

# The Misery and Splendour of Translation: a Classic in Translation Studies

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## *Abstract*

*In 1937, José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) wrote *The Misery and Splendour of Translation*, an essay that contains his views about translation. A cursory review of translation literature is enough to appreciate the wide-spread personal mark that Ortega –who is considered ‘the most influential figure in Spanish Thought’– seems to have imprinted on contemporary Translation Studies. Nevertheless, the influence of his essay on translation studies is an issue that has not been investigated thoroughly yet. This work is a succinct summary of the research carried out for my PhD thesis. In this article, I intend to provide a global integrative vision of Ortega’s concept of translation as well as an objective and dynamic evaluation of his contribution to contemporary translation studies, through an in-depth intertextual analysis of the essay and a study of its dissemination and influence on contemporary translation scholars. Furthermore, this work is aimed to contribute to the reconstruction of one of the most emblematic stages in the history of our discipline.*

*Keywords: Ortega y Gasset, ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’, Translation History, Translation Studies*

## 1. Introduction

La constitution d’une histoire de la traduction est la première tâche d’une théorie *moderne* (1) de la traduction. À toute modernité appartient, non un regard passéiste, mais un mouvement de rétrospection qui est une saisie de soi (Berman, 1984 : 12).

The first historical studies in translation literature date from the early decades of the twentieth century: Amos (1920), Matthieson (1931), Mounin (1955), to mention but a few. However, as Sabio-Pinilla notes, ‘modern interest in research into translation history dates back to 1963’. In the 4th Congress of the International Federation of Translators, held in Dubrovnik, Radó proclaimed the need to write a universal history of translation. Today, the purpose of the compilation of a universal history of translation is regarded as ‘illusory and unthinkable’ (Sabio-Pinilla, 2006), nevertheless scholars have become aware of the relevance of this area of study and efforts are aimed towards a dynamic and practical analysis, as proven by the publication of a series of relevant contributions: Mounin (1965), García-Calvo (1973), Steiner (1975), Lefevre (1977), García-Yebra (1988), Delisle and Woodsworth (1995), Santoyo (1996), and Woodsworth (1998).

In Spain, a remarkable time lag can be observed (Lafarga, 2005) as far as the investigation of the history of translation is concerned; however, Spanish scholars such as Pegenaute (2004), Lafarga (2005) and Sabio-Pinilla (2006) observe that Translation History Studies have progressed considerably, reaching a high level of scholarship. In spite of this expansion, there is still some work remaining. According to Lafarga (2005), it is essential to incorporate translation history into academic Translation Studies programmes. Likewise, Lafarga (2005) and Vega (2005), amongst other Spanish scholars, acknowledge the lack of systematic studies within Spanish translation tradition.

In spite of the progress experienced in recent years in the study of translation history and despite the multiple references to 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' scattered in contemporary translation literature, no thorough investigation on the influence of Ortega's ideas on translation studies have been carried out yet.

According to the division of translation history established by Steiner (1975: 248-250), 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' (1937) belongs to the second period, starting on the 19<sup>th</sup> century with 'Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens', by Schleiermacher until the publication of 'Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme', by Valéry Larbaud (1946). Theory and hermeneutic inquiry were the main characteristics of this stage (Steiner, 1975: 248) as well as a lack of definition of specialised terms and a prescriptive tone (Hurtado-Albir, 1995: 80). Reflections from this period focus on two main debates: the possibility/impossibility of translation and the dichotomy between literal and free translation.

Together with the previous characterisation, in the analysis of the influence of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation', it should be beared in mind Ortega's background and internationally recognised position as a philosopher as well as his notable link to German Hermeneutics. Similarly, Ortega's attitude towards translation is to be taken into consideration.

## **2. The ideological framework of Ortega's concept of translation**

El pensamiento de Ortega es sistemático, aunque sus escritos no suelen serlo; los he comparado con los icebergs, de los cuales emerge la décima parte de manera que sólo se puede ver su realidad íntegra buceando. (Marías, 1986: 13)

According to the purpose Ortega himself declared of 'involución del libro hacia el diálogo', Ortega's thought is disseminated in articles, forewords, essays, conferences and speeches and dialogues. Although each of these pieces of work are, generally, independent units, Ortega's works are also interconnected. Therefore, in order to achieve a comprehensive view of his doctrine, it is necessary to carry out an integrative investigation of Ortega's concept of language

which will constitute the ideological framework and –to a certain extent- background of his ideas on translation.

## 2.1. Ortega's concept of language

La lengua como tal –no el hablar- es obra de la colectividad, es un instrumento que permite un minimum de comunicación. Al ser instrumento, está constituido en cada momento por un sistema de formas fijas, tanto gramaticales como semánticas, que preexisten a nuestro pensar individual, que preexisten a nuestro concreto hablar. La lengua es, pues, una organización del pensamiento que procede de nuestro contorno social y dentro de la cual tiene que moverse nuestro pensar (Ortega, 1983, IX: 761).

Language is a recurrent theme in Ortega's reflection: his considerations about language are scattered throughout many of his works and most explicitly in 'Meditaciones del Quijote' (1914), 'Prólogo para alemanes' (1934), 'Misericordia y esplendor de la traducción' (1937), 'Prólogo para franceses' (1937), 'Gracia y desgracia de la lengua francesa' (1937), 'Meditación de la criolla' (1939), 'Comentario al *Banquete* de Platón' (1946), 'El hombre y la gente' (1957) and 'Meditación del pueblo joven' (1958).

With the aim of systematising Ortega's concept of language, the following sections are established in order to assemble and illustrate the most fundamental aspects of Ortega's integrative approach to language: the ineffability of language, 'theory of saying', the circumstantial dimension of language, language limitations: gestures, the social dimension of language, literary styles and genres, theory of metaphor, the origins of language, critique of linguistics, differences between languages, and translation.

