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THESIS:
“Translation as a manipulative tool of literature”

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1. Introduction

Translation Studies as a discipline on its own right is a very recent development if we consider how long translation itself exists in humankind history. Commerce between merchants from different and distant regions, knowledge exchanges or even cultural and religious domination was only possible because there was a translator to serve as mediator between different civilizations.

Nevertheless, since James Holmes proposed a new way to analyse translation [1970] focused on the description of how it manifests itself in the world, a change of emphasis emerged and scholars started to give more importance the context in which translation happens. As Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi affirm (1999:2) ‘translation does not happen in vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is a part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer’. In this light, culture plays an influential role in translation and, as such, may be considered as a ‘highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries’ (*ibid*, 2).

This shift of focus marks what is referred to by various scholars as ‘the cultural turn’ in translation studies (Bassnett, 1998:123). This group of scholars start to direct their attention to ‘constraints’ or ‘manipulatory processes’ that are ‘involved in the transfer of texts’ between cultures. The ‘manipulation group’, as coined by Armin Paul Frank (Dukāte, 2009:44), considered the social-cultural system as a conglomerate of subsystems that interacted and influenced each other (Baker&Saldanha, 2011:197).

André Lefevere, who participated in this group of scholars, proposed then his theory of rewriting to support his principal that text reproductions (including translation, editing, reviewing and anthologizing) are results of a partial representation of reality, which are

subject to manipulation through constraints inside the literary system (e.g. language, universe of discourse and poetics) and regulatory forces from outside the system (patronage and professionals) (Baker&Saldanha, 2011:241).

In order to understand how these control mechanisms function, and how they influence translated literature. In section 2, we will consider some theoretical background on translation studies on issues developed by Holmes (1975), Even-Zohar (1978), and Hermans (1985; 2014). Then, in section 3 we will study the concepts proposed by Lefevere (1992). In subsections 3.2 and 3.3, we will see some practical examples to illustrate how these mechanisms actively distort or manipulate translation activities within the literary system, and, finally, some last conclusions and considerations (section 5) on this issue will be given.

2. Theoretical background in Translation Studies

Although translation is an ancient activity and the first evidences of its practice dates from around 4500 years ago, when a Sumerian-Eblait civilization used clay tablets to engrave a bilingual list of words with their correspondent meanings (Dalnoky, 1977; cited in Delisle&Woodsworth, 1995:7); Translation Studies as a non-allied and new approach to the study of literary texts first appeared in 1975, when James Holmes coined this term when he first published *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (in Gentzler, 2001:77). This is ‘generally accepted as the founding’ (*ibid*, 93) of a new study field and it was the first time that translation started to be discussed in a new way in Western Europe (*ibid*, 91), namely with a focus on the description of how translation phenomena manifest themselves in the world (*ibid*, 93–94).

This change of focus was also followed by André Lefevere, who in 1975 published his text *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint*, and attempted to a more empirical, objective approach and describes seven different types of translation based on correspondingly distinct methodologies that tend to govern the translation process (*ibid*, 94). Following this descriptive approach, in 1978 the Hebrew scholar Itamar Even-Zohar introduces the term “polysystem” to define the aggregate of literary systems in a given culture (*ibid*, 106) and in 1980 Gideon Toury adopted this concept to isolate and define certain translation “norms” that influence translation decisions (*ibid*, 106), which since then shifted the focus of translation studies from theory to descriptive work (*ibid*, 131).

These ideas from Zohar and Toury were based on Russian Formalists (*ibid*, 106): Yuri Tynianov and Roman Jakobson studied the poetics relying on the systemic functional linguistics, which had been formulated considering Saussurian linguistic principles (Martins, 2010:61). The Russian Formalists established the notion of poetical language as a system or a set of relations between the whole and its parts (Martins, 2010:61) and this notion was the

basis for the theoretical reflections not only for Zohar and Toury, but also for many other scholars that used the new descriptive approach for their research on translation studies, including Susan Bassnett, José Lambert, Hendrik von Gorp, Raymond van den Broeck, Maria Tymoczko, Ria Vanderauwera, André Lefevere and Theo Hermans (Hermans, 2014:12–13; Gentzler, 2001:91).

