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HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE DISCIPLINE. A PROGRAMME

THE FACT THAT TRANSLATION and Translation Studies are flourishing nowadays within academic life, whereas the Humanities in general seem to be in bad shape (e.g. as far as the economic aspect of the book market is concerned), has probably a deeper significance. There is no better way of illustrating the topic of this article[1]. What is the significance of the fact that translation, discourse on translation and research on translation are fashionable and are allocated funds, while money is being refused to other, much better-established areas? Why has translation become fashionable?

1. Few preliminary statements

Contrary to many historians (from the past) I am convinced that there is no genuine, theory-neutral road into history, exactly in the same way as there cannot be any genuine, a-historical road into theory. Such a statement is probably in itself a nice theory, but the difficulty starts where we have to link theory and history in the light of real (empirical) research.

Since I want to make my own position explicit rather than giving the impression that my way is the only possible one of looking at the history/historiography of translation or at translation, a few other preliminary statements may be necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings:

a. When making a distinction between history and historiography, I mean that there is an enormous amount of *historical material* to be discovered, gathered, described, explained by historians in a *historiography:* we have to distinguish between the object of study and the discourse on the object of study, although such a discourse can also be itself part of the investigation. I also want to make distinctions between various kinds of historiography with more or less particular scholarly claims: not all historiography has scientific objectives, and there are various ways of planning historiography as a scholarly enterprise.

b. Although through the ages many people and even groups have tackled aspects of the historical material (quite often in a cumulative, atomistic and normative way), the real problem of historiography has still to be conceptualized. I would like to avoid both being too pessimistic about what has been discussed so far and on the other hand

being too optimistic about what has been done.

c. I want to avoid two other extreme options:

i. simply borrowing the historiographical schemes for history and historiography from other disciplines (linguistics, literature, historiography in general), in particular the positivistic schemes used without any theoretical and/or methodological background;

ii. considering that translation is something *sui generis* and that its history would have nothing in common with the general features of culture and society.

d. While dealing with the historical problems of translation, I am aware that the very concept of translation is the basic problem to be tackled: what translation is and what translation has been, in terms of norms and concepts, both as a realization and as a verbalization (say: in theory and practice), in various cultural circumstances? What does it mean that it is often so differentiated in one-and-the-same cultural situation and that it is often so similar in very different cultural frames, and what may be the principles of changes occurring from the synchronic and from the diachronic point of view? What are its relationships with other kinds of (verbal) communication? I don't see how such basic questions could be dealt with in a too narrow or a too particular concept of translation (while excluding e.g. interpreting, oral translation, subtitling, etc.). Both very macroscopic and very microscopic aspects have to be taken into consideration, textual ones as well as the question of process and/or reception, and formal as well as functional questions, partly in order to determine what can be specific for translation at a given moment. It may be necessary to question whether translational phenomena can ever be studied as *communication* when they are not approached within larger frames, say among the non-translated production of communication, etc. In logical terms this means that there is no way of *explaining* translation in tautological terms, i.e. as and among translations only. The idea of translation cannot be taken for granted and the reference frame ought to be larger than strict translational ones. Such a starting point is in contradiction with all *cumulative* historiography. And the *historical-descriptive* approach to translation (history) has to go beyond a simple registration and/or accumulation.

e. This looks like an enormous and even utopian task. More precise and limited historiographical investigations are very acceptable as long as they are linked to larger scope and planning, whereas, on the other hand, synthetic and panoramic historiography cannot survive without a systematic interaction with small-scale research projects.

f. What is historiography for? What is the use of history and historiography? For researchers or for the man in the street? For the discipline? And for what aspects of the discipline, especially since the idea of a homogeneous discipline can also (probably) be dropped? Do we just want to produce a book, in one or several volumes, which contains a *narrative*, the story of translators and/or translations? Or do we want to question and/or to demonstrate/study anything? What is the historian's task (in this case): telling, showing, arguing, or what else?

g. Practical matters: who is going to take care of it? Who are our historians? What kind of institutional/sociological position could such a historiography have?

