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On Modelling Translation: Models, Norms and the Field of Translation

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In this paper I should like to look at translation as a modelling activity, in a double sense. First, translating can be considered as constructing a 'model' of a source text. This allows us to explore to what extent the concepts of model theory might be applicable to translation and what kind of insight, if any, might be derived from such an exercise. Secondly, inasmuch as translating involves textual production in a social and cultural environment, we may inquire into the norms which govern this process and the place and function of discursive models and prototypes in relation to norms.

1

Allow me to pick a starting point at some distance from my main topic, and to invoke two philosophers of science. In his essay 'The Beginnings of Rationalism' of 1958, as well as in various other writings, Karl Popper argued that progress in the sciences, all sciences, results from free and critical inquiry. Any genuine growth of knowledge in a given discipline, Popper pointed out, can only be based on "the tradition of bold conjectures and of free criticism" (1983, p.29). This is a tradition of research and investigation which accepts that "our attempts to see and find the truth are not final, but open to improvement; that our knowledge, or doctrine, is conjectural; that it

consists of guesses, of hypotheses, rather than of final and certain truths" (ibid.).

Popper's views on the provisional nature of all our knowledge and on the need for free investigation are too well known to require further comment. Equally well know is his insistence on the fact that the growth of knowledge in the sciences is furthered particularly by bold conjectures, bold guesses, bold hypotheses –which, of course, it should always be possible to criticize freely.

One perhaps unexpected way to generate such bold conjectures, daring guesses and novel hypotheses has been suggested by another philosopher of science, Max Black, in his collection of essays *Models and Metaphors* (1962). The essay on 'Models and Archetypes' in this collection contains a discussion of various types of models, including scale models, analogue models, mathematical models and finally theoretical models. As conceptual tools, Black argues here, theoretical models are especially useful to the researcher on account of their projective, exploratory qualities. A theoretical model may prove enlightening precisely in that it is first mapped on some accessible domain of knowledge and then tentatively projected onto an unknown domain. It may therefore be characterized as a "description of an imaginary but possible structure" (Black 1962, p. 239). Because the theoretical model is first mapped on one field and then projected onto another, it employs language appropriate to the first field to speak about the second one. This is where the distinctive *heuristic* function of a theoretical model lies, and in this respect, Black goes on, a theoretical model is comparable to a bold, sustained metaphor. We can see such a metaphor, or any metaphor, as mere verbal ornament or decoration, just as we can see a model as no more than a mental crutch to lean on, but we can also deploy metaphors and theoretical models as actively probing instruments.

A bold metaphor, as Black describes it, establishes an unexpected relation between two separate domains by using language appropriate to one domain as a lens for seeing the other, enabling us to perceive a new subject-matter in a novel way. Just as "[m]etaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight", so theoretical models constitute powerful "heuristic fictions" (p. 228): they are "speculative instruments" which can help us "to *see new connections*" (p.236-7; his emphasis, T.H.). They can do so because theoretical models, like metaphors, require the "analogical transfer of a vocabulary" (p. 238). It is precisely the combination, in the exploratory tool itself, of analogy

and difference, of incongruity and similarity, which may produce sudden cognitive gain, in the form of startling, novel insights. And so it is not surprising, Black observes, that "the crucial question about the autonomy of the method of models is paralleled by an ancient dispute about the translatability of metaphors" (p. 236).

We can leave the issue of the translatability of metaphors aside here and focus on the question of the possible cognitive gain to be derived from metaphorically mapping the terminology of one domain onto another domain. Theoretical models, that is, imply statements of the kind: 'What if the world really *is* as shown in this model?'. Or, to turn to the domain of literary studies: 'What if we decide to see literature as a system?'; which can be reformulated as: 'Assuming, for the time being, or simply for the sake of argument, that literature *is* a system and that consequently the concepts of systems theory can be applied to it, do we observe anything new, anything of interest?'; or again, more apodictically, as a logician might put it: 'Let literature be a system' –and subsequently: 'What is the advantage to be derived from projecting a systemic model onto the domain called literature?'

