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Volume 75

Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury
Edited by Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Daniel Simeoni
Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies

Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury

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Preface

I started being more and more interested in methodology, not in theory. I was never interested in theory per se. My question was always: How are we going to justify the way we do research? (Toury 2005)

To go “beyond” the work of a leading intellectual is rarely an unambiguous tribute. In the case of Gideon Toury, however, there is substantial justification for extending our collective vision beyond the discipline known as Descriptive Translation Studies. Our endeavor most superficially responds to the invitation written into the very title of Toury’s major book, *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (1995). That text, and that title, offer us at once a common base, an open and multidirectional ambition, and many good reasons for unambiguous tribute.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Gideon Toury has been concerned with the development of Translation Studies as a research-based academic discipline. That concern was certainly born of the historical convergence of several similar visions, the nature of which is analyzed in several places in this volume. The work of Toury was in part to bring various insights together, to defend the virtues of a discipline based on programmed empirical discovery rather than quick opinions, and to do that with an originality and rigor that deservedly made him the enfant terrible of his day. The success of Toury’s project is certainly reflected in the institutional triumph of Translation Studies, particularly in postindustrial societies that significantly depend on translation for their cultural and political communication (the special weight of western Europe, Canada and Israel is evident in this volume, and is not to be concealed). That very success, however, could come at the price of making Toury a fixed point of reference, a set of stable propositions, a foundation established in the past and to be left in the past. All disciplines need such points of reference, of course, and Translation Studies certainly has a history of them both before and after Toury’s main book. In the case of Toury, however, the foundational work itself has always invited further development, opening a broad empirical frame in which even the most fundamental tenets can be challenged, dialogue and debate can be pursued, and we continue to understand each other, more or less, in terms of a common academic calling. To evince that shared yet dynamic frame is one of the main aims of this volume, forming what we hope is a broad snapshot of our discipline. To associate the work of Gideon Toury with that frame, without ignoring the numerous others who have contributed, is an act of justified collective homage.

Toury himself has encouraged many of us to move into the open spaces of “beyond”. He has long been an indefatigable networker, a relayer of information, right from the
early days of the newssheet TRANSST, and a tireless editor, both at the helm of the journal Target from its inception and, later, as general editor of the Benjamins Translation Library. Many of us know of Toury as the writer of comments on our unpublished texts, orienting the discipline from behind the scenes. Others know him as their teacher and mentor, quick to respond to their hesitant drafts, keeping close tabs on their progress, and spurring them to turn the next corner.

For those of us aware of that hidden labor, the idea of going beyond Toury is part of remaining faithful to his adopted discipline, rather than to a person. For those of us who have been reading Toury’s work over the years, the movement is all the more justified to the extent that Toury himself has not remained within fixed borders. For those who had read the early Toury, in Hebrew, was there anything really new in the cultural turn of the 1990s? For the Toury of norms and correlated tendencies, is there anything profoundly different in current glances at sociology? For the Toury who studied pseudotranslations, are there any great surprises when we see the term “translation” being used beyond some kind of translation proper? For the Toury searching for laws of translation, is there anything fundamentally different in corpus-based universals?

The diversity of the contributions in this volume may strike some as going beyond what they would consider legitimate Toury-inspired work. But the fact is that all authors acknowledge their debt, perhaps not so much to the orthodoxy of the descriptive model as to the overall project of giving Translation Studies an independent space for conceptual coherence and creativity. In this sense, we believe that Toury’s call has been answered beyond expectations.

Much in this volume is passably new, we hope. And it can be conceptualized and interrelated with reference to Toury.

References


Foreword

Gideon Toury. A name well-known at John Benjamins Publishing for twenty years now. And hopefully many more to come.

We know him as a pioneer in Translation Studies, an authority in his field, the dedicated editor of the highly prestigious Translation Studies journal Target and the first series editor of the renowned Benjamins Translation Library.

We know him as a modest man with a sharp eye, both professionally and personally, and with a very dry sense of humor for which one must always be on the qui vive. A man who is critical in his judgment: sometimes relentless in pursuit of excellence, though never ungentle in manner, always reasonable in collegiality.

Benjamins has a great debt to the man, who was and is one of the keystones in the establishment and academic development of the discipline.

He was one of the people who opened our path to the world of Translation Studies and who helped us build a vast network of knowledgeable experts in the diverse subfields. Who helped us produce publications that have a worldwide circulation at the highest scholarly level. Who helped us create a solid basis for the maintenance of quality and continuity.

Here we express our profound gratitude to Gideon Toury, our tower of strength in Translation Studies. May the accomplishments of our collaboration serve many future generations.

John, Claire and Seline Benjamins
Isja Conen
To the memory of Daniel Simeoni

Daniel Simeoni, one of the editors of this volume, died of complications following a heart attack on November 3, 2007, as these texts were being revised.

Daniel believed passionately but quietly in the careful development of Translation Studies as an academic discipline. The work he put into this volume is to some degree representative of his role in the discipline as a whole, where he was perhaps the most intellectually serious of those who have worked beyond the limelight. His best known contribution to Translation Studies is undoubtedly his seminal article “The pivotal role of the translator's habitus” (1998), cited more than 20 times herein. Similarly serious and provocative texts by him can be found in Translation Studies journals and collective publications, as well as in the recordings of his CETRA lectures delivered in 2005. As is evidenced in his article in this volume, Daniel worked at the highest conceptual level on the deepest intellectual bases of our academic enterprise. He constantly showed awareness of multiple positions; he saw connections between very different traditions; he was always slow to criticize or condemn.

Daniel's work in Translation Studies was not put together in the book that should have been. His efforts were more readily given to helping students, to orienting research projects, to interviewing, and indeed to editing the work of others.

If anything in this volume is presumptuous or peremptory, it is certainly not to be attributed to Daniel Simeoni. He was the opposite of all that; he was, in the simplest and greatest sense, a good man.

He is much missed by contributors and editors alike.