In this classification, we observe how Ortega highlights the importance of elements which, at the time, would normally have been far beyond the traditional scope of linguistics. Silence, gesture and society play a determining role in his vision of language.

No se entiende en su raíz la estupenda realidad que es el lenguaje si no se empieza a advertir que el habla se compone sobre todo de silencios. Un ser que no fuera capaz de renunciar a decir muchas cosas sería incapaz de hablar (Ortega, 1983, I: 250).

[...] todos los demás ingredientes de una circunstancia que no son palabra, que no son *sensu stricto* 'lenguaje', poseen una potencialidad enunciativa (Ortega, 1983, VII: 245).

Mi idea es, pues, que el momento articulatorio de la lengua es secundario respecto al momento gesticulatorio, y que los gestos con que un idioma es pronunciado simbolizan los modos de vida que un pueblo prefiere. Esto es lo que quiero decir cuando digo que la lengua es primer gesto (Ortega, 1983, IX: 761).

La lengua es un hecho social y no un hecho personal: cada uno de sus elementos, por ejemplo, cada giro expresivo, cada cambio en la pronunciación se originó, sin duda, en algún individuo, pero ese giro y ese cambio fonético no son lengua si no han dejado de ser cosa del individuo y no se han transformado en vigencia anónima que se impone a todos los individuos, incluso al que los engendró (Ortega, 1983, V: 268).

This approach stimulated the debate with noteworthy linguists of the past century, amongst them Saussure and Meillet. In Ortega's view, language is not an abstract entity in the way it was traditionally presented in grammar books and dictionaries, but a constant variation, renewed in every human dialogue. Language is presented as a being *in status nascendi*, which at all times requires living reality in order to fulfil its main goal: communication.

Moreover, Ortega acknowledges the determining role of society in the emergence, evolution and consolidation of language. As a consequence, languages are intrinsically linked to peoples, as every language represents its peoples' interpretation of reality. Besides, Ortega suggests that languages should be placed in a hierarchical order, depending on aspects such as their flexibility or transparency.

## 2.2. Ortega's Hermeneutics

Schleiermacher (1813), Gadamer (1960), Steiner (1975), Ortega-Arjonilla (1996) and Gómez-Ramos (2000) have provided some of the most illustrative examples of the existing close connection between Hermeneutics and Translation. Hermeneutics have had notable influence on Ortega's thought, figures such as Schleiermacher and Husserl are to be considered as his antecedents, while Ortega's views have also contributed to the development of subsequent hermeneutic theories in the works of Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and Ricoeur.

Ortega defines Hermeneutics as 'the art of interpretation' (Ortega, 1983, IX: 752). The investigation of Ortega's hermeneutic approach to language reveals the essential role of silence, considered as the embryonic, driving force of every act of communication. According to the Spanish philosopher, silence plays an indispensable role in the configuration of every language. In Ortega's 'Hermeneutics of silence' (Marco-Furrasola, 2002), this element is made up of several dimensions: in the first place, there exists what cannot be said in any language, 'lo inefable'; this first silence is accompanied by what could be expressed but which each individual language silences because it is considered implicit, 'lo inefado'. It is through this second dimension that silence shapes each language. In this sense, Ortega takes a further step and formulates his 'theory of saying' (1983, VIII: 493), articulated on the following principles:

1º Todo decir es deficiente –dice menos de lo que quiere

2º Todo decir es exuberante –da a entender más de lo que se propone (Ortega, 1983, IX: 751).

According to Marco-Furrasola (2002: 90), Ortega's hermeneutic of silence constituted the basis for other subsequent works on the concept of silence. Similarly, Cerezo (1984) and Lawhead (1987) establish a parallelism between Ortega's views on language and Wittgenstein's concept of language as a 'Lebensform'. Furthermore, within the area of translation, Ortega-Arjonilla (1996: 27-28) claims that Ortega's concept of the act of communication –integrated by the interaction between 'speaking', 'saying' and 'silence'– is also present in Ricoeur's approach to language, composed of 'ipsity', 'alterity' and 'socialization'. Another parallelism can be observed in Gadamer's analysis of silence (2000:187) which is also considered to play a fundamental role in the configuration of language.

As far as translation is concerned, silence constitutes the inexorable link between Ortega's hermeneutic approach to language and his reflection on translation. On the one hand, the very purpose of translation consists in saying precisely those things that a language tends to omit; on the other hand, silence not only determines the configuration of each language but also the idiosyncrasy and the different peoples' mentalities.

[...] cada lengua es una ecuación diferente entre manifestaciones y silencios. Cada pueblo calla unas cosas para poder decir otras. Porque todo sería indecible. De aquí la enorme dificultad de la traducción: decir en un idioma precisamente lo que este idioma tiende a silenciar (Ortega, 1983, VII: 250).

### **2.3. Analysis of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation'**

'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' (2) was published in serial form in five articles, in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*, in June and July 1937. At the time of the publication of the German translation of this work, Ortega writes 'Prólogo para alemanes' (1934), in which he introduces himself to his new readers in order to avoid, in his opinion, the despicable abstraction involved in communication with an unknown speaker. The publication of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' coincides with that of the French translation of *The Revolt of the Masses*. Translation played an important role in Ortega's editorial work for the *Revista de Occidente* –founded by Ortega in 1923. In fact, Ortega-Spottorno (2002: 322) indicates that around the *Revista de Occidente*, a sort of 'school of translators' was formed. Moreover, translation, according to Ortega-Arjonilla (1998: 103), was a crucial element in the philosopher's fervent desire to bring about the *europeanization* of Spain.

