A 'Multilingual' and 'International' Translation Studies?

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Abstract: *The paper questions certain import/export relations between the
centre and the periphery of translation studies. It focuses on the common
expectation about the role of researchers based in the periphery as providers
of 'raw materials' in the form of translated texts, paratexts, translational
behaviour and histories of translation. It contends that if theory continues
to be seen as something that is supplied by the centre and consumed by the
periphery, then the theories offered by the centre cannot be truly challenged
just by testing them out on data provided by the periphery. The paper asks
whether we should prolong the illusion that we are all offering equal
contributions to a common goal, the progress of translation studies as a
scholarly discipline. Would we not benefit from reflecting more critically
on our own working methods and our relationship to the theories, models,
tools and materials we use and develop?*

This essay started its life as a paper presented at the 'Research Models in Transla-
tion Studies' conference held in Manchester in April 2000. One of the aims and
objectives put forward for this conference was to see "how Western models fare
when faced with non-Western modes of thought and expression". Accordingly,
among the suggested topics for papers was "Western research models and non-
Western cultures". The juxtaposition or confrontation implied in this conference
blurb also brings to mind the prevalent import/export pattern found within many
contemporary disciplines, including translation studies, as well as a certain rela-
tionship of power which is often too much taken for granted and hence rather
unspoken of.

It is, in fact, rather difficult to work with the terms 'Western' and 'non-West-
ern'. Any adjective describing its subject as a negation, as a 'non-x', is derived
from the vantage point of the 'x'. With the term 'non-Western', the majority of the
world is being defined as a totality of 'non-x', although this majority does not de-
fine itself in opposition to the 'West' necessarily or exclusively. Being 'non-Western'
has apparently become the only common denominator behind otherwise vastly dif-
ferent languages and cultures, spreading from Japan to India, from the Middle East
to China, from Russia to Africa. "It is merely in the night of our ignorance that all
alien shapes take on the same hue", says Perry Anderson (in his *Lineages of the
Absolutist State*, quoted in Spivak 1999: 89). On the other hand, the same dichotomy
renders 'the West' more homogeneous than it actually is (Cronin 1995: 85-6). It
does not take into account the different positions of Irish, Dutch, Slovak or Finnish

languages and cultures, to name but a few. These terms are also not helpful for the researcher who works on contemporary data, where borders are very much blurred and tracing 'influences' is often beyond one's grasp.

Nevertheless, one should be able to talk about the power differentials found *within* the discipline, and if these two terms are rather deceptive, others can be introduced. In my paper, I will use the rather more abstract dichotomy of 'centre' and 'periphery', except for a few occasions. The singular form used should not mislead the reader. There is not one centre in translation studies, neither is there a monolithic periphery. In any case, there is no way of measuring centrality or peripherality. Yet, in order to be able to discuss certain topics, one needs to start with certain terms, despite all the unease that goes with them. As we shall see below, the terms 'centre' and 'periphery' have the advantage of avoiding monolithic constructions such as those suggested by the 'Western/non-Western' dichotomy, since they allow the construction of a centre/periphery opposition also within both the periphery and the centre.

1. Centre-periphery relations within translation studies

The centre and periphery of translation studies do not exactly correspond to those of the world's geopolitical situation today. As a consequence of the subject matter of the discipline, they are rather language-bound. Having a native proficiency in one or more of the dominant languages (English, French, German, and nowadays occasionally Spanish), choosing one's research material from these languages and/ or *publishing* one's research in them are frequently key factors in making one's voice heard. Working on and/or writing in 'exotic' languages, on the other hand, seems to indicate a rather peripheral position, and those who do so have to fight their way through in order to achieve international acknowledgement. The socio-economic power of the country of origin or residence often comes secondary to the might of the language the researcher writes in and works on.

There may also be central figures within peripheries, and peripheral figures in central locations. Certain scholars working in rather less famous countries can still be considered central thanks to their mother tongues or the dominant languages they write in. However, once a scholar based in a socio-economically powerful country starts working on data obtained from 'less common' languages, s/he might soon start feeling rather peripheral. Nevertheless the actual physical location of the researcher remains as a determining factor, since the issue of research outlet is closely related to this physical location. Institutional aspects and patronage play a major role in the dissemination of knowledge among the members of a scholarly community. Where one publishes one's work, in which journals or books (local/international, local but well-known or easily accessible, etc.) and with which publishing houses, is a crucial factor, as is one's proximity to central research institutions.

