

# Translation and Self-Censorship in Gerald Brenan's *The Face of Spain*

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## Abstract

The chapter first provides some background to Gerald Brenan's *The Face of Spain* (1950) before offering an overview of the problems of publishing his texts in Spain. It then presents the main characteristics of the two Spanish translations and some information about the two translators and their very different circumstances. For obvious chronological reasons, the 1952 version had no mission to construct the Brenan myth of the Transition, and thus offered a very limited paratext. However, the 1985 translation was under some pressure not to spoil the myth of Brenan the consummate Hispanophile and anti-Francoist. The paratext of this edition strongly orients the reader<sup>1</sup> and highlights how Brenan, or 'Don Geraldo de Alhaurín', had by then become 'immensely popular' in Spain after being 'forgotten' by the Franco regime because of his "left-wing ideas", and "always showed a great sympathy for the Spanish character" and was even "enamorado de España" [in love with Spain], affirmations which are not borne out by the original text. Through the use of fifteen representative examples from the source text and the two translations, the chapter examines how the two translators responded to the dilemma of translating the book's frequently Hispanophobic and non-progressive views and how their versions differed in terms of the personally and politically offensive nature of the source text.

## Keywords

translation – retranslation – reception – self-censorship – Gerald Brenan – *The Face of Spain*

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1 G nette referred to paratexts as "a privileged place of pragmatics and strategy, of an influence on the public" (1997: 2).

## 1 Introduction

*The Face of Spain* was published in 1950 and is an account of the British Hispanist Gerald Brenan's return to Francoist Spain the previous year, having lived there previously for long periods between 1919 and 1936. It was first translated into Spanish in 1952 as *La Faz Actual de España* [The Current Face of Spain] and was published in Buenos Aires by Losada, a publishing house founded in 1938 by Spanish Republican exiles and amongst whose express aims was the defence of democracy in Spain and a concerted cultural contribution to the overthrowing of the Francoist dictatorship. This first Spanish version was translated by Miguel de Amilibia (1901–1982), a Basque Socialist exile, journalist, and historian, who would later also translate Brenan's *Literature of the Spanish People*.<sup>2</sup> De Amilibia had also been a lawyer and a Socialist politician, and before the Civil War he had represented the leaders of the 1934 uprising in Asturias. During the Civil War he fought on the fronts of both the Basque Country and Asturias and was one of the last representatives of the Republican Government to leave Bilbao in 1937 before it fell into the hands of the Francoist forces. In 1939 he was arrested in France and imprisoned in a concentration camp in Algeria from where he managed to leave for exile in Argentina in 1942. This brief biographical summary clearly indicates the impeccable Republican and Socialist pedigree of the first translator, which would have made it extremely difficult for him to transmit many of the reactionary ideas espoused by Brenan throughout this text. Nevertheless, the book was also characterized by its depiction of the poverty and repression that the author had witnessed in Spain in 1949, and this almost immediate Argentinian translation (which was reprinted in 1964) would have been unthinkable for publication under Franco's regime.

In fact Brenan's text was not translated in Spain until 1985 when it appeared with the literally translated title of *La Faz de España*, a logical modification as this 'face' was no longer 'current' at all. This version was made by Domingo Santos (1941–2018), who was primarily known as a science-fiction writer, editor

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2 *Historia de la literatura española*, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1958. Once again, due to the extreme vigilance of Franco's censors, this politically innocuous book was only published in Spain in 1984 with a rather curious prologue by Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, who referred to Brenan as more of a "connoisseur" than a literary scholar, and diplomatically described his opinions as "unexpected, paradoxical or simply shocking". Despite this decidedly lukewarm introduction to Spanish readers, as in the case of *The Face of Spain*, the appearance of this translation coincided with the extraordinary level of media interest in Brenan as a supposedly anti-Francoist progressive Hispanophile, despite the fact that by now he was extremely reactionary and quite uninterested in contemporary Spanish politics (see Gibson in *Hispanomanía*).

and prolific translator (he is credited with no fewer than 559 translations in the catalogue of the National Library of Spain), and was published in Barcelona by Plaza y Janés, a conventional commercial publishing house. Domingo Santos was the pseudonym of Barcelona author Pedro Domingo Mutinó, who is considered to be one of the founding figures of Spanish science-fiction<sup>3</sup> and also specialized both as a translator and an author in the field of fantastic literature. The translation of Brenan's text was therefore something of an exception in the career of an author who does not appear to have shown any particular political engagement and who would presumably have had merely professional and economic reasons to accept the request from Plaza & Janés to translate what was at that time a commercially attractive text by a figure who was rapidly becoming one of the progressive myths of the Transition in Spain. Whereas Brenan was almost certainly unknown to the first translator, as before 1952 he had only published *The Spanish Labyrinth* in his own name, and this had scarcely made any impact outside of the English-speaking world, by 1985 Brenan was something of a celebrity in Spain and had come to be considered a notable Hispanist and anti-Francoist. Indeed, in 1984 Brenan had been awarded the Medal of Honour of the Spanish Socialist Party, which was personally conferred upon him by the then Minister of Culture Javier Solana, a somewhat ironic recognition in view of Brenan's Romantic eulogization of the illiterate peasantry of rural Spain in texts such as *South from Granada*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this second translator had to solve the additional problem of rendering certain elements of the original text that, as we shall see, are deeply Hispanophobic and which did not match the progressive, left-wing myth promoted by the publisher.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter will first provide an overview of the problem of publishing Brenan's texts in Franco's Spain along with the attitude towards his work of this regime and its censors. Having set out the background to the source text, it will then present the main characteristics of each translation and then analyse several representative examples how each translator dealt with the most potentially problematic aspects of the source text in terms of its many

