



Francisco Ayala (Granada, 1906-Madrid, 2009), member of the Royal Academy of Spanish Language, sociologist, hispanist and renowned writer, was also a translator for many years, especially, at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, when he was forced into exile in Buenos Aires. As far as we know, little attention has been devoted from Translation Studies to his facet as a translator and theorist. As we will try to narrate in the following lines, Francisco Ayala earned a living from translation for many years and reflected about this activity in his *Breve teoría de la traducción* (1946; Brief Theory of Translation). Among other authors, he translated Thomas Mann and Rainer Maria Rilke from German, Almeida from Portuguese and Léon Bloy from French. In this paper, we will only be able to outline a part of Ayala's merits, since, in our opinion, his vast production, as a writer, translator and theorist constitutes a fabulous playground for researchers in our discipline.

KEY WORDS Francisco Ayala, Translation Studies, sociology of translation, professional translation, literary translation

Francisco Ayala and his Professional Approach to Translation Theory and Practice

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Francisco Ayala y su aproximación profesional a la teoría y la práctica de la traducción

Francisco Ayala (Granada, 1906-Madrid, 2009), miembro de la Real Academia Española, sociólogo, hispanista y renombrado escritor, fue también traductor durante años, especialmente cuando se vio forzado a exiliarse a Buenos Aires al final de la Guerra Civil española, en 1939. Hasta donde sabemos, se ha prestado escasa atención desde los Estudios de Traducción a esta faceta suya de traductor y teórico. Como se verá en las líneas que siguen, Francisco Ayala se ganó la vida como traductor durante años y reflejó su experiencia en Breve teoría de la traducción (1946). Entre otros autores, tradujo a Thomas Mann y a Rainer Maria Rilke del alemán, a Almeida del portugués y a Léon Bloy del francés. En este artículo solo será posible esbozar una parte de los méritos de Ayala, dado que su vasta producción como escritor, traductor y teórico constituye, a nuestro juicio, un magnífico campo de investigación para nuestra disciplina.



I. INTRODUCTION

Francisco Ayala impersonates in many aspects the transdisciplinary nature of Translation Studies: living at both sides of the Atlantic, translating different languages, and understanding cultural and social differences. In his case, as in that of many other intellectuals, it is not possible to separate his personal life from his professional career. For this reason, we will devote some paragraphs to contextualize Francisco Ayala's life, work and ethos. This paper is aimed at stressing the importance of Francisco Ayala both as a practitioner and scholar in the field of Translation Studies. From a sociological perspective, we will focus on his *habitus* and will review his appealing first-person narration about the profession of translator, published in his autobiographical work *Recuerdos y Olvidos* (1982/2006; Memories and Oblivions¹), as well as the fundamental parts of his *Breve teoría de la traducción* (1946; Brief Theory of Translation). By way of conclusion, since we are aware that our work can only be considered an introduction to the several research approaches that Ayala can lead to, we will devote a few lines to outline future research.

2. CONTEXTUALISING FRANCISCO AYALA: LIFE, WORK, AND ETHOS

For the general public, the primary importance of the Spanish prose author Francisco Ayala

¹ We have included in brackets the translation of Ayala's works. In most cases, we have used our translation or the translation generally stated in bibliographical works published in English, and, therefore, the translated titles are written in round letters. Only two of Ayala's works cited in this paper have been fully translated and published in English: *Muertes de perro* (1958; translated as *Death as a Way of Life* in 1964) and *Los usurpadores* (1949; translated as *Usurpers* in 1987). In the case of these two novels, the translated titles appear in italics.

(1906–2009) is extraliterary, since “his longevity allowed Spaniards to link contemporary democratic Spain after the death of Dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975) with the democratic Spain prior to the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)” (Ihrle and Oropesa, 2011: 77–78).

For any researcher interested in Francisco Ayala's life and work, the Fundación Francisco Ayala, with its well-stocked library, constitutes a major source of information. As indicated in the biography provided on the Foundation's web site, Ayala was born in Granada (Spain), on 16th March 1906, the first child of Francisco Ayala Arroyo and Luz García-Duarte. His maternal grandfather was an eminent physician, and Vice-Chancellor of the Universidad de Granada, Eduardo García Duarte.

When Ayala was seventeen years old, the whole family moved to Madrid, where he soon came into contact with avant garde literary groups and began to write for prominent journals of the day, such as *La Gaceta Literaria* and *Revista de Occidente*. It was in this period that he published his first novels and two volumes of avant garde short stories — *El boxeador y un ángel* (1929, The Boxer and the Angel) and *Cazador en el alba* (1930, Hunter at Dawn). He also produced an essay about the cinema — the new, influential art form of the period — under the title *Indagación del cinema* (1929, Cinema Investigation).