If the points I have made so far merely sound like 'common sense' or 'common knowledge', it is still worth being reminded of them, since one frequently hears the claim that the centre could be *anywhere* that produces interesting and useful hypotheses, models and theories. Such an approach underestimates the canonization process that goes with linguistic, cultural and economic imperialism.

2. Universality

One of the main characteristics of the centre is its actual will to act as *the* centre, and often claim universality or all-inclusiveness. Since its development stage in the 1970s and 1980s, translation studies was envisaged as such a comprehensive discipline. In his much-quoted article 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies' (1972) James Holmes presented "the ultimate goal of the translation theorist" as being "to develop a full, inclusive theory accommodating so many elements that it can serve to explain and predict all phenomena falling within the terrain of translating and translation, to the exclusion of all phenomena falling outside it" (1988: 73). "Partial translation theories" were then seen as "little more than prolegomena to such a general translation theory" (*ibid.*). This will to exhaustiveness leads to the present increasing efforts to define rules and laws accounting for translational phenomena as diverse as possible. Calls for joint endeavours towards a coherent set of concepts and models, which can be applied across the board to all possible text types written in all possible languages at any time in human history are not infrequent.

Admirable though these ventures can be, they risk certain drawbacks. As has often been argued, models and tools originating from the centre and created initially by using central data, do not necessarily prove useful when they are taken out of their contexts and put to use on peripheral data (see for instance Dharwadker 1999: 125-30, 134-5; Cronin 1998: 147). Examples are not hard to find. It has been pointed out that central thinking on translation is based on a monolingual perspective and therefore cannot account for multilingual situations such as those in India (Devy 1999: 185; Viswanatha and Simon 1999: 164). Central translation theories owe too much to studies on Bible translation and many of the presuppositions of the latter do not work for non-Christian cultures, since different religions and metaphysics have different influences on the production and reception of translation (for a brief comparison of Western and Indian metaphysics and their impact on the understanding of translation, see Devy 1999). As for the work of individual scholars from the centre, Lawrence Venuti's views on the relationship between fluency and imperialism, for instance, have frequently been criticized as inapplicable outside the Anglo-American context (e.g. Tymoczko 2000: 39 and other references provided there; Paloposki and Oittinen 2000). In short, there can be a thin line between the usefulness of imported theories, tools and models, and their limiting or inappropriate nature for the material at hand.

3. Testing out

This drawback is precisely the reason why many of today's prominent models and hypotheses, quite rightly and in an entirely scientific vein, ask for being tested out on material derived from diverse cultures and languages, so that their scholarly relevance and efficiency can be assessed. In fact, one of the underlying motives behind the will to comprehensiveness or exhaustiveness mentioned above was a similar concern to establish a *scientific* discipline. It was argued that theories and generalizations, in order to deserve the title, should be applicable to any arbitrary case, and if a theory "cannot stand up to such a test, it must be modified and reworked" (Tymoczko 1999b: 32). Accordingly, theories based and applied only on a limited number of texts, genres, periods, languages or systems, representing – as had been the case in the past – mostly modern, Western, written and/or high cultures would simply not be valid (*ibid.*). When a theory could not be fully generalized in this way, "its domain must be clearly stated [...]" (Tymoczko 1999b: 33).

It was necessary, therefore, to increase the variety of material available for scrutiny, and peripheral systems were the obvious sources. Attention was drawn to translational phenomena in 'less common' languages and cultures (see, e.g. Bassnett 1993; Cronin 1998; Lefevere 1998). On the other hand, scholars from the periphery had already started using central models and theories in their own research on indigenous data, such as translated texts, paratexts, translational behaviour and translation history, and their publications in dominant languages consequently enhanced 'international' translation studies. As a result, we hear glad tidings today that the discipline is expanding its horizons. However, this expansion has an eerie resemblance to the enthusiastic "information-retrieval approach to 'Third World' [...] literature" which Gayatri Spivak talks about (1999: 114, 118). There is a prevalent mechanism today in which central models and theories are expected to feed on periphery cultures and the data they offer.

