous au juste, et en quoi le lecteur-étudiant (contemporain, belge, d'origine francophone ou néerlandophone, ayant suivi des programmes de littérature française / néerlandaise / comparée) aurait-il l'horizon d'attente requis? Jouons le jeu et prêtons-nous à un moment de lecture aveugle:

> Son père était un Teugels. Suffit. Jamais aucun Teugels n'a valu quelque chose. Sa mère s'appelait Sleebus ou de quelque nom ainsi. Elle venait de derrière la bruyère. Ça également suffit. Toute racaille par là! Régulièrement à l'un ou l'autre marché, à Termonde tantôt, ou à Malines, ou bien encore à Vilvorde, à Boom ou à Willebroeck, cette Clémence se faisait appréhender le cabas et le corsage farcis d'objets volés. Elle passait quelques mois à l'ombre et elle n'était pas rentrée d'une semaine dans la circulation que, derechef, on la voyait partir pour l'un ou l'autre marché. Le plus sérieusement du monde les gens disaient: "Clémence aura de nouveau pas mal d''emplettes' à faire. Quand on n'a, pendant un certain temps, pu se rendre au marché, il est de fait qu'on a besoin de tout." C'était une femme vigoureuse et droite sous des cheveux de jais. Et des yeux! Peu bavarde, elle ne vous regardait jamais en face. Bien qu'elle fût, au demeurant, sans aucune méchanceté, Suske Acoleyn seul osait se payer sa tête. Ce Suske Acoleyn était un petit bossu finaud. Méfiez-vous des bossus.
>
> – Bonjour Clémence, disait-il, vous revenez du marché? Comme vous êtes chargée, dites, Clémence!
>
> Pas de réponse. Suske poursuivait.
>
> – Tout est cher actuellement. La moindre babiole vous ruine. Trouvez pas, Clémence?
>
> – Oui, oui, tout est très cher.
>
> – Vrai ça! Tenez, il n'y a pas cinq minutes, les gendarmes passaient à vélo. Ils sautent de machine pour m'interroger. Ils avaient affaire par ici. (...)

Les caprices et surprises de la contextualisation: géographies et chronologies

En fait, la transcription électronique fournie ci-dessus nous interdit d'échapper nous-mêmes à nos propres pièges. Quiconque lirait le document dans son édition d''époque', légèrement populaire, dans sa typographie bien typique (caractères gras, mise en page très aérée, sans doute typique des éditions pour le grand public) aurait vite fait de localiser le volume dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Il est vrai que le jeu des rééditions ne peut être exclu: un roman des années 1860 pourrait, à la rigueur, être 'traduit' dans les modèles typographiques et éditoriaux des années 1930. Mais il est difficile d'ignorer d'autres marques littéraires, textuelles et linguistiques. D'abord quant à la provenance socioculturelle du tableau évoqué. Le fragment – prenons-le pour 'anonyme' – dénote d'emblée ses origines 'belges', peut-être même flamandes, principalement par les noms propres comme « Teugels », « Sleebus », « Suske Acoleyn ». Les noms de lieu (Termonde, Malines, Vilvorde, Willebroeck. . .) nous rappellent un roman / récit d'un type particulier, c'est-à-dire régional. Texte d'un auteur néerlandophone, francophone, francophone des Flandres? De toute façon, la multiplication des noms flamands ne signifie pas nécessairement que nous avons lu un passage emprunté à une traduction. Aurions-nous des raisons suffisantes pour imaginer un Charles De Coster plus moderne?

Plus moderne? Le cadre chronologique et social ne laisse en effet pas trop de doutes. Les gendarmes circulent à bicyclette: il s'agit d'une technologie qui ne manque pas de dater.[8] Et la brave Clémence va faire ses emplettes au marché, ou mieux, elle fréquente plusieurs marchés, au gré des circonstances: elle a évolué avec la modernité, car elle se déplace. Mais son milieu se méfie des étrangers: "Elle venait de derrière la bruyère". Dans la société en question, point n'est (encore) besoin d'avoir la peau foncée pour paraître étranger.

D'autre part, le narrateur impose au récit une allure toute spéciale, notamment en simulant la connivence avec l'un ou l'autre témoin qui a l'air de tout savoir sur les lieux et les gens, au moins sur les racontars, qui a l'air d'assister à toute la scène, puis d'adopter un discours tout oral qui singe Dieu sait qui au juste, d'où un effet ironique et néanmoins chaleureux. Il y a une part de persiflage, peu méchant ou plutôt sympathique, dans la voix du narrateur. Les subtilités de Clémence et la malice des villageois sont traitées avec le sourire, non avec le cynisme d'un Gustave Flaubert.

Ce qui est tout à fait curieux, c'est la langue maniée par le narrateur. Ou faudrait-il dire: par l'écrivain? Si 'la langue de la littérature' mérite de nous préoccuper à propos de toute œuvre et à propos de tout message, force est de constater qu'elle appelle en l'occurrence une attention toute spéciale: elle constitue un élément de dépaysement manifeste. Serait-il délibéré pour autant? C'est dire qu'il faudrait disposer d'un cadre de référence plus explicite. Y aurait-il, à un moment donné de l'histoire de nos lettres, un quelconque texte qui combine un tel discours en langue française avec les données culturelles, sociales et narratives

8. Elle permit à nos soldats de la Première Guerre mondiale d'attendre avec confiance l'arrivée de l'ennemi, avec les succès que l'on sait. . .

que nous venons d'identifier?[9] Ou serions-nous face à une simple curiosité? À elle seule, la question semble déjà instructive. Plus notre tentative de contextualisation se construit, plus il devient clair que, à lui seul, le fragment cité fait sauter les barrières entre les catégories qui orientent la lecture des œuvres 'modernes' produites dans nos régions et que nous pensons connaître.

Compte tenu des particularités langagières, il est difficile d'imaginer que l'auteur soit 'français', et/ou que le public visé soit parisien. De curieuses maladresses, en effet, font supposer la recherche délibérée du pittoresque, local, fût-il 'flamand' ou 'belge': « Sa mère s'appelait . . . *ou de quelque nom ainsi* »; « Elle venait *de derrière* la bruyère ». Style boiteux qui contraste étrangement avec des tournures mi-ludiques, mi-solennelles (*derechef, bien qu'elle fût*). Bref, il s'agit d'un drôle de texte où des tournures presque littéraires ou académiques alternent avec des mots et expressions populaires à la limite de l'incorrection. Un texte qu'il est difficile d'imaginer dans un milieu parisien du XIXe ou du XXe siècle, d'autant plus que deux gendarmes entrent en scène à bicyclette! Scène plutôt campagnarde, peu parisienne on dirait, peu 'provinciale' même, du moins en termes français.

