

Translation and Asymmetrical Spaces, the Strait of Gibraltar as a Case in Point

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<Abstract> As a geographical location, defined by Paul Bowles as “the center of the universe,” which separates continents—Europe in the North and Africa in the South—but also world views, cultures, religions, and languages, the Strait of Gibraltar was and remains an authentic translation space. At present, the metaphor of the separation that the Strait evokes incessantly continues to be valid every day, taking into account, for example, events such as the successive waves of African immigrants who have been arriving on the European coasts for several years “illegally.” In addition to these tensions, there are cities located in the Strait, such as Tangier and Gibraltar, that are by themselves multilingual and multicultural places and therefore spaces of translation and conflict that deserve specific sections in this paper. While Tangier, during the second half of the twentieth century was a unique “interzone” characterized by cosmopolitanism and the coexistence of spaces and multiple and confronted texts, Gibraltar is now a territory reinvented as a result of its past, in which hybridity would be a fundamental part of its complex and young identity.

INTRODUCTION

Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories.
Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated,
and transformed through artistic and literary practice.
(hooks 1991, 152)

Human beings access reality by means of translations, of provisional, relevant, interesting or interested versions of realities which are continually being contextualized, rectified, and translated. With the hermeneutic and ethical journeys of each individual, we come to realize that translating is an inevitable means of encountering the other. Not only of encountering the other, but also of coming face to face with immigration and national identities, the global and the local, the problem of marginal groups, difference, or encountering what we sometimes agree with and sometimes detest. And we come across all of these things because when we translate we invade spaces, we occupy alien, far-away spaces which overlap and clash. When we translate, we shape these spaces and walk over the tracks we find on the way; but, on occasion, when we move around in others' spaces, our aim is also to rewrite them and translate them. Translating is shifting smells, flavors, or passions from places that are

not ours. Translation is movement, flow, and passage between spaces that are not, and should never be, unidirectional or closed.

Our starting-point in this paper is that all cultural experience arises at the crossroads between *language*, *topos*, and *identity*, and that precisely the experience of what is different is produced by the destabilization of these crossroads (Robinson 1998, 24). Our point of departure, therefore, is that translating, and more specifically translating spaces, is a very political activity which is certainly not neutral—it is the *locus* where the coexistence of heterogeneity becomes possible, and as a result space must always be under construction (Massey 2011, 9).

As an example of this way of understanding translation, we aim to focus on the Strait of Gibraltar, with the cities of Tangier and Gibraltar at opposite sides of its coast. It is a fascinating area because it is the space that joins Africa and Europe, a space of cultural encounter that espouses the concept of hybridity, a hybridity distinct from syncretism, creolization, and métissage, which would suggest that the dynamics of cultural encounters give rise to new, long-lasting identities. On the contrary, these are spaces in which the hybrid is that space in construction just mentioned that problematizes binary oppositions since each is part of the construction of the other. Within this context, translating in these spaces means offering a culturally constructed version away from dualisms.

The analysis of this space, which includes the Strait, Tangier, and Gibraltar, will lead us to reflect on the fact that translating is today the condition of living of many cities with a double or triple history behind them. The study of these spaces will make clear that translation, far from being a benevolent act of hospitality toward a guest from another space, is a relentless transaction (Simon 2003, 77), a hybrid act which does not mean a new synthesis but a zone of negotiation, dissent, and exchange, a locus that short-circuits patterns of alterity in order to express the drift of contemporary identities (Simon 1999, 39–40).

The Strait of Gibraltar, which is in turn a clash space between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, is the starting point of this essay; it is here that all stories—those that go to the North and those that remain in the South—begin and it is also the narrative constructions on the Strait that make this space such a complicated, multicultural space, because “places without stories are unthinkable” (Price 2004, xxi).

In fact, the Strait of Gibraltar and the stories shaping it throughout the centuries make it a space of conflicts, silences, discontinuities, and exclusions that turn it into a place which is unstable and multilayered, never finished, never determined, processual, porous (Price 2004, 5). Because although the Strait of Gibraltar is currently a natural border between two continents (Africa and Europe) and two countries (Morocco and Spain), and it is unique

in that it also has Gibraltar (an overseas territory of the United Kingdom), and Ceuta (a Spanish city with its own statute of autonomous government) on opposite sides of its shores, the truth is that, throughout history, both sides have been united longer than they have been separated. They were governed as one territory by the Romans and also during the eight centuries of Muslim occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. In 1492, after the fall of the Kingdom of Granada, the two shores separated forever, a separation that was only occasionally interrupted during the time of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco (1913–1956). Since 1956, when the kingdom of Morocco became independent, the two shores have once again become administratively, politically, and culturally independent.

