

Xuan Bello, translator and author: his role in the development of the Asturian literature of *Surdimientu*

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Abstract

Xuan Bello is one of the best-known Asturian authors in the Iberian Peninsula. His work as a poet developed in parallel with his work as a translator, especially of Portuguese and Galician, two languages that have influenced his own literary production in Asturian. His dual role as author and translator is inseparable from its cultural context, characterized above all by *Surdimientu*, the movement to recover the Asturian language and culture launched in 1974. Indeed, Asturian literature can be seen as an *emerging literature*, supported by a group of agents who take on various functions inside the literary system. The aim of this article is to analyse the relationship between Bello's poetry and prose with: 1) The role played by the author within the framework of *Surdimientu*, 2) The role played by his translations, and 3) The impact of the translations of his works in prose on the Catalan literary system.

Keywords: Asturian literature; Catalan literature; emergence; translation studies; Xuan Bello

Resum. *Xuan Bello, traductor i autor. El seu paper en el desenvolupament de la literatura asturiana del Surdimientu*

Xuan Bello és un dels autors asturians més coneguts a la península Ibèrica. La seva formació com a poeta es desenvolupa en paral·lel a la seva tasca de traductor, sobretot del portuguès i del gallec, llengües que l'influeixen en la seva obra (en asturià). La seva doble faceta com a autor i traductor és indissociable del context cultural en què es desenvolupa, marcat pel *Surdimientu*, el moviment de recuperació de la llengua i cultura asturianes iniciat el 1974. En aquest context, la literatura asturiana pot ser vista com una *literatura emergent*, que disposa d'una sèrie d'agents que assumeixen diverses funcions en el sistema literari. L'objectiu d'aquest article és analitzar la relació de l'obra (poesia i prosa) de Bello amb: 1) El paper que l'autor desenvolupa en el marc del *Surdimientu*; 2) El paper que hi assumeixen les seves traduccions, 3) L'impacte de les traduccions de la seva obra en prosa en el sistema literari català.

Paraules clau: literatura asturiana; literatura catalana; emergència; estudis de traducció; Xuan Bello

Summary

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A veces, y namás a veces, la vida blinca y reblinca nes
palabres que dicimos.

Xuan Bello, “Escribir”

1. Introduction

Since 1995, when Lawrence Venuti published his book in defence of the translator’s visibility, studies on the authorial dimension of the translator and the role of creativity in translation (especially literary) have proliferated (Perteghella & Loffredo 2006; Bassnett & Bush 2006; Flynn 2013). These studies focus on the translator’s capacity for agency, which in turn conditions his/her creativity (Pym 2011; Bassnett 2011), on his/her renunciation of the use of an authorial self (Pym 2011), on the role of the genre in the choice of translation (Flynn 2013) and on the way translation is mediated through institutional platforms or external agents (Milton & Bandia 2009). The consideration of the translator as an author entails not only a reassessment of the notion of *authorship* (Pym 2011) but also of the status of the translated work, and its assignation to a category much closer to that of *original work*, understanding it as a process characterized above all by its creative dimension (Hurtado Albir 2014: 64).

As happens in the field of self-translation (where the initial studies focused on isolated and very specific cases of self-translations made by recognized authors, who used languages such as French, English and German), the analysis of the translator as creator has often been related to representative authors of the Western literary canon, who, at specific moments and with clearly innovative purposes in mind, used translation in order to improve or complement their own creation (see, for example, Woodsworth’s 2017 analysis of the translations by Bernard Shaw, Gertrude Stein and Paul Auster). In these studies, however, scholars have overlooked the cases of translators-authors who write and publish in societies characterized by *endogenous bilingualism* (Grutman 2013: 71), in which there is an unequal or asymmetric distribution of the social uses of languages that share the same space. In these societies, the practice of translation is strongly conditioned by the sociolinguistic context in which it occurs and reflects the power dynamics between the languages involved. Moreover, there is usually a situation of diglossia that affects the prestige and public recognition of the minoritized language, influencing its use in all contexts and registers and clearly impacting the linguistic choices made by authors and translators.

