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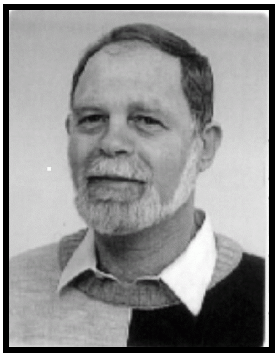
A Handful of Paragraphs on 'Translation' and 'Norms'



The format of paragraphs has been chosen to present questions and a few tentative answers on the theme of translation and norms. The formulation of questions is an important aspect of any research programme, and it has been the basis for descriptive-explanatory research as well. Translating as an act and as an event is characterised by variability, it is historically, socially and culturally determined, in short, norm-governed. In the paragraphs below, the following issues are discussed: the relationships between social agreements, conventions, and norms; translational norms, acts of translation and translation events, norms and values, norms for translated texts vs. norms for non-translated texts, competing norms. Comments on the reactions to three different Hebrew translations of Hemingway's short story 'The Killers' are presented at the end of the paper.

1 An Introductory Note on Aims and Strategy of Presentation[1]

This text should not be regarded as a full-fledged paper which offers a well-rounded presentation of all that may be invoked by the two title notions and their possible combinations. The main aim of the text is to supply food for thought for anyone wishing to get into the right mood and prepare for the Aston Seminar on 'Translation and Norms'. Above all, it is meant to lay down some ground rules for an open discussion.

As experts on diet know only too well, food is much more digestible when served in small, well-dosed quantities. It is also much more appetising that way. It is this kind of strategy that was adopted for the present document, and for the very same purposes. Thus, my humble aim is to supply a cocktail (shaken, not stirred) of select questions with a number of tentative answers and an odd (more general) hypothesis. The document should therefore be seen as no more than a series of paragraphs on the theme of our seminar; a (hopefully) coherent whole with a minimum amount of cohesive devices, mainly a number of cross-refer-

ences, which should allow for a multi-directional kind of reading. I trust this would be acceptable just the same, in view of the fact that, especially in the UK, the notion of 'paragraph' has gained considerable circulation and a measure of respectability as a mode of presenting ideas on translation.

In a way, this is a tribute to Peter Newmark, then, who invented the genre of 'Paragraphs on Translation'. However, as experts on multilingualism and language transfer would surely appreciate, at the root of my thinking in terms of paragraphs there was also contemporary colloquial Hebrew, where *tshmá kéta* (literally: 'listen to a paragraph/segment' but actually something like 'wanna hear something weird/funny') is a common discourse organiser; a marker of

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opening, setting the tone for a rather *casual* mode of presentation (Maschler, in press), which is only too fitting for the aims and strategy of my presentation.

Let me make the terms of reference of my position paper as clear as possible: as always, my main interest lies with *descriptive-explanatory research* rather than mere theorising. For me, theory formation within Translation Studies has never been an end in itself. Its abject has always been to lay a sound basis and supply an elaborate frame of reference for controllable studies into actual behaviour and its results, and the ultimate test of theory is its capacity to do that service.

Moreover, I consider the formulation of *questions* an important aspect (and phase) of any research programme. Therefore I truly believe it is questions we should be focusing on in our seminar rather than any answers that may or may not be suggested, this document included. At the same time, I hope we'll be starting our negotiations with one agreement at least; namely, that the association of 'translation' and 'norms' is not just *valid*, from the theoretical point of view, but of potential *value* too, for whatever each one of us may be interested in doing within Translation Studies; otherwise why take up this topic in the first place? As will soon become clear, my choice of the word 'negotiations', in this connection, is all but rhetorical.

In order to keep a minimum amount of order in this progression of paragraphs, topics for possible discussion will be presented in two separate clusters: a general one, tackling the notions of agreement, convention and norm within a social setting, followed by a more specific cluster, where the same notions will be taken up again and tied to translational behaviour. Some methodological points will also be made where appropriate. Whatever is related to these topic-areas will follow a second introductory section of a *historical* nature, an attempt to supply some contextualising facts to the use of the notion of norms in Translation Studies in the last few decades. Those who find this section too long or too personal are advised to skip it and move directly to paragraph-cluster 3. I feel obliged to do it this way in view of the many distortions in the way recent

developments in the discipline have been presented, most notably in Gentzler (1993), which seems to have become a standard work, in this respect.

2 Historical Observations on the Association of 'Norms' and 'Translation'

Let's agree to refrain from going into the question of who was the first to say what. Due to our incomplete knowledge of the history of our own discipline, where the wheel has been and is still being re-invented time and again, such questions are bound to generate hot debates; which is not bad in itself, had it not been for the fact that such debates would inevitably lead us way off track. Personally, I am more than willing to waive all claims for originality of thinking and give up any credit one might like to give me for having been the first to tackle translation as the norm-governed behaviour it tends to be; credit which I never claimed anyway.

Thus, it goes without saying that it wasn't I who suggested the association of 'translation' and 'norms'. This association was very much present, if only implicitly, in the work of Jiri Levy, (1969 [1963]) and James S Holmes (1988), with whom I have always felt the strongest affinity, as well as a number of other

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scholars. All of these could easily have carried their research well into the realm of translational norms because the foundations were certainly there. Needless to say, they all had predecessors of their own, which would have made it possible -- and not uninteresting -- to trace the association of 'translation' and 'norms' further back.

All this notwithstanding, I am probably the one person who would have to take the responsibility -- the blame, some will no doubt insist -- for having. injected the heaviest dose of norms into the veins of Translation Studies in the 1970s and early 1980s, in as much as the substance thus injected indeed dissolved into the bloodstream of the discipline (which is one thing I hope to see verified during our seminar). At the very least I would have to be granted with having made 'norms' a kind of legal tender in the discussion of translation practices and their results; because there have surely been quite a number who have adopted the term as little more than a catch-phrase. That is, without reflecting on any of the necessary consequences, or even trying to find out what those consequences might have been.

For me, the beginning was over 25 years ago, when I started researching for my PhD dissertation; and the notion of norms first presented itself as a means of elegantly bridging a gap I encountered while trying to account for the observed results of translational behaviour during a limited period of time (the crucial years between 1930 and 1945) in the history of translation of one text type, prose fiction, within one culture/language: the Hebrew one.

The gap I am referring to was between the notion of translation as it had came to be used by the beginning of the 1970s and the principles of establishing a corpus for a descriptive-explanatory study such as the one I had in mind. The main problem was how to draw a justifiable, non-arbitrary line between that which would be included in the corpus because it pertains to translation as conceived of by the culture in question, and that which would be left outside of it because it does not. The necessary demarcation could simply not be worked out on the basis of any of the conceptualisations I was able to lay my hands on, and for quite a while I became a fervent collector of definitions of translation, in the wild hope of hitting upon the ultimate one.