Notwithstanding this combination of extreme skepticism and on the other hand a very large and optimistic ambition, I believe that historiography is a key task, and that it has a real future, since many colleagues are devoting their entire career to such a historiographical enterprise in a rather organized way. The development of the so-called Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury 1980; Delabastita 1991) may be considered to be one of the most explicit indications of the rediscovery of history in Translation Studies and hence of the development of a new type of historiography.

Thirty years ago articles on the history of translation could have dealt 'with the story of translation through the ages'. But in recent days it has become difficult *not to discuss* from the beginning *the premises* of historiographical research.

2. Nevertheless: A Few Translation Stories

It is difficult to imagine any topic linked with translation that would not deserve to be acknowledged as a possible topic in a history of translation(s). This indicates that such a history can/could be immensely large, but also vague. Can we assume that *anything goes?*

Why exactly do people want to know more about the history of translators and translations and how can they proceed?

It is probably a good idea to start by trying out some translation stories or translator's stories to discover what may fascinate us in them. Let us add from the beginning that these stories can be read in many different ways: they do not have any meaning in themselves, they deserve to be observed within some historiographical perspective.

a. One of my friends has discovered recently how West-European prose works from the nineteenth century have been translated by well-trained and well-equipped *factories*

rather than by individual translators. I am sure we would all like to know how the work was divided then and how the predictable consequences of incoherence and speed were (not) avoided by these teams. Did they have supervisors/revisors at all, and who decided who was the big boss of such teams? Quite unconsciously we look for a comparison with 2Oth century translation teams and agencies, but also with the work done at the same moment by famous individual translators working in the same cultural frame. In this case we are looking for the rules and the efficiency of the game. But I am also aware that certain critics and historians have gathered rather picturesque correspondence material, the so-called *petite histoire* of the history of the masterpieces of world literature and their reception in a given society. All this picturesque material can be used and discussed in various ways.

b. Some experts on Africa deal with the development of constitutional and especially of social law in particular contemporary African societies. It seems that in these countries most legal texts have been written down in the vernacular language with the aid of previous translations written down first of all in one of the dominating European languages (French, English, Portuguese...). It would be quite hard not to accept the historiographical character of the history of these translations/ transcriptions, especially since the situation in 1992 has a good chance of being very different from the 1980 situation. The development of African law with the aid of writing and translating has its - though recent - history. Intellectuals and even clerks have *transcribed* the texts, maybe without ever using the word translating, since such a profession has not often been institutionalized before the law was written down. Such stories and the history of such stories may attract lawyers as well as politicians or linguists. Specialists in European medieval culture will remember how the Corpus Justinianum became established into the new vernaculars during the Middle Ages, and my own Flemish background reminds me of the history of my own culture, where nearly all Dutch legal texts have been translated first from French, after these texts had been transmitted from Latin and other traditions into the French language.

So many different people can be interested in these stories and in such a story-telling, and they definitely do not all look for the same kind of satisfaction.

A Canadian colleague has written in 1985: 'Like all new worlds, Canada came into existence by means of translation procedures' (Blodgett 1985). One of Jean Delisle's books deals indeed with the history of Canada and links it very basically with translation (e.g. some Indians were transported to France for translation training). Although the United States has been known so far as the new world model where language differentiation is supposed to disappear, at least officially, several recent books and research projects show again how closely the history of America and the United States is linked with translation (Todorov 1982, Greenblatt 1991, Cheyfitz 1991, Muller-Vollmer 1991).

3. From old to new historiography

Research on translation used to be of a universalistic and static kind (as many theoretical approaches in other disciplines still are). The paradigmatic change probably occurred at the very moment when the concept of norms was introduced, conceptualized and used. And this kind of shift was none too soon. Strangely enough, many implications of the use of the norms concept are being underestimated still today, including its most basic consequence: *the historicization of translational phenomena.* Until the beginning of the 1980's, some well established theoreticians were convinced that the history/historical study of translation was of no use for translation theory. Such a static view on the various areas of the discipline is in strong contrast to the dominant recent approaches to translational phenomena where history and theory are explicitly linked.

