

María Sánchez-Pérez  
*El Quijote en judeoespañol*  
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Among classic literary masterpieces, *Don Quijote* ranks among those that have attracted the highest numbers of readers, translators and scholars. Today, we expect new interpretations of this classic novel as well as explorations of its place, influence and resonance in the national or global republic of letters. However, María Sánchez-Pérez has presented us with a book that instead of all the latter offers a factual discovery. It is a hitherto unknown translation of some parts of *Don Quijote* into Judeo-Spanish, the language of the Spanish Jews expelled from their homeland prior to the Golden Age of Spanish literature.

The author's discovery complements the list of around 150 languages *Don Quijote* has been translated into. Although the Judeo-Spanish versions were published in modern times (1881 and 1931) they evaded the attention of researchers because they were practically buried in the pages of two local Sephardic journals published in Istanbul. These not easily accessible journals, relegated to oblivion after events that changed the historical and political map of the region, were actualized thanks to the fairly recent interest in Sephardic periodicals and the diligent research of María Sánchez-Pérez.

We are not aware of any complete translation of *Don Quijote* to Judeo-Spanish, but thanks to this book we now know that two segments of the novel were translated/adapted by David Fresco (1853-1933) and that they appeared in Sephardic journals published in Istanbul: *El Amigo de la Famiya* (1881) and *La Boz de Oriente* (1931). The selected texts are two fairly long segments from the first part of *Don Quijote*: "El curioso impertinente" and "Historia de Cardenio".

*El Quijote en judeoespañol* opens with a foreword written by Paloma Díaz Mas emphasizing the importance of the discovery of these texts. The main body

of the book consists of three parts. The first is a study by María Sánchez-Pérez about the translations/adaptations, the journals that published them, the translator/editor David Fresco, the specific traits of the translation/adaptation, observations on the target language (Judeo-Spanish), notes on criteria of editing, acknowledgments, and a bibliography. The second part are the Judeo-Spanish texts, but not complete because some issues of the journals were not accessible to María Sánchez-Pérez. Two texts are different versions of “El curioso impertinente”, one published first in *El Amigo de la Famiya* in 1881 and the other fifty years later in *La Boz de Oriente*. The third is “Historia de Cardenio”, published in the former journal in 1881. The book closes with two useful glossaries.

In her introductory study, María Sánchez-Pérez provides the reader with information on the context in which the Judeo-Spanish translations appeared, with special focus on the changes involved in the modernization period of Sephardic culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of the Sephardic press and the shift from a traditional to a modern - European rather than Oriental - cultural model, involving also the appearance of new literary genres in Sephardic culture. She also reconstructs Fresco’s biography, his possible motivations and finally the techniques of adapting and translating the segments from *Don Quijote* (techniques which were the rule rather than the exception in the Sephardic cultural environment of the time). She dedicates the final section of her study to issues of language, translation (comparison of source and target text, use of *glosas*), and transcription (Hebrew versus Roman/Latin script).

It is a meticulous and well written study accompanying the Judeo-Spanish texts and providing a context for their interpretation. Nonetheless, both the study and the Judeo-Spanish texts invite the reader-scholar to explore a number of additional and related issues. This is a feature of good books: they leave the door open for new explorations and almost invite researchers to participate in them.

The main focus of further research done by María Sánchez-Pérez, in articles she co-authored with Paloma Díaz Mas and published in academic publications, is on linguistic aspects of Fresco’s translation. What is especially interesting is the fact that Cervantes’ text was translated to an Iberian language established in an epoch that *preceded* his time and continued its development *outside* the Spanish linguistic domain, in contact with non-Iberian languages of the Balkan and Levantine cultural environment.

Another avenue of exploration, closer to those whose main interest is not linguistic, deals with the issue of literary adaptation. In the specific case of Fresco’s elaboration of Cervantes’ texts, there are two degrees of adaption.

The *first degree of adaptation* refers to the approach to *Don Quijote* as a representative of the novel as a genre. Fresco breaks the original narrative in order to select certain segments he “translates” and then publishes as independent literary texts. In the case of the 1881 publication of “El curioso impertinente”, Fresco fails to mention the novel *Don Quijote* or its author. The readers of *El*

*Amigo de la Famiya* were obviously unaware of the source text and the author. This approach to the original is *typical for Neo-Classicism*, when the works of foreign writers, with the exception of authors of classical antiquity, were considered to be in the public domain and the translator was not even required to mention their names. Translators were free to change the source text as much as they saw fit in order to make the “translation” more receptive to their reading public. So, they shortened, condensed, selected texts, changed names of the protagonists, adapted beginnings and endings according to their own taste.

