DECONSTRUCTIONIST AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST TRANSLATION APPROACHES: OVERVIEW AND CRITIQUE

ENFOQUES DECONSTRUCCIONISTAS Y POSTESTRUCTURALISTAS DE LA TRADUCCIÓN: PANORAMA Y CRÍTICA

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Abstract

It has become a commonplace to believe that deconstructionist and poststructuralist views on translation have opened new perspectives in Translation Studies. In this paper[1], I attempt to show what the main tenets by the main authors in these theories are (Benjamin, Derrida, Berman, Venuti). I also try to show the line of thought that goes from Benjamin to Berman and Derrida and then to Venuti. Likewise, I focus my attention especially on a well-known controversy between Derrida and Searle on key aspects of language meaning. In the second part of the paper, I present the main criticisms made by Newmark, Pym, Searle, Arrojo, and Tymoczko, among others, to the deconstructionist and poststructuralist translation views of interpretation. Finally, I draw some conclusions.

Keywords: *Deconstruction and Translation Studies, Poststructuralism and Translation Studies, Deconstructionist Critique, Poststructuralist Critique.*

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Resumen

Es muy común creer que las posiciones deconstruccionistas y postestructuralistas de traducción han abierto nuevas perspectivas en los Estudios de Interpretación/ Traducción. En este trabajo, trato de mostrar los postulados de los principales representantes de estas teorías (Benjamin, Derrida, Berman, Venuti). Igualmente, presento la línea de pensamiento en este campo desde Benjamin a Berman y desde Derrida a Venuti. De la misma forma, presto especial atención a la famosa controversia sobre los aspectos claves del significado del lenguaje que existe entre Derrida and Searle. En la segunda parte, presento las principales posturas críticas de Newmark, Pym, Searle, Arrojo y Tymoczko, entre otros, hasta llegar la posición de la interpretación deconstruccionista y postestructuralista. Finalmente, presento algunas conclusiones.

Palabras clave: *Estudios de deconstrucción y traducción, estudios de postestructuralismo y traducción, crítica deconstruccionista, crítica postestructuralista.*

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1   This is a revised version of a section of my PhD dissertation in Applied Linguistics.

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1. Introduction

DECONSTRUCTIONIST AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST translation approaches represent some of the most provoking —albeit controversial— views of translation in modern translation studies. A current problem newcomers to modern translation studies have to face is the increasing number of thinkers and scholars whose work is not always explicitly linked to previous works in this discipline. Thus in this paper I attempt to show the existing line of thought among some of the initiators and well-established representatives of deconstructionist and poststructuralist translation approaches. Specifically, I intend to trace back how Benjamin's translational views influenced Berman's and Derrida's thoughts and how they all, in turn, influenced Venuti's translational ideas, one of the best known scholars in modern translation studies.

These translational approaches do not convey a coherent and systematic account of translation as a scientifically-approached, holistic and comprehensive subject matter. They rather deal with specific issues and isolated problems of the nature of translation and the translational activity. The paper is divided in two main parts. In the first part I present the main tenets of deconstructionist and poststructuralist translation approaches, paying special attention to literalness, the translation strategy they advocate within this conceptual framework, the text as an unclosed totality, the primacy of the signifier in the translation of the linguistic sign, the instability of translated meanings, and Venuti's concept of the translator's invisibility rooted in Berman's *effacement du traducteur.* In the second part I present the critique of these translational approaches, highlighting some of their most positive aspects, i.e. the slipperiness of meaning and the surpassing of the conception of the world in binary terms. I also discuss here at length Searle's critique of Derrida's view of the nature of meaning, as well as Pym's and others' critique of Venuti. Finally I draw some conclusions.

As for the method of presenting and discussing the information in this paper, I decided to cite the original authors' ideas in their own words in order to perceive firsthand what they have actually said and not to intend a paraphrasing that would inevitably undermine the essence of their utterances. What I have done is to try to link these diverse insights into a coherent and readable line of thought. All translations included in the paper are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