As we know, the twentieth century has seen a considerable variety of such theoretical models being applied to literature and, more recently, to translation. Of course, I will not be so presumptuous as to suggest that the perspective on translation which I wish to develop here will result in anything like the decisively novel insight which might spring from adopting new theoretical models or daring hypotheses or bold metaphors. This is not to say, however, that a certain displacement of the usual perspective on questions of translation might not prove beneficial, perhaps even refreshing.

What I should like to concentrate on, then, is exactly the concept of model and the way it might be used in the study of translation. I will not employ the term in the fairly plain sense of, say, a diagram representing the communication process or the mental operations involved in translating. I want firstly, and only briefly, to look at some of the basic properties of models in general and see whether there is anything to be gained from thinking of translations as models. In the main part of the paper I will go on to consider models in relation to norms. Norms will be understood here as socially operative realities, so that the social and historical dimension of the matter can come into focus.

What, then, is a model? The question is harder than it looks. Although I am not a 'model theoretician', in either sense of the word, even a limited amount of reading in model theory makes it clear that, while there appears to be a broad consensus as regards a number of fundamental features of models, the term itself covers a bewildering variety of meanings, and there is little agreement on such things as the exact definition of a model, or the classification of models into types. Fortunately, these issues need not concern us in the present context, and we can rephrase our question as: 'what are the basic properties of models?'. Before taking up that question it will be useful to remind ourselves of a few general points about models.

Firstly, models need not be explicit, physical constructs, or even visible entities. They include mental realities such as the semantic maps and conceptual models we carry around in our heads (cf Stachowiak 1965, p.444ff.), both in the very general sense as the basic human ability to conceptualize and in the shape of largely unconscious, culturally formed cognitive schemas. The definition given by some social anthropologists to this notion of 'culturally formed cognitive schemas' is that they constitute 'learned, internalized patterns of thought-feeling that mediate both the interpretation of on-going experience and the reconstruction of memories' (Claudia Strauss in D'Andrade & Strauss 1992, p. 3).

Secondly, the object represented by a model does not have to be a physical reality either. While in many cases the object is of course a tangible entity in the empirical world, it may also be a reality that remains inaccessible to direct observation, for example a social mechanism, or a hierarchical relation; or it may be an entirely hypothetical entity, for example a supposed underlying cause such as the law of gravity. As we saw, most theoretical models address purely hypothetical objects. In a sense, they are models in search of an object; or it might be said, more daringly, that they are models which construe their own object.

Thirdly, models can in turn be modelled. That is, we can construct a model on the basis of an existing model, which then serves as the object or the prototype of the second model - which in turn can stand as the prototype of a third model, etc. In our case, since we are dealing with cultural and textual material, this type of modelling chain is not at all uncommon.

Let us now look at some of the basic properties of models. They can be summarized under three main points.

1. A model is always a model *of something*, called the object, or the original, or the *prototype* (in what follows I will mostly use this latter term). In this sense a model, when perceived in terms of its modelling function, is a 'vicarious object', i.e. a substitute. It represents, reproduces, refers to something else, which is necessarily anterior to it. Their different ontological status arises from the fact one represents while the other is represented. Also, since the model is derived from the prototype and not the other way round, the relation between them is a-symmetrical and irreversible.

2. A modelling relation is not some objectively given natural fact or a state of affairs existing naturally between two entities. A model requires a person, a *Subject*, to recognize it as a model of something. That is, a model can only be a model of something if there is someone who perceives it as such, and who recognizes, or even creates, the appropriate relation between the model and its prototype. In other words, the operation always involves three components: a model, a prototype, and a Subject. And it is the Subject who decides whether the thing in front of him or her displays the 'appropriate', i.e. the requisite relation with a prototype for that thing to be called, and be utilized as, a model of that prototype.

3. The model represents its prototype through *approximation*. It is not a reproduction of the prototype in its entirety and in all its features, for then the model would coincide with the prototype, and an object cannot be a model of itself. The model reduces the complexity of the prototype by retaining only certain features of it. In other words, a model establishes a certain similarity, or analogy, or correspondence, between itself and the object to which it refers. The similarity is of a certain kind, deemed by the Subject to be functionally relevant, i.e. relevant for whatever purposes the model is meant to serve; and the model exhibits this or that particular kind of similarity in a certain manner and to a certain degree.