Those who can do this testing-out are of course those who *have* the proficiency in peripheral languages, and who *choose* to work on them – hence, according to our definition given above, they are the periphery researchers. The generally expected course of action from these researchers is to apply theories supplied by the centre to peripheral 'raw material', with the twin objectives of elucidating local translation practices and testing the strength and comprehensiveness of the imported theories. The new generation of researchers from the periphery often start their career by absorbing whatever has been written on translation in and by the centre. If any original contribution is expected from them, it can only *follow* the wholesale internalization of central translation theories as the only conceivable and legitimate provider of models in contemporary translation studies. Consequently any transformation of the dominant paradigms can come only from within, from the application *of* the particular models *on* peripheral traditions. The tools, models and theories

intended to be at the service of these researchers thus shift to a position of authoritative overseers.

This is a widespread pattern, of course, and not confined to translation studies only. It is usually taken to be just a part of the standard 'initiation and socialization process into an academic community'. It is no wonder that 'testing out' is the type of research most strongly advocated for postgraduate degrees (see e.g. Phillips and Pugh 1995: 49). This type of research tries "to find the limits of previously proposed generalizations" and therefore, it provides "an established framework" and an environment which gives "some degree of protection by the established nature of much of the ideas, arguments, [...] etc." (Phillips and Pugh 1995: 51). In their popular handbook on postgraduate research, which made two revised editions and eleven reprints in less than a decade, Phillips and Pugh warn the newcomers:

> Of course, you will have to make your original contribution – merely replicating what others have done is not adequate. So, for example, you will have to use a methodology on a new topic where it has not been applied before and therefore make manifest its strengths in giving new knowledge and theoretical insights. Or you will have to apply two competing theories to a new situation to see which is more powerful, or design a crucial experiment to produce evidence to choose between them. As a result you may produce your own innovative variant of the methodology or theory. [...] Testing out is the basic ongoing professional task of academic research, and doctoral work done well in this framework is much more likely to be *useful* and thus publishable and quotable. (Phillips and Pugh 1995: 51)

The keywords here are obviously 'useful', 'publishable' and 'quotable', but one more thing is worth noting: 'testing out' is presented as "the basic ongoing professional task" of all academic research, not just of the postgraduate type. The contribution expected from the researcher is, then, to consolidate, criticize and/or reshape *existing* and *well-known* models, tools and theories, since only they will provide the 'established framework' and the 'protection' necessary for successful research. Through the itinerary that leads from background theory via the 'literature survey' to the 'present state of the art' with which each and every researcher should ideally be familiar, the discipline's self-generating and self-perpetuating mechanism is set in motion.

4. What about the other knowledges, then?

Models from dominant systems are "to be imitated and reproduced" by weaker systems if the latter wish to be part of the global community, says Talal Asad (1986: 158). Quite often, knowledge of these models becomes "a precondition for the production of more knowledge" (*ibid.*). In cases where the flow of knowledge is

predominantly one-directional, the likelihood of a platform for discussion, mutual criticism, exchange and dialogue is small. It becomes a question of who produces the "desired knowledge" (*ibid.*), who is the "owner and guardian" of this desired knowledge (Arrojo 1999: 143) and who makes use of it.[1] What matters at this point is no longer the intrinsic quality – relevancy, efficiency or usefulness – of the models, tools or theories exported by the centre, but rather the authority and power which accompany this process. 'Self-colonization', as Lydia H. Liu terms it (1995: 236), is the state a large part of the world finds itself in today. The result is the widespread and mostly voluntary effort to mime the dominant powers, to mould the indigenous discourses on the model of imported knowledge, with the ultimate goal of being incorporated into the 'modern' world (Phillipson 1993: 65):