The analysis of the relationship between the translator and the creator highlights the role that translation takes on in the development of a literature (Delisle & Woodsworth 1995), particularly in emerging literatures, where the translator tends to perform several functions at the same time (namely, as author, critic, editor, publicist, etc.). This situation is common in Iberian literatures such as Galician, Catalan, Basque, and Asturian, which, either during the Franco dictatorship (in the case of the first three) or during the political transition to the Democracy (in the case of the fourth), took advantage of the platforms created by the processes of the institutionalization of culture and the normalization of language use to build an autonomous literary system. In these contexts, translation was promoted and seen as an instrument that contributed to fostering literature in the language specific to the territory. Starting in the 1980s, the reestablishment of education in Catalan, Galician, Basque and Asturian gave a new impetus to a publishing system for which translation represented an ideal vehicle for supplying an emerging market with a guaranteed readership. Much of the debate that arose at that time on the social role of the Catalan, Basque, Galician and Asturian literatures focused on the two functions that they had to adopt: on the one hand, they had to have characteristics that resembled those of other literatures with already consolidated and internationally recognized literary systems, and on the other, they had to be accepted and disseminated throughout the society. In the case of the Asturian language and culture, the literary works and the translations published from 1974 onwards (the year of the launch of the *Surdimientu*)¹ had to perform an extra function: that of participating in the creation of a written language and, more specifically, of a standard that was just beginning to be codified and was in urgent need of linguistic and literary models.²

The aim of this article is to analyse the two-way link between translation and creation in the contemporary Asturian narrative and, particularly, in the work of the writer Xuan Bello (born in Paniceiros in 1965), while also exploring his relationship with Iberian literatures. The article will be divided into two parts. First, drawing on the studies of Guillén (1990), Grassin (1996) and Domínguez (2006, 2011), we will reflect on Asturian literature as an *emerging literature* and the relationship between emerging literatures and the phenomena of reception and translation. At this point, we will also review the role of translation in the construction of the poetic and narrative tradition of the *Surdimientu* (Álvarez Llano 2002: 507-557).

1. The *Surdimientu* was a movement to revive the Asturian language and culture. Used in a sense equivalent to the Catalan *Renaixença* and the Galician *Rexurdimentu*, it has been defined as “un movimiento sociológico, lingüístico y cultural que plantea de forma diferente a la tradicional, las relaciones entre la identidad asturiana y sus manifestaciones culturales y, sobre todo, que convierte a la lengua y a la cultura asturianas en algo absoluto en sí mismo” (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 9). It has also been called *Resurdimientu*, *Remanecer* and *Rexurdimientu*.
2. As Xuan Bello points out in an interview, one of the themes discussed by the writers of the time was the use of a *bable tapeció* or a *bable claro*, that is to say, the dichotomy between a model of a more purified standard, far-removed from real speech, and a model closer to that of the speakers (Santori 2006: 164). In general, the adoption of the standard was seen as a loss of freshness and immediacy (Santori 2006: 167).

Second, we will relate Xuan Bello's literary career (which includes poetry and prose) to his work as a translator (especially of Portuguese and Galician literature) (Álvarez Llano 2002: 541-542). In this section, we will examine the observations that Bello includes in the paratexts of his translations and his justifications for certain aesthetic choices. As a subsection to this second part, we will focus on the specific case of the reception of Bello's work in Catalan literature.

There are two reasons for choosing the career of Xuan Bello for this case study. The first is the fact that he is the best-known Asturian author outside the community of his birth, and the one whose work has generated the most academic studies in languages other than Asturian. The impact and recognition of his literature (especially in its Spanish versions, but also in Catalan) has increased the interest in Asturian literature beyond the language's natural borders. Unlike Catalan, Galician and Basque, Asturian is not an official (or co-official) language in the autonomous community of Asturias,³ and this lack of legal protection is a major obstacle to its normalization as a language of social and literary use. The second reason for choosing Bello is the fact that his career over the course of the last 40 years offers an interesting reflection of some of the characteristics of the processes of literary emergence, to do primarily with the writer's scope of action: in Bello's case, the range of functions he has carried out in the literary system (such as that of author-translator), his participation in the debates on the codification of the language, his defence of the need for institutional support for culture, and his choice of poetry as a means of expression – a genre that, in the early days of the *Surdimientu*, was seen as the most suitable and versatile for the creation of a literary language.⁴

2. The Literature of the *Surdimientu* and Translation

Over the past fifty years or so since the creation of the *Conseyu Bable*, a movement in favour of the Asturian language, the literature that has been written in Asturian can be considered as an *emerging literature*. According to Domínguez (2006) an emerging literature is one that “is nascent, which breaks the surface” and implies a position of self-awareness on the part of the writers, critics and readers who engage in it (Guillén 1990: 5). In this case, there is a clear break (both thematic and formal) with respect to the previous, *costumbrista* tradition, predominant during the dictatorship (Álvarez Llano 2002: 525).⁵ This *emer-*

