



Contemporary Literary Translations into Judeo-Spanish as a Territory of Sephardic Language in its Postvernacular Mode*

Las traducciones literarias contemporáneas al judeoespañol como un territorio de la lengua sefardí en su modo postvernáculo

Agnieszka August-Zarębska

University of Wrocław, Poland
agnieszka.august-zarebska@uwr.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-6525-1201

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Abstract

This article presents the contemporary translations into Judeo-Spanish, published in the form of a book, against the background of the current sociolinguistic and sociocultural situation of Sephardic language, which nowadays is considered as severely endangered. It has ceased to be the language of literature with the exception of several authors who since 1970-ties have published poetry. In the 21st century some of them have noticed the usefulness of translation in the protection or revitalisation of Judeo-Spanish. My analysis of different elements of the books in question shows that translation belongs to the repertoire of postvernacular practices. The further claim is that in times when there is no geographical area where Judeo-Spanish continues to be spoken, the translated literature is an important part of the «territory» of the existence of the language which intersects with other «territories». They function together as points of reference in the construction of Sephardic identity based on the relation with its language of heritage.

Key words: Sephardic literature, literary translation, postvernacular culture, endangered language, text as «territory».

Resumen

Este artículo presenta las traducciones contemporáneas al judeoespañol en el contexto de la actual situación sociolingüística y sociocultural de la lengua sefardí, que está considerada en peligro de extinción y en las últimas décadas ha pasado a su fase postvernáculo. Aunque después del Holocausto apenas se escribió literatura en ella, con excepción de la poesía, en el siglo XXI algunos autores han advertido que la traducción literaria puede contribuir a la preservación o revitalización de la lengua. Mi análisis de diferentes elementos de las traducciones literarias publicadas en forma de libros demuestra que la traducción al judeoespañol pertenece al repertorio de prácticas postvernáculos. Además, expone que hoy en día, cuando no existe una zona geográfica en la que se siga hablando judeoespañol, la literatura traducida se convierte es una parte importante del «territorio» de la lengua que se cruza con otros «territorios». Todos ellos funcionan como puntos de referencia en la construcción de la identidad sefardí basada en la relación con su lengua de la herencia.

Palabras clave: literatura sefardí, traducción literaria, cultura postvernáculo, lengua amenazada, texto como «territorio».

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of WWII (and also due to previously started socio-cultural processes), Judeo-Spanish almost disappeared as language of daily communication and of culture of Sephardic communities. For more than forty years now it has been regarded as endangered. The first activities aimed at saving the language were taken up by the end of the seventies of the 20th century. In the following decades they developed into, and began to be referred to as, *arrebivimiyento*. The majority of them have features typical of the postvernacular mode of the language as defined by Jeffrey Shandler. One of these activities was promoting the writing of original literature in Judeo-Spanish which brought, first of all, a proliferation of poetry. In the 21st century another phenomenon in the field of Judeo-Spanish revival activism can be discerned – namely translation of foreign literature into Judeo-Spanish. In a postvernacular mode the translation plays a different role than in vernacular cultures.

In this paper I will make an overview of few existing contemporary translations into Judeo-Spanish, published in the form of a book, trying to point out their postvernacular characteristics. Both the books and the activities of the agents involved in their translation and publication will be shown against the background of the present sociolinguistic and sociocultural context of Judeo-Spanish. Its translated literature will be presented as a significant part of the «territory» of the existence of the language nowadays which intersects with other «territories». They function together as a bulwark of Judeo-Spanish and of Sephardic identity based on the relation with its language of heritage. The main material to be analysed are the various kinds of paratexts: primarily, peritexts and, occasionally, epitexts¹. As Rodica Dimitriu (2009: 193-206) argues, such meta-texts should be seen as a valuable documentary source in translation studies. In this article, I will try to show their importance in the study of a postvernacular (Judeo-Spanish) culture.

2. THE TEXTUAL BASIS FOR THE ANALYSIS

The number of contemporary translations, which are to be analysed here, is extremely low. Twenty-one books and even fewer titles which meet the criteria established for this research have been found. All of them have been published between 2006 and 2022. This

¹ I understand these terms according to Gérard Genette's classification, whose most general explanation can be found in Kathryn Batchelor (2018: 12): «The paratext consists of any element which conveys comment on the text, or presents the text to readers, or influences how the text is received. Paratextual elements may or may not be manifested materially; where they are, that manifestation may be physically attached to the text (peritext) or may be separate from it (epitext)».

refers to contemporary translations from various languages into Judeo-Spanish published as books. Neither reeditions of older translated literature, i.e. translations and adaptations of religious or secular texts from previous eras, nor bilingual editions of contemporary Judeo-Spanish poetry (conceived from their first edition as bilingual) will be taken into consideration.