In the 1930s, after spending some time studying in Berlin — where “he witnessed at first hand the rise of Nazism” (Richmond, 1987: vii) — Ayala was awarded a PhD degree. In that same period, he also passed the competitive public examination to be appointed legal adviser to the Spanish Legislative Assembly (*Letrado de las Cortes*), and was awarded a professorship in Political Law at the Universidad de Madrid. He served the Spanish Republic in



a number of ways, among other posts working as the Secretary of its legation in Prague. At the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, he moved to Buenos Aires together with his wife and little daughter, and resumed his literary activity. With the exception of 1945, which he spent in Rio de Janeiro, he lived in Argentina until 1949. There, he became involved in the literary circle centred on the journal *Sur* and founded the journal *Realidad, Revista de Ideas*. In 1949, reluctant to continue living in Argentina under the dictatorship of Juan Perón, he accepted a teaching position at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, where he worked as professor of sociology, managed the editorial department and founded a new literary journal, *La Torre*. He spent the last two decades of his exile living in the United States, where he worked as a professor of literature at different universities, including Princeton, Chicago and New York.

Ayala returned to live permanently in Spain in 1977, soon after the death of General Franco and the end of forty years of dictatorship. As noted by Professor Carolyn Richmond (1987: vii), his second wife and also the translator of one of his novels, it was then that he gained the recognition he deserved in his own country:

Since then, he has kept pace with the cultural life of the new constitutional monarchy, contributing influential articles and essays to major newspapers, lecturing, working on his memoirs, and continuing to write fiction. Considered something of the doyen of Spanish intellectuals, he is respected by young and old alike for his lucid and independent mind. His 1984 election to the Spanish Royal Academy was widely celebrated, and he was invited to inaugurate the King Juan Carlos Chair at New York University in the spring of 1986 (Richmond, 1987: x-xi).

Ayala also worked as a translator and editor, and he never stopped writing for newspapers. His extensive oeuvre ranges from sociological essays, such as *Tratado de sociología* (1947; Treaty of Sociology) and *Razón del mundo* (1944; Reason of the World), to literary studies such as *El escritor en su siglo* (1990; The Writer in his Century) and *Las plumas del fénix* (1989; The Feathers of the Phoenix). According to Ihrie and Oropesa (2011: 77-78), some of his most outstanding literary works are his volumes of short stories, such as *Los usurpadores* (1949; translated as *Usurpers* in 1987), a collection of seven tales about greed for power, *La cabeza del cordero* (1949; The Lamb's Head), a series of stories about the Spanish Civil War, and *Muertes de perro* (1958; translated as *Death as a Way of Life* in 1964), in which he condemns life under a dictatorship. His *Recuerdos y olvidos* (1982/2006; Memories and Oblivions) written in different volumes, are key to understanding the intellectual life of Spain and the experiences of exile faced by many Spanish writers during the 20th century.

Above all, and as perceived by Richmond (1987: xi) Francisco Ayala is a universal author, in whose works the human condition is a recurring theme:

Ayala's homeland may be Spain, and Spanish is his language of expression, but his themes are universal. Time and again, in both his fiction and essays, he returns to the subject of the human condition, which, he believes, has remained essentially the same since the Fall of Man (Richmond, 1987: xi).

In the 1990s, Ayala was awarded several outstanding literary prizes, such as the Cervantes Award for Literature in 1991 and the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature in 1998. In 2006, already considered a living legend, Ayala



was able to attend the events organised to celebrate his centenary. He died in Madrid, on 3rd November 2009, at the age of one hundred and three.

3. A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO AYALA AS A TRANSLATOR AND THEORIST

One of the most exceptional features that researchers find as they approach Francisco Ayala's translation facet is the possibility of getting access to his first-hand narrations as a translator and theorist. Ayala's valuable description of his *habitus* contains many details about his relationships with the publishing industry, the difficulties he faced as a translator, his theoretical reflections about Traductology, etc.

As outlined by Alonso and Calvo (2014 and 2015), with the exception of some functional and cognitive works, and sociological research, many of the currents of research in Translation Studies focus essentially on the translation outcome. This trend seems to have changed over the last decades though:

However, the most pragmatic theories of recent decades are starting to pay attention to the ecosystem and environment in which the translation originates. For example, we can see various currents in Translation Studies, which, as Buzelin (2007: 137) argues, use the metaphor of a *network* (Even-Zohar, 1990) or even a *system*, in one form or another. According to Robinson (1997), prior to sociological research acquiring the weight it now has in our discipline (something that took place over the last ten years), it was this social approach, then only incipient, that diverted attention from methods purely focused on the product to also observe the process and the actors involved (Alonso and Calvo, 2015).

