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# Difficulties and Strategies in the Translation of Proverbs (with illustration of the translation into English of proverbs from *Don Quixote*)

by
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L'article envisage les différentes modalités concernant la traduction des proverbes et des unités phraséologiques et met en évidence les difficultés saisies. L'auteur propose plusieurs stratégies à même d'offrir des solutions adéquates pour la traduction des textes littéraires.

There are many linguists who speak about the impossibility of translating proverbs. This is mainly due to their complexity, and especially because of their metaphoric character, that makes them ineffable, just as poetry, which, in its turn, is seen as impossible to translate. However, this impossibility is usually restricted to the proverbs that reflect the cultural specificity of a community of people, being unique[1]. Even the linguists that accept the possibility of translation, admit that it is one of the most difficult types. The translation of proverbs belongs to the literary translation, being closely connected to the poetic translation. It displays almost all the difficulties characteristic to this type of translation, apart from specific ones, derived from the inherent features of proverbs. Since proverbs are considered to be phraseological units, their translation also has many points in common with the translation of fixed expressions and idioms.

**1. Special Difficulties**

Every text is anchored in a specific culture, since languages are not culturally neutral, but are embedded in a certain culture and contain elements which are derived from it, such as greetings, fixed expressions, proverbs etc. As a consequence, the translation of proverbs, like that of any other type of fixed expression, is sensitive both to linguistic and cultural factors. There are proverbs that are common to many cultures, because they have the same origin, are expressions of shared experience or have been borrowed from one language to another. These proverbs usually have equivalent variants in many languages, so they may present linguistic difficulties, but not cultural ones. But there are also cases when a proverb may have no equivalent in the target language; it is unrealistic to expect to find equivalent proverbs in the target language for each and every one in the source text. This is the case of the proverbs that are unique to a certain community of people and are not shared by other cultures, thus raising cultural difficulties. These proverbs usually reflect the cultural specificity of the community and contain realia, which have no exact equivalents in other languages. Mason says that "the cultural connotations of a word or expression cannot, in some cases, be translated; in other words, it is sometimes impossible to obtain a 'similar effect' in the target language readers, because that effect simply does not exist in their reality"[2].

E.g.: *No se ganó Zamora en una hora*.

[1] Constanţa Avădanei, *Construcţii idiomatice în limbile română şi engleză*, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iaşi, 2000, p. 152.

[2] Eva Samaniego Fernández, *La traducción de la metáfora*, Secretariado de publicaciones e intercambio científico, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, 1996, p. 97.



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→ It makes reference to an event in the history of Spain: Zamora is a city in Castile, near Valladolid, where Sancho II of Castile besieged his sister Doña Urraca, who held the fortress until the king's death, when she gave it up to her second brother, who succeeded to the throne under the title of Alfonso VI.

⇒ Rome was not built in a day.

→ Obviously, a literal translation would have made no sense in the cultural context of England, so the equivalent proverb makes use of a known event in the history of humanity, preserving the global meaning successfully; however, in a text, it would be advisable for the translator to briefly explain in a footnote the significance of the historic event for Spain, for a better understanding of its implications. Another difficulty is represented by the prosodic features of many proverbs. Although they are not fundamental, they play an important role and should not be overlooked in the process of translation. I refer to such features as rhythm, which is especially difficult to maintain, since it is influenced by the length of words, which are completely different in Spanish and English, the latter having much shorter words than the former, rhyme, and, of course, the phonetic figures of speech that usually appear in proverbs (alliteration, onomatopoeia, paronomasia etc.).

E.g.: *A padre ganad**or**, hijo despended**or**.*

⇒ After a thrifty father, a prodigal son.

→ The rhyme has been lost in the English version, but both the image and the sense have been kept.

E.g.: *Entre dos **m**uelas **m**olares, nunca **m**etas tus pulgares.*

⇒ Put not thy hand between the bark and the tree.

→ Both the alliteration and the rhyme have been lost; the image is also different, but the sense has been kept.

E.g.: *Amor y señor**ía**, no quieren compañ**ía**.*

⇒ *L*ove and *l*ord*ship l*ike no fellow*ship*.

→ The rhyme, the image and the sense are identical in the two languages; furthermore, the English proverb makes use of alliteration, while the Spanish one does not. Although the terse, pithy form is characteristic of proverbs in general, this is not always reflected in the same way in every language. So, while, in one language a proverb may be very concise, in other language it might have a longer correspondent. This depends on the length of words, on the possibility or impossibility of omitting certain words, such as articles, prepositions, auxiliary verbs etc.

E.g.: *A mal nudo, mal cuño.*

⇒ A crabbed knot must have a crabbed wedge.

→ The image and the sense are identical, but the English version is obviously longer than the Spanish one, which has an elliptical form (the verb is missing, which is marked by the presence of a comma).

E.g.: *No hay rosa sin espinas.*

⇒ No rose without a thorn.

→ This is the reverse case: although the two proverbs have almost the same length, the English version is elliptical (the copula verb is missing), while the Spanish one maintains the verb; the two proverbs are identical in sense, image and form. Sometimes it is quite difficult to maintain the elliptical form of a proverb, which can be lost in the translation process.

E.g.: *Mozo creciente, lobo en el vientre.*

⇒ Growing youth has a wolf in his belly.



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A major difficulty is raised by the metaphorical nature of proverbs, due to the multiplicity of connotations it conveys, to the fact that many of its connotations are cultural-bound and because it infringes many grammatical rules. Many linguists consider that the complexity of proverbs derives mainly from this particular characteristic. Peter Newmark says that metaphors are used to "describe an entity, event or quality more comprehensively and concisely and in a more complex way than is possible by using literal language"[3]. Van den Broeck also refers to the complexity of metaphors: "The less the quantity of information conveyed by a metaphor and the less complex the structural relations into which it enters in a text, the more translatable this metaphor will be, and vice versa"[4]. When the implied meanings do not overlap completely in the two languages, the translator has to choose which to render and which to do away with. For this, the translator has to take into consideration the frequency, currency and register in which the respective metaphor is used, which should be similar to that of the source language. This is because, as Van den Broeck says "the translation of metaphors, together with other literary devices, is subject to higher hierarchies of constraints than merely linguistic ones"[5]. When the overlap of meanings is small or even zero, because the associations are culture-specific, the metaphor is considered impossible to translate[6]. It has also been highlighted that metaphors are many times opaque, so the translator first has to grasp the meanings correctly, and then find the equivalent image that would render them in their totality, to the extent to which such a thing is possible. A related difficulty occurs in the case of metonymic proverbs, when the images which replace an object are not used in similar contexts in the two languages.

