

TWO APPROACHES TO THE POSITIONING OF TRANSLATIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ITAMAR EVEN-ZOHAR'S POLYSYSTEM STUDIES AND GIDEON TOURY'S DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES AND BEYOND

Harry Aveling
Department of Asian Studies
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
h.aveling@latrobe.edu.au

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the work of two contemporary scholars of Translation theory, Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. Their studies arise out of Russian Formalism and their common location at the University of Tel Aviv. Even-Zohar's Polysystem theory attempts to position texts and their translations within "literary polysystems." On the other hand, Gideon Toury extends Even-Zohar's discussion by a more detailed consideration of the role of "norms" in the translation process. This article suggests that Toury's ideas have been more readily accepted by the academic community because of the way they fit other dimensions of contemporary thought. Although this paper does not consider the application of these theories, it suggests that these theories could be valuable in the study of Southeast Asian literature and the relationships between local literatures in different languages.

Keywords

Indonesian literature, literary polysystems, translation theory, Russian Formalism

About the Author

Harry Aveling is from the Department of Asian Studies at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, and is also Adjunct Professor of Southeast Asian Literature at Ohio University. He has translated extensively Malay and Indonesian Literature, and is the editor of the bilingual anthology *Secrets Need Words: Indonesian Poetry 1966-1998* (Ohio UP, Athens 2001), which was shortlisted for the 2003 NSW Premier's Translation Prize. He holds the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy in Malay Studies from the National University of Singapore, and Doctor of Creative Arts in Writing from the University of Technology, Sydney.

Author's Note

An earlier version of this paper has been published as "A Comparative Study of Itamar Even-Zohar's *Polysystem Studies* and Gideon Toury's *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*" in *CELT: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature*, January 2005.

INTRODUCTION

Translation Studies emerged as an autonomous academic discipline during the early 1970s (Even-Zohar 1).^a Among the important work undertaken at this time was that of Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, both of the Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature at Tel Aviv University, Israel (Weissbrod 1-2).

The aim of the department was not to study one or even a number of literary traditions, but poetics itself, "literature as literature," through descriptive research within

the framework of a set of theoretical assumptions. Even-Zohar and Toury, too, sought to provide theoretical frameworks for the study of literary texts and their translations, which relied as far as possible on the study of relationships within and between texts.

This paper focuses on the two theoretical approaches to translation which have arisen from their work in Tel Aviv. The first approach is Polysystem Theory, developed by Itamar Even-Zohar. The second is Descriptive Translation Studies, developed by Gideon Toury.

Even-Zohar was born in Tel Aviv in 1939, and completed his doctoral thesis *An Introduction to the Theory of Literary Translation* at Tel Aviv University in 1972. Sales Salvador describes this work as “the matrix” of [his] polysystem theory. Even-Zohar’s major papers were published as an *Introduction to Polysystem Studies* in 1990 (Schlesinger).^b

The slightly younger Gideon Toury completed his doctorate in 1976, with Even-Zohar as his “ally and guide.” Toury’s work develops out of “the translation component of Even-Zohar’s model” and can be divided into two phases (Gentzler 123-4). The first, from 1972-6, was empirical and involved an extensive study of the cultural conditions governing the translation of foreign language novels into Hebrew from 1930 to 1945. This work used the polysystem theory framework.^c The second period extended from 1975-1980 and led to a series of papers published in 1980 as *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. These papers began to go beyond Even-Zohar’s basic model and Toury revised some of this work in a more theoretical way in *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, published in 1995.^d Both scholars are now leading members of the Unit for Culture Research at Tel Aviv University.^e

RUSSIAN FORMALISM AND PRAGUE STRUCTURALISM

The work of the Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature, founded in 1966, relied heavily on the work of the Russian Formalists of the 1920s and their successors the Prague structuralists. It is necessary, therefore, to gain a brief overview of this critical school before going on to outline the ideas of Even-Zohar and Toury. Because the ideas of these two scholars, and those of their predecessors, do not have wide circulation among literary scholars, I have chosen to use direct quotations wherever possible in what follows.

Russian Formalism can be said to have begun with Victor Shlovskij’s pamphlet *The Resurrection of the Word*^f and to have come to a premature end with his politically motivated recantation in January 1930. The movement was centered around two student groups, the Moscow Linguistic Circle (founded in 1915) and the *Opojaz* (*Obscestvo izucenija poeticesckogo jazyka*, Society for the Study of Poetic Language) group in Saint Petersburg (founded in 1916) (Jefferon 16).