These scholars published together in 1985 a collection edited by Theo Hermans called *The Manipulation of Literature*. The term “manipulation” was a suggestion given by André Lefevere as all scholars in this collection agreed that ‘from the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose’ (Hermans, 1985:11). Besides that, they all shared the same:

‘view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; a conviction that there should be a continual interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies; an approach to literary translation that is descriptive, target-oriented, functional, and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translation’ (Hermans, 1985:10–11)

Then, in 1992 André Lefevere publishes his *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, and proposes his ‘theory of rewriting’ that uses a systemic/descriptive approach and considers translation as ‘a discursive activity embedded within a system of literary conventions and a network of institutions and social agents that condition textual production’ (Baker&Saldanha, 2011:241). In the next section, we will study this theory and manipulation forces or factors in translation, namely patronage, ideology, poetics, professionals, language and universe of discourse.

4. Lefevere's concepts

3.1 Rewriting and manipulation

Lefevere uses a 'heuristic construct for the study of rewriting' based on concept of "system" introduced in literary studies by the Russian Formalists (Lefevere, 1992:9) and considers culture as a:

'complex "system of systems" composed of various subsystems such as literature, science, and technology. Within this general system, extraliterary phenomena relate to literature not in a piecemeal fashion but as an interplay among subsystems determined by the logic of the culture to which they belong' (Steiner, 1984; cited in Lefevere, 1992:11)

For him, rewriting is any kind of text that was produced 'on the basis of another with the intention of adapting the other text to a certain ideology or to a certain poetics and, usually to both' (Hermans, 2014:127). He claimed that 'translation is a rewriting of an original text' and no matter its intention, it will 'reflect a certain ideology and poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way' (Lefevere, 1992:vii). In addition, he states:

'rewritings are produced in the service, or under the constraints, of certain ideological and/or poetological currents, and that such currents do not deem it to their advantage to draw attention to themselves as merely "one current among others.'" (Lefevere, 1992:5)

Therefore, translation functions as a 'shaping force' (*ibid*, viii) within literature and it has the 'shaping power of one culture upon another' (*ibid*, vii). It can bring innovation in literature as it 'can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices' (*ibid*, vii) acting as a kind of 'motor force behind literary evolution' (*ibid*, 2), and it can also 'repress, distort and contain' (*ibid*, vii) innovation. In other words, it can manipulate the 'acceptance or rejection, canonization or non-canonization of literary works' (*ibid*, 2).

Following this line of thought, he states also that:

‘translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting and since it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and or a (series of) work(s) in another culture, lifting that author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin...’ (Lefevere, 1992:9)

However, translation is not the only kind of rewriting. There are other kinds of rewriting, such as: ‘criticism, reviewing, summary, adaptation for children, anthologizing, making into a comic strip or TV film’ (Hermans, 2014:127), and literary manipulation can occur outside translation. For example, when the father of Anne Frank edited his daughter’s diary to publish it the first time in 1947, he decided to make a lot of omissions, mainly passages referring to her awakening sexuality (Hermans: 2014: 43).

Some passages, like that one where the young girl asks ‘why woman occupies a position so much lower than man’s among the nations’ (Lefevere, 1992:64), were completely deleted or at least weakened, as the ideas of women emancipation were against the society ideology of that time. Other passages in other editions, as in the 1986 edition where she ‘gives a very unfriendly and partly inaccurate description of her parents' marriage’, were deleted on request of her family (*ibid*, 62).

In these cases, manipulation was exerted not only by the patron (the editor Otto Frank), but also by the ideology of chauvinistic society that time and by personal reasons (*ibid*, 61). In the next sections, we will focus on these mechanisms, which I named here outer and inner control mechanisms of literature (based on Hermans, 2014:126).

3.2 Outer control mechanisms: patronage and ideology

According to Hermans (2014:126), **patronage** and **ideology** are mechanisms that largely govern literary system ‘from the outside, and secures the relations between literature

and its environment'. For Lefevere (1992:15), patronage means 'something like the powers (persons, institutions(s) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature'. He points out (*ibid*, 15) that the patrons 'try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture'.