3. In 1992, Spain signed the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages (Strasbourg 1992), ratified in 2001 and in force since January 2001, which includes seven languages spoken in Spain: Catalan (Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Valencian Country), Basque (Basque Country and the Basque-speaking part of Navarre), Galician (Galicia), Occitan (Catalonia), Asturian (Asturias), Leonese (Castile and Leon) and Aragonese (Aragon).
4. For Xuan Bello's views on the cultural and linguistic programme of the *Surdimientu*, see Santori's interview with him (2006: 161-173).
5. “La nueva literatura, el *Surdimientu*, va a suponer una ruptura absoluta con esas características de lo antiguo, al tiempo que va a ocupar todos los espacios antes inexplorados y, sobre todo, va a entender de forma distinta el valor y el papel de la lengua y la cultura en la vida cotidiana de los asturianos” (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 13). This “rupture” takes shape in the emergence of new themes, subgenres and styles (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 20-22). In this regard, Bello has considered

gence must be understood, therefore, as including both creation and translation, since “the very act of emergence implies a rereading of the canon through a special thematic and genological work which establishes intertextual, interliterary and interartistic networks, networks in which the translation processes are integral” (Domínguez 2006). If the emerging literary system is not consolidated, does not enjoy international recognition, and lacks a modern literary tradition, it is in a position of vulnerability that avoids “garantizar su equilibrio, su configuración e incluso su existencia” (Martínez Tejero 2020: 58). The Asturian literary system is, in fact, in its formative phase and must fight to achieve its literary autonomy with respect to the Castilian literary system, with which it shares space.

The concept of *emerging literature* has been associated either with a phase of evolution of a national literature (Guillén 1990) or with any type of literature related to the expression of a cultural or ethnic minority, “that cannot be readily comprehended within the hegemonic view of literature” (Goszich 1988: 35). Emerging literatures are forced to fill in their gaps by resorting to “the dominant system’s nuclear or residual data, or by looking to other dominant or emerging systems” (Domínguez 2006). In this regard, their *emergence* implies a reconfiguration of the interliterary network of which they are part (Domínguez 2006) and may involve “an experimentation with new forms, techniques and devices” (Grassin 1996: 9). An emerging literature depends on the reception of other literatures – a reception, in fact, defined as the “driving force of emergence” (Domínguez 2006) – since its repertoire is constituted via the importation of extrasystemic works. Poetry is, moreover, one of the most prominent genres in emerging literatures (Domínguez 2006). These three characteristics – the break with the past symbolized by *Surdimientu* literature, the role played by translation and reception, and the prioritization of the poetic genre – allow us to understand the literature of the *Surdimientu* as an emerging literature and to explore the role played by Portuguese, Galician, and Catalan literatures in its constitution. Before doing so, however, we need to briefly describe the evolution of the movement.

There are three main milestones in the development of the *Surdimientu* (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 35-43): (1) The creation of the Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (Academy of the Asturian Language) on December 15, 1980. The Academy published the *Normes ortográfiques* (Rules on Spelling) in 1981, the *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana* (Grammar of the Asturian Language) in 1998, and the *Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana* (Dictionary of the Asturian Language) in 2000;⁶ (2) The incorporation of the Asturian language into basic general education courses in 1984; (3) The passing of the law on the use and promotion of Asturian by the autonomous parliament in 1998. Although these moves

Surdimientu to be a social reaction against the Asturian “infralliteratura” (apud Bolado García 2002: 571) and the lack of literary and cultural ambition (apud Santori 2006: 166).

6. There is an automatic Asturian-Spanish translator (<<https://eslema.it.uniovi.es/comun/traductor.php>>), an online newspaper (<<https://asturies.com/>>), and a Wikipedia site (<<https://ast.wikipedia.org/>>). [Access: 25/03/2023].

undoubtedly represent an incentive for the use of the language, the number of Asturian speakers remains low: in 1994 it was estimated to be around 550,000.⁷

Linked to the *Surdimientu*, two other currents have been promoted, which have developed at different times or stages. The first dates from the 1970s, with the creation of the Conseyu Bable group. The authors active in that period linked a series of political and linguistic claims to Celtic folklore and to the need to rebuild an interrupted literary tradition through the revival of ballads and romantic poetry. Their goal was to establish relations with cultural reference points from the Asturian literature of earlier times in order to legitimize the literature written in Asturian and to constitute an autochthonous literary tradition in the context of the political transition in Spain.

The second stage, in which Xuan Bello would participate, began in the 1980s and involved a dialogue with the Western literary tradition, mainly through translation (especially of Portuguese poetry) (Santori 2006: 167). The main mouthpiece of the group was the magazine *Adrúi* (1986-1990), directed by Antón García, Berta Piñán and Xuan Bello. The works of Bello that we will discuss are representative of this orientation, insofar as they relate Paniceiros, a town in Asturias, to a series of global locations such as New York and China (Bolado García 2002: 619). As critics have pointed out, this fictional game starts from the idea of Borges' Aleph, which refers to the beginning of a "mundu possible" (a possible world) through which readers can revisit the literary history of the town (Álvarez 2002: 723-724). Paniceiros (Bello's hometown) can be compared to Borges' toponym because it is conceived as a place that includes all other places. So, in addition to being the centre of Bello's literature, this place is also conceived as the centre from which the periphery is repositioned, in a process that involves a reflection on the role of literature (and, more specifically, literature in Asturian) in the world and in the Iberian Peninsula (López-Vega 2022: 74-94).

