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Thieves' Cant in Spanish Translations of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*

Abstract

The approach to the analysis of dialect translation put forward in this article is based on two conceptual tools: the function of dialect (or, more generally, nonstandard language) in the source text, and the translation techniques available, which may be seen as an alternative to the moot point of dialect untranslatability. Translation techniques are just solution types, and in the particular case of dialect translation it might be argued that all possible solutions have drawbacks. By way of illustration, the use of thieves' cant in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* is analysed on the basis of its function, as perceived by several Dickens scholars, and seven Spanish translations of the novel spanning over a century are then studied with regard to how the problem posed by cant is dealt with by translators. Whereas some of them tend to neutralise, i.e. to replace the source text's nonstandard language with more conventional expressions in the target text, others attempt to capture the non-core nature of cant and slang terms at the level of lexical choice, and one even uses nonstandard spelling and grammar as part of the solution.

1. Introduction

Dialect translation is arguably one of the thorniest issues literary translators must face. Some scholars have pronounced dialects strictly untranslatable – an area where equivalence does not hold. And practitioners are hardly more optimistic. Miguel Sáenz, an acclaimed Spanish translator, has argued (2000) that «[d]ialect translation is not an insoluble problem but something worse: a problem with many solutions, all of them unsatisfactory».¹ But it is precisely the existence of multiple solutions, whose feasibility will have to be gauged in context, that leaves some room for optimism.

In our approach to the analysis of dialect translation, function comes first and foremost. It is assumed that, before making a decision, a translator needs to be aware of what exactly the use of dialect is doing in a particular

¹ All translations from languages other than English are the authors'.

literary text. The second pillar of our approach is the concept of translation technique, as defined e.g. by Hurtado (2001) or Molina and Hurtado (2002). As argued elsewhere (Marco 2002, Tello Fons 2011), a number of dialect translation techniques can be identified on the basis of at least three criteria: the use of markers (or not), norm transgression (or not) and the use of real target-language dialects (or not).

The case of thieves' cant in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* may be a suitable testing ground for our framework of analysis. Since several Spanish translations of the novel are available, translators must have used different techniques and therefore given rise to various effects – and it is by their effects that translated texts are ultimately judged.

The layout of the article is as follows. Section 2 will deal with the interface of dialect and literature – why dialects, or nonstandard language in general, are used at all in literary texts and what functions they may accomplish. Section 3 will look at dialect from the perspective of translators and translation scholars – what problems are posed by the occurrence of dialect in literary texts and what solution types have been found by translators and/or proposed by translation scholars. Section 4, which is divided into two parts, will first attempt to characterise the use of cant, as a particular kind of sociolect, in *Oliver Twist*, and then examine how cant, embedded as it is in nonstandard uses of several kinds, has been dealt with in seven Spanish translations spanning over a hundred years. Finally, in section 5, some concluding remarks will be put forward.

2. Dialect and literature: the function of nonstandard language in fiction

Mair (1992) provides a systematic framework for the analysis of nonstandard language in fiction. His point of departure (which he shares with previous scholars dealing with the topic) is that «what is encountered in a work of fiction is not a faithful transcription but an artefact» (1992: 104), its author having selected a number of features which are assumed to represent a certain geographical or social dialect. If less than perfect faithfulness to reality is not perceived by readers as a problem, it is because realism need not be the only (or indeed the main) goal of the use of nonstandard language in fiction. On the contrary, it may serve «a variety of additional purposes internal to a given work of art» (1992: 104).

For the analysis of these purposes, three issues need to be dealt with. Firstly, standards for evaluating representations of nonstandard language in

literature. Even if realism is not the writer's main drive, the analyst may wish to compare the literary representation with the real thing by looking at the data and the linguistic levels (phonetic, grammatical, lexical) it belongs to. Particularly faithful representations will make an impression of freshness and authenticity, but then intelligibility and readability may suffer. Secondly, limits to the use of nonstandard language in fiction. Where does it occur? Typically, it colours characters' speech, but it may also show in a first person narrator, thus virtually permeating the whole text. More interestingly, according to Mair, it may also be found in the discourse of a third person narrator, either between inverted commas or subtly integrated into free indirect discourse, probably with ironic overtones. Thirdly, valuation of nonstandard language in literature. The value attached to a nonstandard variety in a work of fiction may be the same as in society in general or not. Nonstandard varieties, Mair (1992: 107) argues, may have «covert prestige» insofar as they are «expressions of social or emotional ties that do not hold throughout society in general but only in individual sub-groups». The writer's attitude may range from staunch alignment with the prevailing social values to wholesale subscription to the values of the sub-group, often by way of social critique, with many intermediate points between the two extremes.

With regard to the latter aspect, it is significant that Mair should draw on Bakhtin's concepts of *dialogism* and *heteroglossia* and relate them to the use of nonstandard language. Seen in this light, rather than a number of linguistic features adding up to a representation, a nonstandard variety would be a *voice* – one of the many (often contending) voices to be heard in a work of fiction. Of great relevance to our object of study is Bakhtin's concept of *social language*, which he defines as «a concrete socio-linguistic belief system that defines a distinct identity for itself within the boundaries of a language that is unitary only in the abstract» (Bakhtin 1981: 356). When it comes to describing the role of substandard language in fictional works, it may be this emphasis on group identity on the basis of shared beliefs that ultimately matters. That is where its *semiotic potential* (Mair 1992: 110) lies. We will take up this issue again in our discussion of the role of thieves' cant in *Oliver Twist*.

After all his conceptual spadework, Mair (1992: 122) puts forward a typology of literary nonstandard in which three dimensions are identified. Dimension 1 is the “motivation for using nonstandard”, with mimesis at one end and the use of nonstandard as a symbolic gesture at the other. Dimension 2 concerns “language attitudes”, which can range from

“conventional” (with standard as the norm and nonstandard endowed with negative connotations) to a “critique/revaluation” of social conventions. Dimension 3 is the “degree of integration” of nonstandard into the narrative, which again can range from “loose”, when nonstandard features typically occur only in dialogue while narration uses standard, to “tight”, with the extreme case of a novel written wholly in dialect. When the latter extreme is not reached, there may be “hybridisation of narrative idiom” and “fusion of narrative perspectives” by interspersing the narrator’s voice with nonstandard features.

In section 4.1 we will see how this conceptual framework applies to the use of cant in *Oliver Twist*.