Frederic Jameson has suggested that the Formalists “did not have a single position, a single literary doctrine; yet their work was a collective one, and possesses a unity of development in time” (47). Their major concern was with “the investigation of the specific properties of literary material ... the properties that distinguish such material from material of any other kind” (Ejxenbaum 7). This statement indicates that they were interested both in the formal characteristics of literariness (*literaturnost*) and the differences between literary texts and other orders of writing.

They attributed literariness to the use of particular literary devices. Shklovskij wrote: “Poetic speech is *formed speech*,” shaped by formal devices such as rhyme and rhythm, which “act on ordinary words to renew our perception of them, and of their sound texture in particular” (qtd. in Jefferson 20). The purpose of artistic devices, or literary properties, is, firstly, to shape language and, secondly, to “defamiliarise” or “make strange” (*ostranie*) “those things that have become habitual or automatic” (Erich 76). Shklovskij interestingly suggests that: “A dance is a walk which is felt; even more accurately, it is a walk which is constructed to be felt” (qtd. in Jefferson and Robey 19) – it is walking formalised and made different from our normal means of progress, in order to convey particular feelings.

These devices represent formal aspects of the text. Literary devices sooner or later become conventional and dull and give way to other new, and again unfamiliar, conventions and devices. The history of literariness is history of the ebb and flow of disjunctions based on the inevitable automatization of current literary devices and their replacement by other devices. Some of these techniques will be spontaneous; others will enter the canon from foreign literatures, or come from marginal and popular genres (Erich 34, 260).⁵

Language was central to Formalist definitions of literature. Their successors, the Prague Linguistic Circle, reformulated Formalist literary theories within a purely linguistic framework. (The Circle was founded in 1926 by Roman Jakobson, first chairman of the Moscow Linguistic Circle who later moved to Czechoslovakia.) This framework was derived from, or at least very similar to, the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, first published in 1916, de Saussure argued that “languages are *systems*, constituted by *signs* that are *arbitrary* and *differential*” (qtd. in Jefferson and Robey 43). The Prague School’s emphasis on structures, as an alternative way of defining de Saussure’s concept of relationships, led to its being described as “structuralist.” They argued that, like language, the poetic work too is a “‘functional structure’ ... the different elements of which cannot be understood except in their connections with the whole” (qtd. in Jefferson and Robey 44).

The Prague school applied these ideas of “structure” and “function” to all forms of communication, including literature. In an address delivered in America in 1958 but based on categories propounded by Mukarovsky twenty years earlier, Jakobson suggested that any message can have six different functions that correspond to six factors present in any act of communication: an addresser, an addressee, a context, a code, a means of contact, and the message itself. Thus:

The focus on the *addresser*, for instance a speaker or an author, constitutes the *emotive* function, that of expressing the addresser’s attitudes or feelings; the focus on the *addressee* or receiver, the *conative* function, that of influencing the feelings or attitudes of the addressee; the focus on the *context*, the real, external situation in which the message occurs, the *referential* function; the focus on the *code*, as when the message elucidates a point of grammar, the *metalingual* function; the focus on the means of *contact*, as in the case, say, of expressions inserted by one party into a telephone conversation simply in order to reassure the other party that they are both still on the line, the *phatic* function; the focus on the *message* itself, the *poetic function*. (qtd. in Robey 44-5)

While all functions may be present within any act of communication, one will normally be dominant.^h This function will stand out beyond all the other functions in some obvious manner and will thus “foreground” or “actualize” the text as a whole (Robey 45). Sometimes the message may be the most important thing about a text. At other times, the personality of the artist dominates everything else. On still other occasions, the means of expression may be the main feature of interest and the major distinguishing characteristic of the text.

For Translation Studies, Russian Formalism offers, above all, a way of thinking about the facts of literature, not as single details in themselves but as they exist in relationship to other facts (Jameson 13). It is the dynamic relationship which counts most in fully describing literature. Both Even-Zohar and Toury argued in terms of systems and active relationships between the various functions of the literary text. This is the basis of their significant contribution to Translation Studies.