Much of the bibliography on *Surdimientu* literature has highlighted the importance of translation (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 52), and in fact several specific studies have been devoted to this subject (D'Andrés 1992; Martino Ruz 2003; Cortina 2007; Agost 2017). D'Andrés has emphasized that "la traducción a la nuesa llingua, como actividá 'normal', ye un fenómenu carauterísticu del llamáu *Surdimientu*" (D'Andrés 1992: 22). This process took shape during the linguistic normalization, which had two dimensions: the standardization of the language (which affected spelling, morphology, lexicon, and syntax) and its *cultivation* (through promotional activities that were closely linked to the teaching of the language from 1984 onwards). Assessing the translations made between 1975 and 1992, D'Andrés (1992: 28-30) detected some inconsistencies (in his opinion, inadmissible) in the application of the linguistic norms and an excess of translations of children's and youth literature.

Eleven years later, Martino Ruz resumed the analysis focusing on translations published between 1983 and 2000. Like D'Andrés, he considered that this period had been the most productive in terms of the number of translations, with an aver-

7. <<https://ast.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asturiano>> [Access: 25/03/2023].

age of 9.94 translated works per year. In his opinion, this productivity was the result of the imperatives of the normalization of the language and had been favoured by public aid for translation provided by the autonomous government of Asturias, the Principáu. This context was supportive of translation, but it had side effects that would have to be corrected – such as an absence of criteria in the selection of translatable works and the omission, in the books, of any mention of the source language from which they were translated, which made Martino Ruz think that many of them were translated through intermediate languages such as Spanish (2003: 160-161).

For his part, Cortina (2007) underlined two of the difficulties that the translators of the *Surdimientu* had to overcome: the lack of a lexical corpus and the need to act as normalizers, researchers, and linguists, in addition to translators. In his analysis, he reported that the most translated authors were Álvaro Cunqueiro, Xosé Luis Méndez Ferrín, John Berger, Albert Camus, Lewis Carroll, Luis Sepúlveda, Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde. In general, he notes that there has been an improvement in the translations made since the 1990s, which were now much more refined and contained fewer errors than those of the 1980s. He also stressed that the translator's other roles as critic, columnist, editor, and linguist created confusion because, in cases where there was disagreement with the standard, each writer would defend different language models associated with the one they use in their work of creation.

In an article that compiles and expands the data from the articles by D'Andrés, Martino Ruz and Cortina and adds information extracted from the ISBN database, Agost (2017) highlights how the increase in translation since 1974 has occurred parallel to the increase in creation in Asturian. The languages most often translated into Asturian are, in descending order, Spanish (with 180 recorded translations), English (120), French (66) and Galician (52) (in Galician, the numerous translations of Álvaro Cunqueiro's works stand out). Comparing translations *into* and *from* Asturian between 1983 and 2016, Agost observes an imbalance: while 254 titles have been translated into Asturian, only 105 have been translated in the other direction. Considering the importance of the relations between Asturian and Portuguese literatures, facilitated by cultural affinity and geographical proximity, it may come as a surprise that there have been no translations from Asturian to Portuguese.

3. The Literature and Translations of Xuan Bello

In this section, we will make a synthesis of Bello's creative and translating career,⁸ focusing on his relationship with other Iberian literatures and on the way he presents his role as translator in the context of the *Surdimientu*. To do so, we will base our analysis on the information contained in the paratexts of his translations, materials which, as Flynn (2013) remarks, “[d]espite their representative nature or purpose, [...] can also display degrees of creativity in introducing a new writer to a new readership”.

8. For reasons of space, we will focus only on his work published in book form.

Bello's career began in 1982, when he was 16, with *Nel cuartu mariellu* (Bolado García 2002: 617-623). Between 1982 and 2019 he published seven collections of poems, some of which are included in two bilingual (Asturian-Castilian) anthologies: *La vida perdida* (1999) and *Ambos mundos* (2010). In addition, his third book of poems (*Los nomes de la tierra*, 1990) was translated into Galician in 2010 and a selection of his poetry (taken from three books: *Los nomes de la tierra*, *El llibru vieyu* and *Los caminos secretos*) was translated into Catalan in 2006 by different translators (see the anthology *Passà el temps desfent la memòria*, Bello and Gutiérrez 2006). Bello justified his choice of poetry as a genre by arguing that “[I]a poesía ye una forma de pensar, diferente a la que se tien a la hora d’escribir un cuentu o una novela” and is “un bon campu d’esperimentación d’esi estándar [...] tien que ser mui consistente y tien qu’atender a otros aspectos amás de la llingua en rellación con otres cultures, con una tradición cola que dialoga continuamente” (Santori 2006: 168).