2. Deconstructionist and Poststructuralist Approaches: Main Tenets

2.1 Literalness as a Translation Foreignizing Strategy

Benjamin's ideas on translation are expressed on his paper "The Task of the Translator" (2000), initially published in 1923. One of the first issues Benjamin deals with is translatability which he sees as "an essential quality of certain works" (ibid: 16). And he further explains, "which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance in the original manifests itself in its translatability" (ibid). Then, he maintains that there is a link, 'a vital connection', between the original and its translation, and states that "a translation issues from the original-not so much from its life as from its afterlife" (ibid). For Benjamin, this relationship of life and afterlife should be regarded "with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity" (ibid). The key factor within this framework is to acknowledge that the range of life is 'determined by history', not 'by nature'. Like a work of art, a translation survives, realizes the potential of 'eternal life in succeeding generations'. Translation transcends itself and "ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages" (ibid: 17). Benjamin considers that languages are related to each other "in what they want to express" (ibid). Thus, when an original is translated, in its afterlife, in its translation, there is some transformation, "the renewal of something living-the original undergoes a change" (ibid). An intention underlines each language, and the totality of intentions supplementing each other is what Benjamin calls 'pure language'. So, translation plays the role of supplementing different languages in search of their intentions, of attaining that pure language. Thus, "the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it an echo of the original" (ibid: 20). And Benjamin advocates literalness in these terms:

> The significance of fidelity as ensured by literalness is that the work reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation. A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade. (Benjamin, 2000, p. 21)

Then, literalness is justified to the extent that it allows the true or pure language underlying the original to be seen through its translation. Therefore, it does not matter that "a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux" (ibid, p. 22).

According to Niranjana (1992, p. 142), "another post-structuralist version of Benjamin's translation essay [is] Jacques Derrida's 'Des Tours de Babel'." As Niranjana says, the myth of Babel, «for Derrida, tells "of the inadequation of one tongue to another' and 'of the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to compensate for that which multiplicity denies us"» (ibid, p. 143). I think there is a common element in this view of Benjamin and Derrida's: both consider that the multiplicity of languages does not allow us to get to the original. However, there is also a difference: whereas this apparently unattainable goal of the pure original language, for Benjamin, is somehow approachable through translation, for Derrida this is not the case, because translation is inadequate. Furthermore, for Derrida (1985, p. 171) the myth of Babel "recounts, among other things, the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity *as* impossibility." On the contrary, as we saw above, Benjamin does consider translation as a possibility, especially in its literalness or interlinear versions, i.e. translations that follow very closely the syntax and the morphology of the source language text. Thus, according to Niranjana, for Derrida, Benjamin's restitution of meaning is impossible (ibid, p. 147). On the other hand, Derrida coincides with Benjamin in considering translation as transformation, and the original needs supplementation, as Benjamin maintains, because "at the origin it was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself" (Derrida, 1985, p. 188).

2.2 Deconstructing: Unveiling the Unclosed Totality of the Text

In a recent interview, *Jacques Derrida, penseur de l'èvènement* (January 28, 2004) published in *Journal L'Humanité*, J. Derrida discusses his view of what deconstruction is. He points out that he began to reflect on writing (*l'écriture, le texte*) more than forty years ago. What interested him initially was the writing of literature. Initially he asked himself what is writing, what happens when one writes[2]. In order to answer this question, Derrida had to "widen the concept of text

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2   « J'ai commencé, il y a presque quarante ans par une réflexion sur l'écriture, le texte. Ce

and to attempt to justify this extension"[3] (ibid). It is within this context that he uttered his well-known statement that "there is nothing outside the text" ("Il n'y a pas de hors texte"), which he explains as follows: "it does not mean that all is paper, saturated with writing, but that all experience is structured as a network of traces which refer to something different from them"[4] (ibid). And he further explains that there is no present which constitutes itself without referring to another time, another present: the present-trace. Derrida includes the voice itself in the notion of trace because it has been subordinated in philosophy. From the time of Ancient Greece, writing was subordinated to the word (logocentrism), and now there is the living present of the voice (phonocentrism). So, out of necessity a critique has been carried out, "but deconstruction is not a critique. It is not an evaluative judgement or a process of disqualification [...] or a method. [...] Deconstruction favors interpretations of readings, writings, of transformation of the general text, which are so many events"[5] (ibid). Derrida's poststructuralist stance is clear when he maintains that if nothing escapes the text, then the text does not totalize itself. And he adds that due to the structure whose traces compose the text, which open up to something different from them, the totality cannot be closed. This excludes the totalizing, the closing, and the completing of the text as well as its value as a system. Deconstruction is not a system. "It is an adventure whose gesture depends each time on the situation, the context, especially the political context of the subject, on his rooting in a place and a history, and which permit him, in some way, to undersign the deconstructive gesture."[6]

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qui m'importait, au début, et bien que je suis devenu par profession un 'philosophe', c'était l'écriture littéraire. Qu'est-ce qu'écrire, me demandais-je ? Qu'est-ce qui se passe quand on écrit ? » (Derrida, 2004).

3   « Pour répondre, j'ai dû élargir le concept du texte et essayer de justifier cette extension ». (Derrida, 2004).