In recent years a sudden shift in the attitude towards history has become obvious. Let me just mention a few symptoms: several *histories* of translation in different cultural areas have been published, often by famous publishers; an impressive series of *historical readers* has been produced to such an extent that this has become an established research *genre* in the field; translation is defined more and more explicitly in historical terms rather than in technical-linguistic ones; there is an integration of the history concept into the theoretical discussion, as can be illustrated by some handbook projects where translation history is not just a chapter (as e.g. Mounin 1967), but the very basis for theoretical concepts.

It is along these lines that *the history of translation*, either in a limited space-and-time frame or with larger ambitions (e.g. 'la traduction en Occident'), may become the topic of particular books. Both anthologies ('collections of texts put in a historical order') and *histories (discourse* on translators and translations put in such an order) have been produced to give an introduction to the development of translation in a given cultural situation. The problem with this kind of synthetic display of historical material is that so far it has generally been taken as *history* rather than as *historiography*, i.e. not as *discourse* upon historical data selected, analysed and organized by an observer along certain principles (models), but as *history in itself.* Neither the selection principles nor the kind of connections established between concrete historical data nor even the sources and methods used (cf. Van Hoof 1992) are part of the argument. The historian believes it is possible to have direct and straightforward contact with phenomena belonging to another cultural frame. Moreover, as a real story-teller, he retells the story of the past while establishing links (with the aid of words such as: *because, in order to, since, while, whereas,* etc.). In traditional cultural historiography the narrator has not yet discovered what the French Nouveau Roman has entitled *L'Ere du soupçon.* The tricks used by such narrators must remain hidden in order to guarantee the effect of the story:

- In these traditional historiographies there is and can only be a very selective approach to the object of study, and it could be shown that the first aim is to produce a volume with a given number of pages.
- The selection principles generally promote canonized writers, texts and data and exclude epigonic and peripheral phenomena.
- The diachronic structure (evolution, periodization) is stressed much more than the synchronic one, which implies the tendency to homogenize the material and to provide it with a teleological orientation.

In very general terms we can state that the historical norms and concepts are not objects of study, they are taken for granted or even stressed and worshipped. The norms and concepts *of the historian* are not questioned; it is *not the historian's story* but *the story of history:* the book is meant to canonize particular translations and translators rather than analyse their canonization as such.

One of the few disciplines that has had more or less to recognize translation as an integral part of its object of study is Comparative Literature. In the (rather) many publications that have contributed to the history of translations within that field of studies, the following principles have been rather systematically borrowed from the traditions of literary studies in general:

- the historiography applied *is factual* and cumulative;
- the (implicit or explicit) periodization is linear, homogenizing and teleological;
- the periodization has been borrowed without any discussion from the framework common in literary and cultural historiography;
- rather than norms and strategies, faithfulness is the key problem and the implicit standard for the historian;
- it is assumed that faithfulness is a quality in translation and that modern times tend to respect it much more than ancient times (teleology);
- as in traditional literary historiography the aim of the publications is (often, but not always) to canonize translations and translators rather than to study canonization(s).

Similar kinds of simplification in historiography, especially the teleological view, have occurred in all disciplines. They are themselves part of historical development, and there is no reason for claiming that contemporary research is superior just because it is more recent. But the problem will be: (a) how traditional assumptions can be reformulated and (b) how the results of previous research can be integrated into new research frames.

The main difficulty is that until recently there has been hardly any attempt to formulate the task of the translation historian. In such new situations two extreme

options are predictable: borrowing models from other disciplines or, on the contrary, stressing the specificity of translation. Whatever the relationships with neighbour disciplines will be, there is an urgent need for a more explicit and systematic program.