I soon realised that my difficulties stemmed from the very nature of the essentialistic definition, imposing as it does a deductive mode of reasoning, rather than the formulation of any single definition. Even the most flexible of these definitions, as long as it still purported to list the necessary and sufficient conditions for an entity to be regarded as translational, proved to be unworkable. It then dawned on me that, in the very attempt to define translation, there was an untenable pretence of fixing once and for all the boundaries of a category which is characterised precisely by its *variability*: difference across cultures, variation within a culture and change over time. Not only was the field of study thus offered considerably shrunk, in comparison with what cultures had been and were still willing to accept as translational, but research limited to such pre-defined boundaries could not help but breed a circular kind of reasoning: to the extent that the definition is taken seriously, whatever is tackled -- selected for study because it is known to fall within its domain -- is bound to reaffirm it; and if, for one reason or another, it is then found to be at odds with the initial

definition, it will have to be banished from the corpus. In extreme cases, when actual behaviour is in little congruence with the definition, there would remain hardly anything to study as translations, which is inconsistent with presystematic intuitions based on our acquaintance with the history of translation.

The way out of that deadlock seemed to me to try and have variability in all its facets *introduced into the notion of translation itself*, whereby any kind of realisation of that notion would necessarily be regarded as historically, socially and culturally determined; in brief, as norm-governed.

Needless to say, any attempt to close the gap in any real manner necessitated a lot more than the mere introduction of a WORD such as 'norm' into the theoretical arsenal (in which Itamar Even-Zohar's 1971 seminal PhD dissertation was of paramount importance, in my particular case). It had to be made *operable*. I therefore invested time and effort in theoretical and methodological elaborations on the NOTION of norm, especially in relation to its possible application to translation.

The results came into the open during the pioneering Conference on Literature and Translation, which was held in Leuven (Belgium) in 1976 (for the Proceedings see Holmes *et al.*, 1978) -- my first international conference ever. Unfortunately, it was only the skeletal English version (Toury, 1978) rather than the full Hebrew text (Toury, 1977) which became available, and that version was quite correctly characterised as overly schematic; a reflection of its having been a mere summary. In fact, schematism proved to be the strength of that paper as well as its weakness, making it appealing to some and repellent to others, even to this very day. It worked particularly well when regarded alongside Even-Zohar's presentation to the same Conference, entitled 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem' (Even-Zohar, 1978). Unfortunately, the close connections between the two were all too soon forgotten, which was no great help to the appropriate reception of my first paper on norms.

Unlike the development in recent years, conferences on translation, especially truly scholarly ones, were quite rare in the 1970s. Even against this backdrop, the Leuven Meeting was a unique event: with very few exceptions, it brought together a non-randomly selected group of relatively young scholars, many of them graduate students like myself. I therefore found myself preaching to people who were basically on the verge of conversion to a sociocultural way of thinking about translation anyway. Many of them had, in fact, crossed the critical threshold and were ready for more. This is probably the sense in which my partner in the present Seminar, Theo Hermans (who was among the participants of the Leuven Conference himself), later claimed that time was ripe for a change of paradigms of this precise nature and that translation scholars were well prepared for one brand or another of systemic reasoning which has the notion of norms built into it (Hermans, 1995). Unfortunately, while this might have been true for the group convening in Leuven and their disciples, it hardly held for Translation Studies as a whole. I have already expressed my wonder as to the extent to which it holds today...

At the beginning of the 1980s, a number of colleagues, especially younger ones, adopted the notion of norms and tried to apply it to their own corpora, trying to salve the problems they themselves were keen on solving. Some of them even

developed the notion itself in different ways, or at least criticised the simplicity and rigidity of my skeletal presentation, making me rethink it in more and more *dynamic* terms. Due to their personal backgrounds, most of the scholars who tried their hands with the notion of norm were first and foremost engaged in the study of literary translation. However, while this focused interest is easy enough to explain, it is not the case that literature is the only domain where translation can be expected to be norm-governed. It is simply that the notion of the norm has hardly been put to a serious test as an explanatory tool in any other field. This, in other words, is a weakness of Translation Studies in the present phase of its evolution and of its proponents as individuals, rather than of the notion of the norm itself, which has much wider, maybe even universal applicability (see first

attempts to apply the notion to Conference Interpreting, of all modes of translation; most notably in Shlesinger, 1989 and Harris, 1990. To judge from recent conferences, these attempts will soon be revived.)

This marks our transition to the cluster of paragraphs, beginning with the more general ones.

3 Social Agreements, Conventions and Norms

Norm-hunting, in any domain of human behaviour, clearly indicates that a sociocultural perspective was opted for. To the extent that such a perspective can be justified, there is no escape from taking seriously what the Social Sciences have to offer us. We need not become sociologists ourselves to do so. In our case, we can still wish to salve the specific riddles of translation, but we would be doing so on the assumption that translation is basically a sociocultural, and hence norm-governed activity (see paragraph 4.1). In the following paragraphs, a selection of sociocultural notions will be presented, in a way which would pave the way for their subsequent association with translation.

3.1 Agreements and conventions

An important assumption of sociologists and social anthropologists is that there must be some humanly innate flair for socialising, which some have named *sociability*. This faculty is assumed to be activated whenever a number of persons came into contact and start exploring their situation with a view to living together. They do this whether what is at stake is the establishment of a new group or just the sustenance of an existing one. As J. Davis -- an anthropologist who tried to systematise the notion of 'social creativity' and render it serviceable in explaining the making and maintenance of social groups -- recently put it:

> People use their given sociability to create *agreements about actions*. So, our worlds achieve the appearance of *stability and regularity* because we agree that certain actions are acceptable in appropriate circumstances, and others are not. (Davis, 1994: 97, italics added)

Rather than given, (tacit or explicit) 'agreements about actions' are always *negotiated*, with or without the intervention of language. Such negotiations, which require some time, result in the establishment of social *conventions*, according to which members of the group will behave when they find themselves under particular circumstances. They often do so in the form of behavioural *routines*.

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'What we create is -- within agreed limits -- a predictable event, from which certain choices have been excluded'. 'So when we are [socially] creative we attempt to create order and predictability and to eliminate choice, or at any rate to confine choice within certain prescribed limits' (Davis, 1994: 97).

3.2 Negotiations and re-negotiations

In as much as a group is indeed formed, or its existence sustained, the process involving negotiations, agreements and conventions-and-routines can thus be regarded as inevitable. The exact way it proceeds in any individual case, by contrast, is not given in any way. Rather, it is a function of the prevailing circumstances. Many times it may even seem as if 'it could so easily have been otherwise' (Davis, 1994: 97). At the same time, in retrospect, what was opted for can normally be accounted for; the agreements themselves as well as the way they were negotiated and reached.

