

## **In memory of Daniel Simeoni**

Daniel, much missed, would be an honorary Antipodean, if ever I had any capacity to bestow any honor.

He was a Visiting Professor in our doctoral program in Tarragona, Spain, from 2004; Daniel and I were engaged in some co-supervising; we co-edited with Miriam Shlesinger the Benjamins volume in homage to Gideon Toury; we were generally in touch, and in discussion, during the last years of his life.

Only through those personal contacts did I become aware of the depth and seriousness of Daniel's thinking. I remember starting to read his unpublished conference paper on the translation of social science (2000) and being surprised to find in it a thorough and nuanced reflection on the status of postmodern reason, pitched at a level far beyond the concerns of most translators, and no doubt beyond the ken of quite a few social scientists. Similarly, a paper superficially on norms in Bourdieu and Toury (Simeoni 2008) turns out to be a comparative theorization of the State (as in Hegel), as if theorists of translation really were thinking about the ethical and legal foundations of the political State. Or again, closer to home, in an occasional paper on the notion of "transfer" (2003) Daniel suggests that my quaint materialism was developed in interaction with the Tel Aviv school, amidst the tumult of Translation Studies in the 1980s – when in reality, I confess, I was at another end of the earth, somewhere between the Nullarbor Plain and the Indian Ocean, unable to have read anything at all from Tel Aviv – I was reflecting, with self-conscious naïveté, on no more than "transportation" as the name for how convicts got to Australia, a punishment repeated in the fate of my country's "stolen generation". I was thinking about convicts and injustice; Daniel was theorizing the modern and postmodern world.

Despite the overpitch, Daniel saw truer than most of us. The status of cross-cultural reason is indeed what is at stake in the translation of science, to an extent where anodyne accuracy and complete information are no longer enough – active involvement requires communication beyond reason. And yes, the underlying change in models of translation over the past few decades has indeed been the undoing of inherited assumptions about the all-embracing nation-state as system (as in Hegel), give or take a few fantasies attached to belated theorizations of narrative. And as for the movements of peoples, Daniel saw well enough the political implications of materialism: in that paper on the State (2008) he underscores the material transfers of Jewish intellectuals to New Worlds, tracing (implicitly from within) the intellectual transformations that ensued. And in the occasional paper on "transfer" (2003) he cites an open letter denouncing any move to carry out "the transfer of the Palestinian population". That letter, explicitly supported by Daniel, was not coincidentally co-signed by Miriam Shlesinger and Gideon Toury in September 2002, and speaks to the kind of political awareness that I would hope a materialist Translation Studies can still engage in.

Those issues, the big ones, surface and resurface in Daniel's CETRA lectures, which similarly remained hidden from the published world. There is so much in those lectures that one almost laments that Daniel's seminal paper on habitus – which unfortunately invites a facile assumption of translatorial servility – is the one by which he has become best known. It was perhaps not his best piece; this volume should help redress the balance.

My colleagues in Australia and more recently in South Africa tend to see academic life from afar. So they work hard; they read everything; they think about everything; they know the history and the details; from the outside, they tend to see intellectual life as being more intense, more thought-through, more serious than it actually is, as if everyone were really reading everyone else. And so, sometimes in self-doubt, they publish little, if at all. In the case of Daniel, who came to academia relatively late in life, one senses a profound selflessness behind the non-publication, as also seen in the massive immersion in detail in his doctoral thesis on a French translation of Goffman (2001) or in the care and thoroughness of his research work as an interviewer, be it with

Gideon Toury or Canadian publishers. Immersed in the details of the other, Daniel did too little to promote himself. Like more than a few Antipodeans, he thought from afar, with careful respect and hard work, and wrongly shunned the limelight.

Daniel was, in most senses of the word, too good for us.

## References

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Tarragona, July 2012