The waters of the Strait are, therefore, a palimpsest accumulating well-known stories and also, unfortunately, other stories we will never hear about because they were lost forever with the bodies that have sunk to the depths. The waters of the Strait are “a layered text of narratives of belonging and exclusion, always negotiated, always struggled over, never finished” (Price 2004, 7); they are the intermediate, imaginary zone between Africa and the West that every culture *needs*: “Somewhere every culture has an imaginary zone for what it excludes, and it is that zone we must try to remember *today*” (Cixous and Clément 1986, 6). And that imaginary zone is the line that joins the two “dual cities” (Simon 2012, 3 and following pages) we shall go on to examine in detail, Tangier and Gibraltar.

Currently, communication between both sides of the Strait is in the form of fast or traditional ferries between Tarifa, Algeciras, and Gibraltar on the European side and Ceuta and Tangier in Africa. Crossings take between thirty and ninety minutes. Sometimes crossings cannot be made due to storms or strong winds, especially in winter. One of these ferries is called “the whale,” a carrier of unknown treasures which, with a curious symbolism reminding us of Captain Ahab’s quest to hunt down Moby Dick, is pursued by an old fisherman from Tangier in the film *Moroccan Chronicles* (1999) by the Moroccan director Moumen Smihi. The journey between the two shores is made legally by almost three million people a year and illegally by more than ten thousand, who use their own means to get across in “*pateras*.” The Strait of Gibraltar is the only gateway into and out of the Mediterranean for all marine traffic. It is estimated that more than 82,000 ships cross it every year. As Alfred Chester points out in his short story “Glory Hole”: “The hills of Spain are there like civilized laughter across the narrow water; two ferries a day, or six, or ten—who can remember anymore? Spain is on the other, the inaccessible side of Styx” (Chester 1990, 221).

The possibility of building a bridge or a tunnel between both shores

has often been discussed. From the technical viewpoint, the tunnel option would appear to be the most feasible, even though the depth of the water of the Strait would make it the deepest (and most expensive) tunnel in Europe. However, the existence of a tunnel or bridge across the Strait would be a huge improvement in traffic and mobility between both sides, something which, from a symbolic and political point of view, would not seem to be totally acceptable at this moment in time: the idea of a tunnel or bridge, ultimately a metaphor of union and communication between the two shores, clashes with other well-known metaphorical narratives about the Strait which focus more on the idea of battle and separation. One is the familiar mythological tale of the “columns,” identified fairly vaguely as the Rock of Gibraltar and Mount Hacho in Ceuta, which Hercules separated to open up a passage for the Atlantic Ocean. Another is the myth surrounding Julian, Count of Ceuta, a Visigoth governor of the city who is alleged to have facilitated entry of Muslim troops into the Spanish mainland in 711, enabling them to put an end to the Visigothic rule established after the fall of the Roman Empire. This act changed the history of Spain forever. It is said that Julian did this out of revenge after his daughter was raped in Toledo by Rodrigo, the last Visigothic king of Spain who would finally be defeated and killed by the invading army in the Battle of Guadalete. In this sense, the fact that it was a question of honor that caused the Muslim invasion of Spain has led to numerous interpretations. In his novel *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (1970), Juan Goytisolo identifies with the main character more than one thousand years later in his desire to put an end to the essential, homogeneous, and nationalist–Catholic Spain of the Franco regime, in the same way that the Visigothic count had indirectly helped to put an end to Christian Spain and, ultimately, promote miscegenation and the fusion of races. We must not forget that the last significant act of war in the Strait took place in August 1936, when around eight thousand troops from the rebel Spanish army in Morocco were transported by sea to the Spanish mainland to join the rebel troops once the Civil War started.

