



Francisco Lafarga and Antonio Domínguez (ed.), *Los clásicos franceses en el España del siglo XX. Estudios de traducción y recepción*, Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, Barcelona, 2001, 277 p.

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Antoine Berman aujourd'hui
Antoine Berman for our time

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Suggested further readings

KOSKINEN, Kaisa (2000). *Beyond Ambivalence. Postmodernity and the Ethics of Translation*. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 774 (diss.) Tampere, University of Tampere.

PYM, Anthony (1995). "Doubts about Deconstruction as a General Theory of Translation". *TradTerm* 2, pp. 11-18.

WOLF, Michaela ed. (1997). *Übersetzungswissenschaft in Brasilien. Beiträge zum Status von 'Original' und Übersetzung*. Tübingen, Stauffenburg.

Francisco Lafarga and Antonio Dominquez (ed.), *Los clásicos franceses en el España del siglo XX. Estudios de traducción y recepción*, Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, Barcelona, 2001, 277 p.

This book presents the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Zaragoza in 1997, the fifth in a series of conferences held throughout the nineties in Spain on the theme of literary and cultural contact between France and Spain. In the foreword to the book, we learn that a research group formed at a University of Barcelona conference in 1988 has been furthering research in the area of translation and comparative literature in Spain, with particular reference to the theme "Images of France in Spanish Literature." While this initiative has produced a number of books focusing on French influence and translations in particular periods of Spanish literary history, most of their publications are wide in scope, covering at least one or several centuries and numerous authors. A full bibliography of these publications is provided.

The multidisciplinary and multilingual nature of the Zaragoza conference on translation of French classics in 20th century Spain is well represented in these published proceedings. Articles appear in Spanish, French and Catalan, and research is rooted in Spanish, Catalan

or French Philology, as well as in Translation and Interpretation Studies. Most of the articles selected focus on particular Spanish translators and their translations of particular French authors, which are presented chronologically — Ronsard, Du Bellay, Montaigne, Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, La Bruyère, Marivaux, Laclos, Chenier and Voltaire. There are, however, a few general articles, on topics such as translations of French theatre into Catalan, the role of anthologies in spreading foreign literature in translation and, perhaps most interestingly, a piece on the contribution and survival of Spanish writer/translators in the publishing world of early 20th century Paris, by Denise Fischer Hubert. The book ends with comments by contemporary translators on their translations of Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, Louise Labé and Mme de la Fayette.

One's overall impression of this book is one of meticulous scholarship. The articles present detailed histories of classical works of French literature selected for translation into Spanish and Catalan, allude to the circumstances under which such translations were performed and provide useful and complete references. A number of articles centre on extensive comparisons of translations of a single work, of note being "Traducciones del Tartuffe al castellano: de las versiones illustres a las actuales", by Rafael Ruiz Álvarez. Other articles present well-informed analysis of the work of a particular translator, see, for example, "Rosa Chacal: Creación, traducción y crítica. A propósito de seis tragedias de Racine", by Soledad González Ródenas.

The book's strength clearly lies in its presentation of information on translators and its inventory of classics selected for translation. The 20th century was indeed a prolific period for translation of French classics into Spanish and Catalan, especially the pre- and post- Franco periods. Another strength lies in the analysis of hispanization of texts and of the linguistic "nuts and bolts" of translating classics from French to Spanish. Some authors present critical analysis of infelicitous attempts to modernize classics (see for example, "Las traducciones al castellano de los *Essais* de Montaigne en el siglo XX", by Núria Petit) while others discuss technical difficulties such as translating the 12 syllable French alexandrine into the 14 syllable Spanish alexandrine. The reader also learns, not surprisingly, that generally speaking, translators of French literature into Spanish formed part of a cultivated elite, and that many of them were writers

and poets in their own right. These writers see translation as a way of enriching and modernizing Spanish literature, the influence of French symbolism on Spanish poetry being a case in point. Translators frequently wrote long and informative introductions to their work, describing the regulating principles chosen for their translation, and justifying the degree to which they deemed it necessary to appropriate the French text. Typically, translators were torn between (mostly linguistic) norms for reception by a Spanish readership and deep respect for the source text. Comments also underline the *francophilie* of the translators who, like contemporary literary translators, are engaged in a labour of love; witness the astute and reflective annotations by four translators at the end of the book.

The one possible weakness of the book is its treatment of the concept of reception, which some readers may well find narrow. The word *recepción* does form part of the book's title, but the majority of articles selected show a propensity for inventory and linguistic analysis, and a lack of real cultural deconstruction with regard to reception. It would indeed be interesting to read more on the subject of how the civil society represented in French classics such as Molière's plays is adapted or not adapted by the translator for reception as a classic in the old order society of Spain. Such analysis is glaringly absent from articles on reception of works by Laclos and Marivaux, in which the model of society represented in the source culture is comparatively more urbane and libertine than that of the target culture. From the cultural point of view, by far the most interesting articles are those that discuss translations into Catalan. A number of articles address the nationalist ideology of Catalan translators and expose their desire to use translation as a way of filling a cultural void and creating a literary register in Catalan. Appropriation of French classics was seen as a way of reinforcing Catalan culture and bringing it into the European literary world as a national literature. For example, "J. Ruyra y J. de Sagarra, Traductores de l'École des maris: versión parroquial versus traducción" by Maria Oliver, presents a fascinating demonstration of how the Catalan translator, J. Ruyra, attempted to catholicise Molière's play and make it suitable for reading by good Catalan Catholics — "Sganarelle's words "Voyez un peu la ruse et la friponnerie." are piously rendered as "Ja és una beltrada que mereix un bon càstig!". The translator becomes thus, the messenger of a "Molière evangelizado" ”.

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