Although he became known as a poet, prose is the genre that has made Bello popular as a writer and the genre with the most translations and into the widest range of languages. His articles have circulated through the press and digital platforms and have been able to reach a wider audience than his poetry. Bello has published prose since the 1990s, a decade that has been considered the most productive in the *Surdimientu*, when the opportunities for publication improved and there was an expansion of themes and literary forms (Álvarez Llano 2002: 521). For the first time since the 17th century, Asturian literature has more prose writers than poets (Álvarez Llano 2002: 548). Between 1996 and 2019, Bello published three novels and sixteen collections of prose. From this set of nineteen books, five have been translated into Spanish, four into Catalan, and one into Galician. As an exception, two books were originally published in Spanish. The first is *Historia universal de Paniceiros*, a work written in the middle of his career, which won the Madrid City Council's Ramón Gómez de la Serna de Narrativa prize in 2003 and which was published the following year in Asturian (*Hestoria universal de Paniceiros*). The second is his latest book, *Incierta historia de la verdad*. Both books, as well as the collections *La nieve y otros complementos circunstanciales* and *Unas cuantas cousas guapes*, have been translated into Catalan. So Bello's work has circulated in its translations into Spanish, Galician and Catalan, but it has not been translated into English (Bello does, however, have a biographical entry in the English Wikipedia).⁹

In terms of academic reception, most studies have focused on the two prose collections that have Paniceiros as their centre:

- (1) *Historia universal de Paniceiros* (2002). The book is the result of a selection of stories previously published in Asturian, taken from *Pantasmes*, *mundos*, *llaberintos* (1996), *La memoria del mundu* (1997), *Ríu arriba* (1998), *Cómo facer l'Habana ensin salir d'Asturies* (1998) and *La bola infinita* (2000). Two years after its publication in Spanish, the book came out in Asturian in

9. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xuan_Bello> [Access: 25/03/2023].

2004. In the case of the Catalan translation, which appeared in 2008, the text on the cover indicates that it was translated from the Asturian by the publisher Jordi Raventós. Raventós himself, head of the Adesiara publishing house, published two other collections of prose by Bello (*La neu i altres complements circunstancials* and *Unes quantes coses boniques*), which also stress that the original language is Asturian.

- (2) The collection *Paniceiros* (in Spanish) (2004), resulting from the fusion of two books (*Historia universal de Paniceiros* and *Los cuarteles de la memoria*). When preparing this volume, the author respected the order in which the stories were published, classifying them under various headings corresponding to the 27 letters of the Spanish alphabet (and not to the Asturian, which does not have the letter *j*)¹⁰ and added a prologue (*alpha*) and an epilogue (*omega*). Although the back cover of the book (published by Random House Mondadori) describes Bello's work as the “embajada de una lengua y una literatura, la escrita en lengua asturiana”, in the paratexts it is not clearly stated that the texts of the two collections were originally published in this language.¹¹ This has created some confusion when identifying the language of the book and has caused some analyses of its geographical symbolism, such as the one by Nathan Richardson (2014), to overlook the fact that the original language of the text was Asturian. This is a serious oversight, since the use of the Asturian language has an undeniable symbolic and ideological charge in the book in relation to the theme of space: with his work, Bello aims to question certain mental representations of the territory by challenging presumptions about what is global and what is regional.

As we noted above, like other authors of his generation Xuan Bello has had an interesting career as a translator, which has contributed to increasing the symbolic capital of Asturian literature and culture. This work as a translator has been complemented by his role as an anthologist, for example in his edition of the anthology of Asturian literature *El sentimientu de la tierra* (1999). In this field, three main orientations can be observed. First, we find a set of translations from English, Spanish and Catalan, produced to introduce children and youth to literature in Asturian – a pressing need from the moment when this language began to be taught in schools. In this group, we place the translations of classics of youth literature in English, such as *El casu raru del Dr Jekyll y Mr Hyde* (original title: *The strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*) (1995), by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *Tres aventures de Sherlock Holmes* (original title: *Three Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*) (1995),¹² by Arthur Conan Doyle; as well as two books in Catalan that deal with the theme of war: *Silenciu nel corazón* (original title: *Silenci al*

10. Two of the most representative spellings of the Asturian alphabet disappear from the list: the *hache sotopuntiada* (*JxI*) and the *che vaqueira* (*IKI*).