Nor is the establishment of a societal group merely a time-consuming process. In addition to its gradual nature it is also a never-ending one: as long as the group has not collapsed, social order and everything that goes with it are constantly being (re-)negotiated; the more so when new members wish to join the group or when it is challenged by rivalling groups. Small wonder, then, that the process also involves adjustments, and hence changes, of agreements, conventions and behavioural routines. In fact, the most one would get is temporary, sometimes -- i.e. in very unstable societies -- even momentary states of equilibrium.

3.3 Conventions and norms

Conventions are a necessary outcome of any striving for social order, as well as a means for its attainment and maintenance. At the same time, they are not specific and binding enough to serve as guidelines for (and/or a mechanism for the assessment of) instances of behaviour and their products. Due to their inherent vagueness, the acquisition of conventions poses special problems to newcomers to a group, which would be the normal case with new translators starting to work in and for an established society (paragraph 4.11). There is a 'missing link' here which the notion of norm seems a good candidate for supplying.

3.4 Norms

Norms have long been regarded as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a group -- as to what is conventionally right and wrong, adequate and inadequate -- into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden, as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension (the famous 'square of normativity', which has recently been elaborated on with specific regard to translation, e.g. in De Geest, 1992: 38-40). They do so even if one refuses to accept that values art as causal elements of culture, as a sort of ultimate ends towards which action is directed, and maintains instead that

> culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or 'tool kit' of habits,

> skills, and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action'. (Swidler, 1986: 273)

As long as there is such a thing as appropriate vs. inappropriate behaviour (according to an underlying set of agreements), there will be a need for performance instructions as well. In a way, then, norms may be seen as part of Swidler's 'tool kit'. while they may not be 'strategies of action' in themselves, they certainly give rise -- and lend justification -- to such strategies.

3.5 Norms vs. normative formulations

Not only can social negotiations be carried out with or without the intervention of language (paragraph 3.1), but also the norms themselves which would govern behaviour need not be formulated at all: They may well remain implicit. At the same time, there is always at least the *possibility* of having norms verbalised, in order simply to comment on them (or on norm-governed behaviour and its results) or even as part of the process of imparting them to others to ensure social continuity.

This possibility notwithstanding, it is important to bear in mind that there is no identity between the norms as the guidelines, as which they act, and any formulation given to them in language. Verbalisations obviously reflect awareness of the existence of norms and their significance. However, they always embody other interests too, particularly a desire to *control* behaviour -- i.e. dictate norms (e.g. by culture planners) -- or *account* for them in a conscious, systematic way (e.g. by scholars). Normative formulations may, therefore, serve as a source of data on norm-governed behaviour, and hence on the underlying norms as such, but they may do so only indirectly: if one wishes to expose the bare norms, any given formulation will have to be stripped of the alien interests it has accumulated.

3.6 Norms and regularities of behaviour

Obviously, there is a point in assuming the existence of norms only in situations which allow for alternative kinds of behaviour, involving the need to select among these, with the additional condition that selection be non-random. In as much as a norm is active and effective, one can therefore distinguish regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type, which is the clearest manifestation of the 'order and predictability' Davis (1994: 97) regards as characteristic of social creativity (see paragraph 3.1).

Needless to say, whatever regularities are observed, they themselves are not the norms. They are only external evidence of the latter's activity, from which the norms themselves (that is, the 'instructions' which yielded those regularities) are still to be extracted; whether by scholars wishing to get to the bottom of a norm-governed behaviour or by persons wishing to be accepted in the group and hence needing to undergo socialisation (paragraph 3.7).

There is an interesting reversal of direction here: whereas in actual practice, it is subjugation to norms that breeds norm-governed behaviour which then results in regularities of surface realisations, the search for norms within any scholarly programme must proceed the other way around. Thus, it is regularities in the observable results of a particular kind of behaviour, assumed to have been

governed by norms, which are first noted. Only then does one go on to extract the norms themselves, on the (not all that straightforward) assumption that observed regularities testify to recurrent underlying motives, and in a direct manner, at that. For the researcher norms thus emerge as *explanatory hypotheses* (of observed [results of] behaviour) rather than entities in their own right.

3.7 Norms and sanctions

In an established group, norms are basically acquired by the individual -- a newcomer to the group on whatever grounds -- in the process of his/her socialisation (paragraph 3.6). Very often, these norms -- or even the basic agreements and conventions -- go on being negotiated throughout one's entire life in the group, for instance, when members struggle to establish their own positions within the group (or *vis-à-vis* its other members). Moreover, certain individuals may be more instrumental than others in effecting changes in the norms, depending on the status and position they have acquired in the group.

Be that as it may, unlike the weaker, more obscure conventions (paragraph 3.3), the notion of norms always implies *sanctions*; actual or at least potential, whether negative (to those who violate them) or positive (to those who abide by them). Within the group, norms also serve as a yardstick according to which instances of behaviour and/or their results are evaluated, the second, complementary role any kind of norms is desi~gned to fulfil.

3.8 The graded and relative nature of norms

The instruction-like constraints of the norm type are far from monolithic: not only are some of them more binding than others, at any single point in time, but their validity and relative strength are bound to change over time.

Firstly, in terms of their *potency*, constraints on behaviour can be described along a scale anchored between two extremes: general, relatively absolute rules on the one hand, and pure idiosyncrasies on the other. The vast ground between the two extremes is occupied by norms, which, in turn, form a graded continuum: some are more rule-like, others -- almost idiosyncratic. In fact, we -- members of a group as well as observers from without, including researchers -- can recognise a mode of behaviour or its results as being idiosyncratic (or inevitable, for that matter) only against the backdrop of our acquaintance with the middle ground and its infernal gradation. Nor is the centrality of norms metaphoric only, in terms of their relative position along a posited continuum. In a very strong sense, the other two types of constraints are mere variations of norms, and not independent entities. Consequently, they may easily -- and justifiably -- be redefined in their terms: rules as '[more] objective', idiosyncrasies as '[more] subjective [or: less inter-subjective]' norms.