The postvernacular mode affects the number of translated works, their choice of genre and subject matter, the material shape of the book, and the channels of their getting to the reader. I assume that their publication in the form of a book distinguishes them from translations published in the press because it gives them a greater visibility as separate works, but also as artefacts: books are more recognisable than parts of a larger, thematically and genre-diverse publication, such as an issue of *Aki Yerushalayim* magazine (see the analysis of the latter in Álvarez López, 2020). Moreover, as will be shown, the Judeo-Spanish text here has been supported by certain elements that are neither obligatory nor typical of the average translation edition in secure, well-established languages that are in use (see also August-Zarebska and Paprocka, 2021). However, in the case of Judeo-Spanish, the publishers assessed that without these auxiliary means it would be difficult to understand the text or to distribute it.

The publication of the translations discussed here took place in the last fifteen years, in the phase of *arrebioimiyento*, when new author's poetry was published far less frequently than in the two previous decades. Their emergence seems to have involved a conscious policy of using the tool of translation to keep alive and develop the poor lexical and expressive potential of Judeo-Spanish. Translators and publishers, who were among the activists in the preservation of Judeo-Spanish, were aware, on the theoretical level, of the effectiveness of this tool in the development of literary systems of small or weak literatures. The role of the translated literature in strengthening and changing literary systems was analysed in detail, for example, by Itamar Even-Zohar (1990: 45-51).

The translation initiatives have emerged in the last two decades, when original Judeo-Spanish literary production has been less frequent, and has generally been limited to poetry. They may have been a response to this deepening decline. Although in the eighties and nineties new poetry relatively blossomed in the context of the imperilled Sephardic language, it did not provide an extensive material for the reading enthusiasts and new learners of the language. Whereas the translation of larger literary forms created an opportunity to stir up deeper linguistic layers – translators faced the task of resurrecting forgotten and no longer used words and expressions in order to reflect the content of the original and also to search for entirely new linguistic means. The prefaces indicate an

awareness of this challenge and a belief in its usefulness (see for example 'Ha-Elion, 2011; Perez 2001; Perez, 2014a, 2014b).

3. THE SEARCH FOR TERRITORY

A characteristic feature of the functioning of Judeo-Spanish in its most contemporary, postvernacular mode is the absence of a specific physical area of its occurrence (being spoken or read). Consequently, there is no place on the map that can be designated as a zone of real language use, apart from occasional meetings organised with the purpose of speaking this endangered language (Held, 2015: 76-77; Meyuhas Ginio, 2015: 337). In the past, the situation was different: it was possible to pinpoint the regions inhabited by the Ladino-speaking community². In order to look for the right place for the language nowadays, one can follow the direction suggested by George Steiner:

[...] assuredly, writing has been the indestructible guarantor, the «underwriter», of the identity of the Jew: across the frontiers of his harrying, across the centuries, across the languages of which he has been a forced borrower and frequent master. Like a snail, his antennae towards menace, the Jew has carried the house of the text on his back. What other domicile has been allowed him? (Steiner, 1985: 8).

In *Our Homeland, the Text* – this title is mentioned because it gains particular relevance for the topic in question – Steiner (1985) was not referring to Judeo-Spanish, but to the Text *par excellence*, the Bible and the literature around it. However, in these words, he reflected the unique approach to text and language that has ever been present in the Jewish culture. Thus, one could use the metaphor of text as territory and say that, symbolically speaking, the contemporary Judeo-Spanish text and book constitute the «territory» of the existence of the Sephardic language. One part of it is the traditional or the digital book and the other is the cyberspace, i.e. all the platforms which use Judeo-Spanish as tool of communication (see for example Held, 2010; Brink-Danan, 2011; Bunis, 2016; Romero, 2017; Pons, 2018; Yebra López, 2021). These «tierras virtualas» (virtual lands, Romero, 2017) – easily accessible – have played an increasingly important role in most recent years. They provide means of communication in Judeo-Spanish to people who otherwise would probably not communicate at all. Michal Held (2010) compared the functions of Judeo-Spanish online