Certes, peu de littératures du XIXe et du XXe siècle ont ignoré la recherche du pittoresque populaire et villageois, mettant en scène des personnages faisant la causette avec les gendarmes, traquant ou taquinant les polissons du village: songeons à *Tartarin de Tarascon* et tant d'autres. Le pittoresque flamand est même entré dans l'histoire des littératures européennes par l'intermédiaire d'auteurs belges francophones, tels d'abord Charles De Coster ou Georges Eekhoud (*Kees Doorik*, etc.). La langue délibérément orale, incorrecte et/ou panachée est sans doute mieux connue – parce que plus répandue – dans les pays 'francophones' que dans l'Hexagone, comme nous le révèlent les textes de Ramuz, de De Coster ou du Québec.[10] Par conséquent, tout drôle qu'il paraît, notre fragment n'est pas nécessairement un simple jeu de virtuosité, il peut représenter des tendances littéraires et culturelles d'autrefois qui, pour ne pas avoir été canoniques, se sont néanmoins révélées systématiques, voire même programmatiques.

Levons le voile: il s'agit en effet d'une piste vers des curiosités qui n'ont rien d'isolé ou d'accidentel. Le fragment cité est une traduction; il ouvre un récit de Gérard Walschap, un des auteurs flamands les plus en vue durant la première

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9. Dans un jargon plus fonctionnaliste, on se demanderait si la présente combinaison de normes dépaysantes correspond ou non à des régularités, bref, à un 'modèle'.

10. Voir les travaux de Jérôme Meizoz, de Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, Rainier Grutman ou Reine Meylaerts.

moitié du XXe siècle. La traduction date de 1931, et elle est de la plume d'un auteur et traducteur reconnu à l'époque, Roger Kervyn de Marcke ten Driessche.[11]

Il n'y a rien d'artificiel dans la présentation des traductions à l'écart de leur 'original'. Dans la vie littéraire comme dans la vie quotidienne, c'est la démarche habituelle, chose qu'oublient même trop souvent les experts en traduction. La contextualisation du fragment lui donnera de multiples reliefs que la seule lecture isolée et occasionnelle n'a fait que suggérer. En effet, il s'agit d'une traduction sélectionnée – manifestement – selon des considérations bien explicites parmi les œuvres flamandes de l'époque, tout cela en vue d'alimenter une collection ambitieuse, la "Première série des chefs-d'œuvre flamands illustrés par Félix Timmermans", publiée par ailleurs à une adresse toute symbolique: les éditions Rex à Louvain. Un tel nom fait deviner que le hasard est tout à fait étranger au dossier, et que la politique surgit de toutes parts.

C'est Reine Meylaerts[12] qui a mis en évidence l'intégration d'une 'politique'[13] particulière de la traduction d'œuvres régionalistes flamandes et de la recherche du populaire flamand à la construction (littéraire) d'une certaine Belgique, celle d'une élite catholique francophone, nostalgique de la nation unilingue francophone, en passe de perdre son évidence à la veille des grandes lois linguistiques de 1932. Il s'agit d'un milieu lié à *La Revue Belge*, à *La Revue Générale*, au mouvement Rex, sinon à une certaine université catholique... Bref, il s'agit d'un phénomène 'belge', d'un texte conçu pour, et ayant fonctionné à l'intérieur du seul marché francophone belge de l'entre-deux-guerres.

Reste évidemment à déterminer quelles leçons nous pourrions tirer d'une traduction datant des années 1930 en rapport avec 'la traduction en Belgique'. Moyennant une série de précautions, il semble possible en effet de (re)découvrir à la fois le champ des traductions et le champ des littératures au sein de notre pays et au sein de notre histoire. Le danger serait d'avancer trop vite et de se laisser entraîner par des généralisations sans doute séduisantes, mais hasardeuses. C'est pourquoi, tout d'abord, nous nous enfermons dans des cadres synchroniques relativement limités, ceux de l'entre-deux-guerres. Mais une autre limite, à peu près hermétiquement observée jusqu'ici par quiconque étudie la littérature de cette époque, à savoir la frontière linguistique, devient absurde. Pour la seule et simple raison qu'il s'agit d'une traduction? Certes non. Nous entendons démontrer que toute étude qui entendrait creuser le fonctionnement de nos lettres, indépendamment même des traductions, devrait prendre en considération l'instabilité de

11. Walschap (1931: 5–6). Nous avons visé à suivre autant que possible la mise en page, toute particulière, de l'édition citée.

12. Voir Reine Meylaerts, *L'aventure flamande de la Revue Belge* (2004).

13. 'Translation policy' obtenant ici son sens plein.

la langue et – donc – notamment la compétition entre différentes options linguistiques et culturelles, où par conséquent les voisins linguistiques – ceux du Nord comme ceux du Sud – ont leur mot à dire. La composante linguistique est une des composantes évidentes de l'institutionnalisation de nos lettres et de nos écrivains, peut-être même davantage pour les néerlandophones que pour les francophones. Quelle langue est institutionnalisée au juste, et à quel point s'agirait-il d'une langue nationale donnée, d'un panaché de langues nationales, et d'une exclusion délibérée d'autres options linguistiques? On dirait que certains de nos textes littéraires simulent certains de nos textes législatifs néerlandophones dans la mesure où ils entendent manifester ou souligner que leurs origines sont hétérolingues, bref: traduites.

Histoire intra-belge, ou histoires belges pour étrangers?

À qui au juste nos traducteurs s'adressent-ils? Comment un lecteur parisien, des années 30 ou d'aujourd'hui, réagirait-il face à un (tel) roman flamand en traduction française? Le test mériterait d'être organisé. À vrai dire, des tests pareils ont souvent eu lieu, ils sont entrés dans l'histoire, mais ils restent ignorés des spécialistes de nos lettres. Il est vrai que leurs résultats ne manquent pas de nous laisser perplexes. À en croire les statistiques (Deprez 1974 [mémoire de licence]; Lambert 1980), la grande majorité des traductions françaises d'œuvres néerlandophones publiées entre 1800 et 1939 fonctionnent en circuit fermé: exception faite de l'œuvre – énorme – de Henri Conscience et de celle de Multatuli (Kolenberg 1969 [mémoire de licence]), il s'agit d'une affaire entre Belges. Ce sont souvent des traducteurs bilingues flamands qui entendent permettre aux francophones des Flandres de lire leurs propres auteurs; ce sont les maisons d'édition de chez nous qui donnent leur appui à une entreprise principalement intra-belge. On devine que, dans les circonstances données, les traducteurs s'adressant à un public vivant dans le même environnement culturel n'éprouvent guère de peines devant le cadre culturel évoqué dans les récits en question.

Face à un public français – ou 'parisien' –, ils auraient sans doute tendance à éviter les excès de couleur locale, dont en premier lieu les particularités linguistiques: Walter Scott et James Fenimore Cooper ont habitué le public lettré à certaines couleurs locales, mais celles de la Flandre risquent de ne pas trop séduire la France de l'entre-deux-guerres, ni celle du milieu du XIXe siècle.