Acknowledgements

The editors wish to express their sincere thanks to Yves Gambier for his initiative and guidance with this project, and to members of the Intercultural Studies Group in Tarragona who participated in the editing process: Serafima Khalzanova, Cèlia Querol, María Aguilar, Alev Balci, Yoonji Choi, Ana Guerberof, Diane Howard, Kyriaki Kourouni, Hyunjoo Lee, Esmaeil H. Moghaddam and Volga Yilmaz Gumus.
CHAPTER 1

Popular mass production in the periphery*

Socio-political tendencies in subversive translation

Nitsa Ben-Ari
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Not much is known about the agents of the massive, non-politicized literature of the periphery during pre-State Israel. Yet popular literature played an important role in the formation of Hebrew culture. It created and supplied a readership, introduced new sometimes subversive models and market criteria; and forced the canonic literary establishments to stratify. The agents were mostly either ignored or hidden behind pseudonyms. However, interview-based research helps us identify a common denominator between their activity in popular literature and their socio-political habituses. Insight is sought into the relationship between canonic and non-canonic literary systems, between center and periphery, between different worlds of production and distribution, and between ideologically engaged translation and commercial non-politicized translation, which may sometimes turn out to be as mobilized, yet to an opposing, subversive ideology.

Keywords: center vs. periphery, market demands, popular literature, mobilized literature, mainstream vs. subversive ideology, translators’ habituses, pseudonyms

Introduction

My translation research has branched out, over time, to focus on the powers participating in the formation of the New Hebrew. It started with my study of the nineteenth-century historical novel written by German Jews and its role in shaping a New Jew and establishing a new literary system. It went on with the censorious tendency to eliminate or play down Christianity in Hebrew translations, and what followed, almost inevitably was censorship or self-censorship of erotica, mobilized to create the literary image of the pure Sabra (Ben-Ari 1997, 2002, 2008). This led to a re-mapping of the agents (mainly translators–editors–publishers, though also critics, educators and public figures) active in the mainstream and in the periphery of Hebrew literature from the 1930s to the 1980s. The semiotic identity of the mainstream agents, ideologically mobilized to the shaping of the New Hebrew, is clear enough. Very little is known, however, about participants in the non-establishment publications, especially from the

* This essay is dedicated to Gideon Toury, with special feelings, from his home: Tel Aviv University Translation Studies.
point of view of their socio-political affiliation. Of particular interest to me were marginal agents and the vague in-between terrain of commercial ventures.¹ The production these agents participated in was enormous and unappreciated. Many of them remained anonymous, by choice or necessity. I decided I would endeavor to put a face to these anonymous figures. I was especially intent on finding out whether there was any correlation between their non-conformist activity and their otherness.

This was not an easy task, seeing that so many of the participants have passed away or vanished. Many of the publishing houses had sprouted, flourished and closed down in a matter of weeks, often changing hands, names and character to adjust to whims of the market. Many firms were ad hoc inventions, not so much in order to avoid censorship as to evade taxes. Few of them have survived. Some of the agents did not want to be interviewed for academic research. Unlike those in mainstream activity, they still consider their past activity a dark chapter. Written material about them is practically non-existent.

In contrast to this scarcity of personal and sociocultural information, one must note the ample academic theoretical material about certain other aspects. Toury’s work on pseudotranslation provides a theoretical framework for one aspect of this marginal mass production. Even-Zohar’s work on culture shaping and especially repertoire building is crucial to the understanding of the construction of a culture. Rakefet SelasSheffy’s work on the mass production of popular novels in German literature of the eighteenth century helps us understand the power of numbers in shaping literary models. Zohar and Yaacov Shavit made a pioneering survey of the beginnings of pulp fiction in Hebrew literature. Zohar Shavit (1998) provided a detailed mapping of the mainstream cultural agents, but also devoted a discussion to non-canonic literature between 1931 and 1947. Yaacov Shavit provided insight into the establishment efforts to impose a mobilized popular culture on the New Hebrew. Some research has recently been dedicated to the history of the main publishing houses in the Diaspora.² My own research on ideological manipulations of translation has supplied me with tools for understanding the processes involved. These, and many more, have provided points of departure for semiotic research. Yet the phenomenon has hardly been described in full, nor have questions been asked about the sociocultural identity of the many participants in the

¹. Two academic investigations supervised by Gideon Toury supplied much data: Rachel Weissbrod’s Ph.D. (1989) was a source of invaluable information about tendencies of translating English prose from the 1960s to the 1980s; Inbal Sagiv (1999) wrote a pioneering M.A. thesis about translations of the neglected science-fiction genre. Eli Eshed, a journalist who calls himself a “culture detective”, compiled data on Hebrew pulp-fiction. At some time he, too, had attended Toury’s classes, though sporadically.

². Bernard Yakobowitz, Ayala Yahav and Dania Amichai-Michlin are some outstanding examples of modern academic research of Diaspora publishers. A more thorough study of Hebrew mainstream publishers has recently been undertaken by Motti Neiger of the Netanya University College.
Chapter 1. Popular mass production in the periphery

twilight zone of cheap popular literature. Part of this essay will thus deal with unmasking the anonymous. Yet most of it deals with remapping non-canonic literary activity.

Apart from books about Hebrew culture of the period or research about specific publishers, my information about the people came from three main sources: interviews, some written material (mostly Internet sources) about deceased agents, and the data provided by the catalogue of the Jerusalem National University Library. I should add that written material on the Internet was rather scarce and not always trustworthy. And the library catalogue provided partial information only, for the simple reason that most pulp fiction was not sent to the National Library at all.

The literary field

One could sum up the history of Hebrew publishing in the twentieth century as a shift of centers from Europe to pre-state Israel (and the US). It started with the move from Central Europe to Eretz Yisrael (pre-State Israel) of small, private enterprises dedicated to the shaping of a new culture. The shifts occurred mainly because of political and economic constraints, and the move to pre-state Israel was motivated by necessity rather than ideology, since the basic infrastructure for book production had been nonexistent in the Israel of the early twentieth century. With the move of the central-European publishers, private local enterprises sprouted in Israel as well, and the years between the two world wars showed modest prosperity for the book industry. Then, in the face of economic difficulties, political movements became involved, giving financial support to the failing enterprises and demanding some degree of ideological subordination in return.

The establishment of subsidized firms pushed the private firms to the side. Their goal was to supply the literary and cultural basis for the new Zionist ideologies. Basing most of their efforts on translated literature, these publishers absorbed foreign literary models with the aim of using them as infrastructure for a new Israeli culture. Until the 1940s translations were mostly from Russian, German or Polish, and contacts with world literature were established via these literatures. Only from the 1950s did the English-language orientation become more dominant (Even-Zohar 1973: 435).

