A case for an integrated approach to the mediation of national literature

Translated Hebrew literature in the United States in the 1970s and 2000s

Omri Asscher

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The last years have seen a rise in the study of translation as an ideologically-implicated activity within the context of power relations, as well as in translation research from a sociologically-oriented frame of reference. In this article, I will point to a methodological consideration which draws from both of these perspectives, and could be useful for the study of the ideological mediation of national literature through translation. My suggestion is to systematically integrate findings from relatively separate yet complementing discursive areas of culture, located in the publishing, journalistic and academic fields, in order to better grasp the scope and interrelatedness of the phenomena of ideological mediation. As a case study, I examine the mediation of Hebrew literature in the U.S. in the decade following the 1967 Six-Day War, and demonstrate a protective trend meant to create a less critical portrayal, literary and otherwise, of Israeli society and history for the (Jewish-)American audience. I then offer preliminary findings from a recent, quite opposite trend in the mediation of Hebrew literature in the U.S. in the 2000s.

Keywords: ideological mediation, national literature, translation and ideology, Hebrew literature, American Jewry, Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Introduction

Two major trends of research stand out in translation studies in recent years: the study of translation as an ideologically-implicated activity within the context of power relations, and the study of translation from a sociologically-oriented perspective. Since the early 1990s, the "ideological component" has been recognized as one of the most important considerations in the translation process, pertaining

to all of its different stages, "from the selection of foreign texts to the development and implementation of translation strategies to the editing and reviewing of translations" (Venuti 1995: 19). In more recent years, as part of what has now come to be known as the "sociological turn" in translation studies, much effort has been put "in order to shed light on the intricate mechanisms underlying the translation activity in its societal context" (Wolf 2012: 130). The people and institutions involved in the translation process are being thought of as social agents, and their role within situated cultural and historical contexts is elaborated in social terms.

In this article, I would like to point to a methodological/theoretical consideration that draws from sociologically-oriented research, which I believe can be useful for a broader and more nuanced portrayal of the ideological mediation of translated literature. One of the insights from the sociocultural turn in translation studies is the need to focus on the role played in the translation process by external factors such as publishers, editors, and reviewers, and to elaborate on their function in the recreation of a translated work of literature for the target culture (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, among others). Most of the studies have since focused on political aspects in the selection (or censorship) of titles for translation (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2003); on ideological modifications of the translations themselves (Daldeniz 2010); on the function and role of national anthologies (Gombár 2013) or paratexts (Summers 2013) in the mediation of translated works in the target culture; and so on. These contributions are important, yet perhaps too little work has been done focusing on the ideological, which systematically *integrates* findings from these relatively separate yet complementing discursive areas of culture – thus incorporating them into a single object of study (Lefevere 1992, Billiani 2000 are some such examples). This article would like to put explicit emphasis on the importance of such an integrated approach, enhancing earlier work in which this has been done implicitly, and suggesting a model of sorts for the study of the ideological mediation of a national literature in the target culture. My working assumption is that in order to better grasp the scope and interrelatedness of such phenomena of mediation, it is fruitful to accumulate and integrate findings from the separate fields, or separate areas of discourse, that are related to the translation and transfer of literature. One basic intuition behind this kind of methodology is Itamar Even-Zohar's perception of transfer as a "state of integrated importation into a repertoire" (Even-Zohar 2010: 73), in our case, a repertoire of ideologically-implicated ideas and narratives. This conception coincides with Billiani's discussion of the relationship between translation and censorship, in which she describes the "polymorphous nature of censorship" and attests to the way translations "can be easily manipulated by different agents at different stages of their textual production" (as well as, I would add, at the post-production stages of dissemination and interpretation) (Billiani 2014: 3). Similarly pertinent is the

claim made by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, recently cited by Michaela Wolf, that the validity of any sociological research on the dynamics of the literary field is dependent on the *integration* of textual and extratextual elements; Wolf laments the "concentration on translation phenomena on an extratextual level without taking into consideration text structures or translation strategies" in recent translation research, and the "lack of integration between textual and extra-textual analysis" (Wolf 2007: 17). Ultimately, the aim of such an integrated approach is to get a better grasp of the accumulated, sprawling, mediated body of knowledge pertaining to translated literature in the target culture.

To that end, I will present in the second part of this article a case study of the translation of Hebrew literature in the United States, introducing findings related to the varied forms of mediation performed by sociocultural agents, individuals and institutions: the selection of titles for translation by publishers and editors; the manipulation of texts by translators; the paratextual framing to texts provided by literary editors; the mediation of translated works for the target readership through the journalistic field by literary critics; and the mediation of translated works through teaching and interpretation by professors in the universities.[1] The latter may deserve some elaboration, since, unlike the other agents of mediation, the institution of knowledge that is academia has been for the most part left out of translation studies as an object of study when it comes to its ideologically-informed role in the mediation of foreign literature.[2] As is well known, while Foucault interpreted all disciplines of knowledge as configurations of political forces and practices that organize and govern discourse, he gave special attention to the educational establishment. Education, according to Foucault, represents the social appropriation of discourse: "Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it" (Foucault 1972: 227). Bourdieu, too, underscored the special role played by the academy, noting that the field of social sciences (along with other academic disciplines) shares with the journalistic field and the political field the

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1.   The importance of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* to translation studies has been pointed out in recent years (Simeoni 1998; Wolf 2007 and others). Nonetheless, because of the scope of this article, and the nature of this study, which involves a very large number of agents, I do not elaborate on this inherent sociological aspect to translation. My focus is on the acts of mediation themselves, not so much the acquired social-ideological motivation behind these acts, which seem mostly self-evident in this case study.

2.   When touching on academia, much has been written about other issues, such as the politics of translations studies within the academic world (Pym 2006); the *habitus* of the researcher, and its role in translation studies (Simeoni 2008); and the Eurocentrism of translation research (Van Doorslaer and Flynn 2013), to name a few recent examples.

