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TRANSLATING SPANISH COMMERCIAL
NARRATIVE FICTION INTO ENGLISH. THE CASE OF
***ESPÍA DE DIOS* BY JUAN GÓMEZ-JURADO**

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ABSTRACT

We live in a world where translated texts surround us, regardless what languages do we speak. Besides, in the case of commercial narrative fiction (where the bigger the audience, the better), translation has much to do with the level of success that a work can reach. Following the conventional flow of translation between languages, any text originally written in English will always have more chances to reach a bigger audience. Nonetheless, in this paper we are going to focus on a novel that seems to go against the general rule: *Espía de Dios*. This is a Spanish novel, written by Juan Gómez Jurado, whose translated versions have been read throughout the world, even in English-speaking countries, where this rarely happens. We will try to find out to what an extent the quality of the translation may be a key factor behind this phenomenon, by analysing and comparing the original Spanish version and the English translation, *God's Spy*, by James Graham.

Keywords: commercial fiction, translation, Spanish, English, *Espía de Dios*

Vivimos en un mundo en el que estamos rodeados de textos traducidos, independientemente de la lengua que hablemos. Además, en el caso de la ficción narrativa comercial (donde cuanta más audiencia, mejor), la traducción es un factor determinante en lo relativo al éxito que puede alcanzar una obra. Según los flujos de traducción convencionales, cualquier texto escrito originalmente en inglés tendrá siempre más probabilidades de llegar a una audiencia mayor. No obstante, en este trabajo analizaremos el caso de una novela cuyo devenir parece contrario a esos flujos tradicionales de la narrativa comercial. Se trata de *Espía de Dios*, obra del español Juan Gómez Jurado, que se ha convertido en un éxito de venta en muchos países, incluso en países anglohablantes, donde resulta un fenómeno un tanto extraño. En estas páginas trataremos de determinar hasta qué grado la calidad de la traducción puede haber contribuido a tal éxito, analizando para ello la versión original y la versión inglesa, *God's Spy*, traducida por James Graham.

Palabras clave: literatura comercial, traducción, español, inglés, *Espía de Dios*

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1. TRANSLATION AS AN INESCAPABLE NECESSITY

Nowadays, due to the Internet and globalization, the amount of information shared around the world is huge. We are constantly demanding for content, and sometimes it might not be written in a language that we understand. This is why translation is so essential in our everyday lives and has a bigger role in society than what is believed.

So we can say that translation, used everyday for necessary communicative purposes, is the key piece for a correct understanding, for example, between two institutions in different countries that want to make a deal or to collaborate. The accuracy of meaning is the main part when we talk about the communicative purpose of translation.

However, in this communicative process, it seems that only the source and the goal are taken into account by readers and general public. Therefore, the important task carried out by the translator, which is the connecting thread between two different languages, most times is underestimated or even ignored. We have to bear in mind that when we read a translated text, and even more a literary text (with feelings and connotations involved), we perceive it throughout the subjectivity of the translator. No matter how faithful he tries to remind to the original author and his work, there will always be a hint of his own personality on the text.

As Edith Grossman says in *Why Translation Matters*, “translation is a kind of interpretative performance which holds the same relationship with the original text as the actor has with the script, or the musical execution with the composition” (23) . According to this, we could consider translators as artists. These artists, as we have said before, interpret a work that the author has originally created. When we watch a movie, we see a character in the body of the author, when we listen to a piano song, we do it through the hands of the interpreter. This is the same case with a novel and a translator, we read it after the whole

text has been processed by his mind so this is why, according to her, translators are also artists.

But at this point, and getting more into the aim of this analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between two different types of translation: general translation, used for proper pragmatic issues, and literary translation, used for mere entertainment. As we have just said, their objectives are quite different. In the first one, the main objective is to share information breaking a cultural barrier and creating a link not just between languages, but also between countries. The goal of the second kind of translation is also to communicate, but it goes beyond that. Literary translation is also intended to entertain, keeping the meaning of the content but also paying attention to the style and form. The aesthetic part is truly taken into account when translating literature, because it is an essential part when creating an image in the reader's mind that makes him feel something .

Also, their conception of the audience is different. For literary translation -commercial literature in particular- the more people it reaches, the better. This is the task of the translator: to let a text spread beyond any language or culture. However, the kind of translation used for pragmatic purposes has an audience more restricted and closed. It is aimed to a particular group of people, with certain interests or knowledge about the topic treated.

Then, taking for granted that a translator is always going to do his best for presenting a good job, neither the responsibilities, nor the consequences will be the same if we find a bad translation of these two kinds. As Vázquez Orta says in his article, “the distinction between being wrong and not being right may become very critical” (207). If we apply this statement to translation with mainly communicative purposes, the information transmitted in both languages must be really accurate. If we apply it to literary translation, the margin of free interpretation will always be bigger, because we are talking about fiction and the facts narrated do not have a direct impact in real life.

For example, in legal translation, a person who does a bad job will have a punishment contemplated in the Penal Code: “458. 1. El testigo que faltare a la verdad en su testimonio en causa judicial, será castigado con las penas de prisión de seis meses a dos años y multa de tres a seis meses.” This a very dramatic example, but if we compare it to literary translation, the consequences of a bad or good result will be reflected in the sales or the critics. It is not the same translating in a wrong way a law than a novel. The misunderstanding caused in the first case could be fatal.

