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Valero Garcés, C. 2007. *Modelo de Evaluación de Obras Literarias Traducidas*. Bern: Peter Lang. Pp: 269.

It is common knowledge that the interest of scholars in the old field of translation has always been present in theoretical and practical studies, especially in university contexts. In the last fifty years, many authors have devoted attention to the study of appropriate and valid evaluation methods for the improvement of translating quality (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1974; House 1981; Van den Broek 1985; Rose 1985; Wilss 1985; Margot 1987; Gress 1987; Newmark 1988; Hatim and Mason 1990; Bell 1991; Hewson and Martin 1991; Toury 1995), and Spanish authors (García-Yebra 1982; Calvo 1983; Santoyo 1987; Hurtado 2001; Rabadán 1991; Author 2004). On the contrary, especially in contemporary times there have been others who have absolutely rejected any attempt to judge translations for quite different reasons (Lefevere 1992).

Among the first, Eugene Nida (1964) created a system for the testing of translations. He pointed out that the greater length of translations over original versions is produced by the need of the translator to make use of the "expansion"; that is, to make explicit in the translation everything which in the original version may be implicit, for the readers of the translated version may not have the same intellectual and cultural background as the readers of the original version. Nida chose among others the cloze test as one of the best methods to evaluate syntactic models, semotactic correction, cultural background and thematic relevance; and reading aloud techniques to evaluate the naturalness of translation. Other researchers such as Jean Claude Margot (1987) continued with the work of Nida and Taber and affirmed that in dynamic equivalence the reader has the last word, and this acts as the main support for the evaluation of translation.

Juan José Calvo's (1983) interesting chapter explores the diachronic evaluation of literary translations, through an interlinguistic comparison of ST originals and TT versions. Calvo designs a table of different translation-related concepts, which serve as

the basis for the contrast and the ultimate evaluation. Stephen H. Straight (1981) maintains that we will not achieve fair evaluations of translations, unless we expand our knowledge about the processes which take place in the use of language, and Elsa Gress (1987) criticises the capcious comments without a real importance that we frequently read in translation assessments. Others, such as Basil Hatim and Ian Mason observe that to make a critique of a translation, the critic must be previously informed of the translator's norms, especially the way in which these affect his point of view about the literary text, the specific audience, and the degree of acceptability or adequation that the translator pursues (1990). Furthermore Raymond van den Broeck suggests that translations can be carried out with the purpose of becoming original texts or to constitute themselves in adequate versions of their sources (1985).

But perhaps the most well-known work about the evaluation of translations is Julianne House's *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment* (1981), based on Halliday's (1978) three basic functions –ideational, interpersonal and textual–, the semantic aspects associated with denotation or reference, the pragmatic aspects explained by Austin and Searle (1962) and Searle (1969) through the speech act theory and, finally, the textual, according to which different elements interact within the text. While in the translation of overt texts the ideational function stands out, in covert texts the interpersonal aspect is more relevant. The final evaluation of a text as translation of an original version consists of the possible errors, overt and covert, and the resulting assessment of these. House counter-attacks against the authors who believe that assessments are always subjective because they are based on intuitions, replying that the intuitions of the different native speakers over the linguistic facts do not basically differ. At the same time, as House did, André Lefevere vehemently expresses his doubts as to the total objectivity of any evaluation: "There is nothing wrong, or right about using them in a certain manner. What is wrong, though, or at the very least dishonest, is for criticism, to pretend to be objective and to try to take on the trappings of the scientific while remaining partisan and subjective. But this is what they do in order to achieve a dominant position or maintain the position" (1992: 217).

Finally, Marilyn Gaddis Rose (1985) creates the concept of *articulatory latitude*, which Wolfram Wilß tries to delimit: "the fact that sensible questions cannot in all cases be solved through objective, error-proof procedures, is an indication of both the need for tolerance and of the legitimacy of different perhaps even contradictory interpretations in the world of literary translation within the boundaries of our own traditional insight" (1985: 25).

After this necessarily brief historical overview of some different ways of dealing with translation assessment, let us go straight back to our review of Carmen Valero's contribution to this translative issue, which I certainly deem a good attempt to shed light on this widely discussed though frequently not so much valued aspect of human life and experience.

In the *Introduction*, the author states that this work has multiple and various applications. Among these, I would first stress the function of providing translation

scholars and students with tools to translate encouraged by the enriching comparison of the different solutions given by several translators. Secondly, it can serve as a handbook for the development of the critical ability of students and researchers of literature and translation. From the beginning, Valero makes us aware of the constraints and limitations of literary translation and consequently declares that her book must never be read as a normative text.

As a basic premise for the evaluation of literary translation, the book structure in five chapters reveals the bidirectional method of analysis for literary works based on Even Zohar's 70s polysystem theory, later applied by Gideon Toury in the 80s and finally reformulated by Rosa Rabadán in the early 90s: the author and his novel in the historical context; the analysis of the source text; the contrastive analysis of the ST and the TTs; the evaluation of the quality of the different translations (Spanish versions) of the original novel; and finally, the biographical section, where the author refers to translations, originals and editions of Hawthorne's novel and the other sources cited in the book.

While her section on the reception of *The Scarlet Letter* in America is quite interesting, the discussion on the Spanish versions (Valero Garcés 2007: 84-88) seems rather philological in the old sense, and I do not really see the reason of such a deep review of these. Nor will the reader, it seems to me, observe the relevance of such an accurate overview of the different Spanish versions for evaluation purposes (Valero Garcés 2007: 88-123). On the other hand, I find that Valero is at her best in this section by refusing to define a constant UT (Unity of Translation) for analytical purposes, which I consider reasonable and clever, both for theoretical and practical reasons (Valero Garcés 2007: 130).

