

REVIEW

***Rediscovering Rubén Darío through translation.* Carlos F Grisby.**

Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.

doi.org/10.31641/ZGRS2516

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A new book on Rubén Darío is not a rarity, considering that we are dealing with one of the most important poets of the Spanish language. Lately there has been a renewed interest in his poetry; but this book, as its title announces, concentrates its efforts on the art of translating, not only translating Darío's poetry into another language, but translation as a strategy on the part of Darío to write his poetry. It is well known the love Rubén Darío had for French language and culture, and how he was accused by Spanish critic Juan Varela, to be a Francophile and have a "galicismo mental". One of the premises of the book is that by 1905 Darío was disenchanted with French culture and was distressed by the fact that he had not been able to penetrate the French cultural landscape and be appreciated as a poet by French writers and intellectuals. This is not a new contribution to the field since it has been well known for many years, what is remarkable about this book is the way in which Grigsby demonstrates the influence of French poetry and that of other languages of the Spanish peninsula like Catalan, Provençal, and Galician, providing close readings of certain poems and contrasting them with the originals in these different languages.

The book is divided in two parts: the first one deals with translation in Darío. Chapter 1 is "Thinking in French and writing in Spanish", and chapter 2 "Not only the Roses of Paris". The second part addresses English translations of Rubén Darío, something that has proven to be quite difficult and does not do justice to the original talent and skills demonstrated by Rubén Darío in Spanish. These two parts are followed by a coda that concentrates on the use of the word (H)armonia by Rubén Darío in his poetry.

In chapter 1 Grisby discusses the love of Rubén Darío for all things French, but the difficulty he encountered to assimilate into French culture and become a true French poet. By 1888 Darío wrote several poems in French, of which he published in the second edition of *Azul...* "Chanson Crepusculaire", "A Mademoiselle" and "Pensée". Although these poems were significant accomplishments for a poet who had never been to France, he made metrical mistakes in some verses. More important was Darío's failure to integrate fully into the French literary world, after having lived in Paris for seven years. During this time, he made many efforts to befriend French poets and intellectuals, but he was not adopted by the French literary circles of this time and always felt an outsider.

Grisby explains thoroughly, using a comparative close reading, the process by which Rubén Darío wrote some of his poems, comparing them with the French originals on which he found inspiration. "Canción de carnaval" is compared with Théodore de Banville "Mascarades." "Bouquet" is read along with "Symphonie en blanc majeure" by Théophile Gautier. "El canto de la sangre" follows a creative reading of Paul de Verlaine's "Voix de l'Orgueil : un cri puissant comme d'un cor". And "Cosas del Cid" is compared to Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le Cid". It is important to note that Grisby emphasizes the originality of Darío's poems: "As with most of the previous poems, 'Cosas del Cid' is not only an original creation, but also a gloss, a translation, and a rewriting of another poem" (39). Although the debt of Darío to these French authors had already been pointed out, it is the first time that a line-by-line comparison is performed. As Grisby says towards the end of this chapter, "To fully grasp the sophistication of Darío's engagement with French poetry, we must read it in terms of what it does with its French sources, as these usually involves operations far too rich to be solely labeled "imitation" or "influence"" (44).

In Chapter 2 Grisby discusses the multilingualism of Darío and his capacity to imitate and emulate different authors. Grisby discusses poems by Darío in detail and compares them with poems by peninsular writers, explaining clearly what Darío received from these authors as a reader and the transformation of these texts into his own poems. As he states:

Darío began to explore the history of Iberian literature in his poetry, first by rewriting Provençal poetry with "Dezires, layes y canciones" in the second edition of *Prosas profanas*, and then by

going as far as attempting Latin hexameters in *Cantos de vida esperanza* and *El canto errante*, in addition to incorporating Catalan into some of the poems of the latter collection (47).

In chapter 3, Grisby studies the English translations of Darío's poetry from the first one made by Thomas Walsh and Salomon de la Selva to the most recent volumes published by Penguin publishing and Duke University Press. In general, the comment Grisby makes about Thomas Walsh's translation can be applied to most of the attempts to translate Darío into English "The translation falls painfully short on the task of carrying over the poem's richness and musicality" (81). Towards the end of the book, Grisby announces that he is preparing a translation into English of Darío's selected poetry. We hope that he will be able to finally achieve an English translation worthy of Darío's accomplishments in Spanish.

In closing, Grisby has managed to write an excellent analysis of Rubén Darío oeuvre, using a new and original approach, impeccably arguing about Darío's poetry and his place in world literature. As he says in his conclusion:

The foregoing pages show how rethinking a canonical body of work, such as Darío's, from the point of view of another language and tradition can reveal threats or patterns that have remain overlooked, such as the multilingualism of Darío's poetry. They also illustrate how translation can be used as a tool to reread, rethink, and re-present an author's works (136).