Secondly, the borderlines between the various types of constraints are diffuse. Each of the concepts, including the grading itself, is relative too, depending on the point of view from which they are regarded, or the context into which they

are entered. Thus, what is just a favoured mode of behaviour within a large and/or heterogeneous group may well be assigned much more binding force within a particular subgroup thereof, which is likely to be more homogeneous too (e.g. translators among text-producers, translators of literature among

translators, translators of poetry among translators of literature, translators active in a systemic centre vs. translators who operate on a periphery, etc.). A similar kind of relativity can be discerned in terms of types of activity, forming either parts of each other (e.g. interpreting, or legal translation, within translation at large) or just sharing adjacent territories (e.g. translation criticism vs. actual translation [paragraph 4.9]). Thus, even if it is one and the same person who engages in more than one activity, and/or belongs to more than one (sub) group, s/he may well abide by different norms, and manifest different kinds of behaviour, in each one of his/her roles and social contexts. The ability to manoeuvre between alternative sets of norms is of course an important aspect of social life, and its acquisition is an important component of socialisation.

Thirdly, along the *temporal* axis, each type of constraint may and often does move into its neighbouring domain(s) through processes of rise and decline. Thus, under certain circumstances (which would have to be specified), mere whims may catch on and become more and more binding, and norms can gain so much validity that, for all practical purposes, they become as strong as rules. This may also happen the other way around, of course: what used to be binding may lose much of its force, what used to be common may become rare, what was once common to many may become idiosyncratic, on occasion even bizarre. Needless to say, what was taken up in basically synchronic terms under the second point can also be projected on the diachronic axis, which compounds the possibilities as well as the difficulties inherent in the scholarly hunt for norms.

3.9 Norms and power relations

As already indicated (paragraph 3.7), shifts of validity and potency have a lot to do with changes of status, and hence with power relations; whether these occur within the group itself or whether power is imposed on it from without (a claim which -- when stripped of its ideological overtones -- is far from an innovation of postmodernist, feminist, post-colonialist and suchlike approaches to society and culture). Whatever these shifts, they can always be accounted for in connection with the notion of norm, especially since, in as much as the process goes on and social agreements are re-negotiated, the constraints are likely to cross its realm (paragraph 3.8), i.e. actually *become* norms, at least for the time being.

Having covered some general ground, let us move on to tying the notions of social agreements, conventions and (especially) norms to the particular kind of behaviour which translation appears to be.

4 Norms of Translation

4.1 Does translation carry the notion of 'norm'?

It has often been claimed that every art of translation involves a unique encounter of an individual with a text within a specific communication situation. Does such a view of translation carry the notion of 'norm' at all?
'The scope of sociability covers all our activities', says Davis (1994: 97); and translation is certainly an activity which is of sociocultural relevance.

> We try to do all these things in a conventional way, and when we agree that we have options we try to create conventional ways of deciding among

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> them. And you should note that creative activity is continuous: [conventionalised kinds of behaviour] would cease to happen if we did not, so to speak, renew the understanding which makes them, each time [...]. (Davis, 1994: 97)

In fact, it is not difficult to see why translation should lend itself to treatment in terms of sociability, and quite easily so. After all, it is basically performed within a sociocultural context, more often than not for the consumption of persons other than the producers of the translated texts themselves, who may be said to form some kind of a group together (paragraph 4.4). While there does exist the notion of socially-insignificant translation (i.e. individuals translating for themselves, so to speak; e.g. Harris & Sherwood, 1978), its practice is surely negligible. Moreover -- and more importantly, in this context -- most socially-redundant instances of translation can be expected to simulate socially-relevant ones anyway, wittingly or unwittingly. Consequently, norms are bound to affect them too, and the same norms, at that (which is one important way how potential sanctions may be said to be taken into account [paragraph 3.7]).

4.2 Acts of translation vs. translation events

But is translation not a cognitive process? Does it take place anywhere else except in an individual's brain? And if this is the case, what could the explanatory power of sociocultural notions such as conventions and norms possibly be? Should acts of translation not be accounted for in purely *mental* terms? Should we not all turn to the cognitive sciences, if what we are interested in finding out is what translation activities consist of and how they proceed in 'real life'?

True enough. All translation decisions are made in an individual's brain. At the same time, positing an incongruity, let alone contradiction, between the cognitive and the sociocultural seems a gross exaggeration, especially in the context of translation; an incongruity which diminishes to the point of losing its pointed tip as soon as a distinction is drawn between the *act of translation*, which is indeed cognitive, and the context of situation where the person performing the act, and hence the art itself, are embedded, which has sometimes (e.g. Toury, 1995: 249ff.) been called the *translation event*.

Needless to say, no translation event can be said to have taken place unless an art of translation was indeed performed. On the other hand, at least in socially-relevant instances of translation, including simulated ones (paragraph 4.1), all cognitive processes occur within contexts which constitute events. This much I believe should be taken for granted, and it should be justification enough for approaching the overall event in sociocultural terms.

One thing I would not venture to do here is tackle the intriguing question of how, and to what extent, the environment affects the workings of the brain, or how the cognitive is influenced by the sociocultural, even though this would surely make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of translation (see, in this connection, recent attempts to use the notion of 'meme' in Translation Studies, especially to account for changes in the concept of translation itself and the way they travel; most notably in Vermeer, 1997 and Chesterman, 1997.) We will return to the possible influence of the environment on translation performance in the more specific context of socialisation; in this case -- the emergence of

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an individual translator within an established sociocultural setting (paragraph 4.11).

4.3 'All is predestined -- but freedom of choice is granted'

But is the concept of norm, especially in its application to translators, and hence its association with translational behaviour, not too rigid, as many seem to maintain? Is it really the case that acceptance of the idea that translation events are basically norm-governed entails the denial of free choice during an act of translation which is embedded in it? -- Not at all! To borrow a concept from traditional Jewish thinking: 'All is predestined but freedom of choice is granted' (*Avot* (The Sayings of the Fathers], 3: 15).

To put it bluntly, it is always the translator herself or himself, as an autonomous individual, who decides how to behave, be that decision fully conscious or not. Whatever the degree of awareness, it is s/he who will also have to bear the consequences. Remember the notion of sanctions (paragraph 3.7) ? At the same time, it is dear that, even though there is always the possibility that one would be willing to take the risks which unconventional, non-normative decisions entail, under normal conditions, a translator would tend to avoid negative sanctions on 'improper' behaviour as much as obtain the rewards which go with a 'proper' one. Needless to say, it would make an interesting project to study the [negative and positive] sanctions that may be associated with translational behaviour and their (possible and actual) effects on instances of performance within defined sociocultural settings (see the way Daniel Simeoni has recently related the concept of 'norm' and Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' in the specific context of translation, Simeoni, 1998).