POLYSYSTEM THEORY (ITAMAR EVEN-ZOHAR)

Even-Zohar has stated that “[p]olysystem theory was suggested in my works in

1969 and 1970, subsequently reformulated in a number of my later studies and (I hope) improved, then shared, advanced, enlarged, and experimented with by a number of scholars in various countries" (1). Its foundations had been "solidly laid" by the Russian Formalism of the 1920s (as he notes on page 1 of his *Introduction to Polysystem Studies*),ⁱ especially by its later transformation "from an a-historical, clearly textocentric, approach to one where above-the-text occurrences are considered to be the *main* factor, and *change* is considered a built-in feature of 'the system' rather than 'an external force'" (Even-Zohar 33). As we have just seen, for Formalism, change within a literary tradition comes from the use of new and unfamiliar devices within a text and not from external sociological or other forces.

The main ideas of Polysystem Theory can be reduced to a small set of propositions. These can be logically set out as follows, using Even-Zohar's own words as far as possible in an attempt to capture the flavor of his writing:

1. The term "literary" refers to "any kind of textually manifested (or manifestable) semiotic repertoire fully and visibly institutionalised in society" (61). Literature is both autonomous, self-regulated, and also heteronomous, in as far as it is conditioned by other systems (30).
2. A "system" is "the network of relations that can be hypothesized for a certain set of assumed observables."ⁱ
3. A "literary system" is "the assumed set of observables supposed to be governed by a network of relations (i.e., for which systemic relations can be hypothesized), and which in view of the hypothesized nature of these relations we propose to call 'literary'" (27). Alternatively it is "[t]he network of relations that is hypothesized to obtain between a number of activities called 'literary' and consequently these activities themselves observed via that network" (28). As a consequence, Even-Zohar suggests that "[t]he literary system does not 'exist' outside the relations contended to operate for/in it" (28).
4. Following Jakobson (above), Even Zohar argues that the factors involved within the literary (poly)system are:
 - a. The *producer* (addresser, the writer), who makes texts, as both a "conditioning" and a "conditioned" force (35).
 - b. The *consumer* (addressee, reader or listener), who "consumes" the text, but also engages in a wider range of activities relating to literature as

- part of “the public” (36-7).
- c. The *institution* (context), which “governs the norms prevailing in this activity ... remunerates and reprimands producers and agents... determines who, and which products will be remembered by a community for a longer period of time.” The institution includes critics, publishing houses, periodicals, clubs, groups of writers, government bodies, educational institutions, the mass media, and more (37). Because of this diversity, it is clear that the literary institution is “not unified” (38).
 - d. The *repertoire* (code), which is “the aggregate of rules and materials which govern both the making and the use of any given product” (39). Repertoires are structured on at least three levels (40-1). In traditional linguistic terms, the repertoire is “a combination of ‘grammar’ and ‘lexicon’ of a given ‘language’” (39). The “literary repertoire” is “the aggregate of rules and items with which a specific text is produced, and understood.” The literary repertoire may also include “the shared knowledge necessary for producing (and understanding) various other products of the literary system,” such as the roles of “writer,” “reader,” “literary agent,” etc. (40).
 - e. The *market* (contact, channel), which is “the aggregate of factors involved with the selling and buying of literary products and with the promotion of types of consumption” (38). And, finally:
 - f. The *product* (message), which is “any performed (or performable) set of signs, i.e., including a given ‘behavior’” (43).
5. A “polysystem” is “a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent” (11). Polysystems are “dynamic” and heterogeneous (12). They are “not equal, but hierarchized” (14): “It is the victory of one stratum over another which constitutes change on the diachronic axis” (14). At the center of each particular system is “the most prestigious canonized repertoire” (17). Change commonly comes from “the periphery” to the center, within systems and sometimes across systems (14).
 6. Literary systems are always in contact with other literary systems—Even-Zohar’s ponderous words are: “Literatures are never in non-interference”

(59). Sometimes this interference is direct: “a source literature is available to, and accessed by, agents of the target literature without intermediaries.” At other times it is indirect: “interference is intermediated through some channel such as translation” (57).

Translated literature plays a particular role within the literary polysystem, but always on terms set by the receiving literature—not those of the source literature itself (46)—and prestige and dominance are important elements in this process (59). The home co-systems of the target literature also determine “the way they adopt specific norms, behaviors and policies – in short, their use of the literary repertoire” (46). It is important to note two implications of this. The first is that “an appropriated repertoire does not necessarily maintain source literature functions” (59); instead it meets the functions determined by the needs of the receiving literary system. It is also the case that any translation will create a different text from the source text: one that is “simplified, regularized, [and] schematized” (59).