3. Dialect translation: problems and solutions

The translation of linguistic variation has produced a great deal of literature, and so far two aspects are commonly agreed upon: the possibility of carrying out the translation of linguistic variation by means of several procedures, and the concept of functionality as the guiding criterion for translation. When it comes to dialect translation, ideal equivalence is out of the question and several constraints that are external to the language itself prevail. When analysing a text with dialectal presence a macro linguistic approach is required, and so is the use of translation techniques, which are defined by Molina and Hurtado (2002: 509) as «procedures to analyse and classify how translation equivalence works» and described on the basis of five characteristics, the most important of which are arguably the first three: that they affect the result of the translation (not the process), that they are classified by comparison with the original, and that they affect micro-units of text (not the text as a whole). Techniques will change depending not only on the translation brief but also on the target readers and the language pair involved.

When faced with the problem of dialect translation, translators can choose among a number of translation techniques. The most conservative one consists in neutralising any trace of substandard language in the source text in order to produce a standard version in the target text. This technique is called *unmarked translation* by Marco (2002: 80-81) and it works as a lifeline for those translators who assume that dialect translation is impossible or are all too willing to facilitate readers’ understanding of the text. Through this technique, artifice or strangeness in the target text are avoided and acceptability is favoured. Most Spanish translators have

traditionally adhered to neutralisation, since the typical association between standard variety and written language tends to tip the balance towards this procedure.

Hervey, Higgins and Haywood (1995) advise translators to produce a standard version without any remarkable dialectal features whenever these traits are unimportant and their use merely incidental – at least for the target text's purpose. They admit, though, that this option might be rather flat. They are also in favour of adding, as a tag line, «dijo con acento andaluz» ("said with an Andalusian accent"), for instance, to neutralised dialogues (1995: 210). Muñoz (1995) is also in favour of using neutralisation when dialects are not used deliberately but reflect authors' idiolects instead. He is categorical in affirming that geolects and sociolects are only meaningful in the language in which they are conceived, and translations will simply express translators' idiolects (1995: 210).

Many researchers have justified translation into the standard when the whole novel is written using linguistic variation. They claim that linguistic variation in these cases works as the norm in the source text and thus it can be translated into any other language or dialect. Both Berezowski (1997: 33) and Carbonell (1999: 93-96) align themselves with this stance. The latter claims that, as there is no further variation in the original work, dialect has a neutral function that standard language will share in the translation. Rabadán (1991) is convinced that translators only need to be interested in standard language, since it is the only variety that all potential readers can understand. As literary texts usually present social variation which is attached to different geographical areas, that kind of transposition is 'neither satisfactory nor acceptable' (1991: 84).

One of the translation techniques that enjoy broad support among researchers is the translation of linguistic variation by means of highly informal or colloquial language. This technique tries to avoid ignoring dialectal characteristics of original works. It modifies the target language register by introducing a number of colloquial linguistic elements. In order to resort to informal language, and due to the fact that the solution here is of a social kind, translators need to be willing to investigate the social structures of both linguistic communities at play. Slobodník (1970: 139-143) justifies this technique when dialects appear in the characters' direct discourse. Personal features contribute to characterisation at spatial and social levels, which leads him to suggest highlighting oral speech by means of interdialectal elements and resorting to the *substitution* technique, which implies that linguistic elements in the source text might be replaced by

paralinguistic ones (Hurtado 2001: 271). By proceeding in this way, what he calls «homology of functionality» would not be compromised. Likewise, he argues for recreating the syntax of spoken language rather than its lexical aspects, because the former offers a richer potential for conveying aesthetic and semantic information in the source text. Mateo (1990: 102) studies the translation of Black English Vernacular and prefers phonetic solutions such as adopting a more relaxed pronunciation in the target text dubbing, which will feature recurrent vulgar and informal elements. She explains that this procedure will be possible provided that African American characters belong to a low social stratum and they are the least advantaged in the community as well.

When a sociolect belonging to a low social stratum is present in the source text, as is the case in *Oliver Twist*, the technique we are talking about seems to be the most plausible one. Scholars such as Soto (1993: 239-240) see it as an illogical thing for translators not to make an effort to seek out not only a marginal way of speaking in the target text, but also slang, colloquial vocabulary that would replicate the function of linguistic variation in the source text. Carbonell points out one of the obstacles to this when he refers to the eventual ideological problems that colloquial language may give rise to, since such features as a relaxed pronunciation, the use of simpler structures or a decrease in lexical richness would trigger a stereotyping process with regard to the speech of a linguistic community (1999: 91). He recommends a thorough study of target culture and reader. From the standpoint of functionalist theory, both Lavault-Olléon (2006: 513-523) and Buzelin (2000: 232) suggest bringing register closer to popular, common speech which could be understood by target readers. Hernández (2004) prefers selecting clichéd elements to offering the reader odd connotations which might lead to false references.

Another option would be to make use of transgression of the linguistic norm to create a set of nonstandard features in the target text which cannot be identified with any real target language dialect. This would lead the translator to make up a dialect for a given character or group of characters. Breaking the linguistic norm might be a complicated yet fascinating way of restoring linguistic variation in the translation. This way of addressing a dialectally marked text might be called *norm transgression through a combination of cross-dialectal features* (Marco 2002: 84), for it departs from the target text norm by means of incorrectness at all language levels.

Mayoral (1990: 40-45) does not support incorrectness in the target text by means of phonetic features: these resources, when target readers are able to trace the origin of the linguistic variation in the source text – as changing *l* for *r* to imitate the Chinese way of speaking – are simple stereotypes that can lead to pejorative associations that were not in the original. Berthele (2000: 610-613) backs Mayoral when he says that German translations of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in their attempt to express the characters' socio-linguistic characteristics, make Jim seem almost mentally deficient. These translations would undervalue the character, who would be barely able to speak a language, and would contribute to racism towards African American people. Berthele is more in line with the techniques that would imply using colloquial language.

There are studies that do endorse violation of the standard in the target text. Unquestionably, the greatest challenge facing translators is to create a series of substandard traits that cannot be confused with distinctive features in dialects, jargons or already existing dialects. To avoid falling into the language stereotypes of existing dialects will be a proof of great skill, as Hurtado explains: «conveying idiolectal features without falling in literal artificiality is one of the strongest evidence of the translator's mastery» (2001: 594). This kind of mastery Hurtado alludes to must take into account readers' problems when it comes to identifying themselves with the resulting new language. This might be the reason why this technique is considered an option in texts where linguistic variation is occasional and used for characterisation. A lack of genuineness may even make the translation run aground.