11. This information appears in the preface written by the author (Bello 2004: 16).

12. In the case of translations, we indicate in parentheses the date of publication of the translation (and not of the original).

cor) (1999), by Jaume Cela, and *Nun llugar que llamen guerra* (original title: *Un lloc anomenat guerra*) (2002), by Jordi Sierra Fabra.

Second, there are his poetry translations, which reflect some of his literary affinities. As regards Portuguese poetry, his version of *Estanqu y otros poemas* (1989), by Fernando Pessoa, stands out, and the anthology *Una mirada diversa. Una antoloxía de la poesía portuguesa / Uma olhada diversa. Uma antologia da poesia portuguesa* (2009), which includes poems by, among others, Eugénio de Andrade, Jorge de Sena, Sophia de Mello and João Camilo, authors who became points of reference for Bello's generation (Bolado García 2002: 617). In this group, we should also highlight his versions of English, Italian, Catalan, Polish and Russian poetry, collected in the anthologies *Sieglu xx, cambalache*, in 2000 (with poems by Rudyard Kipling, Ezra Pound, Giuseppe Ungaretti, W.H. Auden, Gabriel Ferrater and Cesare Pavese, among others) and *Colección d'identidaes*, in 2009 (with poems by Carl Sandburg, Tonino Guerra, Adam Zagajewski, Anna Akhmatova and Mary Oliver). All four books were published by key publishers in the *Surdimientu* literary programme: Ámbitu, Edicions Trea and Libros del Peixe. Only one of them (*Una mirada diversa / Uma olhada diversa*) is bilingual (Portuguese-Asturian).

Finally, the third group comprises the translations of two collections of stories that influenced him in the conception of his narrative imaginary. These are the volumes *Escuela de melecineros y fábula de varia xente* (original, *Escola de menciñeiros e fabula de varia xente*, 1960) (1997), by Álvaro Cunqueiro, and *Coses* (original, *Cousas*, 1926) (2001), by Alfonso D. Castelao. These two books share with Bello's own work an interest in oral tales, some of which use myths to explain the origin and meaning of specific elements of a place, such as the landscape, and certain superstitions and anecdotes about local characters.

Of all these translations, the ones that relate to Xuan Bello's creative career (both poetic and narrative) and are therefore relevant to our analysis are the ones in the second and third groups. With regard to poetry translations, there is a notable change between the presentation of the translations of the first two collections (*Estanqu y otros poemas* and *Una mirada diversa / Uma olhada diversa*), where Bello appears as a translator, and that of the following two (*Sieglu xx, cambalache* and *Colección d'identidaes*), where he appears as an author. In the first collection, whose author is Álvaro de Campos (one of the heteronyms of Fernando de Pessoa), Bello includes a "translator's note" in which he expresses his view that Pessoa's poetry stands out for the sincerity of his affections, since he says what he feels "verdaderamente, y non solo efectivamente" (Bello 1989: 5). In the second, *Una mirada diversa / Uma olhada diversa*, Bello is presented as the "coordinator". The anthology recovers translations by various translators and contextualizes them within the framework of the *Surdimientu*. In the prologue, the author highlights the importance of these translations for the development of Asturian as a language of culture, links this process to the creation of the autonomous government, and celebrates the fact that, twenty years after the first translations, Asturian is seen as a cultural asset that must be promoted by language policies, taught, and protected (Bello 2009c: 14-25). He also emphasizes the

admiration that his generation felt for Portuguese poetry; in the work of Eugénio de Andrade¹³ and the other poets gathered in the collection, they found a mirror for their linguistic project and a sentimental affinity. For Bello, Portuguese poetry is a tradition that Asturian poets have sought and assimilated as their own. This relationship has been strengthened by the fact that Portugal and Asturias share a common history and territory (Bello 2009c: 24-25).

The paratexts of the following two collections, *Sieglu xx, cambalache* and *Colección d'identidaes*, incorporate notes in which Bello presents the translations as part of his poetics. In the first, he says that the book is made from the “descubrimientos” and “perplexidaes” that certain poems have caused for him. The translation is thus the result of his reading as a poet and is part of the creative process he has undertaken in order to find a “voz propia y [...] duradera” (Bello 2000c: 85). In the second, however, he goes even further, as he presents the translations as “retayos de la propia obra”. The poet approaches the poetry of others from the “abordaxe sentimental” and finds in translation the possibility of exploring various identities.