3 There is an annual prize for science fiction in Spanish named in his honour.

4 This incident prompted Tom Burns Marañón to remark in relation to the original Pablo Iglesias, founder of the Spanish Socialist Party: "Brenan fue honrado por Javier Solana y el socialismo de los ochenta pero Pablo Iglesias habría lapidado al curioso impertinente de Yegen por alabar el analfabetismo" [Brenan was honoured by Javier Solana and 1980s Socialism but Pablo Iglesias would have stoned this 'impertinent onlooker' Yegen for praising illiteracy] (Tom Burns Marañón, *Hispanomanía* [Madrid: Plaza y Janés, 2000], 65).

5 For a complete analysis of the conflict between Hispanophilia and Hispanophobia in *The Face of Spain*, see Walsh (2015).

offensive references to Spanish people and culture. Specifically, the chapter will examine the problems faced by both translators in terms of rendering some of the more troubling and less politically acceptable views expressed by Brenan about Franco's Spain and the Spaniards he met there. Through the comparison and contrast of the different solutions proposed for the renderings of the aforementioned Hispanophobic views, I will seek to analyse how they responded to this translational dilemma and compare the different decisions made, from the first translation which dated from early Republican exile and sought to denounce the poverty and political repression of Franco's Spain, to the second one from the Transition which needed to maintain the reputation of the original author as an anti-Francoist and consummate Hispanophile. Finally, I will offer some conclusions based on this comparative and contrastive analysis of these selected examples from the two translations of what was undoubtedly a frequently troubling source text, and identify the salient differences observed between the approaches adopted by each translator.

## 2 Gerald Brenan in Spanish Translation

In the *Archivo General de la Administración* [The General Archive of the Administration] in Alcalá de Henares near Madrid, where the censorship records from the Francoist Dictatorship are held, there is only one file<sup>6</sup> on the work of Brenan and it contains a report on the translation of *South from Granada*, which was the only one of his works that was ever submitted for permission for publication. The aforementioned text, which originally appeared in English in 1957, was therefore the only book by Brenan that was allowed to be published in translation in Spain during the dictatorship, and even this apparently benign vision of rural Spanish life before the Civil War was subject to strict censorship. Specifically, its occasional references to what happened subsequently in the Alpujarras region described in the book had to be omitted before the text could be published as late as 1974, although the manuscript had been submitted to the censors in 1970. There is no such file on *The Face of Spain* in the Francoist censorship archives in Alcalá de Henares as its publication would have been entirely unthinkable under the dictatorship. Nevertheless, both towards the end of the dictatorship and during the Transition, the work of Brenan enjoyed considerable prestige among the Spanish left-wing intelligentsia, which was perhaps due to a rather limited knowledge of his work, if

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6 At this state archive, these are still simple paper files in aged envelopes and they cannot be photocopied or digitalized).

not downright ignorance of what Brenan had actually written about Spain and Spanish culture. As Juan Antonio Díaz López has stated in what remains the only complete critical study of Brenan's work published to date in Spanish,<sup>7</sup> texts such as *The Spanish Labyrinth* acquired an almost mythical status towards the end of Franco's dictatorship, a status which was distorted by the fact that a politically innocuous and decidedly non-radical text such as *The Spanish Labyrinth* was still banned in Spain as late as 1978. Although it was published in Britain in 1943, until the early 1960s the text, which offered Brenan's decidedly non-radical view of the background to the Spanish Civil War. The text was not available in Spanish until 1962, when a Spanish translation by José Cano Ruiz was officially sanctioned by Brenan and appeared in the legendary anti-Francoist publishing house Ruedo Ibérico in Paris. In his foreword to *The Spanish Labyrinth*, Carr stated that in the 1960s, after the publication of this Spanish translation, which was quickly smuggled into Francoist Spain, it became a 'sacred text for the democratic opposition to Franco'.<sup>8</sup> The mythical status of the text among the Spanish liberal intelligentsia is due to that edition and it was not until 1985 that the book was finally published legally in Spain. In fact, it is striking to recall that during the years of the Transition, Spaniards, or at least the left-leaning progressives who cited him and showed off their copies of the hitherto prohibited text *The Spanish Labyrinth*, were allegedly flattered by Brenan's view of them. In his study of Brenan's work, Díaz-López suggested that Brenan had been more frequently name-checked rather than actually read in Spain:

Durante muchos años, demasiados quizá, Brenan ha sido el gran no-leído de una España que andaba necesitada de maestros [...] para muchos jóvenes de los años sesenta y setenta Brenan era un mito como lo era Marcuse, el Che Guevara o el mismísimo Mao Tsé Tung, y la lectura de sus obras era obligada para mantenerse dentro de los márgenes de la modernidad y la progresía.