Perhaps the most controversial decision in dialect translation is using a real target language dialect as an equivalent. Reactions to this procedure are sometimes hesitant. As Tello Fons (2011: 123) points out, there are several studies which, after advocating it, express some reservations as well. Julià (1997: 570) states that some language traditions are more prone to this kind of translation technique than others, and an analysis of the specific case of translation will determine the feasibility of replacing one dialect by another. As with other techniques, the risk lies in that it may cause uneasiness or even offence among speakers of the target language community when they see themselves reflected in the translation. Chapdelaine (1994: 33), for instance, chooses to restore the sociolect in Faulkner's *The Hamlet* – also with a view to conveying source text humour – by using a French dialect. Julià (1997) strongly supports this technique both in his studies and

translations. He even outlines a hypothetical translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* into Catalan. For five of the dialects appearing in the work, he claims that parallel dialects in Catalan could easily be found; however, he finds it harder to find a dialect which would reflect Jim's variety. According to him, it is difficult to find a genuine Catalan option that would not either be too artificial or make the readers feel awkward. His position is that of an activist regarding this technique: «(...) if there are dialectal varieties and the problem of authenticity affects them as much or as little as it affects other variables (cultural ones, for instance) that have to be gauged at the beginning of the process of translation, is it not worth trying?» (1997: 572). When choosing a target language dialect, however, it will be essential to find dialectal expressions that can be understood by readers from a different geographical area.

When such a technique is attempted, in-depth knowledge of the kind of dialectal variety translators are going to translate into is an unavoidable step. This will prevent them from erring on the side of ignorance by assigning features of one linguistic community to another or falling into clichés which fail to do justice to the linguistic community concerned. A key factor which this technique usually involves is cultural transplant.

Other translation techniques for dialectal texts include what is called «partial translation» (Romney 1995: 223), which consists in leaving part of the source text dialect unchanged in the target text as a way of signalling difference in a character's variety as compared to other characters' language. Nevertheless, the reader's possible incredulity and the fact that this practice would be restricted to those dialects that target readers could understand or infer from the context makes it risky and undermines its feasibility. The closer the linguistic communities, the bigger the prospect of success. Carpentier is reluctant to accept it when she affirms that «a dialectal word suggests a whole network of emotional connotations that will not be noticed if the word is used in a different language» (1990: 81). On the other hand, compensation is a technique that allows the translator to render some marked words and clauses in the source text as standard in the target text, while in other places unmarked words and clauses in the source text become marked in the translation. Advocates of this technique stress its viability regardless of the type of dialect or its function (Tello Fons 2011: 127).

Marco claims that when the function of dialectal elements in the text is relevant, rendering them as standard will probably «alter the work's global

balance» (2002: 82). He adds that there are not simple formulas, but despite the obvious loss to which the translator is exposed, a partial loss will always be better than a total loss. Regarding the most frequently used techniques, Ramos (2009), after considering several translation procedures, claims that «probably because translators often have no specialised linguistic knowledge of their own language and work with stereotypical features easily recognised by the target context community, a combination of different strategies is often found in the same translated text» (2009: 294). Speakers of every community attach a number of values to dialects and to speakers of those dialects, which are meaningful in those communities or social contexts. Therefore, dialectal translation is a juggling act with an uncertain outcome. As Bolaños (2004) summarises, «what we need to 'reproduce' is not the dialect as such, which is (as part of an autochthonous linguistic system) untranslatable in its own nature, but its "evoking elements", since these are what we can really compare» (2004: 344).

To sum up, when faced with the problem of dialect or, more generally, nonstandard language, translators are basically left with four options, or techniques: a) neutralisation, or unmarked translation, which renders the source text dialect as standard in the target text; b) marking the target text language by using a (highly) colloquial, informal tenor which does not involve departing from the norm, at least as far as spelling and grammar are concerned; c) target language norm transgression by means of a set of nonstandard features which cannot be identified as belonging to any particular target dialect; d) target language norm transgression by using real target language dialects which can be easily identified as such by the target reader. As our discussion has made abundantly clear, all options have advantages and drawbacks, and none can be regarded as ideal, at least out of context.

4. Analysis of cant in seven Spanish translations of Oliver Twist

4.1. Cant in Dickens's source text

Oliver Twist, or, the Parish Boy's Progress appeared in serial form in Bentley's Miscellany between February 1837 and April 1839. In November 1838, even before its serialisation had been completed, it was published in book form. The novel was criticised from the first by some readers on the ground that it displayed the underworld of London in all its dirtiness,

shabbiness, poverty and moral squalor, with nothing to redeem these traits. But, as Dickens himself argued in his well-known introduction to the 1841 edition, that is exactly what he had intended to do. In many contemporary novels, the world of thieves and prostitutes was endowed with a «false glitter» (Dickens 2002: 459); Dickens, on the other hand, aimed to render a favour to society by presenting such characters as one might actually find them, without the allurements of fashion and romance. The use of cant in the novel must be seen against this backdrop.

Michael (1993) claims that three groups of characters can be identified in *Oliver Twist* on the basis of their idiolects: those who speak standard, or “pure”, language, like Mr Brownlow, the Maylies and Oliver himself; the “institutional” characters, somehow related to the parish or the law court, such as Mr Bumble, for instance; and the criminal characters, belonging to or having ties with the underworld, such as Fagin, Bill Sikes, the Artful Dodger or Charley Bates. It is obviously the latter who use cant, the criminal slang of thieves, pickpockets and rascals of several kinds – even though police officers are often contaminated by it as a result of their regular contact. According to Michael (1993: 44), Dickens was not original in his exploitation of criminal language for narrative purposes, but he was arguably the first to use it, in *Oliver Twist*, in a magazine designed to reach the family. This use was probably intended to make up for the conspicuous lack of foul language in underworld characters, a fact ostensibly publicised in Dickens’s 1841 introduction, already referred to. Avoidance of obscenities, to put it in Michael’s phrase, had to be compensated for by some other means if verisimilitude was not to be compromised, and that is where thieves’ cant came into the picture.

As to the significance of characters’ speech generally, Michael (1993: 43) quotes Golding (1985: 18) when he says that «even his [*i.e. Dickens’s*] early fictional speech was doing more than merely promoting identification; it was also beginning to embody a character’s view of reality (or lack of it) by presenting this in concentrated, exaggerated form». Later on, he quotes Ginsburg (1987: 227) to the effect that the ability to understand a word or an idiom is connected to the character’s innate moral qualities, either at the moment in question or as they are subsequently revealed. Translated into Mair’s terms, as presented above, this use of language would lean towards the symbolic – would constitute in fact a symbolic gesture conveying more meaning than that shown at face value. The mimetic function is not in abeyance, as witnessed by the outward manifestation of cant language through misspellings (or “distorted spellings”, to put it in Mair’s terms),

non-grammatical morphology and syntax, and, above all, lexical items, both single words and idioms. But it is the symbolic value that matters most.