4. The historiographical tabula rasa

The main difference between the kind of historical research to be promoted and the (more) traditional kinds is that we start on the basis of questions and problem-solving.

4.1 What kind of questions? Are there any models?

One could imagine that historians of all kinds are able to work out a list of key questions on the translational phenomenon in particular societies without any previous knowledge of our contemporary theories. Theories and previous research can be obstacles as well as inspiring tools. I am well aware that the following questions, formulated as a basis for historical research (Kittel 1988), are familiar partly but only partly to the dominant translation theories and that several do appear in isolated historiographical investigations, but generally they do not appear together and hardly ever in a programmatic way:

> Who in a given society translates what for what kind of audience, and is there any connection between these conditions and the way he translates (the translation method)?

These questions could be formalized as the basic parameters for historical-descriptive studies: who, what, where, for whom and how? They probably lead into the standard formulation of the problem or at least into some of its key aspects. But is this program also *sufficient*? The who-for-whom relationship introduces translation into communication channels and situations which have to be questioned further. When establishing who translates a given book, for whom, why and how, I cannot discuss the question what kind of a book/communication the translated book and the translated communication are exactly, nor why such a translated kind of communication is (or is not) preferred to non-translated communication, and why suddenly within the translated book itself we find loan words and other non-translated material.

I cannot examine either why the translated book is often shaped as a local, original book production rather than as a ’translation’.

When asking the who-for-whom questions about individual translations I have to check and to countercheck them while applying them to other translations in similar and less similar circumstances. A reference frame is needed in order to establish and to check and countercheck regularities. How large such a reference frame needs to be is a complicated matter; it stresses the idea of series in research, but it is hard to imagine how even individual translations could be analyzed without any reference frame. These additional and wider questions indicate, however, how investigation about the basic rules of translation generates basic questions about translations, their use and their function among other texts and communications. Instead of asking questions about particular translations I could as well start with questions about the reference frame: where do translations occur, and where do they not occur? Is there any relationship between the areas where they occur and their characteristics? And what would it mean if there appear to be regularities in the distribution of translations? And what would be the (real) difference between so-called translations and similar texts (e.g. adaptations, imitations, etc.)? To what extent are the key rules of translation - in a given cultural situation - specific to translations, or on the contrary common to several kinds of *Textverarbeitungen*? And why does a given society use translations rather than other solutions to the intercultural exchange of communication[2]?

4.2. The phenomenon of non-translation

Instead of starting the study of translations on the basis of the set of who-for-whom inquiries we could also start the other way round, with the aid of a quite different, apparently nonsensical question: where and when are there NO translations, when and where are there translations without any (explicit/systematic) discourse on translation (Lambert 1991a)?

There is no incompatibility at all between the first set of questions which I call *internal* (where translation itself is not really conceptualized within larger situations) and the second group (which I call *external* or, in this case, *functional).* The phenomenon of *non-translation* is not totally unknown, since it has been recognized at a particular microscopic level by Vinay & Darbelnet (1958): they noticed how in most translations one of the techniques used by translators is simply *not* to translate every individual linguistic item but to keep some of them unchanged in the target message. What I want to assume here is that there can be a link between the treatment of microscopic text elements and the general treatment of imported elements on the textual level and on a larger macroscopic level (as in certain particular genres). The idea that there may be a link between the microstructural treatment of imported linguistic items and the treatment of larger macroscopic patterns is not so unexpected, but its application to non-translation brings in general hypotheses about the distributional and selection rules in the relationships between

cultures, text models and precise textual items which it is hard to exclude, but which so far have not been integrated into the research programs on translation. From this perspective, translations and translational patterns are just part of more general cultural and societal patterns (in fact, the term 'part of' could better be replaced by 'are observed in their relationship with').

What I want to stress is not that there is any ideal methodological model, but on the contrary that there are several and quite different approaches to the observation of translational phenomena; that neither the microscopic nor the macroscopic approach (starting point) is ideal or sufficient; that both an *internal* and an *external* approach are necessary, since the question: 'How does translator x proceed?' must be linked with the question: 'In what circumstances does he work?'. We should note, too, that such a distinction seems to be parallel to the distinction between *technical* and *functional* questions and that these perspectives are complementary rather than exclusive.

