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Review

Rosa Rabadán, ed. *Traducción y censura inglés–español: 1939–1985. Estudio preliminar.* León: Universidad de León, 2000. 346 pp. ISBN 84–7719–920–5.

(Source: *Target,* vol. 15, No. 1, 2003, p. 164-169)

This book on translation and censorship from English into Spanish during the Francoist regime and the transition to democracy (1939–1985) is an interim research report rather than a peer-reviewed academic publication. It contains nine contributions: an introduction by the editor, two articles on film, two on theatre, three on written narrative, and one brief overview of censorship and translation through the ages.

Understandably, the articles are qualitatively uneven. Several authors point out that their text is provisional, “a mere sketch of a much more ambitious project” (Santamaría López: 207; translations are mine), “no more than a report” on “work in progress” that has “only just started” (Merino Álvarez: 122). The volume, according to the editor, is “the provisional result of an ambitious long-termproject” (p. 9). Some articles are indeed no more than that, while others (Pérez L. de Heredia on theatre, Fernández López on children’s literature, Rabadán on pseudotranslations) seem more ambitious, full-blown essays. Still other papers are based on published and npublished in-depth research: Gutiérrez-Lanza’s paper on Francoist dubbing practices refers to the author’s Ph.D. thesis (p. 48);Miguel González’ contribution on dubbing in the

40s was preceded in time by her *Catálogo bibliográfico de las traducciones del cine norteamericano en España: 1939–1960* (p. 61).

Gutiérrez-Lanza correctly points out that the most reactionary elements in society saw foreign English-spoken film (which was mostly North-American, p. 26, 52) as a potentially enormous threat to Spanish morality. Concerning Francoist reactions to this product, she broadly distinguishes between a first long and severe period (1939–1962), a second period when the more open-minded García Escudero was General Director of Cinema and Theatre (1962–1967) and a temporary, renewed extreme conservatism (1969–1973) that started when Sánchez Bella replaced Fraga as Minister of Information and Tourism. Using three sources (p. 49), Gutiérrez-Lanza brought 3107 files of films actually shown during Francoism into a database called *TRACE-ci (1951–1975)* — which stands for 'TRAducciones CEnsuradas-CIne' and is part of a wider *TRACE* database (p. 10) located at the Universities of León and the Basque Country and with access restricted to researchers of those institutions. This painstaking task enabled Gutiérrez-Lanza to generate figures concerning films translated from English per *nationality* (73% North-American, 22% British; British film was less present between the late 50s and the mid 60s) and per *ecclesiastical* censorship rating (7% of the films imported were meant 'for all audiences', 26% 'for youngsters', 39% 'for adults', 22% for adults but 'with reservations', and 5% were 'very dangerous'). these ratings do not significantly vary per nationality: e.g. British films were not rated differently than North American pictures.

Films, it should be noted, were censored by two instances. The *official* State censorship ratings, that determined what films could be shown to what audiences, used at least five different legal rating systems during Francoism (p. 51), which makes it difficult for researchers to quantify the ratings unambiguously. By contrast, the ecclesiastical 'advice' system, that rated the officially accepted films, stayed uniform over the whole Francoist era. Therefore, Gutiérrez-Lanza understandably restricted her quantitative analysis to the Church ratings. However, I do not follow the author when she says that the ecclesiastical rating percentages are sufficient and make the official ones somehow superfluous (p. 51). Admittedly, in times of relative openness (especially in García Escudero's and Fraga's period), the officially accepted films received more negative ecclesiastical ratings ('for adults with reservations' and 'very dangerous'). However, rather than using this correlation of periods and Church ratings as an argument to exclude the State ratings, it should be the start of new hypotheses that more qualitative research could help to elucidate. The mere

existence of an ecclesiastical censorship organ different from the official board, and advising on films actually shown, seems to point at a potentially problematic relationship between Church and Administration, which may be a matter of specific powerful people, lobbies, different value systems within the Church, the constellation of Censorship Boards, etc. Even if statistics are unable to grasp it, the double censorship mechanism remains a very interesting historical phenomenon.

Miguel González considers the dubbing of Hollywood films in the 1940s. The article is also rather 'preliminary' in nature, focusing on legislation and institutions (pp. 66–73), on a few examples (*Casablanca*, *Gone with the wind*), and especially including a short and excellent (although not new) description of censorship at all stages of the production-importation-translation process (pp. 74–81): self-censorship of writers, pre-shooting censorship, cuts in the original for the American audience, cuts in the original before presenting it to the official Spanish Censorship board, the selection of films according to mainstream taste and/or according to the Francoist quota system, 'expert' reception of the film, the translator as a manipulator, etc. Nevertheless, Miguel González argues, even mutilated predictable films spread "the culture in which these films are made and developed; the familiarization with North American concepts of society …; one observes it from a distance, sometimes with scepticism, at other times with admiration, but one knows it" (p. 85).