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the waves of immigration that followed, more private commercial enterprises sprouted in the margins. Whereas the established publishers had ideologically charged names, these new firms are recognizable by private or family names, of the owners or occasionally of their offspring. They supplied the demand for popular reading material shunned by the central organs by publishing romance, mystery or erotic novels, many of them serialized. They did not weigh options for translated works by their literary worth but by commercial value, although some had political goals in mind as well. They prospered to such an extent that the establishment firms could no longer ignore them. Thus, the 1970s saw the solidification of privately owned canonic publishing firms dealing with popular literature, as well
as establishment publishers bowing to demand (Weissbrod 1989: 100, 106–114). Writers, poets, translators and editors of renown began to see no harm in producing popular literature. Some had made their way up from the periphery, others had worked their way down from higher literary genres and institutions. The portraits drawn here will be samples of the many who did not work for the establishment firms.

In the ideological atmosphere of the period, translators who did not identify with the establishment line were obliged to work in the periphery. They were not paid much, but work was regular, even abundant. It was also undemanding, seeing that texts were seldom revised or reviewed. Some worked for establishment publishers as well, using different names; they would sometimes use their real names for the mainstream activity, and pseudonyms for their “lower” production. Those who started in the periphery and made their way to the central firms sometimes changed name in the process.

It is not easy to paint portraits of the many faceless or forgotten translators and writers of the past. Some celebrities, who wrote or “translated” pulp-fiction such as Tarzan, Bill Carter or Patrick Kim in the 1960s, brag about it today, tongue in cheek. Not all of them do, however, particularly not those who wrote/translated erotic pulp fiction: no one seems eager to take responsibility for that, not even as a youthful prank. One of the most active pseudotranslators of the 1960s, Miron Uriel, categorically refused to discuss the good old days with me, saying that for him they were bad days, a blemish in his past. Uri Shalgi, a well-known publisher of pulp fiction, refused all interviews on the pretext that he was too busy with present projects. He was willing to describe his current activities, however: he still publishes romance chapbooks, employing a translator who produces one book a week, for which he pays 10 NIS per English page (a total, he says, of 2000 NIS per book, amounting to a monthly salary of 8000 NIS, or $ 1777, not bad for a student, he adds). In that respect, things have not changed much from the past.

Mainstream and subversive ideology

Mainstream ideology was shaped by what is now sometimes called the Mapai (roughly translated as Workers Party of Eretz Yisrael, the basis for today’s Labour party) or Ben-Gurionist socialist doctrine. It saw two enemies, one in the right-wing parties, and the other in the extreme left parties. Those who accepted the image of the Sabra or New Hebrew formed by this mainstream found their way into the establishment and were often integrated into the select body of culture shapers. Those who refused to participate, for various reasons, found the path to the mainstream more or less closed. It would only open much later, with the rise of the Likud party after 1977.

Two kinds of popular cultures had emerged in Israel before the establishment of the State: one imposed by ideologues who felt the New Hebrew working classes had to be supplied with cultural activity such as folk dancing, folk songs, theater, newspapers and culture clubs, and another that was authentic popular culture, imported from the immigrants’ countries of origin or developed from within. This was obvious in the theat-
Chapter 1. Popular mass production in the periphery

...er, where mainstream companies supplied the “right” kind of entertainment in Hebrew, while local groups (often performing in “old-country” languages such as Yiddish or Romanian) supplied the vaudeville that used to be fashionable in the Diaspora. This was also obvious in literature, where ideological mobilization was perhaps the most salient. Three kinds of popular books flowed onto the market: the mainstream distributed recommended classical literature, puritanical in nature, published in cheap formats and sold cheaply for the “working classes”, usually in installments. Commercial publishers offered soft-cover and even hard-cover popular best-sellers, considered by the establishment to be in bad taste. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the production of popular pocket-books, sold by the thousands, sometimes by the tens of thousands. This third category, chapbooks, was sold in kiosks, that is, through a completely different distribution network. The production concentrated around the commercial area of south Tel Aviv, off Allenby Street and the Central Bus Station.3 In terms of recognition by the critics or the media, the two last categories of books were non-existent. From the point of view of the reading public, the thousands who read them often denied doing so. The books did not win prizes or recognition, and the agents who dealt with them often hid behind pseudonyms, changed addresses, and refrained from providing basic information like place or date of publication. The books were poorly produced, rife with printing errors, and had the cheapest possible covers. The translations, done by amateurs or even professionals, with no revision, were probably a gross disservice to the original.

In my efforts to put faces and names to the unknown publishers, translators and pseudotranslators who worked in the periphery, it gradually became clear to me that they had either felt rejected by the mainstream or refused to be part of it, for political and ideological reasons. In other words they were subversive not only in their literary activity but in their political tendencies as well. The materials they produced could be political, but they could also simply be “other” in relation to material recommended by the mainstream, whether they be termed popular novels or (American) bestsellers with no “literary” or didactic value (Weissbrod 1989: 42–57). In this case the market would be supplying the growing demand of the immigrant readership for entertainment literature.

Popular literature in the periphery

Drawing a portrait of a large group of translators/editors/publishers is not an easy task. This is firstly because Hebrew publishers were not a subject of research until recently. As a result, not much is known about the participants unless they established a name for themselves as poets or writers. Ephemeral publishing houses vanished long ago, or else they changed names and owners. Most of the subversive printing firms used to take up fictitious names daily, evading the law or taxation or both.

3. A similar urban concentration of printing and distribution of pulp fiction (especially erotica) in New York is described in Lefkowitz Horowitz 2002 (242–248).
Secondly, these agents were far from being a homogeneous group. They varied according to their place in the popular culture, and according to an inner hierarchy within the field.

Thirdly, they did not function as a group, although many of them knew each other and even worked together. The various partnerships often dissolved in quarrels, if not scandals. For the purposes of my research it is profitable to see them as a group, retrospectively in opposition to the mainstream, though very few of them actually had this image of themselves.