Avant Kervyn…

On n'échappe pas à l'évidence. La traduction française du XIXe siècle paraît bien plus moderne et civilisée, bien moins régionale que notre Walschap du milieu du XXe siècle. La clef du paradoxe serait-elle dans les textes de Conscience et de Walschap, c'est-à-dire dans les originaux, ou dans la position, la stratégie et les objectifs de deux traducteurs séparés par près de quatre-vingts ans?

La difficulté ne saurait être examinée sans renvoi aux traditions globales des textes écrits, littéraires et autres, d'une part dans le monde francophone (belge, français), d'autre part dans un monde intellectuel qui est en train de se constituer à ce moment, à savoir le monde flamand. Les traductions françaises de la Bible, de Shakespeare, de Sophocle élaborées au XIXe siècle, et même plus tôt, supportent la lecture jusqu'en plein XXe siècle, ce qui explique aussi que Gide – pour ne citer que lui – puisse faire un panaché de traductions anciennes et ensuite les publier comme ses propres textes (Vidts 1976 [mémoire de licence]). Les mêmes textes, dans leurs versions néerlandaises du XIXe siècle, et même du début du XXe siècle, ont pris une patine désagréable pour les lecteurs modernes. La langue néerlandaise n'a pas manqué de se transformer à un rythme bien plus rapide que la langue écrite et canonique des francophones. S'ajoute à cela que la plupart des traducteurs ont peur de toute violation des règles du bien-écrire.[14] Bref, du point de vue diachronique, la langue des traductions respectives tient du paradoxe: il arrive que les plus récentes (celles de Kervyn) datent plus que les anciennes (celles de Wocquier).

Après Kervyn…

La difficulté n'a rien perdu de son actualité depuis *Le chagrin des Belges* (*Het verdriet van België*), ce best-seller de Hugo Claus, vers le milieu des années 1980. Tout comme dans le cas de Conscience, c'est un traducteur 'belge', Alain van Crugten, qui a été invité par un éditeur français à servir d'intermédiaire: on verrait mal comment un 'étranger' aurait pu se familiariser avec les tissus discursifs des différents personnages et avec leur coloration culturelle. Tout comme Léon Wocquier, van Crugten a pu travailler pour une maison d'édition susceptible de réussir un best-seller. Et, en effet, au bout de quelques semaines les succès se sont

14. La tendance conservatrice parmi les traducteurs est un phénomène si évident que les spécialistes de la traduction littéraire le trouveraient presque banal: la meilleure formulation théorique peut être lue dans Even-Zohar (1978), mais de multiples travaux historiques en ont dégagé la pertinence. Pour le lien entre le 'droit de mal écrire' et les positions géographico-culturelles, lire Grutman (1997) et Meizoz (1998).

révélés évidents: 45.000 exemplaires écoulés en quelques semaines, dont plus de 25.000 en France; la consécration a eu lieu aussi par l'intermédiaire de la télé, c'est-à-dire par le biais de Bernard Pivot. Plus rien d'une histoire locale, dirait-on. Or, le paradoxe veut que le traducteur n'a jamais renoncé à 'faire belge', notamment dans les dialogues. Chez Claus comme chez Walschap, les dialogues sont omniprésents et envahissent à tout moment le discours du narrateur, ce qui transforme le roman en une bataille discursive qui ne manque pas d'être idéologique. Certains personnages ont le droit de mal parler, l'écrivain de mal écrire (Meizoz 1998). Or, le traducteur, cette fois, bien plus que Léon Wocquier, a suivi son modèle sur ce plan. Il ne recule pas devant les audaces, même pas devant les belgicismes ou devant de véritables incorrections. La recherche d'un discours oral 'petit Belge' et souvent délibérément maladroit, est systématique à travers tout *Le chagrin des Belges*:

> Comment tu sais ça? demanda Louis. (17)
> Il y a toujours quelque chose avec toi, dit Vandezype. (28)

D'où la surprise qu'un tel livre ait pu accéder au statut de best-seller en France, et qu'il ait fini par occuper une place dans le monde des lettres françaises de Belgique, même aux yeux du grand public.[15] En termes de marché, le particularisme s'est révélé payant, car le livre est entré dans l'histoire de la France et des lettres françaises. La surprise est d'autant plus flagrante qu'entre-temps, c'est-à-dire depuis l'entre-deux-guerres et depuis le Manifeste du Groupe du Lundi, les auteurs francophones ont globalement opté pour un usage de la langue française qui ne connote plus leurs origines belges. Ils n'ont certainement plus le droit de faire du panaché ou de mal écrire. Comment expliquer le phénomène Claus, ou le phénomène du *Chagrin des Belges*?

Il serait séduisant d'opter pour une explication diachronique (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: les choses auraient *donc* évolué), mais elle se révèle délicate: la périodisation canonique de nos lettres, liée (limitée) à celle des grands auteurs, n'est pas nécessairement valable pour la périodisation de nos traductions, qui peut difficilement ne pas marquer les habitudes de lecture du côté de nos lecteurs. La difficulté reste évidemment d'établir une périodisation des traductions qui ne commettrait pas les simplifications de la périodisation littéraire tout court (*ab uno disce omnes*?). On pourrait en effet estimer que Wocquier et son temps, voire même Kervyn et son temps évitent d'exporter jusqu'en France la couleur locale comme une des marques du discours littéraire, alors qu'une œuvre de la

15. Une anecdote authentique, vécue dans les rues de Louvain, permet de l'attester. Face à l'étalage d'une librairie bien établie, à côté de l'Église Saint-Michel, un couple d'intellectuels francophones s'étonna de voir une version néerlandaise du *Chagrin des Belges*: « Tiens, je ne savais pas que cela a été traduit en flamand ».

fin du XXe siècle réussit la gageure de vaincre les préjugés de l'Hexagone au point de vaincre aussi, en un seul mouvement, certains préjugés à l'intérieur de la Belgique francophone. Il est vrai que 'le modèle' existe, car la langue de Charles De Coster avait déjà transformé en un programme littéraire national le métissage des langues de la Belgique. C'est ce modèle-là que le Manifeste du Groupe du Lundi – ou même le milieu de *La Revue Belge*, ou l'Académie des Lettres françaises de Belgique (cf. Hanse 1964) – ont entendu renier. Ainsi les commentaires des critiques francophones sur la langue de Verhaeren, sur celle de Camille Melloy et sur d'autres auteurs atteints par la couleur locale ou exhibant – surtout à l'étranger – leur allure de francophone des Flandres, montrent clairement que *Le chagrin des Belges* ou le Kervyn de la collection Rex ne représentent pas la voie canonique.