The history of the Strait, therefore, has been, and continues to be, a history of conflict involving the clash of two different civilizations, established on the two continents located on either side of this stretch of water, which also economically represent two very different zones—Europe on the north side and Africa on the south, which are profoundly asymmetrical in economic terms. It is, in this sense, perhaps the most unequal border in the whole world, and crossing the Strait was, and perhaps still is, travelling to another reality. This is how it was described by the Spanish traveller and spy Ali Bey when he said in 1814, on crossing from Tarifa to Tangier, that whoever crosses the

Strait goes “en tan breve espacio de tiempo a un mundo absolutamente nuevo, y sin la más remota semejanza con el que se acaba de dejar, se halla realmente como transportado a otro planeta” (Bey 2009, 147). Nowadays, the most visible aspect of this conflict is that of illegal migrants, who, as we have pointed out above, use the Strait to enter Europe, and who in recent years consist mainly of people from sub-Saharan countries. This is why this intermediate space that is the sea is the space in movement that, although in the middle, is the space of the beginning and the end, the space of the in-between which necessarily has to be crossed by these fragmented lives. It is the only space in which, unfortunately, they will be full citizens. However, there are other conflicts in the area, including claims from other countries for territories they consider to have been illegally occupied for centuries. This is the case, above all, of Spain and Gibraltar, but also of Morocco and Ceuta.

Exile, or immigration for political or ideological reasons, is also linked to the history of the Strait of Gibraltar. Many historical diasporas have traversed it, including, for example, the Jews (around 80,000) or the Moriscos (around 300,000) when they were expelled from Spain in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively, who abandoned Spain and crossed over to Africa. Some Spanish Jews settled in towns in the north of Morocco, where they lived for centuries with a largely Muslim population. Many migrated to Israel shortly after the new state was founded and now form part of the Sephardic community, one of the most visible and well-known communities of that country. The Spanish Moriscos who took refuge in Morocco, on the other hand, contributed their *andalusi* character to Moroccan culture and it is now one of its signs of identity.

And not only that, but the space we will examine below is, as well as being a multicultural space, or perhaps precisely for that reason, a multilingual space. Four languages live side by side on both shores: Spanish on the Spanish side in Ceuta, in Gibraltar, and to a much lesser degree throughout North Morocco; English in Gibraltar; and French and Arabic in Morocco. The two most used languages, Spanish and Arabic, correspond to diatopical dialect forms, Andalusian Spanish in Spain and colloquial Moroccan Arabic or *dri a* on the Moroccan coast of the Strait. The Andalusian variant is also used by the citizens of Gibraltar, which immediately makes them Andalusians for the rest of Spain when they speak Spanish, although they do in fact speak a hybrid variety called “llanito,” a kind of small-scale European Spanglish. Moroccan Arabic, on the other hand, has a strong Berber substrate and influences from French and Spanish and is an identitarian dialect, far removed from modern standard Arabic and unintelligible to many Moroccans. Due to their own particular history, a number of coastal towns on the Strait, such as Tangier

for example, can be considered to be multilingual spaces where it is possible to be understood in three or four languages. Others, like Gibraltar, are clearly bilingual. Ceuta is similarly an interesting example, as it is also becoming a bilingual city due to the increasing Muslim population, to which we must likewise add a significant Hindu community which is completely bilingual in Spanish and Hindi.

These multicultural and multilingual spaces will allow us to better understand the Strait's coastal "dual cities"—to use Sherry Simon's terminology—which we will examine below.

TANGIER, A DUAL CITY

The place [Tangier] was counterfeit, a waiting room between connections,
a transition from one way of being to another...
(Bowles 2006, 382).

Tangier is not part of Morocco. It's international.
Paul Bowles interviewed by Abdelhak Elghandor
(Elghandor 1994, 16)

From the end of the 1940s until Moroccan independence in 1956, the city of Tangier, located to the extreme west of the African coast of the Strait of Gibraltar, had a unique political status, that of being an "international zone." But it was, at the same time, a multilayered space where many languages existed, and still do exist, at the same time, a space where translation was never a mere language transfer but a practice of writing that took place at the crossroads (Simon 2012, 8). Perched on the northern tip of Morocco with its eyes trained across the Strait of Gibraltar toward Spain, "Tangier certainly has long been at the crossroads, a point of intersection of various civilizations, notably African/ Islamic and European Christian" (Hibbard 2009, 1). This is why Tangier is a space that has always generated multiple discourses; it is a city that has always "spoken," because it is a site of representation. However, the discourses it has generated have been different translations of reality, rewritings of a space that some, Westerners, exoticized, and others, Moroccans, understood differently, as a way of "writing back to the West" (Elkouche 2008, 1).