Translated texts may have various positions in the literary polysystem. They may sometimes even become central and “the most active system within it” (46). This happens when a polysystem is still being established; when the literature is peripheral within a group of co-related literatures, or weak, or both; and when there are “turning points, crises or literary vacuums within the literature (47-8). Translated texts may also be “peripheral,” in which case their function is largely conservative (49). Peter Bush, for example, notes that only three per cent of what is published in English is translated work, and most of that is done for academic purposes (1). It is also possible that, because “translated literature is itself stratified ... one section of translated literature may assume a central position, [while] another may remain quite peripheral” (Even-Zohar 49).

Even-Zohar is pleased to note that his major hypotheses “have won some support among a relatively large group of students of translation” (74). They have also been considered to be compatible with certain contemporary sociological approaches to literature.^k

Nevertheless, not all scholars are impressed. Anthony Pym, for example, suspects that “much of translation history can advance quite well without using the word ‘system’ at all” (117). He finds that the systems postulated are ultimately vague; they rely on “leaps of faith”; they “suppress a humanized, subjective systematicity”; and that, while system theories in general aim to be “scientific,” they are “not very good ... at formulating causal hypotheses” (116-124) or, equally important, in putting forward ethical propositions.

Edwin Gentzler, while acknowledging “the advances” made by Even-Zohar, also notes four “minor problems” with Polysystem theory. These are: a “tendency to propose universals based on very little evidence”; an “uncritical adoption of the Formalist framework” and some of its concepts (including “literariness” and definitions of “primary” and “secondary” literatures) which “underlie, yet seem inappropriate to ... [his] complex model of cultural systems”; “the problem of locating the referent”; and, finally, “Even-Zohar’s own methodology and discourse,” with its assumed scientific objectivity and assumptions of total completeness (120-3). These problems (which are actually quite large problems) suggest the need for further conceptualisation of Even-Zohar’s premises. They do not necessarily negate the premises, but certainly call for caution in their application.

DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES (GIDEON TOURY)

Polysystem theories provide a fruitful framework for thinking about the field of literature and the place of translated texts within and between literatures. In going beyond his mentor’s work, Toury’s program of Description Translation Studies provides a more defined, and perhaps less problematical, methodology for comparative work in Translation Studies.

In *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Toury argues that Translation Studies is a science, which through empirical research, aims “to describe particular phenomena in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which they can be explained and predicted”(9). In accordance with ideas proposed by James Holmes, Toury divides Translation Studies into two major branches, “Pure” and “Applied.” He then sub-divides the “Pure” into two further sub-branches: “Theoretical” and “Descriptive” Translation Studies. Descriptive Translation Studies (henceforth DTS) is then further divided into three different research foci: function-oriented, process-oriented and product-oriented (9-10).

These three foci delimit separate legitimate fields of study, giving rise to individual studies which are “local activities, pertinent to a certain corpus, problem, historical period, or the like ... [but they are also interdependent, as] ... function, process and product can and do determine each other” (11). Toury suggests that the proposed role of a translation in a new literary system will determine the linguistic manner in which it is translated and hence the final new text.¹

Finally he argues that Descriptive Studies should also be informed by, and contribute to, Theoretical Studies, in particular by a concern to establish “coherent *laws*

which would state the inherent relations between all the variables found to be relevant to translation” (16).

Contrary to much of Applied Translation Studies, which is prescriptively oriented towards the linguistic surface of source texts, Toury (more than Even-Zohar) sees translations as “facts of the culture which receive them. The concomitant assumption is that whatever their function and identity, they are constituted within that same culture and reflect its own constellation” (24) – and not that of the original source culture. Nevertheless, because they are translations, they will not match the receiving culture’s literary expectations exactly. Rather, they will also tend to “*deviate*” from the target culture’s sanctioned patterns. Such deviations will not only be considered “*justifiable*,” or even “*acceptable*” but they will be seen as being “*actually preferable to complete normality*” (29). Toury summarizes these assumptions this way: “translations are facts of target cultures; on occasion facts of special status, sometimes even constituting identifiable (sub)systems of their own, but of the target culture in any event” (29).

Toury maintains that such a formulation needs to be contextualized to be fully useful in a research project about translated texts (29). Any such project will imply three postulates: first, that there is a source-text, “in another culture/language, which has both chronological and logical priority over it ... which is presumed to have served as a departure point and basis for the latter” (33-4)^m; second, an assumption about transfer from the source-text, involving “knowledge about products, on the one hand, and about (cross-linguistic and cross-cultural) processes, on the other” (34); and third, an assumption that there are “accountable relationships” (35) which tie the translation to the source-text.