Plutôt que de formuler des conclusions diachroniques, il s'impose de reconnaître au moins les conflits souterrains à propos de la langue – et de la couleur locale – de la littérature, et de reconnaître qu'ils se manifestent notamment au sein des traductions. Serait-ce pour cette raison, précisément, que les chercheurs ont eu tendance à ignorer les traductions? L'histoire littéraire semble en effet nous donner raison: des textes aussi ambigus, aussi 'impossibles' qu'*Un vaincu de la vie* n'ont pas survécu longtemps, et ils ont pour ainsi dire été extirpés – plus tard: *Vae victis!* – de notre historiographie. Pour cause, dira-t-on. Or, en dépit des apparences, le traducteur Kervyn s'est montré hésitant et même sage face à son modèle flamand, comme pourrait le révéler la juxtaposition des textes flamand et français. Tout en fournissant un effort évident d'imiter l'allure populaire du discours de Walschap, jusqu'à la limite de l'incorrection et de la maladresse (« Sa mère s'appelait ... ou de quelque nom ainsi »), le traducteur Kervyn ne peut s'empêcher de rechercher des allures littéraires, sans doute en guise de compensation (« se faisait appréhender »; « le cabas et le corsage farcis d'objets volés »; « elle passait quelques mois à l'ombre »; « derechef »; « des cheveux de jais »). Il réduit le caractère épique, en quelque sorte légendaire, du style de Walschap, et il recourt au « vous », au subjonctif plus-que-parfait et à la phrase subordonnée: l'innovation stylistique de notre traducteur désireux de renouveler les goûts littéraires de ses compatriotes a des limites évidentes. Or, l'écrivain Kervyn en personne a pratiqué un style populaire du même genre, chargé de recherches évidentes, alors que l'autre volet de son œuvre littéraire 'de création' entre sans difficulté dans le bon usage. On dirait que le traducteur de Walschap a mené une double vie, et que ses fameuses expérimentations dans *Pitje Scramouille* ... sont restées sans lendemain. Autrement dit, les hésitations et les réticences linguistiques et stylistiques ne sont nullement dues au hasard; elles témoignent du caractère programmatique, en l'occurrence 'belge' des traductions. Elles nous confirment que des recherches sur 'la langue de la littérature / de la traduction' forment la clef pour comprendre le fonctionnement des littératures en Belgique.

Traductions intra-belges, mais à sens unique?

Sur la base du dossier qui vient d'être analysé, il y aurait lieu de croire que la question de la traduction, du moins dans les lettres francophones de l'entre-deux-guerres, est en premier lieu une affaire intra-belge. C'est au nom de la Belgique que Kervyn et son milieu distribuent les récits d'une certaine Flandre[16] et qu'ils s'efforcent de redéfinir la langue littéraire. Pour Kervyn comme pour ses prédécesseurs et ses successeurs, le seul choix d'une langue particulière ainsi que les options face aux particularités culturelles, tels les noms que portent les personnages, impliquent une prise de position linguistique et culturelle, voire même politique. De telles stratégies constituent la justification même de son activité de traducteur, comme l'illustrent bien les documents de l'époque passés en revue dans Meylaerts (2006). Et on voit mal comment un traducteur quelconque pourrait échapper aux dilemmes que nous venons d'indiquer.

Pourrait-on conclure d'ores et déjà que la traduction littéraire dans les milieux francophones se réduit à une histoire belge, et que le rôle du monde international serait limité? Ce serait une constatation intéressante, à elle seule. La plupart des cultures littéraires, n'en déplaise aux spécialistes des études littéraires de type 'national' et à la plupart des comparatistes, comportent une part d'échanges avec les cultures voisines, notamment par le biais des traductions. Peu de pays vont aussi loin que l'Allemagne de Herder et de Goethe, pour laquelle la *Weltliteratur* et – donc – les traductions étaient une question de vie ou de mort. Le fait que les traductions au sein de la Belgique littéraire – francophone – auraient un rôle plus interne, constituerait une confirmation intéressante de leur caractère fonctionnel dans la dynamique de la vie littéraire et, en même temps, une confirmation des incertitudes au sein même de la vie littéraire du pays.

La traduction serait-elle, en l'occurrence, un des baromètres de l'internationalisation, ou mieux, de la *non*-internationalisation de nos lettres? Pour l'époque de Kervyn, par exemple, les indices ne font pas défaut. Le milieu même qui tend à cultiver les traductions d'auteurs flamands nous fournit une première réponse nuancée à la question de l'internationalisation: les littératures 'étrangères' ne font pas défaut dans les colonnes de *La Revue Belge* par exemple, mais elles y occupent une place bien moins centrale. Souvent d'ailleurs, il s'agit de reproductions de traductions produites en France, et publiées dans des revues françaises. On dirait

16. Il s'agit plus ou moins de la Flandre qui fera tant de bruit autour de Georg Hermanowski, un traducteur allemand qui se montre si enthousiaste devant la Flandre littéraire qu'il exclut les œuvres des Pays-Bas et qui, dès lors, suscitera la colère du monde intellectuel néerlandophone moderne qui, lui, se détourne du particularisme et lutte en faveur d'une intégration littéraire et culturelle avec les Pays-Bas. Voir Simons (1969) renvoyant aux *Leuvense Bijdragen* (1965): une prise de position académique contre le traducteur Hermanowski.

que la contrefaçon, un des titres de gloire de la Belgique du XIXe siècle, n'a pas disparu. En l'occurrence, la Belgique francophone choisit ce que choisit le pays voisin. Il n'y a pas de traces d'une exportation des mêmes textes vers les pays étrangers, contrairement aux pratiques du XIXe siècle.

L'heure de vérité, pour mesurer la position internationale de nos lettres sur la base d'une analyse des traductions, c'est incontestablement les périodes de guerres dites mondiales. C'est encore Kervyn et le phénomène Rex qui dénotent les liens entre la politique nationale et internationale. Et en effet, indépendamment du mouvement Rex, de multiples littérateurs (canoniques ou non) ont adapté leurs positions culturelles aux urgences et occasions du moment. Beaucoup d'entre eux ont – tout d'un coup – collaboré – c'est le mot, pour certains d'entre eux – à des publications nouvelles, ou ils ont soutenu l'exportation de leurs œuvres: vers la France, vers l'Allemagne ... ou vers d'autres régions. L'accélération des échanges internationaux en termes d'exportation ne fait pas de doute (qu'on regarde les cas de Timmermans, Streuvels, Ernest Claes, du côté des Flandres). Rien n'était neutre à l'époque, mais les conceptions modernes, y compris celles des chercheurs, ont perdu de vue la signification des options et priorités interculturelles d'alors.[17]