Tangier was, on the one hand, a space of rich British expatriates and, on the other, the receiving space of many expatriates from Paris during the years between the World wars, artists and writers who sought in the "internationalized" Tangier what the Lost Generation had searched for in the French capital a few years earlier, a space open to less conventional ways of life. The era during which both artists and writers lived in Tangier was especially rele-



1.
View of Tangier

vant with regard to political and social change, because during these years the Maghreb moved on from being an area under European colonial control to one of postcolonial independence

Halfway between nations, cultures, and languages, Tangier became an “interzone,” to use Burroughs’s word—that is, “a place of intermediacy and ambiguity, a place that remains outside standard narratives of nationhood and identity. It proved to be an expedient location for [writers] to sort out the multiple crises of identity, desire, and loss that motivated their writing” (Mullins 2002, 3). In this sense, we must not forget that, as Tangier’s legal situation allowed moral permissiveness with regard, for example, to sexuality and drugs

at a time when homosexuality was still illegal in Britain and was considered to be a mental illness in the United States, it was logical that this unorthodox space should attract many gay artists of the time, from Jean Genet to Robert Rauschenberg, William Burroughs and Paul Bowles (who lived in Tangier for over fifty years, from 1947 until his death in 1999).

To these names we could add a long list of intellectuals who spent time in Tangier, such as Gertrude Stein, Francis Bacon, Djuna Barnes, Brion Gysin, Samuel Beckett, Alfred Chester, Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Aaron Copeland, Juan Goytisolo, Ian Fleming, and many others. Because Tangier was the promised land of the bohemian Diaspora and refuge of many rich, eccentric Westerners (see Pulsifer 1992 and Walonen 2011) who sought ways of life that constituted an alternative to the orthodoxy of their countries of origin. This is something that, in spite of everything, the city is still proud of and still attracts a lot of tourists. A recent tourist brochure, *Tangier in Morocco*, published by the Moroccan National Tourist Office, states: “The streets of Tangier are teeming with artistic and literary memories. Countless painters, novelists, playwrights, poets, photographers, actors, filmmakers and couturiers from every nation under the sun have stayed here a while or made their home here, inspired and bewitched by the city’s magic” (Moroccan National Tourist Office n.d., 12).

Truman Capote, in a 1950 article entitled “Tangier” (Capote 2013), reminds us of the radical heterogeneity and idiosyncrasies arising from this huge amount of freedom. Tangier was the space on the border between Europe and Africa, between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity; a place where nationalities, cultures, and languages mixed to the point of promiscuity. In fact, in Morocco translation is still a means of survival today. Although the official language is Arabic, the economic and cultural life of the country has always been carried out in several languages. The educated classes speak and write standard Arabic and French, while the majority of people use varieties of Moroccan Arabic or Berber variants. In the north many people speak Spanish and also English, particularly those involved in tourism and commerce. Therefore, “no single Moroccan language can universally speak to and for all Moroccans; rather, Moroccans must daily translate among themselves, or in the formation of literary narratives, both written and oral” (Sabil 2005, 176). It is no surprise, then, that this open *locus*, especially that of Tangier when it was an International Zone, should have been so attractive a place for writers whose lives and works were considered unorthodox in Western circles. Tangier was a space where for many years national structures and rigid codes of ethics were deconstructed and where confusion of all binary logic was favored.

However, the spaces inhabited by Westerners in Tangier were gen-

erally separate from those inhabited by Moroccans. We see this in the case of Bowles, whose descriptions of the spaces his characters are situated in speak of class, race, or cultural differences. Moreover, Bowles describes in many of his translations the horror of not having a place in space, in *For Bread Alone* by Choukri (2010), for example. The above-mentioned rich British expats created a series of separate places that reflected English ways of life, places of worship like St. Andrew's Church, tea parties and lavish parties with film stars (Finlayson 1992, 271 and following pages), although it is also true that the density of the population and the physical and social distribution of the city led to inevitable contact between the communities. The center of Tangier had been designed initially for around 12,000 people and it remained unchanged when population numbers increased. So, the streets were always full of people, cultures, and religions as reflected in the pages of Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch* or Bowles's *Let it Come Down*. The narrow streets in the center showed multiplicity and the two main axes of the town, the Boulevard Pasteur running from east to west, and the Rue du Statut running from north to south, crossed at Place de France, "a bustling roundabout ringed by popular cafés frequented by the diplomatic community and Moroccan nationalists" (Edwards 2005, 130).