DTS begins with the target-text, assuming it to be a translation of a particular source-text, then maps “the assumed translation onto the assumed counterpart, in an attempt to determine the (unidirectional, irreversible) relationships which obtain between the paired texts. It then seeks to understand “the concept of translation underlying the text as a whole.” This may further lead to other speculations, including “a confrontation of the competing models and norms of the target and source texts and systems, which were responsible for the establishment of the individual replacing and replaced segments, along with the relationships shown to obtain between them” (37). In time, the fuller exploration of particular literary relationships will extend beyond one translation or pair of texts to, for example, the work of a particular translator, a school of translators, a period, a particular text-type, specific text-linguistic phenomena, etc. (38).

The goal of the target-oriented approach is the establishment of “translational norms” (53). In general, norms are formulations of the general values and ideas of society,

about right and wrong, suitable and unsuitable, and their translation into “performance instructions” for particular situations, specifying what behavior is permitted, what forbidden, and what sits somewhere in between. Norms are the product of socialization – they are learned. Because they are used to evaluate behavior, they carry rewards and punishments (54-5).

Within translation, there are always two sets of norms: that of the source text, “which determines the translation’s *adequacy* as compared to the source text ... [and that of the target culture, which]...determines its acceptability” to the new audience (56-7). The “initial norm” facing the translator is whether to subject oneself to the source of target culture norms or not (56-7).

Following this choice, Toury suggests there are two larger groups of norms with which the translator must deal. The first are “preliminary norms” relating to the choice of text to be translated and the directness of translation. The second are “operational norms” which direct the decisions being made during the work of translation. These include “matricial norms” governing the existence of target-language material, its distribution and manipulations of segmentation, as well as “textual-linguistic norms” which “govern the selection of material to formulate the target text in, or replace the original textual and linguistic material with.” Textual-linguistic norms may be general, applying to translation as such, or particular, applying to “a particular text-type and/or mode of translation only” (59). Significantly, norms “determine the (type and extent of) equivalence manifested by actual translations” (61).

The translation scholar’s task, then, is to reconstruct the norms which have governed particular translations. Norms can, firstly, be reconstructed on the basis of the texts themselves. In certain circumstances, they may also be deduced from extra-textual sources such as prescriptive theories of translation current at the time; statements by translators, editors, publishers, publishers and other relevant individuals; critical discussions of translated works; the activities of individuals and groups of translators, etc. Toury suggests that textual norms are more to be trusted than are extra-textual pronouncements (65). Finally, it is important to note that although norms are socio-culturally specific, they are also unstable and often subject to change (62). And, of course, they are not always followed absolutely, as different translators bring their own understandings and experience to the work at hand (67-9).

Toury’s theories move in a narrower and more carefully defined area than Even-Zohar’s. (Interestingly, the words “polysystem,” and even “system,” are not listed in the index to *Descriptive Translation Studies*.) Although similarly committed to a positivist

scientific methodology, Toury's work is more accessible and more rigorously textual. Despite some scholar's dissatisfaction with Toury's work (Gentzler [130], for example suggests that it contains a number of theoretical contradictions),ⁿ Toury's work has been widely used in Translation Studies.

A major reason for this widespread use may be the large number of articulations which are possible between Toury's ideas and those of contemporary thought. Toury's papers have been published in the context of manipulation theory^o and the wider study of "translation and norms."^p His rejection of "one-to-one notions of correspondence as well as the possibility of literary/linguistic equivalence (unless by accident)" (Gentzler 131) matches the continuing dominance of de Saussure's thought characteristic of post-structuralism. His denial of the common idea of an unambiguous original message carrying a fixed meaning has strong resonances with Reader Response theories, and, in Translation Studies, with Skopos theory.^q Finally, his location of both the original and translated texts within "the semiotic web of intersecting cultural systems" (Gentzler 131) responds to the turn to Cultural Studies which has been such a strong feature of Translation Studies, and the "new humanities" in general, at the close of the twentieth century.^r To put it simply, Toury himself matches the norms of the wider academic culture in a way that Even-Zohar's dogmatic scientism does not. This does not mean, of course, that Even-Zohar is wrong, but it is nevertheless true that readers do have to work harder to make his work useful.

CONCLUSION

Toury suggests that a theory provide a particular set of "questions," a number of "possible methods for dealing with an objects of study with an eye to those questions," and some of sense of "the kind of answers which would count as admissible" (23). Both he and Even-Zohar have played major roles in reshaping Translation Studies into a more rigorous and descriptive discipline, related not only to language studies but also to the major trends in European thought from Russian Formalism through to postmodernism.