There is a recurring pattern, however, that reinforces their group identity, having largely to do with their habitus, and it is the main topic of this paper and of my current work. The pattern includes the following features:

1. They represented commercial enterprise. Bigger or smaller in scale, as private individuals or firms, they did not go into business for didactic purposes but for profit. They thus differed from the private enterprises that had started in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1880s, before moving to Eretz Israel in the early twentieth century. The European firms were mostly a product of the Revival period and were imbued with Zionist didactic fervor. This does not mean that the private enterprises of the late 1940s and beyond were all utterly devoid of ideological beliefs or motivation, but their aim was first and foremost to make money.

2. They did not share the mainstream notion that popular literature could be dictated to readers or even imposed on them by some culture shapers who knew what was good for the consumer. In fact, most of them did not plan ahead, but just went along with the flux of supply and demand, keeping a close eye on the market. They, too, had to watch their reading public while also playing a role in shaping it, since their readership was constantly changing with incoming waves of immigration. More than the mainstream agents, they had to keep in touch with changing norms and fashions, as they could not afford financial losses. Unlike mainstream agents, they were not covered, backed or supported by any subsidies.

3. They were mostly American-oriented. Far from disdaining cultural goods emanating from American culture, considered cheap and shallow by the mainstream, they favored it. In this, they anticipated mainstream publishing and may have had a part in promoting the Americanization of Hebrew culture.

4. They did not have a high regard of themselves. Some are now basking in the retrospective warmth of nostalgia, with the media occasionally spotlighting them. Recurring waves of nostalgia are responsible for the fact that subversive books or chap-books of the 1950s–1960s are now in demand in second-hand book stores, and are quite expensive, too, in utter disproportion to their literary value. The teenagers of yore, who had read the books clandestinely, are now willing to pay the price, half-jokingly, knowing that the books are hard to find. There are even some avowed (and some secret) collectors of pulp fiction. This accounts for the fact that some of the entrepreneurs of the past are willing to be interviewed, but it does not completely do away with their low self-esteem. In fact, the ones I interviewed who are still in the
publishing business invariably started by showing me respectable productions they
had been involved in or are involved in at present.

5. Large groups are seldom homogeneous, and neither is this one. There are various
possible categorizations, which will be discussed later. For now, it is important to
draw the line between those who started in the periphery and made their way up, and
those who stayed “behind” (in their terms). This shift of status has a lot to do with the
sociopolitical background and ideological inclinations of the people involved.

6. Their sociopolitical status was in opposition to that of agents in the mainstream. They
did not come from agricultural communities such as kibbutzim or cooperative set-
tlements; they were working-class or bourgeois individuals living and working in the
big cities. Neither did they belong to the Mapai or Ben-Gurionist camp. I found out
that most had right-wing inclinations, were supporters of Jabotinsky and of what was
later to become the Herut party. Some had been active participants in pre-State ex-
treme right underground movements in the struggle against the British Mandatory
Rule. The political affiliation came out in the interviews, becoming such an import-
ant factor that it practically forced me to look for it in the people I could not interview.
The people I interviewed supplied the information voluntarily. It first came as a sur-
prise, since I had not expected this to be a common denominator. Once I had real-
ized this, I still made a point of avoiding any mention of political affiliation until the
information was provided by the interviewee.

7. Many of the agents working in the popular book industry worked for newspapers
and magazines as well. In accordance with Bourdieu’s theory that newspapers and
journalists of the same inclinations tend to find each other (Bourdieu 1984: 161–166),
they found a home not in the mainstream — that is Socialist — party organs, but in
evening papers such as Yediot Aharonot, which backed private enterprise and gave
voice to “other” opinions. From there some found their way to bourgeois enterprises
like La’isha, the first magazine for women, or Olam Ha’kolnoa, the first cinema mag-
azine. Not surprisingly, when new right-wing newspapers were founded with the rise
of the Likud in 1977 (Yoman Hashavua, or the more extreme paper Nativ), several of
them found their way to these publications. Working in evening papers or in maga-
zines came up in interviews as a form of apprenticeship, or as a means of obtaining
funds that could eventually be invested in books.

8. There was a recurring pattern in the interviews. In order to put people at ease,
I started by enumerating the merits of the subversive pop literature of the past: go-
ing against the mainstream, introducing variation, fighting censorship and espe-
cially self-censorship. The reaction was invariably negative: none of the my reasons
had been the motive, direct or indirect, for going into the business. My assump-
tion was met with either a shrug or even distrust as to the nature of the undeserved
“compliments”.

9. All interviewees mentioned that they had started writing or translating at a very
early age. Not having the right connections, they were refused jobs in mainstream
firms, but they did not give in; they found their way in the periphery.
10. They had made a lot of money, relatively speaking, in a rather short time, though they usually lost it at some later point. The rise and fall in their career was due partly to tough competition, and partly to market fluctuations. The field obeyed no copyright or ethical rules, and competition was indeed fierce. Their final collapse was mainly due to mainstream firms that had become aware of the potential profits in the popular niche and reached out for their share. This coincided, of course, with the diminishing subsidies for the mainstream firms.

11. Money was not the sole criterion for the hierarchy within the periphery. Publishers like Mizrahi were not likely to be recognized by the producers of hard-cover books, who were much less successful financially. Malka Friedman, daughter of the publisher Shmuel Friedman and co-owner with him of the firm Sh. Friedman, said her father had to intervene for Mizrahi when the publishers’ organization did not accept him. Ezra Narqis, on the other hand, regarded Mizrahi as a role model, while he himself became the model for Uri Shalgi.

Before introducing some of the people involved in the popular book industry, I should say something about their names and pseudonyms.