2. THE TRANSLATION OF COMMERCIAL NARRATIVE FICTION

As we have mentioned before, literary translation will always look for the biggest audience possible. It has a very clear purpose, which is entertaining, transmitting feelings and provoking them to the readers. Since it has a different objective, it has different features and way of functioning. In the excerpt below, Grossman explains why is the task of the translator important when we talk about this kind of translation:

The translation of their works is also of critical importance to writers around the world, promising them a significant increase in readership. One of the reasons writers write is to communicate with and affect as many people as possible. Translation expands that number exponentially, allowing more and more readers to be touched by an author’s work. For writers whose first language is limited in terms of how many people speak it, translation is indispensable for achieving an audience of consequential size. For those whose first language is spoken by millions [...] translation is also an imperative. (26-27)

It is clear now why the translation of literary works is essential for every author and helps them achieving their purpose of reaching the biggest amount of people. Besides, a book originally written in English will already have at first a bigger audience than a book written, for example, in Portuguese. *Espía de Dios* was originally written in Spanish, one of the most widely spoken languages around the world together with English and Chinese.

2.1 SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

Previously we have made a distinction between general translation and literary translation in particular. Now, we are going to focus on literary translation, which is the type that we are dealing with here. Let us start by defining literary translation and specifying what are the features that make it different. According to CONALTI (Colegio Nacional de Licenciados en Traducción e Interpretación) literary translation consists on the translation of poetry, plays, literary books, literary texts, as well as songs, rhymes, literary articles, fiction novels, novels, short stories, poems, etc. (Bazzurro, par. 1). All these types of texts have a strong stylistic component that has to be transferred by the translator.

Translation of literary works must pay attention to the stylistic side of the content. It has to be a combination between form and function. Besides, the translator, sometimes has to deduce what the author wants to transmit with certain rhetorical devices like metaphors or connotations where meaning is not very clear, since language, and even more literary language, is full of implicit meanings. What is more, he has to make an interpretation so that both audiences, the one reading the original and the one reading the translation, get the closest feeling possible when approaching the text. So, if we take it like that, it is a difficult task to move a story to a different language and culture.

The literature of a specific country will always be full of cultural references that foreign people will not understand, and the task of the translator is to adapt them to the target language in a natural way that fits to the context. Let us take a look at the example below (all the examples that are going to appear are taken from the books *Espía de Dios* and its translation into English, *God's Spy*):

SP: Creyó reconocer la canción que entonaban a coro, un recuerdo de su infancia, a un millón de años en el pasado. Era *Yo tengo un amigo que me ama, su nombre es Jesús*. (133)

EN: He thought he recognised the hymn they were singing. It was a memory from when he was a child, a million years in the past: *If you're saved and you know it, clap your hands*. (118)

In both cases, there is a religious song intended to be sung by children. The first one is originally religious, but we see that in English this song does not exist, so the translator has chosen another similar song that actually exists in Spanish as well. This English song is an alternative to the first version, which is *if you're happy and you know it clap your hands*. However, in Spanish we can also find both versions of this English song, with non-religious lyrics: *si eres feliz y lo sabes aplaude así*, and the one with religious lyrics: *si en verdad Dios te ama da las palmas*.

The following example, rather than a cultural reference is an issue with language and spelling.

SP:-Una cosa, ¿Robayra es con *y* griega, o con *i* latina?

-Con *y* griega, creo. (60)

EN:-One thing, Robayra is written with “ay”, not an “i”

-With “ay”, I’m fairly sure. (50)

In this example we find a spelling issue. In English the “*y griega*” and “*i latina*” distinction does not exist. So the translator manages to adapt it according to English spelling. In the original the confusion is caused by letter distinction, while in English, the translator plays with the pronunciation of the word.

SP: En el umbral había un sacerdote vestido con *clergyman* (63).

EN: In the doorway stood a priest dressed in dog collar and suit (53).

This is a unique example, since the term used in the Spanish sentence is already in English, but the translator has taken the option of changing it, so we assume that the English expression used in the Spanish sentence is not used as such in English because it has a different meaning. The result is that instead of using *clergyman* he specifies what is the priest’s clothing.

All the time, in any language we use idioms and expressions that might or might not exist in other language. And again, the translator has to get an expression where his audience understands the same (or as similar as possible) to the source language audience.

When translating one of them, if it exists in the target language there will be no problem. If it does not exist as such, but there is an expression that resembles it or that, in the end has the same meaning, the translator should take that one. In the rest of the cases, when the idiomatic expression does not have a direct equivalent, the translator sometimes takes the option of paraphrasing the actual meaning of the idiom, so there is not stylistic or metaphoric element. In this particular example, we can see the opposite case. The author used a normal expression without any connotation or idiomatic component and the translator is the one that has added it.

EN: Dante was frivolous and he certainly wasn't the brightest bulb in the box... (39)

SP: Dante era un poco frívolo, y desde luego no el más ingenioso de los hombres...(49-50)

The literature of a specific time will also have its own cultural referents. In the same way that each place is different so are its culture and literature. Languages develop with the course of time, as Benjamin Walters says on his article *The Task of the Translator*.

No translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original [...] For just as the tenor and significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well. While a poet's word endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to be absorbed by its renewal. Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth of its own. (In Grossman, 2010.74-75)

What Walters wants to say is that society changes and develops and so does the language because the way of speaking, along with the way of life and the way of approaching life issues is not the same as a few years ago. So the time factor is also taken into account when

adapting a text. Literary translation is a way of cultural transfer, where we have to mix the source culture and the target culture in a logical way that makes sense for the audience, keeps as faithful as possible and keeps the style of the original text. As it is obvious to think, achieving all of these is pretty much impossible. So in each case, the translator has to choose what he is going to put at the forefront and what is going to be his priority when facing a translation task. He will very often have a debate between form and content.