In fact, translators have even been known to art differently, or at least to produce different surface realisations of the category 'translation' (i.e. differently

looking utterances), when working for different commissioners, e.g. in order to be given more work by the same commissioners, or at least to escape the need to have their products edited by others, which many translators abhor. To be sure, freedom of choice is exerted not only when one chooses to behave in a way which does not concur with the prevailing norms. It is also exercised when one seems simply to reaffirm one's previous commitment to these. After all, in principle, there is always an alternative, otherwise there would be no need for norms in the first place (paragraph 3.6).

4.4 What group is it where agreements are negotiated?

If agreements and conventions are constantly being negotiated (paragraph 3.2), and if norms are one of their outcomes and modes of implementation in actual behaviour (paragraph 3.3), it would only be proper to enquire as to where those negotiations take place, in the case of translation; in other words, what constitutes 'the group' in question. For instance,

* How homogeneous (or heterogeneous) should that group be taken to be?
* Would it always consist of members of the same categories?
* More specifically, would it include acting translators only (which would yield a very limited group indeed), or persons playing other, adjacent roles as well; whether in the production of translations itself (e.g. editors [of

translations, or even texts in general]; teachers, especially of translation; translation critics; censors; publishers) or around it?
* And what about (average or specific) consumers of translated utterances: would they be taken to form part of the group too? And, if so, would it not mean going way too far with the notion of 'group'?
* In a heterogeneous group, how powerful are the translators themselves, with respect to the creation, negotiation, maintenance and change of translational norms? Do they occupy the centre or a peripheral position?
* And what about individuals who play several roles alternately? Is it all that certain that they would art according to exactly the same norms while assuming their different positions?

This is an intriguing domain about which translation scholars seem to know precious little, beyond a small number of accounts of isolated individual cases. There seem to be many alternative patterns here. Thus, there may be larger and smaller groups involved in the negotiations, more or less closely-knit or diffuse, more or less homogeneous, more rigid in their (personal or sectorial) composition, etc. It is not totally unjustified to assume that these differences would manifest themselves as significant, in their implications for translation behaviour and the norms governing it. However, this is about all I would say, at this point (see again Simeoni, 1998).

4.5 The 'value' behind translation

Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably confronts different languages and cultural traditions, and hence different conventions and norms on each pertinent level. Thus, the value behind it, or the basic tools in a translator's 'tool kit', for those who refuse to accept that values behave as causal elements of culture (paragraph 3.4), may be described as consisting of two major elements; namely, producing a text in a certain (so-called 'target') language,

(1) which is designed to occupy a certain position, or fill in a certain slot, in the culture that uses that language while, at the same time,
(2) constituting a representation in that language/culture of another, preexisting text in some other language, belonging to some other culture and occupying a definable position within it.

It is clear that these two types of requirement derive from two sources which -- even though the actual discrepancy between them may vary greatly -- should be regarded as different in principle. Often they are incompatible in practice too, so that any attempt to abide by the one requires a price in terms of the other, which breeds an inherent need for *compromise*.

4.6 Norms and efficacy

The inevitable compromise between the constraints drawing on the two different sources, while always realised by an individual, is strongly affected by sociocultural factors which determine its appropriateness; the behaviour by the enveloping circumstances, the art by the event. Among other things, this can be seen as a strong factor of *efficacy*.

Thus, were it not for the regulative capacity of norms, the tensions between

the two sources of constraints, and hence between adequacy and acceptability (as a translation or as a target-language text) would have to be resolved on an entirely *ad hoc* basis, and with no clear yardstick to go by. Indiscriminate, totally free variation might have been the result, which would have made it next to impossible to locate an art of translation and/or its results within their social context and assign them any cultural relevance. Everything may well have been seen as equal to everything else, which is most certainly never the case; not even - in the most permissive of societies. Not even if the ideology appears to be there.

4.7 Regularities of behaviour again

In fact, as any cursory look will ascertain, translation as practised within a particular culture, or a certain sector thereof, tends to manifest quite a number of *regularities*, in terms of both translational adequacy and acceptability (as well as their preferred blends), a fact which we have already taken as strong evidence of the *potency* of norms (paragraph 3.8). On the other hand, these regularities may well differ from the ones exhibited by another culture, cultural sector, or even the same culture in another phase of its evolution (which amount to the same thing, theoretically speaking).

One consequence of the existence of such regularities and their acknowledgment is that, even if they are unable to account for them, people-in-the-culture can at least tell when a translator has failed to adhere to sanctioned practices. For instance, they may not be able to say that a certain phenomenon in a translated text reflects interference from the source text/language, but they will at least have a hunch as to what they are expected to~ *feel* about it, within the preferences of their culture. Different cultures have been known to have had different thresholds of tolerance of interference. Some of them even preferred to have them in translated texts; e.g. in the translation of 'Works of Wisdom' (in contradistinction to the translation of 'Works of Beauty') into Hebrew in the Middle Ages (see Toury, 1998).

4.8 How regular would 'regularities' need to be?

'Regularities' thus turn out to be a key notion in descriptive studies into translational behaviour and its results as well. In fact, the establishment of recurrent patterns is the most basic activity in the pre-explanatory phases of a study, the phases where data are collected and analysed and discoveries are being made. Also, it is first and foremost discerned regularities, rather than any of the individual phenomena as such, which would then be explained on the assumption that the behaviour which yielded them was indeed norm-governed (paragraph 3.6), all the more so as not every observed phenomenon will be subsumable under one of the emerging recurrent patterns in the first place. The beauty of human behaviour, whether under cognitive or sociocultural observation, is that there is no 100 per cent regularity, not even in the behaviour of one person while translating one text, which concurs with the graded and relative nature of the notion of norms (paragraph 3.8). Complete absence of any regularities should also be regarded as marginal: if one looks hard enough (or extends one's corpus enough), reflections of any possible mode of behaviour are sure to be found.

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What may seem more frustrating than failure to come up with any absolute findings (which both 'never' and 'always' imply) is that, very often, regularities will first manifest themselves in rather low percentages. Consequently, it will not be all that clear just how much significance should be assigned to each observed regularity. The main reason is that it is almost as hard eta establish sampling rules for translational behaviour, or even its textual-linguistic results, as it is to take 'everything' into account. Justifying the status of a body of material as a 'sample' in terms of Translation Studies is even harder.

In actual fact, what a researcher often starts out with is a rather arbitrary set rather than a proper corpus; a group of texts, or a number of lower-level phenomena, which may be both accidental, from a translational point of view, and highly heterogeneous (i.e. devoid of clear regular patterns). The way to go from here is to try and break the initial set into sub-groups on the basis of one feature (variable) or another which will have emerged as significant (for that set) during the study itself. This procedure is bound to yield a substantial increase of

homogeneity, reducing each sub-group's accidentality and gradually rendering it representative in terms of that particular variable; in other words, a proper corpus. Within such sub-groups, regularities are bound to increase, often considerably. If found to be too small now, any subgroup-turned-corpus could then be expanded; this time on the basis of the defining feature itself, and hence in a much more justified (and justifiable) fashion.