E.g.: *Más vale en paz un huevo que en guerra un gallinero*.

⇒ Better an egg in peace than an ox in war.

→ The first image is identical in Spanish and in English, but the second one is different. The proverbs that contain word plays are especially difficult to translate, because, in most cases, although the sense is rendered, the humorous effect is lost in the target language.

E.g.: *A quien hace casa o se casa, la bolsa le queda rasa*.

⇒ Building and marrying of children are great wasters.

→ The Spanish proverb plays on the perfect homonym '*casa*', with its different meanings of 'house' and 'getting married'; this word play is lost in the English equivalent, which only renders the general meaning.

**2. Strategies**

*Equivalence* is the central strategy in any process of translation, and, more than in any other case, in the translation of proverbs. According to Vinay & Darbelnet it is a procedure which "replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording"[7] (they obviously refer only to the case when the equivalent resembles only the sense, but not the form of the original). So, the first step in the translation of proverbs would be a bibliographic investigation, in order to find an equivalent in the target

[3] Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Paris, Frankfurt, 1981, p. 84.

[4] Eva Samaniego Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 95.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 84.

[7] Mark Schuttleworth, Moira Cowie, *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, St Jerome Publishing, Manchester, 1999, p. 51.



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language[8]. The most fortunate case is that of *total equivalence*, when the proverb found is of similar meaning and form. The target language equivalent proverb should cover the same denotative and connotative meaning as the original one and consist of equivalent lexical items. Furthermore, it should also have roughly the same communicative function, stylistic features, emotional impact and similar metaphoric image on which the proverb is based[9]. This case, however, is not very frequent.

E.g.: *Cuando el gato no está, los ratones bailan*.

⇒ When the cat's away, the mice will play.

But even in the case that the equivalent proverb has similar meaning and form, in one language there might be nuances of meaning that the other lacks. A less demanding strategy is that of *partial equivalence*, when the proverb has similar meaning, but dissimilar form, consisting of different lexical items, morpho-syntactic structures and stylistic features. This is actually the most frequent case with the translation of proverbs and also of other phraseological units[10]. Some linguists offer a variant for this strategy: add a footnote in which give the literal translation of the original proverb, for the target language readers to have the opportunity to familiarise with it.

E.g.: *Quien bestia va a Roma, bestia retorna*.

⇒ If an ass goes a-travelling, he'll not come home a horse.

But finding the right equivalent for a proverb in the target language does not necessarily lead to a successful translation, although it is a fundamental requirement. Other factors must be taken into consideration, such as the significance of the specific lexical items which constitute the proverb, for example if they are manipulated later in the source text, as well as the appropriateness or inappropriateness of using proverbs in a given register in the target language. The convention of using proverbs in written discourse, the context in which they can be used and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target language[11]. In the cases when an equivalent cannot be found in the target language, there are several strategies that can be applied. A first one is the *literal translation* of the proverb (which could be seen as a type of equivalence in which the form is similar, but the meaning is different). It has also been called *pseudo-equivalence*. However, this solution is not accepted by most linguists, especially in the case of the translation of phraseological units, where the global meaning is not made up by the sum of the meanings of its component parts. It is considered a mistake, since it does not remain true to the spirit of the original and deprives the proverb of its semantic, metaphoric, phonetic and rhythmic specificity[12]. Sometimes the meaning may be roughly similar to that of the source language, but most times it deviates completely from it, presenting different or even antagonistic situations, since, in some cases, it is based on the so called 'false friends' analogy. It is only acceptable in the cases when the phraseological units have transparent meanings, which can be easily grasped, but this is not a very frequent case[13].

E.g.: *Quien a buen árbol se arrima, buen sombra le cobija.*

[8] Maryse Privat, "Algunas reflexiones sobre la traducción de fórmulas gnómicas incluidas en textos literarios", in Revista de Filología de la Universidad de La Laguna, Nº 16, 1998, p. 324.

[9] Mona Baker, *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 72.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 74.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 69, 70.

[12] Leonor Ruiz Gurillo, *Las locuciones en español actual*, Areo, Madrid, 2001, p. 93.

[13] Constanţa Avădanei, *op. cit.*, p. 157.



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⇒ He who leans against a fine tree is covered with a good shade.

→ This literal translation of the Spanish proverb does not make much sense to an English speaking person, since it has to do with a geographic fact: in La Mancha 'fine trees' are about as rare as in the Sahara and as desirable, because of the fierce rays of the sun; so, the metaphoric meaning of the proverb – that having the favour and protection of a powerful friend should be a desirable aim in one's life – cannot be fully grasped in the English translation. The *translation by paraphrase* is considered a more adequate strategy than the literal translation. It has also been referred to as *zero equivalence*. The proverb is substituted by a string of words, with no idiomatic character, which expresses the global sense conveyed by the original proverb. In this case, the meaning is rendered, although the formal aspect, including the stylistic effect produced by the proverb, is lost. It is also a good solution when the use of proverbs in the target language text does not seem appropriate because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages. Another solution is the *translation by omission*, when a proverb may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This strategy can be used either because it has no adequate equivalent, it cannot be easily paraphrased or for stylistic reasons[14]. This strategy is usually accompanied by *compensation*, which is seen as "the technique of making up for the translation loss of important source text features by approximating their effects in the target text through means other than those used in the source text"[15]. In this case, the omission of a proverb at some point in a target text can be compensated by the introduction of another proverb in a different part of the text, thus maintaining the idiomatic character of the text. This type of compensation is referred to as *compensation in place*. For the cases when an equivalent proverb cannot be found, some linguists have offered yet another strategy: to try to create a new proverb in the target language, that would resemble the original, featuring broadly the same characteristics. However, taking into consideration the complexity of proverbs, this solution is usually rejected altogether. It simply does not seem plausible that someone could 'create' a proverb, that is such a complex fixed structure, and which usually undergoes long processes of polishing and refining before being accepted in a language as a proverb. For the translation of proverbs which contain realia there are several strategies proposed: transcription (cultural borrowing or assimilation), calque (literal translation), explicitation (descriptive translation)[16]. The purpose is to retain some local colour, without encumbering the reader with an excess of new, frequently impenetrable lexical items.

E.g.: *A quien tiene hambre, todo a **rosquillas** le sabe*.

⇒ Hunger makes hard beans sweet.

