

**CADERA, Susanne M.; WALSH, Andrew Samuel (eds).**  
*Literary Retranslation in Context*, Oxford [etc.]: Peter Lang,  
2017, 242 p.

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The volume on *Literary Retranslation in Context* (2017), edited by Susanne Cadera and Andrew Walsh, consists of nine contributions (and an Introductory article) that reveal the results of the research that has been conducted at the Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid within the framework of the RETRADES (Studies on Cultural and Textual Interaction: Retranslation) research project. In one way or another all chapters in the volume focus on “the interrelation between literary texts and their translations with the socio-historical characteristics of the period in which they were produced” (1). In this way the volume forms a perfect reflection of the ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies, which turned the attention of a new generation of researchers from the pure textual analysis of translated texts towards the societal context of the translation activities, with its multitude of different agents and external processes that influence the final result of the translation process.

In general, the nine chapters of this book discuss the often complex relationship that exists between (re)translated literary works and the “historical, cultural and social context” (1) of the period in which the retranslation was published. In the case of retranslations the new versions of a previously translated source text are



sometimes announced as completely new (and “improved”) versions of the same original, but also as revisions or adaptations of a well-known translation. The analysis of the contextual factors of retranslation in the volume focuses on three different aspects of the process, but in the end they all share the concept of ‘change’ as mutual connecting thread. The chapters in the volume deal with a series of different topics, such as (a) the influence of the target cultural policy (and sometimes overt manipulation) on the activities of literary translators and how, for instance, references to racial origin and homosexuality are treated in translation; (b) traces of censorship in literary translation, in particular during the Francoist period in Spain; and (c) the reception of retranslations (and similar ‘recycling’ of themes and ideas from source texts through indirect means), and the reader’s perception of the retranslated authors. In general, works by authors who belong to the generally accepted literary canon have traditionally been major sources of retranslation because of their high literary value. Yet, the chapters of this volume show that literary excellence is not the only motive at stake, and, in fact, many other considerations and motives are crucial for the fast developing (and digitizing) market of literary (re)translations.

In the opening chapter, **Susanne M. Cadera** sketches the broader theoretical frame for the analysis of retranslations, in which she first gives an extensive discussion of the existing definitions of the concept. In particular, she highlights the differences among a series of apparently similar and therefore often confused terms, such as *retranslation*, *indirect translation*, *intermediate translation*, *backtranslation*, *adaptation* and *revision* (5-6). She then provides a short historical overview of some key research lines in the study of retranslations. However, the main concern of this first chapter is related to the future of Translation Studies, and it opens a range of new perspectives for the analysis of retranslations and their interplay with the socio-historical context of the target culture. Cadera stresses in particular how “the date of the translations and

the historical context” (9) cannot be left out of the analysis of literary retranslations, and how ideology and the values of both source and target cultures play a much more central role in the process than the pure linguistic considerations of refreshing and revising an earlier translation. So far, the lion’s share of research on retranslation has dealt with the causes and motives for retranslation, but according to Cadera searching “for universal causes for the retranslation phenomenon do not lead to valid conclusions” (10) as simple causal explanations are impossible to discern among the “multiple and variable causes” (9) that play a part during the (re) translation process. Instead, she argues in favor of more interdisciplinary, contextual and systemic approaches to retranslation in order to relate the concept to its broader socio-historical and political context. The subsequent chapters of the volume in their own way elaborate on the systemic relationship between source and target text(s), providing clear evidence of the fruitfulness of alternative approaches to retranslation.

The two chapters of Part I on *Retranslation and Ideology* are mutually interconnected as they both elaborate on issues of how (re) translators deal with sensitive themes such as racism and sexuality. **Andrew Samuel Walsh** analyses the five existing English language translations (published between 1940 and 2008) of Federico García Lorca’s unabridged *Poet in New York*, in search of traces of Lorca’s work in the (American) reception. This reception of Lorca is directly intertwined with the translation strategies of the different translators as they were forced to find ways to express references to race and sexual orientation amidst “social and cultural evolution in language” (22) that were hardly stimulating alternative discourses. By analyzing a number of examples with “problematic lexical areas” (38) Walsh demonstrates how translators mitigate “the potentially racist and homophobic references in the source text” (39) in accordance with the sensitivities of the social and historical context of their respective times. Precisely due to the “generational retranslation” (49) and continued updating of

Lorca's language throughout the consecutive translations, García Lorca's *Poet in New York* has become a canonical work in English.

**Ana María Roca Urgorri** also investigates the influence of reigning ideology on translation practices, in particular how translators deal with issues in the source texts that are considered as 'taboo' in the receiving culture. The link with retranslation is evident in cases where changes in the ideology of the target system call for adapted versions of previously translated literary works. The case study presented by Roca Urgorri bears upon the retranslation of "gay American twentieth-century novels" (53) that had been translated for the first time into Spanish during the Franco period, and were retranslated since the transition to democracy after the death of the dictator, that lasted until 1982 (64). The different translations are not analyzed at textual level, but the contexts of their respective appearance are investigated and confronted with an extensive overview of the ideological attitude vis-à-vis homosexuality in Spain from 1936 on. Based on the comparison of publication data of the works in the corpus, Roca Urgorri comes to a number of preliminary conclusions about changes in ideology being influenced by the translation policy of the specific historical period. However, she also acknowledges that textual analysis is still very much needed for tracing cases of manipulation and censorship.