> If the Center always provides the teachers and the definition of what is worthy of being taught (from the gospels of Christianity to the gospels of Technology and Science), and the Periphery always provides the learners, then there is a pattern of imperialism [...] a pattern of scientific teams from the Center who go to Periphery nations to collect data (raw material) in the form of deposits, sediments, flora, fauna, archaeological findings, attitudes, opinions, behavioral patterns, and so on for data processing, data analysis, and theory formation (like industrial processing in general). This takes place in the Center universities (factories), in order to send the finished product, a journal, a book (manufactured goods) back for consumption in the center of the Periphery, first having created a demand for it through demonstration effect, training in the Center country, and some degree of low-level participation in the data-collection team. This parallel is not a joke, it is a structure.
> (Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds. A Transnational Perspective*, quoted in Phillipson 1993: 57)

These days one can hardly carry out research without using central models and theories. These models and theories have attained the aura of 'universality', since through abstraction and generalization they leave the local and particular behind and strive to be value-free, culture-free, context-free and neutral. A good case in point is mathematics. However, just how much mathematics as we know it today is constructed by people from certain cultures, and not from others, how other alternatives were suppressed and gradually came to be forgotten, can be seen in the work

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[1] This largely unilateral import/ export relationship does not necessarily imply passivity on the part of the periphery. Translation theory, for instance, is not and cannot be exempt from the common fortunes of 'travelling theory' in general (see, e.g. Said 1983; Miller 1996). As happens in almost any other process of transfer and transportation, imported models and theories are transformed, altered or appropriated at and by their destinations. It is important, therefore, "to avoid reductionism by recognizing that what happens in the Periphery is not irrevocably determined by the Centre" (Phillipson 1993:63).

of scholars who deal with what they call 'ethno-mathematics'. Alan J. Bishop refers to studies on different counting systems in the world – some 600 in Papua New Guinea alone, where more than 700 languages are spoken – utilising means other than the decimal system or even numbers (1997: 72). There are also various conceptions of geometry, and not all of them have the "'atomistic' and object-oriented ideas of points, lines, planes and solids" (*ibid.*), features taken for granted in Western mathematics and taught all around the world. Bishop notes that today 'ethno-mathematics' is demonstrating how Western mathematics has contributed to the colonization process under the guise of 'universality'.

Then, what happens to the previous or alternative knowledges – a plural form, by the way, which does not have currency in English – produced about translation in and by the periphery? By the time researchers of periphery-origin have matured in their training, they start regarding traditional ('old') concepts of and thinking about translation and translating found in their own cultures as 'inferior', 'useless', 'simplistic' or 'irrelevant', and put them aside in favour of translation theory in its 'modern' and 'Western' sense. They usually consider the theorising in their own languages and cultures not so much as resources which might feed into their current work but as historical case studies to be placed under the scrutiny of the dominant models. These researchers are 'educated away' from their own culture and society. Even if their point of departure and initial goal were to understand and explain translational – and maybe, therefore, social and cultural – phenomena in their own systems of origin, the more they work *with* central models and tools, the more they are meant to work *for* them. This seems inevitable, because, as I have pointed out above, it runs deep into the accreditation process. Any 'useful', 'publishable', and 'quotable' work, including the present one, should refer to established – read: central – frameworks.

5. Consequences

I would now like to focus briefly on some of the consequences of these asymmetric relations between centre and periphery as reflected in our research on translation. Before I do so, I need to make a brief detour to Maria Tymoczko's *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (1999b). Tymoczko emphasizes that translation, which is traditionally seen as standing in a metaphoric relation to a source text, also possesses significant metonymic aspects: "for the receiving audience the translation metonymically constructs a source text, a literary tradition, a culture, and a people, by picking parts, aspects, and attributes that will stand for wholes" (1999b: 57). In Tymoczko's view, these metonymic aspects of translation, combined with André Lefevere's notion of translation as 'rewriting', create a major problem in the translation of non-canonical or marginalized literatures (1999: 47). Whereas in a marginalized culture a text constitutes for the original audience a retelling or

rewriting of pre-existing material, when that text is translated it is neither a retelling nor a rewriting for the receiving audience. The translator then "is in the paradoxical position of 'telling a new story' to the receptor audience [...] and the more remote the source culture and literature, the more radically new the story will be for the receiving audience" (*ibid.*).