'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' contains Ortega's reflections about translation and is structured as a fictitious dialogue held by academics and students of the *Collège de France* in Paris. It is divided into five chapters: Chapter I, 'The Misery'; Chapter II: 'The Two Utopianisms'; Chapter III: 'About Talking and Keeping Silent'; Chapter IV: 'We Don't Speak Seriously'; and Chapter V: 'The Splendour'.

Ortega begins the discussion by explaining the ‘miserias’ of translation, which is considered a utopian activity, as any other human activity. The translator, ‘ruled by cowardice [...] will place the translated author in the prison of normal expression [...] *Traduttore, traditore*’ (Ortega, 1992: 94). The utopianism of Ortega’s vision of translation is mainly based on writers’ personal style, formed by every author’s personal deviations from habitual usage, as well as on what Humboldt called the ‘internal form’ of every language, which makes the complete correspondence of meanings between two languages impossible. In this vein, Ortega also considers different degrees of difficulty in the possibility/impossibility of translating different types of texts; this he attributes –especially in the case of mathematics and the natural sciences – to the use of a specific terminology, considered by Ortega to be a ‘pseudolanguage’.

Admitting ‘the misery’ of translation constitutes the necessary first step to attaining the possible splendour of translation. On the path to splendour, in the three middle chapters of the essay, Ortega deals with several aspects related to the phenomenon of language, beginning by distinguishing between two utopianisms, personalised in the good and the bad utopian; ‘the bad utopian thinks that because it is desirable, it is possible’ (Ortega, 1992: 97), ‘the good utopian [...] thinks that because it would be desirable to free men from the divisions imposed by languages, there is a little probability that it can be attained’ (Ortega, 1992: 98). Thus there always exists a possibility to refining, perfecting.

Silence (see 2.2) is considered as a crucial element in Ortega’s concept of translation. Silence shapes each language differently, so that ‘each language is a different equation of statements and silences’ (Ortega y Gasset, 1992: 104). It is precisely here that the main difficulty of translation lies. Nevertheless, in the philosopher’s dual vision of translation, silence also conveys the possible splendour of translation which, in Ortega’s humanistic vision, consists in ‘the revelation of the mutual secrets that peoples and epochs keep to themselves and which contribute to their separation and hostility; in short – an audacious integration of Humanity’ (Ortega y Gasset, 1992: 104). Furthermore, Ortega considers language to be the origin and the embryonic element of all types of knowledge. This ‘first knowledge’ (Ortega y Gasset, 1992: 107) originally reflected the truth about the world and the differentiations established to the ‘limitless continuum of diversity of reality’ (Ortega y Gasset, 1992: 106) by different peoples. The consideration of language and, inevitably, silence as crucial obstacles to translation is the only way to be able to attain the possible ‘splendour’ of translation.

Ortega concludes his essay with a discussion about the splendour of translating. In this chapter he describes what he understands by translation and how translators should proceed acknowledging that ‘what is essential concerning the matter has been said more than a century ago by the dear theologian Schleiermacher’ in his work *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens* (1813). Ortega contemplates the two possible methods of translation proposed therein: ‘Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward

the reader'. Here Ortega's position is categorical: only if we tear the reader away from his native linguistic conventions and force him to throw himself into the mind of the original author can we speak of 'translation proper'. This is the procedure to be chosen by the 'shy' translator, taking into account that a translation is not the work itself, but merely serves as an approach to the work. In this vein, Ortega proposes an enhancement of translation by recommending its practice to writers. He also emphasizes the value of different translated versions of an original text, as, in his opinion, it is impossible to approach all dimensions of a text at the same time. Finally, Ortega concludes by commenting on the difficulties for translation posed by the French language.

Only two chapters of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' are exclusively dedicated to the subject of translation, however Ortega's philosophical interpretation of translation makes it necessary to address aspects involved therein such as language, the original form of knowledge that human beings possess in order to comprehend reality and the world around them. His advocacy of foreignizing translation favours the exposure to new forms of thinking, the creation of new forms of expression and, ultimately, the communication of new knowledge. Ortega-Arjonilla (1998: 115), classifies Ortega's contribution to Translation Studies in three ways: from a theoretical perspective, the Spanish philosopher offers an integrative conception of translation inherent in human communication; from an intellectual perspective, Ortega proposes an increase in the translator's self-esteem; from a practical perspective, Ortega's considerations should be applied to literary and philosophical translation.

#### **4. Dissemination of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation'**

Lo cierto es que, con crítica o sin ellas, el eco nacional e internacional de 'Miseria y esplendor de la traducción' ha sido considerable. [...] No sólo eso, hasta bien avanzados los años ochenta, yo diría que hasta los mismo años noventa, Ortega ha sido de facto el único autor español mencionado, cuando se mencionaba alguno, en las bibliografías internacionales de nuestra disciplina (Santoyo, 1999: 241-242).

Prior to the analysis of the dissemination of Ortega's views on translation, given Ortega's status as an intellectual in Western cultures –considered the 'filósofo español del siglo XX más conocido, leído y estudiado fuera de nuestras fronteras' (Chamizo, 1985: 157) –, it would be interesting to review the position occupied by him within the cultural spheres of various Western countries. Due to both educational and personal circumstances, Ortega travelled to several countries, Germany, France, Holland, Argentina, Portugal. In his early twenties, Ortega did several research interships in Germany. Similarly, he travelled on various occasions to Argentina, where he soon reached an outstanding position within Argentinian intellectual circles and collaborated actively with the journal *La Nación*, in Buenos Aires –in which 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' was first published. In 1936, due to the Spanish Civil War outbreak, Ortega initiated an exile that took him to France, Holland, Portugal and Argentina. Later, Ortega also travelled to the United States –that had been the destination of some of his

disciples who had also been exiled-, where he was invited to take part in the conference on the centenary of the death of Goethe. All the previous circumstances surely motivated the spread of his ideas and the vast impact of Ortega's philosophy in Western cultures:

[...] il jouit d'une grande notoriété dans les milieux intellectuels germaniques, anglais, américains, et tout particulièrement dans le monde si vivant de l'Amérique latine (Borel, 1959 : 11).

