

Darebný, Jan

Spanish verse and Czech verse translation of the polymetric plays of Calderón de la Barca : summary

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SUMMARY

Spanish Verse and Czech Verse Translation of the Polymetric Plays of Calderón de la Barca

This study deals with the topic of verse translation from the Spanish to the Czech language and is focused on a comparison between the original and the translated verse. The objective is to examine the verse of Calderón's polymetric plays, to compare the Spanish and Czech versification systems (which are based on different prosodies) and to analyse the strategies of Czech translators.

The text is divided into the following parts: the first part is introductory; the second part deals with the life and work of Calderón de la Barca and presents some general concepts; the third part is analytical and the final part is the conclusion.

The objectives of the study, presented in the Introduction, are: to introduce the verse of the Spanish playwright Calderón de la Barca and to describe the Spanish versification systems of the given period (17th century); to describe the Czech versification systems into which Calderón's plays have been translated since the second half of the 19th century; to provide a basic orientation of the history of translation of Calderón's plays and to analyse how translators approach the issue of translating theatrical verse; to compare the Spanish and the Czech versification systems using methods provided by versology; to offer an insight into the practice of Czech theatres, which often do not respect polymetry; and finally, to propose some solutions for future translators.

The second part of this study briefly presents the life and work of Calderón de la Barca, followed by an introduction of the concepts which are necessary for the subsequent analytical part. The chapter "Polymetry in Calderón's Theatre" ("Polimetría en el teatro de Calderón") aims to describe the playwright's techniques in composing his *comedias*. The polymetry consists of the fact that certain dramatic situations are related to certain metres and strophic, non-strophic or solid forms: for example, *romance* is a non-strophic form constituted by octosyllabic verses, where every second verse has an assonant rhyme; *redondilla* is a strophic form also constituted by octosyllables, but the rhyme (in this case consonant)

has the *ABBA* scheme; *sonnet* is a traditional solid form composed according to the Italian model: its 14 hendecasyllables have the *ABBA ABBA CDC CDC* rhyme scheme, with the disposition of the last two tercets being variable, etc.

Polymetry was introduced into Spanish theatre by Lope de Vega, with Calderón following his formula, but modifying it. The objective of the next chapter is to compare the techniques of both playwrights. In this chapter, we primarily follow the research by Diego Marín (1962, 2000), who dealt with the polymetry in the plays by Lope, as well as by Calderón. The objective of the chapter is to prove that the polymetry in the *comedias* of the Spanish Golden Age has not merely an ornamental function, but is a significant element of the composition.

The objective of the next chapter is to present the field of study of Versology or the Theory of Verse. This is a modern discipline, bordering on the Theory of Literature and Linguistics. Its basis was founded by Russian Formalists and developed by Structuralists. Members of the Versification Research Group from CAS – the Institute of Czech Literature – in the footsteps of their predecessors, are putting their research activities into practice in individual and collective projects. For example, they have developed a computer program called *Květa*, able to do an automatic statistical analysis of thousands of verses, working with the Corpus of Czech Verse. In Spain, the discipline which deals with verse studies is called *métrica*. The problem is that both disciplines differ in their methodology and conceptual apparatus (one of the reasons for this difference is the fact that the Czech verse of translations is syllabotonic, while the Spanish verse of the Golden Age is syllabic in the case of short metres and syllabotonic in the case of long metres). So the aim of this chapter is to compare both disciplines and to establish a cohesive method, usable for our comparative analysis.

The third, main part of the study is analytical. The methodology varies depending on the type of analysis.