Periphery researchers writing up their research in dominant languages and for an 'international' audience are all 'translators'. They translate their material – mostly from their own culture of origin – into the dominant paradigms and discourses of contemporary translation studies. In order to justify their findings, they need to contextualize the translations they talk about, and the more unknown this context is for the 'international' audience, the 'newer' the stories they tell. Researchers of periphery-origin cannot afford to leave certain historical, literary, social or political information implicit in their work, as they cannot assume such a vast erudition on the part of their audience – even though a similarly vast erudition on central practices and traditions of translation is often expected on their part. Therefore, research on peripheral systems is often full of background information, which would not be necessary to anything like the same extent for research on central systems. In an earlier essay, Tymoczko referred to a similar phenomenon in post-colonial writing as 'frontloading' (1999a: 29). In academic writing, too, I would say, most of the time and energy of periphery researchers necessarily goes to such 'frontloading'.

Paradoxically, in a way similar to interlingual literary translation and post-colonial writing, periphery researchers also have to simplify their material. Tymoczko observes that the greater the distance between an author's or translator's source culture and the receiving culture for which the work in question is intended, the greater will be the impetus to simplify. This is because in attempting to cover the cultural divide the peripheral author/translator will feel the need to be highly selective, picking only certain aspects "to convey and to emphasize, particularly if the intended audience includes as a significant component international or dominant-culture readers" (1999a: 23-4).

Periphery researchers, then, always translate and make their material more accessible to the "international or dominant-culture readers" *within* translation studies. In fact, they actually have to translate their 'raw material' into the dominant languages they are writing in, as in the translation of quotations, concepts, arguments, examples, book titles, etc. Periphery researchers often do not write in their mother tongues, sometimes not even if they do research in their home countries. Both in central and in peripheral institutions the criteria for being accepted into the 'modern' world of translation studies and into academia are very similar. Researchers often need to achieve international recognition first even to be employed back home. This means, in practice, that they have to write in the dominant languages.

The research material of translation studies is necessarily polyglot, but the knowledge *about* this material is more and more produced and stored solely in English, French or German (cf. Ahmad 1992: 245-52). Especially the present status of

English as the authoritative *lingua franca* of the academic world creates reader expectations of 'international' or 'universal' theory. Those who carry out their research in 'less common' languages often do not benefit from the means of communication which the discipline itself is focusing on: texts on translation research are not among the priorities of translators who are looking for means to earn their living, and translation scholars themselves hardly translate each other's work. This often leads to the isolation of peripheral theorizing, as in the case, for example, of East European and Russian theories of translation (see, e.g. Jänis 2000; Zlateva 2000; see also *Perspectives* 5:1, 1997).[2]

6.   Non-Western = Peripheral = Postcolonial?

Andrew Chesterman lists the aims of empirical research as follows:[3] (*a*) to provide new material/ 'facts'/ corpora/ case studies, i.e. new data on which existing hypotheses can be tested; (*b*) to apply and test an existing hypothesis, "in order to justify it better or to criticize it"; (*c*) to propose a new idea, conceptual tool or hypothesis which "offers a better way of describing or explaining existing data"; (*d*) to propose a new research methodology or tool, i.e. "a new way of testing [or generating] a hypothesis"; and (*e*) "to propose a new theory, or a better formalization of an existing one" (Chesterman 2000: 11). I would argue that, due to the constraints discussed above and in the *current* situation in translation studies, the periphery researcher is usually expected to deal with the first two of these aims of empirical research. The last three can be less frequently taken up by periphery researchers working *within the dominant paradigms* of translation studies.

This does not at all mean that new conceptual tools, methodologies or theories are not being suggested by the periphery. On the contrary, there is at the present time a great deal happening in the periphery as regards translation theorizing. However, as soon as these works are published under the auspices of international institutions, they tend to be seen as belonging to a 'postcolonial' framework, and to be classified under the heading of 'postcolonial theories of translation', which itself occupies an as yet marginal position within the discipline as a whole.[4] In some cases this is in part due to the research interests of the periphery researchers themselves. After all, when they do write about translation, their work becomes bound up with the asymmetries between their languages and cultures and those of the

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[2] Although in 'The Future of Translation Theory: A Handful of Theses' (1978) Holmes had already noted the urgency of accessing work on translation theory in the Soviet Union (1988: 102), the two decades since have witnessed slow progress in this respect.