4.9 Are translational norms translation-specific?

Due to their contending sources (paragraph 4.5), there is no way that the norms governing translation in their totality (that is, the overall 'normative model' a translation event is subject to) will be identical to the ones operating in any other field, be it even a closely-related one. One may of course expert correlations, including partial overlaps, but never full identity. Norms can also be imported from one type of behaviour to another (always with some [necessary] modifications), but the value of each one of these norms is likely to be different due to its different systemic position. The same holds for norms imported from a different group engaging in the same kind of activity, within the same culture and society or in different ones.

Let us look at three types of activity which are closely related to translation: communication in non-translated utterances, translation assessment and translator training.

Type one: *Communication in translated vs. non-translated utterances*. Here, partial overlap is to be expected, as a translation is always an intended utterance in the target language and culture: one aspect (or phase) of any art of translation involves formulation in that language, and the norms governing this activity may of course be more or less similar to the norms governing the composition of a non-translated utterance, and more or less different from them. At the same time, since translation is not reducible to that aspect/phase alone, only partial overlap can be expected.

Overlap between the norms governing translation and non-translation can be expected to grow in direct proportion to the centrality of target-language 'normality' in translation, which is of course a norm-governed idea. 'Accept-

ability as a translation' may thus become a variety of 'acceptability' in general, which would normally imply reduced interest in the principles governing the source text (or the internal 'web of relationships' which constitutes it) and their reconstruction.

Conversely, imitations of textual-linguistic behaviour in another culture/language (or of certain types of translation from it) may be attempted in non-translational communication as well. The resulting texts may thus bear close resemblance to translations without there ever having been an identifiable source text. This option has often been selected by the creators of so-called 'fictitious

translations' (e.g. Toury, 1995: 40-52), precisely in order to convey the impression that those texts had in fact been translated, i.e. lead the people-in-the-culture astray on the basis of what they have come to associate with 'genuine' translations.

Whether the one extreme or the other (and both of them are extremes!), the likely result is a blurring of the borderline between translations and non-translations: all texts would tend to look alike, and whatever differences there may be, it won't be easy to attribute them to the translation/non-translation opposition. On occasions, such an opposition may be found out to have been completely non-functional in the culture in question: even if it is retained on the level of the acts whereby texts are generated, translations may still be presented -- and accepted -- as originals, and originals as translations, without this having any cultural repercussions.

Such seems to have been the case in the early Enlightenment period in Hebrew literature (Toury, 1995: 131ff.). People-in-the-culture, producers and consumers alike, did not really rare which texts were based on foreign ones in a one-to-one manner and which texts were based on them in a one-to-many ratio, or even just embodying the principles of the models underlying particular text-types. Today's scholars face a great many difficulties in ascertaining which one is which, but, in an important sense, they may be trying to salve riddles of very little historical significance, if that is what they are doing.

Type two: *Translation vs. translation assessment*. These two activities differ in a different sense: with respect to the translational product, the one activity is *prospective*, the other one is *retrospective*. Even if bath result in textual entities, their end-products are of a different order too: translations are the result of a direct application of translational norms whereas assessments employ first and foremost norms of evaluation and of evaluation-presentation, including the norms governing the composition of evaluative texts. As regards translational norms, evaluators just react to them and their results. Sometimes they may try to extract them from the results of translational behaviour, to a certain extent even verbalise them. What they never do is *implement* the norms, unless they wish to offer an alternative translation (which may be a strategy of critics, even teachers, whereby they change for some time their role, and hence the kind of activity they are engaging in).

Basically, translation and evaluation are two different activities, then, whose governing principles can simply never be 'the same'. What they can do is reflect the same overall attitude towards translation, each in its own domain. In this sense, translators and evaluators may belong to the same group (paragraph 4.4).

However, even this is not a theoretical must, nor does it always occur in practice. Thus, critics and translators may, and often do have *different* values, e.g. they may

favour different blends of acceptability and adequacy; on occasion, even if translation and criticism are performed by one and the same person.

To give an example: whether (or under what circumstances) a translator would feel obliged to read the source text in its entirety before s/he embarks on its translation is a basic strategic decision which may rely more or less on social factors, that is, be norm-governed; be it directly (e.g. there exists an 'instruction' to do precisely that) or indirectly (e.g. through a marked dominance of an initial norm of translation adequacy). Now, whereas every translator who has finished translating will have been through the source text at least once, many translation evaluators, including critics writing on literary translations, or members of committees awarding translation prizes, may never feel an urge to even peep into the original, let alone read it in its entirety. What is most significant here is not simply that this happens, but that a societal group may accept it, sometimes even *prefer* it that way.

Type three: *Translation vs. translator training*. This may well be the trickiest comparison. One would think that persons who have been entrusted by society with the training of translators at an accelerated pare, would see their task as imparting modes of behaviour to the non-initiated the way they are normally practised, thus preparing them for acceptance in and by the relevant group (paragraph 4.4). However, this is often not the case. What many students of translation are actually being offered draws on an admixture of concepts borrowed from sources deemed more 'respectable' than the behaviour of real translators under normal sociocultural conditions; mainly disciplines such as linguistics, text-linguistics or pragmatics. These concepts are supplemented by intuitions, sometimes very good ones, but all too often seasoned with a speck of wishful thinking. In the most extreme cases, the claim is even made (at least implicitly) that there are things that simply should be (or else should never be) done; by virtue of what translation allegedly 'is', and not by virtue of a sheer convention; in fact, not seldom in contrast to existing conventions and the agreements which underlie them.

There is normally an ideology behind such attitudes, and ideologies tend to involve a manipulation of existing normative patterns. Thus, many teachers of translation see it as their task to effect changes in the world at large, wishing, as it were, to take active part in the process of (re-)negotiation which is constantly going on (paragraph 3.2). They would of course claim that the prevailing situation is badly in need of improvement, but this would not affect the basic claim that what they are trying to do is *change* a state of affairs, and one which others, including the group of practising translators, may well regard as perfectly satisfactory. They do what they do from a position of almost absolute power (*vis-à-vis* their students), power which was granted to them by the institutions in which they work; sometimes, though not always, and certainly not necessarily, on the basis of their own recognition by society as translators (see, in this connection, Chesterman's 'professional norms', Chesterman, 1993). However, the edge teachers have over their students does not necessarily imply similar

position and power within society at large; not even in the 'translatorial' group, whoever it may consist of.