Étant donné que les comportements des traducteurs nous rappellent des stratégies interculturelles bien données, et qu'elles prennent par là une valeur – historiographique – de baromètre, il s'imposera(it) également de déterminer si le monde des traductions a eu, d'une manière ou d'une autre, un véritable impact sur l'évolution des tendances et des modes littéraires. La traduction comme baromètre seulement, ou la traduction comme agent actif? Serait-elle l'un ou l'autre, ou les deux à la fois? La traduction aurait-elle 'influencé' la conception des lettres, aurait-elle fourni des modèles décisifs? Ou serait-elle restée, somme toute, un phénomène marginal? Les traductions importées ou exportées, dans les genres canoniques et/ou dans les genres périphériques, auraient-elles rempli le même rôle? L'historiographie littéraire n'a pas fourni de réponses à ce sujet, sinon par un silence compromettant. Qu'elle n'ait pas vraiment abordé non plus un phénomène largement européen, sinon mondial, à savoir l'internationalisation des genres nouveaux de type populaire, tel le roman policier ou ... ceux de la littérature de masse, ne fait que confirmer le bien-fondé de notre étonnement fondamental: faisons-nous partie de la littérature (occidentale?), ou serions-nous simplement absorbés par les cultures littéraires voisines? Notre analyse – forcément limitée et exemplaire – de quelques dossiers particuliers situés – trop sommairement – selon les perspectives synchronique et diachronique, donne une idée des possibilités et des nécessités de la recherche à la fois intra-nationale et internationale.

17. À titre d'exemple, renvoyons aux commentaires américains sur le soi-disant anti-sémitisme de Paul de Man.

Le paradoxe est que même les réponses négatives mériteraient de susciter l'intérêt: si nos milieux littéraires n'entendaient pas cultiver la traduction, ils ne manqueraient pas de se distinguer sensiblement par rapport à la plupart des traditions littéraires. S'ils se concentraient sur certains types de traduction plutôt que sur d'autres, ils ne manqueraient pas de s'auto-définir parmi les cultures littéraires environnantes. Le refus de traduire, on le verra, bref la 'non-traduction', constitue une prise de position fondamentale, qu'il s'agisse du choix des œuvres et programmes ou, à un niveau microscopique, d'un certain discours, de certaines figures de style, de procédés narratifs ou de catégories culturelles.

Selon une telle logique, on n'échappe(ra) plus à la nécessité de réexaminer, par exemple, les fluctuations chronologiques et géographiques ('culturelles' en fait) de la langue littéraire des littérateurs qui ont animé la vie littéraire et intellectuelle durant près de deux siècles à partir de l'espace culturel où une nation nouvelle est venue s'implanter quinze ans après Waterloo. On ne peut (pourra) plus ignorer que, parmi les littérateurs, les traducteurs ne suivent pas nécessairement les principes rendus canoniques par les groupes les plus influents. Ils ont tendance à expérimenter avec des modèles anciens ou nouveaux, traditionnels ou construits de toute pièce. Or, il n'est pas sûr du tout que seuls les traducteurs soient en cause, ni les seuls littérateurs francophones, ni, surtout, qu'il s'agirait de velléités inhumées depuis belle lurette. C'est sur ce point que l'historiographie de notre passé littéraire souffre d'amnésie. Face au *Chagrin des Belges*, face à la littérature de jeunesse ou face à la bande dessinée (de *Tintin* à *Bob et Bobette*, ou *Astérix*, souvent produit en langue néerlandaise par nos voisins du Nord), nos historiens des lettres ont assez systématiquement perdu de vue les fluctuations dans la séduction – intermittente, certes – de l''étranger', d'inspiration soit particulariste, soit nationale, soit internationale.[18]

Si c'est l'ensemble de notre paysage littéraire qui mériterait d'être mis en cause à partir de la question des traductions, il suffira pour l'instant d'envisager une série de jalons:

D'abord, au delà de Kervyn, c'est tout un groupe de revues importantes qui investit dans la traduction, et d'abord dans la traduction des écrivains flamands.

En Flandre aussi, des écrivains d'envergure (tel Stijn Streuvels) consacrent une bonne partie de leur œuvre à la traduction, mais rarement en s'attachant aux écrivains français de Belgique; dans les rares cas où ils le font, c'est en vertu de considérations qui ne doivent à peu près rien au rêve d'une Belgique intellectuelle

18. Et délaissons pour l'instant la question de l'internationalisme ou de l'internationalisation: que faire de l'exploitation du champ belge par Henri Heine, Karl Marx ou Victor Hugo, puis de l'installation des immigrés russes à la fin du XIXe siècle (Coudenys 1995). Pour Marc Sleen (*Nero*) et Willy Vandersteen, voir l'actualité dans les journaux flamands *De Standaard*, *De Morgen* durant les derniers jours de 2002.

ou culturelle. Ainsi Streuvels associe les textes populaires de la Flandre à ceux de la Russie, de l'Allemagne ou des pays scandinaves.

Il arrive que les maîtres de la Flandre se laissent entraîner dans une entreprise belge commune, notamment en se pliant aux ambitions de Camille Melloy, lui aussi séduit par l'âme populaire, où il se plaît à associer les récits de jeunesse de Streuvels aux dessins campinois de Felix Timmermans, voire même les poésies de Guido Gezelle.

Mais Melloy sert ainsi la cause d'un catholicisme international d'orientation française plutôt que belge: Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Francis Jammes sont ses idoles, non ses compatriotes francophones; et Melloy comme ses maîtres flamands se félicitent de bénéficier ainsi de succès internationaux à Paris.[19]

Les mêmes courants catholiques d'origine française occupent un instant le théâtre populaire en Flandre, grâce à Henri Ghéon notamment. Or, s'il est vrai que la Flandre théâtrale donne une voix à un des (futurs) grands de la Belgique francophone, à savoir Michel de Ghelderode, c'est que la traduction illustre en l'occurrence les barrières culturelles qui divisent le pays, car sans traduction l'auteur d'*Escurial* n'aurait pas eu de voix du tout, et on sait que Ghelderode est bien le dernier à interpréter ses succès du *Vlaamsch Volkstoneel* comme un service rendu au pays entier.

Durant les mêmes années, l'essor de la bande dessinée illustre une connivence entre les deux traditions linguistiques jusqu'au niveau de la rédaction et de la distribution qui n'a pas son équivalent dans les zones canoniques de la littérature, mais, une fois de plus, la collaboration sur le terrain ne consacre en rien un programme national, comme l'illustre l'évolution de Hergé en personne, qui remaniera ses productions de jeunesse au gré de ses succès internationaux.

Bref, à tout moment et à tous les niveaux de la vie littéraire, la traduction reflète les fluctuations et différenciations des ambitions et positions littéraires, tout en mettant en évidence que les zones canoniques des lettres – on sait qu'elles se redessinent à travers le temps – ne sont pas seules à dessiner le profil des nos littératures.