"claim to the imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world" (Bourdieu 2005: 36). Academic discourse rightfully joins all the quite different, complementary areas of the cultural sphere mentioned previously. Together, they are responsible for the reframing of any knowledge pertaining to the foreign literature that circulates within the target culture.

There are several significant advantages for the integration of these discursive areas of culture into a single object of study. First, it helps us situate the translation process within a wider social context, not restricted to one social field or practice, in order to see it as a vehicle of ideas and images, or "a generative process of cultural repertoire" (Sela-Sheffy 2000: 249 following Even-Zohar 2010[1997]), within more or less separate societal discourses. Second, insights can be gained into the differences and similarities between these distinct social fields, i.e., into the ways comparatively separate social practices may vary or converge with regard to the ideological mediation of a foreign literature. Third, this research approach allows us to find out more about the scope of mediation, and better gauge the pervasiveness of ideological trends, that is, whether these trends are restricted to only one form of mediation, or do they also permeate other discursive contexts, and, if so, to what extent. Finally, what implicitly ensues from the latter is that an integrated approach can also help shed light on the interrelatedness between phenomena from these complementary discursive areas of culture.[3] This may actually prevent us from forming a false perception about the integration of a foreign literature into a target culture. The effects of certain channels of mediation may not always go hand-in-hand with the effects of other channels of mediation, and may sometimes even negate one another, as in the case of a propagandistic review that downplays or skews the implied ideological critique in a translated literary work or its paratextual elements. On the other hand, these channels can sometimes feed into one another, as in the case of the selection of a short story for a national anthology, which allows and may even encourage professors to include this story in their course curriculum. Both of these instances, taken from actual occurrences in the translation of Hebrew literature in the U.S. (see Asscher 2014a: 171, 205–209), influence the perceived image of the national literature in the target culture.

In the case study presented in this article, I will focus on the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States during the decade following the Six-Day War in 1967. After several decades of comparatively little interest in Hebrew literature, the late 1940s marked the starting point of a shift in the character and status of translated Hebrew literature in America, leading to something of a boom in the

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3. It has indeed been shown that ideas about cultural products such as books circulate in "networks" of mediating agents such as editors, reviewers and scholars, who stand in constant interaction with one another (Weedman 1992).

1970s and beyond (Amit 2008; Asscher 2014b: 96–104). Reflecting sociological and ideological changes within American Jewry, the scope of translation activity grew dramatically at this time, and the repertoire of translations gradually caught up with the evolving Israeli canon. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, and as the extent of the horrors of the Holocaust became more widely known, the prevailing approaches within American Jewry toward political Zionism and Israel shifted from partial indifference, and even hostility in some parts of the Jewish-American establishment, toward emphatic support and identification, or what is now commonly described as the "Zionisation" of American Jewry (Hertzberg 1979: 220–227). The peak of this phase occured during the decade or so following the 1967 war, when the state of Israel became a major source of Jewish-American identity, dubbed by historians as American Jewry's "new religion" (Liebman 1977; Medding 1987: 35–39). The "Ethnic Revival" that took place in American society from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, which encouraged different ethnic groups to return to their roots and create a separate, communal identity as a form of self-expression (Novak M. 1996), along with growing militant trends within the Civil Rights movement, also played a role in pushing American Jews away from a liberal, universalist identity toward a more separatist, ethnic one (e.g., Rauh Jr. 1973).

This socio-historical change led to a general interest in and demand for Hebrew literature. The presence achieved by Hebrew literature in English in the 1970s and 1980s constituted, in Robert Alter's words, "one of the great literary success stories of our time," and "by the 1980s it had become the most visible foreign literature in the United States after that of Latin America" (Alter 1991: 5). Alter's account is not based on any hard statistical evidence, and so should be taken with a grain of salt, yet it nevertheless attests to the special position occupied by Hebrew literature in the American literary field since the late 1960s. The increasing appeal of Hebrew literature was also demonstrated by discerning reviews in prominent venues such as *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books*, as well as by the large number of literary anthologies that appeared in translation, particularly in the 1970s, both reflecting and sustaining an interest in Israeli works. Many of these novels and short stories would later be taught in the growing number of Jewish and Israel Studies programs at universities across the United States.

In what follows, I will show that apart from this growing interest in Hebrew literature in the United States, some of the features of the mediation of this literature can also be contextualized and understood with relation to the ideological shift within American Jewry toward Israel during these years. Because of the scope of this article, I will not be able to cover each of the major channels of mediation thoroughly; these are dealt with in a more comprehensive manner in Asscher 2014a. However, I will discuss at least one representative example from each of these discursive areas of culture involved in the translation process, and through

these examples identify a persisting ideological trend or coherent set of values manifested in the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States during the years under discussion. As we will see, a few of the social agents were located in the source culture, while the vast majority of the forms and channels of mediation are firmly situated in the target culture. Most of these agents, whether they were located in the source or target culture, seemed to have shared the same ideological inclinations. Needless to say, the ways in which ideology materializes and is represented in literature are manifold and extremely complex, and the set of narratives advanced through the mediation of Hebrew literature in the U.S., as presented here, is necessarily somewhat reduced and only part of the whole picture. In the final part of this article, findings from the 1970s will be contrasted with preliminary findings from the 2000s to show the effects of a new trend in the translation of Hebrew literature in the United States.

Findings: 1968–1978

During the decade following the 1967 war, one can identify a discernable trend in the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States, which could be described as a propagandistic or protective trend, meant to cushion the image of Israeli society and national identity for its (Jewish-)American readers. The different channels of mediation played a role in creating a generally more palatable, less critical portrayal of Israeli ethics and history than the one offered in the source literary discourse. This issue is not frequently discussed when it comes to Hebrew literature, but it has had real implications for the way this literature is understood and read in the U.S., and more generally in the English-speaking world. The following will thus concentrate on five areas or "channels" of mediation, offering a methodology of sorts for an integrated study of the mediation of national literature: (1) the publishers and their selection of titles for translation; (2) the translators who shape the translations themselves; (3) paratextual elements, such as introductions for anthologies; (4) the reception of translated literary works in major newspapers; and (5) the teaching of translated literature in universities.