It is possible to say that training institutes often behave like closed groups, having conventions and norms of their own. They are trying to impart these norms to newcomers to this closed group and through them and their future translational activity -- to society as a whole. Unfortunately, transition from such a group into the 'world' may not always be all that smooth. In extreme cases it may involve real pain and frustration. Thus, it has not infrequently been the case that the graduates of a translation programme had to undergo a process of forgetting a great deal of what they had been taught and adjusting, at least in part, to prevalent norms of sociocultural appropriateness; very often the very same norms their teachers wished to see changed.

4.10 But are all translations 'good'?

Are teachers of translation (or critics, for that matter) all that wrong? Has everything become so relative that there is no such thing as a bad translation any more? Of course there is, even though there is definitely nothing objective or absolute about that notion either. Rather, notions of what would constitute a bad translation (or a good one, for that matter) are as changing as the notion of translation itself. In fact, judged by our (irrelevant) norms, even the ones we apply to the case of the translation of religious texts, the King James Version of the Bible is surely not a very good translation. From today's point of view, its centrality can only be explained in historical terms. Acknowledging its 'inherent' qualifies as bath an English text and a translation into English would require the adoption of another attitude, associated with a completely different set of norms, those that were at play at a different point of time and hence in another culture.

The basic thing one must be ready to accept is that bad translations are first and foremost translations, not something completely different. Consequently, whether an item which would be conceived of as a translation is 'good' or 'bad' will be determined by an extension (or further specification) of the normative model pertinent to the culture where it came into being (or the appropriate section within it). It is not that members of a societal group cannot arrive at a valid conclusion in an intuitive way; it is that, if and when required to account for their attitude, they will have to draw on that set of norms -- or else be unable to justify their intuitive verdict.

Thus, any attempt to impart the way 'good' translations are (to be) done, e.g. by teachers of translation (paragraph 4.9), may backfire; namely, when society refuses to accept that those are indeed good. Significantly enough, it is often the case that even teachers in one and the same institute, or critics within one culture, do not assess a translation the same way. Differences of assessment, again, may look idiosyncratic, a matter of personal taste and temperament, and to a certain extent this is precisely what they are. However, to an even greater extent they are a result, or a reflection of the affiliation of different persons to different

(sub)groups, and to that extent they are a function of norms again. (For the possibility of having different, even competing norms within one and the same group see paragraphs 4.12 and 4.13.)

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4.11 How does an individual acquire translational norms?

In modern times, many translators (but still a minority) are indeed being trained, even conditioned, in professional or academic training institutes. Me have just touched upon their possible fate (paragraph 4.9). Others, probably the vast majority, pick up the conventions and norms pertinent to their job through a process of initiation within the culture itself, a specific mode of socialisation (paragraphs 3.6-3.7). In view of the lack of any real longitudinal studies into the making of translators outside of the schooling system, the only way to sketch this process is speculative; namely, on the basis of what we know about socialisation in general, with the addition of some translation-specific considerations. The present writer also made use of his insights as to how he himself became a translator back in the 1960s; namely, before he ever did any Translation Studies.

Firstly, if the internalisation of norms is really that important an aspect of translational behaviour, then the acquisition of that knowledge, and of ways of coping with it in real-life situations, should count as a major aspect of socialisation in relation to translating. My assumption here is that, being a mode of communication, translating is likely to involve *environmental feedback*, which may come from any other party to the communication event. This feedback is normative in its very essence: it concerns the well-formedness of a translation, not just as an utterance in the receptor language and culture, but first and foremost as an assumed translation (Toury, 1995: 31-35), that is, a realisation in the culture and language in question of the mode of text-production translating is taken to be. At least by implication, the norms embodied in that feedback also apply to the (minimal, optimal, necessary, etc.) relationships between assumedly translated utterances and their assumed sources, especially in terms of whatever should have remained invariant. By extension, they also determine the appropriateness of the strategies used to derive a translational output from a given input utterance under those conditions of invariance, even though there can be no one-to-one relation between a procedure and the results of its application.

Secondly, it is the all-pervasiveness of sanctions (paragraph 3.7) which lends such normative feedback its influence on a translator's behaviour. Under normal conditions, one would wish to avoid negative sanctions on 'improper' behaviour as much as obtain the rewards which go with a 'proper' one (paragraph 4.3). This aspiration holds especially for the novice, who -- due to lack of sufficient experience -- is likely to feel insecure as to what translating is all about, according to the conception of the group in and for which s/he will be operating, and who, on the other hand, may be looking for recognition by that group in his/her capacity as a (socially-relevant) translator. It is precisely this view which gradually crystallises for her/him in a process of initiation. It may, of course, prove irrelevant again, if and when that person moves to another group,

especially if the new group forms part of a completely different culture. Under such circumstances, another process of socialisation may be required.

Thirdly, in the initial stages of one's development as a translator, the feedback directed at him/her is exclusively *external*: overt responses to one's translational products, final or interim. A novice simply has no means of assessing the appropriateness of various options and/or of the alternative strategies that may yield them. Little by little, however, translators may start taking potential

responses into account too. They thus develop an *internal* kind of monitoring mechanism, which can operate on the (interim) product as well as on the art of translation as such.

Fourthly, as socialisation in relation to translating goes on, parts of the normatively-motivated feedback are probably assimilated by the translators as they gather more and more experience, modifying their basic (i.e. innate) competence and gradually becoming part of it. Many decisions will now be made more or less *automatically*. It may also be hypothesised that, to the extent that a norm has been internalised and made part of a modified competence, it will be applied to instances of more spontaneous translation too, namely in situations where no sanctions are likely to be imposed. It is in this sense that socially-insignificant instances of translation may be said to simulate socially-significant ones (paragraph 4.1). Some translators may then go on to take active part in the re-negotiations concerning translational conventions (paragraph 3.2) which will sometimes result in a change of norms.

4.12 Alternative norms within a group

One thing which makes translational decision-making less demanding than it may have sounded so far in terms of the risks taken, even though probably more complex in terms of its underlying mechanisms, is the fact that, at every point in the life of a societal group, especially a comprehensive and/or heterogeneous one, there tends to be more than one norm with respect to any behavioural dimension. Consequently, the need to choose between alternative modes of behaviour tends to be built into the very system, so that socialisation as concerns translating often includes acquisition of the ability to manoeuvre efficiently between the alternatives (paragraph 4.6).

Multiplicity of norms does not amount to no norms at all, much less imply anarchy. For it is normally not the case that all existing norms are of an equal status, so that choice between them would be totally free, or devoid of any implications for the assessment of the person's behaviour and/or his/her position within society. Manoeuvring between alternative modes of behaviour thus turns out to be just another norm-governed activity, necessarily involving risks of its own.