The relationship between *Retranslation and Censorship* is also the 'piece of the puzzle' that links the following three chapters in the volume (Part II), that deal with Spanish retranslations of English, Italian and French canonical works. In the first chapter of this part of the volume, **Susanne M. Cadera** and **Patricia Martín-Matas** study four different translations of Chinua Achebe's postcolonial novel *Things Fall Apart*. The paper first discusses the macro-level of translation policy by examining the institutional reception of the literary work and of English postcolonial literature in Spain in general. Further, the source text is compared to two Spanish translations, published in 1966 and 2010. The authors select a

number of specific issues that are linked with issues of identity and reception, and examine the way the two translators preserve or omit elements of Achebe's Igbo culture. In conclusion Cadera and Martín-Matas suggest that publishing decisions, "aimed at a broader Spanish readership" can have "an enormous influence on reception" (109), in almost the same way as considerations of ideology and manipulation do under the influence of censorship. Despite manipulation and censorial decisions, the first translation still reflected the source culture in a rather faithful way, whereas the more 'domesticated' and readable retranslation from 2010 "lost much of the typical diction of the literary discourse" (110), despite the obvious absence of censorial pressure in the 21st century.

The different (re)translations of Italo Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923) in Spanish are examined in the chapter by **José Luis Aja Sánchez**. Here again, the author demonstrates the complex interplay between the publishing sector and the censor by investigating in detail the omissions imposed by the censor on the (re)translations. As a result, this analysis provides an overview of different "taxonomies for censorship" (126). Aja Sánchez sees the first translation (from 1956) as a "historical document" that can be considered as "a faithful reflection of the period in which it was published" and allows to "reflect on the mechanisms of correction, rewriting and translation practices" (115) of that period. An analysis of the banned extracts of the source text reveals the following "possible reasons that provoked the censorship" (126): (a) explicit presence of adultery, (b) indirect reference to adultery, (c) the justification of adultery, and (d) attacks on (Catholic) dogma (126). Aja Sánchez demonstrates the often arbitrary character of censorship (134) and the deficiencies of the censor's agency, who clearly failed to grasp the complex nature of Svevo's text and deprived the readers of the deeper dimensions of the novel by omitting a number of crucial scenes from the novel (133).

The concluding chapter of Part II deals with “the Six Lives of Celestine”, i.e. the six Spanish (re)translations of Octave Mirbeau’s *Le journal d’une femme de chambre* (1900). **José Luis Aja Sánchez** and **Nadia Rodríguez** describe the context of the (re)translations within the larger perspective of other translations of Mirbeau into Spanish, and they reflect on the different strategies used by the translators and the specific role of their agency in his reception. Contrastive textual analysis of the six target texts reveals that only three Spanish (re)translations can be considered as “full versions of the original work” (152). In a next phase these three full (re)translations are confronted with each other, in search for differences in the rendering of “the transmission of narrative orality” and “stylistic intensification” (152) in the text. The analysis leads to a number of general findings on the nature of retranslation, and in particular to the conclusion that each translation is a unique creation and in itself the result of the “historical period” (163) in which it came into being.

Part III of the volume focuses on the relationship between *Retranslation and Reception* in Spain. The first chapter of this part deals with the thirty-one (31!) existing Spanish translations of Franz Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung*. **Susanne M. Cadera** examines how the reception of this work changed in the Spanish cultural system since the very first translation in 1925 up to the present day by looking at the frequency and pace by which retranslations are produced and published in the target culture. She describes the evolution of the different translations and evaluates the impact of the translations in their “specific historical moment” (170) by checking out the references in newspapers. As Cadera correctly mentions, the extremely high amount of retranslations casts doubt upon a number of the often repeated motives for retranslation, for instance the issue of ‘ageing’ which is obviously refuted by the publication of two or three translations of the same literary work in the same year (191).

**Andrea Schäpers** also investigates the varied reasons and motives for retranslation that have been identified in Translation Studies,

although they have not been proven to be universal and applicable in the majority of cases. The object of her chapter is the contextual circumstances for the publication of the six different Spanish translations of Georg Büchner's only narrative text, *Lenz*, published between 1976 and 2010 in Spain and Argentina. Schäpers extensively describes the 'story' of the six translations and concludes that the differences in reception of the six translations "depend to a large extent on the individual choices made by the translators or the publisher in order to achieve a specific function" in the target culture (216). The range of possibilities goes from purely "academic interest" (217) over "awaking interest in the literary work" to a broader audience (217) and then "back to academic surroundings" (218) with the most recent retranslation.

The concluding chapter in the volume deals with the indirect reception of 'Ossian' in Spain through the focus of another canonical literary work – Goethe's *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers*. **Arturo Peral Santamaría** investigates how 'Ossian' became known in the Spanish cultural system not only thanks to the (re)translations of Goethe's work, but also via the "presence of *Werther* in magazines and newspapers and the success of Massenet's opera" *Werther* (236). *The Poems of Ossian* was published four times in Spanish, with only a very limited reception. Peral Santamaría demonstrates in this chapter how 'Ossian' finally managed to enter Spain after all, but in an indirect way. Goethe's famous novel, with its abundant references to 'Ossian', had "an enormous presence in the Spanish book market" because of the "new translations appearing constantly and old translations being republished in notable quantities" (235).

## References

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