It is a pity, however, that historical investigations on translations are so often merely *technological*. They accumulate data on translators, their habits, their selections, their techniques and utterances, without ever questioning what the ultimate function (position) of these data could be for the literature, the society or the enterprises that hire these translators. One of the main reasons why the study of translation is not taken seriously within the Humanities is precisely that it seems to function for its own sake, as a very sophisticated kind of research, and not as a specialization that provides insight into the basic strategies of culture. It is striking that no trend within Translation Studies has stressed this link between forms (techniques) and functions more than the (poly)systemic model, whatever may have been written and said about it[3].

As long as the aim is to analyze translations in terms of norms and strategies, the result will always be that translations are *different*, at one and the same moment, even when they originate from one single translator. But *how* different? Would they even be *erratic*, or *idiosyncratic?* Since the scholars (e.g. Armin P.Frank[4]) who support the idea of idiosyncrasy also compare various translations and utterances on translation, there must be a misunderstanding: differences and parallellisms must be limited. The problem is rather *where* and *how* translation strategies are different (heterogeneous). The treatment of foreign names and technical terms happens to be more or less inconsistent in most translations, but French translators used to adopt French proper names instead of keeping foreign names unchanged, whereas in similar circumstances Dutch translators usually do the opposite. Is there any collective policy in translation in a given time-and-place situation, and what could the general trends be? In terms of scholarship it would be difficult to exclude such a question from the historian's program.

Individual translations seem to be as heterogeneous as cultures and languages: *non-translation* seems to occur within so-called translations in a way analogous to the features of non-translated texts in the same cultural situation, which always contain translated elements (Lambert 1991b) and in a way analogous to cultures in general, which never happen to be absolutely closed to neighbour cultures.

4.3 A fundamental ambiguity

In any cultural situation translation seems to be complex, heterogeneous and always more than 'just translated'! Translations for that reason are ambiguous, and it would be interesting to examine if they are so by chance, or in a systematic way and *how exactly:*

- the very concept of translation and the words used to refer to it are unclear and contradictory in every culture, as can be illustrated by all dictionaries (since the equivalent of 'translation' always means several things and since the phenomenon can be identified with the aid of several words);
- in terms of communication, translation hardly ever functions/exists in isolation; it coexists with other kinds of messages that have no foreign original and that do not pretend to have any such original;
- there is never a real consensus on what deserves (still) to be called translation according to the normative principles of a given community, and what for translator x is an imitation may become a translation for translator y;
- most key texts imported by given communities are available in several versions;
- no translation is just and only a structure of translation procedures since non-translation is one of the translation strategies (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958); on the other hand, translation is not confined to clear-cut well identified messages since it occurs anywhere in language use as part of any discourse, as a fragment;
- the use of translations tends to become ambiguous because people are not necessarily (any more) aware that something is translated;
- especially in business matters and in political or religious discourse - a very large number of translations do not refer at ail to their real ('other') model, and the user often hardly cares about this;
- there are strong indications that part of translation strategies used by multinationals and by political institutions (legal texts) are based upon the principle of ambiguity, since there can be better chances of convincing a given audience if the translated nature of the message is not stressed, and while simulating that the origin of discourse is not foreign at all.
- the most basic question on translation is not really how translations are

> possible, but how we explain that messages formulated previously in other languages are given priority over the messages available or common in the currently dominant language.