Edwin Gentzler has argued that this theoretical work, done in Israel, reflected the complex relationships of multiple cultures and languages which are characteristic of the region. As he dramatically states "[i]n the fragile diplomatic and political situation in the Middle East ... Russian culture does meet Anglo-American; Moslem meets Jewish; social and historical forces from the past influence the present; multilingualism is more prevalent than monolingualism; exiles are as common as "local" nationals. To understand one's past, one's identity, an understanding of translation in and of itself is crucial; translation

ceases to be an elite intellectual “game,” a footnote to literary scholarship, but becomes fundamental to the lives and livelihood of everyone in the entire region (and maybe the world)” (107).

The situation in Southeast Asia in general, and the Philippines in particular, carries a similar urgency. Both Even-Zohar’s and Toury’s studies have related to Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and the emergence of a native Hebrew culture in Palestine. More recently, Even-Zohar has studied *The Role of Literature in the Making of the Nations of Europe*. I believe that these theories could fruitfully be applied to the study of translated texts in Southeast Asia as a whole, to literatures in particular nations in Southeast Asia, and the relationships between particular local literatures in different languages. Certainly they offer a framework for more rigorous thinking in the area of comparative literature. It is my hope that future articles will contribute to this project.

Allow me to conclude here by providing a short example of how the theories described above might be used in the discussion of one translated text from Southeast Asia. For convenience, I will refer to my own book *Secrets Need Words: Indonesian Poetry 1966-1998*,^s a bilingual anthology of English translations of Indonesian poems written during the Suharto era.^t

The 115 poems included in *Secrets Need Words* (hereafter SNW) belong to the Indonesian literary polysystem. Estimates of how many languages are found in Indonesia vary from a low 69 to a high 578 (McGlynn 72). The Indonesian literary polysystem includes works written in the national language “Indonesian,” *Bahasa Indonesia*, by authors normally residing within the borders of the Republic of Indonesia, published after 1920. Although the system is dispersed across the archipelago, its centre of prestige rests in the national capital, Jakarta. The Indonesian literary system stands in opposition to the various “regional” literary systems: the Javanese literary system, written in Javanese (from Central and Eastern Java); Balinese literary system, in Balinese (from Bali); Minangkabau literary system (from Central and Western Sumatra), and so on. It also stands in opposition to other literary systems using the same language (but called *Bahasa Melayu*, Malay) to be found in Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore.

1. The producers of the original Indonesian poems comprise twenty-three poets, only two of whom are women. SNW distinguishes between two “generations” of Indonesian poets. The “Generation of 1966,” who were born during the 1940s, experienced the transition to Independence provided by the Revolution of 1945-1949, began writing in the highly nationalist context

of late Sukarnoism (which they largely rejected), and assumed their place at the centre of the polysystem after 1966, with the accession of Suharto to the positions of Acting President in 1966, then President in 1968. A second group, which I call the “Post Indonesian Generation” were born during the 1960s, educated in Indonesian, resided in the provinces, assumed that religion was an important part of their self-definition, and experienced the various pressures placed on the expression of free speech after 1973. The Post Indonesian generation began publishing their works after 1980 and thereafter shared with the centre of the literary system with their seniors, who remained active and influential.

2. The consumers of this poetry consisted of a highly educated literary public, fluent in Indonesian and trained in the norms of “modern” literature. Although these readers were spread across the archipelago, their numbers were small – perhaps as few as 3000 persons in all (of a population now in excess of 220 million people).
3. The various institutions which governed this activity consisted of the few literary magazines (Horison, founded in 1966, and Budaya Jaya, which ceased publication in the late 1970s); the Jakarta Arts Council and its cultural centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki; and later other arts centers and literary groups in the provinces. Some of this literature was taught at university level in Departments of Indonesian Language and Literature; some (a small part) was taught at the high school level. The major critics were associated with Indonesian, and sometimes overseas, universities.
4. The repertoire emphasized the free verse expression of personal emotion through a variety of thematic concerns. Poetry, on the one hand, supported the individuality that the regime sought to cultivate but, on the other, tried in subtle ways to ignore the state’s increasingly strong call for publicly recognizable obedience and conformity to traditional gender roles. The change in the devices marking literariness in the 1980s were sparked by the religious trends which were characterized as a mystical Sufism. The new aesthetic ideologies (concrete poetry, surrealism and feminist protest) remained subject to the earlier individualism and the avoidance of any public

explicit criticism of the regime. With the final fall of the President in May 1998, the earlier ideology of poetic protest briefly reasserted itself in “Sastra Reformasi,” the Literature of Reformation.