Criminal slang, according to Michael (1993: 48), expresses a desire for secrecy, serves the need not to be understood by outsiders, i.e. by members of the middle and upper classes. Members of the underworld feel and know themselves to be shut out from conventional society, and the use of cant is a tool towards survival, or self-preservation. Conventional members of Victorian society were aware that criminals were becoming a class unto themselves (Michael 1993: 49), which only added to their being perceived as a threat and to the rigour of the laws aiming to protect property owners. And the urge to survive is closely associated with a sense of belonging and a concern with identity. Members of the underworld are united by their exclusion from society and their fear of the gallows, which always looms large in their lives' landscape. According to Michael (1993: 49), nowhere is this concern with identity more visible than in the idiolect of the Artful Dodger, who uses cant most effectively and even becomes at times a sort of ideologue of group membership – what it implies to be a thief.

The symbolic force of cant in *Oliver Twist* is, it is hoped, clear by now. But where does Dickens stand with regard to it? This is a difficult matter to ascertain and may be said to create a great deal of ambiguity – which, in its turn, adds new layers of potential meaning to the novel. It would obviously be untrue to say that Dickens (or, rather, the implicit author) stands by the criminal characters and endorses their behaviour. He is on the side of virtue, embodied by Oliver. But, as several critics have observed, Oliver is hardly credible as a character in that his virtue is “exaggerated” (Michael 1993: 50), as he goes unscathed through all kinds of threats to his moral integrity. Rather than a character, he is a principle – «the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last», as Dickens himself put it (2002: 457). But, just as the Poor Laws that we saw exposed in the first part of the novel served the purpose of excluding and victimising the most unfortunate members of the working classes, there are other laws which serve to perpetuate the exclusion of underworld members. In the final chapters of the novel, according to Michael, we are made to feel and suffer with the representatives of the underworld, and what gets confronted then is no longer “good” versus “bad” characters, but underworld characters and the system of law and order which makes possible both workhouses and criminality. And, in this context, the use of cant to promote group identity is further enhanced (Michael 1993: 59):

Like the other criminals in the novel, the Dodger uses language – whether translating flash language or dropping it altogether – to sustain his identity, to separate himself from a society whose Principle of Good is a gossamer morality having little to do with humanity.

We have come a long way from simple implied author alignment. He may not endorse criminal behaviour, but he does understand the plight of the underworld, of those who remain outside with no hope of ever belonging to “respectable” society – and he makes a case for them. That can only have had a disquieting, discomfiting, dislocating (the adjectives are Michael’s) effect on Victorian readers, who must have subsequently felt the need to re-adjust their social views.

As to the third dimension of the use of nonstandard language in fiction (degree of integration) identified by Mair, as seen above, cant is typically found in characters’ speech. Therefore, its integration into the novel might be described as rather *loose*, to put it in Mair’s terms. However, it is not altogether so, as there are also (admittedly few) examples of cant embedded in the narrator’s discourse, even if they are suitably isolated by means of inverted commas. That kind of occurrence, together with the prevailing one, will be illustrated in the next section.

4.2. Cant in Spanish translation

In what follows, two passages from the novel will be analysed in which the use of nonstandard language in general and cant terms in particular is quite prominent. Excerpt 1 belongs to chapter VIII and provides an account of Oliver’s first meeting with the Artful Dodger and of their arrival together at Fagin’s house. Excerpt 2, taken from chapter XVIII, features the Dodger and the rest of Fagin’s gang. After a period of confinement, Oliver is free again to move about Fagin’s house. The Dodger and Charley Bates try to persuade him to join the gang and earn a living by means of thieving. This passage is particularly rich in cant terms.

As stated at the beginning of this article, our analysis includes seven Spanish translations spanning over a hundred years and three centuries. There are many more, of course, and our selection is based on representativeness (different historical periods, with their different approaches to translation) and availability. A few basic details of these translations will now be provided, so that their analysis is not perceived by readers as being carried out in a sort of vacuum. However, it is out of the

scope of the article to give a full account of the context in which they were published. The earliest translation of *Oliver Twist* into Spanish is Enrique Leopoldo de Verneuil's. He translated into Spanish more than thirty works between 1868 and 1900 (Peral 2012: 87), including two Dickens novels: *El hijo de la parroquia* (1883) and *La niña Dorrit*. Huertas Ventosa (1907-1967) is the author of the second translation to be analysed. He was a scriptwriter, writer, journalist and translator. He worked for the publishing house Editorial Molino as a translator and magazine editor – at the time, he ran the popular Spanish comic books *Pocholo* and *Mickey* (Martín 2011: 76). Along with Dickens's *Oliverio Twist* (1941), he translated celebrated authors such as Mark Twain and Jules Verne. José Méndez Herrera (1906-1986) was a writer, playwright and translator. His translation of *Oliver Twist* was published in 1946. He translated other Dickens novels and edited his complete works for Editorial Aguilar in 1948 with an introductory essay. He translated or adapted such other authors as Ibsen, Goldoni, Poe and Stevenson. Julio C. Acerete translated a fair number of first-rate nineteenth-century novelists, such as Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Hugo or Verne from French, and Dickens, Emily Brontë, Melville or Henry James from English. Most of his translations were published in Editorial Bruguera. His *Oliver Twist* saw the light in 1969. Enriqueta Sevillano's translation of the novel was also published by Bruguera in 1970. Pollux Hernández is a writer, playwright and translator who has translated Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift and Alexandre Dumas, amongst others. His translation of *Oliver Twist* came out in 1990 in Editorial Anaya, in the series "Tus Libros", which is addressed to young readers and includes notes and a study on the author and work in question. Finally, Marco *et al's* translation is peculiar in that it is a joint, collaborative effort. It was carried out by a group of last-year students on the Degree in Translation and Interpreting at Universitat Jaume I under the supervision of Josep Marco, who is one of the authors of the present article. It was published by Editorial Alba in 2004.