Three main categories are discernible in the names of the agents involved: real names, names of family members (usually sons or daughters), and pseudonyms. Real names were used by small commercial publishers as a means of distinguishing between themselves and the institution-backed firms: M. Mizrahi, Sh. Friedman, Zelikowitz, Carmi and Naor, as opposed to Sifryat Poalim [literally: People’s Library], Am Oved [Working People], Ha’kibbutz Ha’meuchad [the United Kibbutz] or Mossad Bialik [the Bialik Institute]. Real names were also used by translators when translating more respectable books. First names could form an acronym for a publishing firm: David, Shimon and Eli were the three partners who formed a small publishing house called Deshe. Since the initials form the Hebrew word for grass, not many know where the name actually derived from. First names of children were used by publishers for various purposes, be it for their firm (Karni publishing), or for their various book series: Ha’dov, the Bear, a name used by Sh. Friedman, after his son’s name Dov; Nava — his daughter’s second name served for another series. Children’s names could be used in portmanteau form as well. When publisher Uri Shalgi sought a name for his enterprise, the name of his children, Ram and Dorit, were combined into Ramdor. The world of pseudonyms was of course much richer: acronyms and anagrams (Eliezer Carmi — as Azriel Macir), original Diaspora names before changing to Hebrew ones (Arieh Hashavia — as Arieh Lev; Ezra Narqis — whose family name was originally Khadria [“vegetables” in Arabic] — as Y. Yarkoni). In fact Narqis had a hard time remembering the many pseudonyms he invented, and said that any hint of vegetable was a helpful clue. The predominant choice, however, was foreign, preferably English-sounding names (Bert Whitford) for a whole line of pulp fiction that would not sell under Hebrew names.

Apart from these, there were literally hundreds of names invented and changed almost overnight, as cover for firms that sought anonymity. Names such as Olympia
or Eros for printing houses would obviously suggest a line of provocative erotica.

One of the peculiarities of the field is that the huge number of pseudonyms caused the line between writing and translating to be somewhat blurred. Thus, when I introduce translators below, I do it both in the specific sense and in a more general one of translator/pseudotranslator/writer/editor. It must not, however, be confused with the general term for participants in the popular literary enterprise, referred to as “agents” for the sake of differentiation.

Translators

Work for the popular book industry started at a very early age, sometimes in high school or while doing military service. It could come about when an acquaintance of the family had a small printing firm or worked in a newspaper. Family members of a publisher would sometimes participate as translators. Some sought work in the pulp fiction industry when they were rejected by mainstream organs. Many young translators were immigrants or children of immigrants. M. Mizrahi told me how he had selected translators and editors from among the young people who constantly swarmed his book stall off Allenby Street, picking the ones who showed interest and understanding. Ezra Narqis had translated a story by Conan Doyle in school, long before he even knew how to pronounce the author’s name. A teacher caught him reading a booklet under the desk, and was placated only when Ezra’s classmates assured him it was the pupil’s own translation. Then Ezra started work in a printing shop of one of his father’s friends. He was 14 or 15 at the time. Eli Kedar described how, after his army service, he had tried to be accepted as a journalist, was rejected, and decided to look for a publisher in the bustling commercial area of south Tel Aviv. He had heard there was a man called Nissim, in the Yemenite neighborhood of Shehunat Machalul, who published chapbooks; he literally went from door to door, looking for this man. Arieh Hashavia started as a young reporter for *Gadna* (monthly publication of the pre-military training program), when still a student. He also started working as a messenger boy and general assistant in *Yediot Aharonot*. He continued as a reporter for the army magazine *Bamahaneh*. Arieh Karassik started writing thrillers when he was 16; when he could not find a publisher, he borrowed 25 lira from his father and started his own enterprise.

Work was abundant in the periphery. The pay was not high, but it came regularly. G. Ariuch, pen name for Gentilla Broyde, was often reprimanded by her brother for working in the popular literature business. The brother, Ephraim Broyde, translated poetry and Shakespearian drama for respectable publishers such as Sifryat Poalim, and he often begged her to stop working for the “Türk” (Mizrahi’s derisive nickname). She refused, so Mizrahi told me, since Mizrahi supplied her with a steady flow of bestsellers. Around 50 books are listed under her name in the library catalogue, most of them for central mainstream publishers like Am Oved or Zmora Bitan. Yet at least seven were translated for Mizrahi, among them Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* and books
by Louis Bromfield or Daphne du Maurier. Loyalty to one publisher was rare. Eli Kedar wrote 12 books per month, in the Wild West pseudotranslation series *Buck Jones* that he produced for his first publisher Nissim, earning 50 *lira* per book. Only two a month were published. Ezra Narqis offered to pay him 75 *lira* per book and publish as many as he could write. Kedar accepted the offer. When Narqis discovered Miron Uriel could translate/write more quickly, he soon took him on instead. Apparently, Uriel could produce a booklet in two hours. He never re-read what he had written.

The most interesting common denominator of the group is their anti-establishment political involvement. Many of them had been political activists in their early youth. Their subversive activities varied, diverging either to the extreme left or to the extreme right.

Here are some portraits to illustrate the nature of the translators in the periphery.

The first is that of Maxim Gilan, poet and political dissident under his true name, and diligent translator of erotica under the pseudonym G. Kasim (similar letters). Gilan was born in Spain and came to Israel as a poor refugee from France in 1944. As a young boy he enlisted in LEHI, the extreme anti-British underground movement also known as the Stern Gang, and after the establishment of the State he was a devout anti-Ben-Gurion activist, playing a part in at least three underground sects that planned to overthrow the first Prime Minister and even threatened his life. He was imprisoned twice, for 14 months, then for 59 days for suspected involvement in the Kaestner assassination. When he was co-editor with Shmuel Mor of the porn magazine *Bul*, they were accused of publishing the details of the Mossad involvement in the assassination of Moroccan dissident Mahdi Ben-Barqa, the Mossad allegedly having helped extradite the Moroccan to the French authorities. After the Six Day War, Gilan exiled himself to Paris, where he became editor of *Israel & Palestine*, an English-language pro-Palestinian magazine. As Maxim Gilan he went on publishing poetry books. Under the pseudonym G. Kasim, however, Gilan translated and wrote erotic literature for “Eros”, financed by Eli Kedar in the early 1960s. The books came out repeatedly and were re-printed in 1968. He was the translator of *Fanny Hill, Scented Garden, Arabian Nights, Turk’s Pleasures* and *The Black Woman’s Lust*. Gilan eventually came back to Israel, where he won several literary prizes. He died in 2005.