The first chapter is a presentation of the corpus that serves as the basis for our analysis; it is divided into two parts, principal and auxiliary. The first part contains the following translations of Calderón's plays: *El alcalde de Zalamea*, translated by Jan Červenka in 1899, Mirko Tůma and Gustav Schorsch in 1946, Jan Pilař in 1959 and Jindřich Hořejší in 1965; *La vida es sueño*, translated by J. J. Stankovský in 1870, Jaroslav Vrchlický in 1900, Jindřich Hořejší in 1938 and Vladimír Mikeš in 1981. The auxiliary part of the corpus contains translations of *Antes que todos es mi dama* (trans. by Jaroslav Vrchlický, 1902; Eva Bezděková, 1958), *La dama duende* (J. Vrchlický, 1899; Ivan Jelínek, 1936; Jindřich Hořejší, 1940), *La hija del aire* (J. Vrchlický, 1901; K. M. Walló, 1957; V. Mikeš, 1998), *El hombre pobre todo es trazas* (Antonín Klášterský, 1920; Jiří Šrámek, 19–; Jindřich Černý and Vladimír Hvizdala, 1956), *El mágico prodigioso* (Josef Král, 1892; Miloslav Uličný, 1994) and *El médico de su honra* (J. J. Stankovský, 1871; V. Mikeš, 2008). Those *comedias* that were translated only once have been omitted, because of the impossibility of comparison; the religious one-act plays, *autos sacramentales*, were also not analysed.

The second part of this chapter is a diachronic overview of all the translations used in this study: they are identified and inserted into the historical context.

The next chapter deals with a verse composition analysis of all the Czech translations of *El alcalde de Zalamea* and *La vida es sueño* (contained in the principal corpus). After summarising the plots of both plays, their polymetry is analysed. The conceptions of dramatic syntax by Ruano de la Haza (1988) and Mark Vitse (1998) are also presented; the latter

theorist opposes the former, preferring the structuration of Calderón's *comedias* according to the metrical criterion. When approaching the polymetric plays according to Vitse's theory, it can be proved that the verse composition of Calderón's plays is not arbitrary; on the contrary, it is elaborated and well-considered.

Next, the fidelity of the translations to the originals from the point of view of polymetry is considered: for example, Jaroslav Vrchlický (Czech poet and translator, member of the Lumír generation; his translations were published at the turn of 19th century) maintains the original metres and strophic, non-strophic and solid forms, maintains the original rhyme disposition, etc., but his translations are almost unrepresentable in theatres. On the other hand, the translations by Jindřich Hořejší are freer; for example, in his version of *El alcalde de Zalamea*, Hořejší completely cancels Calderón's polymetry, alternating the passages written in prose with a series of iambic pentameters.

The two following chapters, "Spanish Octosyllable and Czech Trochaic Tetrameter" ("El octosílabo español y el tetrametro trocaico checo") and "Spanish Hendecasyllable and Heptasyllable, Czech Iambic Pentameter and Trimeter" ("El endecasílabo y el heptasílabo españoles, el pentámetro y el trímetro yámbico checos") are strictly versological and constitute the main and most extensive part of this study. The chapters are divided into two sections each. The first section deals with the verse of the originals, the second section with the verse of the translations. The goal was to offer an insight into the relation between the chosen metre and the rhythm of specific realisations. In these chapters, the two plays and their translations contained in the principal corpus: *El alcalde de Zalamea* and *La vida es sueño*, are investigated.

Statistical analysis is utilised, inspired by the researches of Czech versologists Jiří Levý, Miroslav Červenka (among others) and the Versification Research Group from the Institute of Czech Literature, CAS. Using a script prepared in MS Excel, thousands of verses were analysed. The syllables of each verse were handwritten into the cells; the prosodic properties of the syllables were defined using the special characters: "_" for an initial stressed syllable; a space for an initial unstressed syllable; "." for a non-initial stressed syllable (only in the analysis of Spanish verse). In the case of oxytonic Spanish verse (ending with a stressed syllable) and Czech masculine verse, which both have only seven (octosyllable) or ten (hendecasyllable) syllables, the character "0" was used. Thereafter, the script was automatically assigned two numerical codes, consisting of ones and zeros for each verse. In the case of oxytonic and masculine verse, the code ends with the letter "m". The first code represents the distribution of stresses in the verse, the second one indicates the distribution of boundaries between words. So, for example, the verse "Dejarne quiero servir" enunciated by Segismundo in *redondillas* in Act II of *La vida es sueño* was inscribed as follows: |De|. jar|me|_que|ro| ser|.vir|0|. The program generated these strings: 0101001m for the distribution of stresses and 1001010 for the distribution of boundaries between words.