DÍAZ LÓPEZ, 1987: 15<sup>9</sup>

As a final curiosity regarding the extremely politicized reception of Gerald Brenan's work in Spain, it is worth noting that his books still appear on the list

7 Díaz López, Juan Antonio. 2007. *Gerald Brenan: Hispanista Angloandaluz*.

8 Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], vii.

9 For many years, too many perhaps, Brenan has been the great unread writer of a Spain that needed maestros [...] for many young people in the sixties and seventies Brenan was a myth, just like Marcuse, Che Guevara or Mao Zedong, and you had to read his books to stay in the realms of modernity and progressiveness. (My translation).

of those controlled or prohibited by the ultra-conservative Catholic organization Opus Dei. Specifically, his work is awarded a number 4 on the scale of 1–6, which means that it can only be read by Opus Dei members if special permission is obtained from a priest and the reader can also justify his or her need to study the text.<sup>10</sup>

### 3 The 1952 Translation

The translator of the 1952 Spanish version of *The Face of Spain*, Miguel de Amilibia, is credited with the translation of over 200 texts, including the aforementioned texts by Gerald Brenan and works by authors such as Daphne du Maurier, O. Henry, and Guy de Maupassant. He was also the author of his own historiographical works about the Spanish Civil War such as *La Guerra Civil Española* [The Spanish Civil War] (1951) and *Los Batallones de Euskadi* [The Battalions of the Basque Country] (1977) and, during his lengthy exile before returning to Spain in 1977, he would contribute numerous articles about the anti-Francoist struggle to the Argentinian press. Therefore, he was not only an experienced translator but also a deeply politicized author in his own right, and this would inevitably have made his version of *The Face of Spain* more than merely another paid translation that was necessary to make a living in exile. It is noteworthy that his 1952 Argentinian translation offered a very limited paratext. In fact, this paratext was minimal and included no introduction or other additional information about the author other than a short text on the inside jacket of the book which approvingly cites Desmond MacCarthy's glowing review of the book from *The Sunday Times* and then informs readers that Mr Brenan "habla el español corrientemente y conoce el país" [speaks Spanish fluently and knows the country] and that his impressions in this book are 'diverse' but "siempre teñidas de una gran objetividad y un gran amor a España y los españoles" [always marked by a great objectivity and a great love for Spain and the Spanish]. In line with Brenan's perceived apoliticism and love for what was deemed to be representative of "Spain and the Spanish", the cover illustration presents a stereotypical image of two aged peasants standing in front of a bullfight poster, even though the book devotes no attention whatsoever to "la fiesta nacional" [the national celebration] of bullfighting.

As this version had no mission to present Brenan as an anti-Francoist progressive, given that Brenan was then unknown in Spain, at least in theory de Amilibia was consequently freer than his 1985 successor to faithfully and

10 See [http://www.opuslibros.org/Index\\_libros/guia\\_general.htm](http://www.opuslibros.org/Index_libros/guia_general.htm) (Accessed 19 January 2021).



FIGURE 6.1 Cover of *La Faz Actual de España* by Gerald Brenan, 1985

honestly reflect deeply offensive opinions about Spanish culture and the current political situation, along with the book's denunciation of the extreme poverty and repression that the author had recently witnessed in Spain. It is extremely unlikely that Miguel de Amilibia would have known anything about Brenan while he was translating *The Face of Spain*, and certainly had no progressive, anti-Francoist image to protect. Essentially, he was charged with the delicate mission of producing a fair and honest translation of a text which would inevitably have been offensive to Republican exile in many of its conformist remarks about Franco and its harsh criticism of the Republic in general and Spanish Socialists in particular, including the de Amilibia himself for whom some comments by Brenan (as we shall see) must have been deeply reprehensible.

#### 4 The 1985 Translation

On the contrary, the second translator in 1985 would inevitably have been subject to a certain commercial pressure to soften and even dilute the original author's frequently offensive comments so as not to spoil the then fashionable and thoroughly attractive myth of Brenan the consummate Hispanophile and anti-Francoist, which was proclaimed even from this edition's front and back covers. Just as in his versions of celebrated best-sellers by authors such



FIGURE 6.2 Cover of *La Faz Actual de España* by Gerald Brenan, 1952

as Frank Herbert, Isaac Asimov and even Stephen Hawking, Domingo Santos was carrying out another commercial translation of an author who was then in vogue. Nevertheless, the fact that Brenan's reading public was composed essentially of Spanish progressives, who considered Brenan to be an anti-Francoist myth, would inevitably have conditioned this version of the source text, and it is immediately obvious that the paratext of this 1985 edition strongly orients the reader. This translation was part of a series entitled *Biografías y Memorias* [Biographies and Memoirs] and its cover reproduced a photo from the progressive Spanish newspaper *El País* which showed an image of Brenan as a venerable old man.