4   « 'Il n'y a pas de hors texte' ne veut pas dire que tout est papier, saturé d'écriture, mais que toute expérience est structurée comme un réseau de traces renvoyant à autre chose qu'elles-mêmes ». (Derrida, 2004).

5   « Cela dit, et malgré la nécessité de la critique, la déconstruction n'est pas une critique. Elle n'est ni jugement évaluatif ni procès de disqualification. Pas plus d'ailleurs qu'elle n'est […] une méthode. […] La déconstruction fait droit à des interprétations de lecture, d'écriture, de transformation du texte général, qui sont autant d'événements ». (Derrida, 2004).

6   « La déconstruction n'est pas un système […] C'est une aventure singulière dont le geste dépend à chaque fois de la situation, du contexte, politique notamment, du sujet, de son

2.3 The Linguistic Sign in Translation: The Primacy of the Signifier

A. Pym (1993) has reviewed the contribution of Derrida's ideas to translation studies. For Pym, some of the main thoughts by Derrida were already present in his 1967 *De la grammatologie.* Derrida's point of departure is a discussion of de Saussure's conception of the linguistic sign. For de Saussure, a linguistic sign is made up of a signifier and a signified. However, de Saussure did not take into account that besides speaking, a spoken signifier, there is also writing, a written signifier. This is an issue Derrida observed and, for Pym, "the written signifier can then travel out on its adventures into the world, available to be interpreted in many different ways, according to many different models" (ibid, p. 39). Consequently, for Derrida writing "isn't just a matter of writing things down. It's a process that involves a distance, a breaking up of what Saussure thought was the semantic unity of signifiers matching signifieds" (ibid). This distance is what Derrida calls *différance*, "pronounced like *différence* but spelt with an *a* to signify at once 'difference' and 'deferment' [postponement], indicating that semiosis works not just between different positions but also through time" (ibid, p. 39). Thus, for Derrida meaning is not, as de Saussure thought, a one-to-one relationship. "There's always another signifier [the written one], even in the beginning" (ibid). As Pym maintains, if "meaning always has to be created afresh, then you don't waste much time looking at the author of a work; you're much better off sitting down with the text itself and trying to make sense of it." (ibid) This relativizes the role of the original author's intention in the translation process. Translators would only interpret what they understand, and this, in turn, is interpreted by others in a different way, so that meaning is always in a continuous unfolding, a tenet that was also shared by hermeneutic approaches as we saw above. Thus, Derrida (cited by Hatim, 2001) summarizes his conception of translation in a nutshell as follows:

> Difference is never pure, no more so in translation and for the notion of transla-tion we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transforma-tion of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched. (Derrida, 1981, p. 4)

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enracinement dans un lieu et une histoire, et qui lui permettent, en quelque sorte, de signer le geste déconstructif ». (Derrida, 2004).

2.4 Instability of Translated Meanings

For Holmes (1988, p. 106), deconstructionism represents a different paradigm in literary translation studies from those of traditional approaches which strived to "demonstrate that despite all the paradoxes and contradictions apparent at the surface of a text, there was an underlying unity to it" (ibid). On the contrary, a deconstructionist "seeks the contradictions and paradoxes which uncover the underlying motives, desires and frustrations the author of the text has done his best to hide" (ibid). In Hatim's (2001, p. 48) words, "what would be considered peripheral in a text is usually seized on by the deconstructionists in an attempt to bring out hidden meanings and concealed ideological values." According to Hatim, in the deconstructionist approach "it is the original text which is actually dependent upon the translation and not the other way around, since without translation the original would simply remain 'undiscovered'" (ibid). As we discussed above, this same idea is already present in Benjamin who considers that the translation in its after-life helps to secure the survival of the original. Likewise, as for Hatim, Arrojo (1998) considers that the key concern in deconstruction is "the constant questioning of the myth that meaning is intrinsically stable and fully present in texts, and that it can be recoverable and can thus be transported intact across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (ibid).

On the other hand, Arrojo (1999) also acknowledges that this same instability in meaning renders it difficult to define deconstruction itself:

> The recognition that the deconstructive conception as a whole calls into question the belief in the stability of the meaning of a word or a concept explains the difficulty in defining deconstruction and its inherent implications for translation in a couple of sentences.[7] (Arrojo, 1999, p. 101)

For Arrojo, Derrida himself said that deconstruction had to do with destruction, desedimentation of all meanings whose origin reside in the logos (ibid). The immediate consequence of this for translation is that all traditional translation theories which begin from an idealized transfer of unchanged meanings from one

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7   "Die Erkenntnis, daß das dekonstruktivistische Denken den Glauben an die unveränderliche Bedeutung eines Wortes oder Begriffs in Frage stellt, erklärt die Schwierigkeit, Dekonstruktion zu definieren und ihre wesentliche Implikationen in einigen Sätzen zu diskutieren." (Arrojo, 1999, p. 101).

language to another, from one culture to another are called into question, without taking into account the translator's intervention or his translation situation (ibid). As the main issue in deconstruction is difference, then the traditional conception of text as a static protective case of the author's intended and allegedly reproducible meaning is radically reviewed. Consequently, translation is seen as a constant transformation of one language through another one, of one text through another one (ibid).