² Judeo-Spanish used to be spoken in the Turkish-Balkan and North African Diasporas. At the beginning of the 20th century, it started to give way to the local or western European languages at different pace in each country of these regions. Moreover, migrations of the Sephardim to new lands contributed to the further weakening of their language. The extermination of the biggest Jewish communities of the Southern Europe during WWII is regarded as the «fatal blow» which led to the current condition of Judeo-Spanish.

communities to the ones which in earlier Sephardic communities would have courtyards (*kurtijos*)³:

Having lost its function as a vital tool of communication, contemporary JS [Judeo-Spanish] used online may be regarded as a metaphoric place, in which an identity is constructed in the absence of an offline Sephardi community. The new Sephardi courtyard forming on the Internet is based primarily upon the ethnic language: the vehicle for the recreation of a fragmented offline personal and collective Sephardi identity (Held, 2010: 83).

The author considers these cyber-groups to be «[...] perhaps the only Sephardi homeland existing in the twenty-first century», which compensates their members for the loss of their previous homelands (Held, 2010: 93). Interestingly, when one thinks about Judeo-Spanish nowadays, space-based metaphors, such as Held's «Digital Home-Land» (2010), Rey Romero's «tierras virtualas» (2017), David Bunis' «virtual Sefarad» and «geographically border-free Judezmland» (2016: 323), Shmuel Refael's «Ladinolandia» (2021: 193) or, in this paper, «Ladino text as territory», often come to her or his mind. All of them are possible because of the separation of language and identity from a physical place, that is their deterritorialization⁴. As contemporarily there is no other geographical area where Judeo-Spanish language and the Sephardic identity have been reterritorialised, «Sephardi Digital-Home-Lands [...] effectively reterritorialize the nomadic Sephardi nation on the very deterritorialization of a Western State and language ascription» (Yebra López, 2021: 102). However, I propose not to limit the concept of the contemporary Sephardic homeland to the online communities and practices but to extend it encompassing the recent original poetry and literary translations as well.

The metaphor of «text as territory» is an image that invites interpretation. On the one hand, it is a «place» to which one can go to have contact with the language. One can return to it to renew, or sustain, his or her knowledge of the language. On the other hand, it is a «place» where one can see the language, convince oneself that it still exists and that it still carries content and values. Around this «territory» you can meet a community for which Judeo-Spanish is important. Texts of original and translated literature represent an opportunity to develop a repertoire of practices that will bring together people for whom this language is still valued. This can include reading, public reading, lectures, using texts in language classes, combining them with music, performance, spreading their fragments

³ On cultural significance of courtyards in Sephardic traditional culture, see August-Zarębska (2013).

⁴ The term of «deterritorialization» evokes Deleuze and Guattari's category of «minor literature» (1983: 16-27). Nevertheless, I will not resolve here whether the contemporary Judeo-Spanish literature belongs to it or not.

in social media and other platforms etc. – forms of engagement that do not require proficiency in the language, but which demonstrate its symbolic value (see Shandler, 2006).

Furthermore, this metaphor reveals another aspect of text and language. Identity can be constructed in relation to them understood as territory. Today Judeo-Spanish is not the first and only language of communication for anyone, but for many Sephardim it is still the language of roots and heritage. Interestingly, the postvernacular mode allows for an incomplete, fragmentary and even residual knowledge of it, which suffice to declare it as an element of identity. The memory of a language, its texts and its culture can make up the mosaic structure of contemporary complex, fragmentary and liquid identities⁵. The book editions of the translations interpreted in the light of this metaphor are an expression of care for this symbolic territory of language – so as it will not shrink or become an unwanted, abandoned wasteland.