The text on the back cover highlights how Brenan offers “an understanding vision of our country”, “a great sympathy for the Spanish character”, and “always showed a profound love for Spain”, affirmations which are simply not borne out by the original text and which would pose any Spanish translator with the significant dilemma of solving the problem through a certain process of dilution and/or self-censorship. Furthermore, the “Editors’ Note” affectionately refers to the author with respectful Spanish title of “Don Geraldo de Alhaurín”, in reference to the village in Málaga where he lived in his later years, and also tells readers how he had then become “immensely popular” in Spain after being “forgotten” by the Franco regime because of his “left-wing ideas” (5).

The circumstances surrounding this 1985 version were utterly different to those of the first translation, and this second translator was inevitably under some pressure to sustain an act of literary manipulation towards a supposedly



progressive figure who was by then inscribed in the historical memory of the conflict and the post-war. After an approving quote from the left-leaning Catalan poet Gabriel Ferrater (who considered Brenan's *Literature of the Spanish People* to be "the best history of Spanish literature"), the anonymous editors inform their readers that in this book Brenan offers "una visión lúcida, desgarradora, pero entrañable de lo que era España al filo del medio siglo" (6) [a lucid, heart-rending, but also heart-warming vision of what Spain was like at the middle of the century] and that it was a book that showed us "de la mano del amor, una de las zonas más hermosas de nuestra geografía" (6) [led by the hand of love, one of the most beautiful parts of our country]. This last reference to "one of the most beautiful parts of our country" is entirely incongruous given that Brenan had written about many different parts of Spain in this book, and might make us suspect that this laudatory comment was due to the author of this blurb mistaking *The Face of Spain* for *South from Granada*, which does indeed focus on one part of Spain: Andalusia.

Although Brenan had added a second short preface to the 1965 Penguin re-edition of the book (in which the author recognized that since 1949 "the face of Spain has changed almost out of recognition"), this was not translated in this 1985 Spanish version. This same translation by Domingo Santos was subsequently republished in 2003 by Península with a notably different paratext which no longer highlighted Brenan as an anti-Franco progressive and presented a much more anodyne cover photo which showed a rather hazy image of a small village rather than highlighting the venerable figure of the elderly British Hispanist as was the case with the 1985 edition. Nevertheless, the book still received fulsome praise from such a notable Spanish intellectual as Vicente Verdú, who referred to the *Face of Spain* as "un bellissimo libro" [a very beautiful book] and compared it favourably to the prose of such celebrated Spanish writers as Azorín and Baroja.<sup>11</sup>

## 5 Methodology

We will now look at fifteen representative examples of some of the more problematic excerpts from the source text,<sup>12</sup> in which Brenan would frequently reveal himself to be utterly dismissive of Spanish society and culture, in order

11 <http://www.elboomeran.com/blog-post/11/903/vicente-verdu/la-faz-de-espana> (Accessed 10 November 2020).

12 All subsequent references are from the second edition of the book (published in London in 1965 by Penguin Books) and will be given in brackets in the text.

to see to whether or not the versions of both translators resort to omission or dilution of these offensive elements. I have chosen these examples as they clearly represent the different translational dilemmas faced by both translators. De Amilibia was translating the words of an author who could categorically opine that “Spain for some time to come needs to live under an authoritarian régime” (14), an opinion which must have been a deeply offensive anathema to its translator, whereas Santos had to present the progressive myth promised by the book’s paratext. We will also examine to what extent the translations are characterized by recourse to self-censorship through dilution or omission, or merely by a simple lack of knowledge of the pejorative connotation of certain words which led to an incorrect translation. And through a comparative and contrastive analysis of the solutions for these selected examples of problematic excerpts from the source text, we will analyse how Miguel de Amilibia (henceforth, MdA) and Domingo Santos (henceforth DS) decided to render these references into Spanish in very different socio-political circumstances.

## 6 Analysis of the Translations

Brenan (1950)

Spaniards are remarkably smug by nature (30)

De Amilibia (1952)

los españoles son muy presumidos por naturaleza

[Spaniards are very vain by nature]

Santos (1985)

los españoles son notablemente presuntuosos por naturaleza

[Spaniards are notably presumptuous by nature]

Both translators rather undertranslated this offensive reference and thus MdA preferred to render “smug” as “*presumidos*” [vain, conceited] and DS offered a translation in which the term “*presuntuoso*” [presumptuous] again fails to capture the essential harshness of “smug” (i.e. self-satisfied, complacent), which was used by Brenan to refer to his perception that Spaniards believed that whatever happened elsewhere could not seriously affect them. In the context of the supposedly self-imposed cultural isolation of Spaniards, references to their “vanity” or “presumptuousness” do not make much sense and both translators would seem to have misunderstood rather than deliberately diluted the original term.