Notwithstanding, it should be noticed that the impact of Ortega's philosophy varied from one country to another, while he was soon regarded as an important intellectual figure in the German context, in France the influence of his thought was quite limited.

El lugar que ocupa el pensamiento de Ortega en el pensamiento europeo de hoy día nos remite a un conjunto heterogéneo de hechos, a un verdadero 'disparate'. Así, por ejemplo, la importancia que se le da en Alemania, el lugar que ocupa en los países anglosajones, no tiene nada que ver con su presencia, impalpable, en Francia. [...] la significación filosófica [...] del pensamiento orteguiano en Francia, es casi nula (Pierre, 1991: 59-60).

This impact concerned mainly to the whole of Ortega's philosophy. Nevertheless, the notable position held by Ortega in the Western cultural sphere must be taken into consideration in this study as it constitutes undoubtedly a favourable background for the dissemination of his views on translation. In order to determine the spread of his essay 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' in Western Translation Studies, an examination of translation anthologies, both anthologies gathering exclusively works by Hispanic authors and those with a general scope, must be carried out.

Translation anthologies are a fundamental genre within Translation History Studies as they contribute to the consolidation of the history of reflection on translation by bringing the history of the discipline within the reader's grasp. In recent years, this genre has experienced an extraordinary development, as shown by the following inventory; this genre is currently experiencing a period of great popularity and success especially in the Spanish-speaking world – which seems to indicate a progressive development of research in translation history. Translation anthologies are made up of a heterogeneous variety of collections of texts, depending on the selection criteria applied by the individual author.

In the translation anthologies with a general scope, not limited to the Spanish-speaking world, the presence of Hispanic authors is very limited; only Ortega and a few others such as Cervantes, Vives, Paz and the 'Escuela de Traductores de Toledo' manage to overcome this barrier.

In 1963 two anthologies were published, *Poezija Pervod*, by Etkind, dedicated to Russian authors and Störig, H.J., *Das Problem des Übersetzens*, of general scope. In 1975, Steiner



published *English Translation Theory 1650-1800*, gathering English and French works. In 1977, Lefevere published *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*, dedicated to the German context and Balcerzan published *Pisarze polsey o sztuce przekladu*, dedicated to the Polish context.

In the following decade, Horguelin published *Athologie de la manière de traduire: Domaine français* (1981), and in the Spanish context, Santoyo published *Teoría y crítica de la traducción: Antología* (1987).

In the 90s, D'Hulst provided a study of the 18th century French translation context in *Cent ans de théorie française de la traduction : De Batteux à Littré* (1990), *Theories of Translation: An Anthologie of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, by Schulte and Biguenet (1992) and *Translation, History and Culture: A Sourcebook* (1992) by Lefevere, both of general scope. *La teoria della traduzione nella storia* (1993) by Nergaard, *Textos clásicos de la teoría de la traducción* (1994) by Vega, *Teoria contemporanee della traduzione* (1995) by Nergaard, *Teorías de la traducción: Antología de textos* (1996) by López García and *El discurso sobre la traducción en la historia: Antología bilingüe* (1996) by Lafarga are all anthologies of general scope. Pais published *Teoria diacrónica da tradução portuguesa* (1997), dedicated to the Portuguese context. *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche* (1997) by Robinson, a general-scope anthologie; *Cents anys de traducció al català (1891-1990)* (1998), by Bacardí, the first and only translation anthologie dedicated to the Catalan translation tradition; *El tabaco que fumaba Plinio: Escenas de la traducción en España y América: relatos, leyes y reflexiones sobre los otros* (1998) by Catelli and Gargatagli; and *O discurso sobre a tradução em Portugal: O proveito, o ensino e a crítica: Antologia (c. 1429-1818)*, by Sabio Pinilla and Fernández Sánchez.

In 2000, *L'art de traduir: Reflexions sobre la traducció al llarg de la història* by Gallén and *The Translation Studies Reader* by Venuti are two new anthologies of general scope. Dasilva published *Escolma de textos sobre a traducción en Galicia* (2003), the first anthology covering the Galician scope. In 2004, Vega's and Venuti's anthologies are reedited, and García Garrosa and Lafarga published *El discurso sobre la traducción en la España del siglo XVIII: Estudio y antología* (2004) in the Hispanic tradition. Finally, in 2006 two new anthologies with general scope were published: *Translation: Theory and Practice. A Historical Reader* by Weissbort y Eysteinnsson and *Antologia bilingüe. Clássicos da teoria da tradução. Renascimento* by Furlan.

The tracking of Ortega's essay in all these anthologies exposes the following results: Seven out of the twelve translation anthologies of general scope include, either completely or partially, 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation', which means that the essay is excluded in five of the general anthologies. However, on three occasions, this exclusion is due simple to chronological reasons –Neergard (1995), Robinson (1997) and Furlan (2006). Paradoxically, the essay is not included in any of the three translation anthologies of Hispanic authors analysed in

this work. These exclusions are, however, justified either explicitly by the author (Santoyo), or by the application of the authors' compilation criteria (Catelli and Gargatagli, García-Garrosa and Lafarga) who opted for the dissemination of less known works.