19. Melloy fut publié à Paris, à Bruxelles (Éditions des poètes catholiques; Éditions Durendal), à Lille (Giard), Paris (Desclée de Brouwer, Perrin, Bloud et Gay, Alsatia), Liège (Éditions catholiques), Louvain (Éditions Rex, établies aussi à . . . Rome et Paris!), et même à Londres et New York (Sheed & Ward); les livres illustrés par Jeanne Hebbelynck ou par Felix Timmermans sont ainsi présentés à des publics très différents, en Belgique comme en France, en pays flamand comme en pays francophone.

Importation (*in*-traductions) et exportation (*ex*-traductions), dissymétries internes et externes

La découverte des traductions intra-belges a fait ressortir l'illusion d'une Belgique harmonieuse des traductions, dans laquelle les communautés linguistiques auraient des comportements analogues. 'La Belgique n'est donc pas vraiment un pays bilingue?', nous disent souvent les étrangers, sans doute à juste titre. Une telle observation présente l'avantage de nous faire réfléchir sur la possibilité de parallélismes et/ou de conflits dans l'importation d'œuvres littéraires à partir d'autres langues, parallélismes ou conflits qui pourraient se manifester au niveau de la sélection des langues, des genres, des écrivains comme au niveau des stratégies de traduction. Et pourquoi exclure alors la possibilité (bien réelle, semble-t-il, dans les bandes dessinées et, à un moment donné, dans la promotion des lettres) d'une politique commune dans l'exportation?

Il est temps de situer le dossier dans un cadre plus délibérément international. Du point de vue des experts en la matière, le cas de la Belgique des traductions littéraires semble contraster avec celui des pays environnants: la traduction, un autre problème belge? Depuis une vingtaine d'années, de multiples enquêtes ont surtout mis en valeur la position internationale des traductions: selon les voisins choisis et selon le traitement qui leur est réservé, les cultures littéraires ne manquent pas de fournir une auto-définition. C'est notamment le raisonnement fonctionnel emprunté à Gideon Toury et à Itamar Even-Zohar qui l'a orienté: c'est à partir des besoins d'une tradition donnée et localisée (souvent dans un 'pays' particulier) que les traductions livreraient leurs secrets. Depuis à peine quelques mois, une variante d'un tel raisonnement fonctionnel s'est signalée à l'attention des chercheurs. Pascale Casanova (1999) et – parmi d'autres – Johan Heilbron (1995, 1999) adoptent un point de vue délibérément international en acceptant d'emblée la réalité du 'marché mondial des traductions' et du marché mondial des littératures. À première vue, les discussions qui précèdent trouveraient difficilement leur place dans un panorama mondial de ce type: il semble que la traduction puisse jouer aussi un rôle local. Ce qui ferait supposer que la Belgique des traductions (littéraires), peut-être même la Belgique de la littérature, trouverait à peine une place dans une telle conception de la *Weltliteratur*. Reste à déterminer si la difficulté s'explique par les options et traditions de la Belgique, c'est-à-dire par l'objet à étudier, ou, au contraire, par les modèles de recherche appelés à la rescousse. À vrai dire, l'histoire intra-belge discernée jusqu'ici n'est en harmonie ni avec les modèles des *descriptive translation studies* ni avec les modèles plus globalement sociologiques des dernières années. Or, rien n'exclut que les deux schémas d'explication révèlent ainsi leurs limites, alors que, d'autre part, ils sont susceptibles aussi de compléter – maintenant – le tableau que nous avons esquissé jusqu'ici.

Voyons d'abord si jamais, au delà des frontières linguistiques, la Belgique des traducteurs ainsi que leurs maisons d'édition auraient suivi des programmes internationaux communs ou parallèles. La question est capitale aussi bien pour l'importation (la Belgique a dû participer à certaines vogues largement internationales, celle du roman policier ou du feuilleton télévisé, par exemple, sans parler des Prix Nobel) que pour l'exportation (celle de nos bandes dessinées, par exemple). Le premier volet de la question situe nos courants dans le sillage d'autres traditions, alors que l'exportation permet de discerner la position des littératures de la Belgique comme pôle actif, comme lieu de prestige. Les deux volets ne sont pas incompatibles du tout, mais la perspective d'observation est très différente, ce qui explique – en effet – que les deux approches ont, en principe, leur raison d'être. Ceci ne veut pas dire que la Belgique (ou certains de ses secteurs particuliers) se conforme nécessairement aux habitudes des nations 'comme les autres'. La Belgique des traductions ferait-elle comme tout le monde? Et les paradoxes et dissymétries se confirmeraient-elles dans les rapports intra-belges comme dans les rapports internationaux? Une Belgique des traductions à deux (ou à plusieurs) vitesses? Une fois de plus, nous devrons nous contenter de quelques premières explorations susceptibles de conduire plus loin, sur la base de contextualisations et d'enquêtes comparatives en série.

Peu de nos grands littérateurs ont vraiment conquis le 'monde' littéraire en traduction, si ce n'est Georges Simenon, cas équivoque s'il en est. Toujours parmi les francophones, ce sont surtout les représentants de la Jeune Belgique, les Maeterlinck et Verhaeren, voire même Rodenbach qui ont circulé à travers les pays et les langues. En plein XXe siècle, Charles De Coster a été honoré de chiffres de vente impressionnants dans le monde marxiste européen, mais on devine ce que signifient en l'occurrence les chiffres. Parmi les auteurs d'expression néerlandaise du XIXe siècle, Henri Conscience et ... Multatuli ont acquis une réputation assez remarquable. Il n'empêche que l'exception confirme la règle, sauf peut-être, sans doute en partie grâce à la guerre, la génération de Streuvels, de Claes et de Timmermans. La constatation la plus frappante est sans doute que, aussi bien à l'intérieur du pays qu'à l'extérieur, les parallélismes sont rarissimes, aussi bien dans les échanges entre la Flandre 'd'expression néerlandaise' (!) et la Belgique francophone d'une part qu'entre les mêmes zones et l'étranger.

Le test par excellence devrait être fourni par la bande dessinée, qui fleurit des deux côtés de la frontière linguistique et qui, c'est connu, occupe un segment nullement négligeable du marché belge du livre. Quelles que soient les traditions des publications distribuées en deux ou trois langues (notamment religieuses), l'exception confirme la règle. Il est vrai que la bande dessinée tend à maintenir l'illusion d'une littérature 'belge', notamment en gommant souvent les origines des bandes dessinées bilingues, d'où un minimum d'équivoque auprès du grand public: *Tintin* serait-il francophone? Les jeunes l'ignorent, et les livres qu'ils dévorent leur donnent raison: les éditions Casterman, parmi d'autres, ne mettent nullement en vedette le nom de leurs traducteurs. Ils les choisissent par ailleurs au pays voisin, tels les traducteurs hollandais d'*Astérix*. Les Flamands lisent ainsi leurs 'classiques étrangers' dans le néerlandais de leurs voisins du nord.