Excerpt 1

This passage refers to the moment when Oliver first meets Jack Dawkins – the Artful Dodger. He does not have the slightest idea about Jack's trade when he speaks to him. He is very tired and starving after some days walking. Dawkins supposes poor Oliver is a delinquent who is trying to escape the law – "the beak", another name for "a magistrate". He addresses

him as “flash companion”, which is a cant expression for “rogue”, and asks him whether he has been in jail (“the mill”), but Oliver does not understand this word either. Jack behaves kindly and offers to buy him something to eat and to take him to an old gentleman’s house where he will be able to stay for free. The old gentleman Jack Dawkins speaks about is Fagin, also known to the readers as “the Jew”. He is the villain in the novel, the corruptor of children like Dawkins, who are forced to work for him. They pick pockets and perform some other criminal activities in exchange for food and shelter. When Oliver and the Artful Dodger get to Fagin’s house, the latter uses a watchword that lets them in – “Plummy and Slam”, meaning “all right” – that Oliver again does not understand.

As was usual at the time (1883), Verneuil translates the characters’ first names into Spanish: Oliverio, Jacobo, etc. When attempting to render cant in Spanish, the translator only concerns himself with the lexical level. Ungrammatical constructions and misspellings are not taken into account. However, oral expressions are in line with the tone most readers today would expect from a nineteenth-century text, since the translation was published in 1883 and old-fashioned phrases are only natural (“¡Por vida mía!” [“for the life of me”], “vióse” [“he saw himself”]). Verneuil uses italics for Jack’s nickname in Spanish, *Truhán* – this might be due to ancient stylistic norms.

Regarding cant terms, he translated “beak” and “mill” as “pico” and “molino”, respectively, a literal translation of both words in Spanish. The latter is a term that may evoke the prison to Spanish readers if they think about the millstones which prisoners used to turn in jail at that time, but the former does not refer to an old, informal, or usual name attributed to judges. “Flash companion” is translated as “compañero”, which might reflect comradeship, as intended by the text. This version leaves out the translation not only of slang words such as “bob” and “magpie”, but also of some cultural matters like the explanation Dawkins offers on the function of a “mill”. The translator’s prudence makes us think that he might have avoided problem areas – though he highlights in the target text some informal vocabulary, such as “quillas”. The choice to leave “Plummy and Slam” in English and add a literal translation next to the original expression does not seem to be consistent with other solutions – particularly when two translator’s notes are used for other words like “beak” and “mill”. This version removes any dialectal feature as far as spelling and grammar are concerned, and turns the text into a standardised one.

Huertas Ventosa's version is clearly modelled on Verneuil's, to the point of plagiarism. He equally adapts the characters' first names to Spanish and even writes "Fagín", following the Spanish rules of accentuation. He freely borrows from Verneuil's translation for most of the cant and slang vocabulary, though he translates the password "Plummy and Slam" as "Slummy and Slam". It might seem he intended to give a rhythmic effect in Spanish, but Spanish readers would not understand either the meaning of the words or the translator's intention. In this translation, colloquial words contrast with formal speech, which is not in the characters' nature ("Me alabo de ello. Me daría vergüenza tener otra ocupación" ("I boast about it. I'd be ashamed of having a different job"); "¿Y el odio que profesa a los demás perros?" ("And what about the hatred he professes towards other dogs?"); "¿Quieres acaso vivir a expensas de tus amigos?" ("Would you indeed like to live at the expense of your friends?"); and "Tal cosa sería censurable" ("That would be reprehensible") are examples of standardisation seen in other parts of the novel, which moreover make the underworld characters sound more formal than they did in the source text.

The most visible feature in Méndez Herrera's translation regarding linguistic variation is the combination of conversational resources and informal language. A careful reading shows a good use of spoken language, where nonstandard terms are not overused. Unlike the two previous translators, Méndez Herrera is prone to integrate colloquial and cant terms in Spanish. "Beak" is "baranda" (a leading individual or someone who has authority), "mill" is "molino" and "flash companion" is "chaval" ("young man"). Méndez Herrera adapts "Plummy and Slam" to Spanish as "Rico y Capote", which tries to emulate a password in Spanish. He uses italics for all informal words or expressions, informality being the level at which he chooses to capture in Spanish the linguistic variety of the source text. Despite this fact, the discourse in this version seems to be more homogeneous than in the earlier two: "chirona" ("jail"), "manducatoria" ("food"), "pluma" ("one-*peseta* coin"), "perra" ("five-cent coin"), "apoquinaré" ("to pay") and "pierna" ("companion").

Acerete's version clings to the standard, both by neutralising cant terms and displaying a general tenor which departs from colloquial discourse. In fact, the translator might be said to overdo the tone, since he makes Dawkins speak in educated language: "suele encontrarse instalado" ("it is usually placed") or "no creas que llevas el camino recto que te han indicado sino todo lo contrario" ("don't think you follow the straight path as has been pointed out to you but quite the contrary"). Regarding cant

vocabulary, he opts for “curioso” (“nosy”) for “beak” and “molino” and “chirona” for “mill”. He tones down substandard discourse by omitting “flash companion” or “bob and magpie”. “Plummy and Slam” are adapted, similarly to what Méndez Herrera did, to “Compuesto y Capote”. Unlike in other translations, translated segments matching source text cant words are placed between inverted commas. Other informal, conversational resources as “grub” are translated as “comida” (“food”), which makes the word in the source text lose its informal meaning. This translator’s approach to linguistic variation is extremely cautious and the consequence is that the text lacks liveliness and authenticity.

As we see in other versions published in the last century, Sevillano turns Oliver into Oliverio. She also embarks on a standardising version, like other translators, but she does this mostly through omission. Such parts of the text as «the mill as takes up so little room that it'll work inside a Stone Jug; and always goes better when the wind's low with people, than when it's high; acos then they can't get workmen” and «only one bob and a magpie; but, as far as it goes, I'll fork out and stump” disappear in the Spanish version. There are some exceptions: “beak” is “pico”, “mill” is “molino” and “flash companion” is “compañero”, though we might easily wonder if those solutions are drawn from earlier translations. “Plummy and Slam” is translated as “Slummy and Slam”.

Hernández’s translation targets young readers. We find many translator’s notes that explain cultural issues and other notes in the margin where the meaning of outdated or conversational words or expressions is explained. This edition also includes a brief introduction to the story by the translator.

