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Traduction, terminologie, rédaction



**Julio César Santoyo. *La traducción medieval en la Península Ibérica (siglos III-XV)*. León, Universidad de León, Área de publicaciones, 2009, 534 p.**

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l'enseignement universitaire et de mieux en saisir les retombées didactiques. Les interventions montrent qu'il semble y avoir un réel désir de rapprocher pratique et théorie, la théorie étant encore perçue par bien des praticiens – et certains enseignants de traduction – comme « superflue » ou encore trop « universitaire » et donc inutile. C'est ainsi que l'ouvrage saura intéresser non seulement les universitaires, c'est-à-dire ceux qui font de la recherche dans le domaine de la traduction et qui croient donc à la pertinence de la traductologie, mais également les praticiens chargés d'enseigner la traduction, c'est-à-dire les chargés de cours (ou les « vacataires ») qui, parfois réfractaires à l'intégration de principes théoriques aux cours qu'ils dispensent ou encore mal outillés pour le faire, pourraient grandement bénéficier des contributions que réunit ce volume. Cela est d'autant plus vrai que les chargés de cours, du moins dans les programmes professionnels des universités canadiennes, sont appelés à donner bon nombre de cours pratiques, tant en traduction générale et spécialisée que dans les disciplines connexes. Les témoignages présentés dans cet ouvrage servent justement à illustrer que, d'une part, la traductologie doit faire partie intégrante des cursus universitaires et, d'autre part, qu'il est possible de le faire.

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**Julio César Santoyo.** *La traducción medieval en la Península Ibérica (siglos III-XV)*. León, Universidad de León, Área de publicaciones, 2009, 534 p.

One of the most internationally renowned scholars of translation history, Julio César Santoyo, offers in his latest contribution an overview of translation practice during the Middle Ages in the Iberian Peninsula. The study is divided into six chapters arranged chronologically around the major periods of medieval translation: 3<sup>rd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, 12<sup>th</sup> century, 13<sup>th</sup> century, 14<sup>th</sup> century, first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to an introduction and a final remark, the book contains a foreword by Managing Editor of the University of León Press, Maurilio Pérez, in praise of Santoyo's longstanding commitment

to medieval cultural studies. Although written in Spanish, the text is frequently interspersed with quotations in Latin, Italian, Catalan, Galician, Portuguese, French and English. Except in very specific instances, no translation is provided, which will make reading difficult for those who do not have a reading knowledge of those languages, especially of Latin.

Given that the book covers roughly 1300 years of translation history in less than 500 pages, one might expect *La traducción medieval en la Península Ibérica* [*Medieval Translation in the Iberian Peninsula*] to consist mainly of titles of source and target texts and names of source-text authors and target-text translators, with occasional commentary on their overall significance in their historical context. And, although at times Santoyo's monograph verges on the simple compilation of historical data (particularly in the chapters dedicated to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the number of translations increased dramatically), it provides for the most part an outstanding critical study of translation historiography and theory of the utmost importance for Translation Studies. In the following lines, I would like to comment on five key trajectories in contemporary translation research to which this study makes an important contribution.

The first trajectory is the definition of translation, which has been a recurrent topic of research in recent times, albeit from different perspectives (see, for example, Halverson, 1999; Chesterman and Arrojo, 2000; Tymoczko, 2007; St. André, 2010). In this regard, Santoyo's exploration of "*el metalenguaje de la traducción*" [translation metalanguage] throughout the book should inform future redefinitions of translation that depart from the transfer metaphor embedded in the word "translation." In the Iberian Peninsula of the Middle Ages, *traducere* [to translate] was indeed employed, as the first recorded use of the verb in 1015 indicates; yet it was not the only word that denoted a translation product or process. In addition to several forms derived from *traducere*, a whole metalanguage of interlingual translation began to develop from the 14<sup>th</sup> century (particularly in Castilian and Catalan), with neologisms such as *sacar* [to take out], *interpretar* [to interpret], *tornar* [to turn, to become] and *rescriure* [to rewrite]

that problematize the assumptions couched in the standardized term “translation.” The implications of the historical emergence of such a metalanguage are twofold: while the metalanguage speaks to the conceptual reductionism of “translation” as simple translation products and processes, it also reveals the shortcomings of Western conceptualizations of translation that fail to account for the multiplicity of views that emerged in the geopolitical entity currently known as Western Europe.