I will start by relating to the selection of works for translation, the first and, by far, most crucial stop on the long way an Israeli work has to travel before it reaches the American reader: if a story or novel is not selected for translation, it cannot reach the (Jewish-)American readership, the overwhelming majority of which does not read Hebrew. A telling example is the 1969 collection of short stories *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories* by S. Yizhar, the most important writer of the so-called Palmach Generation, the generation that fought in Israel's war of independence in 1948 and experienced this war as its defining moment. This was the

first collection of Yizhar's stories available to English readers. It was published in Jerusalem by the state-affiliated Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, whose remit, since its inception in 1961, was to disseminate and promote Hebrew literature throughout the world. The English translation of Yizhar's collection was distributed in the U.S. and discussed in American newspapers; this English edition was clearly intended for American readers, as evidenced by the selection of stories. While the anthology includes the stories "Ephraim Goes Back to Alfalfa," "Midnight Convoy," and "Habakuk," the most canonical and influential stories by Yizhar, "The Prisoner" and "Khirbet Khizeh" are not included. The importance of the latter two stories in the history of Hebrew literature cannot be overstated. As literary scholar Yonatan Sagiv notes, "ever since [their] publication […] these two war stories have come to occupy an exceptional, almost mythical place in the Israeli literary canon" (Sagiv 2011: 221). While "The Prisoner" appeared in several literary anthologies in English (the first in 1962), "Khirbet Khizeh" was translated into English only 60 years after its initial publication in 1949, while many other, much less canonical stories by Israeli writers (and by Yizhar himself), were translated and published. Significantly, these two stories, particularly "Khirbet Khizeh," are perhaps the most painfully self-critical and poignant stories about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the results of Israel's war of independence in 1948. "The Prisoner" describes Israeli soldiers who capture an innocent Arab shepherd, steal his livestock, beat him and then, presumably, pack him off to jail – or worse. The more important and controversial "Khirbet Khizeh" describes the expulsion of Palestinians from their village by an Israeli detachment during the War of Independence. Yizhar depicts the Palestinians as authentic dwellers of the land, and pins their expulsion on an immoral Israeli policy based on disingenuous national rhetoric (Oppenheimer 2008: 167, 180). It seems clear that these two stories were excluded by the publisher from this representative collection of Yizhar's work for ideological reasons. By doing so, the Hebrew readership's image of S. Yizhar was transformed into something very different on its way to its English-reading audience.

Another way in which Hebrew literature was modified for its American readers was through the translations themselves. In many cases these translations were not produced by American translators, or translators working in the United States. Many of the translations discussed in this article were done by translators who grew up in various places, such as England, Scotland, and South Africa, and were living there or in Israel while working on their translations. In fact, it is far from certain that it was the translators themselves who made the changes, and not the editors or publishers who might have played an active role in the shaping of the final draft of the translation. When asked in personal correspondence about the shifts in their translations, the translators who could still be contacted responded

that they did not clearly remember all the details of the translation process, which had indeed taken place more than thirty years before, but that they strongly believed that they had not introduced, of their own accord, any ideological alterations to the original text. My own intuition, based on the correspondence with the translators and authors, is that the manipulations had indeed occurred during the editorial process; but, admittedly, this cannot be verified. In the following, I will present only a few representative examples; a more exhaustive survey can be found in Asscher 2016. For all the examples, the phrases that were omitted in the translation are translated by me into English, incorporated in the translation and crossed-out, while anything that was added to the translation is bold-faced and put in brackets.

My first example is from Dorothea Shefer's 1970 translation of *The Man from There* by Yitzhak Ben-Ner, which takes place during the War of Independence. In one scene, the war cries of a Jewish boy, Ezra, whose family is secretly living in a borderland Egyptian town and awaiting its conquest by Israeli forces, are omitted:

(1)   The Egyptians are cowards and liars! ~~They should be slaughtered! All of them!~~
      But Zahal's soldiers will come and take this town!   (E: 163–164; H: 153)

The translation moderates Ezra's zealous hatred for the Arab enemy, presenting the American reader with a less aggressive image of the young Jewish boy. Along the same lines, we find interference in the translation elsewhere in the novel, when the (nameless) narrator attempts to flee the Egyptian town where he is hiding and cross the border into Israel. Here the text is reconstructed to lend the narrator a less ambivalent, more devoted view of his country and people than in the original text:

(2)   The following evening I set off. My country, ~~so painful to me~~ [**embattled, its existence threatened, its people, my people, facing enemies that wanted to chase them into the sea**], seemed so near, and yet so far away. I was accompanied by one of Mr. Navad's tall, silent Bedouin.   (English: 137; Hebrew: 127)

By leaving out the painful ambivalences felt by the narrator toward his country, and endowing him with a feeling of shared fate with his people, the translation recasts the narrator as emotionally involved in Israel's struggle for independence. The text is also infused with political rhetoric ("my people, facing enemies that wanted to chase them into the sea"), even as the narrator is presented as less unsure of his own national identity.