4. EDITIONS OF TRANSLATIONS: KEY DATA

The total number of translations that form the basis of this study consists of fourteen separate titles: nine larger works and five single- or multi-author poetry collections. The figure of twenty-one editions is obtained when we take into account the reissue of one title; another was published in two alphabetical versions, three editions are in two volumes, and, finally, one title has been translated twice by different translators. Translations were made from Hebrew, ancient Greek, Modern Greek, Yiddish, French, English and Spanish. The most basic subject-genre classification permits to distinguish epics (Homer's *La Odisea* [vol. 1, 2011; vol. 2, 2014] and *La Iliada* [vol. 1, 2016; vol. 2, 2021]; José Hernández's *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* [2017]), Holocaust literature (Itzhak Katzenelson's *El kante del pueblo dijdyó atemado* [2006⁶; 2008⁷]; Moshe 'Ha-Elion's *Las Angustias del Enferno: las pasadias de un djidio de Saloniki en los kampos de eksterminacion almanes Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Melk, Ebensee* [2007]; Moshé Liba's *Yo esto reklamando!* [2014]⁸), poetry (El'azar Granot's *Abondansa del miel detenido: seleksion de poemas 1948–2008* [2007]; Mal'ahi Bet-Arye's *Las muntanyas de Yerushalayim i todos los tormentos* [year unknown]) and children's literature (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *El Princhipiko* [2010; 2nd. ed. 2012], or in the newest Heketia version,

⁵ I understand the identities and their construction according to Zygmunt Bauman's (2011) analysis of contemporary patterns of identity.

⁶ A trilingual edition (Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, Spanish).

⁷ A Judeo-Spanish edition.

⁸ This is the most general classification which does not avoid simplifications or ambiguities, e.g. *Yo esto reklamando!* can be classified both as Holocaust literature and a poetry collection and *El kante del pueblo dijdyó atemado* as Holocaust literature or epic. Its purpose is to provide a basic overview of the analysed material.

El Prencipito [2022]; Lewis Carroll's *Las Aventuras de Alisia en el Paiz de las Maraviyas* [2014; edition in Rashi script 2016]; Avner Perez's *Una Torre en Yerushalayim* [2010], anthologies *Yeladino* [2017] and *Yeladino 2* [2018]; Zehava Chen-Turiel's *Agada sfaradit* [2020] and Hergé's *Las Aventuras de Tintin. La Izla Preta* [2022]).

One of the characteristics of the majority of these editions is the combination of different languages within a single volume, it means that Judeo-Spanish is accompanied by at least one other language at different levels of textual organisation (Hebrew, Spanish, English). This second language, which can be described as auxiliary, was used mostly on the editorial page and possibly on title pages or in prefatory texts. It is here that this auxiliary character is most evident, as it was considered that Judeo-Spanish was not sufficient at the level of information which allows a book to be identified, classified in catalogues, placed within legal boundaries (e.g. copyright formulas) or easily distributed. The practical nature of this procedure is evident, and the language chosen is most often the language of the country of publication, or, if not, English – recognised as an international language. Only sometimes does it coincide with the language of the original⁹. Essentially, this assumes that an additional language version will enable or facilitate the reception of the Judeo-Spanish text, which itself could not be fully or even at all comprehensible. The addressees of these editions are people who know Judeo-Spanish, those who study it, but also those who do not know it at all but treat it as a witness to history and culture and as a visible sign of their roots. In the latter case the book becomes an artefact, a meaningful object or, to use Shandler's expression, a «semiotic souvenir» (2006: 156) with specific senses within postvernacular culture.

The combination of languages within one volume is also connected with the phenomenon of biscriptalism, i.e. coexistence of different alphabets. As these alphabets have a different direction of writing, and thus the direction of opening the book – it happens that the book has a front cover on both sides – according to the direction of both alphabets. The same applies to title pages, editorial pages and prefaces (see August-Zarębska and Paprocka, 2021). The Hebrew alphabet appears in two fonts: *merubá* and Rashi. The use of Rashi font should be interpreted as a special kind of trace – commemorating the historical reality of Judeo-Spanish. It functions like a monument to the language today, like a *lieu de mémoire*. This script, which used to be routine, today attracts attention in a special way – it commemorates, recalls the past, bears witness to it, becomes an occasion for recollection. There is a regularity here, about which Pierre Nora wrote:

⁹ For example, in Katzenelson's *El kante del puevlo dijdýo atemado*, Spanish is present on the editorial and title pages and in other paratexts, but the original Yiddish text is also given. The original Hebrew text is also included in *Agada sfaradit. La Iliada* and *La Odisea*, on the other hand, include a translation of the epic into Hebrew alongside the Judeo-Spanish version.

Lieux de mémoire originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory [...]. The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de mémoire* – that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. We buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them (Nora, 1989: 12).