2.5 Berman's *effacement du traducteur* and Venuti's 'Invisibility'

L. Venuti's stance on translation is initially influenced by such authors as W. Benjamin and Paul de Man. For Venuti, these authors "argue that what makes the foreign text original is not so much that it is considered the coherent expression of authorial meanings, but that it is deemed worthy of translation, that it is destined to live what Benjamin calls an 'afterlife' (*Überleben*) in a derivative form like translation." (Venuti, 1992, p. 7). Venuti also recalls Derrida's concept of *différance* (cf. above) and interprets it as "the signifying movement in language whereby the signified is an effect of relations and differences along a potentially endless chain of signifiers and therefore is always differential and deferred, never present as a unity" (ibid). Consequently, as Venuti puts it, "the originality of the foreign text is thus compromised by the poststructuralist concept of textuality", [...] according to which, "neither the foreign text nor the translation is an original semantic unity", both are "derivative and heterogeneous, consisting of diverse linguistic and cultural materials which destabilize the work of signification" (ibid). Within this poststructuralist framework which challenges the meaning of the original's authorship, Venuti (1992, p. 1) introduces his reflection on the invisible role the translator has usually played in translation: "Translation continues to be an invisible practice, everywhere around us, inescapably present, but rarely acknowledged, almost never figured into discussions of the translations we all inevitably read." A. Berman (1984, p. 14) had also made explicit this ancillary condition of translation: "I refer here to something which cannot be omitted: the hidden, stifled, condemned, and *ancillary* condition of translation which has an effect on the conditions of translators to the extent that nowadays it is not possible at all to make an autonomous profession out of it."[8] Furthermore, for Berman translation should not be ethnocentric, which

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8   « Je fais référence ici à quelque chose qui ne peut pas ne pas être évoqué : la condition
     occultée, refoulée, réprouvée et *ancillaire* de la traduction, qui répercute sur la condition des

means that "the essence of translation is to be open, dialogue, hybridizing, decentering. It is related to something, or it is *nothing*."[9] Venuti reinforces Berman's view of translation as regards the translator's role, generally 'erased' (Berman speaks of *l'effacement du traducteur*), and translation as a non-ethnocentric activity (Benjamin had already pointed in the same direction, cf. above). In Venuti's words:

> The translator remains subordinate to the author of the original work, whether in the translator's own acts of self-presentation or in academic institutions, publishing companies, and legal codes. The originality of translation rather lies in self-effacement, a vanishing act, and it is on this basis that translators prefer to be praised. (Venuti, 1992, p. 4).

This vanishing act by the translator is judged to be successful by "editors, publishers, reviewers, readers, by translators themselves, when it [the translation] reads fluently, when it gives the appearance that it is not translated" (Venuti, ibid). For Venuti, fluency is responsible for the 'effect of transparency', which 'evokes the individualistic illusion of authorial presence'. In this fluency-oriented process, translators suffer 'cultural marginality and economic exploitation' (ibid, p. 5). And, "in this rewriting, a fluent strategy performs a labor of acculturation which domesticates the foreign text, making it intelligible and even familiar to the target-language reader" (ibid). So, "domestication is an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). Opposite to this appears foreignization, which is "an ethnodeviant pressure on values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (ibid). As pointed out by Munday (2001, p. 146), Venuti's domesticating and foreignizing methods are akin to those discussed by Schleiermacher when describing two options in translation: the translator either 'leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him' (domesticating), or 'leaves the writer alone, as much as possible and moves the reader towards the writer' (foreignizing). Venuti favors the foreignizing method in order to make translators visible and advocates a strategy he calls 'resistancy'. In this, Venuti also follows Ber-

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traducteurs, à tel point qu'il n'est guère possible, de nos jours, de faire de cette pratique un métier autonome ». (Berman, 1984, p. 14).