In the same line, Monzó i Nebot (2006: 171) argues that systemic perspectives to translation and interpreting are not new, as it can be seen in the works carried out by the Manipulation School and the increasing wave of researchers applying Pierre Bourdieu's studies (Inghilleri, 2003; Simeoni, 1998).

Once again following the sociological readings proposed by Alonso and Calvo (2015), it is noted that, as outlined in the compilation produced by Wolf and Fukari (2007): "the main sociological currents in Translation Studies include the notion of *habitus* (developed by Bourdieu) and what is known as the *actor-network theory* (ANT) (Latour 1987; Callon 1986; Law 1999)".

The concept of *habitus* is paramount to understand the sociological theories of Translation Studies. According to Chesterman (2007: 177), the translator's *habitus* refers to:

the translator's mindset or cultural mind, "the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history (Simeoni 1998: 32)". The *habitus* thus mediates between personal experience and the social world. The *habitus* is acquired via "inculcation in a set of social practices" (Inghilleri 2005: 70).

As reported by Buzelin (2005), both proposals (Bourdieu's *habitus* and Latour's ANT) can be complementary and reveal unexplored data that could help us confront discourse with practice:

I believe that ANT has the potential to help us move one step further in the direction already taken by Bourdieu translation scholars, at least in the following respects. First, taken in its weaker form, as a research methodology relying essentially on ethnography and semiotics, ANT can simply contribute more directly than Bourdieusian approaches



to the development of a much needed process — oriented kind of research, answering the call recently raised by some to this effect (Sela-Sheffy 2000). Inasmuch as it consists of tracing the genesis of products called translations, it will enable us to acquire data to which translation theorists have rarely had access so far, namely data on the multiple mediators potentially involved in the translation process, including the way they make or explain their decisions (when they are still unsure about the outcome of this process), and the strategies by which they negotiate their place in the process, convince others to participate, etc. (2005: 215).

Blommaert (2005), on his part, emphasizes the importance of the ethnographic epistemological foundations of Bourdieu's work, highlighting the link between *habitus* and voice.

Bearing all these sociological considerations in mind, the following paragraphs outline Francisco Ayala's *habitus* based on an ethnographic approach that relies on his own narration of facts, the description of other actors/agents involved in the translation process and his thoughts on translation.

3.1. *Ayala translator*

Francisco Ayala helped many authors 'bearing across' (Rushdie, 1981/1991) their works from their native languages — German, Italian, Portuguese, French — into Spanish.²

According to the material provided by Fundación Francisco Ayala, and as Ayala himself narrated in his biographical work *Recuerdos y Olvidos* (1982/2006; Memories and Oblivions), Ayala did most of his translating work during his years of exile in Latin America in the 1940s. At the time, he spoke of "the desperate task of

translating" (Ayala, 2007: 101, our translation), so "pleasant and enjoyable when done for pleasure, but painful and abominable when one has to depend on it for living" (Ayala, 2006: 264, our translation).

He also reflected more theoretically on this professional experience in *Breve teoría de la traducción* (1946; Brief Theory of Translation), an essay that he included in several of his books on literary studies.

Over the last few years, Ayala's activity as a translator — for a long time one of the least known and least recognised facets of his career — has been analysed by a number of researchers (Amorós, 1973; Sabio and Fernández, 2000; Mesa, 2004; Vázquez Medel, 1995, 1999-2000, 2006; Fortea, 2007; and Alonso, 2010).

Breve teoría de la traducción (1946) is not the only text in which Ayala refers to translation. His work and indeed his very life experience (his life in Spain, his exile in Latin America and the United States and countless trips to other countries) were so varied that his thoughts on the subject were recorded at many different times and in many different locations, thus complicating the researchers' task. On many occasions, Ayala expresses his ideas about translation in connection with other thoughts about Spanish language variations in Spain and Latin America, language standardisation, neologisms, and the role of the professional translator, etc.

Ayala made a living from translation in his early years in exile. He acquired detailed knowledge of the publishing industry of the day and, as a result, his stark, sometimes quite blunt, description of translating activity differs from more quintessential approaches to the subject.

The opinions Ayala expressed at different moments and in different places and circumstances reveal that he did indeed use very different adjectives to describe translation.

² For a detailed list of the works translated by Francisco Ayala, researchers may contact the Fundación Francisco Ayala.