It is worth noting that as regards its relation to the prototype, the model is never more than a partial and reductive approximation. It retains and highlights particular features of an object but, of necessity, disregards others. At the same time the model itself also exhibits 'functionally contingent' features, i.e. features which, from the point of view of its modelling task, are not directly relevant. While these features may be redundant as regards the modelling relation, there are

nevertheless features pertaining to the model. Moreover, every model displays such features. This means that the relation between a model and its prototype is necessarily marked by a mixture of similarity and difference, approximation and deviation, variance and invariance.

The different kinds and degrees of similarity that can obtain between models and prototypes gives rise to different types of models, and forms the basis of most classifications of models into scale models, analogue models, etc., using criteria such as iconicity, isomorphism, structural analogy, and so on (Stachowiak 1965). In practice, theoreticians categorize and classify models in a variety of ways. Some even do it on the basis of the modelist's degree of familiarity with the corresponding prototype, which means we could discern a range going from theoretical or heuristic models, which tentatively map a hypothetical object, to scale models, which are based on exhaustive knowledge of the prototype (e.g. Pazukhin 1987, p. 78ff.). However, this is an issue that does not concern us here.

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If we now ask ourselves in what way translations could usefully be viewed in terms of models and modelling, we should try to see to what extent the basic properties of models as described in model theory can, metaphorically, be transposed to this other domain, that of translation. In some respects this is perfectly straightforward, in others somewhat less so.

Clearly, a translation, like a model, is a derived, second-order product, and the relation between a translation and its original is neither symmetrical nor reversible. And just as one can construct a model out of an existing model, so a translation can in turn be translated; in theory this chain can be extended ad infinitum.

A translation commonly claims, explicitly or implicitly, to represent a source text, a pre-existing discourse. A translation therefore, in its function as translation, is a 'vicarious object', a substitute. It could be objected that in contrast to models, translations fully replace, even displace their originals. This objection points up a genuine difference, but it only comes about, I submit, because the act of translation typically involves one or more semiotic transformations, as a result of which the source text is left at the other side of at least one of those semiotic barriers, and may thus become inaccessible to those on this

side of the barrier, i.e. those who need and use the translation. If the barrier is a natural language, the point is obvious enough, and for the target-language audience the translation may indeed, to all intents and purposes, obscure the source text. But we only need to think of, say, interlinear versions or bilingual editions made for the enjoyment of those who read both languages involved, to realize that in such a case the translation does not replace or displace the original at all. And the - no longer bold - metaphor ensconced in a commonly heard phrase like 'President Yeltsin speaking through an interpreter said that...' indicates that here too the source utterance and intention remain very much in view, reducing the translation, in its function as translation, to the status of a vicarious object, a supposedly transparent subsitute.

Another objection might be that translations, as opposed to models, constitute objects of the same order, belonging to the same class as their originals. Here too I would suggest that the ontological difference is hard to negate and that more often than not this factor plays a part in the place cultures assign to translated in contrast to non-translated texts. Translations of literary texts are by no means always and automatically regarded as literary texts. The conflation between the two kinds of text is likely to occur only in situations where all texts are perceived essentially as transformations of other texts. In those cases the notions of translation and of related forms of textual processing and modelling tend to encompass virtually all text production.

A translation can stand as a representative or substitute of a source text only if there is a Subject who recognizes it as such –in both senses of the term. A model, as we saw, requires a Subject to perceive its modelling function, or attribute that function to it. If this perception or attribution does not take place, what we have is an object like any other, but not a model. In the same way a translation, whatever its origin, remains a text among other texts as long as it is not perceived as a translation –perceived, that is, by a Subject, who may of course be a collective Subject, a community. In other words, a translation that goes unrecognized as a translation is, functionally speaking, not a translation at all.

This has implications as soon as we put the matter in historical perspective. As we know, the line between translation as commonly understood here and now and other forms of textual processing and transfer has been drawn differently by different communities at different times. As a result, certain texts generated through some process of transformation applied to existing texts, may be –and have been–

recognized by certain communities at certain times as legitimate translations, while others are not. In other words, we can transpose –translate– the observation made earlier in respect of models: it is the Subject –and in many cases it will be useful to think of the Subject as a collective Subject– who decides whether text *A* displays the 'appropriate' i.e. what they regard as the requisite relation with a text *B* in a different language for text *A* to be called, and be utilized as, a translation of text *B*.

