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Ramon Guillermo

Translation and Revolution:

A Study of Jose Rizal's Guillermo Tell

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As we have mentioned above, among various migrant groups and within each migrant group, there are configurations of power and gradations of domination and oppression. It is thus not enough to approach the migrants' situation only in terms of cultural difference or in projecting the Church as a multicultural community. There are also issues revolving around class and gender. (De Guzman, 143)

Moreover, while structures of domination and oppression are acknowledged, one wonders whether attitudes toward these structures remain ambivalent and whether the force of these problems is truly appreciated. In the passage below, for instance, the author on the one hand acknowledges differences of various sorts as causes of injustice, but on the other hand neutralizes these differences by relegating them to the temporal as opposed to the transcendent perspective. The easy distinction the author makes between “non-alienating” and “alienating differences” should make one pause and ask whether the problems posed by these differences have been sufficiently taken into account:

In the triune God, therefore, all differences, in gender, nationality, ethnicity, class, and religion, so many causes of human division, are sublated into the affirmation of a fundamental equality and a new eschatological identity before God as children of the same Father and brothers and sisters of one another in the Son. This eschatological reality is the deepest identity of human beings. All other identities based on empirical contingencies such as nationality, status, class, gender, culture, and religion are temporal and transient. To be born again as new creatures in the Risen Christ is precisely to assume this eschatological identity. Non-alienating differences based on gender, nationality, and culture are to be accepted and respected as part of God's saving providence. Alienating differences such as oppressive differences in class and power are to be removed. (Kyongsuk Min, 191)

The theme of opening the doors of the church to the stranger is a common motif that runs through the essays in *Faith on the Move*. Without minimizing the depth and perspicacity of the works presented in this volume, it has to be said that the suggestions offered and the hopes expressed in these

works can only bear fruit in practice if the church—as an institution (that is to say, primarily the official hierarchy) and in its institutional practices, and not just in its members' internal and individual attitudes—opens its internal doors and acknowledges the reality of its failures of hospitality toward its own members.

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RAMON GUILLERMO

Translation and Revolution: A Study of Jose Rizal's Guillermo Tell

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Ramon Guillermo's *Translation and Revolution: A Study of Jose Rizal's Guillermo Tell* is a work of solid scholarship. Its significance can hardly be disputed, for it is the first book-length study of Rizal's 1886 translation of Schiller's play, *Wilhelm Tell* (first performed in Weimar in 1804). It is thorough in its analysis as well as thoughtful of the historico-political and linguistic intricacies of Rizal's translation.

Guillermo's objective is to analyze Rizal's translation of the Wilhelm Tell “as a living cultural and historical practice” (217), and to reveal how the original German work evolved into Tagalog through Rizal's particular historical and especially political *Weltanschauung*. To show how this evolved, however, is not an easy task. The work of translation, after all, implies the appropriation and integration of what is initially unfamiliar and alien into a work that becomes intimate and meaningful in the translator's own culture and history. This is often neither straightforward nor unambiguous, insofar as the historical and cultural, and therefore textual, renditions of certain concepts are not always immediately commensurable.

Consider the case of translating “inalienable rights.” In the introductory chapter Guillermo takes up the final chapter of *El Filibusterismo*, in which Padre Florentino explicitly cites a German poet (Schiller) as he comforts a dying and disconsolate Simoun. Florentino's citation, as Guillermo

indicates, is a paraphrase of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*. In that paraphrase, Florentino talks about "inalienable rights, which, as the German poet says, shine ever there above, unextinguished and inextinguishable, like the eternal stars themselves." Now "inalienable rights" can easily be translated into Spanish as *inalienables derechos*, as Rizal in fact did. In Rizal's Tagalog, however, it appears as "di matingkalang katuiran" (incomprehensible reason). Guillermo finds this difference, and many others like it, significant. Here we find the central problematic of the book in what Guillermo calls the "disjunctions and differential histories" (9) of political concepts, since these would be revelatory and instructive of how Rizal had appropriated the revolutionary spirit of enlightenment Europe into his own. This book is therefore not merely a linguistic study of Rizal's translation of a German play but, more significantly, an analysis of the ideological implications of Rizal's translation. Simplistically, one may follow the book's title and claim that Guillermo aims to show that Rizal's *translation* of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* is indeed *revolutionary*.