His first contact with translation was in 1929, when he was living and studying in Berlin. There, together with Beate Hermann, he translated his first text: a short story written in German that was eventually published by the Argentinean journal *Síntesis* (Ayala, 1982/2006: 145-146).

Even in this first translation, Ayala showed himself to be a scrupulous translator; his excessively meticulous work method exasperated his partner, who just wanted to finish the job as soon as possible.

[Beate] soon proposed that we should work together to translate a story — I have no idea how she acquired the rights — and then publish it. It was a lovely story, a story of great interior beauty, set among the Kirghiz in Mongolia. My scruples and perfectionism as a translator frustrated Beate; she was in a hurry to see the work finished and in print. When it was finished, I sent it to the journal *Síntesis*, in Buenos Aires, with which I had already had some contact, and they published the story naming Beate Hermann and Francisco Ayala as the translators (1982/2006: 145-146).*

Upon his return to Madrid in the summer of 1930, Ayala resorted to translation to earn a living until he was able to obtain some economic stability as a university lecturer. At the same time, he also found that translation helped him to consolidate and improve his proficiency in German, a language that he had just learnt.

I visited my teachers and friends, looked up my old professional contacts, translated some books (translating provided an income that would tide me over until I could find a more stable job) and I wrote a book of my own — *Erika ante el invierno* — which was

destined to be my last narrative work for a very long time.

I must say that the translations *pro panem lucrando*, to which I would later return when I went into exile, suddenly offered an added advantage; that of helping me to consolidate and further my knowledge of German (1982/2006: 151-152).

The fledgling translator acknowledged how difficult it was to translate his first novel, *Pont und Anna* (1930, *Lorenzo y Ana*) by Arnold Zweig. Many decades later, Ayala was able to re-read his translation, and — ever the soul-searching perfectionist — still maintained his opinion that the prose he had used was too close to the source text.

The first book I translated was a novel, *Pont und Anna*, by Arnold Zweig [...] What an effort I had to make to do that translation that summer in Madrid! And I wonder how it turned out. I don't know, because I never saved a copy and I have never come across the text again since then. (*Jorge Campos — as good to me as a friend as he is inquisitive and knowledgeable as a reader — recently gave me a copy of the book [Arnold Zweig, *Lorenzo y Ana*, Madrid, Ediciones Hoy, 1930]). He told me he found the prose — the prose of my translation — captivating, but I find it rather odd-sounding for its literalness; basically it follows the language of the source text too closely (1982/2006: 151-152).

The economic stability that Ayala had pursued for years — a goal for which he had studied and worked with determination — soon arrived when he took up a teaching post at the Universidad de Madrid. However, he continued translating until the outbreak of the civil war in 1936. Most of the books he translated in this period were legal texts originally written in German.

* All quotations from Ayala's work are ours, until we indicate otherwise.



One unusual fact revealed in Ayala's autobiography is that, at least during his first years of marriage, he used to translate with the assistance of his first wife, Etelvina.

During that period, my wife helped me with my translation jobs. She also used to meet my friends and take part in our get-togethers (1982/2006: 154).

In the 1930s, translating was part of Ayala's daily routine. It is worth recalling that Ayala's main activity during those years was lecturing at the university, and also that the political regime in Spain at the time was the Second Republic. As stated above, this first-hand description of his activity and his *habitus* (Chesterman, 2007: 177), is of great ethnographic value for researchers in Translation Studies. Among other things, we can see that Ayala — like many other intellectuals, university professors and writers in all ages — used to combine his role as translator with his main activity.

After my daily class, I used to stop off in the secretary's office to talk to the dean about paperwork and then I went home, where I busied myself with other jobs, mainly translations, until lunch time. After lunch, I often went to the café and spent some time there chatting to one friend or another. It was a fairly hectic, gruelling lifestyle, but it was made bearable by the bubbling, joyful sense of energy which prevailed in the country at that time (1982/2006: 160).

Soon after arriving in Buenos Aires after the civil war, Ayala worked as a translator for the publishing house Losada. His first project there was a translation from German into Spanish of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Los cuadernos de Malte Laurids Brigge) by Rainer Maria Rilke. The translation was published in 1941 and is still

the version listed in the Alianza Editorial catalogue today.