Brenan (1950)

[all the children in it were well dressed and came from] middle-class families  
(45)

De Amilibia (1952)

familias de clase media  
[middle-class families]

Santos (1985)

familias de clase media  
[middle-class families]

Brenan uses the semantically confusing term “middle-class” several times throughout his text, and the context should clearly have indicated to the translators that this was meant in the British sense of “bourgeois”. Nevertheless, both of them translated this directly as “clase media”, a term which in Spanish simply refers to those who have an average income and are neither rich nor poor, and thus the references sound rather incongruous.<sup>13</sup> In mitigation, it should be acknowledged that allusions to social class are notoriously problematic to translate, particularly in the case of British English, and both translators appear to have been confounded by Brennan’s frequent and loaded use of the term “middle class” to refer to the leaders of the Falange party (i.e. the very bourgeoisie who the author identifies as responsible for the mass corruption in the food rationing system in a country whose ordinary people were going hungry), thus rather distorting the original meaning. However, once again and bearing in mind other lexical mistakes they made in their versions of the text, particularly so in the case of DS, this is much more likely to have been due to a lack of comprehension of the connotational range of the original British English term rather than any intention to socio-politically modify the source text.

13 The whole quote makes it clear that these children from the city of Córdoba were most certainly not from families with an average income at that time, who would barely have had enough to eat, much less dress their children well and give them a secondary education at the local fee-paying Catholic school visited by Brennan: “Our first step was to visit the *Instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria* or Secondary School [...] This school was housed in a magnificent building with a large interior court. All the children in it were well dressed and came from middle-class families, so I asked our companion whether any working-class children found their way here. ‘Very rarely’, he replied [...] The State primary schools are today so neglected that that the children who go to them make no progress [...] Most of the children of the poor grow up without learning how to read or write.” (46–47).

Brenan (1950)

[The Spaniards have inherited] this blankness of mind (60)

De Amilibia (1952)

esta laguna del espíritu, [this lagoon of the spirit]

Santos (1985)

vaciedad mental

[mental emptiness]

This extremely offensive reference to the “blankness of mind” that, to a greater or lesser extent, Brenan attributed to Spaniards is somewhat **diluted** by both translations, presumably in an attempt to mitigate any possible offence. Thus, Mda dilutes this offensive reference somewhat by rendering it as a “lagoon of the spirit”, when there is clearly no reference to spirituality or the lack of it in Brenan’s original phrase, whereas DS writes more harshly that the Spaniards have inherited a “mental emptiness”, which does at least reproduce the offensive reference to a lack of cerebral activity and consequently a lack of intelligence. As Brenan was supposed to be a notable Hispanophile, this mean-spirited and disparaging remark must have been highly offensive and uncomfortable for two Spanish translators, although curiously it was the second translator, the one whose version had a vested interest in consolidating Brenan’s reception as a progressive icon, who rendered this most directly.

Brenan (1950)

those brainless, ecstatic faces of Zurbarán’s monks (61–62)

De Amilibia (1952)

esas caras extáticas de los monjes de Zurbarán

[those ecstatic faces of the monks of Zurbarán]

Santos (1985)

irracionales, estáticos rostros de los monjes de Zurbarán

[those irrational, ecstatic faces of the monks of Zurbarán]

The harsh and thoroughly offensive reference to the “brainless, ecstatic faces” of Zurbarán’s monks is reduced by Mda to “ecstatic faces”, thus directly omitting the reference to their alleged “brainlessness”, a decision which can only be explained by the offence that this comment presumably caused to a translator who was a Spaniard in exile. In contrast, DS rather dilutes the original reference by writing of the monks’ “irrational, ecstatic faces”, reducing the

dysphemism from a complete lack of intelligence to a lack of rationality, which would appear to be decidedly more palatable.

Brenan (1950)

This Belsen atmosphere (71)

De Amilibia (1952)

Este ambiente de Belsen nos deprimió tanto

[This atmosphere of Belsen depressed us so much]

Santos (1985)

Aquella atmósfera nos deprimió tanto

[That atmosphere depressed us so much]

Brenan makes a shocking comparison of the extreme poverty and hunger observed in a small Andalusian town with an infamous Nazi concentration camp by writing that “this Belsen atmosphere depressed us so much that next morning we took the train for Málaga” (71). This specific and shocking historical reference was rendered directly by MdA with an expression mention of Belsen and, in this regard, it should be remembered that MdA was translating the text in 1952 when the reference to the Nazi concentration camp would have been all too painfully recent and clear in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the discovery of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, forty years after the end of this war, DS eliminated this reference to Belsen and simply reduced this phrase to “that atmosphere depressed us so much”. It is not clear if he thought that the reference would have been offensive, incomprehensible or merely irrelevant to his readers in 1985 but, bearing in mind his unflinching attitude to the translation of many other deeply disturbing and Hispanophobic comments throughout the source text, the latter option seems the more likely hypothesis.