9   « L'essence de la traduction est d'être ouverte, dialogue, métissage, décentrement. Elle est mise en rapport, ou elle n'est *rien*. » (Berman, 1984, p. 16).

man (1984, p. 17), who, within an ethical stance, attempts to avoid ethnocentric, i.e. bad translations: "I call a bad translation, a translation which, usually under the disguise of transmissibility, performs a systematic negation of the strangeness of the foreign work."[10] More recently, Venuti insists on this foreignizing method, but tends to call it 'minoritizing', or as Munday (2001, p. 147) says, "to cultivate a varied and 'heterogeneous discourse'." In linguistic terms, this means to adhere to the SL structure and syntax, to use calques, archaisms, etc. Clearly, this minoritizing strategy or foreignizing method goes hand in hand with Benjamin's advocacy for literalness, even though Venuti does not go so far as to propose an interlinear version (see above). Besides, we think that in his foreignizing strategy, Venuti draws on and invigorates Benjamin's and Berman's non-ethnocentric-oriented agendas.

3. Critique of Deconstructionist and Poststructuralist Approaches

3.1 Slipperiness of Meanings and Non-binary Semantic Distinctions

For Newmark (1991, p. 57), Derrida follows Benjamin's approach to translation in that "translation does not depend on any theory of reception nor does translation have any form of communication as its essential mission." Benjamin, says Newmark, "sees a translation neither as a copy nor as an interpretation but as the complement or the completion of the original." Then, Newmark asks, "What can the translator learn from Derrida and his adepts?" (ibid) And he answers, "Mainly I think a kind of sensitisation, an awareness of the slipperiness of meaning, the continual displacement, difference, dissemination, disuse, deposition, deconstruction, which, according to Derrida, calls all translation into question if it affects subtle texts." (ibid)

In assessing the impact of deconstruction in the USA, Pym (1993, p. 42) says that it has helped to break down traditional binary gender distinctions where signifiers "indicating homosexuality, transvestites, and the rest" had traditionally been excluded. And he further expands, "As we all are, a bit one way or the other. The falsely structured world can be broken down to reveal a more real, more dynamic, more loosely structured world. [...] It can open up a far more plural, far more multicultural society" (ibid). On the other hand, within the framework of translation,

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10   « J'appelle mauvaise traduction la traduction qui, généralement sous couvert de transmissibilité, opère une négation systématique de l'étrangeté de l'oeuvre étrangère ». (Berman, 1984, p. 17).

Pym considers that a deconstructionist stance would contradict Newmark's emphasis on the words 'authority' and 'author', "mostly in conjunction with his idea of the 'authoritative text" (ibid, p. 43). And to support his criticism on Newmark's view of the role of the author in translation, Pym adds, "But then, an elementary deconstructionist would have to ask how anyone can really know what the author meant" (ibid). And Pym replies, "I can only *interpret* the text [Pym's emphasis], and then you can interpret my interpretation in accordance with your interpretation, and so on. And meaning will be moving along" (ibid). However, as we saw above, Newmark sees the contribution of deconstruction to translatology precisely in the acknowledgement of the fact that meanings are slippery or, in Pym's words, that they move along. Despite his interest in deconstruction, Pym also points out some limits of this approach. For him, "deconstruction can be used to cover over what would otherwise be considered the hard facts of the past. It's a very ambiguous instrument of liberation" (ibid, p. 46). He refers to Paul de Man, who favored the Nazi cause and then "did much to apply deconstruction to history [...] arguing that history itself has no firm meaning and is only a series of interpretations. But you see, someone who supported the Nazis, and who wanted to hide that support, is very interested in saying that history is always open to interpretation" (ibid). Then, after analyzing Wittgenstein's statements about beliefs of the main facts of geography, such as "that the earth is a body on whose surface we move", Pym concludes that "we can say that no matter how much an approach like deconstruction might be useful for studying translation, at some particular points you have to believe in something that you're not going to deconstruct. If you don't, you'll have to doubt everything, and you will be unable to take any real action" (ibid).

3.2 Searle's Critique of Derrida

Perhaps the strongest contentions against J. Derrida's deconstructionist stance are those presented and discussed by J. Searle (1996). Searle begins by analyzing Derrida's definition of meaning, "the view of Jacques Derrida that meaning is a matter of, well, what? Meanings are 'undecidable' and have 'relative indeterminacy', according to Derrida. Instead of fully determinate meanings, there is rather the free interplay of signifiers and the grafting of texts onto texts within the textuality and the intertextuality of texts" (ibid, p. 102). For Searle, Derrida ignores "certain fundamental linguistic principles" (ibid, p. 104). And once one understands them, "then many of the issues in literary theory that look terribly deep, profound, and mysterious have rather simple and clear solutions" (ibid). Searle also deals with what

he calls "some rules of investigation", and explains, "Now let me say in advance that, of course, there is nothing sacred about these principles. Perhaps we can refute all of them. But I also have to tell you in advance that there are certain rules of the investigation. The first is this: If I say, for example, 'There is a distinction between types and tokens,' it is not enough to say 'I call that distinction into question.' You actually have to have an argument" (ibid, p. 105). When explaining the background of interpretation, Searle introduces two key terms: background and network:

> The functioning of meaning in particular and intentionality in general is only possible given a set of background capacities, abilities, presuppositions, and general know-how. Furthermore, in addition to the preintentional background the functioning of meaning and intentionality generally requires a rather complex network of knowledge, beliefs, desires, etc. (Searle, 1996, p. 105).