Translations of the essay are another important means of dissemination of Ortega's vision of translation. The collection of translations of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' reveals that this essay has been translated into four Western languages –German, English, French and Italian- and four Eastern European languages –Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Hungarian- which illustrates the extraordinary dissemination of Ortega's conception of translation. It should be noted, however, that first German translation of the essay was published in 1950 and since then three more versions have been published, whereas the first French version was not published until 2004. This temporal gap indicates an uneven dissemination of the essay; at the same time, it can be observed that this dissemination seems to correspond, in broad terms, with the Spanish philosopher's status within the different Western cultures.

## **5. The influence of Ortega y Gasset on Translation Studies in the Spanish-speaking context**

No reprocho al propio Ortega (no podría hacerlo) el eco en mi opinión excesivo que su ensayo ha tenido, sino que quizá a cierto papanatismo nacional. A este país siempre le ha complacido citar a Ortega: quedaba bien, daba «tono» a la intervención o al escrito [...] (Santoyo, 1999: 248).

In order to investigate the influence of 'The Misery and Splendour of Translation' on translation studies, a collection, classification and an analysis of most representative works in translation studies literature containing any kind of reference to Ortega's essay has been carried out (3). In an attempt to provide an objective idea of the scope of Ortega's views on contemporary translation studies, a separation between Translation Studies in the Spanish-speaking context and other Western translation traditions has been established, in spite of being totally aware that the Hispanic translation tradition is also embedded in 'Western Translation Studies'. This separation has been made on the one hand in order to leave aside the attitude of 'papanatismo nacional' alluded by Santoyo (1999: 248) and, on the other hand, to provide a comparative study of Ortega's influence outside his native culture.

This study covers the period from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century –when 'Translation Studies' started to be considered as a *sui generis* discipline- until the present day. The purpose of this analysis is not to provide an exhaustive inventory of references and quotations to Ortega's essay, but merely an illustrative and representative study of the reception of Ortega's ideas on translation. This analysis is divided into four sections, according to the different attitudes adopted towards Ortega's ideas: works dedicated exclusively to the study of the essay; 'brief quotations' which include works that contain a simple short reference to Ortega's essay;

‘commented quotations’, in which scholars provide an evaluation of Ortega’s ideas; and ‘critics’ quotations’, in which a critical attitude towards Ortega’s views is adopted.

### **5.1. Works on ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’: Ortega’s Concept of Translation in Spanish-speaking Translation Literature**

Five works are found dedicated exclusively to the analysis of ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’. These five articles are relatively recent and analyse Ortega’s ideas from diverse perspectives evaluating his contribution to translation studies.

In ‘El legado de Ortega y Gasset a la teoría de la traducción en España’ (1998), Ortega-Arjonilla claims that it is necessary to adopt an intertextual approach in the study of ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’. Consequently, his study begins with a commentary of Ortega’s vocation as a committed writer and intellectual, driven by his aforementioned purpose of *europaeizing* Spain. In this work, Ortega-Arjonilla identifies three principal features of Ortega’s conception of translation: the admittance of the existence of different translated versions of an original text, Ortega’s extreme position on foreignizing translation, and his advocacy of ‘ugly’ translations. Ortega-Arjonilla finally assesses Ortega’s contribution to Translation Studies, concluding that the value of ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ lies in the interpretations provided and the solutions hinted at therein, taking into account its speculative, philosophical nature.

In 1999, Santoyo writes ‘En torno a Ortega y Gasset: Miseria y esplendor de la reflexión traductora’. He adopts a critical attitude towards Ortega’s essay and, in his opinion, its excessive influence in Translation Studies. In his account of Ortega’s personal circumstances, Santoyo maintains that the Spanish philosopher had not been particularly interested in translation before contemplating taking up this activity as a possible means of earning some extra income during his stay in Germany. According to Santoyo, most of the essay does not deal with translation itself; moreover, when Ortega does address this topic, he merely amalgamates the views already presented by Schleiermacher, Goethe, Humboldt or Rosenzweig. Santoyo’s critical approach also targets Ortega’s categorical defence of foreignizing translation and his description of the translator. Nevertheless, in spite of his critical attitude, Santoyo concedes Ortega’s ‘valuable and original contribution’ (1999: 249) on two issues: first, the establishment of a strong link between translation and speech; second, Ortega’s recommendation to writers to take up translation in order to enhance it and value it as an ‘intellectual work of the first order’ (Ortega, 1992: 111-112).

In ‘La justicia de Ortega’ (2000), Montezanti claims that the anglophone translation tradition has disregarded Ortega’s essay. Montezanti argues that ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ pioneered the type of reflection found later in the works of McFarlane, Nabokov, Jakobson and Szondi, both chronologically and conceptually, as far as modern positions on

foreignizing translation are concerned. Ortega, Montezanti claims, is also the precursor to Quine's reflection about untranslatability and Venuti's considerations about foreignization and the concept of translation as an approach to the work. This author also examines what are considered two of the most paradoxical issues in Ortega's essay: his critical attitude towards the French language and the confluence of the dialogue between different characters in 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation', producing a polyphonic tone that results in a sort of illusion.

'Unamuno and Ortega's Ideas on Language and Translation' (2002) (4), by López-Folgado, represents an attempt at examining the ideas of these two intellectuals who have, according to this author, played a significant role over the first half of the twentieth century. This study explores Ortega's conception of translation as a utopian activity and his advocacy of 'ugly' translations. The author acknowledges the intuitive character of Ortega's essay, even though, in his opinion, Ortega's views on translation have been little appreciated in a practical context either by his readers or critics.

'Miseria y esplendor de la traducción de José Ortega y Gasset', by Fernández-Sánchez and Sabio-Pinilla (2006), approaches the essay from an integrative point of view. The authors analyse Ortega's essay from a cautious yet wide perspective, incorporating aspects such as the philosopher's multifaceted personality, his outstanding writing skills and his historical context. The original contribution of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' consists, according to Fernández-Sánchez and Sabio-Pinilla, in assimilating Schleiermacher's distinctions as to what defines authentic translation, best translation procedure and, especially, in his hermeneutic approach to translation, an activity which involves facing 'otherness' and cultural self-assurance.