Brenan (1950)

her husband, a simple transparently honest man (78)

De Amilibia (1952)

‘el marido es sencillo y transparente’

[the husband down-to-earth and transparent]

Santos (1985)

un hombre sencillo y transparentemente honesto’

[a down-to-earth and transparently honest man]

The translation of the English term “simple”, which is used extremely frequently by Brenan throughout his text to refer disparagingly to many of the Spaniards he encounters on his travels, leads to a disparity of decisions on the part of the two translators. In the case of the example cited above, both Mda and DS decided to translate this use of “simple” in English as “sencillo” in Spanish, although when the former word is used in English in reference to a person it would be much more accurately rendered as “simple” in Spanish, and not “sencillo” which is wholly positive in relation to a person and much closer to “down-to-earth” or “straightforward” in English, and certainly does not have the pejorative connotations of “simple” in both languages. Curiously, when Brenan later refers to “a beggar woman called Marta, aged about thirty and simple” (97), both translators opted here for the direct Spanish cognate “simple”.

Brenan (1950)

[Don Carlos] was optimistic, scheming, irresponsible [...] in short, a Micawber (86)

De Amilibia (1952)

Era optimista, imaginativo, irresponsable [...] en pocas palabras, era Un Micawber

[He was optimistic, imaginative, irresponsible ... in few words, a Micawber]

Santos (1985)

Era optimista, astuto, irresponsable [...] en pocas palabras un Micawber, ese personaje de Dickens siempre optimista

[He was optimistic, imaginative, irresponsible [...] in few words, a Micawber, that character from Dickens who was always optimistic

When Brenan refers to one of his old Spanish acquaintances from Málaga as a “Micawber”, both translators reacted rather differently to this specifically cultural reference to a memorable character from Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. In 1952, Mda presupposed more literary knowledge from his readers than DS in 1985, and thus left this Dickensian reference intact in his version without any further explanation as in the source text. However, DS decided to add some extra information for his readers and felt the need to explain the cultural connotations of Mr Micawber, whom most English-speaking readers would instantly recognize as the man who always famously believed that “something will turn up”. Nevertheless, both translators decided to leave two similarly culture-bound allusions intact. Another example of this questionable translational strategy is found in Brenan’s subsequent reference to “how Democracy, with its Queensberry rules becomes unworkable” (166). For

Anglophone readers, this clearly alludes to the gentlemanly rules of fair play supposedly respected in the sport of boxing, invented by the celebrated infamous 9th Marquess of the same name, whose other claim to fame (or perhaps notoriety) was the crucial role he played in the downfall and disgrace of Oscar Wilde. This specific cultural was also entirely foreignized by both translators and translated directly without any help for presumably bemused Spanish readers for whom the allusion to “Queensberry rules” was not at all a standard cultureme. In the same vein, we also later see how Brenan’s reference to “how out of place this atmosphere of St Helens seemed under Southern skies” (169), made during a visit to Puertollano in La Mancha, was translated directly by both translators maintaining the original references to St. Helens, although it is doubtful whether this reference to St. Helens as an archetypally grim Northern English town would have made any sense through this direct foreignization strategy.

Brenan (1950)

this monkey type of man is a common Mediterranean species (114)

De Amilibia (1952)

Este tipo de hombre es corriente en el Mediterráneo

[This type of man is common in the Mediterranean]

Santos (1985)

Este tipo ridículo de hombre es una especie común en el Mediterráneo

[This ridiculous type of man is a common species in the Mediterranean]

This is undoubtedly one of the most deeply offensive remarks from the source text, and one which positively reeks of the cultural superiority perceived by the upper-class English travel writer, is to be found in this reference to a Spanish engineer that Brenan encountered in Malaga. Perhaps due to the intensely disparaging nature of the original quote, which would have been hard to reconcile with the mission to consolidate the reception of the venerable Hispanophile “Don Geraldo” faced by the second translator, the reference is reduced and consequently diluted by both translators. MDA merely refers to “this type of man” and completely removes the reference to “monkey” and also reduces the animalistic connotations of Brenan’s deliberately mocking use of the word ‘species’, whereas DS goes a little further by rendering “this ridiculous type of man”. Both evidently felt impelled to avoid the troublingly racist connotations of the original use of the term “monkey”, and MDA also either ignored or perhaps misunderstood the loaded use of the term “species”, which in English would be entirely inappropriate when used to refer to people instead than animals

and is redolent of an unmistakable strain of cultural imperialism on the part of Brennan.

Brenan (1950)  
they are two sensible, well-informed men (165)

De Amilibia (1952)  
Son dos personas razonables y bien informadas'  
[two reasonable and well-informed people],

Santos (1985)  
dos hombres sensibles y bien informados'  
[two sensitive and well-informed men].