Lefevere affirms (*ibid*, 16) also that patronage 'can be exerted by persons (...), by a group of persons, a religious body, a political party, a social class, a royal court, publishers, and (...) the media, both newspapers and magazines and larger television corporations'. In addition, it is composed by three elements that interact in different combinations: the ideological, economic and status.

The **ideological component** functions as a 'constraint on the choice and development of both form and subject matter' (*ibid*, 16). For Lefevere, ideology is 'the dominant concept (...) of what society should (be allowed to) be' (*ibid*, 14), but Hermans (2014:126) prefers to define ideology as 'what the relation between literature and other social systems is supposed to be' (*ibid*, 127).

The **economic component** involves the employment relation between patrons and rewriters, where the patrons "sees to it that writers and rewriters are able to make a living, by giving them a pension or appointing them to some office' (Lefevere, 1992:16) and last, but not least, the **status component** where 'acceptance of patronage implies integration into a certain support group and its lifestyle' (*ibid*, 16), conferring 'prestige and recognition' to the rewriter (Hermans, 2014:126).

Besides that, patronage can be classified in **differentiated** or **undifferentiated in nature** (Lefevere, 1992:17). In the first category, the 'three components, the ideological, the economic and the status components, are all dispensed by one and the same patron' (*ibid*, 17),

which was most the case in the past when in many literary systems the countries had absolutist rulers, or a totalitarian regime, as patrons. In the second category, the economic component plays an important role and its ‘success is relatively independent of ideological factors, and does not necessarily bring status with it’ (*ibid*, 17). This can be well observed in most of today's bestsellers, where the economic component is the most important factor for the patron.

3.2.1 The translation of Jorge Amado novels in China (from Portuguese into Chinese)

Despite the Chinese system ‘has been able to resist change the longest, precisely because undifferentiated patronage limited both the producers and readers of literature’ (Lefevre, 1992:24), there is a Brazilian novelist that achieved quite a good fame in the Chinese literary system: Jorge Amado (1912–2001). According to Jianbo (2013:25), the translation of his works can be divided into two periods, the first from the middle 1950s until 1960, and the second from 1980 until 1991.

In the first moment, his novels were retranslated from English, Russian, and, mainly, French into Chinese. In the beginning of the 1950s, translation of foreign literature, especially those that fitted the dominant **communist ideology** (most of them from the Soviet Union or communist countries of the Eastern Europe), started to be produced (Jianbo, 2013:26-27). These translations were subsidized by the Chinese government, an **undifferentiated patron**, and supported the communist ideas. From Latin America, literary works from the Chilean Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) and Jorge Amado had the privilege of being introduced into the Chinese literary system, as both writers were members of their countries’ communist parties and both underlined their political position in their works (*Jianbo*, 2013:28).

Then, from 1966 until 1976 China went through a Cultural Revolution, where the publication of any foreign book was prohibited, and in 1978 the country started a process of reform. Jianbo affirms (2013:36) that the literated people started to surpass certain limits imposed by the dominant ideology and in 1981 the first translation from Brazilian Portuguese into Chinese of Amado's novels (in this case: *A Morte e a Morte de Quincas Berro D'água*) was published. The translated novel was praised by the critics and four years later, it was reedited and published in the literary market (*ibid*, 37). The success of the first novel motivated the translation of other Amado's novels: e.g *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (1985), *Tieta do Agreste* (1986), *Dona Flor e os seus dois maridos* (1987), and many others (*ibid*, 41).

According to this example, we can observe two phenomena. First, how literature was then manipulated by an undifferentiated patron and this made the fame of a foreign author, whose ideology was the same as in the target society; and second, how critics influenced on the production of other translations.

3.3 Inner control mechanisms: poetics and professionals

Theo Hermans claims (2014:128) that 'all rewriting, then, takes place under the constraints of patronage, ideology and poetics'. In the last section, we have seen that on one hand, patronage and ideology have an influence on the relation between a certain literary system and the outside environment. On the other hand, there are control mechanisms inside a literary system, whose function is to 'keep order within the literary system' (Hermans, 2014:126). Lefevere (1992:14) calls them 'poetics' and 'professionals'.