The most striking feature of the translations of the two collections of Galician stories is the choice of authors. Alfonso R. Castelao and Álvaro Cunqueiro are two key figures in cultural and political *galeguismo*; for this reason, the paratexts of the translations not only emphasize the cultural capital of their work but also its symbolic value. Bello’s “Asturian version” of the collection *Coses* by Castelao, published by Llibros del Peixe, reproduces the drawings made by the author in the 1926 edition and does not include any notes from the translator. The “translation” of *Escuela de melecineros y fábula de varia xente* is part of a wider project of translation of Cunqueiro’s work, which, as far as the prose is concerned, also includes the books *Xente d’equí y d’acullá* and *Les otros feriantes* (all three published by Ediciones Trabe). If in the poetry, we have highlighted the importance of the Portuguese tradition in the configuration of a poetic system in Asturian, in prose we should underline the importance of Cunqueiro, the Galician author most frequently translated into Bello’s language.

There are two main reasons for the warm reception given to Cunqueiro: one is systemic, that is, related to this author’s role in the Galician system during the post-war period, and the other social, that is, related to the popularity of his work. Regarding the first reason, it should be remembered that Cunqueiro’s work (especially the part published after *Merlín e familia*, 1955) took on a foundational role in the post-war Galician literary system, especially in the 1950s and 1960s when the author wrote in *Faro de Vigo* and published with Galaxia, a key platform in the process of building an autonomous Galician literary system (Martínez Tejero 2020). Thirty years later, via the importation of Cunqueiro’s work and its cultural capital, the Asturian editors and writers wanted to start a similar process, which would promote the autonomy of their own system. The second reason is

13. Andrade’s influence as a model in Asturian poetry is perceptible from 1985, when the Asturian translation of *Memoria d’outro río* by Antón García was published (Sánchez Vicente 1991: 30; Santori 2006: 170).

related to the success of sales, in Galician, of books such as *Merlín e familia* and *Escola de menciñeiros*, a success that Asturian publishers very likely wanted to replicate. In the translator's note that precedes the Asturian version, Bello highlights the harmony between Cunqueiro's rural imagination and that of an Asturian: "[L]a benéfica influencia d'Álvaro Cunqueiro nes nuses lletres [is] una visión de la tierra íntima y fuerte, un sentimentu de que la nuestra alma yera asina, como'l paisaxe de nueso: una sierra al fondo y, más p'allá, el mar" (Bello 1997: 7).

3.1. A specific case of reception: Xuan Bello and Catalan literature

The reception of Asturian literature in the Catalan literary system has been influenced by two factors. On the one hand, the dynamics of children's or youth literature are very favourable to intra-Iberian translation (apart from Bello, the other authors translated from Asturian into Catalan, Silvia Ugidos, Paco Abril and Marta Piñán, cultivated this literary genre) (Agost 2017: 54). On the other hand, we should also stress the impact that Bello's work has had on a publisher, Jordi Raventós, and a poet, Jordi Llavina, who decided to translate four collections of his prose: *Història universal de Paniceiros* (2008), *La neu i altres complements circumstancials* (2010), *Unes quantes coses boniques* (2015) and *Incerta història de la veritat* (2019) – the first three translated from Asturian by Raventós and the fourth, by Llavina, from Spanish.¹⁴

Beyond the links that Bello, as an author, has with specific figures in the Catalan literary system, his literature has an unequivocally Iberian dimension that is expressed, as we have seen, in his interest in Portuguese poetry, in cultural *galeguismo* and, last but not least, in Catalan writers who are attuned to his literary and sentimental imaginary, such as Josep Pla and Joan Perucho. In a recent interview, he stated that his Atlantic sensibility is perfectly compatible with the Mediterraneanism of Vicent Andrés Estellés and Josep Fuster, and he advocated a conception of Iberianism based not on politics but on culture, which he sees as the consequence of the relations between cultures and, thus, of the "possibilitat de col·leccionar identitats" (Gaillard 2019: 42).

Bello's four books translated into Catalan are fragmentary volumes, full of literary and geographical references, structured through local stories and autobiographical notes. They comprise already published articles and can be read out of sequence, jumping from one text to another. In general, they revolve around the same themes or obsessions: words, landscape, and memory. In part, they all follow the model established by *Història universal de Paniceiros*, a book that is:

14. Bello's relationship with Catalan writers in fact began much earlier, when he discovered the poetry of Salvador Espriu at secondary school. It took further shape in his participation in the XIV translation seminar in Farrera, dedicated to Asturian poets, in April 2005. This encounter was the embryo for the bilingual volume *Passà el temps desfent la memòria* (2006), which includes a selection, translated into Catalan, of poems by him and Vanessa Gutiérrez. In press interviews Bello has expressed his admiration for Catalan literature (Llort 2010; Ballbona 2015). The book *Quadern d'Astúries* (2008), by the poet Jean Serra, also includes texts by Gutiérrez and Bello (poems and articles compiled in *Riu arriba*) translated into Catalan.