[3] Although empirical research is certainly not the only type of research undertaken by translation scholars, it is the one which is particularly emphasized here because of the discipline's efforts to prove its scholarly status.

[4] Vinay Dharwadker's (1998) article on A.K. Ramanujan's theory and practice of translation is a case in point.

centre. However, this categorization may also be due to a certain expectation that in today's translation studies novelty or subversiveness can only belong to postcolonialism precisely because of its still rather marginal position within the discipline, compared to its – maybe already waning – centrality in other fields of research, such as literary theory.

What exactly qualifies an approach or a piece of research in translation studies as 'postcolonial'? Is political commitment or orientation the most obvious criterion? The references used? Certain keywords? Or are the determining factors the identity of the researcher, such as his/her country of origin or adoption, mother tongue or first language (but *not* the language in which the research is being written), and/or the origin of the material being studied? Defining "what constitutes postcolonial theory's methodology and its 'object of study'" has been a difficult task in general for literary and cultural critics (Mongia 1996: 2). In translation studies, too, the various practices and approaches of the periphery are too quickly subsumed under the term 'postcolonial'. Similarly, what constitutes a 'non-Western' approach in translation? Is it again to do with the identity of the researcher, even if the researcher is mainly using central models on peripheral data? Or is this an umbrella title to be tagged to any topic related to peripheral languages and cultures?

One should be careful in making these distinctions and, most importantly, one should keep in mind that those periphery researchers who could be heard after all – at least, to an extent – are those who write in dominant languages, and preferably, who manage to be published by well-known publishers: as in the case of the present writer in this particular paper in this particular book. Others who write mainly in their own languages and in their home countries are bound to be heard only by their local audience, however important and useful their work might have been for the rest of the world. This point deserves reiteration, since, as Gayatri Spivak observes, the "diasporic [often] stands in for the native informant" (1999: 169):[5]

> [...] Works in often indifferent English translation or works written in English or the European languages in the recently decolonized areas of the globe or written by people of so-called ethnic origin in First World space

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[5] In her book Spivak's aim is to "track the figure of the Native Informant" through philosophy, literature, history, and culture (1999: ix). However, this tracking first shows up "a colonial subject detaching itself from the Native Informant", and then "a certain postcolonial subject [...] recoding the colonial subject and appropriating the Native Informant's position" (*ibid.*). Spivak notes that the "native informant [is] a figure who, in ethnography, can only provide data, to be interpreted by the knowing subject for reading" (1999: 49). For the purposes of my arguments, I am of course appropriating Spivak's concept of the 'Native Informant'. As she rightly points out, those who are fortunate enough to be writing, doing research, publishing, etc. belong to the centre of their countries of origin and therefore are not 'Native Informants' proper. However, I found the analogy worth pursuing.

are beginning to constitute something called 'Third World literature'. Within this area of tertiary education in literature, the upwardly mobile exmarginal, *justifiably* searching for validation, can help commodify marginality. (Spivak 1999: 170)[6]

In similarly confused fashion, the term 'postcolonial' is being used rather too fuzzily within translation studies today. As Maria Tymoczko rightly points out, there is a misconception of postcoloniality as an ontological category rather than "a complex set of circumstances responding to specific historical conditions associated with the European age of discovery, expansion and imperialism" (2000: 32). Since postcolonial theory is "currently one of the few viable theoretical approaches that addresses directly the geopolitical shifts and problems of power that dominated the twentieth century" and is also "one of the few discourses pertaining to power that has sustained itself since Marxism has fallen out of favour and been widely abandoned in academic circles" (*ibid.*), it seems like the only option left if one wishes to discuss matters of power. However, Tymoczko believes

> that the field of translation studies [...] is best served by setting issues of power in their specific spatio-temporal contexts, paying attention to differences as well as similarities. [...] Thus, it is important to distinguish struggles pertaining to power relevant to those who have been colonized *per se* from struggles pertinent to others suffering oppression for other reasons, just as within postcolonial studies it is important to differentiate the specific manifestations of colonialism experienced by the several peoples who have been colonized. In order to do so, however, it will be helpful to have a more articulated theorization of power as it pertains to translation. (2000: 32-3)

Such an "articulated theorization of power" could certainly be instrumental when it comes to examining the power relations found within the discipline itself.