This circumstance reveals the current condition of Judeo-Spanish, a language already largely a thing of the past; yet postvernacular practices such as literary translation, among others, have come to its rescue in order to prolong its duration. As Nora wrote: «no longer quite life, nor yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded» (1989: 12).

Nowadays the language is actually looking for its own form¹⁰. In the past, the Rashi alphabet predominated, but there were also communities that used a different form more locally, e.g. in Bulgaria the Cyrillic alphabet, or already in the 20th century in Bosnia and Turkey the Latin alphabet (with an orthographic system taken from the respective national language) (see Bunis, 2018: 208-210). Today the prevailing view holds that Latin script is supposed to be the tool to pave the way to more readers than the Hebrew alphabet. The underlying trend shows that the set of rules developed by the journal *Aki Yerushalayim* is increasingly being respected¹¹. The orthographic diversity in the translations is considerably less than in the poetry editions published since 1975. The translations produced in the twenty-first century were based on regularities already developed in the original Judeo-Spanish poetry. Nevertheless, the issue of the lack of orthographic standardisation of Judeo-Spanish is so important that two translators specify in their prefaces or afterwards the notation they adopted in their texts. These declarations attest to the fact that, nowadays, the choice of a writing system for Judeo-Spanish requires a conscious decision and even an explanation that highlights the competence or intention of the author. These explanations are sometimes perfunctory, as can be seen in the first following passage, or somewhat more elaborate, as in the second one:

Leshos de la akademia i de kualquier relijiosidad, so yo djudio agnostiko i kompletamente asimilado, e optado por realisarło akodro al sistema “Aki Yerushalayim”, tal vez por kreyer

¹⁰ The topic of the search of a new form for Judeo-Spanish observed in contemporary Sephardic poetry books has been analysed in August-Zarębska (2024).

¹¹ The spelling system of *Aki Yerushalayim* was also accepted from the very beginning by the first and existing up till now online Sephardic community *Ladinokomunita* (created in 1999 by Rachel Amado Bortnick). Recently, it can be also observed as the most frequently chosen one on other internet spaces where Judeo-Spanish is used. This aspect shows intersections between the «virtual lands» and the contemporary original and translated Judeo-Spanish literature as parts of the territory of the language. Some of the authors and translators participate in the interactions in the online communities. Moreover, their works were and still are announced and discussed there and thanks to this they reach a wider audience.

ke es esta la eskola ke fonetikamente aserka kon mayor fasilida i felisida mis oyidos a la dulce muzika de sus avlas (Levy, 2017: 7).

En su kurto diskorso sovre el yiddish, Franz Kafka mos favla de una lingua sin gramátika, formada de byervos ajenos yenos de bivez, i mos dize ke es una de las linguas mas djóvenas de la Evropa. Parese ke mos está favlando del djidyó. En realitá, los Sefaradim uzan oy métodos de eskritura muy semejantes, syendo el mas propajado el de la gazeta Aki Yerushalayim. Ninguno de eyos no mete aksentos en los byervos. Portanto, para mí, ke no sé el turko –i ay muchas palavras i verbos turkos en el djidyó–, i ke no nasí en la lingua djudiya, los aksentos son muy provechozos, no sólo para pronunsiar djustamente, ma tambyén para separar los omónimos, por esto kije uzarlos a la manera del espanyol moderno [...] (Pons, 2006: 285-286).

Explicit spelling guidelines do not appear in the translations of Avner Perez and Moshe 'Ha-Elion, but it is known that the former is related to *Aki Yerushalayim* and cooperated in the development of the journal's writing rules. Also, the dictionary he published in co-authorship with Gladys Pimienta, *Lashon me-Aspamia. Diksionario Amplio Djudeo-espanyol-Ebreo*, uses quite a similar system. Both 'Ha-Elion and he cites the dictionary, which can be seen as an implicit orthographic statement. Only *El Prencipito*, translated into the Moroccan variant of Judeo-Spanish by Alicia Sisso Raz (2022), differs in terms of the chosen spelling system, which uses special diacritics representing the pronunciation typical of this dialect.

