

In Memoriam Gideon Toury (1942–2016)

Dirk Delabastita, Sandra Halverson, José Lambert, and
Kirsten Malmkjær

Like many colleagues in all corners of the world, we were deeply saddened by the news of the death of Gideon Toury on October 4, 2016. He was many things to many people. We have known him in several contexts and capacities, too, but as the current editors of *Target*, we are perhaps most keenly aware of the key role he played in establishing the journal and taking it forward for the first two decades of its existence. The pioneering and inspirational force of his work is among the themes evoked in the tributes below by fellow founding editor José Lambert and by Kirsten Malmkjær, who joined the editorial team in 2000.

On October 20, 2013, the current editors and Isja Conen (on behalf of John Benjamins) sent Gideon a short email message “just to say hello” and to let him know that “*Target* is in excellent health and that those who are running it now cherish the memories of those who started it up and made it into such a wonderful journal.” The message further said this:

We are proud to follow in your footsteps (and those of José) and it is our ambition to maintain the standards that you set! You’re in the post-academic stage of your life now, hopefully enjoying the peace and quiet, the close company of family and friends, and other things all too often denied to busy academics. Please add to them the satisfaction of knowing that others are working hard to try and keep up the good work you started.

We never expected a reply (and didn’t get it), as we knew about his poor physical condition. We hope, though, that he read it and that the wish expressed in it was fulfilled somehow.

Gideon and José did not only set the highest of academic standards for the journal: they also were exceptionally open-minded, curious, and forward-looking. These qualities left their mark on the journal, and we strive to ensure that they continue to do so. In so many ways, Gideon embodied some of the most important

values in academic life, and they were the foundation on which his work, including his editing, was built. Though Gideon has left us now, the legacy of his work remains, and so do the happy memories and, of course, the task “to keep up the good work [he] started.”

Dirk Delabastita and Sandra Halverson (editors)

I first encountered Gideon Toury as the author of the article, “Translated Literature: System, Norms, Performance: Toward a TT-Oriented Approach to Literary Translation,” which he published in *Poetics Today* in 1981. This was right at the start of my PhD studies, and that article was the first scholarly work that I had read that said something really original about how translations might be viewed. Gideon’s work had pride of place in my PhD and has been among my main inspirations ever since.

The second time I was in contact with Gideon was in connection with an article that I had had the audacity, as I saw it, to send to him for potential publication in *Target*. I was immensely surprised and delighted when he accepted it for *Target* 5 (2); few events in my professional life have caused me more excitement. Among those that did, of course, was my first encounter with Gideon in person, an event that took place at a conference in Prague, where Gideon spoke in memory of Jiří Levý; I admired him then from afar, as it were, and it was to be several conferences later before I picked up courage to chat at any length; I think it was in Copenhagen. By and by, we became good enough friends for Gideon to ask me to become a co-editor of *Target*, a job that I undertook with immense pleasure for 13 years, the last four as General Editor, until work and family commitments prevented me from continuing. It was a wonderful time and it taught me so much about our field that I would never otherwise have known. Our last meeting, Gideon, was in 2009, at the Conference to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of CETRA and *Target*, in Leuven, where so many people came together in large part to honour your journal, your work and the work of CETRA.

And now you have left us behind; but I remember your conference speech in memory of Jiří Levý all those years ago. “We shall surely meet again,” you said of Jiří at the end of that talk. And I imagine you both, Jiří and Gideon, in a *Gan Eden* of the greatest translation scholars, and I know that you will surely inspire us all for many decades to come.

Kirsten Malmkjær (editor of Target, 2000–2012)

Like human beings, academic disciplines experience what it means to come of age: death is part of life. After James S Holmes, André Lefevere, Daniel Simeoni, Miriam Shlesinger and a few others, the generation of scholars that redefined and

in many ways created Translation Studies has now lost Gideon Toury. It was particularly painful that the exceptional expert in communication that Toury was, had virtually been cut off from the scholarly world by poor health during the last years of his life. For many of us in the Translation Studies community, the loss of a personality like Toury looks like a calamity. But let us not feel completely overwhelmed by sadness. Toury leaves a rich heritage to his colleagues and disciples.

I had the rare privilege to watch him from the beginning to the end of his career. He was an exceptional companion between 1976 and 2016 (or, really, until 2009–2010). When he made his international academic debut as one of the youngest participants in the 1976 *Literature and Translation* symposium in Leuven (Holmes, Lambert and Van den Broeck 1978), he impressed his audience more than anyone among the ambitious stars on the programme. The birth of the discipline is now generally – and quite rightly – linked with James S Holmes and his 1972 paper, but without the Leuven 1976 meeting and if it hadn't been for the international and interdisciplinary configuration of scholars gathered there around Holmes (including Even-Zohar, Lefevere, Van den Broeck, Bassnett and – in particular – Gideon Toury), the history of Translation Studies would have looked very different. The most substantial innovation at the Leuven conference was indeed provided by that shy and unknown gentleman who had not even finished his PhD.