Closely connected to the first, the second trajectory concerns medieval understandings of translation. In this respect, Santoyo’s monograph features an excellent collection of translators’ statements on the nature and object of their activity, from the prologue preceding the first recorded translation in the Iberian Peninsula (*Verba seniorum*, translated by Pascasio from Greek into Latin in the 6<sup>th</sup> century) to a letter written by Maimonides in 1199 where he expounds on his only translation rule, to the five masterly rules of translation devised by Don Duarte (King of Portugal from 1433 to 1438) in his *Leal Conselheiro*. While it is true that a significant number of these statements happen to be prescriptive stances about translation as a circumscribed activity (hence their common categorization as translation discourse instead of translation theory), readers will be surprised to find many articulate and complex statements (particularly in the late Middle Ages) that problematize the ubiquitous *ad verbum/ ad sententiam* antagonism constantly encountered in translation history scholarship.

Two translators are particularly pertinent here: Bishop Alonso de Cartagena and Bishop Alonso de Madrigal (also known as “El Tostado”), whom Santoyo deems the most important translators of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Most known for his dispute with the renowned Italian translator Leonardo Bruni, Cartagena is responsible for some of the most fascinating medieval reflections on the activity of translation, such as the introduction to his translation of Cicero’s *De inventione*, where he reflects on linguistic anisomorphisms and translation as the expression of the “effect” of the source text; his commentary on Pier Candido Decembrio’s translation of Plato’s *Politics*, where he comments on the importance of textual edition in translation

practice; and his essay on language contact and lexical borrowing in response to Bruni's critique of a translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*. As for El Tostado, one of the most prolific intellectuals of the Middle Ages, his theoretico-practical system of translation was built upon two general principles. First, regardless of the language pair, everything that can be signified in a given language can be signified in any other language. Consequently, no language can be considered superior—a highly problematic statement at the time, given the widespread belief in the natural superiority of Greek. Second, in spite of the shared expressive capacity of languages and the inherent possibility of translation, languages differ in what they convey—a contention reminiscent of the theory of translation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century formalist Roman Jakobson (2000 [1959]).

The third research trajectory on which the book sheds light is translation as a fundamentally humanistic endeavour. If one of the main difficulties in writing a history of translation is the scarcity of textual and paratextual evidence, Santoyo points to the deliberate exclusion of certain types of texts (e.g., ecclesiastical, medical, veterinary and commercial) from traditional histories of translation as another significant obstacle. Although the readership of classical humanistic philosophy was small, the translation of these texts in the Middle Ages has been the consistent object of translation history scholarship, whereas the translation of other types of texts, particularly with the decline of Latin, has been little studied in translation histories.

As the historiography of translation and the development of Translation Studies are inextricably linked to the study of Bible translation, the fourth research trajectory is the translation of the Bible into Latin and the various Romance vernaculars. Whereas, as Santoyo points out, religious texts dominated translation practice during the period, a strict censorship was exercised over Romance-language translations of the Bible, particularly of *The Hebrew Bible* that was regarded as inherently heretic and, accordingly, taken out of circulation. This situation is indicative not only of the lingering asymmetry in the 15<sup>th</sup> century between Latin and Romance languages in spite of the palpable decline of the former, but also of the instrumentality

of translation as a means of accessibility to religious texts for the purpose of conversion. Often extremely literal, Romance-language Bible translations are by no means devoid of literary interest, as exemplified in the *Biblia de Alba* (regarded by Santoyo as one of the most outstanding translations of the Middle Ages) that was commissioned by Luis González de Guzmán, translated from the Hebrew Bible by Rabbi Mosés Arragel de Guadalajara and approved in 1431 by the Church censors in Toledo.