In general, it is noticeable that almost all the translators mention the dictionaries they used in the translation process. They also thank the «first readers» of their work, who, as users of Judeo-Spanish or specialised researchers, corrected subsequent versions and offered advice. These experts include Avner Perez, Marie-Christine Bornes-Varol, Yehuda Hatsvi, Güller Orgun, Margalit Matitiahua or Haim Vidal Sephiha. In the Haketia version of *El Prencipito* (2022) the spelling revisions were made by specialists in this variety of Judeo-Spanish: Yaakov Bentolila and Oro Anahory-Librovicz. Arnau Pons, who gives the longest list of people he consulted for his translation, describes the nature of the work undertaken as follows: «Sin estas personas, yo no uviera kitado mi trezlado. Es, puedo dizir, un lavoro kolektivo en el ke yo fui sólo el rijidor» (Pons, 2006: 285). Here, another example of the intersections between a still smaller territory of the translated literature into Judeo-Spanish and a bigger one of the Sephardic Digital Home-Lands can be seen, since the majority of people listed by Pons are or were members of at least one online community. This proves that the activists of Judeo-Spanish engage in building different territories of their language of heritage: metaphorically speaking, «live» there, participate, «visit» and «revisit» them. At the same time, people interested in getting to know the language «visit» these deterritorialised realms in order to immerse in Judeo-Spanish, likewise students of a secure

language who go to live in a country where this language is spoken or contact its native speakers to explain any doubts.

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, the postvernacular editions of the translations are characterised by a fairly extensive paratextual content. Likewise with space, which «is marked physically, with objects forming borders, walls and fences. Staking a claim, organizing, ordering» (Macgregor Wise, 2000: 297), the territory of these contemporary translations is singled out, delineated and organised by various kinds of peritexts. They include, for example, titles and subtitles, given in different language versions, the information that the book was translated into Judeo-Spanish: «Tresladado al djudeo-espanyol... » (translated into Judeo-Spanish), «Trezladado del fransez al ladino» (translated from French into Ladino, *El Princhipiko*), «Trezladado al ladino...» (translated into Ladino, *Las Aventuras de Alisia...*); «Trezladada en ladino del grego antiguo...» (translated into Ladino from Ancient Greek, *La Odisea*); «Trezladada al ladino del orijinal grego...» (translated into Ladino from the Greek original, *La Iliada*). On the cover of *La Izla Preta* we can find the information: «Edision en Judeo-Espanyol», while on the cover of *El Prencipito* we find: «En Ḥaketía», and on the front page «Edición ḥakética». It is somewhat peculiar that information about the target language of the translation is given here. In the case of secure languages this is usually taken for granted and highlighting it is deemed unnecessary, however, here it becomes central as it defines the book and the language itself, and thus can be regarded as a gesture which sets boundaries, that is a landmark or a border post.

A second unique feature is the use of different denominations for the Sephardic language itself, which rarely occurs in case of other languages. This matter is typical of Judeo-Spanish and has been broadly discussed by the researchers, e.g. Bunis wrote about it with a touch of humor: «One of the unusual features of this linguists' delight is the plethora of names by which the language has been called during the course of its history, by native speakers as well as by others» (2011: 41). As we can see, also the contemporary editions of the translated texts manifest divergences as to the names for the language¹². Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that neither «djudezmo» nor «espanyol» appear amongst them, although they were most frequently employed in the past. I argue that the publishers chose «ladino» and «djudeo-espanyol» because nowadays they are the most widespread ones amongst *aficionados* of the language. Therefore, they facilitate the identification of these books, while the use of «djudezmo» and «espanyol» becomes more and more restricted to the academic circles. Furthermore, the later may lead to confusion with modern Spanish.

¹² Slight spelling differences can be observed already on the covers and title pages as well, e.g. *tresladado* / *trezladado*.

The placing of the phrase «trezladado al ladino...» below the title can have an additional symbolic meaning since it memorializes a 19th- and early 20th-century printing habit that was ubiquitous in Judeo-Spanish literature. The phrases: «trezladado de...», «tradusido de...» (translated from) or «adaptado de...» (adapted from) used to appear in many *romansos* (novels) which were indeed translations or adaptations of foreign oeuvres. The very genre of the novel was transplanted to Sephardic culture as a result of translating or – paraphrasing Olga Borovaya’s seminal work (2012: 140) – «rewriting» French or, less frequently, Hebrew and other novels. The obvious difference concerns the use of prepositions «a» (into) and «de» (from): in the past the publishers would inform about the source language («trezladado de...»), whereas today the target language is given («trezladado a...»). I regard this fundamental turn to be a consequence of the changed condition of Judeo-Spanish in the 21st century. When the language was connected with specific regions and communities of speakers, it was unnecessary to point out the language of the book. However, when it was deterritorialized in geographical sense and its community remarkably shrank, this additional support began to be of utmost importance.