→ 'Rosquillas' are a type of pastry, typically Spanish, similar to doughnuts, with no correspondent in English; the English proverb follows, more or less, the same pattern, but makes use of a common type of food instead of the Spanish one. In the translation of metaphorical proverbs (which means the majority of proverbs), the translator has to opt between rendering the sense or the image of the metaphor. He can either choose to translate it literally, leaving the understanding of the sense to the reader, or to transfer one interpretation of the many possible ones into the target language, by paraphrase[17]. Eugene

[14] Mona Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[15] Mark Schuttleworth, Moira Cowie, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 140.

[17] Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of translation*, Prentice Hall, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, 1988, p. 105.



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Nida and Charles Taber think that what the translator has to take into account, when translating figurative meaning, is "the response of the receptor to the translated message"[18], which should be understood correctly. In the case that the associations of meanings are culture-specific, thus their overlap being very small or zero, it is not recommended to translate it literally, but rather to explain it through a non-metaphoric string of words, obviously losing the stylistic effect. It is one of the three more common procedures used for the translation of metaphor[19]:

- through an equivalent one (depending on the cultural overlaps, the same image could be rendered);
- through an adapted one, replacing a source language image with another established in the target language, with the same meanings, so that it would not clash with the target language culture;
- or transforming metaphor into non-metaphor: through a simile, thus retaining the image or by means of an explanation, converting the metaphor to sense, when an equivalent cannot be found.

E.g.: *Cuando las barbas de tu vecino vieras pelar, echa la tuya a remojar*.
⇒ When thy neighbour's house doth burn, be careful of thine own.

→ Although both proverbs express the same idea and both are metaphoric, the images used are different.

E.g.: *El fuego y el agua son buenos servidores, pero malos amos*.
⇒ Fire and water are good servants, but bad masters.

→ This is a successful case of equivalence, since both the sense and the image of the metaphor have been preserved. Newmark gives one more possibility in the case that an equivalent metaphor does not exist: transfer the same metaphorical image into the target language and add a gloss, in order to help the reader understand the meaning; but this is not a widely accepted idea. However, the strategies given are nothing more than some guidelines to help translators find the best possibility to render metaphorical proverbs in the target language, since, each metaphor has to be analyzed separately and one cannot make generalizations, each being unique. Mason also recognizes the individuality of metaphors: "Each occurrence of a metaphor for translation must be treated in isolation; each of its components must be dealt with in the light of its cultural connotations before a translation of the whole can take place, and account must also be taken of the textual context in which the metaphor is used".

## 3. Illustration

### 3.1. Proverbs in Context

Proverbs are not usually used outside a certain context, which is seen as essential for their correct interpretation due to the fact that they convey a message in an indirect way and their sense often diverges from the sum of the individual elements[20]. As a consequence, the relation of proverbs to their context has been seen as extremely important, and even from the beginning, from Plato and Aristotle, proverbs have been studied in their context[21]. They made reference both to the linguistic context (the verbal expressions that make up the discourse) and to the situational context (created by the spatial, temporal, ethnic, sociologic circumstances) in which a proverb appears. The two

[18] Charles Taber, Eugene A. Nida, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1969, p. 1.
[19] Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*, p. 88-91.
[20] Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1964, p. 51.
[21] Cezar Tabarcea, *Poetica proverbului*, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 112.



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elements define and delimit each other: the proverb helps in the decodification of the context, and the context eliminates at least some of the possible meanings that create semantic ambiguity, when a proverb is seen in isolation[22]. Proverbs are linguistic units similar to words, but displaying greater complexity than them, and like them, proverbs are polysemous. A linguistic unit (word or proverb) usually contains a wide range of potential meanings, from which only one is made evident in speech, which in the actual performance, is a text. Therefore, the relation between proverbs and their context has been considered similar to that between the potential meanings of a word and the actual meaning conveyed by it when used in a context.

The proverbs contained in a literary work have a special position in comparison to those used in everyday speech or that appear in a collection, due to the different role they play in it. Don Quixote reprimanded Sancho, his squire, for using proverbs at random, explaining him that they must fulfill a certain function, fit in a certain context; otherwise, it was foolish to use them[23]. In a literary work, the author chooses only one from all the potential meanings of a proverb, which is made evident in the particular situation he presents[24]. The use of proverbs in a literary work can have different motivations: they can be used by the author for didactic purposes, which was the general European tradition, can pass judgment on a certain character, attitude, situation etc., or can be manipulated for linguistic purposes, creating word plays[25]. Furthermore, they add to the specificity of the literary work, thus raising the interest of the reader. The complexity of proverbs is much greater when they are contained in a literary masterpiece, like *Don Quijote*, in which every word, every irony, every word play has great significance. Harold Bloom considered Cervantes and Shakespeare "the central Western authors, at least since Dante, and no writer since has matched them"[26]. Cervantes is seen as the creator of literary language, his style is a linguistic model and the Spanish language has even been referred to as "la lengua de Cervantes"[27]. *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* is not only a great monument in Spanish literature, but a pillar of the entire Western literary tradition, having been voted in 2002 the best work of fiction in the world[28]. It contains within itself, in germ or in full-bloom, practically every imaginative technique and device used by subsequent fiction writers to engage their readers and construct their work. The language used is extremely rich and a great variety of styles and idiolects are interwoven, depending on the particular situation. The literary language of *Don Quijote* has been considered the model of language that would be advisable to imitate[29].

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

[23] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Centro de estudios cervantinos, Alcalá de Henares, 1993, p. 1062.

[24] Casia Zaharia, *Expresiile idiomatice în procesul comunicării*, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iași, 2004, p. 317.

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 323.

[26] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, A New Translation by Edith Grossman, Introduction by Harold Bloom, An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2003, p. XXI.

[27] Idem, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Real Academia Española, Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, Madrid, 2004, p. 1122, 1129.

[28] Idem, *Don Quixote*, 2003, p. XIX.

[29] Idem, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 2004, p. 1125.