In short, literary translation has a stylistic element that makes it different from other sorts of translation, and as Fernández Guerra says, “all the images, connotations, social implicatures, etc. play a decisive role for the interpretation, and hence it is necessary for the translator to bridge the socio-cultural gap between the two audiences” (139). This quote explains exactly what is the task of a literary translator and what are the “obstacles” that he will find along the way.

2.2 QUANTITY OR QUALITY: THE TRANSLATION OF COMMERCIAL NARRATIVE FICTION

As we can deduce from its own name, commercial literature is intended to catch as many readers as possible, and its success is measured by the amount of books sold. The fact that a book becomes or not a best-seller, induces to think that the amount of books sold is directly related to its quality, and therefore the quality of the translation. This cannot be applied to any other kind of translation since, as we have previously explained, reaching the biggest audience is just a feature that commercial narrative fiction has. Going back to Grossman’s book, she makes a reference about how literary translation started and how important it has been throughout the story:

Translation occupies a central and prominent position in the conceptualization of a universal, enlightened civilization, and, no small accomplishment, it almost defines the European Renaissance. The “rebirth” we all have studied one time or another began as the translation into Latin and then the vernacular languages of the ancient Greek philosophy and science that had been lost to Christian Europe for centuries. Poets of the late fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries routinely translated and adapted classical and then Italian works, and these versions of Horace or Virgil or Petrarch were included as a matter of course in collections of their original poems. (25)

This has a lot to do with what we said in the previous section involving time and cultural referents. Literature has existed since so long ago and it is so rich and varied that there is always influence of previous works, styles, authors and trends in what we read. Without all these traditional works we could not know very much about the past, the history and the way of expressing that people had in previous times. Translation has allowed us to know where do we come from, and to follow the evolution that we have made. Having said that, we have to bear in mind that there are languages that are spoken by more people because they have a large tradition and because of the expansion since the colonial period. That is why some European languages are spoken in regions that are so far away from their roots.

If we take a look at “The 10 Most Spoken Languages in the World”, we will find that three of them are European: Spanish, English and Portuguese (Lane). This is not a big number, but if we take into account that some of the other languages in the list are Chinese, Hindi, or Russian the thing changes. The speakers of these languages are to be found in restricted areas of the world map, in the case of China and India (Hindi) we are talking about extremely overcrowded countries, and in the case of Russian we are talking about the largest country in the world, so this is logic that they are going to be highly spoken. But Spanish, English and Portuguese are spread all around the world.

This is important because in order to see what has happened with the novel that is protagonist in this essay, we need to know how translation flows work and what is the general rule that *Espía de Dios* seems to have broken. All this information is very well explained in an article written by Covadonga Fouces, and even better, she focuses in Europe (Spain and Italy in particular). Taking a look at a newspaper supplement (ABC), she discovers that Spain is the most autarchic country with 63% of literature originally written in Spanish and 36% of translated literature. Besides, literature written in Spanish (Spain and South America) is well received internationally because of its quality. If we take a look at the best-sellers list from the U.S. by *The Guardian*, we will find that practically all of them are originally written in English (from the U.S. and the U.K), and the author that stands out for not being English is Stieg Larsson (Swedish).

The next quote taken from this article is a good summary of how literature is evolving and how translation flows are an essential piece in this evolution:

Una literatura internacional nueva en su forma y en sus efectos, que circula fácil y rápidamente en todo el mundo mediante traducciones casi simultáneas y que conoce un éxito extraordinario porque con su contenido *desnacionalizado* puede comprenderse en cualquier parte sin riesgo de malentendidos.(125)

Here, Covadonga Fouces explains how important is for a certain book to be translated into more languages, specifically English, German or French, because they are considered *central languages* due to the translation flows. According to this classification, Spanish is considered a *peripheric language*. When a peripheric language is translated into a central one, it will always acquire a bigger popularity. In the case of the novel analysed here, it is curious how Gómez Jurado, yet nowadays is not a super famous writer on his own country (Spain) , but he is better known in some other countries, the U.S. amongst them. This is even more curious taking into account that this is a book with a high acceptance worldwide (5 million copies in 42 countries). So we have here a book that goes against the flow, and there have to be some reasons that we are going to try to find within the lines of *Espía de Dios* and *God's Spy*.

2.3 TRANSLATING IN A COUNTERCLOCKWISE DIRECTION: THE CASE OF *ESPÍA DE DIOS*, BY JUAN GÓMEZ-JURADO

The settings of the story are mainly the Vatican and Rome, in 2005 right after the death of John Paul II and following with the conclave, in order to choose his successor. However, an important part of the story takes place some years before (1994-1999) in Saint Matthew Institute, in Maryland. At the end of the novel (just in the Spanish version) Gómez-Jurado explains how he travelled to Rome in order to have the experience and first-hand knowledge about the environment that he would use later for his first novel. It was first published in 2006 and, as we have already mentioned, it was translated into English by James Graham and published just one year later. James Graham is a translator, interpreter

and presenter who works mainly in medical, legal and financial translation. However, he has also translated some other literary works, such as *Blood Pact* by Mario Benedetti.