This thoroughly stereotypical, back-handed compliment about the local innkeeper and his brother, whom Brennan had met in the small town of Pozoblanco in Córdoba, was rendered quite accurately by MdA as “two reasonable and well-informed people”, plausibly substituting “sensible” with “reasonable”, which still conveys the original idea of pragmatism and common sense. However, DS makes a clear mistake in the translation of the English word “sensible”, which is one of the more notorious false friends between English and Spanish, and translates this as “two sensitive and well-informed men”. This mistake is repeated later by DS when Brennan writes of a fellow diner he encountered at an inn located in Almagro in La Mancha and, in one of the sweeping racial generalizations of which he was so fond, informs us that “these people belong to a special type – mild, sensible, un-Iberian” (182). This distinctly non-Hispanophile comment was mistranslated by DS in 1985 as “sweet, sensitive, non-Iberian people”, completely missing Brennan’s allusion to what he considered to be an untypically pragmatic sort of Spaniard. MdA again translated the English terms “sensible” as “razonable” [reasonable] and, judging by his correct rendering of this and other notorious English-Spanish false friends that appear in the text, he seems to have had a stronger grasp of English than his successor thirty-three years later.

Brenan (1950)  
[Some day perhaps Spaniards will realize that in the long run] more is lost by the struggle than by a compromise (169)

De Amilibia (1952)  
se pierde más con la lucha que con el compromiso  
[more is lost with struggle than with commitment]



Santos (1985)  
 se pierde más en las luchas en el compromiso  
 [more is lost in struggles than in commitment]

Both translators clearly misunderstood the term “compromise” in English and translated this basic English-Spanish false friend directly as “compromiso”, which in Spanish refers to a ‘commitment’, often of a political nature, and thus they inadvertently distorted the original call to consensus and mutual agreement, and turned it into an appeal for further political engagement. This confusing mistranslation was, in fact, exactly the opposite of what Brennan was suggesting that Spain needed at the time, and unfortunately distorted his exhortation to understanding and compromise between the two Spains that had been torn apart by the Civil War.

Brenan (1950)  
 the monotony of Spanish culture (184)

De Amilibia (1952)  
 la monotonía de la vida española  
 [the monotony of Spanish life]

Santos (1985)  
 la monotonía de la cultura española  
 [the monotony of Spanish culture]

MdA curiously modifies this reference and writes of the monotony of “Spanish life” rather than “culture”, perhaps offended again by this disparaging reference to his own heritage, whereas DS renders this distinctly non-Hispanophile reference literally and, thus, is once again prepared to directly translate and not dilute or omit offensive remarks about Spanish culture. This stance is all the more laudable given the fact this translation was in no small way meant to consolidate Brennan’s reception in newly democratic Spain as a progressive Hispanophile, a venerable English intellectual with “a profound love for Spain”.

When Brennan encounters some young French girls in his hotel in Madrid, he launches into an extraordinarily racist value judgement which would undoubtedly have been troubling for these two Spanish translators. After referring to his belief that, in comparison to Spanish girls of the same age, “they have less animal vitality, but their mental processes are more complex” (255). The celebrated Hispanophile “Don Geraldo de Alhaurín” concludes this intercultural observation with quite extraordinary condescension and yet more evidence of

cultural imperialism, bordering on what Edward Said (1978) would later define as “Orientalism”:

Brenan (1950)

The truth is that the Spaniards are a simple race in comparison to the English and French. (255)

De Amilibia (1952)

La verdad es que los españoles son una raza sencilla en comparación con la inglesa o la francesa

[The truth is that the Spaniards are a down-to-earth race in comparison to the English or the French]

Santos (1985)

La verdad es que los españoles son una raza simple en comparación con los ingleses o los franceses

[The truth is that the Spaniards are a simple race in comparison to the English and French]

MdA softens the original comment by using “sencilla” which, as we have seen before is semantically much milder than the direct cognate “simple”, whereas DS boldly translated this directly with “simple” and made no attempt to dilute this deeply offensive national slur, despite his version’s commercial interest in consolidating Brenan’s supposedly progressive, left-wing reception as part of the Spanish Transition.

Brenan (1950)

The Spaniard [...] is a rather simple person (255)

De Amilibia (1952)

El español [...] es un hombre más bien sencillo

The Spaniard [...] is quite a down-to-earth person)

Santos (1985)

El español [...] es una persona más bien simple’

The Spaniard [...] is quite a simple person

Once again, Brenan’s pejorative use of the term “simple” leads to a divergence on the part of the two translators. MdA again opts for the much milder option of “sencillo”, thus considerably diluting the original quote and instead

ascribing a down-to-earth, unassuming nature to the Spanish, whereas DS is prepared to maintain the offensive original reference and chooses to render this unflinchingly as “*simple*”. Indeed, as we have seen previously, throughout his translation Mda shows a notable tendency to mitigate offensive references to Spanish people and/or culture through dilution or omission, unlike DS who is prepared to maintain them, perhaps rather surprisingly given his radically different commercial mission in this translation.