Such general assumptions are much more than *additional* considerations for translation since they lead in many cases into the very socio-cultural origin of translations. Translations are not used as an *en soi*, just because they are translations, and as self-evident objects, but as one of the solutions to the problem of communicating in bi- or multilingual societies (are there really other ones?), and it is rather exceptional that they are used as the exclusive solution, which indicates why the *internal* examination will always be too narrow on its own. It can be supposed that the general socio-cultural and sociolinguistic situation will have its effects upon the translation strategies. This applies especially to the institutional frame. What kind of institutional norms (economic, religious, moral, political) are governing the community in/for which translation is used and produced? The first norms that have a chance to govern communication, whether imported or not, are the ones established by institutions. By definition, the institutional impact is different in private vs. public discourse. The more public discourse has to rely on sophisticated and expensive communication technology, the more it will be influenced by the institutional norms, as has been demonstrated especially since writing, printing, television or advertising have been introduced. This is also why linguistic and other kinds of standardization have become stronger because of the development of the industrial Western society.

From the point of view of the study of culture, the translational phenomenon is inevitably a key test for the homogeneity of societies (rather than: *nations).* On the basis of our modern Western experience we cannot imagine how a given community could be stable without a standard (written) language, especially since such a common linguistic frame has institutionalized the principle of nation. In sociological terms translations seem to conform at least generally to such standard norms while on the other hand importing at the same time foreign norms. Although they are not often recognized as a threat to the linguistic and cultural stability, they may have enormous consequences in the long run for the habits of the receiving culture (as may be the case with subtitling and dubbing).

In the macroscopic (panoramic) approach to the problem of translation our set of questions has first to go far beyond what translation is supposed to be, first of all in order to determine to what extent, in each case, translation is supposed to be (or is not supposed to be) a particular kind of communication, and why (not) exactly. It is particularly striking that in our contemporary Western world the answer to such a question would be negative in a very high percentage of cases, especially as far as newspaper and magazine texts, advertising or even dubbed movies are concerned: translations do often look just like common texts, and this is precisely why the man in

the street simply does not notice them.

This indicates a gap between the scholar's perception (our perception) and the man in the street's perception which very few scholars are aware of. Too many scholars reluctant to carry out empirical research are convinced that their own perception is shared by the rest of mankind. There is no reason why one type perception should be the only possible reference for historical research. The relationships between these perceptions also deserve to be questioned.

5. Notes on contemporary situations

The reasons why an internal description of translations cannot be sufficient deserves to be illustrated through some contemporary situations, and first of all with reference to a seemingly old topic, oral vs. written translation, in this case the contemporary situation of the interpreter vs. the translator. In terms of communication, the interpreter's message seems to function along the same principles as the translator's, i.e. along the double communication scheme sender-receiver etc. At least the elements involved give the impression of similarity. Several interesting differences could be noticed, e.g. in the timing etc. (Gile 1993). Seen from the point of view of translation and the stricter kind of culturally-oriented Translation Studies, our communication scheme provides a good scenario. What is generally missing however is the dynamics of the game. The very origin of interpreting/ translating in a given contemporary situation is quite often the decision taken by an organizer/manager to tell somebody else to speak/not to speak (to write/not to write) his own language. We are very naive when accepting that the question of translation is a matter of translation (only) rather than (for example) a political/economical/social decision. The audience is not necessarily informed about the reason why the 'imported' message will be given in the dominant language. It is often quite clear why the organizers of multicultural happenings do not explain to their audience *who* will be allowed to speak directly in the language of his choice to the audience. But independent of the efforts and problems of the interpreter, the people who listen to him, even to the recorded version of an interpretation, notice that the interpreter is an intermediary only (he stops, he listens, there are two voices, etc.). When listening to the speech itself as well as the simultaneous interpretation, the audience may see the interpreter together with the speaker, or they may see the speaker and listen to the interpreter, who is hidden somewhere behind a screen or a curtain. (The cultural situation described here, with the technological equipment involved, certainly has an obvious impact on the function of the message produced by the interpreter-intermediary. In oral traditions, where interpretation also functions/functioned, the conventions of reported speech follow quite different lines.) In our contemporary society only insiders know exactly who the translators of written texts are, and the readers are not well

informed about their role, to the point that they are even often misled by those who identify the substituted text as 'the (supposedly original) text'. This is especially the case in business language of all kinds as well as in political and religious discourse and even in many kinds of literary genres (except the canonized ones). Even the question of subtitling and dubbing has to be looked at in the same way: although translation occurs everywhere and (probably) more and more, it is not supposed to be made more but less explicit, and the very awareness/unawareness of its ubiquity among the members of a community is obviously not a matter of linguistics only.