The thing that first strikes the reader in Hernández’s version is the use of nonstandard spelling, grammar and vocabulary in Spanish. Hernández’s options include nonstandard conversational tags like “pos” (*pues* in standard spelling, meaning “well”) and “tío” (“mate”), informal language like “a pata” (colloquial for “on foot”), “compinche” (“buddy”), “jalar” (“to eat”), or “¡Venga! ¡Andando!” (“Come on! Let’s go!”), and words where some syllables and letters have been omitted or modified, thus reflecting oral speech and evoking the language of uncultivated people: “ta bien” (standard *está bien*, meaning “it is fine”); “p’arriba” (*para arriba*, which means “up”); “mu” (standard *muy*, which means “very”); “pué” (*puede*, meaning “may”); or “rezto” (instead of *recto*, meaning “straight”). However, this version also shows what looks like a combination of colloquial and outdated terms with other words that do not seem to fit in with the language we would expect for that period of time, that is, the nineteenth

century. This is the case of “requetechulo” (“great”) or “coleguilla” (“mate”) that we find elsewhere in the text. Some words and expressions offer a contrast as well due to their formality (“lo vierto” [“I pour it”], “superfine” [“super-high quality”]). On the other hand, cant words are translated consistently: “beak” is “grajo” (“rook”), “mill” is “molino”, “flash companion” is “hermano granuja” (“brother rascal”), and “Plummy and Slam” is “menda lerenda” (“muggins”), which may not convey the same meaning of secret password as in the source text. All these tools contribute to the liveliness of the text, but this fact is undermined to some extent by a set of nonstandard updated options that do not always seem coherent. Still, the translator’s approach is a creditable attempt to recreate both the discourse and the atmosphere of Dicken’s novel.

Marco *et al.*’s translation creates a mildly colloquial tone through expressions like “¡Por favor, qué inocente!” (literally, “Please, what an innocent!”), “Ya veo, ya” (“I see, I see”) or “Pues” (“well”), and using vocabulary as in “una pluma y una perra” (one-*peseta* and five-cent coins, respectively) and the informal word for eating, “tragar” (“swallow”). Cant words are reproduced in the target text: “beak” is “pelucas” (literally “wigs”) and “mill” is again “molino”, though they explain what *mill* refers to by adding “cárcel” (standard for “jail”). “Plummy and Slam” is “Engolado y portazo”, a word for word translation in Spanish of the original password. Beyond this, Marco *et al.* choose to write a translation which is not fully committed to slang vocabulary and expressions.

Excerpt 2

In this passage, the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates are instructing Oliver and trying to persuade him to join Fagin’s gang and become a pickpocket (a “prig”) like them. In the course of his first stay with Fagin and his boys, Oliver had gone out with them and been left behind when the Dodger and Charley Bates ran for safety after having stolen a pocket-book. He was taken in by the victim of the theft, Mr Brownlow, but forcibly fell into Fagin’s hands again and was held captive for some time in a room in Fagin’s house. Shortly after Oliver has been allowed to leave the room, the Dodger asks him to polish his boots (“japanning his trotter cases”) and both he and Bates try to win Oliver over to their cause. Dawkins admits that they are all thieves, even the dog, who is the shrewdest (“downiest”) of them all and the least likely to become a police informer (“the least given to

peaching”). He would not talk to a judge even if he was left without food (“wittles”) for a fortnight, and he gnarls at any fellow (“cove”) who laughs or sings. But all that, says the Dodger, has nothing to do with Oliver, whom he calls “Green” because he is inexperienced in the ways of thieving. When Oliver reprimands Bates and the Dodger for having left him behind after committing their theft, Dawkins justifies himself by saying that they only took flight (“made our lucky”) because the police (“the traps”) knew that they worked for Fagin and they did not want to compromise him. That was the reason (the “move”) why they escaped at all, according to them. When the Dodger offers Oliver a few coins and the latter refuses to take them, he calls him a dupe (“flat”), whereupon Bates jokingly remarks that Dawkins will eventually be hanged (“scragged”). The Dodger winds up by warning Oliver that he will have to steal handkerchiefs and watches (“fogels and tickers”) for Fagin sooner or later, so he had better start now.

Verneuil favours neutralisation in most cases, as witnessed by such translation solutions as “del oficio” (“of the trade”) for “prigs”, “que cierra la marcha” (“who closes the procession”) for “downiest”, “vendernos” (“sell us”) for “peaching” and “sin comer” (“without eating”) for “wittles”. However, some flavour of the original is retained in other, more colloquial solutions: “joven perillán” (“young rogue”) for “young Green” or “si no nos hubiéramos largado” (“if we hadn’t left”) for “if we hadn’t made our lucky”. Finally, other cant segments seem to easily lend themselves to calque, as will be seen as we progress through our analysis of the different Spanish translations. Thus, “japanning his trotter cases” becomes “hacerse barnizar las trotonas” (“having his trotters varnished”), even though *trotonas* is not attested in Spanish use with the meaning just glossed.

Huertas Ventosa’s translation is almost identical to Verneuil’s, as remarked above. As far as cant terms are concerned, it just shows a couple of departures from the previous translation: “guris” (short for *guriipa*, meaning “a person who enforces order”, a word of Gypsy origin) for “traps”, instead of “espías” (“spies”, a rather curious choice), and “bobo” (“fool”) for “young Green”, instead of “perillán” (“rogue”). Needless to say, the general tenor of this translation all but overlaps with Verneuil’s.

Méndez Herrera’s translation is outstanding in its lively combination of genuine Spanish cant, slang or just colloquial terms. Its main effect is that it rings true. “Calcorros” is a cant term for “shoes”; “fazo” is short for *fazoleto*, from Italian *fazzoletto*, meaning “handkerchief”; “pelucos” is slang for “watches”; “randa” and “gachó” could be regarded as slang terms for “pickpocket” and “fellow”, respectively. And there are plenty of

colloquialisms which are still current nowadays and might be said to hit the right tone, or tenor, given the context and the character: “chivito” (“informer”, “tell-tale”), “cándido” (“ingenuous”), “polis” (“cops”), “nos las piramos” (“escape”), “primo” (“fool”, “gullible person”), “gaznate” (“neck, throat”), “mangar” (“pilfer”). Other choices (“el más vivo”, “sin comer”) rather lean towards the standard, but they do not cloud the general impression of liveliness and authenticity. The language used by the underworld characters clearly departs from norm-ruled neutrality, even if it is only on the lexical level, as no attempt is made to relay the source text’s non-standard usage of spelling and grammar.