'Ortega y la traducción' by Carpintero-Ortega (2006) (5). In this work, Carpintero-Ortega emphasises the innovative nature of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation'. The author carries out an analysis of the path from 'misery' to 'splendour' traced by Ortega. In this analysis, Carpintero-Ortega establishes a parallelism between Ortega's ideas and figures such as Derride, Austin and Searle and Even-Zohar. Special emphasis is placed in Ortega's concept of language. Carpintero-Ortega claims that in Ortega's essay translation is rendered possible on the grounds that we all share the same reality, differences between languages do not imply an absolutely different way of seeing the world and translation allows the expression in the target language of what is implied in the source language. According to this author, Ortega's proposal of foreignising translation is justified by the present need to consider classic authors as models within their reality instead of adapting them to today's reality. Finally, Carpintero-Ortega underlines the Ortega's contribution to the purpose of making translation an 'intellectual work of the first order' (Ortega, 1992: 111-112).

## 5.2. 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' in Translation Literature by Hispanic Authors

In translation literature by Hispanic authors, 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' seems to constitute an essential point of reference, as most scholars make some kind of reference to Ortega's essay ('brief quotation'). The most frequently quoted aspects relate to Ortega's description of translation and the idea of 'foreignizing' translations. 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' is generally considered to be one of the most significant contributions of its period.

Después de la desidia de fines del siglo XIX, a comienzos del siglo XX vuelve a animarse la reflexión en torno a la traducción. [...] Varios autores formulan su opinión sobre la traducción partiendo de esta concepción filosófica del lenguaje, en la que no se considera la función utilitaria de la traducción, sino su condición de proyección hacia el lenguaje universal; de esta manera, las pautas para traducir que se proponen son de tipo literalista. Varios son los autores que se manifiestan en este sentido (Fulda, Rosenzweig, Broch), siendo los más representativos Benjamin y Ortega y Gasset (Hurtado Albir, 2001: 119).

Many Spanish scholars incorporate Ortega's exposition in their works and provide their own interpretations of the philosopher's ideas ('commented quotations'). Amongst the most commented aspects we can include is Ortega's defence of foreignizing translation are his views on the possibility/impossibility of translation and his description of the translator.

Los teóricos de la traducción que han ejercido la contemplación pura, sin descender a la práctica del arte de traducir, han llegado a conclusiones semejantes a las de Schleiermacher y Ortega. Pero los traductores, especialmente los de obras literarias, siguen, en general, el camino opuesto, el que procura, en lo posible, hacer olvidar al lector que se halla ante un producto extraño a su propia lengua (García Yebra, 1994: 311).

En el caso de Ortega, por ejemplo. Ortega no ve la traducción. Para él no existe. Aunque en su ensayo habla de miseria y esplendor –he aquí, de nuevo, a Cervantes–, es tal la fascinación que en él ejerce la miseria que ni repara en la traducción. Los elogios que hace de la traducción son tan poco convincentes que casi detrás de cada uno de ellos podría advertirse un reproche (López García, 1991: 32).

Ortega comenzaba su escrito hablando del traductor como de un ser «apocado» que al traducir despoja al texto de cuanto pueda tener de rebelión contra las reglas estereotipadas. Naturalmente, la abnegación del traductor no debe entenderse de esta forma: al contrario, su aparente impersonalidad supone una alta exigencia ética e intelectual; el traductor debe expresar, de manera transparente, toda la riqueza y diversidad del texto, realizando la magnífica empresa de contribuir a «una audaz integración de la Humanidad» (Meregalli, 1982: 85).

Ortega's essay has also given rise to controversy amongst Spanish-speaking translation scholars. In addition to Santoyo's extensive study (see 5.1), authors like Vázquez-Áyora (1977) and Ruiz-Casanova (2000) have expressed a critical attitude towards 'The Misery and Splendour of Translation'. Ortega's categorical defence of foreignizing translation, his description of the translator, and his speculative perspective are the most controversial aspects.

La opinión de Ortega es, en este caso concreto, lamentable [...] si traducir a Homero quiere decir poner a un contemporáneo nuestro, de lengua hispánica, en condiciones de entender el magnífico cargamento literario que subyace en sus poemas como lo entendían sus contemporáneos, entonces, ¿cómo vamos a proporcionarle algo «exótico y distante», si se trata precisamente de lo contrario, de darle algo normal y próximo? Claro está, lo que pasa es que esta manera de traducir [...] es la mar de sencilla: no hay más que traducir palabra por palabra, en el mismo orden y con la misma función, sin ir más allá –esto es– de lo permitido por la gramática, y luego justificar el rompecabezas conseguido asegurando que es fruto de la fidelidad del traductor a la lengua original y al estilo del autor. Pobre manera de entender un estilo, verdaderamente [...] (Alsina, 1987: 267) (6).

Sin duda alguna, es un comentario sorprendente [la descripción de Ortega del personaje del traductor]. Si atendemos a su opinión, apocados habrían sido Lutero, san Jerónimo, Unamuno y Quevedo, los cuatro bien notorios por su genio, notorios incluso por su mal genio, pero no desde luego por haber sido en modo alguno pusilánimes; apocados habrían sido también los dos Machado, Salvador de Madariaga, Julio Cortázar, fray Luis de León y Buero Vallejo, Juan Ramón Jiménez, el rey Alfredo de Inglaterra y Alfonso X el Sabio en España, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz y Agustín García Calvo..., por sólo citar un pequeño ramillete de personalidades «apocadas», todas ellas bien conocidas por sus traducciones (Santoyo, 1999: 247).