Dans le secteur de la littérature canonique, l'idée d'une réciprocité entre les communautés littéraires du pays n'a jamais donné le ton, et encore moins l'exploitation de la traduction au service d'une vie littéraire commune, si ce n'est peut-être au moment de la création du pays, c'est-à-dire au début du XIXe siècle. Le contraire eût sans doute été surprenant dans la mesure où les sociolinguistes ont depuis longtemps établi que la symétrie entre deux usages linguistiques co-existant au sein d'un cadre culturel donné génère généralement des décalages ainsi qu'une compétition systématiques. Que le monde des traductions n'échappe pas à de telles règles n'a, somme toute, rien de surprenant. Ni le contraire, c'est-à-dire l'exploitation d'autant plus prononcée, à un moment donné, des traductions, comme à l'heure de Rex, au nom d'une unité politique qui resterait à construire.

Qui aurait besoin de traductions?

Il ne semble pas que Kervyn ait jamais eu son pendant du côté des Flamands. Il arrive, bien sûr, que les littérateurs de la Flandre s'inspirent de certains auteurs francophones. Mais ils abandonnent à leurs voisins du nord de disséminer les œuvres de leurs grands contemporains, tel même un Prix Nobel, le seul qu'on ait jamais eu, comme Maurice Maeterlinck.

Pourquoi donc les écrivains de la Flandre se seraient-ils jamais mis en tête de traduire les textes et auteurs francophones de la Belgique dans un effort de promotion culturelle et/ou politique de l'union nationale? À elle seule, la question suscite déjà le scepticisme. D'abord parce que la raison d'être des traductions néerlandaises d'œuvres francophones paraît ridicule. Parmi les Flamands des deux derniers siècles (traitons à part le nôtre et les vingt-cinq ans qui l'ont préparé), quel amateur des lettres aurait eu besoin de traductions pour lire ses compatriotes? Par conséquent, la connaissance des langues explique pour une bonne part la dissymétrie dans les rapports littéraires entre les communautés: les Flamands lettrés connaissent le français, les francophones lettrés ne connaissent pas (vraiment) le néerlandais, et ils ne manquent pas de le reconnaître, voire de le regretter (Meylaerts 2006). On peut supposer dès lors que, sauf peut-être à la fin du XXe siècle, l'idée même de traductions intra-belges remplit une tout autre fonction parmi les Flamands que parmi les francophones.

La Flandre, pays sans traductions? Bien sûr que non! Le long poème épique de *Hiawatha* a préoccupé Guido Gezelle pendant des années; les *Tachtigers* ont truffé leurs textes de figures de style empruntées aux Anciens (Van Hemeldonck

1977); et nous avons déjà souligné que dans l'œuvre majestueuse de Stijn Streuvels figurent un nombre impressionnant de traductions, allant de Charles De Coster et des Scandinaves jusqu'à *Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia* de Clemens von Brentano. Plus tard, des personnalités comme Anton van Wilderode, Bert Decorte ou, en pleine époque contemporaine, Paul Claes, ont construit leur profil littéraire autour de traductions. Il est vrai qu'aucun de nos traducteurs n'est parvenu à se tailler une place dans le panthéon des lettres en tant que grand traducteur, et qu'aucun des écrivains de la Flandre ne s'est révélé traducteur au point de sacrifier ses titres de noblesse comme écrivain à ses gloires de traducteur.[20]

À qui la Flandre doit-elle de pouvoir lire les prix Nobel et les réputations mondiales du XXe siècle? À défaut de statistiques fiables ou d'outils bibliographiques spécifiques, référons-nous à quelques ouvrages qui ont eu le mérite de préparer le terrain. Hermans (1991) fournit un riche baromètre en ce qui concerne les secteurs privilégiés de la traduction littéraire dans le domaine néerlandais. Or, c'est surtout de façon négative que le répertoire en question se révèle instructif. Dans la mesure où les noms néerlandais de Boutens, Bertus Aafjes, Leopold, Slauerhoff, Nijhoff se révèlent importants dans l'index des noms cités, ils mettent en évidence l'absence de leurs pendants, les grands écrivains de la Flandre, représentés assez discrètement par Hugo Claus ou Guido Gezelle.

Jusqu'à preuve du contraire, le paysage de la traduction dans les lettres néerlandaises illustre les tendances suivantes:

1° quant aux traducteurs: ce sont surtout les littérateurs hollandais qui ont nourri la traduction, et même la discussion (théorique) de la traduction;

2° quant aux textes et œuvres retenus: les auteurs francophones de Belgique sont à peu près introuvables, alors que – chose prévisible – ce sont les classiques grecs, latins et modernes (Shakespeare, Goethe, Cervantès, H.C. Andersen, les Russes, les Anglais comme Richardson, Sterne, etc.) qui représentent le monde de la traduction.

Suggérons un autre test. Entrons dans les grandes librairies du pays, et dans nos bibliothèques, en pays flamand comme en pays francophone. Prenons en main les éditions des grandes œuvres internationales, celles de Shakespeare, de François Mauriac, de Hemingway et Faulkner ou Tolstoi et Dostoievsky, celles de Goethe, Rilke, Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie et de Konsalik, celles de H.C. Andersen, Perrault, ou même celles de Maeterlinck ou de Georges Rodenbach. L'ancien pays de la contrefaçon a systématiquement abandonné aux pays voisins de lui fournir la traduction des chefs-d'œuvre étrangers. On serait tenté de dire que le phénomène est connu, que les francophones et les Flamands ont abandonné au pays voisin

20. Un contemporain Paul Claes peut être l'exception qui confirme la règle. Dans ce contexte, le nom d'Anton Van Duinkerken est sans doute inévitable, ou celui de Willy Courteaux: mais l'un comme l'autre ont traduit les grands noms de l'histoire littéraire, après tant d'autres.

le système de l'édition, que les seuls critères économiques expliquent déjà que la production – à grande échelle – des livres à valeur internationale dépasse les capacités du 'petit pays' que nous sommes. Or, c'est ignorer que déjà le XIXe siècle s'est distingué par la même (double) passivité en matière de traduction. C'est ignorer d'autre part que notre marché du livre de jeunesse contraste assez clairement avec les explications globales, car il exporte en traduction vers plusieurs pays. C'est ignorer d'autre part – chose tout à fait inconnue jusqu'ici – que les capitaux belges font tourner le monde français de l'édition.