In the following years, and especially during the first few years of his exile in Buenos Aires, Ayala translated many texts for Losada and for other publishing houses in Argentina, such as Sudamericana, Argos and Schapire. He specialised in translations of German works into Spanish, *Lotte in Weimar* (1939; *Carlota en Weimar*, 1941) and *Die vertauschten Köpfe* (1940; *Las cabezas trocadas*, 1941) by Thomas Mann, and *Gespräche mit Goethe* (1835/1848; *Conversaciones con Goethe*, 1956) by Eckermann; but he also translated from Portuguese *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias* (1854; *Memorias de un sargento de milicias*, 1946) by Almeida; and from French a selection of Léon Bloy's writings (*Páginas escogidas*, 1946). His rendering of *La romana* (1947; *La romana*, 1950) by the Italian author Alberto Moravia, has been reprinted in numerous editions since its first appearance and is still considered the definitive translation. The list of works translated by Ayala reflects the profuseness of his translating activity in those years.

In the chapter entitled *Yo, traductor a destajo* (I, piecework translator) of *Recuerdos y olvidos*, Ayala explains the circumstances surrounding his translation of *Los cuadernos de Malte Laurids Brigge*. As he would discover some years later, his rendering of Rilke's work had made a deep impression on the group of emerging young writers in Río de la Plata and also within the dispirited literary circles of Spain. The author details his negotiation with the publishing house and acknowledges his limitations in business dealings. His words clearly reflect the effort he had put in to that translation; he had even checked it against the English and French versions. It is also interesting to see that Ayala insisted on revising the galley proofs. Thanks



to his insistence and perfectionism, he noticed that the publishing house's literary advisor had modified his translation, and had translated a few words and sentences that Rilke had expressed in French — instead of German — into Spanish. Ayala stood up to the publishing house and defended the validity of his decision as the translator, and the text was changed back to the first version.

[...] a task which I accepted without asking about terms and conditions. For some reason — shortcomings or excesses in my character, pride, shyness, sheer inexperience, or whatever — I have always handled economic affairs rather badly, and this was even truer in that period of my life. I did the translation conscientiously, comparing it with the excellent versions in English and French. When I submitted it I asked Guillermo de Torre to let me have the galley proofs so that I could revise them, because, having exerted so much effort on this job, I wanted the resulting book to be as polished as possible.

When they gave me the proofs, I was surprised to find that Guillermo, in his capacity as the publisher's literary adviser, had translated the words and passages Rilke had written in French into Spanish. In my translation I had left them as they were, just as the author had incorporated them in the German original. Torre must have been familiar with the French version of the work and, perhaps thinking I had forgotten to translate those paragraphs into Spanish, was trying to help me by rectifying the result of my carelessness and precipitation. I thanked him for his good intentions, but insisted that everything be left as it was, which is indeed what happened (1982/2006: 264-266).

Professor Fortea (2007), who has analysed Ayala's translations of Rilke and Mann, acclaims this writer and translator as "the oldest member

of the inexistent association of literary translators of German". He points out that Francisco Ayala's translations have endured thanks to their outstanding quality, although they are not totally free of errors. Fortea (2007: 6) also considers that, in his translation of Thomas Mann, "Ayala offers a magnificent piece of work. A text written in refined, clean, Cervantine, perhaps even congenial Spanish".

We think it should be pointed out that Fortea notes and praises Ayala's decision to include a translator's note on the first page of *Los cuadernos de Malte Laurids Brigge*, explaining his decision to leave a few words or sentences in French, as they appeared in the original text.

On the very first page of the text, Ayala had to deal with an expression in French, and he took the opportunity to explain his decision in a note: "All French words and sentences, which abound in the German text, have been respected in this version just as the author wrote them".* This explicit convention of retaining the foreign terms appearing in the source text works very much to Rilke's benefit, because in *Los apuntes de Malte* the characters and streets keep their original names and this contributes to the cohesion of the text (Fortea, 2007: 17).

In his own account of the facts, Ayala referred to a revision of his own translation that he did some years later, in 1997, when the text was going to be published in Spain by Madrid Alianza Editorial. In this revised translation, the title of the original version was changed from *Los cuadernos de Malte Laurids Brigge* to *Los apuntes de Malte Laurids Brigge*. In our view, it would be interesting to compare the two versions to gauge the extent to which Ayala modified his original translation.

Not long ago I had to revise the text that has now been published by Madrid Alianza

Editorial, and, seen from a distance, it seems that this is undoubtedly not unworthy translation of the original work (1982/2006: 264-266).

A number of researchers have performed retranslation studies before (Zaro and Ruiz, 2007; Jiménez, 2008), and their methods could help us shed some light on the unusual form of retranslation that Ayala performed in this case. Since more than 40 years separated the publication of his first translation (1941) and the second version (1997), the language used in each translation might show significant differences, but this is something that should be confirmed.