No less diligent was Eliezer Carmi, translator and writer with more than 300 books to his name (according to the National Library catalogue). He used several pseudonyms: A. Ben-Dan, Azriel Macir . He may have been hiding behind the female-pseudonym Shula Effroni, first translator of Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*. Carmi has been described by his friends as a big jovial fellow, a womanizer, who was a tireless writer/translator. He was born in Russia in 1918 and came to Israel in 1924, at the age of seven. According to Eli Eshed he did not even finish elementary school. At a very early age he co-founded a small publishing firm called Twentieth Century Publishing. They put out chapbooks: thrillers and detective stories adopted from English literature. When World War II broke out, Carmi joined the Jewish Brigade of the British army (where he first discovered Damon Runyon), then the IDF. When the war was over, he was left with-
out work. He founded Carmi & Naor, and published hard-cover books of good quality. However, the costly production led to financial difficulties, and he had to work for publishers like M. Mizrahi or Uri Shalgi (Eshed 2006).

According to Eshed, Carmi translated at a rate of 12 books a year, about 500 books in all. He was best known for his genial rendition of Damon Runyon, for which he actually invented an “equivalent” Hebrew slang. For his special style, Mizrahi coined the term “Carminization” of translated texts. He translated O. Henry, Edgar Wallace, H. G. Wells, R. L. Stevenson, Jack London and many more. He was especially prolific in translations of erotic literature, fiction and guidebooks. According to Arieh Hashavia, not only did Carmi disdain censorship of erotica, he exaggerated it when he felt the original was not risqué enough. He added abundantly to Stiletto by Harold Robbins, for instance. In his zealous efforts to translate erotic books, Carmi had to look for less “normative” publishers in the periphery. Carmi was less of a political person. However, his weekly column in the Likud magazine Yoman Ha’shavua, published in the 1980s, leaves no doubt about his right-wing political affiliation. He died in 1991.

Arieh Hashavia is an example of a translator, writer and journalist who did not identify with the right wing and who found his way to more central publishing. Hashavia started in the Gadna magazine and went on to write the IDF weekly Ba’machaneh (literally: In the [Military] Camp). In 1948, as a high school pupil, he was already working as jack-of-all-trades in the Yedioth Aharonot evening paper. When Aharon Shamir became editor of the paper’s Weekend Supplement and of La’isha [For Woman], young Hashavia became his close assistant, and remained on the job for ten years (Zvi and Paz 1999: 13). There were many immigrants who could not read Hebrew, it was the “Utility” period, people hardly had money for food, and the conservative paper for women, founded and run by men, provided advice for the working-woman-housewife-mother in matters of fashion, housekeeping and social gossip. The British magazine Woman supplied a model. La’isha started a letterbox and, seeing that response was meager, initially had to resort to fabricating readers’ letters. Should I allow him to kiss me on the first date? Arieh Hashavia, as the woman-consultant “Ariella Lev”, provided the answers. The editors conducted polls to find out what women wanted to read. What was the “recipe for success”? Hashavia explained it to me: they did not annoy or challenge anybody, they did not write about sex.

Early in his career, Hashavia managed M. Mizrahi’s publishing firm for ten years, and throughout that time translated a large number of books. He used the pseudonym Haim Lev (his full name at birth was Haim Leib) when he translated erotica such as Frank Harris’s My Life and Loves (and was surprised that I guessed as much, see Ben-Ari 2006: 269–270, 288–281). He also used the pseudonym H. Adini (his wife’s name is Adina) and T. Lavie.

4. My student, Nir Cohen, verified this for me, for which I thank him.
A colorful figure, a pseudotranslator–publisher, who made a point of staying behind the scenes all these years, is Eli Kedar. Born 1938 in Givatayim, Kedar was a central figure in the marginal popular literature scene of the 1960s. He used so many pseudonyms for his writing and his ad hoc invented printing firms that he finds it hard to remember them all. Among them: Nam Sun, Mike Baden, A. Zilber, A. Keren, A. Kadar and even a female name — Tali Frank. The publishing firm Great Art & I, for whom G. Kasim translated Fanny Hill, was his venture, as were a film company named Sirtey Yoel [Yoel’s Films] and a woman’s magazine called Hu ve’Hi [He and She]. Kedar was an entrepreneur, initiating projects and abandoning them as soon as they came into the public domain. He often lost money by quitting when the project became a hit.

In 1958, after his military service, Kedar wanted to become a journalist. When the major journals rejected him, he decided to try his hand at writing pulp fiction. It was then that he went to look for the publisher who was putting out Westerns. After the success of his first book Köhenet Ha’yareach Ha’tzahov [Priestess of the Yellow Moon], Nissim asked for more material, and together they created the Buck Jones series. As mentioned above, Nissim could not keep up with Kedar’s tempo. Ezra Narqis met Kedar in the Central Bus Station compound and offered him more money for all the books he could write. According to Kedar, he and Narqis published the first pocket-book to be sold in kiosks — Nam Sun’s Rutz ad Ha’sof [Run Till the End] — which appeared two weeks before M. Mizrahi published the first chapbook in his Agatha Christie series. Leafing through a foreign magazine in Narqis’s office, with pictures of voluptuous SS female officers, Kedar conjured up his greatest hit — Stalag 13 (see Ben-Ari 2006: 163–173). In the tradition of Billy Wilder’s Stalag 17, the series depicted British and American prisoners being tortured in Nazi prison camps, with a “twist”: the camps were run by sadistic sex-craving female Nazi officers. Kedar did not pursue the success of the Stalags in Israel. He translated his book into English and went to Germany to look for a publisher. He came back to find, to his amazement, that the books had been sold by the thousands, which did not deter him from abandoning the sure success of the Stalags and looking for new ventures.

Publishers

There was a clearly defined hierarchy among small and medium publishers in the periphery. Though they all looked up to the mainstream for literary language and models and for norms of translation, a clear-cut line existed between those who published hardcover bestsellers and those who published serialized pulp fiction only, in the form of booklets and magazines. The difference was mainly in the fact that the first could be bought in certain bookstores, while the others were sold in kiosks and occasionally in second-hand bookstores. The following are representative of these domains.