We can understand an utterance correctly, "because each utterance presupposes a whole cultural and biological Background (in addition to a Network of beliefs, etc.)" (ibid, p. 106). Searle recalls another distinction, that between types and tokens, which was first formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce. And he explains it as follows: "If, for example, I write the word 'dog' on the blackboard three times, have I written three words or one? Well, I have written one *type* word, but I have written three different *token* instances of that word. That is, the token is a concrete physical particular, but the type is a purely abstract notion" (ibid, p. 108). Searle mentions this distinction because "in fact a fair amount of the confusion in literary theory rests on a failure to get that distinction straight" (ibid). Searle criticizes here Derrida's notion of *'iterabilité'* because "the notion is very ill-defined in his work. He is unable to say clearly what the domain of its application is, what entities exactly are iterable" (ibid). For Searle, Derrida speaks of 'marks' and 'signs', "but actual marks and signs, that is actual physical tokens, are precisely not iterable. It is rather the *type* of mark that can have different instantiations" (ibid). And concludes, "Derrida lacks a clear answer to the question, 'What is it that gets iterated?' in part because he seems to be unaware of this distinction" (ibid). Another crucial distinction is that between the use of expressions and the mention of expressions. "If, for example, I say 'Berkeley is in California', I use the word Berkeley to refer to a city. If I say ''Berkeley' has eight letters,' I am mentioning the word 'Berkeley' and talking about it" (ibid, p. 109). For Searle, "when Derrida speaks of what he calls *citationalité,* one would think that is talking about the use-mention distinc-

tion, but, as with *iterabilité*, he does not give a coherent account of the notion, and this leads him to say things that are obviously false" (ibid). Searle mentions one of Derrida's examples where this confusion is evident, "He [Derrida] thinks that when a play is put on the actors in the play do not actually use words, they are only citing them. [...] In the standard case of producing a play, the actors produce the words written by the playwright, they actually *use* the words, and they do not *mention* or *cite* them" (ibid).

Another key distinction Searle mentions is that between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. "It is crucial to distinguish what a sentence means (*i. e.*, its literal sentence meaning) and what the speaker means in the utterance of the sentence" (ibid, p. 110). Clearly linked to this distinction is the question Searle poses, "Does the author's illocutionary intention determine what speech acts he or she is performing; that is, what intentional speech acts he or she is performing in the production of a text?" (ibid, p. 121). And Searle answers, "To this question, I hope, it is obvious that the answer is yes" (ibid). Then, Searle poses a second question in this respect, "Does the author's intention determine how the text is interpreted; does it determine the meaning that the hearer understands. I hope it is obvious that the answer to this question is no. Notoriously, authors are understood in ways that are quite different from what they actually intended" (ibid). For Searle, the most obscure case which appears in deconstruction is Derrida's attempt to 'deconstruct' the notion of meaning that occurs in the theory of speech acts. "Derrida claims that since the very same text can function totally detached from any authorial intention, the author cannot control the meaning of his utterance. Because the sign is subject to 'iterability' and 'citationality' the horizon of the author's intention is insufficient to control the free play of signifiers" (ibid, p. 123). To discuss this point, Searle clarifies, "intentions-along with other biological phenomena such as beliefs, desires, and so forth-function only within a highly contingent Network of other intentional states and against a preintentional Background of capacities" (ibid, p. 124). And Searle further explains, "The fact that someone might perform *another* speech act with a *different* token of the same type (or even another speech act, with the same token) has no bearing whatever on the role of the speaker's utterance meaning in the determination of the speech act" (ibid). He concludes, "Derrida holds the bizarre view that speech-act theory is somehow committed to the view that the intentionality of the particular token speech act must somehow control every subsequent occurrence of tokens of the same type" (ibid, p. 127). For Searle, "it is just a simple confusion to suppose that from the fact that I say something

and mean something by what I say, and somebody else might use other tokens of those very words and sentences to mean something completely different, it follows that somehow or other I have lost control of my speech act" (ibid).