The examination of the commented quotations reveals that some scholars, such as García-Yebra and Ortega-Arjonilla (7), make repeated reference to Ortega's ideas. Furthermore, references to Ortega's essay in Hispanic translation literature can be found from the late sixties and seventies (Alsina, 1967, Vázquez-Ayora, 1977), until the present day.

## **6. The influence of Ortega y Gasset on Western Translation Studies**

The analysis of the relevance of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' is concentrated now on contemporary Western translation studies. Again, research extends from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, and the same divisions used for the Hispanic translation tradition are established. First, works dedicated exclusively to the analysis of Ortega's conception of translation are examined, and references to Ortega's essay are collected and classified into brief, commented and critical quotes.

## **6.1. Works on ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’: Ortega’s Ideas on Translation in Contemporary Western Translation Studies**

Two works can be found dedicated entirely to the analysis of Ortega’s concept of translation, coming from the German and the Italian translation contexts respectively.

‘Ortega y Gasset, die Sprachwissenschaft und das Übersetzen’ (1986), by Reiss, provides a comprehensive reflection on ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ which incorporates both its historical context and the evolution of linguistics. Reiss reflects on Ortega’s significant role within Translation Studies and adopts a practice-oriented perspective, illustrated by her study of the essay’s translations into German. Reiss focuses on Ortega’s practical examples, which, according to her, are not a very appropriate to illustrate his ideas. However, Reiss acknowledges the relevance of Ortega’s reflection to the proponents of foreignizing translation. Reiss concludes that ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ should be considered an open reflection and a stimulating piece of literary prose.

In Macola’s ‘Stile di pensiero e stile letterario: Ortega in traduzione’ (1997), she carries out a review of Ortega’s concepts of language and translation, concentrating on literary issues such as style and metaphor. Moreover, Macola examines the most relevant aspects of Ortega’s essay, identifies his predecessors in figures like Humboldt or Benjamin, and discusses the essay’s practical application. In her study, Macola emphasises the inexorable connection between Ortega’s reflection about translation and his views on language.

## **6.2. ‘The Misery and Splendour of Translation’ in Western Translation Literature**

References to Ortega’s essay constitute a notable presence in contemporary Western translation. Although we find a relatively lower number of quotes relating to the essay in Western translation literature than in literature within Hispanic translation, Ortega continues to be one of the most important proponents of foreignizing translation. At the same time, ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ appears in Western translation literature as one of the most influential works of its time.

In the pre-linguistic period of writing on translation, which may be said to date from Cicero through St. Jerome, Luther, Dryden, Tytler, Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Buber, Ortega y Gasset, not to say Savory, opinion swung between literal and free, faithful and beautiful, exact and natural translation, depending on whether the bias was to be in favour of the author or the reader, the source language or the target language of the text (Newmark, 1981: 38).

Some of the people we now consider the leading lights of the discipline were mentioned occasionally and are duly quoted in Reiß’s book: Eugene Nida, George Mounin, Ortega y Gasset, not to mention Martin Luther; St. Jerome and Cicero (Nord, 1996: 81).

Western translation scholars also interpret Ortega's paradigms. Though less numerous, their interpretations appear to coincide with the Hispanic tradition as far as the most quoted aspects are concerned: foreignizing translation, Ortega's definition of translation as a utopian activity, or his advocacy of 'ugly' translation. In addition to this, particularly in German translation literature, a practical approach to the essay can be observed.

The emphasis has shifted now from the categoric «not...but» to the more tolerant alternative «either...or», but the rigid dichotomy remains, and Schleiermacher makes it clear in his treatise that he favours the method of *Verfremdung*, or translation that is «faithful» to the original. [...] In southern Europe equally drastic conclusions were drawn, by Croce (1902) and by Ortega y Gasset (1973), who maintained that ultimately translation is an «impossible undertaking» (Snell-Hornby, 1988: 10).

Wer die Übersetzbarkeit eines Werks negiert, negiert eo ipso auch dessen Lesbarkeit. Lesen ist Übersetzen. Denn Sinn einer jeden Philosophie ist, das Undenkbare denkbar zu machen, das Unmögliche – Ortega hat es selbst so definiert – das Utopische zu wagen (Dedecius, 1986: 95).

Ortega y Gasset was right in saying that «it is impossible, at least almost always, to express all the facets of the original text». There is no question that preserving all the elements of the original in a translation is an impossibility. So the evaluation of a translation would not focus on some particular aspect or section of it, as is so often done, but it should begin rather with a definition of its text type (Reiß, 2000: 47).

In a way similar to the Hispanic authors, some Western scholars such as Steiner or Reiss repeatedly incorporate their interpretations of Ortega's assertions in their writings. Translation scholars such as Wilss (1981) and Newmark (1991) also express their disagreement with some of Ortega's assumptions in 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation', the most controversial aspect being Ortega's advocacy of literal translation.

This development pushed the equation of SL-oriented literal translation and equivalent translation, raised to a canon of translating by Schleiermacher, into the background, thus making place for a functional notion of TE [...] these ideas largely refute José Ortega y Gasset's resigned assessment of the «hopeless utopian efforts» of the translator [...] (Wilss, 1981: 38).

Or you may have a behavioristic view of translation, like Catford's «replacement of S.L textual by equivalent T.L. textual material», and virtually ignore the text level. Or you may follow Benjamin, Nabokov, Roland Sussex, Bruno Bettelheim, Gasset, and believe that words are more important than texts, but that is not very likely, is it? (Newmark, 1991: 110).



## **7. Conclusions**

Research in this work has included three main sections: the analysis of ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’, the dissemination of Ortega’s views on translation and the study of Ortega’s influence on contemporary translation studies. Conclusions reached in each of these aspects are now presented.