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M. Mizrahi was one of the first commercial publishers and, for a long period, the greatest commercial success of them all.7 Meir Mizrahi emigrated from Turkey as a boy, a young tailor in a family of tailors. He had no experience with books but he had a keen business sense. In the colportage tradition, he started by lending popular books to his fellow immigrants, then peddling books that he and his wife carried around with them. Around 1958, he opened a bookstall in the busy commercial Lewinsky Market, off Allenby Street. He bought stocks of books from bankrupt printers, eventually realizing he should buy the plates and the rights as well. Later, he moved to an office and storeroom nearby. He identified a niche, so he said, a lacuna, that he could fill, that of popular novels: along with Erle Stanley Gardner and Ellery Queen, he bought the wholesale rights for Agatha Christie, all of them writers he had heard of in Turkey, all of them considered “cheap” by the mainstream. Mizrahi did not limit himself to detective stories. He published A. J. Cronin and Harold Robbins, Enid Blyton and Alistaire McLean; he published titles such as Casanova or Popeye the Sailor Man, along with Huckleberry Finn and Oliver Twist. Today, he is still very proud of several popular encyclopedias for youth that he published, or the French Que sais-je series of popular information he introduced later on. In fact, the encyclopedias were the first item he pointed out to me in our interview.

Although he certainly reached the top in commercial publishing, Mizrahi (the “Turk”), was looked down upon by mainstream and periphery alike. Although he called his bestselling series The Good Book Club, its reputation of cheapness persisted for years.

Throughout his publishing career, Mizrahi followed a golden rule: to consult with “good” people. He did not gamble on new translators; he employed only those who had established a positive reputation; nor did he gamble on unknown writers. He was not aiming at the literary elite. There are haute couture clothes made for the best clients, he said, but there are workers’ clothes as well, and they too should be well-made, not from fancy stuff, nor custom-tailored, but from good sturdy material. He recognized literary interest and taste among the people who visited his stall, and soon put them to work as readers, editors and translators. The names he mentions proudly are those of professionals such as Haim Abrabaya, Arieh Hashavia, Yitzhak Levanon, Yonatan Ratosh. He paid them less than other publishers, by the book rather than by length or difficulty, but supplied regular work. Arieh Hashavia translated, edited, read and consulted. Baruch Krupnik-Karu, a lexicographer and prolific mainstream translator, produced a fuller translation of Lady Chatterley’s Lover (Ben-Ari 2006: 248–255) and stayed on for more work, including an anthology of Hebrew writers. Eliezer Carmi made his reputation at Mizrahi’s and earned Mizrahi a small fortune with his hilarious translation of Damon Runyon. He was a tireless translator of erotic books, but found that Mizrahi drew the line at pornography. Mizrahi did not have to read the “suspicious” books. Like the famous judge who said he could recognize pornography when he saw it, he spied smut and sent Carmi to smaller, less puritanical printers. He gave up the good profit

on Harold Robbins, for instance, when it became too daring for him, sending Carmi to Shalgi, a publisher with no such compunction. Mizrahi drew the line at Christianity, too. He published all of A. J. Cronin’s bestsellers, except for one: The Keys to the Kingdom, which he vetoed when he heard it was about a priest.

Mizrahi’s downfall occurred in the 1980s, when popular literature began to be published by establishment and non-establishment firms alike. He made a come-back and is still in business, though mostly re-printing bestsellers of the past. Today, at the age of 75, he still prides himself on understanding nothing about books, but understanding all about people and business.

Sh. (Shmuel) Friedman was one of Mizrahi’s competitors. He founded his publishing house in 1942. After his death in 1991, it was run by his daughter Malka and his son Dov. It has recently been sold to a relatively new publisher, Opus, which started with computer manuals and expanded into translated literature.

Grandfather Moshe Friedman came from Lithuania in 1918. He was a Revisionist, a keen follower of the right-wing leader Zeev Jabotinsky. He rejected membership in the Histadrut, the socialist workers’ union, and wrote essays against the establishment. At a time when Yiddish was fought against by the culture shapers in the famous “language battle”, he started a Yiddish paper called Emeth wagen Eretz Yisruel [Truth about Eretz Yisrael]. His six sons were all members of Irgun, the militant anti-British underground movement. His son Shmuel started by publishing political pamphlets and books, but soon realized popular genres would make more money. Most of the books published by the firm were translations, a small number from French, the rest mostly from English. Shmuel Friedman soon identified another “subversive” niche and formed the magazine Olam Ha’kolnoa [The World of Cinema], which was a successful moneymaker. Friedman is also known for publishing a collection of the extreme leftist political satires called “Uzi Ve’shut”, and was friendly with Canaanites such as Binyamin Tamuz and Yonatan Ratosh, who published their own work and translated for him. The firm published a great number of the despised American “bestsellers”: Peyton Place, Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden, novels by Ayn Rand, Vicky Baum, Damon Runyon (the first Guys and Dolls by Carmi). Both the American bestsellers and Olam Ha’kolnoa were “luxury” American-style products, not favored by mainstream ideology.

Malka Friedman insists the firm never received any subsidy from the establishment. Moreover, when Friedman wanted to go into textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s, he was turned down for not belonging to the right party. He had to give up this profitable branch of business.

Ezra Narqis was perhaps the Number One publisher of pulp fiction in the 1950s and 1960s. Now 75, he was born in Jerusalem to a family that had emigrated from Syria. As a boy he joined the underground Irgun, performing various secret missions. This was when he also started translating, his first book being a Conan Doyle (a name, he recalls

8. Interview with daughter-partner Malka Friedman-Shafir, 05.03.06.
with a smile, that he mispronounced as Devil, due to similar spelling in Hebrew). He was surprised when I told him his much-admired leader, Jabotinsky, had also translated Conan Doyle when in the Turkish prison. He started working in a printing shop and made his way up, taking Meir Mizrahi as his model (although, he says, Mizrahi became too “stuck up” later).

Narqis identified a hunger for pornography, as well as a new reading public. In his words, these were young men who emigrated from “under-developed countries” (a euphemism for Arab countries), for whom the mere thought of a woman’s bare leg was arousing. According to him, he was not swimming against the current; he was swimming wherever the current carried him. He saw a vacuum, and he filled it, having recognized the potential of the large number of new immigrants who would read smut. He supervised and copy-edited the books he printed, insisting they were well-written, better than others published in the periphery.