Conversely, a text may be perceived as a translation even without there being a source text in sight. This is less odd than it sounds, and historically better attested than one might think. It happens when a text is presented as a translation, and is accepted and begins to function as such, but no source text can be identified. In fact, these so-called pseudo-translations are very much like theoretical models. They are mapped on known phenomena, i.e. existing source texts and translations or indeed models and patterns derived from them, and then projected onto a non-existent, hypothetical domain. They can be characterized in Max Black's terms as 'descriptions of imaginary but possible structures.' For the student of translation, of course, it is not these hypothetical source texts, the non-existent entities making up the 'imaginary but possible structures', which are of interest, but the shape of the model itself, and the terms of the modelling/translating operation, which in a pseudo-translation appear in their barest, most transparent form, uncontaminated, as it were, by a real source text. From an historical and socio-cultural point of view, pseudo-translations can tell us a great deal about the features which individuals and communities expect a translation to possess.

What about translation as partial and reductive approximation? Translations relate to their originals through similarity of a certain kind, in certain respects, to a certain degree. This means that inevitably there will be features of the source text which are not retained in the translation. Those features that are retained are those deemed –by the Subject– to be relevant, i.e. relevant in view of whatever purpose the translation is meant to serve; and they are retained to whatever degree is thought to be appropriate. At the same time, the translation will also contain features which are not strictly relevant to what we might call the 'translational relation', i.e. the modelling or mapping relation between the source and target texts. The translation, that is, invariably displays 'contingent features', a surplus, the mixture of variance and invariance, similarity and difference which also applies to models.

Since we are dealing with language and translation and therefore with forms and structures capable of triggering a proliferation of meanings, this perspective yields some interesting questions. To the extent that translations are models of their originals, are they ever the only possible models? If not, how do they acquire their particular textual shape? What is it that determines the individual mix of approximation and difference in the relation between a given translation and its source text? How do the 'contigent features' in a translation acquire their particular shape? Are they entirely haphazard, or are they likely to be modelled on some other text or textual pattern? If so, does this make it desirable to study translations not only in relation to their source texts but also to these other textual prototypes?

4

Looking at translations as models can throw into relief a whole range of general aspects of translation, including their ontological status and the nature of their relation with the source text. However, rather than continuing to labour the point, I should now like to bring in an additional and somewhat different, more explicitly socio-cultural dimension. It concerns the place and role of models in relation to norms of translation.

Translation is never simply a matter of static relations between texts. Like modelling, translation involves a network of active agents. Subjects who construe and recognize relations. These ubjects are also social beings, individuals or groups with certain preconceptions and interests. Translation, then, is a matter of transactions between parties that have an interest in these transactions taking place. The process of translating involves semiotic transformations applied to an entity invested with meaning and resulting in a product that stands in a certain relation to its source. For those taking part in this process. all these modalities and operations presuppose choices, alternatives. decisions, strategies, aims and goals. Norms play a crucial role in these processes; and, as I will try to show, models are closely linked with norms. In what follows, however, the emphasis is on the agents involved in these processes rather than on the nature of the relation between source and target texts. Also, I will refer to 'models' not so much as the cognitive instruments which they tend to be for the scientist, but primarily as social and cultural realities, rather in the way

that sociologists or anthropologists might use the term. In the cultural domain, these models are usually part of a modelling chain: they are derived from given prototypes (which may themselves be models) and they can in turn be modelled.

Let me explain what I mean by norms in this context, and how they bear on translation, meaning here the entire translative operation, not just the actual process of translating. For this latter process is necessarily preceded by a number of other decisions.

Translation may be regarded as a mode of textual import, as one among a number of possible modes of the intercultural movement of texts. There are, of course, other modes. They include, for example, importing a text in untranslated form –but note that deploying materially the same text in a different linguistic and cultural environment still lends that text a different 'load', for it is bound to be perceived differently; Anthony Pym (1992, p.180) rightly speaks of 'value transformation' in these cases. Summary, paraphrase, commentary and other forms of what André Lefevere calls rewriting constitute a further set of alternative modes, as do transformations into different semiotic media, etc.