It would be naive to assume that those who produce the translations/interpretations would NOT be influenced by the communicational situation in which they produce messages, especially when these messages are supposed to look like 'real texts', i.e. like non-translated texts. ('Celui qui commande, paie; celui qui paie, commande').

As can easily be guessed, the geographical, social, ideological, linguistic, religious position of those who give orders and who pay (or do not pay) could play a decisive role in the execution of the job, especially when the power relationship is obvious (as in the case of colonial powers, multinationals, etc.). One of the reasons why the source-target binary relationships in Translation Studies are to be reformulated is precisely that they are typical of a traditional view of the world where one-by-one relationships between local and more or less national communities were common, whereas nowadays many kinds of international communication circulates in much larger frames, which implies that the person who says how to speak and to write gives such orders within a larger stereotyped frame. Stereotyping or standardizing are the heart of the matter, given the norms principle. The question is whether translated messages are supposed to conform to local, to national, to international or to other kinds of messages.

For all these reasons it can be assumed that the strategies of mass communication, where translations are used as (the hidden) part of the game, are never and can never be innocent. Whether intentionally or not, they redefine discourse principles and hence also societies.

A panoramic insight into the distribution of various strategies and their variants on the world map would lead us far beyond the question of translation for its own sake. It could give us a better view of the development of societies. If it is true that one of the basic rules of social coherence is the circulation of significations, the systematic coexistence of various kinds of discourse, e.g. of translated and non-translated discourse, must be a key chapter in the process of the reshuffling of societies which is going on nowadays. Along the same lines, we can assume that the mobility/immobility of populations, whether by their own initiative or by force and misery, must always have played a central role in the traditions of translations

and hence in the development of societies.

6. The organization of historiographical knowledge

Let us stress again our distinction between *history* as the object of study (research) and *historiography*, as the argumentation on the historical object, which often but not necessarily takes the form of a book or publication (which is an output, often mainly as story-telling, more or less sophisticated, with a more or less conscious narrator). I don't see *how just the act of (re)telling history* would have a scholarly status, as long as it is not explicitly organized as such, i.e. carried out as an enterprise of synchronic and (probably later) diachronic interpretation or analysis, i.e. as *a systematic discourse, on a topic.* Histories of literature that have taken fee shape of books are generally more didactic than scholarly tools. If historiography means historical *research*, then the survey that can be offered will be a state of the art in the best of cases. It is easy to imagine that, for research teams, books are not necessarily the only possible kind of state of the art. The output of historical research does not coincide with research in progress, and work-in-progress often appears to be incompatible with the idea of finalized books, partly because the book market requires something other than simple reports.

It is worthwhile and necessary to explore particular corners of cultural history, and to reveal the results in books, as part of the didactics of scholarship. However, it is impossible to see how we could ever realise the dream of literary historians, who have wanted to summarize the development of literatures in one or several volumes. Such dreams teach us more about the historians than about literature. Historiography as a book, or as a narrative, belongs to the traditions of positivism. Only a systematic *mapping* or state of the art seems to be possible (Lambert 1989). Rather than aiming at an inevitably manipulated synthesis it is possible to indicate on a multiplicity of (synchronic and diachronic) maps, with the aid of precise parameters, what has been established and - much more - what is still open. The advantage of such diachronic and synchronic maps is precisely that they will always show the 'black spots' better than the 'illuminated islands'. They are excellent weapons against scientism.