The fifth research trajectory—and probably the most controversial—relates to the so-called “Escuela de traductores de Toledo” [Toledo School of Translation] in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, whose existence Santoyo denies from the very first chapter. He discusses the terminological trap of speaking of a “School” as if it were an organized *studium*, and of Toledo, as opposed to other places where more intense translation activity was taking place at the time, such as Murcia and Seville. He points to the document that initiated the *totum revolutum* in translation historiography, Amable Jourdain’s *Recherches critiques* (1819), as well as to a number of other documents that feature critical historiographical mistakes, not only with regard to the existence of a “School” itself, but also in relation to patronage, dates, participating translators and translated texts. In his refutation, Santoyo argues that too much attention has been paid to the Toledo “School” of Translation to the detriment of the *studia linguarum* [Language Schools] established by the Church in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to evangelize the Muslim and Jewish populations in the newly-conquered Christian territories in the Iberian Peninsula and Northern Africa. In addition, he points out that the first *studium* in the Iberian Peninsula that can be properly called a Translation School was the one that Pope Clemente V created in the 14<sup>th</sup> century at the University of Salamanca, one of the five key sites of Christendom in Europe, along with Rome, Paris, Oxford and Bologna.

Santoyo successfully argues that translation historiography is far from producing a comprehensive history of translation during the Middle Ages in the Iberian Peninsula. In this regard, not only the scarcity of textual, paratextual, metatextual, contextual and co-textual information prevents translation historians from achieving that goal, but limitations are also linked

to the trajectories of research discussed above. Indeed, in order to “enlarge translation” beyond the limitations of dominant Western translation theory (Tymoczko, 2007), it becomes necessary not only to rethink translation from a synchronic perspective (that is, how translation is currently conceptualized and practiced), but also from a diachronic one (that is, the historical emergence of both primary and secondary conceptualizations and their implications for the definition of translation). Santoyo’s analysis reveals the complexities of medieval translation discourse, incorporating questions of semiosis, linguistic asymmetries, textual function and expressive capacity to the common staples of form and content.

It is hoped that the exploration of such complexities will result in the study of text types that have been heretofore neglected in translation history scholarship. The close attention that Santoyo pays to the translation of religious texts—not only to Romance-language Bible translations, but also to the translations of hagiographies, treatises, sermons, liturgies, homilies, epistles, rules and so forth—supports his insistence on the importance of neglected types of translation in the Iberian medieval literary system. His refutation of the Toledo School of Translation bolsters his broader argument in favour of a more critical translation historiography that incorporates the study of ecclesiastical production.

Santoyo’s approach to the medieval past in the Iberian Peninsula is historically well-informed and, as such, it generates more questions than it answers. An English translation of *La traducción medieval en la Península Ibérica* would be an important contribution to Anglophone Translation Studies—indeed, a contribution to be hoped for in the foreseeable future.

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**John Milton and Paul Bandia, eds. *Agents of Translation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2009, 337 p.**

The concept of "agency" is at the center of the discussions presented in this book. Using the umbrella term "agents of translation," the authors shed light on the role of networks of social actors, journals, publishing houses, translators, and patrons in the production of cultural repertoires via translation.

"Agency" is considered in two ways. The first one refers to agents "who have effected changes in styles of translation, have broadened the range of translations available, or who have helped or attempted to innovate by selecting new works to be translated" (p. 2). Outi Paloposki presents two case studies in which translation agency is defined against a backdrop of editorial and financial constraints in Finland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Cemal Demircioğlu reflects on the "provocative figure" (p. 131) of Ahmed Midhat during the Turkish *Tanzimat*. His analysis of paratextual materials reveals some of the textual practices related to translation—"conveying," "borrowing," "stolen text," "dialogue," "summary," "conversion," "emulation/imitation" (p. 153)—in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Turkey and, by doing so, takes the analysis of translation practices beyond the source text–target text dichotomy.