As stated below, Ayala again evaluates his translation, describing his rendering as “not unworthy of the original work”. As noted by Fortea, the Chilean writer Maria Carolina Geel offered a much more complimentary review of Ayala’s work in the February–March 1949 issue of the journal *Occidente*. In the same vein, Fortea himself considers Ayala’s translation as “canonical”:

[...] at the end of an impassioned review, Geel says: “[...] I would like to pay tribute, albeit tardily [...], to the discerning translator of the work; some literary instinct in the reader’s mind immediately makes them aware that the new rendering has been successful, that the affinity existing between author and translator inspired the latter to produce a well-honed interpretation, while leaving the masterpiece unscathed. That, at least, is what I have perceived. My gratitude to Ayala, *whoever he may be*” (2006: 3-4).

Ayala ends his account of the events surrounding the translation of Rilke’s work alluding to the meagre remuneration he received for such a laborious job of such outstanding quality:

Losada paid me one hundred pesos for it (I was going to have mentioned it earlier, but I forgot). This was the same amount that I was

receiving for each of my articles for *La Nación*, and half of what I paid each month for the modest apartment in which we were living (1982/2006: 264-266).



In another chapter of *Recuerdos y olvidos*, entitled «El arte de la traducción» [“The Art of Translation”], Ayala mentions the precariousness of his initial economic situation in Buenos Aires, in comparison with the stability he had enjoyed in Spain before going into exile. Such economic difficulties were not the norm among Spanish émigrés, who, in most cases, enjoyed a better position in the new country. In connection with this reference to his economic situation in his first years in exile, Ayala openly describes the practices of some publishing houses in that period as ‘predatory’.

As for me, for the time being I went on translating for Losada and trying to defend myself — although, in truth, never very successfully — from their abusive practices (1982/2006: 266-267).

It was in this period that Ayala came to realise just how sedentary the job of a translator and writer is, a reflection that resurfaced in many of his writings.

Translating and writing articles, preparing the odd lecture and, of course, writing my own creative texts were sedentary tasks which I did at home (1982/2006: 268).

He found himself obliged to translate large numbers of texts of all kinds, and, despite the pressure, he sometimes actually enjoyed translating. He also described how he translated at home, spending endless hours sitting in front of a little portable typewriter that he called ‘Erika’:

I was saying that, in the early days of my career as a literary hack, my pen or my little typewriter ‘Erika’, were busily employed not



only writing articles for *La Nación* but also on translating, which is pleasant and enjoyable when done for pleasure, but painful and abominable when one has to depend on it for living; like all piecework, it leads to the most ruthless degree of self-exploitation: the worker drives himself to the limits of exhaustion (1982/2006: 263-264).

However, the time when Ayala most vehemently complained about his job as a translator was not — as one may expect — when his economic situation was most critical and he was at the mercy of the implacable publishing industry, at the beginning of his life in Buenos Aires, but when he moved to New York in 1953 to work as a staff translator at the United Nations. Before accepting this new job, he felt fully integrated as a professor at the Universidad de Puerto Rico. The job at the United Nations was very well paid and allowed him to live near his family, which had moved to the United States so that their daughter could continue her university studies. Furthermore, his workload was light and the translations easy. His acceptance of the job, however, interrupted a period of great intellectual effervescence in Puerto Rico, where he was also in charge of the university press. Perhaps this explains why he described his job at the United Nations as a “stupid routine”, an “intolerable”, “unpleasant regime [...], irrationally mechanical”, and “job of absolute futility”.

Perhaps the stupid routine to which I was bound during working hours would have been less unbearable if it hadn't interrupted and imposed itself on the creative activity I had been engaged in at the Editorial Universitaria in Puerto Rico; but the irrationally mechanical system to which one was subjected in those offices was inevitably antagonistic, at all times and under all circumstances, to my way of thinking (Ayala, 1982/2006: 417-418).

Ayala considered that working methods at the United Nations were irrational and inconceivable. For example, different parts of a single text were sometimes split up between translators, and could not be translated properly due to the lack of context and coherence. Ayala was also conscious of the futility of having to translate some documents even though the translators knew in advance that the proposals had been rejected.

The task itself was easy: revising and correcting a specified number of pages each day, the same number of pages every day for each supervisor; pages that were very often parts of one document that the boss would divide and distribute, in such a manner that very frequently the translator would see neither its beginning nor its end, and — to make matters worse — would only know that it may well be part of a proposal that had already been discussed and rejected; so he was fully aware of the absolute uselessness of the work he had to do (1982/2006: 417).

Finally, Ayala could not stand the inflexibility of the working hours, during which he was not allowed to leave the office once he had finished his assigned quota of translations. He found the mechanical, dehumanising work environment and the way he was expected to perform his job equally unbearable.