So far, Juan Gómez-Jurado has written and published 6 novels, all of them have been translated into more than 40 languages. After *God's Spy*, he released *Contract with God* (also titled *The Moses Expedition*) in 2007 (same year that the English translation of *Espía de Dios* by James Graham was released). In this one, some of the characters are shared with his first novel, and it was also very successful in 42 countries, just like *The Traitor's Emblem*, published in 2008. Hollywood has bought the rights of *The Moses Expedition* in order to make an adaptation for the big screen.

Even though we have seen that his novels are quite successful in general, he declared in an interview in the Spanish newspaper "El Mundo" that in Spain his fame is more modest, while in countries like Finland, Germany or the U.S. everything he publishes gets a huge success (Alvarado, par. 1). So it is clear that *Espía de Dios* is a case that goes totally against the flow, where national literature is normally more successful and where anything translated from any peripheral language into English will not have the same impact as something written in English and then translated into any other language. In the following lines we will try to find out whether the quality of the translator's work has something to do with the degree of success achieved by this novel, or whether it depends just on other factors like the topic of the novel, the genre, if it is a novel within the current trend, if the topic used is treated in an interesting way, the easiness when empathising with any of the characters, etc.

3. *ESPIA DE DIOS* VERSUS *GOD'S SPY*: BEST SELLER? BEST WRITER? BEST TRANSLATOR?

As we see in the title, we are going to try to find out the answer to what is exactly the key of the success of this work and the reasons behind it, what are the main elements that could have helped to make people read this novel all around the world. For this, we are going to analyse in detail both the original Spanish version, and the English one. We are going to

look at the differences and the parts that could be a trouble for the translator and how he has solved them. We are going to analyse and evaluate the examples extracted from both versions taking into account several aspects: are the register and general tone kept? does the translator allow himself modifying the text more than he should? how does he execute these changes? why does he make certain decisions? etc.

In this analysis we will approach in detail how the translator has managed to treat some important issues in the novel and what solutions he has chosen. These issues are gathered in 5 categories: names of the characters or anthroponyms, where we will see if he has changed any of the names and try to explain why. Then, place names or toponyms, where we will analyse the settings of both versions and how the decisions made by the translator influence the development of the novel. The third section is called cultural references and here we will analyse examples that address to elements that might belong to the source culture and see how they are transported to the target culture. Following that, we will see how the expressions and quotes written in other languages are addressed by the translator and the final section will be destined to see how do endnotes and footnotes work in both versions. By analysing all these features and the examples taken from the texts, we will try to give an answer to the questions raised at the beginning of this section.

3.1 NAMES OF THE CHARACTERS OR ANTHROPONYMS

The translator approaches this issue in a very particular way. Most of the names remain unchanged as they appear in the Spanish version. However, despite they look the same, there is a footnote after the “*dramatis personae*” section that raises a big difference between the characters of both versions: “Casi todos los personajes del libro están inspirados en personas reales.”(16). James Graham does not specify if the characters are based in real ones, but he does not say that they are all fictional either, he just has opted for omitting this information. So he keeps the name and characterization, but does not clarify that they are based in real people. Maybe, this can explain the next case, where the name of the characters is kept but he has changed the surname. We find this in two characters:

Carlo Boi (SP) vs. Carlo Troi (EN)

Francis Shaw (**SP**) vs. Francis Casey (**EN**).

The first one is the Director of the UACV (Unitá per l'Análisi del Crimine Violento), the second one is an American cardinal. The possibility that these characters could resemble some real people more than what James Graham would want can be the reason why he changed their surnames. Regarding this issue of changing names, let us take a look at this singular example:

-**SP**: Permítame que le sugiera unos nombres: **Leopold**, Jamie, Lewis, Arthur... Harry, Michael, Johnnie, Grant... Paul, Sammy, Patrick...Jonathan, Aaron, Samuel... (173)

-**EN**:Let me suggest a few names: **Ryan**, Jamie, Lewis, Arthur...Harry, Michael, John, Grant...Paul, Sammy, Patrick...Jonathan, Aaron, Samuel...(158)

Here, there is someone listing the names of children abused by a priest. The very first name is the only one that has changed. This election of the translator induces us to think that for him, Leopold could be taken as a real person for some reason, so he has simply put another name that will be lost amongst all the others. But there is something paradoxical in this example. In the Spanish version, there is a chapter (omitted in the English one) where a child called Harry is abused by a priest.

Then, there is a chapter that appears in both novels, where Francis Shaw/Casey tries to suborn this child's mother. The name of the child is explicitly said in both versions, so it is a mystery why the translator would not change this name too. But if we take a look at this chapter, he addresses to the mother as Edwina Bloom (**SP**) and Edwina McDougal (**EN**), so Graham is really changing his identity as well because in the Spanish version the child abused is Harry Bloom and in the English version is Harry MacDougal. Also, there is one particular case where Graham has changed the spelling of the name and surname. One of the main characters is called Viktor Karoski in the original, while in the English version the surname is spelled Victor Karosky.

Besides, there is even a case where a character has been completely omitted from the story. His role in *Espía de Dios* is not a big deal, but he does exist in real life.

SP:-Dicanti, ¿ha oído usted alguna vez el nombre de John Negroponte?

-Me suena mucho. Es italoamericano?