Expanding on the issue of other peritexts, as a rule, there is actually at least one prefacial text – but sometimes there are even several. Prefaces or afterwords, as already mentioned, explain the orthographic rules, but they also talk about the translation process, contain basic information about the language, possibly about the translator, their connection to Judeo-Spanish culture, and in a sense legitimise their competence. Moreover, they explain why the translator chose a particular literary work. Against this background, Avner Perez’s texts stand out. They are more elaborate than those of the other authors, in which he additionally refers to the history of translation in Judeo-Spanish culture and to previous translation projects in which he participated as a translator or publisher. He explains what motivated him to undertake a particular translation, what its value is in the current postvernacular phase of the language (he does not use the term «postvernacular»), and how successive translations «dialogue» with one another. In the introduction to Moshe 'Ha-Elion’s translations of the ancient Greek epics, he shows the complexity of this task and compliments 'Ha-Elion’s artistry.

In the case of most of the books discussed here, the publication of the translation becomes a celebration of Judeo-Spanish literature and of a milieu committed to the revitalization of the language. We find an expression of this both in the peritexts and in the epitexts, i.e. reviews, press notes and articles, which, in different languages, appear mainly in online media. In the following excerpt of Perez’s introduction to *La Odisea*, his monumental, lofty style can be observed: «This day is a holiday for the admirers of Ladino and its literature. The most distinguished oeuvre of the classical literature, the poetry of Homer, enters today the palace of Ladino» (Perez, 2011: IX). What might the sense of «the palace of Ladino» be

here? I claim that this figure stems from a slightly old-fashioned distinction between the high culture and the low or popular culture. It embodies original and translated literature and can be contrasted, in the context of Judeo-Spanish nowadays, with the «digital courtyard», space of communication and exchange whose first and foremost purpose is not their aesthetic value. These two areas or territories need each other so that the contemporary Sephardic culture is more complete and develops in a more balanced way.

Perez's words confirm that although the territory of Judeo-Spanish is small, it celebrates events important to its existence, and, one can even say that celebrates itself. What's more, the Digital Home-Lands prove to be reactive to the publication of new translations and here their respective territories intersect again. Several members of *Ladinokomunita* shared their opinions and experiences connected with reading the Ladino version of Homer's epic, for example, noticed that the vocabulary used by 'Ha-Elion was exceptionally diverse and rich. The translator himself commented upon this question in the newspaper *Haaretz*: «I didn't make up any words. I have documentation for everything» ('Ha-Elion's quote in Hasson, 2012). Rachel Amado Bortnick, in a text written for the site *eSefarad. Noticias del Mundo Sefaradí*, expressed her appreciation of *La Odisea* in Judeo-Spanish:

[...] es una ovra ke va pasar a la lista de las mas sovresalientes traduksiones del mundo!!! I para mozotros, los amantes del ladino i su literatura, es koza de darmos grande orgulyo i alegria. Este livro es un trezoro literario, i verdadamente “una fiesta para los amantes de ladino” (Amado Bortnick).

5. FOREWORDS: THE MOTIVATIONS OF TRANSLATORS

Prefaces are also an interesting source of information about the motivations of translators and publishers when undertaking a translation. Three main types of motivation can be read. These are the commemoration of roots, the contribution to the preservation (revitalisation of the Judeo-Spanish language) and, mainly in the case of Holocaust literature, the conviction of the ethical value of making these works available in the language of some of the Holocaust victims. Carlos Levy, in a short introductory note to José Hernández's *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, makes it clear that, for him, translation was a form of commitment to saving the language and an act of declaring his identity, i.e. of highlighting the two sources of a complex, hybrid identity – the Judeo-Spanish culture of his family and the Argentine culture of his country:

Este lavoro de tresladasión del Martín Fierro, non tyene otro propozito ke aportar a la rekuperasión de la kultura Sefaradí i el Ladino, ya ke rekodrando a Unamuno ambezimos ke el sprito de los puevlos bive i se transmite en los dizires de su lingua. Al mizmo tyempo profito de rendir omenaje al poema maksimo de esta, mi tiera, i la ke adoptarion mis

antepasados, a la fin de un largo peregrinaje, komo suya, maike dainda eskarinyados kon Sefarad i Turkiya (Levy, 2017: 7).