I used to finish my work fairly quickly, so if I had been allowed to leave once I had handed in my daily quota of copy, I would have been able to accept it as just one of the many burdens one has to shoulder to make a living. But even that was out of the question! I had to stay there in the office all day; and since each office, or cubicle, was shared by two work companions, and mine was afflicted with irrepressible logorrhoea, neither could I make any personal, private use of my spare time there [...] (1982/2006: 417-418).



3.2. Ayala's Breve teoría de la traducción

Aiming at offering a comprehensive overview of Francisco Ayala as a translator and theorist, in the following paragraphs we will review the foundations of Ayala's translation theory. Additional considerations could have been brought up to this purpose, such as an analysis of Ayala's contribution to Traductology worldwide, an evaluation to his outstanding position within Spanish Translation Studies, or a comparative study of his theoretical approach with that of his predecessors (specially, Larra and Schleiermacher), contemporaries (Ortega y Gasset) or successors (Venuti, Even-Zohar, Toury, etc.). May the following lines serve as a summary of Ayala's main highlights in the field of Translation Studies and as a road map for future research.

As described earlier, Ayala narrated his career as a translator in his autobiographical work *Recuerdos y olvidos*. Inevitably, though, he internalised these experiences, and passed them through the filter of his own reflection. The result was a set of four essays published between December 1946 and February 1947 in *La Nación*, the Buenos Aires journal in which Ayala used to publish articles regularly. There were four articles: *Sobre el oficio del traductor* (On the translator's job), *Los dos criterios extremos* (The two extreme criteria), *Las obras de pensamiento* (Philosophical works) and *Las obras de creación literaria* (Literary works). In 1956, Editorial Obregón of Mexico published all four articles together under the title *Breve Teoría de la Traducción* (Brief Theory of Translation). In 1965, the articles were published again, this time by Taurus, under the title *Problemas de la traducción* (Problems of translation). Ayala also included them in many of his works dedicated to literary studies, and today they can be found

in volume III (Literary Studies) of his *Obras completas* (2007; Complete Works) published by Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores.

Translating work [...] made me reflect on the nature of an activity which took so many hours and required so much effort. The result of this meditation was an essay on the desperate, or, rather, impossible, art of translation. The text ended up — as was to be expected! — in the pages of *La Nación* and now constitutes one of my works on literary theory (1982/2006: 268).

In his theory, Ayala (2007: 100) points out that one of the consequences of the boom in publishing which took place in the Americas in the 1940s was an increase in the demand for translations. But the translations produced were not always of the quality that might have been expected. This rise in demand, for an activity which had previously been carried out on a much smaller scale, “more for pleasure than as a profession”, opened the door to all kinds of improvisers.

Unfamiliar with the subject matter, ignorant of the foreign language and with only a summary, unread layman's knowledge of their own language, what else could be expected of the work of these impudent improvisers? (2007: 101).

At that time, geographical, nationalistic or imperialist sentiments led many to argue that, in order to be good, translations into Spanish ought to be done only by Spaniards. However, Ayala thought that the most important quality a translator should have is to be a “man of letters” (2007: 104).

He defends the role of the translator, who must have “an outstanding spirit of self denial” (2007: 104) and who, in many cases, must also “take upon himself any possible mistakes



or flaws of the author". "The translator," adds Ayala, "is denied the respect which is given automatically to foreign authors", insofar that "while the author is usually assumed to be writing by vocation, the translator's work is attributed to strictly economic motives" (2007: 105).

For Ayala (2007: 104-105), "translating is a demanding, thankless task", or even a "desperate task", because it is sometimes almost impossible to "transfer a spiritual object from one enclosed sphere to another" and "bring about a transposition between two subtly incommunicable worlds". Expanding upon this same idea, the author saw all literary works as the product of a specific cultural system. He believed that, when translating, the two cultural identities concerned must be very much taken into account by means of "subterfuge, a conjuring trick, a deception" (2007: 106). As many other authors in TS, he even formulated the hypothesis that the perfect translation is unattainable (2007: 109).

One of Ayala's forerunners in the history of Translation Studies was Schleiermacher, who, for Ayala, formulated the only two possible manners to understanding and performing the translator's task.

[...] and ever since Schleiermacher reduced it to a theory and described it as such, the conviction has spread that the translator's task can only be understood and performed in one of these two opposing manners: that which proposes leading the reader towards the translated original, transferring its external structure as faithfully as possible, and that which attempts to adapt the intrinsic meaning present in the original text to the cultural norms characteristic of the linguistic medium into which it is being transferred (2007: 106).