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### 3.2. The Value of *Don Quixote* as a Collection of Proverbs

Spanish proverbs are considered wiser, wittier and more numerous than those of any other language, which has been seen as a consequence of the extended domination by the Arabs in the Peninsula. Moreover, the Spanish people have always held proverbs in high honour, fact also proven by the great number of collections of proverbs that have been published in Spain. In such a context, and at a time (the 17th century) when proverbs were in the height of their popularity, *Don Quixote* remains the "best and choicest collection of Spanish proverbs in the world, that have been selected and approved by so good a judge as Cevantes"[30]. It is considered "o capodoperă a literaturii universale în care proverbele sînt valorificate artistic într-un mod magistral"[31]. *Don Quixote* contains a great variety of proverbs, especially in the second part, although, obviously, there are many well-known Spanish proverbs which Cervantes did not introduce in his immortal work. Most proverbs are put in the mouth of Don Quixote's Squire, Sancho Panza, whose proverbs are almost as celebrated as the masterpiece in which they are contained. The defining trait of his language is the extensive use of proverbs, maxims, aphorisms, some more appropriately introduced than others. "'Sancho Panza's proverbs,' said the duchess, 'though more in number than the Greek Commander's, are not therefore less to be esteemed for the conciseness of the maxims. For my own part, I can say they give me more pleasure than others that may be better brought in and more seasonably introduced.'"[32]. But it is not the Squire alone who gives utterance to the wise proverbs, each character contributes with his "pinch of proverbial salt" and the grave knight himself points his morals with quite many sayings. He even says: "I think, Sancho, there is no proverb that is not true, all being maxims drawn from experience itself, the mother of all the sciences"[33]. The use of proverbs in this masterpiece has different ends in different parts of the work, the two extreme points being either to pass judgment on a certain situation, or to create a word play, drawing on the expressive resources of the language. But between the two, there are other numerous functions that proverbs play in the work, making Cervantes an expert in the manipulation of proverbs in a literary work.

Due to the great appreciation of Cervantes's work, *Don Quixote* has had quite many translations into English, some more valuable than others, although "the translation of the first – and probably the greatest – modern novel" has been seen as a "wonderfully utopian task", in the sense intended by Ortega y Gasset[34]. The English readers have had the opportunity to enjoy the adventures of Don Quixote and the other characters for more than two centuries now. However, John Ormsby's opinion is that there can be no truly satisfactory translation of *Don Quixote* in any language, not so much because of the difficulty of its language, which is indeed challenging for any translator, but rather because "the sententious terseness to which the humour of the book owes its flavour is peculiar to Spanish, and can at best be only distantly imitated in any other tongue"[35]. Any translator approaching the work should treat it with the respect due to a great classic,

[30] Ulick Ralph Burke, *Spanish Salt, a Collection of All the Proverbs which Are to Be Found in Don Quixote*, with a Literal English Translation, Basil Montagu Pickering, London, 1892, p. XXIII.

[31] Cezar Tabarcea, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

[32] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, translated by John Ormsby, Heritage Press, New York, 1950, part II, ch. XXXIV.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[34] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 2003, p. XVII.

[35] *Ibidem*, 1950, p. V.



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trying not only to tell the story, but to tell it as Cervantes did, at least so far as differences of circumstances permit.

**3.3. Illustration with Proverbs from *Don Quixote***

For the illustration of the difficulties and strategies used in the translation of proverbs, I have analyzed the English translation of some proverbs that occur in *Don Quixote*. First, in a collection containing all its proverbs – *Spanish Salt, a Collection of All the Proverbs which Are to Be Found in Don Quixote*, with a Literal English Translation by Ulick Ralph Burke and then, as they appear in two English versions of the book: the 1950 edition of John Ormsby's translation and the 2003 translation by Edith Grossman.

**3.3.1. Proverbs in a Collection**

I will start by analyzing the *Spanish Salt, a Collection of All the Proverbs which Are to Be Found in Don Quixote*, with a Literal English Translation by Ulick Ralph Burke. It contains a total of 352 proverbs, which are arranged alphabetically according to a key-word, which is printed in capitals. After each proverb, there is a reference to the part and chapter of *Don Quixote* where it can be found and, when it also appeared in some great Spanish collection of proverbs, it is specified, with the number of the page. The translator assures us that "every true proverb which occurs in *Don Quixote* will, I undertake to say, be found in this collection, as well as a few proverbial sayings or similes, and some wise saws or sentences not strictly speaking proverbs, but sufficiently pointed, I trust, to justify their presence in this work"[36]. As the title suggests, the method chosen by the translator is the literal one, and he remains constant all through his work. This is the second method proposed by some linguists for the translation of proverbs contained in a collection, when an equivalent cannot be found[37]. However, as I have already pointed out, this is not a generally accepted method, especially in the case of the translation of phraseological units. Being a literal translation, the metaphorical images were rendered in all cases, but while some had a transparent sense and could be easily understood by the reader, others, though beautiful, were rather opaque. Moreover, except in the cases when the proverbs were identical in the two languages, the idiomatic character was lost in the translation. And despite the fact that it was a literal translation, many formal aspects of the Spanish proverbs, such as rhythm, rhyme, phonetic figures of speech, word plays etc. were not rendered in most cases. In spite of its shortcomings, the literal translation was successful in the cases when the proverbs in the two languages coincided, since they had the same origin, which was usually the Bible.

E.g.: *Dime con quien andas, decirte he quien eres*. (II, 9, 23)

⇒ Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are.

→ The exact English equivalent is: 'Tell me with whom thou goest, and I'll tell thee what thou doest.' Another case when the literal translation was at least partially successful was when the Spanish proverb had a transparent meaning, which could be easily grasped by the English reader.

E.g.: *Mientras se gana algo no se pierde nada*. (II, 7)

⇒ While one is gaining anything one is losing nothing.

The lack of efficiency of this method in the translation of phraseological units, whose meaning could be opaque, was compensated by the translator, in some cases, by additional explanations. Unfortunately, he was not constant in their use. They made clear:

[36] Ulick Ralph Burke, *op. cit.*, p. XIII.

[37] Maryse Privat, *op. cit.*, p. 323.



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- the general meaning of the proverb

  E.g.: *Ir por los cerros de Úbeda*. (II, 43, 57)

  ⇒ To run about the hills of Úbeda.

  ("To run from one thing to another, to diverge from the matter in hand.")
- the cultural aspects reflected in the proverbs, which might have hindered the reader from understanding them

  E.g.: *Las cañas se vuelven lanzas*. (II, 12)

  ⇒ Reeds become darts.

  ("The simile evidently has reference to the old *juegos de cañas*, or cane-games, sham tournaments, which, however, often led to combats with more deadly weapons. Thus, beginning to play with inoffensive *cañas*, they finished by tilting with real *lanzas*."). Without the explanation, the metaphorical image could not have been understood by someone not acquainted with the old Spanish tradition.
- the meaning of some words which displayed certain difficulties

  E.g.: *Pedir **cotufas** en el golfo*. (I, 30; II, 20)

  ⇒ To look for dainties at the bottom of the sea.