-Dios mío, Paola, levante alguna vez la nariz de los libros de criminología. Sí, es americano, pero de origen griego. En concreto, es el recientemente nombrado director nacional de Inteligencia de Estados Unidos. A su cargo están todas las agencias de los norteamericanos: la NSA, la CIA, la DEA... y un largo etcétera. Eso quiere decir que este señor, quien por cierto es católico, es la segunda persona más poderosa del mundo, por detrás sólo del presidente Bush. Bien, pues el señor Negroponte me ha llamado esta mañana mientras estábamos con Robayra y hemos tenido una larga, larga conversación. Me ha avisado de que Fowler había cogido un vuelo directo desde Washington para unirse a la investigación. No me ha dado opción. No se trata sólo de que el propio presidente Bush esté en Roma, Y por supuesto bajo aviso de todo. él es quien ha pedido a Negroponte que tome cartas en el asunto antes de que éste salte a los medios de comunicación. Y Negroponte textualmente me ha dicho:...

[...]

-Según me dijo Negroponte, George Bush se ha interesado personalmente por el caso. El presidente cree que aún está en deuda con Juan Pablo II, quien hace años le miró a los ojos y le pidió que no invadiera Irak. Bush le dijo a Negroponte que le debían al menos eso a la memoria de Wojtyla. (100)

EN:-Dicanti, to cut out the chase, I had a call from someone high up - right near the top - in US intelligence this morning, while we were with Robayra, and we had a very long conversation. This person informed me that Fowler was flying directly from Washington to join the investigation, and gave me no choice in the matter. It's not just a question of the fact that President Bush is in Rome himself and everyone is therefore on guard. These are the guy's exact words:..

[...]

-He told me, over and over again, that there is a personal interest in this case at the very highest levels of the government. (88)

The translator does not avoid this character by chance and his brief appearance and all the information that comes with the name is the reason why he made that decision. Even though he is a real character -he is a U.S diplomat and a C.I.A member-, Gómez-Jurado exaggerates when telling that he is in charge of all the American agencies. Also, in the last bit of the dialogue, he avoids mentioning George Bush and the Iraq War, which can be a polemic issue taking into account the audience of this translation (U.S. itself). The nature of the story that comes with the name, and the fact that his role in the overall plot is not very relevant are probably the factors that have made Graham cutting John Negroponte out of the story.

The fact that the translator has changed some names does not change the course of the story, which is really the task to perform. It is also very important to know who the audience will be and if certain adaptations will help to get the acceptance of this audience. In this case, Graham may have thought that his audience would not be happy with the inclusion of certain names and therefore, he may have decided to change them so that they could not be related.

3.2 PLACE NAMES OR TOPONYMS

The scene is settled in different places and times. The main setting is the Vatican. The plot begins with the death of Pope John Paul II, and continues with his burial and the conclave celebrated in order to choose a new Pope. It ends with the election of the new one, Benedict XVI. It takes place in 2005. So, as we can see, the historical frame is real, and the whole story spins around two events (death of John Paul II and conclave) that actually took place. Furthermore, there are some flashbacks along the story in order to give an answer to some of the mysteries that appear in the present. The plot goes through the development of the killer instinct of a priest, and we can see him, before committing the crimes, in an institute that hosts Catholic priests with a history of sexual abuse. This place, the Saint Matthew Institute is a curious case to be analysed here.

The existence of the Institute is either real or fictional depending on the version of the novel that we read. The Spanish version takes it as a real place. At the end of the book in a

note there is a further explanation about this place and the author provides the webpage of the institute as well. Gómez Jurado says that the name and the stories told about this place are fictional, but its existence, the purpose and the way of functioning are both real and terrifying. The true name of this place is Saint Luke Institute, and its existence is unknown by most people in America and around the world. The actual location of this place is, as we see in the Spanish version, Silver Spring, Maryland. However, James Graham takes the option of changing it by a non-existing location placed in Maryland as well (Sachem Pike). We will see this in more detail in the section called “footnotes”, where Gómez-Jurado talks about this place outside the fiction of the novel.

There is another place that is neither omitted from the story nor presented with a different name, but the translator has decided to remove its name. We are talking about Saint Mary seminary in Baltimore, which also exists in real life and where homosexuality is approached as a normal thing. Graham prefers not to identify this place with its real name, just like Saint Matthew, so he does not modify what is told about this place, but since it has no specific name and there is not a footnote -as in Spanish- explaining how things worked there, he lets the audience take the seminary as a fictional place. We will see more about this place later.

Graham plays with place names as he has done with personal names. In the case of Saint Matthew, he has continued what the original author did and he has also modified the location. He is constantly trying to hinder reality from being seen in the story, mainly in issues that can be controversial, so he changes the names/locations but the events are kept, in order to maintain the sense and coherence of the story.

3.3 CULTURAL REFERENCES

This is an issue that we will always find when dealing with literary translation and many other kinds of translation, so it is not just a matter of literature, since the cultural differences can be found in many fields. As we have previously said, in this kind of translation it is important the translator’s task of making the audience have feelings as close

as possible to the ones felt by the audience in the original language. This is sometimes hard to achieve, because the culture is different, but also the writer is different. We have to bear in mind that, as the following quote says “translators make interpretative choices based on their understanding of the text in order to enable an English audience to comprehend some of the cultural resonances encoded in the work” (Fernández Guerra 140).

The first example that we have below may sound familiar:

SP:-¿Y a que no sabe quién era el embajador de Honduras en aquella época?

Paola empezaba a atar cabos a gran velocidad.

-John Negrofonte.

-¡Premio para la belleza de pelo negro! Fundador de la base Aérea de El Aguacate, en la mismísima frontera con Nicaragua, base para el entrenamiento de miles de guerrilleros de la Contra. (168-196).

EN:-Paola was starting to connect the dots (152).