La Belgique, pays de la non-traduction? La constatation mériterait toute notre attention dans la mesure où l'importation de livres en traduction représente une forme d'ouverture, de passivité vis-à-vis des marchés étrangers, qui ne sont d'ailleurs pas nécessairement voisins. Une telle passivité est en bonne partie truquée, à en croire les experts de la traduction (Toury 1980, 1995; Hermans 1999), dans la mesure où il y a toujours lutte entre domestication et stratégie du dépaysement. La situation d'une culture comme celle de la Belgique (littéraire) aurait ceci de surprenant qu'elle abandonne jusqu'à la stratégie textuelle et linguistique de l'importation aux voisins. Mais, en attendant des enquêtes poussées et spécialisées par secteur, retenons que les genres dits périphériques, telle la bande dessinée, nous réservent des surprises. Nous savons depuis pas mal de temps que les conflits, fluctuations et hétérogénéités délivrent les principes des dynamiques culturelles.

Histoires locales / internationales: ce que (ne) nous apprennent (pas) les statistiques

C'est à propos des traductions 'françaises' du XIXe siècle qu'Anthony Pym (1997) a souligné, à juste titre, les limites d'une analyse 'nationale' des traductions. Rien ne permet d'accepter *a priori* que les traductions publiées en France durant une certaine période s'expliquent nécessairement dans le cadre des événements du pays en question: les traductions vers le français pourraient circuler à partir d'autres pays, dans la même langue, ou elles pourraient prendre place dans des campagnes largement internationales, comme ce fut le cas de beaucoup de best-sellers pour la jeunesse, du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours, et comme c'est de plus en plus le cas de nos jours, à l'époque de l'internationalisation. Il est vrai que les recherches descriptives sur la traduction (*descriptive translation studies*), qui ont donné lieu à pas mal d'entreprises remarquables, ont eu tendance à envisager le point de vue des langues ou des nations particulières, qui équivalait en réalité à la perspective de l'‘importation’.[21] Les appels en faveur d'une démarche plus large, où l'internationalisation serait reconnue comme une perspective complémentaire (Lambert 1989e, 1995f; Gentzler 1993; Hermans 1999), n'ont pas vraiment été entendus. Durant les derniers mois, et notamment à partir d'un centre prestigieux, la question des traductions littéraires (!) a été – brusquement et de façon plutôt inattendue – découverte comme un objet privilégié de la recherche sociologique (Casanova 1999; Heilbron 1999; Sapiro & Heilbron 2001). Dans les publications les plus en vue générées à partir du foyer en question, il est assez remarquable que la reconnaissance des traductions comme ‘un marché’, selon les concepts devenus familiers depuis Pierre Bourdieu, privilégie l'exportation (on n'ignore pas que les balances de paiement sont chose sensible du côté des économistes!). Or, les sociologues sont habitués aux statistiques, et puisent une part de leur crédibilité dans le recours aux chiffres, sans par ailleurs réduire leurs ressources au quantitatif. Il est vrai que le recours aux statistiques ne date pas d'hier (Milo 1984; Lambert 1980a; Van Bragt 1995) et n'est en rien lié, *a priori*, aux hypothèses particulières exploitées par Casanova, Heilbron, Sapiro. On a pu démontrer par exemple ce que les États modernes – et notamment la Communauté flamande – pourraient tirer d'une lecture plus intelligente de leurs données quantitatives sur les médias, sur l'importation et sur l'internationalisation (Meylaerts 2001).

Il est difficile de traiter à fond les questions soulevées depuis le début de la présente discussion sans recours à des techniques de documentation plus sophistiquées, de manière à suivre de plus près les fluctuations dans les relations internes (au sein des Flandres, des communautés culturelles de la Belgique comme au sein de la Belgique par rapport aux pays environnants) et externes (par rapport au ‘marché international’). L'importation, en l'occurrence, est d'un type bien spécial et ne pourra être saisie qu'au moyen de données quantitatives mises au point *ad hoc*. Par ailleurs, la vie des revues pourrait bien se plier à des principes étrangers au marché du livre, le seul à être convenablement traité jusqu'ici dans les analyses du marché des traductions. Et, pour finir, la stratégie suivie par les traducteurs, leur profil individuel / collectif, leur maniement de la langue, leur position dans le paysage littéraire, linguistique et culturel du moment, aussi bien du point de vue ‘local’ (‘national’?) que du point de vue international, demandent à être mis en rapport avec les données statistiques. Il est plus que douteux que les méthodes développées par la linguistique du corpus (*corpus linguistics*) donnent – déjà – satisfaction pour jeter des ponts entre les questionnaires de type

21. Ce fut même le cas dans les premiers articles où une tentative a été lancée d'envisager la question des traductions au moyen de concepts ‘économiques’ comme l'importation, à savoir Lambert (1983b, 1995f).

sociologique, d'une part, et, d'autre part, les questionnaires mis au point dès la naissance des *descriptive translation studies* (Lambert & Van Gorp 1985).[22]

La situation de la Belgique – et des pays environnants – se prête à merveille à une expérimentation sur les modèles d'analyse dans la mesure où une des prémisses nettement dépassées des recherches comparatistes y devient caduque: la concurrence entre les principes linguistiques et l'institution politique y devient centrale, d'où l'hésitation permanente entre différents centres, ou la persistance des tentatives de construction. La première instabilité des initiatives en matière de traduction et d'institutionnalisation linguistique ou littéraire est liée à la mobilité des territoires. Ajoutons que la question de la littérature en traduction n'est qu'un des multiples secteurs de l'institutionnalisation des traductions. En effet, il n'est pas surprenant que la prolifération sur le territoire belge des institutions commerciales, politiques ou sociales d'origine internationale ou à partir des pays voisins, à travers deux guerres dites mondiales, puis durant l'établissement de l'Union Européenne et du multimédia, ait donné lieu à une multiplication des stratégies de communication dans lesquelles la traduction joue un rôle crucial mais ignoré. Que la traduction soit un 'problème belge' ne signifie en rien que seule la Belgique le mette en lumière, mais que les conditions culturelles d'une société institutionnalisée comme la nôtre – c'est-à-dire par couches successives – méritent d'être exploitées pour des recherches interdisciplinaires dans lesquelles la traduction est reconnue comme une clef.

En attendant que nous ayons nous-mêmes le cadre et les conditions qui permettent de creuser le dossier, signalons qu'il est plus que douteux que la Belgique elle-même décide un jour de soutenir de telles recherches. Dans la mesure où les financements et les structures de la recherche dépendent de la nation – traditionnelle ou fédéralisée – les efforts seront plutôt réservés à la promotion de la culture qu'à la recherche en profondeur. L'autonomie de la recherche n'est sans doute pas vraiment en cause, mais les priorités sont claires et bien établies.

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22. C'est notamment Mona Baker qui a mis au point une grille destinée à analyser de larges corpus, qui fournit par ailleurs des résultats intéressants. Mais le modèle d'analyse en question aborde de tout autres composantes textuelles que les *descriptive translation studies*, en ignorant (pour l'instant) bien des niveaux textuels et culturels.

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