The choice of the mode of import is initially made by whoever is the prime mover instigating the process, who may be an agent in the Source Culture or in the Target Culture. The initial choice may be delagted, and it may turn out to be impracticable; even so, it is largely determined by the intended response, i.e. by the effect aimed at, on the part of the intended receiver or receivers.

Whether the choice of a particular mode is practicable in a given situation, depends on the 'rules of the game' at that moment. The initial choice of a preferred or intended mode of import may be modified by the initiator's assessment of what is materially possible in terms of various physical factors (technology, geography, etc.), and of what is socially, politically, culturally and/or ideologically feasible, i.e. what is likely to be tolerated, permitted, encouraged or demanded by those who control the means of production and distribution and the relevant institutions and channels in economic, social, ideological, artistic terms.

Intercultural traffic, then, of whatever kind, always takes place in a given social context, a context of complex power structures. It involving agents who are both conditioned by these power structures or at least entangled in them, and who exploit or attempt to exploit them to serve their own ends. The power structures cover political and

economic power but also, in the field of cultural production, those forms which Pierre Bourdieu calls 'symbolic power'.

It is here that the concept of norms –and, in its wake, that of models– comes in. Norms govern the mode of import of cultural products –say: of literary texts– to a considerable extent, at virtually every level. Of course, they also govern the mode of export, if a culture actively exports texts or other cultural goods. But whether a product will be *im*ported by the intended target culture, or imported in the way envisaged by the donor, depends partly on factors pertaining to the target culture and partly on the nature of the relations between the two cultures in question.

In practice, this means that norms play a crucial part in *(a)* the decision by the relevant agent in the receptor culture whether or not to import a foreign-language text, or allow it to be imported; *(b)* if it is decided to import, whether to translate (whatever the term may mean in a given socio-cultural configuration) or to opt for some other mode of importation; and *(c)*, if it is decided to translate, how to approach the task, and how to carry it out.

This latter process is, of course, the translation process itself. As I pointed out at the beginning, I am not interested here in the mental reality of the translation process as such or in ways of reconstructing or representing –modelling– it by means of diagrams and such like. I take it for granted, however, that translating requires constant decision-making by the translator at a number of levels, and over a period of time, since texts are produced in a certain language and languages are made up of discrete units. This process of decision-making is in large measure, necessarily and beneficially, governed by norms. If it were not, translators faced with a source text, however short or simple, would either be unable to decide on one solution rather than another and throw up their hands in despair, or make entirely random decisions, like a computer gone haywire.

From the point of view of the *study* of translation, it is important to bear in mind that this process of decision-making, and hence the operation of norms in it, takes place in the translator's head and thus remains largely hidden from view. We have no direct access to it. We can speculate about it, and we can try to move closer to it through procedures like talk-aloud protocols, or through confronting the input of the process with its output, i.e. the source text with the target text, and then make retrospective inferences. In this latter course we are helped by the fact that translation, like any other use of language, is a

communicative act, and thus a more or less interactive form of social behaviour, involving a degree of 'interpersonal coordination', and depending for its success on solving the specific 'coordination problems' presented by the situation, on the relative positions and qualities of the participants, and on the values and interests at stake. Once we have recognized this social dimension of the production and reception of translations, as distinct from the psychological reality of the translation process, we are in position to appreciate the role of norms and models –as social realities– in these processes.

5

What exactly is this role (1)? My basic assumption here is that translation, like any other use of language, is a communicative act. Given that, as observed above, communication is a form of social behaviour requiring a degree of interpersonal coordination, it follows that communication problems can in principle be described in terms of so-called 'interpersonal coordination problems', which in turn are a subdivision of social interaction problems. Norms offer solutions to problems of this kind. It is this perspective which allows us to apply –or at least to transpose– what sociologists and social anthropologists have to say about social conventions, norms and models to the domain of language use and of translation –including the practice of translation as it takes place in a given historical context. In what follows a general term like 'behaviour' comprises such activities as 'speaking', 'writing' and 'translating'.