Writing on this type of translation, M. Friedberg<sup>1</sup> highlighted the case of V. A Zhukovsky who translated *Don Quijote* into Russian in 1803. Zhukovsky deemed that Cervantes’ novel contained certain imperfections which he thought should be eliminated in order to improve the original text: “Some jokes are repeated too often, others are overly long. There are some unpleasant scenes. Cervantes’ taste was not always without reproach...I took the liberty to change a few things. I toned down some overly blunt expressions, changed many verses and eliminated repetitions...” An example of “free translation carried to the extreme”, wrote Friedberg, was Denis Diderot, who read Lawrence Sterne’s novel *Clarissa* twice, “was imbued by its spirit, then closed it and began to translate it”.

The publication of novels in installments, thus adapted to the periodical publication of journals, was not unusual at that time. Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* was initially released in installments published by the *Russian Messenger* from 1873 till 1877. Nonetheless, Fresco’s intention was not that of presenting an important classical novel, let alone a modern one, to the Sephardic reading public. On the contrary, it would seem that his purpose was to publish a novella on the eternal theme of love, that would attract and amuse the readership of *El Amigo de la Famiya*, something like novels pertaining to popular culture would do today.

This leads us to the *second degree of adaptation* which is carried out within the segment selected for translation. María Sánchez-Pérez, points out that on publishing “Historia de Cardenio” Fresco *did* comment on the source novel: “Antes de pasar a la historia propiamente dicha de Cardenio, Fresco incluyó una breve explicación para sus lectores en torno a lo que eran los libros de caballerías y sobre el propio personaje de don Quijote”. She observed that Fresco eliminated chapter 25 and made other changes in line with his “sole” interest of describing the intricate love relations of Cardenio, Luscinda, Fernando and Dorotea.

It was the plot of this story that would attract Fresco and most probably his readers, just as it did in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. In 1728 Lewis Theobald published a play titled *Double Falsehood*, claiming it was an adaptation of one

1. M. Friedberg, “Literary Translation in Russia: Neo-Classicism and Romanticism”, *Književno prevođenje: teorija i istorija*, K. Vidaković Petrov (ed.), Požarevac: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1989, 123-128.

of Shakespeare's plays that had allegedly been lost. Based on the "Historia de Cardenio" from *Don Quijote*, which had been translated into English by Thomas Shelton in 1612, Theobald's play does not seem to have any connection with Shakespeare. Nevertheless, it shows the typical Neo-Classicist approach to literary authorship.

To conclude, we will pass through one more door María Sánchez-Pérez left open when she noted Fresco's position on language: "De ideología antisionista, Fresco se mostró en contra del uso de la lengua sefardí y a favor de adoptar la lengua turca". What Fresco living in Istanbul wished, but did not achieve, was carried out by Haim S. Davičo in Belgrade (Serbia). Davičo led the way in the linguistic shift from Judeo-Spanish to Serbian, becoming the first Sephardic writer in the Balkans to write his literary works in the Serbian language. In addition, he translated literary works from Spanish, including two of Cervantes' short farces: *El juez de los divorcios* and *El retablo de las maravillas*.<sup>2</sup>

Despite writing short stories, essays and other works in Serbian and producing good translations of works by Spanish writers (including Cervantes), Davičo has one work which points back to the approach we have described above as typical of Neo-Classicism. It is a tale titled "Ženske šale" [Women's Jokes]. While Davičo commented that he had collected the tale directly from the Sephardic oral tradition (from an informant in Belgrade), this was in fact his translation/adaptation of Tirso de Molina's tale "Los tres maridos burlados".<sup>3</sup> It almost seems as if Davičo himself was participating in a comedy of mistaken identities and deliberate confusion of fiction and reality.

There are many other interesting doors to open after reading *El Quijote en judeoespañol*, but we leave this to future readers.

Finally, we would like to commend the editorial house Tirocinio for publishing this book in its renowned series "Fuente clara. Estudios de cultura sefardí" which provides crucial support to new research of the Sephardic heritage.

2. J. Stojanović, "Dragocen doprinos Sefarda poznavanju Servantesa u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji", *Zbornik Jevrejskog istorijskog muzeja*, 9, Beograd, 2009, 381-402.

3. Ž. Jovanović, "Haim Davičo's Text Ženske Šale (Women's Jokes): A Sephardic Folktale Or a Serbian Translation of Tirso de Molina's Los tres maridos burlados", *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 2014, 91.7, 981-1002.