Thereafter, a statistical analysis was done of the rhythmical variation of different sequences (*romances* and *redondillas* in the case of octosyllabic verse, *octavas reales* and *silvas* in the case of hendecasyllabic verse). Two methods were employed: vertical and horizontal statistics. The first method consists of counting all the stressed syllables in vertical columns, where each column represents one position in verse; next, the percentage of accentuation of each position was able to be determined, as well as the observation of how the poet or translator follows the given metrical scheme. For example, the Spanish octosyllable has a different scheme from the Czech trochaic tetrameter, despite the fact that both metres

are octosyllabic: the Spanish octosyllable is categorised as syllabic versification, while the Czech trochaic tetrameter is syllabotonic. The horizontal analysis shows the frequencies of particular rhythmical variants of the verse. So, for example, in the case of the Czech trochaic tetrameter, the number of realisations are counted of the variant 10101010 (and 1010101m), which is the “saturated” tetrameter, with all the strong positions stressed and all the weight positions unstressed. However, there are more possible variants of this metre according to Miroslav Červenka’s (2006) correspondent rules. Therefore, the frequencies of all metrical variants were observed. Finally, the non-metrical variants were concentrated on, because these realisations can also appear in the translations and are very important as indicators of the translation style.

The next chapter deals with the translation of rhyme. According to Hrabák (1978), rhyme has three functions: semantic, rhythmical and euphonic. We are of the opinion that a translator should respect all the functions of rhyme. Nevertheless, on the other hand, he should take into consideration the fact that these functions may acquire different importance depending on the language, genre, epoch or author. At the same time, the translator must consider the goal of the translation, the targeting: who will be the audience? Will it be the reader of a book or the spectator in a theatre? The subsequent steps concentrate on the problems of grammatical rhyme, the syllabic extent of rhyme and assonant rhyme. This topic is very important, because in the Spanish literary tradition, assonance is used much more often than in the Czech tradition. To the Spanish audience, this type of rhyme is natural and normal, while Czech readers/listeners do not even perceive it.

In the last chapter of the analytical part of the study, there is a focus on the polymetry in some actual stagings of the translation of *La vida es sueño* by Vladimír Mikeš. For this purpose, a special corpus is used (neither the principal nor the auxiliary one used in the previous analysis), comprising the texts of different stagings that follow on from the translation by Mikeš. However, they have been modified by directors or editors.

After the analysis, it was possible to observe how the modifications (deletions, reductions, substitutions, etc.) affect the polymetry of the translation. It is important to state that the modifications are necessary, because Mikeš translated the play in its whole extent, so it is unrepresentable in actual theatres. However, on the other hand, in many cases these modifications cancel the polymetric structure; this occurs mainly in the case of longer forms such as *octavas reales* or *décimas*. The conclusion is that the translation by Mikeš is very accurate (with some exceptions) from the point of view of the maintenance of polymetry. It is textocentric and quite faithful to the original. In actual stagings, this composition is so disrupted that the solutions by Mikeš almost lose their sense. So the ideal is a double translation of the plays: the first translation which is intended for the theatre, the second one for publication.

In the Conclusion of the study, proposals are formulated which could make the work easier for future translators of Calderón. Some of Mikeš’s rhythmical solutions of trochaic tetrameter are recommended, because the verses of his translation are the best approximation to Calderón’s flexible and dynamic octosyllable. In the case of iambic pentameter as an equivalent to the hendecasyllable, the appropriate alternation of different types of incipits and clauses is recommended. In addition, some possible solutions are proposed for the maintenance of the polymetry of translation, using equivalents of some strophic, non-strophic or solid forms. Nevertheless, the ideal would be a close collaboration between translators and directors.