Brenan (1950)

everyone either has money or is pretending to have it (261)

De Amilibia (1952)

todos tienen o simulan tener dinero

[everyone either has money or is simulates having it]

Santos (1985)

todo el mundo tiene dinero o pretende tenerlo

[everyone either has money or tries to have it]

Mda correctly renders Brennan's idea that everybody in Madrid was either rich or at least simulating wealth, whereas DS makes another basic mistake with an extremely well-known English-Spanish false friend, confusing the English verb “to pretend” with the Spanish verb “*pretender*”, which essentially means “to try”, thus distinctly changing the sense of the original reference. Once again, DS gives the impression of having a surprisingly limited knowledge of basic English-Spanish false friends for a professional translator. Or perhaps the fact that he was translating so prolifically (as will be remembered, he translated 559 texts in a career in which he also wrote dozens of science-fiction books of his own) and at such speed can partially explain these rather surprising mistranslations.

Brenan (1950)

those great draughty halls of the mind in which the Spaniards habitually live (263)

De Amilibia (1952)

esas grandes y aireadas salas del espíritu en que los españoles habitualmente viven

[those great and airy rooms of the spirit]

Santos (1985)  
 esos grandes espacios mentales llenos de corrientes de aire  
 [those great mental spaces full of draughts].

In this final example from the closing pages of the book, Mda refers rather vaguely and literally to “those great and airy rooms of the spirit”, again changing the reference from the mind to the spirit, whereas DS renders this quite literally and confusingly as “those great mental spaces full of draughts”. Once again, both translators seem either not to have grasped or just not wanted to reflect the essential nastiness of Brenan’s original comment about the supposedly habitual workings of the Spanish mind.

## 7 Conclusions

Maria Tymoczko (2003: 183) has spoken of how “the ideology of a translation resides not simply in the text translated, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in its relevance to the receiving audience” and the two Spanish translations of Gerald Brenan’s *The Face of Spain* represent a paradigmatic case of this observation. The two versions show a similar translational approach to the uncomfortable elements found in the source text i.e. dilution and occasional omission of the offensive references to Spanish people and culture, although the distinctly non-progressive political views espoused by Brenan (such as stating that there was no alternative to a dictatorship at that time) were faithfully translated and not omitted even by a politically committed Basque Socialist exile such as Miguel de Amilibia. Both translators faced a challenge – the first one logically wanted to defend the Spanish Republic, whereas the second translator was charged with the commercial mission of defending a myth of the Spanish Transition. Each translator was subject to a different kind of pressure. The Socialist Miguel de Amilibia was translating a text with political resonances for Spanish Republican exile, whereas Domingo Santos was carrying out a commercial translation of a work by an author who was then in vogue due to his perceived progressive associations. The first translation diluted offensive comments about the people but not the uncomfortable political views, suggesting that Mda was perhaps more offended by the disparaging references to the Spanish people and needed to mitigate them. On the other, although DS made some serious lexical mistakes including the mistranslation of some notorious false friends the occasional mistake but was also prepared to translate more faithfully the disparaging references to Spanish people, despite the fact that his version aspired to be a commercially viable text purporting to be the thoughts of a progressive Hispanophile.

In *Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm wrote that “our accelerated culture is destroying the mechanism of historical memory that links each generation’s experience to that of earlier generations” (Hobsbawm 1994: 3), and the translation and subsequent retranslation of historically significant texts is evidently one of the principal ways of preserving this linking mechanism. Any translation of such a politically sensitive text as *The Face of Spain* was clearly unpublishable in Franco’s Spain and, as we have seen, even the translation of the comparatively benign *South from Granada* was heavily censored and reduced in 1970 prior to publication in 1974. In his Introduction to the 1987 reedition of *The Face of Spain*, John Wolfers wrote that Brenan fortunately “lived to see a democratic regime in which translations of his own books, including this one, could be published freely in Spain” (8). Nevertheless, the frequently offensive nature of many of his remarks about Spain and the Spanish people were naturally a problem for his translators, who were faced with the dilemma of opting to either dilute or omit the many offensive culturally based remarks and the surprisingly reactionary political references from a supposedly progressive, anti-Francoist figurehead. Domingo Santos, who translated Brenan when he was accorded unprecedented and undeserved prestige as a leading foreign opponent of the dictatorship and a celebrated Hispanophile, did neither of these things, and any criticism that can be levelled at his version rests on the basic lexical mistakes that he made. Miguel de Amilibia, a Basque Socialist exile who to some extent was translating the text to denounce a dictatorship that he still hoped to overthrow and restore the Republic, occasionally opted to dilute or even omit some disparaging references to Spanish people and culture. However, he unflinchingly translated the objectionable and even harmful remarks about the political situation that Brenan made, including his affirmation that “Spain for some time to come needs to live under an authoritarian régime”. Given the fact de Amilibia was himself a Socialist exile from Franco’s Spain, and that he was translating the text for a Republican publishing house such as Losada, this displayed exceptional translational honesty on his part.

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