Another novel whose English translation portrays a less ambiguous image of Israeli morals than the source text is Aharon Megged's *The Living on the Dead* in Misha Louvish's 1971 translation. The novel's narrator, Jonas, plans to write a biography of a mythological Zionist figure, Davidov, and sets off to interview

Davidov's old friends and fellow pioneers. In the following paragraphs, a friend of Davidov's from the early settlement days tells Jonas about the active role Davidov played in the establishment of upper Hanita in the 1930s. After he mentions an affair Davidov was having with the wife of another worker, the man describes the Jewish settlers' forceful evacuation of the Arab farmers who lived and worked on the land (note that the first sentence refers to Davidov's affair, not the expulsion of the Arabs):

(3)   Look, I don't take it upon myself to decide what is moral and what isn't, but there are some things, how should I say, that are like defying the order of nature, If I can put it like that."
~~There was a large stone house in upper-Hanita where Arab farmers dwelled. They refused to evacuate it before being compensated by large sums of money. Every day, men from the detail would come and negotiate with them, and they would ask for more. One day, Davidov suggested that we take the place by force. Twenty men were brought up there, equipped with hoes, hammers, barbed wire, sacks. They entered the inner yard and started to turn it into a stronghold, surrounding it with a fence and trenches, and fixing its walls. The Arabs still would not leave, so all their things were taken out; the inhabitants and their possessions were mounted on donkeys and sent across the border. This was how upper-Hanita was conquered. A spotlight was then placed on top of the roof, and the two Hanitas would signal each another every night, from the stone house to the tower within the stockade.~~
[**When upper Hanita was taken**] Davidov moved to the top of the hill. From then on he would set out from there to accompany the surveyors, the truck that maintained communications between the two points, the tractor that reaped the disputed fields.   (English: 173; Hebrew: 158)

While Davidov's affair with another man's wife was not considered sufficiently worthy of condemnation to be omitted from the translation, the novel's only scene documenting the aggression that was part of the Jewish acquisition of land in Mandatory Palestine was left out, and the English passage was neatly stitched together around it. As a result of this omission, the image of Davidov and his fellow settlers is less ethically ambiguous with regard to the story of the establishment of Hanita than in the source text; in fact, the Arab farmers are not even mentioned in the translation.

A similar example can be found in Richard Flantz's 1977 translation of Yoram Kaniuk's *Rockinghorse*. Here, the translation omits a description of barbaric behavior performed by an Israeli commanding officer during the War of Independence. In the original text, Kaniuk relays a scene on an Israeli ship sailing from the U.S. to Israel as the narrator makes his journey home after many years abroad. At

some point during the cruise, the one-time commanding officer, now a (drunken) sailor, is persuaded by his fellow shipmates to retell "that funny story of his" from the war; he then goes on to describe how he shot down a defenseless, elderly Arab man, who nevertheless kept standing and "refused to die." Eventually, the soldier approaches him and fills his body with holes "like buttons." Only then does the old man finally fall to the ground. The sailor then suddenly breaks down in tears, muttering, "I just wanted to tell the story, like I tell it on every Independence Day." This sharply critical scene in Kaniuk's novel, which stains the notion of "purity of arms," a mainstay in the ethos of the Israeli army, is omitted in the English translation (compare Kaniuk 1974: 128–129 and Kaniuk 1977: 152). Apart from the brutality of the actual killing, the reader of the translation is also spared the barbarism of the sailor's retelling of the story as a joke every Independence day. As with the previous example, the translation improves the image of a literary character that is expected to be an exemplary representative of Israeli society.

In general, one finds cases where translations moderate descriptions of (Jewish) Israeli aggression targeted at Arabs; subdue the national otherness presented in the voice of Palestinian characters; and bring historical references in the text closer to the hegemonic Zionist narrative. Texts selected for translation that had originally contained some subversive elements were occasionally subjected to a series of "checks and balances" in their English rendering, giving support to the claim that "translated texts tend to attract censorial intervention," often self-imposed, which "functions as a filter in the complex process of cross-cultural transfer encouraged by translations" (Billiani 2014: 3).

A third channel through which Israeli literature was ideologically mediated for its American readers was that of paratextual elements, which represent the "thresholds of interpretation" for a literary text (Genette 1997). Paratexts play a pivotal role in translation in general, and in the context of translated literary anthologies in particular, as anthologies are often perceived in the target culture as representative not only of the national literature of the source culture but also of its people's collective psyche. It is here where paratexts tend to take on an implicit ideological role (see, for example, Kovala 1996, Watts 2005, Alvstad 2012).

In what follows I will discuss the introduction to *Firstfruits: A Harvest of Twenty Five Years of Israeli Writing*, published by the Jewish Publication Society of America in 1973 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. This national anthology was edited by (non-Jewish) American writer and Pulitzer laureate James Michener, who selected the stories and wrote the introduction. The choice of Michener to edit the collection seems to have been a result of the author's novel *The Source* (1965), a historical novel set against the backdrop of Jewish history from the days of the Patriarchs to the first years to the establishment of modern Israel, and expressing sympathy with the Zionist

cause (Brocker 2007). Michener was inspired and persuaded by the mayor-to-be of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek to write *The Source* while he was visiting Israel, and even received Israeli state funding for his research in preparation for the novel (ibid., 6). This made Michener a natural choice to edit a national anthology of Hebrew literature, the explicit aim of which, as stated in the book's preface, was to "salute" the State of Israel (Michener 1973: viii).

While the selection of stories for the anthology does not reflect a clear ideological standpoint, and includes somewhat politically oppositional works by Aharon Megged and Amos Oz alongside more naïve works by Asher Brash and Moshe Shamir, Michener's introduction decidedly endorses the Zionist ethos. At the beginning of the introduction, he speaks fondly of the years he lived in Haifa and of his visits to the Negev desert. He describes Israel's agricultural, technological and artistic accomplishments with admiration, and compares them to the way "the desert bloomed" before him one day and produced "a rug of many colors" after some rare showers of rain (Michener 1973: x). This hegemonic Zionist discourse of 'progress' adopted here by Michener excludes reference to the Palestinians who had been living on the land before the pioneer Zionist settlements. Further in the introduction, Michener acknowledges that the land was not empty before the Zionist enterprise, but his reference to the native Arab population is distinctly paternalistic:

(4)   I do not believe that prior to 1948 all was barrenness, with the Arabs and the British having achieved nothing. From what I could see of Haifa when I lived there I suspect that both the Arabs and the British accomplished a good deal and that if they had retained control of the Jewish homeland they might have accomplished a good deal more in a quiet, desultory sort of way, with swamps still swamps and water still wasting itself on its way to the sea.   (ibid.: xii)

Michener's "compliments" for the Arab population reveal an orientalist attitude that refutes the Arab (or British) ability or willingness to bring to the land any "real progress." Later in the introduction, Michener expresses another aspect of the hegemonic Zionist discourse by claiming that mandatory service in the army is a system that actually makes the Israelis a better people (ibid.: xiv). Moreover, Michener implicitly ties this ethos to the writers represented in the anthology by mentioning how he "was struck by the number of writers in this anthology who had some of their education in uniform" (ibid.).