Norms, then, can be understood as somewhat stronger versions of social conventions. Conventions are simply a matter of precedent, shared habit and therefore shared expectation. Their operation relies on the expectation, shared by most or all members of a community, that in a situation of a given type each member will behave in a certain manner in preference to some other possible manner. Social norms are very much like social conventions, but they have a more binding, a more directive character. Like conventions, norms derive their legitimacy from shared knowledge, a pattern of mutual expectation and acceptance, and the fact that, on the individual level, they are largely internalized. There are many social norms that we adhere to while hardly being aware of them.

However, norms differ from conventions in that they tell individual members of a community not just how everyone else *expects* them to behave in a given situation, but how they *ought* to behave –implying, that is, that there is among the array of available options a particular course of action which the community has agreed to accept as 'proper' or 'correct'. This intersubjective sense of what is 'correct' constitutes the *content* of a norm. More about this below. First a few more words about the operative aspect of norms, their executive arm, as it were. Norms act as constraints on the individual's behaviour, they foreclose certain options but they also, more positively, offer, or suggest, or even prescribe particular courses of action. Ultimately, the directive or normative force of a norm stems from the threat of sanctions, which may be deployed in a positive sense as the promise of reward. Strong norms are backed up by strong sanctions, often spelled out explicitly; weak norms by weak sanctions –which may amount to no more than some discreet sign of disapproval, or even the sense of unease felt by someone not complying with a norm that they are not quite doing the right thing. In any case, norms can be broken. They do not preclude erratic or idiosyncratic behaviour, and non-compliance in particular instances does not invalidate the norm, just as for example the rules of polite conversation at a dinner party are not invalidated because one of the guests fails or refuses to observe them; the same goes for, say, the highway code, which is a much stronger and more explicit norm.

Norms, then, can be strong or weak, positive or negative, i.e. tending towards obligations or towards prohibitions. They may cover a narrow or a broad domain, they may or may not be promulgated, etc. The modalities of normative force, i.e. the relative strength of a norm and its positive or negative load could be mapped diagrammatically in the form of a 'semiotic square', so that the logical interrelations become clear:

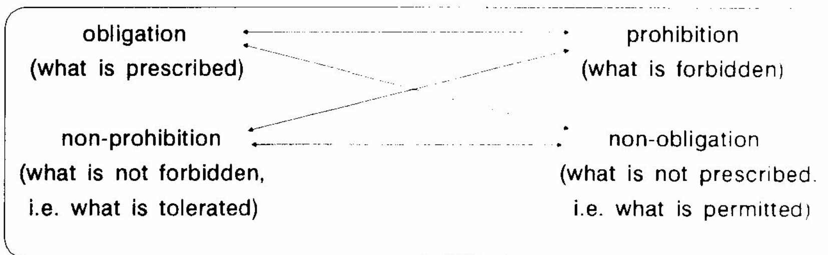

Diagram 1: Modalities of normative force (2)

The upper half of square contains clearly recognized, well-defined norms, as obligations and prohibitions, which may be backed up by drastic sanctions. The lower half indicates areas of permissiveness and of tolerated behaviour: things that one is not obliged to do or say, or that one is not obliged to refrain from doing or saying.

At the same time, the operation of norms implies interaction between agents, and therefore a social context. If in a given domain, in a given situation, person *X* has an obligation to act in a certain way, this means he or she has this obligation towards another person *Y*, who may be a group of persons, a collective, a community. If *X* has an obligation towards *Y*, it follows that *Y* has a certain claim on *X*. This 'claim' means that *Y* has the power to impose a norm on *X* and invoke sanctions in case of non-compliance by *X*, if *Y* chooses to use that power (Ross 1968: 127ff.). As in the case of the modalities of normative force, the modalities of normative control involve not only a set of clearly defined relations in which *Y* controls *X* and *X* has certain obligations towards *Y* to behave in a certain manner on certain occasions, but also a more uncertain area, where *X* is more or less immune from *Y* and vice versa. Again it is the top part of the diagram which shows clearly defined relations, while the bottom part shows areas of uncertainty:

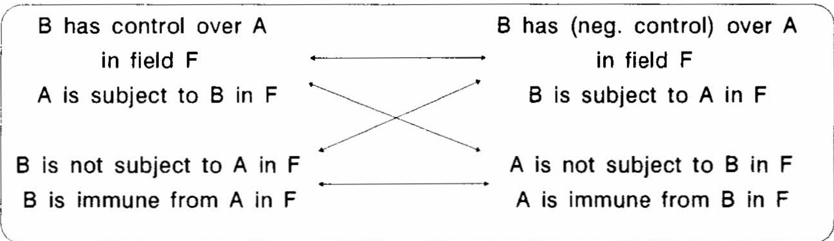

Diagram 2: Modalities of normative control

The point to stress, however, is that norms are social realities, involving not just individuals, groups and communities but also the power relations within these communities, whether these relations are material (economic, legal, political) or 'symbolic' (in Bourdieu's sense). This is what gives the 'model' its dynamic character. Norms operate in a dynamic social context –which may be a cultural system, e.g. the literary system. However, it does not greatly matter whether one thinks of this context in terms of a 'system' in the sense of systems theory or in terms of, say, a 'field', e.g. the field of cultural production as described by Bourdieu. It *is* important to realize that norms are deeply

implicated in the social and cultural life of a community. They involve different and often competing positions and possibilities, they point up various interests and stakes being pursued, defended, coveted, claimed –and the individual's desires and strategies to further his or her own ends.

It is also this social context, and the hierarchy of the power relations in it, which explains the greater binding force of some norms as opposed to others. The institutions or agents who exercise normative control tend to occupy positions of relative power and dominance in the community where the norms apply. The dominant norms are usually those of the dominant sections of the community. They are also the sections which determine the content of those norms.

The content of a norm is a notion of what is 'proper' or 'correct'. This is a social, intersubjective notion, a conceptualization of patterns of behaviour –including speaking, writing, translating– regarded as correct. What is 'correct' is established within the community, and within the community's power structures, and mediated to its members. The directive force of norms, their executive arm, serves among other things to delimit and secure these notions of correctness.

Notions of correctness are abstract entities. They are values, attitudes, which, in order to become socially or culturally operative, have to be fixed, both subjectively and intersubjectively. They also have to be learned. That is why, in practice, they appear in the more schematic but mentally manageable form of models. In that sense we can say that the operation of cultural systems is governed by norms and models, and of course the protoypes from which the models derive. These models may be envisaged here either as mental schemas or as formalized sets of properties and prescriptions (as in a poetics, for example). They may be derived from real occurrences and examples or from more abstract values. Their importance derives from the fact that they summarize those features which are deemed to be essential to the various notions of correctness as they exist in a given cultural system or subsystem.

The mere fact of entering a cultural system and learning to operate as a participant in it, involves a process of familiarization with its cultural models. This is true whether we are talking, say, of going to university, or of joining a translation agency, or of beginning writers trying to get their poems or literary translations accepted by a publisher. In fact, as social anthropologists have shown, the process itself has directive and motivational force, as cultural models are

internalized, and behaviour is adapted to conform to the models recognized as pertinent to the system (cf. Shweder 1992 and Holland 1992 for exemplary case studies). Looking at it from a different angle, we can say that it is through the directive force of models that relations of obligation and claim are created between collectives and individuals.

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Even though the above is cast in rather egenral and abstract terms, I trust it is not hard to see how this complex of norms and models operates with respect to translation. If every stage in the importation and translation of texts is governed by choices which require criteria to make more than wholly random decisions about which options to select, to what end, then norms and models supply these criteria and goals. Compliance with the set of translational norms regarded as pertinent in a given community or system means that the product, i.e. the translation, is likely to conform to the relevant 'correctness notion', which means conformity with the model embodying that correctness notion –behind which, of course, we discern the dominant values and attitudes of the community or the system in question. Translating 'correctly', in other words, amounts to translating according to the prevailing norm, and hence in accordance with the relevant model. The result should be a 'model translation'. Note, incidentally, that terms like equivalence, fidelity, meaning and suchlike do not occur in this description of what constitutes a 'correct' translation. It is also worth pointing out, however, that in a domain like literary translation –or literary writing, for that matter– observing a norm does not at all have to mean blind obedience to a rule and dull conformity as a result. Deviation from particular textual norms may well be assigned positive value in a literary system in which, in Yury Lotman's terms, an 'aesthetic of opposition' constitutes the overarching norm; by the same token, a certain amount of variation will be looked upon positively even in what Lotman calls an 'aesthetic of identity' (Lotman 1972, p. 404ff., esp. 410-414).