One of his most notorious commercial successes was the Stalags — the above-mentioned chapbooks provocatively combining sex and Nazism. As Narqis recalls, a young man named Eli Kedar came to him and offered a book entitled Stalag 13, a book every other publisher had rejected. Narqis bought the rights for 200 lira and printed it. To Kedar’s astonishment (and dismay), within five months Narqis sold nearly 40,000 books. Narqis published some 25 to 30 Stalags and other booklets of the genre, all pseudotranslations. In fact, according to him, 99% of the books he published were pseudotranslations. Some 80% of them, he says, were written by Miron Uriel under various pseudonyms. Miron Uriel wrote books by the hour; no editing or revising was necessary. Narqis invented foreign names of writers, publishers, critics — so many that he cannot remember them today. The covers were done by Asher Dickstein (today an Orthodox Jew, member of the Habad Hassidic movement) or copied from British/American magazines.

Narqis was not worried about censorship. In his entire career he spent one night in jail, his wedding night (February 10, 1963), after the publication of Stalag 13 — because, he explains, his lawyer had neglected to pay his bail. The angry judge scolded the lawyer for his negligence, scolded the police for arresting a man on his wedding night, and dismissed the case. When the notorious I Was Colonel Schultz’s Bitch (printed by his competitor Peretz Halperin) was confiscated by the police, Narqis quickly published an almost unnoticeable variation, Colonel Schultz’s Bitch (“with absolutely no erotica in it, hardly even a kiss on the cheek”) and immediately sold three editions.

In the 1960s Narqis sold booklets for 1 or 1.50 lira at a time when a clerk would earn 40–50 lira per month. He is still in business, though he too had his ups and downs, first making much money and then losing it. He is now working on a new edition of the Stalags.

The fourth portrait is that of Eliyahu (Eli) Meislish, one of three partners in Deshe Publishing.10 Meislish, one of the Likud Party founders, was until recently Vice Editor of Nativ, a right-wing paper. He was born to a religious family in Netanya. After com-

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pleting his elementary studies in the religious Tachkemoni school and then in a Yeshiva, he sought secular education and studied Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He made some money working in Kenya, which enabled him to found Deshe Publishing. The company was launched by Eli and his childhood friend David Lifshitz in 1960. The third partner, an auditor who kept the books “with the severe neatness of a Yekke”, left them after a short while. Lifshitz, a student of literature and history, was interested in pornography and started a pilot for three pornographic magazines in 1959. An article in Ha’olam Ha’ze (1134, 24.6.1959) claims that the pilot pocket books sold 4000 copies, an immense success in terms of the period. He planned a fourth, an illustrated sex guide that, he insisted, would not only sell but would be of pedagogical value. Each booklet had only one edition, since the law did not demand permits for a one-off publication. The jackets often bore the self-defeating title Hotza’a chad-pe’amit [literally: one-time publication], No. 2, No. 3 etc..<p>

David Lifshitz’s career as publisher of sex books was cut short when the police arrested him after a detailed exposé (complete with photograph) in Ha’olam Ha’ze. Obscenity laws were not too clear about pornography, and so he was arrested on technicalities such as not naming the printing house or publishing firm on the cover, as required. His friend Eli got him out on bail. Lifshitz changed his name to Sadan, and Deshe Publishing became more careful about printing pornography. Lifshitz, according to Meislish, was an anarchist who supported the Arab El-Ard group, and therefore accepted a book by Lebanese writer Laila Ba’albakki, Ani Echye [I Shall Live]. It was meant to appear in an establishment publication of the Histadrut, the Trade Union Organization, but was vetoed for its anti-Zionist tone. Deshe was persuaded by the translator Yehoshua Halamish that the book included no more than one or two provocative anti-Zionist sentences, and published it in 1961.

Eli Meislish was 29 when they started the small firm. Literary celebrities of today worked for them, recommending books, translating or illustrating. Aggressive and quite modern distribution techniques were used. Eli was careful not to let David introduce too much sex. However, Sadan soon published books about Nazis and concentration camps, even a book about Hitler, with swastikas on the covers. The partnership (and friendship) finally broke up when Meislish found out Lifshitz had published a book in the Deshe format calling it Keter Publishing. Meislish then established a small firm on his own, called Golan, which published then-unknown poetry books. He copied old chapbooks, changing key words here and there to be on the safe side. He wrote a pornographic book under the pseudonym Eli Ben-Layish, and later worked for Massada Publishing, then for the Likud daily. For six years (1983–1989) he worked as producer for Olam Ha’isha (Woman’s World, La’isha’s competitor), and later moved to nativ, the extreme-right settlers’ magazine, where he remained for 17 years. David Sadan, who remained in the book industry, established Sadan Publishing, where he specialized in law books.

Similar tendencies could be described in a long list of private commercial publishers, known for their right-wing affiliation. For lack of space I will mention only a few

Mainstream and periphery — a word in conclusion

There could be several conclusions to this presentation. Hypothesis A: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature were rejected by the mainstream and found their way to the subversive margins. Hypothesis B: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature rejected the mainstream, sought an outlet where they could publish anti-establishment material, and formed their own publication facilities on the periphery. Hypothesis C: both of the above are true. Some cases are not clear-cut, with people blundering into marginal production for financial reasons, and staying in it or drifting away for the same financial reasons. Being less mobilized for a cause, however, does not make them less dissident, and they were often driven by a strong sense of rejection.

The combination of non-canonic or even subversive writing, translating or publishing with right-wing political tendencies is complex and somewhat perplexing. Most of the participants were not aware of this common denominator. They would not have characterized their habitus as such. After all, they had gone into the business for profit, not ideology. However, profit was a bourgeois notion, defying true socialist, Zionist, anti-Diaspora values. The keywords business, profit, bestsellers and market would only later be adopted by mainstream publishing.

Notwithstanding, very early in my research it became clear that the texts all looked for models in the “high” literary norms. This was confirmed when I became acquainted with the people involved. It was a one-sided dependency, of course, since the mainstream did its best to ignore pulp fiction. But almost all the people involved in the popular field had a real interest in literature, and they thus had a notion of what was “right”, even if they did not always adhere to it. This changed for the worse in the 1970s when a new generation entered the pulp literature scene devoid of any literary aspirations, and for the better when, at the same time, more respectable central publishers took an interest in the commercial success of popular literature.

One thing stands out: the mainstream could not ignore indefinitely the bustling activity in the periphery. The periphery introduced what the system needed more than anything else: healthy stratification. Translation thus became, again, a vehicle for change.

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