5. The market was governed by a few major publishers and increasingly a range of small private publishers; as well as the national and regional newspapers published in Indonesian which carried literary supplements on a weekly basis.
6. The product potentially consisted of all of the poems published in Indonesia over the thirty-two years of Suharto’s rule.

Secrets Need Words is a small selection of the poems published over this period, chosen between 1996 and 1999. The poems were selected and translated by a single individual, an academic scholar of Indonesian literature working in an Australian university. The readers were expected to be other scholars of Indonesian Studies, and hopefully readers of poetry in English (translation) in general. The institutions governing the activity were the universities, scholars of Indonesian, and the critics of translation (“the translation police”) in particular.

The repertoire included a number of elements. The first of these were the criteria for selection: authors must have published at least one book of poems; the poems had to be considered important by Indonesian critics; the poems had to be capable of being turned into English. The second was my desire that the translations should read as poems in English.^v The third were the principles of free verse translation, reflective of the original poems but also of the most common form for English literary translation since Ezra Pound. And the fourth were the criteria relating to the various ways in which a literary anthology might be composed: monolingual or bilingual; representative of Indonesian writing or directed towards the tastes of the target audience; with or without commentary; arranged by a sequence of discrete authors, themes, historical period, etc.^v

The market consisted of people willing to buy (and able to afford) a book published by an American university press. The product was not only the poems and their translations, but also the cover and illustrations, the preliminary introduction, the various introductions preceding each of the eight chapters in the book, the footnotes, the table of contents and the list of poems, and the notes on the authors. Each of these would be worthy of comment.

Even-Zohar would be interested in the place occupied by poetry in Indonesia and by the place of the translated poetry in SNW as part of the wider American literary polysystem. Based on my observation, translations of Southeast Asian literature tend to be of most interest to other Southeast Asian nations, and sometimes to the source nation itself. My translations of Malay literature into English, for example, have been read and criticized mostly by readers from [in] Malaysia itself. The fit into various other English (with a small “e,” following the classic *The Empire Writes Back*) polysystems besides those of the dominant Anglo-American English speaking cultures is worth studying further. (How are English translations of Malay and Indonesian, and other Southeast Asian literatures, read and placed in the Philippines, for example?)

Toury would not be interested in studying either source or target polysystems. Instead, he would take the contextualization of SNW within the target culture much further than I have done above. The interest in norms would need to consider the choice of texts – why some poems were selected but also how others have been ignored on the grounds that they might be considered clichéd, sentimental, overstated or banal in English. In SNW, one would need to consider and compare the choice of lexicon, syntax, tone, meter, rhythm, poetic form, and emotional content. The study of text-linguistic norms would also relate to nature of free verse in English literary systems, and the dominance of free verse models in translation. It would consider how those used in SNW relate to other poetry in English, as well as to the specific models which have influenced my own practice, Donald Allen’s *The New American Poetry* and A. K. Ramanujan’s *The Interior Landscape*. The fuller study would consider the ideology behind SNW, which might be considered as a liberal-humanist concern for personal freedoms and the role of literature in challenging dominant political forces, and relate this to other translated and original literature in English. (Many works from “the Third World” chosen for translation into English have strong political overtones of protest against authoritarian regimes or the sufferings caused by patriarchy.) Finally, there might be a comparison of the norms governing SNW with those in other volumes of translation of Indonesian poetry, e.g. Burton Raffel’s *Anthology of Modern Indonesian Poetry*; John McGlynn and Ulrich Kratz’ *Waling Westward in the Morning*; and *Di Serambi: A Bilingual Anthology of Modern Indonesian Poetry*, edited and translated by Iem Brown and Joan Davis. And even, perhaps, with English translations of Indonesian prose – the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, for instance.

Gideon Toury entitled his closing remarks to the Seminar at Aston University in February 1998, as follows: “Some of us are finally talking to each other. Would it mark the beginning of a true dialogue?” He described the discussion which had taken place at the

seminar, and led to the volume *Translation and Norms*, as a “promising first step towards a much desired dialogue to be sure, but not yet a real dialogue.” What seemed important to him for that dialogue to truly begin was “the ability – and the willingness – to take a step backwards and find out what everybody’s assumptions and goals really are and how exactly different goals breed different theoretical and methodological stances” (qtd. in Schaffner 133). The principles of study suggested by Even-Zohar and Toury himself, provide a systematic framework for understanding the multiple ways of dialogue between various cultures and the translation of literary texts.