Acerete, like other translators, tends towards neutralisation: “el oficio” (“the trade”) for “prig”, “el más listo de todos” (“the cleverest of all”) for “the downiest of the lot”, “agentes” (“officers”) for “traps”, etc. There are even incidental signs of formalisation, i.e. of a tenor which is more formal than colloquial Spanish and therefore ill-suited to the characters it is ascribed to. Thus, “the least given to peaching” is rendered as “el menos propicio al chivatazo” (“the least prone to telling”), where “propicio” is hardly the kind of adjective one would expect to hear from the lips of the likes of Charley Bates. There are also, indeed, more colloquial choices, such as “chivatazo” (“telling, informing”), “nos largamos” (“we leave”) or “fazos y pelucos” (“handkerchiefs and watches”); but, taken all in all, the prevailing tendency of the translated text is towards the standard.

Sevillano, for her part, largely flattens, or neutralises, the source text’s profile. Translation solutions like “del oficio” (“of the trade”) for “prig”, “que cierra la marcha” (“who closes the procession/the queue”) for “downiest”, “el menos dispuesto a la traición” (“the least ready for betrayal”) for “the least given to peaching” or “colgado” (“hanged”) for “scragged” are clearly noncommittal in that they rely on standard wording which provides the target reader with no hint of the expressive, colourful nature of the Dickensian idiom. The closest this translation comes to colloquial language (as far as the passage under scrutiny is concerned) lies in the use of such terms as “palomino” (literally “dove chick”) for “Green” or “despejamos” (literally “clear”) for “made our lucky”. And “lustrar las troteras” for “japanning his trotter cases” definitely leans towards calque, as *trotera* is not attested in Spanish as a synonym for *shoe* or *boot* and is formally inspired by English *trotter*.

The translation which departs most from standard Spanish is undoubtedly Hernández’s, as remarked above, because it makes use of both slang and colloquialisms, on the lexical level, and non-standard spelling and

grammar. This has a mutually reinforcing, multiplying overall effect, as deviations from standard spelling highlight the non-core, peripheral nature of part of the vocabulary used. Thus, “chorizo” is a colloquial (*vulgar*, according to the DRAE)² term for “pickpocket, thief”; “el menos dao al chivateo” combines colloquial “chivateo” (“police informing”) with the non-standard spelling of “dao” (standard *dado*, i.e. “given”); “chorbo” is colloquial for “fellow”; “madero” is slang for “cop”; and other colloquial or slang expressions include “dao el zuri” (“escape”, again with non-standard spelling and the rare “zuri”), “pardiyó” (standard *pardillo*, meaning “a gullible person”) and “guindao” (standard *guindado*, meaning “hanged”). The only solution which does not sound genuine but formally inspired by the source text segment is “laquear los pisantes” (literally “to lacquer the treaders”, i.e. “to polish the boots or shoes”), which might strike some as too literal a translation. Apart from that, the main difficulty underlying some of the solutions furnished by Hernández is that of likely anachronism, since words like *madero* or *movida* do sound too contemporary for a nineteenth-century novel. It could well be argued that historical, or chronological, verisimilitude is part of the *suspension of disbelief* contract the reader is expected to enter into when reading a work of fiction. In translated works of fiction, it is the translator’s responsibility to adhere to that kind of verisimilitude. Translators may often feel strongly tempted to embed contemporary words in a fictional world where they do not belong, for the sake of effect or just efficient communication; but that temptation had better be resisted for the sake of the principle just invoked. Even though the translator may not know for sure whether any actual reader would be historically-conscious enough to detect possible anachronisms, they must take into account that their ideal reader *would* detect them and make sure that they are not given the chance to do it.

Marco *et al.*’s translation relies likewise on slang and colloquial language, but shows no departures from standard spelling and grammar. Some translation solutions are not very different in nature from those furnished by Méndez Herrera or Hernández, in the sense that they pertain to a marked lexical sphere. In fact, *chorizo*, *chivarse* or *guindar* also feature in the latter’s translation; *darse el piro* is very close to *pirarse* in Méndez; and other, unprecedented solutions remain on the colloquial level to be expected – “panoli” is a colloquial term for “a gullible person”, and “hucha” (“money

² DRAE stands for *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, the Spanish normative, official dictionary issued by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language.

box”) is a rather curious term possibly intended to stand for *wallet* or *pocket-book*, which is obviously not the same as the (silk) handkerchiefs which got stolen in the source text. “Maquear los pisadores”, for its part, is a hybrid form when compared to Hernández’s or Sevillano’s options. *Maquear* is a current word meaning “to decorate furniture or other objects with *maque* (a kind of lacquer)”, according to the DRAE, but in contemporary usage it is applied to different kinds of things and even, in an ironic sense, to people. In that respect, it might well be perceived as an anachronism too. But “pisadores”, like “pisantes” in Hernández, seems to be inspired by the source text segment and is not attested in Spanish use. Other forms, such as “sin comer” (“without eating”), “extraño” (“strange”) or “el inocente este” (“this ingenuous one”) certainly tone down the colloquial profile of the source text by bringing it closer to standard diction.

Table 1 offers a comprehensive summary of all the cant or slang terms found in the passages analysed.

Table 1: Cant and slang terms in the excerpts analysed: the source text and seven Spanish translations

Source text	Leopoldo de Verneuil (1883)	Huertas (1941)	Méndez Herrera (1946)	Acerete (1969)	Sevillano (1970)	Hernández (1990)	Marco et al. (2004)
Chapter VIII							
beak	<i>pico</i>	<i>pico</i>	<i>baranda</i>	«curioso»	<i>pico</i>	grajo	<i>pelucas</i>
mill	<i>molino</i>	<i>molino</i>	<i>molino, chirona</i>	«molino», «chirona»	<i>molino</i>	molino	molino, cárcel
flash companion	<i>compañero</i>	<i>compañero</i>	chaval	Ø	compañero	hermano granuja	chico
bob	la bolsa está algo flaca	la bolsa está algo flaca	<i>pluma</i>	no ando muy bien de fondos	flaco está mi bolsillo	chelín	pluma
magpie	la bolsa está algo flaca	la bolsa está algo flaca	<i>perra</i>	no ando muy bien de fondos	flaco está mi bolsillo	medio penique	perra
pins	<i>quillas</i>	<i>quillas</i>	<i>canillas</i>	canillas	quilla	gambas	Ø
Morrice!	y andando	y andando	¡Andando!	¡Hala, andando!	¡Arriba!	¡Andando!	¡Marchando!
Plummy and Slam	<i>Plummy and Slam</i>	<i>Slummy and Slam</i>	<i>Rico y Capote</i>	Compuesto y Capote	Slummy y Slam	Menda lerenda	Engolado y portazo
Chapter XVIII							
japanning his trotter cases	<i>hacerse barnizar las trotonas</i>	<i>barnizar las trotonas</i>	charolarse los calcorros	lustrarle las troteras	<i>lustrar las troteras</i>	laquear los pisantes	maquear los pisadores
a prig	del oficio	del oficio	randa	vocación por el oficio	del oficio	chorizo	chorizo
And he's the downiest one of the lot!	que cierra la marcha	que cierra la marcha	¡Y éste es el más vivo de todos!	el más listo de todos	que cierra la marcha	Que es el más fino del montón	que es el más fino de todos