My final example from Michener's introduction shows Michener relating to (what remains) a charged political issue, the question of the occupied territories in the West Bank, conquered from Jordan in the Six-Day War:

(5) I have never been a Nile-to-Euphrates man, for mere territorial aggrandize-
ment is repugnant, but I used to feel strongly that the former arrangement on
the road from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem was an abortion that simply had to be
corrected. I am gratified that it has been. I felt the same way about the narrow
waist northeast of Tel-Aviv, and I am equally glad to see it repaired. I speak
not as a nationalist but as a geographer. Geographical monstrosities ought to
be corrected, and history usually takes care of the matter, for it does not like
to see them indefinitely prolonged. The land is therefore in better *shape* than
it used to be.   (ibid.: xxii)

While the argumentation used by Michener is somewhat unconventional, the
viewpoint he expresses on the loaded issue of the occupied territories in the
West Bank is explicit. He notes that the land is "in better *shape* than it used to
be" and that he is "glad to see it repaired." This case of taking sides coincides
with the rest of Michener's introduction, and it is evident in many of its pas-
sages. Actually, it is revealing to compare these remarks to an article Michener
himself published in the *New York Times* in 1970 about the Israeli-Palestinian
conflict. In that article, entitled "*What to Do about the Palestinian Refugees?*"
Michener expresses sympathetic concern and criticism over the difficult human-
itarian conditions in the Palestinian refugee camps (Michener 1970). Michener's
criticism of Israel's policy following the Six-Day war can also be found in his
earlier, generally supportive letter to the editor in *the New York Review of Books*
(Michener 1967). In his introduction to *Firstfruits*, Michener states that there
is no use going over what he had already written elsewhere on the subject, but
he does not refer the reader to these articles. This seems evasive, as most of the
readers of the anthology would be unlikely to know them. In any case, it is clear
that the difference in the medium, and, crucially, the difference in the assumed
target audience, influenced the ideological underpinnings of what Michener
chose to share with his readers.

    The next channel of mediation I will discuss is the journalistic field, perhaps
the most wide-reaching of all forms of mediation. As there is a much wider au-
dience for newspapers and book reviews than for books, the reviews published
in newspapers and literary supplements may shape the idea readers have about
titles they have never read. The following example is a review of the anthology
The New Israeli Writers that was published in 1969, and edited by the Israeli poet
Dalia Rabikovitch. The review, written by the Jewish Studies scholar and novel-
ist Curt Leviant and published in *The Saturday Review*, expressed dissatisfaction
with the anthology for various reasons. The reason most relevant to this article
was Leviant's belief that the anthology was being too critical of the Israeli army:

(6)   The three stories that focus directly on army life give the impression that Israeli soldiers are small-minded sadists – a gross distortion of a citizen army that has no time for spit-and-polish soldiering, and which has a special feeling of dedication and affection between officers and men. […] it was unfair of the editor to have chosen only stories that depict the Israeli army unfavorably, especially if the ostensible purpose was to give the reader an honest experience of Israel.

(Leviant 1969: 57)

Interestingly, elsewhere in his review Leviant criticizes the lack of social awareness displayed in the anthology, and the secular and ethnic bias in the selection of writers. Yet, when it came to the Israeli army, Leviant felt the need to defend its image; the army appeared to be more of a taboo for Leviant, something above questioning or criticism. As with Michener in his introduction, Leviant does not hesitate to voice generalizations about the Israeli army when they are positive, asserting that it is a citizen army "which has a special feeling of dedication and affection between officers and men." And so, a study that focuses solely on the selection of stories in national anthologies might make much of the inclusion of subversive works, such as Yizhar's "The Prisoner" and Avraham Raz's "Oded Yarkoni's War Affair," in *The New Israeli Writers*, but to assume that the (mostly Jewish) target audience was inclined to accept works that undermine the hegemonic Zionist narrative would be wide of the mark, as shown above.

An example along the same lines, this time from the late 1970s, is Norman Kotker's review of Amos Oz's *The Hill of Evil Counsel*. In his review, published in *The Nation* in 1978, Kotker offers an explicit affirmation of the Zionist ethos, as he describes the Israeli children depicted in Oz's stories as the future heroes of Israel's next wars, although Oz's stories have little to do with this sentiment:

(7)   Oz's book, a collection of three interrelated stories, is in essence about Zionism, that astonishing phenomenon. […] [the young boys in the stories] are poised at the edge of heroism, like Israel itself. They are about 10 years old at 1947 […] too young for the war that will come in 1948. Oz does not have to point out that they'll have plenty of opportunities to be heroes though. They'll be 19 in 1956; 30 in 1967; 36 in 1973, still eligible for combat.   (Kotker 1978: 606)

Kotker, a Jewish-American author of several historical novels, a biography of the founder of political Zionism Theodor Herzl and a comprehensive history of Jerusalem, expresses in this passage the Zionist ethos of sacrifice. He presents the Zionist project and the establishment of the State of Israel in a heroic light and, by claiming that the subject of the stories is Zionism, posits them as allegories of Israeli nationhood and society, which he explicitly describes as admirable. Elsewhere in his review, Kotker writes that "the oxygen atoms [Israelis] breath

may have once been breathed by David and Solomon," thus giving expression to another important component of the Zionist ethos, the notion of Jewish continuity and historical claim to the land. (see further examples for this in Asscher 2014a: 205–209).

