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Guzmán, María Costanza. *Gregory Rabassa's Latin American literature: a translator's visible legacy*. Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2010, 192 p.

María Costanza Guzmán takes a critical look at the influential translator Gregory Rabassa in *Gregory Rabassa's Latin American literature: a translator's visible legacy*. The goal of this book is not only to offer insights the translator's methods, but also to address a topic that Costanza Guzman believes has not yet been examined, which is "the extent of his work's influence and the complexity of the sociocultural circumstances that have surrounded his practice..." In doing so, it moves beyond the realm of evaluating the quality of Rabassa's translations in terms of fidelity and accuracy, and into examining his legacy and methods.

The study is organized into five chapters and includes three

further appendixes, a well-constructed index, and an extensive bibliography. The chapters progress in a logical fashion and the appendixes provide a rare look into Rabassa's editing process.

Costanza Guzmán, an associate professor in the School of Translation at York University, chose to Rabassa specifically as her subject for several reasons. One is his unique visibility as a translator. In a profession typically marked by little publicity, he is often credited alongside the author and seen as a creative force in his own right. A second is because of the fame of his published works. As the translator of such canonical texts as Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, Rabassa's contributions to the international image of Latin American literature cannot be ignored.

Many of the works that Rabassa has translated contributed to the period known as the Latin American Boom during the 1960's, in which there was a significant increase in foreign interest in Latin American authors, especially

in the United States. Costanza Guzmán discusses the history of the Boom period in detail and the role that Rabassa played in it.

In the first chapter the author explores why the translator has typically occupied a “secondary space” and strives to reposition the translator in the role of the subject of investigation. In this process, she covers many influential theories in translation studies that attempt to identify the role of the translator, including those of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, and Lawrence Venuti. In choosing Rabassa as a subject, Costanza Guzmán is assuming that the translator contributes directly to a “cultural legacy” and she is able to analyze his specific, lasting contribution. She proposes a number of questions that the book sets out to answer, including how Rabassa defines the translator’s mission.

Chapter two details Rabassa’s personal theory on language and how this has shaped his translational practices. Drawing from his semi-autobiographical book *If This Be Treason: Translation*

and Its Dyscontents, Costanza Guzmán outlines his “anti-theory” attitude. He does not encourage theorizing about the act of translation, choosing instead to embrace the ambiguities that arise in the process of moving between two languages. Analyzed as well is whether he believes translation to be treason, as discussed in his book. Rabassa reaches a Scots verdict, signifying that translation may or may not be treason, and it is within this area of uncertainty that the practice of translation occurs.

The third chapter explores Rabassa’s relationship with the authors of the works that he translates, to whom Costanza Guzmán refers as “his authors.” Because Rabassa translates works written by living authors with very few exceptions, he has often benefited from a dialogue with them and has even had an active, collaborative relationship with some. His translation of *Hopscotch* by Julio Cortázar is discussed, though she intentionally does not evaluate the quality of the translation. Instead, she reveals his methods

through showing the working and personal relationship between Rabassa and Cortázar, including citations from their correspondence. This allows other sources, including Cortázar himself, to provide an evaluative perspective on Rabassa's translations.

Rabassa's relationships with Lezama Lima, Gabriel García Márquez, Clarice Lispector, and Luis Rafael Sánchez are also explored. Costanza Guzmán uses *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents* to gain insight into the intimate relationship he shared with some of his authors, and how this effected his translations. Rabassa reveals that he translates as he reads a text for the first time in order to best convey a sense of newness to his readers.

Chapter four examines the critical reception and influence on the internationalization of Latin American literature as a result of Rabassa's translations. Costanza Guzmán provides an array of critical viewpoints regarding Rabassa's translations that not only reflect the quality of his

work but the nature of translation itself. She concludes that: "Rabassa's translations meet the Anglo-American standards of taste while carrying an acceptable foreignness..." The author also addresses the translator's impact on the expansion of Latin American literature in the English-speaking world, and gives a history of Latin American literature in the United States before, during, and after the Latin American Boom period in the 1960s. As Costanza Guzmán notes, Latin American writers were writing before being translated and published in the United States during the Boom, but they were not receiving substantial international recognition. Translation played a pivotal role in the internalization that defined this period, and Rabassa was at the center of it.

In the fifth and final chapter, Costanza Guzmán further contextualizes Rabassa's work by exploring how he and his translations have affected the "construction of images of Latin American literature and of collective narratives and representations of Latin

America in its literature". While the Boom promoted the internationalization of literature written by Latin American authors, it also constructed what is now known as the genre of Latin American literature. Costanza Guzmán is careful to note that the Boom unified where commonality may not have existed, a phenomenon she refers to as "imposed homogeneity." Certain authors such as García Márquez and Cortázar were published during this period, but many Latin American authors were not included in the foreign market during the Boom.

One of the most influential novels published during this period was García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, the English translation of which was done by Rabassa. Costanza Guzmán uses this novel as a particular example to show specific effects of the Boom on internationalization. García Márquez employed the style of magical realism, and the success of the novel enticed publishers to look for similar works. Costanza Guzmán draws attention to how this narrative tech-

nique has at times been incorrectly interpreted as mere magic by readers who are unfamiliar with Latin American history and culture, while the social realities are often overlooked. Rabassa's translation was pivotal in bringing this awareness to the United States. Costanza Guzmán states, "...translation not only has to negotiate social and cultural contradictions: it embodies them."

Appendix I is the transcript of Costanza Guzmán's personal interview with Rabassa in which she questions the translator on his methods and views. Appendix II is a list of translations by Rabassa. Appendix III consists of manuscripts and edited drafts done by Rabassa during the translation process, including the first page of García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and a letter from Cortázar to Rabassa concerning the translation of *Rayuela*.

The level of detail in which the information is presented in *Gregory Rabassa's Latin American literature: a translator's visible legacy* suggests that it is

intended for those who have an interest in Gregory Rabassa and the field of translation, but it is not necessary to have expertise in the subject to understand Costanza Guzmán's language. This book may appeal to those who study socio-linguistics or work

in the field of translation studies. It contextualizes and gives insight into the extensive work of the highly influential translator Gregory Rabassa.

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