The final chapters of that PhD were to be written in Leuven, too, in the second half of that same year, 1976. My family will never forget how Gideon behaved in everyday life, how he silently but astutely analysed the profiles of friends and colleagues, how he had been hurt by conflict and by war situations. It is impossible to forget these days – among the sunniest in his and my career – in our garden in Linden (near Leuven) in May 1976, after Gideon's first symposium abroad – and then again a decade later, in August 1987, during the days when we were finalizing the proposal for the publisher and sharing the excitement about the imminent birth of *Target*.

Sadness? An immense sadness came over me the day in 2008 when I witnessed first-hand, somewhere near Zaragoza, during Gideon's last travels in Europe, how dependent this great scholar had become on physical assistance.

The rest cannot be silence. During a period of some thirty-five years Toury showed an unwavering commitment to his main project of working out James Holmes's 'map' as an academic programme for Translation Studies. This was also the explicit justification of *Target*, as announced in the journal's preface (Toury and Lambert 1989) and confirmed two decades later in his wide-ranging retrospective study of the journal, delivered orally (2008; published by Pym 2014) as well as in writing (Toury 2009). Translation Studies had to be an open and long-term construction of the scholarly world, not a one-man-show, and he took this

belief to the point of putting part of his personal publication programme second to the collective interests of the emerging research field.

One year before taking part in his first international symposium in Leuven, Toury was already fully aware of his own potential. He submitted no fewer than five proposals for papers to the conference organizers, each of which would have been worthy of inclusion in the programme. We are considering the possibility of publishing these and other working documents from Toury's early career. They definitely deserve to survive, no less than his books or than what is probably his most 'classic' article, his paper on "The Nature and Role of Norms in Literary Translation" (first published in Holmes, Lambert and Van den Broeck 1978, 83–100), which belongs to the handful of papers that have truly shaped modern Translation Studies.

Toury has been identified quite early as one of the pioneers of translation research, along with other scholars – the likes of Nida, Catford, Levý, Popovič, Holmes, and further also Jakobson, Lotman, and Sebeok – whose major contributions Toury always acknowledged. He would not have put up with any joke about them, no matter how innocent. Toury's name tends to be automatically associated with the concepts of norms and of pseudotranslation. But this is in fact a very narrow definition of what others call his pioneering role and position. The idea of 'position' is one of the links with Even-Zohar's frameworks. It was not revolutionary as such, but its application to translation phenomena implied the integration of translation phenomena into the socio-cultural world, entailing the revision from static into dynamic and functional concepts. This is where a truly fundamental turn took place. Holmes's map had made possible at least the conceptual introduction of translation into academic worlds, taking the scholarly debate far beyond traditional understandings of issues such as the 'translator,' the 'original' or the 'text,' or the 'services' that translation could be made to render. Whether making use of traditional terminology or not, the Descriptive Translation Studies programme redefined more or less *all* translation concepts (that of *translation*, to begin with), thereby drawing a clear line between scholarship and criticism (Lambert 2016). Just another theory?

Until the mid-seventies brilliant translators as well as brilliant linguists, philosophers and literary scholars had disseminated a series of translation *theories*, often as solitary enterprises, far away from curricula or from interdisciplinary research, and many have continued to do so until today, now being helped by the Internet and global communication. But for the establishment of solid scholarly foundations much more is needed than just a *theory*. More accurately perhaps, academia needs *theories of a different kind*, namely, theories that result from socio-cultural investigation rather than merely being potential starting points for it.

The option for a *tabula rasa* in the progressive construction of Translation Studies as an academic discipline was meant to be the continuation and the operationalization of Holmes's map. Significantly, Toury (1980) starts with a key quote from Holmes; Toury (1995) offers a much more explicit and programmatic panorama based on the same priorities. Between the two books, however, fundamental changes had taken place, first in the everyday world of politics, business and publishing, and subsequently in the international academic world. Holmes had invested in academic contacts and cooperation; he was dreaming of a clearing house for Translation Studies and distributed a newsletter entitled *TRANSST* (1976–1978). Toury could benefit from new resources and he got support from what soon came to be called the Manipulation group ("it was a real group," he asserted in 2008). International publishers were discovering the new market: while Hermans (1985) was important for the happy few, Snell-Hornby (1987) went on to become a successful book, and the Göttingen Sonderforschungsbereich "Die literarische Übersetzung" was to generate more than a staggering 30 volumes. When in a significant gesture of loyalty to Holmes's programme Toury decided to revive and continue his *TRANSST* in 1987, he was still addressing the happy few, but at that moment he was already more boldly working out his portfolio for an ambitious journal. After a few years of *Target*, the publisher and the editor decided to expand their programmes as well as their teams, leading to the book series *Benjamins Translation Library* (1994–) and later the bibliography *Translation Studies Bibliography* (2004–). The international world accepted the challenge; other publication projects were launched, and PhD curricula were created in five continents.

Besides insisting on the position of translations in the modern world, Gideon Toury was fully aware of his own position among colleagues and within networks. He realized that his own work required further cooperation and more intellectual and cultural input. He knew about areas left open or waiting to be discovered. But no one on our planet has contributed more than Gideon Toury to the backbone of a *summa translato-logica*.

José Lambert (editor of *Target*, 1989–2010)

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