The last mode of mediation that will be discussed, one that complements and reinforces the aforementioned areas of discursive mediation, is the academy. American universities, as institutions of knowledge invested with symbolic capital, distribute what are perceived and accepted as "authoritative" representations of Israel, and so play a role in determining the position Israel occupies in the taxonomy of images in elite American culture. Here, I will bring the notes from a course delivered in 1970 at the University of California at Berkeley by Robert Alter, perhaps the most important U.S. scholar of Hebrew literature at the time. The course, entitled "America and Israel: Literary and Intellectual Trends," was documented in a booklet published by the Hadassah Education Department (Alter 1970). Most relevant to us are Alter's notes for the last class of the course, called "confrontation with the Arabs." In what follows, I will not touch on Alter's literary interpretations, but rather on those places where Alter presumes to convey truths to his students about the "mentality" of Jews and Arabs as revealed in the conflict – in other words, where Alter uses his position in the academic field to partake in contemporary political discourse, employing political rhetoric.

During this class, Alter describes war experiences recounted by Israeli soldiers – in itself unusual for a literature course – taken from the 1967 *Siach Lochamim* (translated into English as *The Seventh Day* in 1970), a compilation of interviews with Kibbutznik soldiers who fought in the Six-Day War. The compilation was notable at the time for providing a more thoughtful and self-critical narrative of the war at a time when popular photographic albums depicting the war heroically were proliferating. As shown by later research, the collection of interviews was also carefully constructed so as to project a sensitive, humane image of the Israeli soldiers: Alon Gan has demonstrated the tendentious nature of the editing of the original book, as the editors left out instances of professed Israeli brutality, among other things (Gan 2002: 104–127). In his class, Alter relies on the interviews from *The Seventh Day*, and goes on to deduce from these stories a generalization about the asymmetry between Jewish and Arab ethics:

(8)   One of the most disturbing "asymmetries" in this whole terrible confrontation of Arab and Jew is the fact that so many of the Arabs, even women and children, have been thoroughly brutalized by their own propaganda.   (Alter 1970: 38)

In one of the incidents Alter cites from *The Seventh Day*, an Israeli soldier is murdered by an Arab family begging for bread, as he hands them his own rations.

Alter draws from this story a generalization about the difference between Arab and Jewish mentality and ethics, and ties this difference with the "Jewish character":

(9)   Perhaps the saddest aspect of this story is not the tragedy of the murdered soldier but of the Arab family, which had effaced its own humanity. In stark contrast, the degree of moral conscience Israelis have managed to preserve, the degree of their resistance to brutalization, is quite remarkable. And this moral conscience seems to me to have a peculiarly Jewish character. (Alter 1970: 39)

Importantly, while Alter draws generalizations about "Arab mentality" from stories depicting Arab barbarism, he refrains from generalizing about "Jewish/Israeli mentality" from stories depicting Jewish/Israeli brutality. The latter, unlike the former, are not deemed representative or a sound basis for a generalization on Israeli ethics. This changes, however, when it comes to positive generalizations, as Alter states that mulling over hard moral issues is something essentially "Jewish." It is true that Alter later hints at the proximity of his views to the Israeli left-wing's willingness for a territorial compromise, and criticizes American Jews' tendency to readily adopt the right-wing narrative of "the Jewish right to the land" without giving attention to its Arab inhabitants (Alter 1970: 40). The overtones of his final remarks for the class, which also end the whole course, are, however, quite similar to those of his earlier commentary:

(10)   Israel's peculiar predicament may be representative, situated as it is as a sophisticated technological society, a parliamentary democracy, a country with humanistic and humane traditions, encircled by enemies, some of whom are even self-styled Maoists and many of whom stand for nothing more meaningful than destruction, or personal aggrandizement, or the lawless lust for power.   (Alter 1970: 42–43)

In his conclusion for a course in literature, then, Alter chooses to participate and take sides in the charged political discourse of the day by presenting a sharp opposition between the two peoples with regard to their morality and ethics. Even as he promotes the values and general viewpoint of the moderate Left, Alter feels the need to adamantly protect the image of the Israeli army and Israeli/Jewish morals, not unlike the publishers and translators mentioned above.

     To conclude this section, I have demonstrated a "protective" trend in the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States in the late 1960s and the 1970s, realized in the selection of works for translation, the translation strategies applied, the paratextual materials used, and in the representation of Israel in literary book reviews and university courses. This article does not claim to be exhaustive, and ideologically-related phenomena pertaining to the transfer of literature are, by definition, manifold. Moreover, the mediation of literature through translation, as in all discursive areas of culture, is never monolithic. Indeed, the integration

of Hebrew literature into (Jewish-)American literary discourse has always been multifaceted, and the existence of self-critical elements within it reflects the stratification and complexity of the mediation process. Nonetheless, we find a discernable tendency in different areas of literature and culture throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s to introduce the (Jewish-)American reader to a Hebrew literature that was easier to "swallow," a literature that presented a more favorable, and, above all, more ethical image of Israeli society than the literature read by readers in the source culture; even as the intellectual discourse in Israel, it is important to stress, did not shy away from such self-questioning. These years may have been the climax of the Zionisation of American Jewry, and the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States both reflected this socio-ideological trend and played a part in enforcing it through the practical political wish to defend the image of Israeli society within (Jewish-)American culture. These findings can also be understood in the context of the internal American Jewish discourse with regard to its identity as a religious and ethnic group, and, in particular, to its need to produce a certain image of Judaism, in which Israel plays a constituent role. As noted by rabbi and educator Bernard Martin, Israel had "strengthened [American Jews'] resolve to remain Jewish – a point of obvious and far-reaching religious significance" (Martin 1978: 11–12). This perception of Israel, viewed through the lens of Zionism, as fulfilling a quasi-religious role in American Jewish life, was proposed elsewhere as well (cf. Halpern 1979, 15–33; Silver 1949). The mediation of Hebrew literature could thus essentially be attributed to the American Jewish inclination to appropriate Israel as a mainstay of communal identity. By presenting Hebrew literature, and Israeli reality as it was depicted in it, in a more positively moral light than in the oftentimes self-critical source texts, this literary sub-discourse by extension projected a higher morality onto American Judaism and American Jewry. If Israel had been, as described by Ted Solotaroff with regard to the years following the Six-Day War, "probably the paramount source of Jewish identity" (Solotaroff 1988), and if, as suggested by Alan Mintz, the translation of Hebrew literature could be seen as one of the more refined ways to discuss questions of Jewish identity, on account of its "truth-telling" capacity (Mintz 2001: 24–25), then we can indeed think of these mediations as important assertions of an American Jewish collective identity.