A few off-hand comments on how the poems “read as though they had been written in English,” or are ugly and deformed transgressions of English poetic aesthetics, or misrepresent the original language by the omission of this word and that punctuation mark, are not, it should now be clear, how one should deal with translated texts at all.

NOTES

- a. See the essay by James Holmes, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies," written in 1972 but most recently republished in Lawrence Venuti, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2000.
- b. Itamar Even-Zohar. "Introduction to *Polysystem Studies*." *Poetics Today* 11.1 (1990): 1. This journal includes 19 articles by Even-Zohar, published between 1974 and 1990, and "replaces" his earlier *Papers in Historical Poetics* (1978).
- c. *Translation Norms and Literary Translation into Hebrew, 1930-45* (in Hebrew). (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1977). Gentzler describes the work on pages 124-5.
- d. Further references to this book will be carried within my main text. Gentzler agrees with Theo Herman's critical comments on the lack of innovation in the new book and its lack of engagement with competing ideas and views. See Herman's *Translation in Systems* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1999).
- e. See the website <<http://www.tau.ac.il/tarbut/index.html>> for a description of the work of the Unit of CultureResearch, Tel Aviv University.
- f. A translation of this essay can be found in S. Bann and J. Bowlt, eds. *Russian Formalism*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973.
- g. See also the discussion by Tony Bennett. *Formalism and Marxism*. London: Methuen, 1979.
- h. Peter Steiner defines "the dominant" as "a skeletal, form-giving element in a static hierarchy of holistic correlations" (105). See *Russian Formalism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1984. See also Jakobson's essay "The Dominant" in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 82-7.
- i. Interestingly, Russian literature held the position of major prestige in "the Hebrew literary polysystem" between the two wars (Even-Zohar 49), and continued to do so long afterwards (Even-Zohar 83).
- j. In his essay "On Literary Evolution", Tynjanov (1927) defines "the system" as "a complex whole, characterized by interrelatedness and dynamic tension between individual components, and held together by the underlying unity of the aesthetic function": See Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 199.
- k. See M. V. Dimic and M. K. Garstin. "The Polysystem Theory: A Brief Introduction, with Bibliography." *Problems of Literary Reception*. E. D. Blodgett and A.G. Purdue, eds. Alberta: University of Alberta, 1988. Available online at <http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/ps/dimic_ps.htm>.

- l. The relations may also be read in the opposite order, but as functions – “the value assigned to an item belonging in a certain system by virtue of the network of relations it enters into” (12, n.6) – have “at least *logical* priority over their surface realization,” the reversal of roles is “no longer viable: Since translating is a teleological activity by its very nature, its systemic position, and that of its future products, should be taken as forming constraints of the highest order.”
- m. This is not always the case: some texts – in Classical Malay Literature, for example – claim to be translations from Javanese, although no source texts in fact exist. Robson discusses this practice in the Introduction *Hikayat Andaken Penurat*, Bibliotheca Indonesica 2, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1969.
- n. See also Theo Hermans. *Translation in Systems*. 76-7.
- o. “A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies” first appeared in Theo Hermans, ed. *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. London: Croom-Helm, 1985.
- p. See “A Handful of Paragraphs on ‘Translation’ and ‘Norms’” in Christina Schaffner, ed. *Translation and Norms*. (Clevedon, 1998). 10-32.
- q. See Christiane Nord. *Translation as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. Manchester: St Jerome, 1997.
- r. See Lawrence Venuti. *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- s. See Harry Aveling. *Secrets Need Words*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2001.
- t. A more extensive consideration of this volume, using a different conceptual framework, can be found in my “Finding Words for Secrets: Reflections on the Translation of Indonesian Poetry.” *Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Working Papers Series*, No. 116. Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 2002.
- u. Michael Bullock makes an interesting distinction between “a poem written in English” and “an English poem,” in his Foreward to Surjeet Kalsey’s *Glimpses of Twentieth Century Punjabi Poetry*. Delhi: Ajanta, 1992.
- v. See Helga Essman. “Weltliterature Between Two Covers: Forms and Functions of German Translation Anthologies.” *Translating Literature, Translating Cultures*. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Michael Irmscher, eds. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.

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