The term '**professionals**' makes reference to the individuals, 'critics, reviewers, teachers and translators' that 'render a service' for the patron (Lefevere, 1992:14), and '**poetics**' can be defined as 'the dominant concept of what literature should (be allowed to)

be' (*ibid*, 14). Patronage is more concerned about ideology of literature than poetics (*ibid*, 15) and counts on the professionals 'to bring the literary system in line with their own ideology' (*ibid*, 16).

Poetics has two components: a **functional** and an **inventory component**. The first can be described as 'what the role of literature is, or should be, in the social system as a whole' (*ibid*, 26) or 'how literature has to, or may be allowed to, function in society' (Lefevere, 1986:6), and the second is a set of elements, such as 'devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols' (Lefevere, 1992:26).

Lefevere explains that functional component in a literary system exerts more influence 'in the selection of themes that must be relevant to the social system' (*ibid*, 1992:26), and 'is created by 'ideological forces in the environment of the literary system' (*ibid*, 27); while the inventory component of poetics 'is not immediately subject to direct influence from the environment'. Another contrast between both components of poetics is that the first 'exerts an innovative influence on the literary system as a whole', and the second 'tends to be more conservative' (*ibid*, 34–35). The functional component is 'closely tied to ideological influences from outside the sphere of the poetics' (*ibid*, 1992:26).

Poetics may change over time (it is what Lefevere calls 'historical variable'), for instance, today's dominant poetics is very different from what it was in past (*ibid*, 35), but it tends to 'posit itself as absolute' (*ibid*, 35). Each dominant poetics 'controls the dynamic of the system' (*ibid*, 35), and to maintain its absolute position in the literary system, poetics may 'rewrite the history of the literature it dominates at a given time' (*ibid*, 35). Some clear examples of this process may be observed in the German literature at the time Nazi ideology was the dominant in the literary system. In this case, poetics was 'closely linked the Nazi ideology' (*ibid*, 35).

For Lefevere, most educational institutions in literary systems enforce the dominant poetics, and they tend to be conservative (*ibid*, 19). Once a work of literature has been canonized by educational institutions, it tends to stay a canon (*ibid*, 19). Therefore, ‘academies or influential literary journals (...) play an important part in admitting new works to the canon’ (*ibid*, 20).

3.3.1 The three translations of Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children* (from German into English)

A well-known example of how control mechanisms manifest themselves to manipulate literature towards canonization of a foreign author is given by Lefevere (Venuti, 2000:239) when he analyses the three translations into English of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, written by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Though his theatrical works have today their own terms and poetics, when he lived he received harsh critics as his original works did not match the **dominant poetological currents** of the Anglo-Saxon social-cultural system.

So, to insert his works into the literary canon of the English speaking countries the solution was to acculturate them. Acculturation means ‘the process which is employed to tone down the Foreign by appropriating the unfamiliar “reality”, and making the integration possible by blurring the borderline between the familiar and the unfamiliar’ (Aaltonen, 2000:55). Both translators, H. R. Hays (1941) and Eric Bentley (1967), **rewrote** *Mutter Courage* with their own terms and neglected some alienation effects (such as the defamiliarization devices like songs, prologues, and an episodic structure in the dramaturgy) that play a crucial role in Brecht's notion of theatre.

They simply adapted Brecht's piece to the theatre dynamics of the USA, where entertainment and amusement were more important factors, so that it could be accepted as a 'well-made play' by the Broadway theatre-goers. It was the way they followed to establish 'a bridgehead for Brecht' in their system, and 'compromise with the demands of the **poetics** and the **patronage**' that were dominant at the time they were translated (Venuti, 2000:244).

3.3.2 The translation of *The Lusiad* of Luís Vaz de Camões (from Portuguese into English)

The Lusiad (in Portuguese, *Os Lusíadas*) is an epic poem written by Luís Vaz de Camões (born c.1524/25–1580) that tells the history of Portugal (since its mythological origins until the Great Navigations, based on stories concerning Vasco da Gama's trip to the East Indies) (Martins, 2015:32). Its second translation into English was carried out by the Scottish poet William Julius Mickle and published in 1776. In his rewriting, Mickle praises Vasco da Gama's trip and the ideological reasons for that, due to the great importance this issue represented to the commerce and the British Empire. Also, because many of his **patrons** were members of the East India Company and at his time, there was much criticism on commercial monopoly and feasibility of the Company in governing distant regions without the support of the Crown (*ibid*, 36-37).