### **7.1. Ortega’s conception of translation**

The integrative study of Ortega’s concept of translation, rendered necessary by the philosopher’s wide and integrative approach, has revealed Ortega’s passionate attitude towards language, defined as the origin of, and the incontestable medium for, all knowledge, is illustrated by the numerous references to this phenomenon scattered throughout his works. Ortega presents a non-ontological vision of language that goes beyond the context of traditional linguistics and constitutes an integral part of the living reality of human beings. Ortega’s hermeneutic approach to language, could rightly be regarded as a ‘hermeneutic of silence’ (Marco-Furrasola, 2002). The concept of silence, a crucial element in Ortega’s theory about language, also represents an ineluctable link between his examination of the phenomenon of language and his considerations on the subject of translation. In his hermeneutic interpretation of language, translation is already defined as an activity that involves the convergence of two living realities, forged by two different spirits, which present difficulties not only for the expression of certain thoughts in another language, but also for their assimilation. From this perspective, translation therefore presupposes an inherent difficulty in the hermeneutic process or ‘art of interpretation’.

In ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ Ortega examines the main issues that have dominated the pages of translation debate throughout history, i.e. the possibility or impossibility of translation, the hierarchy of languages and their capacity to express our ideas, the connection between language and thought, and the different methods of translating. Ortega incorporates in this essay the views of the most prominent figures in German Hermeneutics, such as Schleiermacher, Goethe and Benjamin, and ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ can be considered to be a continuation of the Romantic Hermeneutics’ paradigms. However, the essay’s innovative nature must also be acknowledged, as Ortega contributes to the transfer of major Western European trends in translation studies, especially those developed by German authors and scholars, to Spain and the Hispanic world. All in all, ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’ is a work that leads us towards the deepest aspects of the concepts of language and thought, and indeed to those defining the foundation of translation, in a philosophical approach which is entrenched in human nature.

### **7.2. Dissemination of ‘The Misery and the Splendour of Translation’**

Translation anthologies, together with translations of the essay itself, represent the main means by which the dissemination of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' to both Spanish-speaking and European audiences. Taking into account Ortega's international standing as an intellectual, his status in different Western cultural circles was also investigated, as this is a potentially significant factor in the dissemination of his views on translation.

The results obtained from our rigorous tracking of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' through the diverse compilations of the translation anthologies of general and specific scope show a broad presence, which is in itself eloquent and illustrative of the notable dissemination of Ortega's essay in contemporary Western translation studies. Furthermore, if we take into account the generalised absence of authors belonging to the Spanish-speaking tradition in literature of Western traditions, this result acquires greater relevance. Translation anthologies constitute a heterogeneous genre, as a result of the various personal criteria that every scholar applies to his/her selection: historical representativeness of works, their referential value and their relevance as certain doctrinal guides, or their historical influence; alternatively these criteria appear inverted, in an attempt to contribute to the diffusion of those reflections that have historically remained ignored. Thus, on the basis of the aforementioned criteria, the obtained results indicate that 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' is one of the most representative works in Western translation thought, which in addition, has a remarkable value as a guide on the hermeneutic approach to translation.

The collection of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' translations reveals its divergent dissemination within the different Western traditions, both temporally and geographically. Here a correspondence can be observed, in broad terms, between the dissemination of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' and the relevance of Ortega's doctrine and his position as an intellectual in the different Western cultural circles.

### **7.3. The influence of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' on Contemporary Western Translation Studies**

The study of Ortega's influence in Western translation studies from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, shows that 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' is a constant presence both in the Spanish-speaking translation tradition and in the different Western translation contexts. Ortega's approach to translation is consistently incorporated into the expositions of some of our most representative contemporary scholars such as García-Yebra or Ortega-Arjonilla, in the Spanish-speaking tradition, and Steiner or Reiss, from other Western traditions. Having accounted for this, this work exposes a considerably lower number of references to Ortega's essay in Western translation literature compared to that of the Spanish-speaking translation tradition. Notwithstanding this fact, it cannot be denied that Ortega's concept of translation plays a significant role in Western translation theory.

Research into the impact that 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' has had on Western translation studies displays a heterogeneous picture where a critical interpretation is required from the perspective of the different translation traditions. 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' constitutes a relevant point of reference in the German-speaking tradition; similarly, the essay's significance in the English-speaking tradition is considerable, although it should be noted that this is a more recent influence; in the French-speaking tradition Ortega's perceived relevance is significantly less meaningful, furthermore a receding influence can be observed; in the Italian and Portuguese traditions, in spite of finding a relatively lower volume of references than in the German or English-speaking traditions, the influence of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation', especially in recent decades, is on an upwards spiral. Nevertheless, the interpretation of these results should take into consideration the variable development and consolidation of Translation Studies in the various Western traditions.

'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' is an essay of considerable historical value in Translation Studies. Furthermore, references to Ortega continue to be scattered in the works of the most representative scholars within Western translation literature. These findings allow the consideration of 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation' as a 'translation classic'.

## Notes

(1) Italics in original.

(2) Ortega y Gasset, J., 'The Misery and the Splendor of Translation' in Schulte, R., Biguenet, J., *Theories of Translation: an Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 93-112. Translated by Elizabeth Gamble Miller.

(3) See Ordóñez-López (2006) for a more extensive analysis of references to 'The Misery and the Splendour of Translation'.

(4) Please note that even though this work is written in English, it was published in the Spanish journal *Hikma*, edited by the Universidad de Córdoba.

(5) This article was first published in journal *Kutadgu bilig felsefe-bilim arařtırmaları*, 8 (October, 2005), 85-92.

(6) First edited in 1967.

(7) See Ordóñez-López (2006)

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