To accomplish this aim, Guillermo undertakes a "comparison of what may be termed 'ideological structuration' of [Rizal's] translation . . . to that of the original work [Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*]" (29). He performs this comparison through a computer-aided discursive analysis of both the source text and target text, which is a relatively novel method. This comparison produces vocabulary flow and hapax graphs that identify significant lexical clusters in both the source and target texts (62). The approach is apparently nonnormative, insofar as it makes comparisons of neither semantic content nor an interpretative schema. Instead it derives "structures of global textual coherence from global structures of lexical cohesion," which is useful for the explicit aim of the work, what Guillermo calls a "semiotics of ideology" (77).

As regards the book's outline, Guillermo devotes two chapters after the Introduction to investigate textual cohesion by applying "Computer-aided Discourse Analysis" (chapter 2) and a discussion of "Some Empirical Results" (chapter 3). For a theoretical framework Guillermo employs Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's theory of translation evaluation (34), which enables him to construct and reconstruct "comparative ideologies" from the source text (Schiller's German) and target text (Rizal's Tagalog). In these two chapters, Guillermo explains how the computer-aided methods work to ensure the "comparability" of the source and target, as well as the ensuing empirical results.

Next he looks into textual coherence by taking up "Sociocriticism and Translational Analysis" (chapter 4) and "Interpreting Semiotic Texts" (chapter 5). In these chapters Guillermo explains the methodological inspiration for his employment of "sociocriticism," which he describes as the effort to develop an empirical approach to the "semiotics of ideology" (77). He presents a variety of tables to account for a microsemiotic reading that he has extracted from source and target texts (90ff), insofar as the data provided by the vocabulary flow and hapax graphs enable the comparison of the "thematic structures" and "ideological formations" of both texts (83).

In the sixth chapter ("The Passing of Nature"), he examines the particularly interesting problem of translating the German word *Natur* into Tagalog and the solutions that Rizal offered. Today it could easily be expressed as "kalikasan," but Guillermo notes that "kalikasan" was absent under "natural," "naturaleza," or "naturalidad" in the 1889 *Diccionario Tagalo-Española* of Pedro Serrano Laktaw, while it finds its earliest occurrence in 1922 in Rosendo Ignacio's *Diccionario Hispano-Tagalo* (172). Thus Rizal employed a variety of renditions of *Natur* in the translation of *Wilhelm Tell*. Guillermo finds six renditions: among them are *loob* ("innermost being"), *pagkatao* ("humanity"), and *sangsinukuban* ("universe"). He then attempts rigorously to account for the variety of transformations of *Natur* in the Tagalog, that is, how in each rendition Rizal brings out the "senses" that are relevant to the nineteenth-century cultural and political world of his native tongue. This is where we find the heart of Guillermo's work, as well as his insights into the explicit act of constituting the ideology of nationalism in the Philippines. He then concludes his work (following the book's title) by recapitulating its results and deepening its significance in the realm of Translation Studies.

In conclusion, Guillermo's *Translation and Revolution* is an indispensable contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship in [on?] the Philippines because it shows that a work of translation could have an ideological significance, and it presents scientific and empirical evidence for such significance. Guillermo is explicit in this endeavor when he claims that close examinations of a work of translation could "serve as useful sources in the investigation of the history of political and ideological discourse in the Philippines" (217). Guillermo's work is also exemplary in its methodological contributions to the discipline of translation studies, particularly in the field of empirical translation analysis. Thus this work

will interest not only ethnolinguists and specialists in translation studies, but also historians and political scientists who may draw insights from “some of the ideological dynamics [that are] constitutive of nineteenth century nationalism in the Philippines” (31).

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