It will be clear that in the case of translating, as a form of textual production, the models and prototypes we are talking about are textual, discursive entities. They cover the substance of what is normally called a 'poetics' (a poetics of literature, a poetics of translation): a set of principles and practical rules for 'good writing',

and a set of examples of good practice. But they appear here with a different emphasis, which allows us to appreciate more clearly their strategic role in the dynamics of culture. Particular groups or communities will adopt a certain configuration of models and prototypes in opposition to other groups and communities, and because there are certain stakes to be defended or claimed. As individuals weave their way through and around these configurations, they take up positions and build alliances, so as to be able to achieve their own aims, goals and ambitions as well as those of the groups with which they have aligned themselves.

It follows from all this that the task of the researcher consists in identifying and reconstructing, on the basis of the various choices and decisions made by a translator, not just the norms which governed those choices and decisions, but also the models and prototypes which inspired the norms, and which inform us about the translator's motivation, the kind of text he or she was aiming to produce, the aims and goals which they were trying to achieve –and the negative models they were presumably trying to avoid. The discourse about translation, whether by translators themselves or by others, will also point up notions of correctness, operational aspects of norms and positive and negative models and prototypes. Establishing the nature of the relation of this discourse –the historical metalanguage of translation– to the contemporary practice of translation is part of the researcher's task. All this amounts to a fairly comprehensive programme for historical research.

The task may sound relatively simple. It is not –for several, rather obvious reasons. Cultural systems are extremely complex and perpetually changing entities, embedded in other systems, each with a history of its own. We can therefore expect to find a variety of competing, conflicting and overlapping norms and models. Their directve force will depend on their nature and scope, on their relative weight, their centrality or marginality, their relation to other canonical or non-canonical models and norms, etc. This is what determines, for both collectives and individuals, what *must* be said, what *must not* be said, what *may* be said, what *can* be said, as suggested in Diagram 1 above. It is only within such complexes that we can begin to assess the motivational of norms and models as opportunities or constraints.

Moreover, translations, like the models we saw at the beginning, cannot be reduced to their mapping or 'modelling' function. They also, invariably, contain elements which are contingent in this respect –but

which are not shapeless, not unformed. The assumption must be, then, that both kinds of elements –i.e. both the 'modelling' and the 'contingent' features in a translation– are informed by norms and models, tying the translated text not just to the source text but also to a given translation tradition (however conflictual and multi-layered in itself) and to general concepts and models of textual well-formedness prevalent in the cultural system or one or more of its pertinent subdivisions.

The fact, finally, that in certain domains, at certain times, certain models, norms and prototypes have been more in evidence than others, is a reminder of the hierarchies of power and of the (real or symbolic) power struggles that characterize the field. As a social and cultural activity, translation is part of these structures and constitutes an operative force in them. It is precisely through the models which the individual translator chooses to adopt that he or she takes part in that dynamic. In other words, the identification of the translator's models and norms and the assessment of their relative strength provides access to, and insight into, both the translator's strategy and his or her motivation. It also makes of the translator an agent, an active participant in a complex exchange, a person with a particular expertise (and hence a certain amount of power) and all manner of private and public interests to look after. To study such a creature and the forces that make him or her tick cannot be a simple task. But it is fascinating. It is also highly relevant to our understanding of the dynamics of social and cultural systems.

Notes

1. See Hermans 1991 for further details and references to the theoretical works by David Lewis and Renate Bartsch on which this view of the nature and role of norms is largely based.
2. See Greimas (1970, p. 135ff.) and De Geest (1992 and 1993) for the use of semiotic squares of this kind; the terms 'modalities of normative force' and 'modalities of normative control' (below) are derived from Ross 1968 (p. 177ff.), where they are discussed in a legal context, and in a different form. The horizontal axes in the semiotic square indicate relations of opposition; the diagonal lines, relations of contradiction; and the vertical lines, relations of implication.

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