Again, the character of John Negrofonte is omitted. But this time, Graham cannot avoid mentioning “La Contra” and “El Aguacate” which he refers to previously in the conversation because it would have no sense. But at this point, having already omitted John Negrofonte, it would be absurd to mention him now.

SP:-Y lo regaba todo con buen whisky de malta. Bien regado. (81)

EN:-And then he washed it all down with a fine single malt.(71)

In this case, the translator considers that the specification of “whisky” is not necessary when saying “single malt” because the audience is already acquainted with that term and associates it to a whisky original from Malta.

SP:-¿Cuántos partidos escuchaste?

-Once.

-¡Dios mío, este chico estuvo encerrado casi dos meses!(148)

EN:-How many games did you listen to?

-I don't know - forty, maybe fifty. I lost count.

-My God, the child was locked in the closet for almost two months.(132)

In this example we can appreciate the cultural difference through sport. In the Spanish version he says that he listens to 11 matches and in the English version he listens to 40/50 matches. It is obvious that baseball is much more popular in the United States than in Spain, so there are more teams and therefore there are more matches. So the translator has adapted it according to what his audience is used to.

SP:-No mamá, con estas es más que suficiente. Tengo el panderero como el estadio de la Roma.(109)

EN:-No Mamma, this is more than enough. My backside is already bigger than the Coliseum.(94)

Here, we are dealing with two famous Roman buildings, but in the first case it is a football camp and in the second one it is a historical monument. James Graham probably thought that the Coliseum is a place better known and that his audience would get better the concept by using the most famous monument in Rome than the stadium.

In this section we have seen different solutions that the translator applies when facing cultural references. As previously, he uses omission as far as possible, keeping the sense of the story, but he also replaces some of those referents by the equivalents in English, and if there is no equivalent he adjusts what is said so that the audience gets the idea as close as possible to the Spanish audience.

3.4 LINGUISTIC MATERIAL IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Since this novel is placed in different countries and its characters have different nationalities, both Gómez-Jurado and Graham use quotes, expressions and terms in all the languages involved so that the whole novel gets a more realistic appearance.

3.4.1 Terms and quotes in English

The only example that we can find of an English term used in the original Spanish version appears in the following excerpt:

SP-En el umbral había un sacerdote vestido con *clergyman*. (63)

When reading the English version of the same excerpt, we could think that everything has already been solved by the author, but we find something really unusual:

EN-In the doorway stood a priest dressed in dog collar and suit. (53)

We would not expect a term that already appears in English in the original to be changed throughout the translation process. This leads us to think that the meaning given by the author would paradoxically not be the same if it were kept like that. So Graham decided to make an explanation of what Gómez Jurado called “clergyman”.

3.4.2 Terms and quotes in Spanish

This time we have looked for the opposite phenomenon: words in Spanish used in the English version. Once again, as in the previous section, we have found just one example:

EN-*Buenos días*. I'm calling you from the archbishopric of Buenos Aires. (192)

The character is trying to imitate the Argentinian accent, so the translator puts “buenos días” at the beginning in order to help the reader getting the feeling that she is talking in Spanish, but the rest of the sentence continues in English.

3.4.3 Terms and quotes in Latin

Since the novel has a religious theme, there are quotes from the Bible all over the novel. Let us see how they are treated by Gómez Jurado and Graham. In the first place, there is a quote from the Bible and in both cases it is followed by the translation in their respective languages.

SP-*Et tibi dabo claves regni coelorum quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis; et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in coelis.*

Te daré las llaves del reino de los cielos; lo que ates en la tierra quedará atado en el cielo, y lo que desates en la tierra quedará desatado en el cielo. Mateo 16, versículo 19. Es decir, las palabras con las que Jesús confirmó a san Pedro como jefe de los apóstoles y les otorgó a él y a sus sucesores el poder sobre toda la cristiandad.

-*Santa Madonna.*(64)

EN-*Et tibi dabo claves regni coelorum quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis; et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in coelis.*

“And I will give unto thee the keys of kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew sixteen, verse nineteen. That is to say, the words with which Jesus confirmed Peter as the leader of the apostles, and awarded him and his successors power over the whole Christendom.

-*Holy Mother of God!*(54)

The beginning of this quote is the very first thing that we find when opening both books, but in the Spanish version it is in Latin and in the English version it is directly translated:

SP: <<...et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum.>> MATEO (16:19)

EN: ‘And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...’ MATTHEW 16:19

Later in the story, we find this Bible passage:

In paradisum deducant te angeli,

In tuo advente

Suspiciant te martyres...(**SP** 138/**EN** 123)

As in some other examples that we have commented during the analysis (and some others that we will see in the next section), when something could not be very clear, like the meaning of these words, the author adds a footnote, but there is no footnote in the translation: “Al paraíso te conduzcan los ángeles, a tu llegada te reciban los mártires...”

But out of the religious meaning, there is an example used in the forensic field, when the corpse of one of the priest’s victims is being analysed. The term “ante mortem” (**SP**:52/**EN**:41) is used in order to refer to the moment after the death, but again, this explanation comes in a footnote in the original version.

3.4.4 Terms and quotes in Polish

SP:-*Sprawiać przyjemność, potrzebujemy żeby widzieć kardynałny Casey/Shaw, siostra Helena.*

La monja abrió los ojos como platos.