Several maps are needed for different questions, exactly as in the case of sociolinguistic maps, where the items described are often reduced to the lexical level. The number of maps and surveys necessary in the case of literary or translational world maps looks unlimited. The question then will be how several 'maps' could be related. Here the question of the narrative pops up again. The danger is again that the narrative features might owe more to the narrator than to history. So far there seems to be no possibility of any *world history* of translation, but it is time for historians to work out honest historical maps where they summarize

what has been done and what is to be done.

7. The implications for translation theory and for the discipline

The many historical questions dealt with and to be added are theory-bound from the beginning to the end. But the historical-cultural research reveals many weaknesses in the models known so far. It is precisely *because* there are no ideal theoretical frames that historical research is much more than a pleasant activity: it is an absolute necessity even and in particular for theoretical reasons.

One of the consequences of an explicit program for historical research is that it makes us better aware of the Eurocentric basis of contemporary translation theory (and of most other theories in the humanities). Translation theory is heavily influenced by the Western institutionalization of language, societies, cultures. Although generally defined nowadays as communication, translation is generally reduced to written translation, just as language is generally reduced to standardized and written language, which is supposed to be *the only* language within a given society, and societies are supposed to be *nations.* Such a concatenation of reductions prohibits us from understanding linguistic situations in non-Western situations in the past and present, and it excludes us from many common, but non-canonized, situations within the very West-European traditions.

The too static categories underlying our academic views on language, society, communication, translation prohibit us from noticing that at this very moment quite different types of societies are developing, and there are strong indications that translation plays a basic role in such developments, Historians of translation are needed more than ever before. In our contemporary world, which is so scared/fascinated by otherness, translated discourse has the very particular feature of being both familiar and foreign. We do not know exactly whose discourse it is. The integration of translated communication into 'real communication' is so systematic and unconscious (e.g. in our newspapers, in our colloquial language, etc.) that it is part of ourselves.

I am well aware that such a cultural view of the possibilities and responsibilities of Translation Research widens the field. It does not necessarily change nor compromise what I have called atomistic research. The problem may be: what does it change for me, for the individual scholar?

8. Who is going to do this?

There seems to be no way of organizing or supervising the kind of historiography promoted here. Individuals will hardly take seriously even the idea that it is possible. Unfortunately scholars in the so-called human sciences are still convinced that research can be individual, as we have been all been taught ('Die Forschung ist Sache des Einzelnen'). They forget that they work within institutionalized frames and that it will soon be hard to avoid collective planning. The more research budgets for the human sciences are threatened, the more it will be necessary to have well-established priorities. To the extent that translation is obviously and inevitably a matter of interdisciplinarity, research on translation is well-placed to reveal the deeper roots of society and culture. In our contemporary age the sudden changes in the archeological structure of societies indicate that societies are always overlapping and always (more or less) dynamic. The links between the increasing internationalization, the instability of cultural traditions and the growing need of translations cannot be underestimated. All individual nations, but also and especially large international institutions such as the United Nations, Unesco and above all the EC, make intensive use of translations, not just for practical reasons, but also as an aspect of their political and cultural strategy. While devoting enormous budgets to new technologies and also to its enormous crew of translators, the EC tends to adapt the cultural identity of the Old Continent. So far it has not taken into consideration any organized research on the socio-cultural patterns and functions of translation and international communication. Hence the question may be asked *why* precisely *those institutions* where translations play a key role do not plan any research on their own translation strategies. Some institutions of quite a different kind - i.e. multinationals - have done exactly the opposite, for their own good: they *invest* in a better knowledge of their own communication and translation strategy! It can almost be predicted that political institutions will sooner or later do the same.

Notes

1 I am grateful for many discussions with colleagues from Leuven and other centers, especially to Lieven D'Hulst, my main companion in historiographical research.

2 In Lambert 1992 this methodological discussion is applied to concrete historical material from French romanticism.

3 The most explicit thematization of this relationship is provided in the classical paper by Even-Zohar (1978).

4 Mainly in the series 'Göttinger Beiträge zur Internationalen Übersetzungsforschung' (Berlin: Schmidt).

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