  ("The real or primary signification of *cotufas* is Jerusalem artichokes, although Pineda says they are the same as *Criadillas* or Truffles. The word seems to be applied generally to any vegetable delicacy.")
- sometimes, also the origin of the proverb was explained

  E.g.: *El diablo está en Cantillana*. (II, 49)

  ⇒ The Devil is in Cantillana.

  ("A proverbial expression, derived, according to Gonzalo de Oviedo, from a certain Juan Tenorio, who, in the troubled reign of Alfonso XI, was noted for his forays, to which the town of Cantillana, being on the Guadalquivir, was especially subject. This Juan Tenorio was nicknamed, like Robert of Normandy, *El Diablo*.")

In other cases, quite many actually, an English equivalent proverb was given as well, besides the literal translation.

E.g.: *Más vale un "toma" que dos "te daré"*. (II, 7, 35, 71)

⇒ One "take" is worth more than two "I'll give thee's".

("Eng. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'.")

A less frequent case was when he gave several equivalent English proverbs, which were variations of the original one.

E.g.: *A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando*. (II, 35)

⇒ Praying to God, and hammering away.

("Eng. 'Prayer on the lips, and labour on the hands'.
'Trust in God, but look to yourself'.
'Pray to God, but row to shore'.
'Who sweats afield and prays to God at home, will never starve'.
'Trust in God, and keep your powder dry'.
'Call upon God, but don't irritate the Devil'.")

→ The sense of this metaphorical proverb was quite transparent, since it resembles closely the English equivalent. Unfortunately, both the rhythm and rhyme of the Spanish proverb were lost. And in some cases, an equivalent French, Italian or Latin proverb was also given.

E.g.: *No hay camino tan llano que no tenga algún tropezón*. (II, 13)

⇒ There is no road so level as to have no rough places.

("Fr. 'Il n'y a pas de rose sans épines'.")



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There were also instances when the translator offered different versions of the Spanish proverb.

E.g.: *Sobre mí la capa cuando llueva*. (II, 66)

⇒ [Put] the cloak over me when it rains.

("Sp. 'Una buena capa todo tapa'.")

And for some proverbs, the translator even combined these methods, offering both an explanation and an equivalent English, French, Italian or Latin proverb.

E.g.: *Todo saldrá en la colada*. (I, 20, 22; II, 36)

⇒ All will come out in the washing.

("*Colada*, lit. lye for linen. Similarly, '*Todo saldrá al freír de los huevos*.' We say 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'; the Spanish proverb says that the quality of the linen or other stuff, or of the colour with which it has been dyed, will be apparent after the test of 'the wash'."). There were proverbs which contained Spanish words which had no exact equivalent in other languages (realia), being thus impossible to translate into English. The translator proved quite skilful in rendering those words either simply by repeating the Spanish word (cultural borrowing) or by translating it through an English term with a similar meaning. In either case, he also offered additional explanations, which were rather illuminating.

E.g.: *En un **credo** las haré*. (I, 25; II, 25)

⇒ I will do it in the saying of a "Credo".

("Such formulations were usually gabbled over pretty fast. Similarly the English verb "to patter" is derived from *Pater noster*. But as a fact, the *Credo* is much longer than the *Pater noster*, and is indeed one of the longest exercises in the Mass.")

E.g.: *Donde hay mucho amor no suele haber mucha **desenvoltura***. (II, 65)

⇒ Where there is much love, there is usually but little boldness.

("*desenvoltura*: a word for which there is no exact equivalent in English, and which I have accordingly translated 'boldness'").

A great difficulty was also raised by the Spanish proverbs which played upon the different meanings of a word. Unfortunately, this special effect is usually lost in the translation process, and so was the case with this translation as well. But the translator at least gave some explanations, clarifying the word play.

E.g.: *El amor mira con unos antojos que hacen parecer oro el cobre, a la pobreza riqueza, y a las lagañas perlas*. (II, 19)

⇒ Love looks through spectacles which make copper look like gold, poverty like riches, and foul tears like pearls.

("*Antojos* means 'longings' as well as 'spectacles', for which the more modern form is *anteojos*."). Unfortunately, there were also quite many proverbs whose meaning was rather difficult to grasp and for which no explanations of any type or equivalent forms were given.

E.g.: *En otras casas cuecen habas y en la mía a calderadas*. (II, 13)

⇒ In other houses they cook beans, but in mine they cook cauldrons full.

→ Besides the sense, which is quite opaque, the elliptical form of the original proverb was also lost in the English translation.

**3.3.2. Proverbs in a Literary Context**

I will now analyze some proverbs from *Don Quixote*, as they appear in two English translations. The 1885 translation made by John Ormsby was considered the most honest of all translations, at least up to his time, without expansions upon the text, nor changing of the proverbs and most modern translators took it as their model. The methods he used for the translation of the proverbs that appeared in the book were: finding an English equivalent,



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paraphrase and literal translation. For quite many Spanish proverbs the translator managed to find an exact English equivalent – identical both in meaning and in form, thus maintaining the metaphorical image, whose sense was transparent.

E.g.: "– *Paréceme, Sancho, que no hay refrán que no sea verdadero, porque todos son sentencias sacadas de la mesma experiencia, madre de las ciencias todas, especialmente aquel que dice: '**Donde una puerta se cierra, otra se abre'**. Dígolo porque si anoche nos cerró la ventura la puerta de la que buscábamos, engañándonos con los batanes, ahora nos abre de par en par otra, para otra mejor y más cierta aventura;* […]" (I, XXI).

⇒ "*I think, Sancho, there is no proverb that is not true, all being maxims drawn from experience itself, the mother of all the sciences, especially that one that says, '**Where one door shuts, another opens**.' I say so because if last night fortune shut the door of the adventure we were looking for against us, cheating us with the fulling mills, it now opens wide another one for another better and more certain adventure,* […]".

→ It was important to keep not only the sense, but also the form, since the words of the proverb were manipulated later in the text, so the translation is truly successful. The proverbs that had a biblical origin were other instances of exact equivalence, since they are usually identical in many languages.

E.g.: "*Así que, no hay para qué nadie se tome conmigo, y pues que tengo buena fama, y, según oí decir a mi señor, que **más vale el buen nombre que las muchas riquezas**, encájenme ese gobierno y verán maravillas; que quien ha sido buen escudero será buen gobernador*." (II, XXXIII)

⇒ "*So there's no occasion for anybody to quarrel with me; and then I have a good character, and, as I have heard my master say, '**a good name is better than great riches**;' let them only stick me into this government and they'll see wonders, for one who has been a good squire will be a good governor*."