-Wasz język polski nie jest dobry.(230)

EN:-*Sprawiać przyjemność, potrzebujemy żeby widzieć kardynałny Casey, siostra Helena.*

The nun’s eyes widened in surprise

-Wasz język polski nie jest dobry. (215)

They look the same, but in the Spanish, Gómez Jurado has added a footnote explaining the meaning of this little conversation. In the English one we have to guess by the context of the conversation that follows. The explanation is the following: “el padre Fowler le pide, por

favor, permiso para ver al cardenal Shaw, y la monja le responde que su polaco está un poco oxidado”. (230)

3.4.5 Terms and quotes in Italian

There are some words and expressions in Italian in both versions and we are going to see how author and translator deal with them. For example, the word *Ispettore/ ispettora*. This word is often used by some of the characters when addressing to Paola Dicanti, the Italian Police Inspector. The term *ispettora* is used in the Spanish version, but there is a spelling error in this word and the correct way of spelling it would be, as the English version uses, *ispettore*. This word has neuter gender, and ending the word with -a can be considered a stylistic device used by the Gómez-Jurado.

Moreover, in some cases where we find these Italian expressions, in the English text we find the translation right after it, like in ‘*Santo subito!*’- ‘*Sainthood now!*’ (238). There is no such case in the Spanish novel, because if any expression needs a wider explanation, the author always adds footnotes, which will be treated in the next section.

SP:Capelo cardenalicio. (58)

EN:Their *cappellos cardenalicios*.(48)

In this example we can see how the term has been adapted to Spanish (capelo), but in English it has been kept the same because there is no direct equivalent so the Italian term has been borrowed.

SP:“*Noi abbiamo dato nella croce*”.Right, Dante? “We’ve run smack into the Church”. (227)

EN: “*Noi abbiamo dato nella croce*”, ¿verdad, Dante? +nota a pie de página explicando el origen de la cita. (212)

In this excerpt there is an issue that translators have to deal with very often: idiomatic expressions. This one is initially used in Spanish, and appeared for the first time in *Don Quixote*, so this expression has been translated from Spanish into Italian and viceversa. In the case of the English version perhaps is not the best translation possible. The idiomatic expression is translated literally, and even though the real meaning has to do with the church in this context, what it wants to express is impotence or hopelessness facing an element with a big authority. So the meaning of this expression in the English novel is not complete, not to say inaccurate.

3.5 FOOTNOTES

This is the part of the novel where both versions differ the most and we have already pointed this out during the analysis. While in the original novel we can find a lot of footnotes explaining some cultural references, translations or providing further information about a certain issue, as some of the ones mentioned above (up to 32 footnotes), the English version has absolutely none. Some of these explanations are really important and necessary for the understanding of the reference. When in doubt, it is better to explain everything that could not be understood by the audience than taking for granted that they know it. First of all, after the *Dramatis Personae* section at the beginning of the book, where all the characters are listed, in the Spanish book there is a footnote that says:

Casi todos los personajes del libro están inspirados en personas reales. Esta historia es de ficción, pero muy cercana a la realidad en cuanto al modo del funcionamiento interno del Vaticano y el Instituto Saint Matthew, un lugar real (aunque con otro nombre) cuya propia existencia causa pavor, y del que nada se sabe en España. Tal vez lo más inquietante de esta novela no sean los hechos que narra, sino que **podrían** ser ciertos. (16)

We have already mentioned this footnote, but it is truly one of the most important of them all. It is not important in order to understand the story or liking it or not, but the translator

should keep as faithful as possible to the source text, and there is a huge lack of information.

For example, in this case it is possible that the audience of the target language has the knowledge that the audience of the source language lacks. There is a moment in the novel when a character quotes William Blake, an English poet. While in Spanish we can find a footnote about who he was and further information about the exact quote “*A dead body revenges not injuries*” (231)/ “*Los cadáveres no vengan injurias*”(246), the English version takes for granted that everyone knows William Blake and the origin of this quote, or he considers this information irrelevant for the story. In this particular case, even though the footnote is very informative, the meaning of the quote can be understood with no problem, but there is no apparent reason for this to be omitted.

However, we found some other cases where the footnote is important: at some point in the novel, the author talks about the Liberation Theology (Teología de la Liberación). This footnote explains what it refers to and why it is a controversial way of thinking within the Church: Then, in the story they also talk about the Charismatics, and the explanation in the footnote in Spanish says that:

Los carismáticos son un grupo polémico cuyos ritos son bastante extremos: ellos cantan y bailan al son de las panderetas, dan volteretas [...] Todo ello supuestamente imbuidos del Espíritu Santo y de una euforia tremenda. La Iglesia católica no ha visto nunca con buenos ojos a este grupo. (250)

If the English audience wants to know who these “Charismatics” are they will have to look for it, while the Spanish audience already gets the context by reading the footnote. Besides, in the middle of a conversation the name of Saint Mary seminary in Baltimore appears. We only get the name of this seminary in the original version, plus a footnote:

El seminario Saint Mary de Baltimore era llamado en los años ochenta el *Palacio Rosa*, por la liberalidad con la que se aceptaban las prácticas homosexuales entre los seminaristas. Según el padre John Despard: <<en mis días en Saint Mary podía haber dos hombres juntos en la ducha y todo el mundo lo sabía, no pasaba nada. Por la noche era un continuo abrir y cerrar de puertas en los pasillos.>> (86)

Together with this footnote, there is an episode in the story where someone talks about illegal experiments with humans using hormones. This person mentions “ALFA-area/zona Alfa” which is explained in Spanish as:

Determinadas multinacionales farmacéuticas han saldado sus excedentes de stock de anticonceptivos a organizaciones internacionales que trabajan en zonas del Tercer Mundo como Kenia y Tanzania [...]La empresas encuentran de este modo miles de examinadores involuntarios de sus productos, con pocas opciones de emprender demandas legales. A esta práctica se refiere la doctora Berr como Programa Alfa. (96)

And following with the same topic, in the next page, the doctor talks about Omega subjects, that are defined, again just in Spanish as “individuos sin nada que perder, a ser posible con pasado violento. La letra Omega, la última del alfabeto griego, se ha asociado siempre con sustantivos como <<muerte>> o <<final>>”(97). All of these footnotes are about polemic, immoral, controversial or secret issues, and the translator avoids them all as far as possible. The fact that he omits such information exposes the subjectivity of the translator, as we said before.