4.13 Competing norms

Norms operating within one and the same group are not merely different from each other. Quite often they are competing too. After all, in the dynamic structure of a living society, there is always a struggle for domination, as a result of which norms may change their position *vis-à-vis* a certain centre of gravity, the more so as the centre itself may be undergoing shifts.

What complicates matters even more is the fact that each group-within-a-group (and all groups tend to be hierarchically organised) may have its own structure of centre vs. periphery, entailing an internal struggle for domination of its own, in addition to (and sometimes as part of) its participation in the overall struggle. Consequently, one has to be as clear as possible as to whether one is talking about changes *of* (sub)systems or changes *within* one of them.

Firstly, there is *variation within a culture*. Whether within one (sub)system or

between the various (sub)systems regarded as building up one higher-order entity, it is not rare to find side by side three types of competing norms, each having its own followers and a position of its own: the ones that dominate the centre, and hence direct translational behaviour of what is recognised as the *mainstream*, alongside the remnants of *previous* sets of norms and the rudiments of what may eventually become *new* ones, hovering in the periphery (and/or near the centre of lower-order (sub)systems). This is why it is possible to speak -- and not derogatorily either -- of being 'trendy', 'old-fashioned' or 'progressive' in translation as it is in any other behavioural domain.

Secondly, there are *changes over time*. One's status as a translator, in terms of the norms one adheres to, may of course be temporary: many translators fail to adjust to the changing requirements, or do so to an extent which is deemed insufficient. Thus, as changes of norms occur, formerly progressive translators may soon find themselves just trendy, on occasion even downright *passé*.

At the same time, regarding this process as involving a mere alternation of generations can be misleading, especially if generations are equated with age groups. While there often are correlations between one's position along the 'dated'-'mainstream'-'avant-garde' axis and one's age, these cannot, and should not be taken as inevitable, much less as a starting point for the study of 'norms in action'. As already maintained, there is nothing deterministic here.

In fact, research shows that it is often people who are in the *early* phases of their initiation as translators, whether young or not so young of age, who behave in the most epigonic way. Insecure as most of them understandably are, they like to play it safe and tend to perform according to dated, but still valid norms. One way to explain this is to realise that a beginner's deviant behaviour would more readily be regarded by society as 'erroneous' rather than 'innovative'. while both may be applied to the same mode of behaviour (or its products), the different *values* assigned to them make all the difference in the world!

Such a conservative tendency is further enhanced if would-be translators receive reinforcement from socialisation agents, especially powerful ones, holding to dated norms themselves. No wonder that revolutions -- i.e. large-scale changes of paradigm -- have often been made by *experienced* translators who had, moreover, attained considerable prestige by behaving 'appropriately', i.e. according to mainstream norms. After they internalised those norms, and having attained more than mere recognition by society, they can afford to start deviating from them and get away with it.

4.14 Constraints, strategies and norms

There is another pair of notions which deserves a lot more attention than it has received so far, namely that of 'strategy' and 'norm'. Let us regard as a strategy any set of moves utilised in trying to solve a perceived problem; perceived by the one performing the act, that is.

Intuitively, there seems to be some connection between strategies, on the one hand, and norms on the other. However, the nature of that connection has not been clarified; probably mainly due to the fact that those who focused on translation strategies (e.g. Wolfgang Lörscher, 1991) have normally considered mere *acts of translation* rather than *translation events* (paragraph 4.2) whereas most

socioculturally-oriented scholars have not followed the progression from the event to the art. I believe it is about time that we had both ends meet, if only for the purpose of supplying better, more comprehensive and more flexible explanations of the translational behaviour of individuals within a societal context (and see Simeoni, 1998 once again). Such explanations are also bound to assign a third notion, that of constraints, its proper place in the account of translation rather than its mere 'opening conditions'.

5 By Way of Conclusion: A Story of Three 'Killers'

Let me conclude with one of my favourite cases, which may be taken as a nut-shell exemplification of many of the points made throughout this document.

In the last few decades, three different Hebrew translations of Hemingway's famous short story 'The Killers' were published, at almost identical intervals, and not very long ones, at that: the first translation (A) was published in 1955, the second one (B) in 1973 and the third and last one (C) in 1988. Linguistically, each one of the three textual entities is of course different, which is all but surprising; the more so as every translator seems to have been aware of the earlier version(s). In fact, some of the decisions made by later translators could be taken as indications of so-called 'polemical translation'; see Popovic, 1976: 21.)

What is most interesting, however, and not all that evident, is that when asked to put the three translations in their correct chronological order, everybody -- from complete newcomers to thinking about translation to experienced translators, teachers of translation and translation scholars -- came up with precisely

the same order. Moreover, with very few cases of local disagreement, when asked to justify their ordering, they all based it on the same series of features; basically an assortment of semantic, grammatical, syntactic, pragmatic and stylistic markers, as well as translation relationships, which the subjects seem to have associated with 'typical behaviour' of literary translators into Hebrew at the three different points in time (or at least of its gradual change along time).

Now, the significant thing is that, in spite of a 100 per cent agreement between dozens of subjects who have undergone this pseudo-experiment, they were all wrong: the order they came up with -- which was based on their intuitive-to-learned ability to identify relevant markers and associate them with modes of translation (and, yes, the norms which governed them) -- that order did not conform to reality. Thus, the order they all gave was ACB instead of ABC.

When I disclosed the names of the translators (actually, four of them, because the 1973 version (B) was prepared by two persons jointly), there were quite a number of subjects who were able to correct their initial ordering. The names acted as additional information for them, because they had cultural knowledge as to who was more or less likely to count as 'dated', 'mainstream' or 'avant-garde' in their translational behaviour.

Finally, once all subjects learnt of their factual error, it was relatively easy to explain to them how, historically rather than chronologically speaking (that is, in terms of the appropriate norms and their position in society), they had not been all that wrong, after all. Thus, only one of the three translations was appropriate for the time at which it was produced and the expectations of its intended consumers, namely, the first one (A). The other two versions were either ahead

of their time (B) or somewhat obsolete (C); two kinds of deviation from 'mainstream norms' which were automatically 'corrected' by all readers.

The bottom line seems clear enough: not only are there norms associated with translation, but people-in-the-culture know how to, and actually do activate them; not only while producing translations themselves but while consuming them as well. What is still unclear is whether production- and consumption-norms are exactly the same, even in this individual case, i.e. which group it is that generates and negotiates translational norms, but we have already presented this as a moot point (paragraph 4.4).

Note

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1. I have decided to have the paper published in a format almost identical to that which served as basis for the seminar, i.e. with only minor amendments. The reason behind this decision is to let the readers see how I tried to stimulate the debate.

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