Un quadre miscel·lani on es barregen diferents tècniques d'escriptura, llenguatges poètics i reflexió assagística sobre la cultura i la literatura. Hi domina un to general narratiu i un fil conductor que té com a centre l'imaginari mític construït amb referències locals (el vilatge de Paniceiros) relacionades amb les vivències infantils i juvenils de l'autor, tot connectant [...] amb els altres universos ficticis de la resta del mosaic mundial. (D'Andrés 2009: 26)

In this “world mosaic”, Asturian culture has a privileged position, alongside Iberian literatures (and other Western traditions). In relation to the Spanish language, we should stress the importance of Borges in the articulation of Bello's mental landscape of Paniceiros and in his rethinking of the reading of space (López Vega 2019). Regarding Catalan, Adesiara's edition of *Història universal de Paniceiros* is preceded by a “Pròleg als catalans”, where the author emphasizes the impact that Salvador Espriu's and Blai Bonet's work had on him when he was young. In the book, however, other names are mentioned, such as Josep Pla (Bello quotes a fragment from Pla's trip to New York), Gabriel Ferrater (Bello translates some of his poems), Gaziol (he mentions some passages from *Meditacions en el desert*) and Joan Perucho (he recalls Perucho's treatment of subjects associated with superstition and religion). From Galician literature the name of Álvaro Cunqueiro stands out, and from Portuguese, the *Mistérios de Lisboa* by Camilo Castelo Branco, a book that, in Bello's opinion, may have inspired some potential *misterios d'Uviéu*. Finally, from Galician culture, he recalls an observation made by Vicente Risco, who associates the presence of clogs, an element of Galician and Asturian peasant culture in increasing disuse, with the land. This reflection can be linked to one of the leitmotifs of Bello's literature: the abandonment by modern peoples of many of the traditional beliefs, and the feeling of loss and melancholy that this apparently irreversible process inculcates in the author.

This loss also affects the Asturian language, which is inseparable from the writer's literary landscape. It is no surprise that Bello takes Pessoa's maxim “a minha pátria é a língua portuguesa” as his own, associating the idea of homeland with the longing and the exile of the language, a feeling typical of any group affected by dispossession. Bello finds the culture that serves as his inspiration in the village literates, who preserve the memory and the language. And it is also in this culture, as indicated by the title of his anthology of Asturian literature published in 1999, where “el sentimiento de la tierra” is most alive, since it helps him to establish relations of affinity with neighbouring literatures.

4. Conclusions

In a recent interview, published on the occasion of the edition of *Incierta historia de la verdad* in Catalan and Spanish, Bello stakes a claim for translation (and literature in general) as a vehicle of communication and mutual understanding between cultures. The assertion “La llengua oficial d'Europa hauria de ser la traducció” (Llort 2010: 6) reminds us of a very vivid image in his literature, the one that places the writer on a bridge between two banks of a river, watching the flow

of the water and also of time. A result of the cultural *asturianismu* revived in 1974, Bello's poetry, narrative and translations reveal some of the characteristics that define Asturian literature as an emerging literature. In the context of the *Surdimientu*, Bello acts as a writer with multiple functions related to the normalization of the language. He breaks with the current tradition through a "relectura de la tradición occidental" (Santori 2006: 167), and prioritizes in his criticism and in his creation the poetic genre, which he sees as the most appropriate for the creation of a literary standard language.

Placing Bello's career as a writer and translator at the heart of a literature in a process of consolidation allows us to investigate many of the questions that the bibliography on creation in translation has overlooked. Issues such as the visibility and recognition of the author-translator, his/her self-identification as a reference point of a minoritized literature, and the influence of the sociolinguistic situation on his/her literary decisions are particularly relevant both in the case we have just analysed and, at the same time, in the analysis of intra-Iberian cultural relations. Studying them from the perspective of the development of the *Surdimientu* on the one hand, and from the construction of a literary career associated with a specific cultural capital on the other, allows us to understand Bello's creative work not only as a result of a process of building a literary tradition, but also as a dynamic agent in the institutionalization of an emerging literature (Guillén 1990: 18). On this last point, it should be noted that Bello's reflections on his translations insist that they, as part of his poetics, are works of creation. This, as we have seen, affects the authorship of the works: in two of the books discussed, the translator is presented as the author.

As a translator and anthologist, Bello acts as an agent of a culture which is based on a "selective tradition" (Williams 1977: 115), a culture which shares thematic affinities and roots with Galician and Portuguese literature. From these traditions, he emulates a certain vision of the world and of the language, which infuses his descriptions of nearby places and rural-based characters. With Catalan culture, however, the relationship takes shape through the link he establishes with two well-positioned agents in the literary system, who translate and disseminate his work. All these relationships are possible thanks to the conception of a cultural Iberianism which finds in its historical roots a rich source of interchange and a profound mutual understanding.

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