The author takes from Hewson and Martin (1991) the concept of evaluation from different perspectives, which in turn is projected on the three forms of "invariante traductológica" (*tertium comparationis*): linguistic, sensical, and pragmatical or generical. Now her attention is directed at the pragmatic-discursive aspects, that is, more textual and less grammatical, and she perfectly distinguishes ten different aspects of study, which range from socio-cultural differences, variations in tone and original structure of the ST and inadequacy of equivalences, to translator errors, preservation of structures of the ST/literal translation, and variation in the use of rhetorical/literary figures/tropes such as parenthesis (interpositio, interconclusio), paralelism (isocolon), gradation (climax), comparison and metaphors.

For each of these strategies, she presents her *modus operandi* for the evaluation from here on in: name of procedure, brief description, translation unit from selected ST, translation of the different versions alphabetically ordered, and commentary. But the most interesting and original aspect in Valero's work is no doubt the comparative analysis ST-TTs, though there are some arguable points. For instance, she would not have probably needed such an extensive explanation to illustrate the "Sabbath" holiday (Valero Garcés 2007: 139). On the other hand, nobody could be sure, based upon the information given by the text, that the expression "Election Sermon" contains

unequivocally a religious content (Valero Garcés 2007: 140). Once again the author offers an explanation about the different translated versions, devoid of an appropriate context with which to understand the different translator choices (Valero Garcés 2007: 144). On the other hand, Valero does not really give a clear opinion about the different choices the translators make, I suppose, because she understands that translation is not an exact science and we should not be dogmatic –as she states in the introductory paragraphs of the book; nevertheless, in my view a bit more assertiveness in her judgements would have been welcome.

Notwithstanding, Valero's explanations are generally quite intuitive, reasonable, wise, and well documented, especially in her section devoted to the inequivalences and the suppression of the marginal passage, where the author's comments are especially sharp and inspiring. It's a shame that we cannot frequently observe such an inspiration and self-confident appreciations when we are teaching, but this is the nature of translation, at least until we get to see through more scientific, mental processes, etc. But the most attractive and surprising point is her treatment of the variation in the use of the literary figures and tropes (Valero Garcés 2007: 213-273). Here, she clearly and rigurously presents the different tropes and literary figures such as isocolon (*paralelismo*), gradation (*clímax*), parabole (*comparación, símil*), and interrogatio or erotema (*pregunta retórica*). After a brief commentary on the theory of metaphor, Valero insightfully exemplifies the various ways to translate metaphors, such as the reproduction of the same image in the SL, the translation of a metaphor by a similitude or by an explanation of its meaning, and the supression of the metaphor if redundant or unnecessary. Finally, the author talks about metaphors in the TT, not present in the ST.

In the last section "Evaluación de la calidad de las traducciones en español de *The Scarlet Letter*", the author insists on the idea of going beyond the merely linguistic domain, paying instead attention to certain discursive and stylistic aspects, and also stating that the translator's decisions are subject to functional constrictions, rather than just merely linguistic. She now declares that in translation there is no room either for improvisation or for variation of the author's intention. But can we ever be really sure of the author's intention? When reviewing Newmark's (1988) four aspects to take into account when assessing a translation -the negative aspects (scientific aspect and translation as ability), and the positive (translation as art, and style or personal taste), Valero reminds us of the constant presence of the subjective element in translation evaluation, though this does not deny the validity and usefulness of translation criticism.

As a conclusion, Valero affirms that her method must not be considered unique or definitive, for we will surely need different methods for different evaluations. She confirms our belief that the most surprising explanations in her work have to do with the literary figures for their importance within the ST and the translation process, and insists on the flexibility of the translation units in each analysis and evaluation, depending on the character, the operation and the function of each translation. In her assessment of the different TT versions in terms of quality, her arguments seem to be a bit ambiguous and utopian: she ascribes the quality mainly to the preoccupation of the translator in his/her

task. Finally, she ends up with the idea that translation relies on many different aspects and constraints beyond the mere linguistic and intellectual aspects, such as nationality, socio-cultural situation in a certain geographical area and temporal period. The last quotation perhaps reflects best the difficulty of the translation, more so if we acknowledge the impossibility of "fixing" the intention of the author, and even less the literary impression on the reader, owing to multiple factors: history, geography, individuality, society, culture...

To sum up, I think that Valero's ambitious work is certainly valuable for its wise and insightful explanations about translation practice, offering at once a practical and an intuitive way of evaluating literary works. Perhaps, the only objection I would make against this kind of works is that obviously because of the true nature of translation, we cannot really be quite scientific in the strict sense, for translation is not yet an exact or quantifiable human activity. In the formal aspects of the work, I must say that I found some formal flaws, such as some orthographic and grammatical mistakes, which could have been easily avoided with a more accurate revision (proof-reading, double-check, edition) of the composition, errors that are more surprising if Valero's work is originally based on a previous doctoral writing. But for the rest and as a whole I have quite enjoyed its reading and I would heartily recommend it to any translator, researcher or scholar interested in literary translation because it smartly combines a theoretical support with a practical exercise on the evaluation of literary translations, which obviously may signify a great help for lecturers and teachers of translation.

NOTE

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