Going back to the case mentioned before, the Saint Matthew Institute, Gómez-Jurado makes some references to its real existence along the book that James Graham has not included. We are right now in the part of the story when the characters of the present action (2005) are mentioning this place for the first time. In the Spanish novel, linked to the name of the place, there is a footnote with real figures about the people that entered the institute:

Las cifras reales: entre 1993 y 2003 el Instituto Saint Matthew atendió a quinientos religiosos, de los que 44 fueron diagnosticados como pedófilos, 185 efebófilos, 142 compulsivos y 165 con trastornos de sexualidad no integrada (dificultad para integrar la misma en la propia personalidad). (81)

Moreover, as I have already mentioned, the author adds a note at the end titled “*When reality reached fiction*” (“*Cuando la realidad alcanzó la ficción*”) and here he talks about how he came up with the main idea of the novel and what were his initial thoughts of it. The second half of this note is dedicated to Saint Matthew Institute. The decision taken by the translator of not adding this endnote could be motivated by certain reasons:

First of all, Graham may not have included the part in which GÃ³mez Jurado explains how he came up with the original idea because, as Edith Grossman says in her book *Why Translation Matters* professional serious translators consider themselves as writers and they are right when considering themselves as writers (17). Maybe James Graham thought that by omitting this information he could win more relevance by taking away some from the original author. In this section we also have to highlight a case mentioned before. In the example where a character talks about “El Aguacate”, the explanation of what this thing refers to is within the story, but it is the kind of thing that the translator would have omitted if the explanation was in a footnote. This is the information given:

SP: Según *The Washington Post*, El Aguacate era<<un centro clandestino de detención y tortura, más parecido a un campo de concentración que a una base militar de un país democrático>>.

EN: According to *The Washington Post*, El Aguacate was “a clandestine centre for detention and torture , more like a concentration camp than a military base in a democratic country”.

It cannot be omitted because the conversation is about a topic where this information is necessary, and probably it would be incoherent or incomplete without it.

Besides, the part where Saint Matthew Institute is mentioned, which would be such a valuable information for the reader, does not appear in the English version. So here Graham is making a big omission, that even though it would be good for every reader to know about that, it does not have an impact in the perception of the story. If we try to put in the translator’s shoes, he might have thought that his mission was not to inform about real life, but to transmit the story created by the original author.

There is also the option that James Graham has avoided this topic in order to skip polemic, as we have seen before in the example of John Negroponte and Iraq War. If we take into account that a lot of the English-speaking readers that would read this novel are from the

U.S. and probably do not know about the existence of this horrific place, he takes his “literary translator” role very seriously here. He sticks to the meaning and value that Gómez-Jurado gives it inside the novel and throughout the story, he keeps loyal to what happens there, but when the Spanish author speaks about the non-fictional side of this, the option that the translator takes is to stay away.

Regardless of all that we have previously commented or evaluated, we have to say here that, at the end of *God's Spy*, in the acknowledgement section we can read the following: “The author wishes to express his thanks to [...] Orion, to Kirsty Dunseath. Her command of Spanish and her passion for detail have helped substantially in making this novel possibly better than the original. And I can't forget to thank my *mano* James Graham. The effort of these four people went far beyond what their job required.” (371). Here we can see how he counts on the author's approval, who evaluates the job executed by James Graham as a really good translation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The translation and adaptation of a work that is already successful in its own country is a difficult task. But achieving the success in other countries and even when it means translating in the opposite way of the normal flow, it is quite remarkable. Taking drastic and risky solutions has been part of James Graham's job, because this novel touches some delicate topics that could bother a group of the audience.

We have seen how he has cut out a character, a chapter, even all the footnotes with a huge amount of information, and despite all of this he has successfully accomplished the aim of commercial narrative fiction that we talked about at the beginning. He has changed names, locations that might be important, but the success is still there, and the number of books sold does not lie. So we could say that all those omissions that seem crazy when we first compare both versions, make us understand that translating a big work is about making big decisions, knowing the audience and of course knowing the work we are going to deal with very well. Even Gómez Jurado, as we have previously seen, deems it as a good translation even better than the original.

However, we cannot forget about all the information that Spanish audience gets and the English audience lacks. There is a huge decompensation when talking about the communicative purpose of translation, even if the target of the commercial part of the book has been reached. So we could say that this is a complex example.

On the one hand, the success is there and it is undeniable. On the other hand, we cannot be sure that the idea that both audiences get are quite the same when we are talking about pure fiction or issues based in reality. As a commercial literary translator, James Graham has fulfilled the task, as a transporter of the book as a whole, his job has not been that good.

At this point, and to conclude, we have to say that, leaving aside the relative quality of Graham's work in *God's Spy*, the development of the plot in the story, the depth of the characters, and the atmosphere full of mystery are the indisputable protagonists of the success of this novel around the world.

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