3.3 Critique of Venuti

As for Venuti's contribution to translation studies, Pym (1998, p. 74) begins by revising the way figures are presented by Venuti in his 1995 *The Translators' Invisibility. A History of Translation* and he maintains that "no statistical distribution of translations, be it across time or space, is entirely neutral", and points out that, when presenting some data on the publishing industry of originals and translations, Venuti "is not above producing strangely manipulative sentences" (ibid, p. 72). As an illustration of this, Pym cites the following sentence by Venuti:

> British and American book production increased fourfold since the 1950s, but the number of translations remained roughly between 2 and 4 percent of the total. (Venuti, 1995, p. 12)

For Pym, based on the information Venuti himself provides, the manipulation consists in presenting a biased picture of reality: "book production increased *and* translation production increased. 'And', not 'but'" (ibid). Besides, with regard to the 'resistant' strategy proclaimed by Venuti, Pym says that "one might imagine Venuti's generalized call for 'resistant' translators being socially cordoned off as a trick for intellectuals, thus causing virtually no changes beyond an academic coterie"[11] (ibid, p. 121). Likewise, Pym criticizes Venuti's assumption that translators belong to the target culture: "This can be seen in minor slips like his suggestions that translators working into English somehow need to defend their 'rights as a British or American citizen' (1995, p. 9)" (ibid, p. 179). And he reminds that he works into English but he is not neither British nor American. Again, from a practice-oriented standpoint, Pym assesses Venuti's translational approach:

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11   Neubert & Shreve (1992) also relativize the use of this 'resistant' strategy, especially when dealing with pragmatic texts: "Frankly, for most translators this whole argument is a non-issue. Pragmatic texts make up the bulk of their work. Perhaps of greater concern for serious practitioners and eager users of translation is the great amount of translation which is neither destructive nor constructive, but simply awful" (ibid, p. 4).

A fourth strategy can be found in Lawrence Venuti, who takes up cudgels not in defence of translated texts but on behalf of translators as a social group. Translators, it seems, form an oppressed profession. Since part of the blame for their situation can be traced back to traditional ways of thinking about translation, Venuti proposes a magnanimous 'intervention' by theorists of marxism, postcolonialism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and feminism (1992, pp. 1-6), a mix strangely reminiscent of my undergraduate comparative literature. Nothing suggests translators ever called for an intervention of this kind. But that's surely beside the point. Like the descriptivists' strategy, the belligerent decrying of exploitation has upset remarkably few people. It remains grist of the mill of an expanding academic research industry. (Pym, 1998, p. 198)

In analyzing *The Vision*, H. F. Cary's translation of Dante's *Comedy* into English, first published in 1814, Edoardo Crisafulli (1999, p. 97) rejects "Venuti's (1995, pp. 65, 99, 309) contention that the dominant criterion in Anglo-American culture, transparency, necessarily implies a view in which the translator sees him/herself as a humble decoder of a coherent original message which may be grasped and transferred unaltered to the target text." Based on the evidence presented in his article, Crisafulli also maintains that "it is not necessary for the translator to disrupt the 'target-language cultural codes', as Venuti says, in order to present a complex image of the translation process and cast doubt on the possibility of rewriting the source text faithfully, which presumably is one of Venuti's aims" (ibid, p. 99).

As regards the issue of the lack of evidence provided by Venuti to support his views, Maria Tymoczko (2000, p. 35) also points out that Venuti "tends to assert things rather than argue for them or present evidence for them." And as Crisafulli above, Tymoczko also maintains that "for example, he claims that fluency is the dominant standard for translations in the United States at present, but offers little evidence of the claim, except for his own experience, experience which is based primarily on the translation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary works between European languages." (ibid). Besides, from a postcolonial stance, Tymoczko states that "*cultural dominance* results in translations with deformed textual and cultural representation that serves the interest of the dominant receptor culture" (ibid). This kind of deformation "is not necessarily to be associated with a single type of translation method, such as fluency. Rather, any translation procedure can become a tool of cultural colonization, even foreignizing translation" (ibid).

For Arrojo (1995, p. 30), "transparency idealized by tradition is not exactly a neutral, ethical stance which any conscientious translator will have to adopt; it

is, rather, a strategy that necessarily serves certain interests." As regards the most important consequence poststructuralism could bring to translation studies, Arrojo considers that it is "precisely a thorough revision of the relationships that have generally been established between originals and translations, between authors and translators, and between translators and their readers, which are no longer adequately described in terms of the traditional notions of meaning recovery, fidelity or equivalence" (ibid).