→ The proverb is an adaptation from Ecclesiastes 7: 1. In some of the cases when the translator did not find an equivalent English proverb, he opted for a paraphrase of the general meaning.

E.g.: "*El cura lo sosegó todo, prometiendo de satisfacerles su pérdida lo mejor que pudiese, así de los cueros como del vino, y principalmente del menoscabo de la cola, de quien tanta cuenta hacían. Dorotea consoló a Sancho Panza diciéndole que cada y cuando que pareciese haber sido verdad que su amo hubiese descabezado al gigante, le prometía, en viéndose pacífica en su reino, de darle el mejor condado que en él hubiese. Consolóse con esto Sancho, y aseguró a la princesa que tuviese por cierto que él había visto la cabeza del gigante, y que, por más señas, tenía una barba que le llegaba a la cintura; y que si no parecía, era porque todo cuanto en aquella casa pasaba era por vía de encantamento como él lo había probado otra vez que había posado en ella. Dorotea dijo que así lo creía, y que no tuviese pena, que **todo se haría bien y sucedería a pedir de boca***." (I, XXXV)

⇒ "*The curate smoothed matters by promising to make good all losses to the best of his power, not only as regarded the wine-skins but also the wine, and above all the depreciation of the tail which they set such store by. Dorothea comforted Sancho, telling him that she pledged herself, as soon as it should appear certain that his master had decapitated the giant, and she found herself peacefully established in her kingdom, to bestow upon him the best county there was in it. With this Sancho consoled himself, and assured the princess she might rely upon it that he had seen the head of the giant, and more by token it had a beard that reached to the girdle, and that if it was not to be seen now it was because everything that happened in that house went by enchantment, as he himself had proved the last time he had lodged there. Dorothea said she fully believed it, and that he need not be uneasy, **for all would go well and turn out as he wished***."

→ It was an efficient translation, although he rendered only the meaning of the proverb, and its form and metaphorical image were lost, besides the idiomatic character of



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the text. In other cases, he chose to translate the proverbs literally, strange enough, even when they had close equivalents in English.

E.g.: "*Pues dígame, señor: ¿piensa vuestra merced caminar este camino en balde, y dejar pasar y perder un tan rico y tan principal casamiento como éste, donde le dan en dote un reino, que a buena verdad que he oído decir que tiene más de veinte mil leguas de contorno, y que es abundantísimo de todas las cosas que son necesarias para el sustento de la vida humana, y que es mayor que Portugal y que Castilla juntos? Calle, por amor de Dios, y tenga vergüenza de lo que ha dicho, y tome mi consejo, y cásese luego en el primer lugar que haya cura; y si no, ahí está nuestro licenciado, que lo hará de perlas. Y advierta que ya tengo edad para dar consejos, y que este que le doy le viene de molde, y que* ***más vale pájaro en mano que buitre volando****, porque quien bien tiene y mal escoge, por bien que se enoja no se venga.*" (I, XXXI)

⇒ "*Tell me, senor, do you mean to travel all that way for nothing, and to let slip and lose so rich and great a match as this where they give as a portion a kingdom that in sober truth I have heard say is more than twenty thousand leagues round about, and abounds with all things necessary to support human life, and is bigger than Portugal and Castile put together? Peace, for the love of God! Blush for what you have said, and take my advice, and forgive me, and marry at once in the first village where there is a curate; if not, here is our licentiate who will do the business beautifully; remember, I am old enough to give advice, and this I am giving comes pat to the purpose;* ***for a sparrow in the hand is better than a vulture on the wing****, and he who has the good to his hand and chooses the bad, that the good he complains of may not come to him.*"

→ In English, there were several quite close equivalents of the Spanish proverb: 'A bird in hand is worth two in the bush', 'A feather in hand is better than a bird in the air', 'Better a fowl in hand nor two flying'. Though he employed the literal translation, the rhythm and rhyme of the original proverb were lost. In some cases, the literal translation was quite successful, at least in the formal aspect, although the sense was not very clear and the idiomatic character was lost.

E.g.: "*Sancho nací, y Sancho pienso morir; pero si con todo esto, de buenas a buenas, sin mucha solicitud y sin mucho riesgo, me deparase el cielo alguna ínsula, o otra cosa semejante, no soy tan necio que la desechase; que también se dice: '****Cuando te dieren la vaquilla, corre con la soguilla'****; y 'Cuando viene el bien, mételo en tu casa'.*" (II, IV)

⇒ "*Sancho I was born and Sancho I mean to die. But for all that, if heaven were to make me a fair offer of an island or something else of the kind, without much trouble and without much risk, I am not such a fool as to refuse it; for they say, too, '****when they offer thee a heifer, run with a halter'****; and 'when good luck comes to thee, take it in'.*"

→ The translator managed to maintain the metaphoric image – although it was not very transparent –, and the rhythm and rhyme of the original proverb. Obviously, the proverbs containing words plays had a higher degree of difficulty, and, although it was a literal translation, the humorous effect was usually lost, because of the lexico-semantic differences between the two languages.

E.g.: "*¡Vive el Señor, que voy viendo que le habéis de tener compañía en la jaula, y que habéis de quedar tan encantado como él, por lo que os toca de su humor y de su caballería! En mal punto* ***os empreñastes de sus promesas****, y en mal hora se os entró en los cascos la ínsula que tanto deseáis.*

*– Yo no estoy preñado de nadie – respondió Sancho –, ni soy hombre que me dejaría empreñar, del rey que fuese; y, aunque pobre, soy cristiano viejo, y no debo nada a nadie; y si ínsula deseo, otros desean otras cosas peores; y cada uno es hijo de sus obras; y, debajo de ser hombre, puedo venir a ser papa, cuanto más gobernador de una ínsula, y más pudiendo ganar tantas mi señor que le falte a quien dallas.*" (I, XLVII)



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⇒ "*"By God, I begin to see that you will have to keep him company in the cage, and be enchanted like him for having caught some of his humour and chivalry. It was an evil hour when* ***you let yourself be got with child by his promises****, and that island you long so much for found its way into your head."*

*"I am not with child by anyone," returned Sancho, "nor am I a man to let myself be got with child, if it was by the King himself. Though I am poor I am an old Christian, and I owe nothing to nobody, and if I long for an island, other people long for worse. Each of us is the son of his own works; and being a man I may come to be pope, not to say governor of an island, especially as my master may win so many that he will not know whom to give them to.*"

→ 'Empreñarse de las promesas / de lo primero que oye ...' is said about people who easily believe what they are told, without thinking that it might not be true; 'empreñar a alguien' means literally to get pregnant; Cervantes played here with the literal and idiomatic sense of the verb. Sometimes, the literal translation led to deviations in the semantic content of the proverb, which did not make sense in English.