the least given to peaching	el menos dispuesto a vendernos	el menos dispuesto a vendernos	el menos chivato	el menos propicio al chivatazo	el menos dispuesto a la traición	el menos dao al chivateo	el que menos se chiva
without wittles	sin comer	sin comer	sin comer	sin comer	sin comer	sin vituaya	sin comer
cove	a los que	a los que	gachó	desconocido	al que se permite	chorbo	extraño
young Green here	con el joven perillán, que tenemos aquí presente	con el bobo que tenemos aquí presente	este cándido	con nuestro ingenuo amigo Oliver	este palomino aquí presente	este verdecioyo	con el inocente este
traps	espías	<i>guris</i>	<i>polis</i>	agentes	«polis»	maderos	Polis
if we hadn't made our lucky	si no nos hubiéramos largado	si no nos hubiéramos largado	si no nos las píramos	si no nos largamos	si no despejamos a tiempo	si no nos hubiéramos dao el zuri	si no nos hubiésemos dado el piro
that was the move	Esa fué la única razón	Ésa fue la única razón	Por eso fue la prisa	De ahí nuestra prisa	por eso te dejamos	esa fue la movida	ésa fue la cosa
Oh, you precious flat!	¡ah! ¡idiota!	eres un idiota	¡Eres un primo!	Ø	idiota serás	¡Ah, valiente pardiyo!	¡Vaya panoli!
He'll come to be scragged	ya acabarás por hacerte colgar	también acabarás por hacerte colgar	Acabará porque le aprieten el gznate	Acabará con el gznate en una cuerda	Éste acabará colgado	Terminará guindao	Le van a guindar
if you don't take fogels and tickers	si no escamoteas <i>sonadores...</i>	si no escamoteas <i>sonadores...</i>	Si no <i>mangas fazos y pelucos</i>	Si no mangas fazos y pelucos	si no escamoteas...	si no afanas safos y pelucos...	Si no pillas huchas y pelucos...

5. Conclusions

Let us imagine the four dialect translation techniques outlined above as discrete points on a cline ranging from neutralisation, or unmarked translation, at one end and the use of real target text dialects at the opposite end, with the use of an informal tenor which implies no departures from the norm and norm transgression through nonstandard features not belonging to any real dialect as intermediate points. On such a cline, four of the translations under scrutiny (Verneuil's, Huertas Ventosa's, Acerete's and Sevillano's) would clearly tend towards the neutralisation end in that they show no departures from the norm as far as spelling and grammar are concerned and often fail to match the non-core nature of cant and slang – even if a whiff of the source text is incidentally caught through the use of informal vocabulary. Méndez Herrera's and Marco *et al.*'s translations show no transgression of the orthographical or grammatical norm either, but attempt to make lexical choices in accordance with the source text's tenor. Having said that, Méndez's translation rings perhaps truer than Marco *et al.*'s in this respect. But both may be ascribed to the second technique described – trying to match the source text's colloquial tenor as far as lexical choice is concerned without norm transgression in other respects. And Hernández's translation is undoubtedly the one which goes farthest in the opposite direction, first and foremost because there is norm transgression on the level of spelling, and also on account of the effort it makes to mirror the source text's tenor on the lexical level. The only objection that could be raised in this case is that a number of translation solutions might strike some Spanish readers as anachronistic in that they could hardly be current in the nineteenth century, as they have a much more contemporary ring. It remains to be seen whether the set of linguistic resources deployed by Hernández on different levels add up to a real, identifiable target text dialect or not. Many (perhaps most) deliberate misspellings and colloquial, even slang words and phrases are intended to reflect popular speech in a general way, with no particular geographical ascription; but sometimes the reader may be left with the impression that the whole model is inspired by Madrid popular (*castizo*) speech. However, a more detailed analysis, or the translator's confirmation, or both, would be needed to ascertain this conjecture.

In the final analysis, it could be argued that a close connection exists between the extent to which the symbolical value of cant in the source text

is conveyed and the use of certain translation techniques. The relationship between these two concepts is not mechanistic, as a great deal depends on the translator's skill, on their mastery of the target language resources. Even so, it might be claimed that, all other things being equal, a translation of *Oliver Twist* involving some kind of norm transgression and/or a highly colloquial tenor (which may even include slang) is more apt to convey the symbolical associations of cant, and the undercurrent of sympathy for some of the characters using it, than a translation which mainly relies on neutralisation. Because the undercurrent of sympathy springs from the liveliness and truthfulness with which the characters' speech is represented, and neutralisation, more often than not, is more akin to flatness than to liveliness. In Hernández's translation, the qualities just mentioned emerge from lexical choices and the support they receive from departures from the norm. In Méndez Herrera's and Marco *et al.*'s translations, such support does not exist, and the effect of the whole is left to rest on a colloquial tenor relayed through lexical choices – this effect being perhaps more authentic in the former than in the latter. In the other four translations, neutralisation prevails, with local effects being created by colloquial vocabulary, to varying degrees. This sounds like a bottom line we could more or less agree upon on the basis of the analysis carried out here, but it would be dangerous to project it onto other works. The trickiest thing about dialect translation is perhaps that it does not lend itself to generalisation and decisions (as well as assessments) need to be made on an individual case-to-case basis.

Finally, a word is here in place about the relationship between prevailing translation techniques and a specific translation's publication date. It would be an unfair generalisation to say that neutralisation is in direct proportion to a translation's antiquity, because there are modern translations which do neutralise nonstandard language too; but it must be observed, nevertheless, that translations making obvious attempts to deploy target language resources in such a way that at least part of the source text's particular social language is preserved are mostly contemporary. The main exception is perhaps Méndez Herrera's, which was published almost seventy years ago. If this were a trend, it might signal a (perhaps incipient) change of norm in the target culture with regard to dialect translation. But, as above, much more research is needed before generalising.

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