4. Conclusions

Literalness as a foreignizing translation strategy advocated by representatives of both deconstructionist and poststructuralist translation approaches may be an appealing concept at first, if one intends to show some of the peculiarities of the original text, especially in the case of some literary texts. However, it should be pointed out that it is a strategy to be used *only* partially in the translated text, i.e. if a whole text is translated literally, then it is *not* a translation proper, it would be simply a calque of the original, which may serve the purposes of calling the reader's attention to a very likely unintelligible exotic target language text. Besides in conveying this exotic nature of the original, I do not see what actual communicative purpose may be achieved through the translation. It should also be acknowledged that in modern translation of practical-sometimes called pragmatic-texts it has been recognized that words expressed in the original correspond only to the lexical and syntactic nature of the text, and that translation has to do more with the meaning conveyed through these surface structures, and, as I would like to underline, the pragmatic dimension of the translation process, i.e. what is intended to be communicated by the source language text (author) is the most crucial aspect to be maintained when translating it into the foreign language.

On the other hand, if it may be true, as Newmark says following Derrida, that meanings are complex and slippery; once this is acknowledged, it is also true, as Pym (1993, p. 46) maintains, that 'referential reality isn't open to debate', and at some point it should be recognized that words mean what they refer to. This means for our theoretical translational purposes that the source language text means what it actually *says* implicitly and explicitly. It does not matter if the words used in the source language text have also been used previously in other texts by other speakers. Besides, as convincingly demonstrated by Searle, once a terminological clarification and an adequate conceptualization are made as regards such key terms in speech act theory as type and token, background and network, use and mention, sentence

meaning and speaker meaning, Derrida's apparently mysterious and allegedly novel notions such as iterability and citability are easily and thoroughly clarified.

The slippery nature of meanings does not mean either that we cannot understand what a text means. As Searle points out there may be no coincidence between what the text's author intended to say and what the text's reader actually understands. This divergence is easily accounted for by acknowledging the imperfect nature of human communication where participants in the communicative interaction have different expectations and may be located in different contexts where they activate different cognitive backgrounds that allow for the emergence of 'misunderstandings'.

Venuti, on the other hand, has rightly pointed out a fact we all professional translators are quite aware of: our professional status seems to be socially undervalued. However, from this fact, we cannot simply advocate a foreignizing translational strategy which strives for visibility at all costs in order to counterbalance this situation. As Crisafulli and Tymoczko maintain, a domesticating fluent and transparent translational strategy does not necessarily imply that the translator is being submissive. A problem I see in Venuti's proposal as regards translational strategies is that he still follows a dichotomous approach, *either* domesticating *or* foreignizing. Translational practice shows us that both strategies are usually combined within one single text and that their use by the translators is not always conscious. As Hatim (1998, p. 124) puts it, "there is the question of whether the translator's intervention is consciously undertaken or whether it unconsciously filters through." In this same line, Tymoczko (2000, p. 36) criticizes Venuti's distinctions in these terms: "Venuti has a hard time maintaining consistent distinctions between the polar opposites he works with, a difficulty which is actually no surprise." As regards the functions proposed by Venuti, Tymoczko adds, "the functions picked out by Venuti's approaches to translation are not coherent either. In fact, the functions of minoritizing or resistant or foreignizing translations are quite variable, assuming for the moment that we can pick out translations corresponding to these terms" (ibid). Thus, "Venuti's concept of *resistance* is less dependent on identifiable criteria or specific functions pertaining to translation than on somewhat arbitrary personal judgments-a matter of taste, let us say- on the part of Venuti and others who use his approaches" (ibid, p. 37). In relation to the possibility of actually using Venuti's concepts, Tymoczko points out that "we are faced with a real difficulty [...], for a *sine qua non* of the usefulness in research of a critical tool or of critical terms is replicability and transfer, both of which seem problematic in the case of extending

Venuti's arguments" (ibid). Besides, one can initially think that Venuti's approach is descriptive, but, as Tymoczko maintains, "ultimately his approach is a normative one, and a highly rigid and autocratic approach to norms at that, making ultimate appeal to his own view of politics rather than the methods or contexts of translation" (ibid, p. 39). Tymoczko explains Venuti's normative stance as follows: his view about "foreignizing and resistant translation is highly specific in its cultural application; it pertains to translation in powerful countries in the West in general and in the United States in particular" (ibid). He does not offer a transitive theory that can be used in smaller countries, lower in the "hierarchies of economic and cultural prestige and power. In this sense his approach is not applicable to translation in postcolonial countries" (ibid). Likewise, some elitism has also been pointed out in Venuti's work by Robinson (1997, p. 99), because of Venuti's almost exclusive concern with literary translations and disregard of lower-class 'utilitarian texts' (*i. e.* pragmatic texts) where an institutional hegemonic domestication intent is evident (ibid, p. 100).

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