E.g.: "*Todo esto que he dicho, señor cura, no es más de por encarecer a su paternidad haga conciencia del mal tratamiento que a mi señor se le hace, y mire bien no le pida Dios en la otra vida esta prisión de mi amo, y se la haga cargo de todos aquellos socorros y bienes que mi señor don Quijote deja de hacer en este tiempo que está preso.*

*– **¡Adóbame esos candiles**! – dijo a este punto el barbero –. ¿También vos, Sancho, sois de la cofradía de vuestro amo? ¡Vive el Señor, que voy viendo que le habéis de tener compañía en la jaula, y que habéis de quedar tan encantado como él, por lo que os toca de su humor y de su caballería*!" (I, XLVII)

⇒ "*I have said all this, senor curate, only to urge your paternity to lay to your conscience your ill-treatment of my master; and have a care that God does not call you to account in another life for making a prisoner of him in this way, and charge against you all the succours and good deeds that my lord Don Quixote leaves undone while he is shut up."*

***"Trim those lamps there****!" exclaimed the barber at this; "so you are of the same fraternity as your master, too, Sancho? By God, I begin to see that you will have to keep him company in the cage, and be enchanted like him for having caught some of his humour and chivalry*."

→ The Spanish proverb is used to express distrust of what somebody is saying and could have been better rendered by a paraphrase, maintaining the sense, though losing the metaphorical image, which was rather opaque for the reader anyway.

The 2003 translation by Edith Grossman obviously makes use of a much modern language than the previous ones and comes highly recommended by Harold Bloom, in the introduction to her translation, "for the extraordinarily high quality of her prose"[38]. The techniques she used were the same: finding an equivalent English proverb, and in the case when it was not possible, paraphrasing the sense or translating it literally. She also made use of footnotes in several occasions, which I think was well-inspired, due to the difficulty and complexity of the translation. She says with regard to footnotes: "I decided I was obliged to put some in […] I did not want the reader to be put off by references that may now be obscure, or to miss the layers of intention and meaning those allusions create"[39]. The best cases of equivalence were obviously when she managed to find a proverb which was similar both in sense and in form, thus preserving the metaphorical image, which was identical.

E.g.: "*Así que, desde hoy en adelante, nos hemos de tratar con más respeto, sin darnos cordelejo, porque, de cualquier manera que yo me enoje con vos****, ha de ser mal para el cántaro***." (I, XX)

[38] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 2003, p. XXII.
[39] *Ibidem*, p. XVIII.



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⇒ "*Therefore, from this day forward, we must treat each other with more respect and refrain from mockery, because no matter why I lose my temper with you**, it will be bad for the pitcher***."

→ Don Quixote used here only the second half of the proverb to make his point clear to Sancho; the Spanish proverb goes like this: 'si la piedra da en el cántaro, mal para el cántaro, y si el cántaro da en la piedra, mal para el cántaro'; this is why I believe Grossman's footnote was quite effective in this case: "This is the second half of a proverb: 'It doesn't matter if the pitcher hits the stone or the stone hits the pitcher: it will be bad for the pitcher'." In other cases, when the equivalent English proverb, although with the same meaning, was not identical in form, she manipulated it in order to achieve greater similarity, without, however, destroying the proverb.

E.g.: "*Mire vuestra merced si se puede levantar, y ayudaremos a Rocinante, aunque no lo merece, porque él fue la causa principal de todo este molimiento. Jamás tal creí de Rocinante, que le tenía por persona casta y tan pacífica como yo. En fin, bien dicen que es menester mucho tiempo para venir a conocer las personas, y que **no hay cosa segura en** esta vida.*" (I, XV)

⇒ "*Your grace, see if you can stand, and we'll help Rocinante, though he doesn't deserve it, because he's the main reason for this beating. I never have believed it of Rocinante; I always thought he was a person as chaste and peaceable as I am. Well, like they say, you need a long time to know a person, and **nothing in this life is certain***."

→ The equivalent English proverb is longer than the Spanish one: 'In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.', but the translator cut out the second half, in order to resemble the original more; I believe it was well-inspired, since the idea of 'taxes' did not quite suit the Squire. The rhyme, however, was not preserved. In other situations, the translator had to render the Spanish proverb through an English equivalent with similar meaning, but different form. However, the translation was successful, preserving the sense and the effect intended, though the elliptical form was lost.

E.g.: "*– ¿Quién te mete a ti en esto, Sancho? – dijo don Quijote.*

*– ¿Quién señor? – respondió Sancho –. Yo me meto, que puedo meterme, como escudero que ha aprendido los términos de la cortesía en la escuela de vuestra merced, que es el más cortés y bien criado caballero que hay en toda la cortesanía; y en estas cosas, según he oído decir a vuestra merced, tanto se pierde por carta de más como por carta de menos; y **al buen entendedor, pocas palabras***." (II, XXXVII)

⇒ "*Who involved you in this, Sancho?" said Don Quixote.*

*"Who, Señor?" responded Sancho. "I involved myself, and I can involve myself as a squire who has learned the terms of courtesy in the school of your grace, the most courteous and polite knight in all of courtliness; in these things, as I have heard your grace say, you can lose as much for a card too many as for a card too few, and **a word to the wise is sufficient***."

When an equivalent proverb could not be found, in some cases the translator chose to render it through a paraphrase.

E.g.: "*– Apostaré – replicó Sancho – que piensa vuestra merced que yo he hecho de mi persona alguna cosa que no deba.*

*– **Peor es meneallo**, amigo Sancho – respondió don Quijote*." (I, XX)

⇒ "*I'll wager", replied Sancho, "that your grace thinks I've done something with my person I shouldn't have."*

***"The less said the better**, Sancho my friend," responded Don Quixote*.

→ The complete Spanish proverb is 'es mejor no menear el arroz, aunque se pegue' and Grossman rendered its sense quite efficiently through the paraphrase, especially since the formal aspect of the proverb was not especially important in this instance. However, in other occasions, when the same proverb was used, she opted for a literal translation, which, I



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think, was less effective, since the sense of the metaphorical image was rather opaque. It is a pity she was not constant in her translation.