As should be reiterated from a theoretical point of view, all these discursive instances of mediation are borne out of, indeed would not exist without, translation. Translation, in its wider sense of the transfer of literature across cultures, may be seen as their initiator and generator, as it brings about discursive elements available for ideological-political posturing as such.

Preliminary findings: The 2000s

The previous section provided representative examples taken from a more comprehensive research (Asscher 2014a). In the following, I will present some preliminary findings from the mediation of Hebrew literature in the U.S. during the first decade of the twenty-first century. These findings should not be seen as anything other than preliminary, and they are mainly meant to demonstrate the usefulness of an integrated approach for a *comparative* study of different historical periods, while pointing out what seems to be a new current, or at least undercurrent, in the ideological mediation of Hebrew literature in America. As we will see, this current of mediation involves a more judgmental discourse, one that draws away from, and sometimes openly and even harshly critiques, the hegemonic, institutionalized Israeli narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While it is not an all-encompassing trend, it presents a more complex image than in the late 1960s and the 1970s. It could perhaps be understood in light of a growing openness in certain areas of the (Jewish-)American and Israeli discourse to the Palestinian narrative of the conflict and to harsh criticism of certain aspects of the historical Israeli narrative.

As in the previous section, I will begin with the earliest and obviously extremely crucial form of mediation, the selection of titles for translation. In 2008, forty years after Yizhar's collection of short stories was introduced to the English reader, and sixty years after "Khirbet Khizeh" was first published in Hebrew, the Jerusalem-based Ibis Editions published Yizhar's canonical story dealing with the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from their village in 1948, in Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck's English translation. This may be one of the more important translations from Hebrew literature in the last few decades, both literarily and ethically speaking. The editors of Ibis Editions, Peter Cole and Adina Hoffman, are Jewish-American scholars and writers who divide their time between New Haven and Jerusalem; the book was distributed in the United States and widely reviewed in the American press. It is important to note that Ibis Editions is a small non-profit, and that the publishers explicitly note that the content of the works they select for publication makes it hard for them to receive funding; they express their goals in plain ideological terms, "to build bridges of various sorts, between Arabs and Jews, the communal and the personal, America and the Middle East, and more."[4]

The very political afterword to the translation, written by the Israeli professor of Indian Studies and peace activist David Shulman, speaks of the relevance of Yizhar's story to our time. Shulman describes taking part in human rights

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4. http://ibiseditions.com/home/about.htm. Last accessed on 14/2/2017.

activities in the West Bank, and draws a direct parallel from the story to the present day and Israel's current occupation. He concludes on a personal note:

(11)   We'll be carrying signs, in Hebrew and Arabic, for the benefit of the villagers and the soldiers and the press, signs that say something like, 'Lift the Siege on Tuba!' and 'Evacuate the Settler Outposts' and 'No to Occupation, Yes to Peace.' Maybe I'll make one for myself: 'No More Khirbet Khizehs.'   (Shulman 2008: 131)

It seems that what has led publishing houses to evade translating and publishing Yizhar's story in English for six decades was the very reason that led Ibis Edition to do so in 2008.

We find another illustration of the degree to which things have changed from the 1970s in the introduction to the translated anthology *Sleepwalkers and Other Stories: The Arab in Hebrew Literature*, published by Lynne Rienner, an independent scholarly and textbook publisher, in 1999. In this edition, a paratextual element frames the reader's understanding of the literary text. The Israeli editor, Ehud Ben-Ezer, states the following:

(12)   The theme of unrequited love in Israeli-Arab relations resulted in one of our most deeply rooted collective denials: that of the problem of Palestinian refugees from 1948 onward. Even politically moderate Israelis had no hesitations on the subject, due mainly to the "all-or-nothing" position of most Palestinians. Today, however, the closer the Palestinians come to reconciliation, compromise, and coexistence, the greater becomes the willingness of Israeli society to consider solutions to the taboo issue of the refugees.   (Ben-Ezer 1999: 16)

Describing the problem of the Palestinian refugees as a "deeply rooted collective denial" is something that one would never see from an editor representing Israeli literature to the (Jewish-)American reader in the 1970s. What makes things more complex, however, is that Ben-Ezer otherwise deploys a rather protective political rhetoric in his introduction, portraying the Palestinians as the more uncompromising of the two peoples and more responsible for the ongoing lack of peace, thus expressing the dominant Israeli narrative. In many ways, he is more ambassadorial in English than he is in the original Hebrew version of the anthology, targeted at his Israeli readers (Asscher 2014c). Even so, acknowledging the Palestinian refugee problem makes his text more complex from an ideological and political standpoint, and less consensual than similar texts from the 1970s, such as James Michener's introduction to the 1973 anthology *Firstfruits*.