Moshe 'Ha-Elion in the volume I of the *Odyssey* does not say this directly, but it can be read from his words that the main motivation was the development of the language. In fact, he focuses on pointing out that he was aware of the immense difficulties of the task of translating the ancient epic into a language that was impoverished at its present postvernacular stage and which, even in its mature phase, had not developed a vocabulary of certain semantic groups (e.g. concerning navigation, weaponry, agriculture or music) and certain literary forms (specifically the dactylic hexameter) (see 'Ha-Elion, 2011: VII-VIII). Also, the publisher Avner Perez, in the introductory texts to both volumes, emphasises how challenging it was for 'Ha-Elion to translate the text and how many difficulties he had to overcome. Moreover, he stresses how significant his contribution to the development of Judeo-Spanish is, all the more so because he did this work at an age when many were predicting the death of the language (see Perez, 2011: X; Perez 2014a: VII-IX). All these elements lead us to believe that the most important objective for both the translator and the publisher was precisely the development of the language. In my opinion, it is essential that 'Ha-Elion and Perez, as well as other translators who live in Israel, know the history of the revitalisation of Hebrew as a language of communication and literature over the past two centuries. In their strategies they seem to refer to methods previously observed in Modern Hebrew literature.

The ethical theme of bearing witness to the Holocaust and commemorating its victims guides the translation of Holocaust poetry in *Yo esto reklamando!* It is preceded by as many as four prefaces by politicians (Shimon Peres and Itzhak Navon), a literary scholar (Ada Aharoni) and the author of the poems. The fifth president of Israel, Itzhak Navon, writes:

Entre estas lenguas se topa el ladino o sea el djudeo-espanyol, lengua de la komunidad a la kuala apartiene el violinista, i el yidish, lengua uazada en las komunidades djudias ke fueron persigidas i embiadas a Auschwitz i a otros kampos de la muerte. Los avlantes de estas dos lenguas estan indo i menguando, i la publikazion de estos poemas es una kontribusion ke va a ayudar a sus konservasion (Navon, 2014: 5).

On the one hand, it highlights the value of the act of making works available in the language of some of the victims, for whom it was a vernacular language. On the other hand, the motivation aimed at preserving a dying language is no less important.

All the above-mentioned translators' motivations can be construed as their struggle for the maintenance and the strengthening of the contemporary territory of Judeo-Spanish as well as a manifestation of their affinity with it.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be observed that the small number of contemporary translations into Judeo-Spanish shows the current critical state of this language and literature. In the present Sephardic context, however, they play an extremely important role, since they participate in the prolongation of the language and even in its development, and in them the contemporary form of the Judeo-Spanish language and book is crystallised. They provide admirers and students of the language with material for reading and learning. Symbolically, they form part of the «territory» of the language's existence in the age in which it has no other proper place in physical landscape. This territory becomes an important reference point in the construction of contemporary complex Sephardic identities. It turns into «home-territory» because «What makes home-territories different from other territories is on the one hand the living of the territory (a temporalization of the space), and on the other their connection with identity, or rather a process of identification, of articulation of affect» (Macgregor Wise, 2000: 299). Moreover, contemporary translations constitute a kind of monument commemorating Judeo-Spanish, its community and culture.

It is worth noting that the functions of literary translations in vernacular and postvernacular culture are different. In the former the main purpose of translating new books into a language is to make them available to the readers who would not read them in the source language. There, the *oeuvre* itself is the aim whereas in a postvernacular context the language becomes most important. The second aim may also be to develop the target language and literature – to develop new means that have not been present in it before. Postvernacular translations are intended, first and foremost, as means of developing the target language, enriching its literary capacity, providing the reading matter in it (which is scarce). The translated work as well as its content recede into the background. They are subordinated to the essential purpose of attesting to the vitality of the target language. They become an opportunity for it to be spoken again, which is actually tantamount to its continued existence. Moreover, some of translations are also carried out by the translator in order to reclaim and honour their roots, not by choosing a work or a source language, but by choosing a target language. In postvernacular culture this choice is not transparent, it is an end in itself and always demands interpretation.

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