E.g.: "*A esto respondió doña Rodríguez, que se halló presente:*

*– Dueñas tiene mi señora la duquesa en su servicio, que pudieran ser condesas si la fortuna quisiera, pero allá van leyes do quieren reyes; y nadie diga mal de las dueñas, y más de las antiguas y doncellas; que, aunque yo no lo soy, bien se me alcanza y se me trasluce la ventaja que hace una dueña doncella a una dueña viuda; y quien a nosotras trasquiló, las tijeras le quedaron en la mano.*

*– Con todo eso – replicó Sancho –, hay tanto que trasquilar en las dueñas, según mi barbero,* ***cuanto será mejor no menear el arroz, aunque se pegue***." (II, XXXVII)

⇒ *To which Doña Rodríguez, who was present, responded:*

*"My lady the duchess has duennas in her service who could be countesses if fortune so desired, but laws go where kings command; let no one speak ill of duennas, in particular those who are old and maidens, for although I am not one of those, I clearly understand and grasp the advantage a maiden duenna has over one who is widowed; and the person who cut us down to size still has the scissors in his hand.*"

*"All the same," replied Sancho, "there's so much to cut in duennas, according to my barber,* ***that it would be better not to stir the rice even if it sticks***."

E. Grossman made successful use of paraphrase, even in quite difficult situations to translate from Spanish, though the idiomatic character, which added a specific flavour to the text, and the metaphorical image were thus lost.

E.g.: "*– No niego yo – respondió don Quijote – que lo que nos ha sucedido no sea cosa digna de risa, pero no es digna de contarse; que no son todas las personas tan discretas que sepan poner en su punto las cosas.*

*– A lo menos – respondió Sancho –, supo vuestra merced poner en su punto el lanzón, apuntándome a la cabeza, y dándome en las espaldas, gracias a Dios y a la diligencia que puse en ladearme. Pero vaya, que* ***todo saldrá en la colada*** *[…].*" (I, XX)

⇒ "*I do not deny," responded Don Quixote, "that what happened to us is deserving of laughter, but it does not deserve to be told, for not all persons are wise enough to put things in their proper place."*

*"At least," responded Sancho, "your grace knew how to place the lance, aiming for my head and hitting me on the back, thanks be to God and the care I took to move to the side. Well, well,* ***it all comes out in the end*** *[…].*"

Unfortunately, there were also some cases, although less frequent, when the paraphrase was not adequate, because it deviated from the semantic content of the Spanish proverb.

E.g.: "*– Pero, con todo esto, yo me esforzaré a decir una historia que, si la acierto a contar y* ***no me van a la mano****, es la mejor de las historias; y estéme vuestra merced atento, que ya comienzo.*" (I, XX)

⇒ "*But, even so, I'll make an effort to tell a story, and if I manage to tell it and* ***my fear doesn't stop me****, it's the best of all stories; and your grace should pay careful attention, because here I go.*"

→ The meaning of the Spanish proverb – 'ir a la mano' – is 'to disturb someone, to hinder him from doing something'; in this case, to interrupt him from speaking, which was totally changed in the translation. When the Spanish proverbs had no English equivalent, the other method used, besides paraphrase, was their literal translation.

E.g.: "*A esto respondió doña Rodríguez, que se halló presente:*



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*– Dueñas tiene mi señora la duquesa en su servicio, que pudieran ser condesas si la fortuna quisiera, pero* ***allá van leyes do quieren reyes****; y nadie diga mal de las dueñas, y más de las antiguas y doncellas;* […]" (II, XXXVII)

⇒ *To which Doña Rodríguez, who was present, responded:*

*"My lady the duchess has duennas in her service who could be countesses if fortune so desired,* ***but laws go where kings command****; let no one speak ill of duennas, in particular those who are old and maidens* […]"

→ I believe that, perhaps, a paraphrase of the general meaning – that things don't always go as we would like, since many times they depend on greater instances, like fate – would have been more effective for the understanding of the proverb. Though it was a literal translation, the rhythm and rhyme were not rendered in English. There were also quite many instances in which E. Grossman translated a proverb literally, although they had English equivalents, even if not very exact ones.

E.g. : "*– No me dieron a mí lugar – respondió Sancho – a que mirase en tanto; porque, apenas puse mano a mi tizona, cuando me santiguaron los hombros con sus pinos, de manera que me quitaron la vista de los ojos y la fuerza de los pies, dando conmigo donde ahora yago, y adonde no me da pena alguna el pensar si fue afrenta o no lo de los estacazos, como me la da el dolor de los golpes, que me han de quedar tan impresos en la memoria como en las espaldas.*

*– Con todo eso, te hago saber, hermano Panza – replicó don Quijote –, que* ***no hay memoria a quien el tiempo no acabe, ni dolor que la muerte no le consuma***." (I, XV)

⇒ *"They didn't give me a chance," Sancho responded, "to look at them so carefully, because as soon I put my hand on my sword they made the sign of the cross on my shoulders with their pinewood, so that they took the sight of my eyes and the strength from my feet, knocking me down where I'm lying now, where it doesn't hurt at all to think about whether the beating they gave me with their staffs was an offence or not, unlike the pain of the beating, which will make as much of an impression on my memory as it has on my back.*"

"*Even so, I want you to know, brother Sancho," replied Don Quixote, "that* ***there is no memory that time does not erase, no pain not ended by death***."

→ The translator chose to render the metaphoric image and the formal aspects of the Spanish proverb by translating it literally, although there were several quite close equivalents in English: 'Time cures all things', 'Time is a great healer', 'Time heals all wounds'; however, I must say that the original image was exquisitely beautiful and worth keeping, perhaps, even to the detriment of the idiomatic character.

The methods employed by the three translators were the most frequent ones: finding an equivalent, the literal translation and paraphrase. However, their approaches were different, depending on whether they translated the proverbs in a collection (in isolation) or in a literary context. In the first case, U. R. Burke decided to translate the proverbs literally and he remained constant. His translation achieved what Popovič called *linguistic equivalence*[40], but the idiomatic character was lost in most cases. I have already pointed out that, in order to compensate for the flaws of this technique, he found several solutions – like giving additional explanations, an English, French, Italian or Latin equivalent etc., but he did not use them systematically. For the translation of proverbs in a literary context, the two translators employed broadly the same techniques – the ones I have mentioned above – but neither was constant all through the work. Both of them, depending on the situation, achieved either *stylistic* or *linguistic equivalence*. On the overall, and despite the inevitable and some unnecessary losses, the three translations have rendered the Spanish proverbs quite

[40] Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, revised edition, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, p. 25.



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successfully into English. I believe the examples I have offered clearly prove the difficulty of translating proverbs, and especially of those contained in a literary work of such magnitude as *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*.

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