Pérez L. Heredia remarks how the Hollywood successes fundamentally stimulated the introduction in Spain of North American mainstream theatre. Her article distinguishes between at least two different periods. On the one hand, it seems to argue that the early melodrama theatre (of which unfortunately only the Spanish titles are given) was first 'domesticated' by early Francoism (p. 169, 177). On the other hand, it points out that, in the 1950s, modified but still 'revolutionary' pieces by Arthur Miller, Robert Anderson or Tennessee Williams were performed in Spain (with such Francoist 'translators' as Luca de Tena). While the corpus of the article is cautious with claims on 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' effects of North American theatre, some conclusions are questionable or at least too bold. No element in the essay backs the final sentence which says that "US cultural discourse and ideology . . . will become [no date or period is given, JV] [Spain's] first cultural, ideological and political reference point" (p. 189). Would there not be, up to the present day, a considerable difference between the cultural (but not necessarily political) Americanization in smaller countries like Belgium and Holland and the supposedly Americanized culture of Spain? Further, where did the analysis prove that Francoism was "nationalist" rather than "imperialist" (p. 188)? And how does one define

'nationalism' and 'imperialism' as opposed concepts? Thirdly, was the early Francoist theatre scene really 'defective' in Robyns' (1994) sense? Let us recall that Robyns defined such discourse as one that "*stimulates the intrusion* of alien elements that are *explicitly acknowledged* as such" (p. 60, my emphasis). Even if it does (but it doesn't), what could be 'nationalist' about such discourse?

In **Rabadán'**s essay on pseudotranslations of 'low-brow' written narrative, Venuti's views on domestication and foreignization get twisted. Rabadán argues that in contemporary Western societies there exist two ideologically opposed views on translation. In the first view, typical of the US, translation is marginal and subordinate to the laws of commerce; in the second, translation is omnipresent and meant to mediate between cultures (p. 255). For the latter view, the essay gives the possibly adequate example of present-day Spain but in the same breath goes on to add Francoist translation practices: since translation was so massively present during Francoism, the argument runs rather explicitly, the regime used it as a mediating intercultural device (p. 256). Should we understand that translation was really just 'translation' in that period, and not unethical and antidemocratic manipulation? To use Venuti's words, I would definitely consider Francoist translation practice one big 'scandal of translation'. The Francoist administration surely had other concerns than to 'mediate' between e.g. American and Spanish societies. Also, Rabadán quotes the wrong figures (from Gutiérrez-Lanza) to prove her point: the fact that, between 1951 and 1975, 73% of the originally English-spoken films in *TRACE-ci* were American, and 22% British, does not say anything about their absolute presence in the overall Spanish film landscape (i.e. about their relative importance vis-à-vis national Spanish production). The ideological error is unfortunate because the materials studied are interesting: Rabadán shows when and how prominent pseudotranslation 'from English' was under Francoism. But as cultural analyses commonly depict Francoist 'low-brow' culture as an escapist mode (e.g. Monterde 1995) or an opportunistic strategy by a culturally deficient aggressive regime in economic trouble, I am reluctant to believe that pseudotranslations of science fiction, detective books, etc. were anything else ('cultural mediations', for instance).

Far more coherent is **Fernández López'** article on literature for children and youngsters. It is well-argued, pleasantly written, with a clear focus: Francoist manipulation. More than half of the books translated for young people were originally written in English. Worldwide, and until the 1960s such writings were restricted by taboos on violence-for-fun, death of children and parents, divorce, alienation, killers, etc. For three different periods — *Autarquía* (1940–1954),

desarrollismo ('developism', 1955–1969) and late Francoism (1970–1975) — Fernández López surveys the editorial and administrative landscape and the often appalling translation strategies. Original gender roles were confirmed, racist stereotypes were enhanced, some types of irony were forbidden, etc. One criticism, maybe: I would have appreciated more editorial and material details of the texts compared.

Santamaría López' 'preliminary panorama' on translated prose and **Merino Álvarez'** piece on English theatre from 1960 onwards are interesting as process descriptions of research in progress and give an idea of the many difficulties censorship researchers may encounter. **Santoyo'**s text looks back at the never-ending history of translation and censorship. Especially lucid and thought-provoking is the paragraph where he gives theoretical answers to the core question of this history: what specific elements may lead to censorship (pp. 293–294)?

Concerning this question, it is definitely a pity that this book often seems to conceive of Francoism more as a test case for general poetic laws and conceptualizations on translation (like the ones formulated by Toury or Venuti) than as a tragic period of which all details matter and deserve to be brought out, even if only in an 'unconceptualized' (or not 'overconceptualized') form, as long as it is still understandable. The apparently 'aseptic' Descriptive Translation Studies was founded by scholars with a great historical sensitivity, as I see it, but who may have felt a need for more encompassing, abstract concepts and mechanisms; yet it would be erroneous to force concepts like Robyns' 'defective stance', Toury's 'translations as facts of the target culture' or Venuti's 'foreignization' onto the specific historical matter so as to confer their credibility upon a project — especially if the concepts get distorted. My reading was occasionally disturbed by sudden conceptual digressions: how convenient are the references to Toury on p. 24, 122, or to Descriptive Translation Studies on p. 85? Is it not trivial to say that (loathsome) Francoist translation practices illustrate that 'translations are facts of target cultures'? Francoism is not a test case for concepts, it is a human tragedy that should be brought into the open without too many conceptual barriers.

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