One sees a difference between the mediation of Hebrew literature in the United States in the 1970s and 2000s not only in the selection of titles for translation, or in paratextual elements, such as introductions and afterwords, but also in courses taught at U.S. colleges and universities. In the past decade, American universities

have offered literature courses providing a more critical outlook, either by de-constructing Zionist narratives embedded in literary works; demonstrating the role literature played in constructing Israeli national identity; studying Israeli literature from postcolonial perspectives and sensitivities; or by introducing a Palestinian voice through Palestinian texts or films. Some recent courses have included Yizhar's "Khirbet Khizeh," which serves as another illustration of the ways in which various channels of mediation influence one another. A cursory survey of courses indicative of this trend include: Dana Blander's "Being Israeli and the Israeli Being" at Tufts University (2011); Nathan Devir's "Modern Hebrew Culture in Translation" at Middlebury College (2011); Yael Zerubavel's "Special Topics: Israeli Culture" at Rutgers University (1999); Dan Miron's "Variants of the Israeli Novel" at Columbia University (2012); and Ken Frieden's "Israeli Literature and Culture in Conflict" at Syracuse University (2003). In the syllabus for his class, Frieden explicitly notes that one of the objectives of the course was "to balance our own prior views with other perspectives,"[5] and this seems to be true for the other courses as well. Judging by the syllabi of these courses, the lecturers offer a multifaceted and complex view of Hebrew literature and culture, and give voice not only to the hegemonic or conservative Israeli narrative of the conflict. As a side note, it should be mentioned that this new current may be at least partially related to the relatively large number of Israelis or ex-Israelis teaching in Jewish and Israeli Studies at American universities, either as core or visiting faculty members; but this deserves a separate study.

A similar ideological shift can be noticed in another channel of mediation, that of book reviews published in major U.S. newspapers and literary supplements. A representative example is Patricia Storace's review of David Grossman's novel *To the End of the Land* that appeared in the *New York Review of Books* in 2011. While Curt Leviant's 1969 review of the anthology *The New Israeli Writers* expressed discontent with what he saw as an overly critical portrayal of the Israeli army, Storace writes about what she feels is missing from Grossman's novel along pretty much the opposite lines:

(13) Grossman's withholding of the political realities of Israeli childhood in the novel blunts the reader's comprehension and response. He gives us an intimate experience of the cumulative effects of life in Israel on his characters, but the brilliantly idiosyncratic vignettes and intense scrutiny of one family obscure the ubiquity of the glorification of armed force, the relentless emphasis on the collective and group cohesion over individual values. [...] From toy soldiers and

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5. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syl/Frieden.pdf. Last accessed on 14/2/2017.

> paratrooper dolls, model tanks, displays of the emblems of Israeli army corps, pop songs from the armed forces radio station, school visits from soldiers, and picture books about army adventures, to teenagers taking state-sponsored trips to concentration camp sites in Poland, Israeli childhood educates for war.
> (Storace 2011)

Storace's review is clearly critical not only of what she sees as the underlying elusive ideology of Grossman's novel, but also of what she calls Israel's "army culture." She expresses uneasiness with how little attention Grossman gives in the novel to what she perceives as the pervasiveness of army culture in the lives of Israeli children, or "the ubiquity of the glorification of armed force." Needless to say, this is no less explicit ideological mediation than some of the mediation observed in the 1970s, as Storace wields her review to polemically engage opposing views in the contemporary political discourse. One cannot refrain from pointing out at least one exaggeration Storace makes, as it is far-fetched to claim that Galatz and Galgalatz, the 'civilianized' armed forces radio stations, select pop songs that "educate" Israeli youngsters "for war" (see Soffer 2012 for a more nuanced analysis). In any case, for our comparative purposes, unlike the review by Leviant from 1969, which expressed unhappiness about stories critical of the army experience, Storace's review expresses disapproval for the lack of such criticism.

Before concluding, it should be noted that unlike in the 1970s, I did not find manipulations in the translations themselves through comparisons of the source and target texts. These being preliminary findings, I do not claim that interferences in the texts do not exist altogether in recent translations. However, after checking several 'suspect' novels and stories, I did not find any such interferences. This coincides with the newer trend demonstrated in other areas of mediation, with translated works, paratextual elements, literary reviews and university courses giving room to a more critical view of the Zionist ethos and narrative, and allowing, sometimes pushing, for a less institutionalized perspective of the conflict. At the same time, it is important to stress that the corpus of translations, as well as the material from the other channels of mediation, yet to be examined is still extremely large.

Conclusion

As shown by translation scholars in the past few decades, literature does not just transfer itself from one literary system and language to another, untouched. The people and institutions involved in the translation process may realize certain ideological preferences, reflective of their times, and shape the discourse surrounding

the translated literature in the target culture. Indeed, the transfer of a national literature, and its representations of national identity, occurs through not one but varied discursive sites in the target culture. The ideas and values produced through the mediation of literature and carried across cultures are not monolithic, or necessarily consistent; the different channels of mediation constantly interact, either by feeding one another or diminishing the effect of one another. An integrated approach to the historical study of translation and ideology, as employed here, can help capture this complexity and interconnectedness so as to bring the mediated nature of knowledge more broadly and systematically to the fore.

In the recent forum "Translation and History" in *Translation Studies* 2012 (5:2), the question of translation as an approach to history, and the relationship between the disciplines of translation studies and history, was put to discussion. This article follows the position, advanced by Dirk Delabastita and Theo Hermans, that the contribution of historical research of translation should not be restricted to specified research fields, but rather that "the insights gained may benefit more than one community" (Hermans 2012:245), as they contribute not only to our knowledge about translation as a unique contact zone between cultures but also to specific histories and historical contexts. Along those lines, the preliminary findings presented here may hopefully contribute to what has been learned from previous studies about the representation of Israel in U.S. media and film (Mart 2006, McAlister 2005:155–197), in American popular culture (Katz 2015), and in Jewish-American literature (Furman 1997), providing a more complete picture of the relationship between the two major segments of world Jewry, and of the way Israeli culture has been represented to American readers.

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Author's address

Omri Asscher
The Center for Israel Studies, The Ben-Gurion Research Institute
for the Study of Israel and Zionism
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

asschero@post.tau.ac.il

Biographical notes

Omri Asscher is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His latest research focuses on ideological aspects involved in the literary translation and cross-cultural transfer between Israel and the U.S. His articles him have appeared in journals such as *Target*, *AJS Review* and *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*. His translations into Hebrew include *Murphy* and *Watt*, Samuel Beckett's first novels.