One of Mirkle's strategies was the abundant use of paratexts, including many notes where he defended the overseas expansion, narrated how the Indies were discovered or how the Portuguese Empire rose and fell in the East. They were added to the text in purpose as these ideas encouraged the **ideology** of that time, and justified the initiatives of commerce, colonization and expansion of the British Empire (Martins, 2015:38).

Furthermore, he praises not only the characteristics of the main Portuguese heroes in the poem, but also their achievements in defending commerce and maritime expansion. Mirkle defends militarism and expansionism, and delegates a ‘missionary’ responsibility to civilize the ‘wild or primitive people from Africa and Asia’ (Martins, 2015:32). But he does not only rely on ideology, in order to achieve success in the British literary system, he also adapts his translation to the dominant **poetics** of his time. He applies certain poetical resources (e.g. elimination of some mythological allusions) to remodel the original and make the poem more ‘fluent’. In fact, he manipulates his translation to be accepted in the receptive literary system, and as a result, he succeeds (considering the fact that the first edition of his publication was quickly sold out and until today it is considered the most read translation of the Portuguese poem) (Martins, 2015:30).

4.4 Other intra-systemic constraints: language and universe of discourse

Aside from poetics, there are other constraints inside the literary system that can cause ‘shifts’ in rewriting (Baker&Saldanha, 2009:241). Lefevere postulated that the ‘natural language’ can vary in form (grammatical structure) and in pragmatics (‘the way in which language reflects culture’) (in Venuti, 2000:242).

He also states that ‘different languages reflect different cultures’ (in Venuti, 2000:242), and sometimes this difference cannot be reduced, independent of how much ‘translator training’ someone has (1992:100). However, the translator may develop certain strategies in order to ‘overcome’ this difference and produce his or her image of an original text, which in turn may be affected not only by ideology and/or poetics, but also by other factors: such as target audience, linguistics and universe of discourse (*ibid*, 100).

Universe of discourse, for Lefevere (1985:233), is ‘the knowledge, the learning, but also the objects and the customs of a certain time, to which writers are free to allude in their work’ (cited in Hermans, 2014:128). It is a kind of ‘cultural script’ that contains the ‘accepted pattern of behaviour expected of people who fill certain roles in a certain culture’ (Lefevere, 1992:89).

4 Conclusion

Considering the discussion of theories of rewriting and manipulation, as well as the examples presented in this essay, we can draw some conclusions on translation and its role within a certain literary system. First of all, translation is not an activity disconnected to rest of the world or a phenomenon that ‘occurs in vacuum’. It is, in fact, an activity that is inextricable to its socio-cultural context, and, as such, may be affected by elements and factors that are external or internal to the target socio-cultural system into which they will be transferred.

Also, translations are rewritings (partial interpretations) subject to manipulation and are driven not only by the patron, but also by a dominant ideology and/or poetics in the target socio-cultural system. These forces rule literary translation and even though they seem to be absolute, they may change with time and transformation of society. They control literary fame and receivership of a foreign author or a certain book.

Nevertheless, this manipulation power, which may sound extremely negative, can be exerted in a positive and constructive way. This means that it can help an author or a work to be introduced into a literary system where poetological and ideological currents might originally refuse the source text in their socio-cultural system. Aside from that, once literary fame has been established, and an author is already regarded as ‘canon’ and his works as ‘classics’, other translations may be carried out to show the original poetics and/or ideology as faithful as possible.

In other words, through translation literature can be manipulated to result in acceptance or rejection of literary works. We can affirm that translated literature is responsible for literary exchanges between different socio-cultural systems, and it can import

new poetological and ideological currents from one system into another. Thus, it occupies a central position in literary system and is able to transform and innovate the target socio-cultural system.

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