7. Conclusion

I believe that, while one can and must regard the expansion of translation studies to non-canonical and non-European material as a major step forward, drawing attention to such material is not enough for the establishment of a truly 'international' and 'multilingual' translation studies. Even more important is to learn about the *thinking* of the periphery about translational practices, and not only for the purposes of comparing it to the dominant theories and finding it lacking. Neither is it

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[6] Spivak ironically notes: "[...] the privileged inhabitant of neo-colonial space is often bestowed a subject-position as geo-political other by the dominant radical. (One is most struck by this when planning or attending international conferences)" (1999: 339).

sufficient to present the experiences of peripheral systems as valuable sources for the solutions of problems encountered within dominant ones, and therefore, as worth their attention.[7]

This does not necessarily mean that we should struggle for a more 'democratic' distribution of scholarly models and influences. Translation studies is one of the disciplines which has at least the potential for more interaction and tolerance between cultures, less ethnocentric views and more open scholarship. Furthermore, since it is still a relatively young discipline, it might as yet have the flexibility before becoming ossified in terms of the sources supplying it with tools, theories and data. If we think it is important to move out of the structure described by Johan Galtung above, periphery researchers have to take some time off from data-collection and concentrate on what is being done and what *has* been done in the peripheral languages and cultures in terms of translation *theory*. If theory continues to be seen as something that will always be supplied by the centre and consumed by the periphery, then the translation theories offered by the centre cannot be truly challenged just by testing them out on data provided by the periphery.

Such a shift of attitudes would require a reconsideration on everybody's part of what 'theory' means and what it is comprised of. Theorizing, if not 'theory', can be found in many different forms and contexts. One can theorize without the "Western forms of abstract logic", avoiding "decisive statements" and not even attempting to produce a monolithic and "wholesale" theory (Christian 1996). Theory is understanding and explanation, and not only "something there and established" (Gillham 2000: 12). Theorizing on translation is not something 'new' to the periphery, where translations have been carried out for centuries, and not without accompanying commentaries and other metatexts. Such theorizing does not claim to explain translation universally, of course. An undertaking of this sort is usually not its concern. Neither

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[7] For example, Michael Cronin observes: "It is important to stress the relational dynamic of minority languages if only to underline the significance of minority languages to translation theory and practice. This significance is related to three factors. Firstly, languages and political circumstances change. The majority status of a language is determined by political, economic and cultural forces that are rarely static and therefore *all* languages are potentially minority languages. It follows that the historical experience of a minority language can offer useful insights into the translation fate of majority languages should contexts change" (1995: 87-88). Elsewhere he argues: "The issue of translation and minority languages is not a peripheral concern for beleaguered fans of exotic peoples gabbling in incomprehensible tongues but the single, most important issue in translation studies today. The hegemony of English in the fastest-growing area of technological development [telecommunications] means that all other languages become, in this context, *minority languages*. [...] Major languages have much to learn from minority languages. As vocabulary, syntax and cultural memory come under pressure from English, dominant languages are simply experiencing what minority languages have been experiencing for many centuries, and it would be instructive for the former to study the responses of the latter to assimilationist translation pressures. This, in turn, places an onus on translation scholars in minority languages to become more visible in translation studies debates" (1998: 151).

does it necessarily claim coherence or applicability, which could have made it a suitable candidate to be placed in university curricula worldwide, for instance. Yet this does not mean that such theorizing would be devoid of significant insights. What is aimed for would not be an 'all-inclusive theory' but maybe a different understanding of 'theory', a different way of thinking which would not easily assume the position of an overseer.

Let me end by returning to the audience issue. Today, self-positioning and the question of one's intended audience are often presented as major issues in different fields of research. Literary critics have started questioning who it is they write their criticism for. Who is a postcolonial writer writing for? For the colonizer, for the colonized or for an international audience? For whom does a translator translate? And who are we, as translation researchers, doing our research for? Should we prolong the sustained illusion that, in our pursuit of 'pure wisdom and knowledge', we are all offering equal contributions to a common goal, the progress of translation studies as a (scholarly) discipline? Or would we benefit from reflecting more critically on our own working methods, our own relationship to the theories, models, tools and materials we use and develop?

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