When he wrote his *Breve teoría de la traducción*, Ayala explained that the predominant tendency is the first one:

Since translation is a means of making a work accessible to those who are unfamiliar with the language in which it was written, it is generally considered that the translated text should ideally be made to conform as closely as possible to the original, by forcing language to the very limits of its elasticity (2007: 106).

However, Ayala (2007: 108) acknowledges the need to take into account the second alternative, defended by Larra. This approach is also known as the "free version", since a "literary work, far from being a self-standing, whole product, belongs to a very rich cultural ensemble that must be taken into account, at least implicitly, at the time of its interpretation".

Ayala's objective, pondered consideration of the facts led him to conclude that "taken to the extreme, both translation methods lead to absurdity and deny the essence of translation" (2007: 108).

For the Spanish author (2007: 112), such a delicate, necessary task must be entrusted to the translator, "to their tact, their sensitivity, their intuition", who should also take into account the meaning of the work.

At this point, he lists the different types of texts that a translator may face, and the recommended strategy for every case (2007: 112-119). He mentions, among others, so called 'form texts' (*escritos formularios*) — letters, daily journalistic information, etc.—, philosophical texts and literary works, which are the most challenging for translators because they are subject to specific aesthetic tastes, feelings, emotions and a specific culture. It is in imaginary literary works where the problem of translation arises in its full measure, with all its difficulties (2007: 118).

Finally, Ayala describes the difficulties translators face and the different attitudes they can adopt when translating poetry, drama or



literary works with a high content of colloquial terms (2007: 119–124). He concludes his theory reaffirming his belief that in order to translate properly one has to be a man of letters.

As we have observed, the way Ayala envisages translation is directly related to Toury's 'adequacy' vs. 'acceptability' (2012: 70), and to Venuti's 'foreignization' vs. 'domestication' (2008: 19). In our opinion, Ayala deals with the big topics of Translation Studies — the profession of translator (for example, skills, relationships with agency, and market conditions), the two possible approaches to translation, the difficulties of communicating across cultures, etc. — with the additional merit of having produced his theory already in 1946. As a way of conclusion to this section, we would say that a more thoughtful review would be needed in order to identify the dots connecting Ayala's approach to modern Translation Studies theories.

4. FINAL REMARKS

As we have tried to outline above, Francisco Ayala deserves an outstanding position within Translation Studies. We have noted that the sociology of translation provides a solid framework that encompasses constructs such as the *habitus* and the Actor-Network Theory, as well as methodologies such as the ethnography or narratology, which can be used to approach Ayala as a translator and theorist. Francisco Ayala was able to incorporate his sociological background into his translation theory. Moreover, he shares with us a first-hand description of his *habitus* as a translator: literary translation is described as a sedentary laborious work conducted in the family home, with his typewriter. Ayala refers to this activity as a precarious job that he has to combine with other intellectual tasks (teaching, writing, etc.); these facts seem

to support the current argument of the fragmentation of the profession (Katan, 2009). In spite of the low remuneration that Ayala receives for his translations, we can find features of professionalism in his *modus operandi*: perfectionist, resorting to translation of the text in other languages, revising galley proofs, etc. As stressed above, he provides many details about the editorial industry in the forties, where we can already find traces of an incipient globalisation.

Ayala does not hide pragmatic aspects of the profession of translator such as, for example, translation rates, negotiations with the agency, interferences by the editorial staff in the job of translators, self-exploitation of freelancers, professional encroachment, etc. Any of these topics could constitute by itself a source of further reflection.

His 'post-modern' approach to translation theory, extracted from his extensive experience as a translator, and emanated from his intellectual dimension, adds an extra value to his theoretical contribution that can be considered in many aspects as 'professionally oriented'. Finally, as expressed before, we consider our work can only be seen as an introduction to Francisco Ayala in the field of Translation Studies, and that a number of approaches — such as retranslation and many others — could contribute with powerful methodologies. In this sense, we would be very pleased to arouse the interest of many other researchers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Manuel Ángel Vázquez Medel (Universidad de Sevilla), for his encouragement and advice; the Fundación Francisco Ayala for supporting researchers and projects focused on Francisco



Ayala; my colleague Dr Nieves Jiménez Carra (Universidad Pablo de Olavide), for reviewing the original draft and suggesting many improvements; and Andrew Taylor, for his careful proofreading and for translating Ayala's quotes.

RECIBIDO EN NOVIEMBRE DE 2013

ACEPTADO EN JUNIO DE 2014

VERSIÓN FINAL DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 2014

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