In Tangier, the European powers were initially the producers of spaces, the power groups who designed, distributed, *named*, and built spaces and who also established the rules for the use of these spaces. This divided spatiality is typical, as Fanon reminds us in *The Wretched of the Earth*, of colonizing processes: "The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits" (Fanon 1968, 52). The space of colonial order is always one of luxury, cleanliness, and entertainment; the other formed of wretched places, as we see, for example, in Choukri's *For Bread Alone*.

Without a doubt, for Bowles and many other writers and artists, Tangier was a "third space," in Edward Soja's sense of the term—that is, "the space where all places are capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood" (Soja 1996, 56). Perhaps this is why Bowles never considered himself to be Tangierian but, rather, a vocational stateless person. In March 1992 he said in an interview, "I am not American and I am not Moroccan. I'm a visitor on earth. You have to be Muslim to really be accepted in Morocco, to be a part of it" (Choukri 2008, 304).

Bowles was also against the Westernization of Moroccan spaces after independence—for him geography was a way of reading identity. Spaces were texts and the scenery was the reflection of his characters' inner self, some-

thing the critics have discussed in detail (Pounds 1985; Olson 1986; Hassan 1995; Caponi 1998; Patteson 2003; Walonen 2011) and that he himself recognized in some of his travel writings such as *Their Heads are Green and their Hands are Blue* (1963), and in his novels and several interviews. Characters like Thami in *Let it Come Down* identify with the place and the space, but when they are taken somewhere else like New York many of his characters feel out of place. It was in his translations of oral texts by Moroccan narrators (Ahmed Yacoubi, Layachi Larbi, Abdeslam Boulaich, and Mohammed Mrabet, among others), however, that he rewrites in that contact zone that is no good to imperialism, like many other postcolonial translations, but comes from within the Other(s) space, “involves a much looser notion of the text, interacts intensely with local forms of narrative and is a revigorating and positive global influence [. . .] a continuous life-giving and creative process” (Simon and St-Pierre 2000, 10).

After October 1956, when Tangier was no longer an International Zone (in 1961 it became part of Morocco), people came to suspect that “the good times, the high-living years for foreign residents with substantial assets in Tangier, might be ending” (Finlayson 1992, 75). In 1957 the British Post Office closed its offices; the Spanish Post Office did the same in 1958. In addition, many banks and companies closed and transferred their branches to other countries. The luxury goods shops on Boulevard Pascal were replaced by shops selling local crafts and clothing. But one of the most revealing details of the change was “a new edict banning the sale of liquor within a certain distance from a mosque” and another determining the places that stayed and those that did not: “There were a great many mosques, and a great many Spanish, Jewish and other foreign-owned bars. The mosques stayed open, the bars closed” (Finlayson 1992, 75). That is, the places that Lefebvre calls “representations of space” (1991, 33) closed, that experience of space referring to hegemonic ideological representations, to space constructed by professionals and technocrats (engineers, architects, urban planners, geographers, etc.), a space where ideology, power, and knowledge are invariably linked to representation. Besides, when it was no longer an International Zone, many Moroccans living in the country moved to Tangier, which changed the city space.

The clean, luxurious Tangier of today is Muslim, the best areas belong to citizens of countries in the Persian Gulf and to Moroccans who have made their fortune from drug-trafficking between Africa and Europe, trafficking in which the city is a crucial point (Walonen 2011, 127). The city and its population have evolved and so has their interaction with the first world, to such an extent that the essentialist vision of the Muslim population, which today reproaches the former foreign residents of the Tangier of the International Zone, might have changed. The foreign residents and tourists currently in

Tangier (many attracted by the literary past of the city) still mix with the local people, but probably in a different way to that of the foreign community of the Tangier of the 1940s and '50s. Despite this, it is curious that in the tourist brochure mentioned above, *Tangier in Morocco*, Tangier's special character, compared to that of other Moroccan cities, is highlighted in the following words: "Today, the city still has its cosmopolitan side, with a wide variety of outside influences contributing to its cultural diversity and unique personality" (Moroccan National Tourist Office n.d., 7). Or with these other puzzling words: "There is something altogether unique about the town, something impalpable, indefinable—a sense of freedom that hangs in the air like the scent of orange blossom" (Moroccan National Tourist Office n.d., 5).

Tangier, with its linguistic and cultural contrasts and the social and classist inequalities reflected in its spaces, is therefore the living example that spaces are socially created entities, political constructions that reveal prejudices, asymmetries, and inequalities. But, in addition, the places are "practiced" spaces (De Certeau 1988, 117). De Certeau compares spatiality, place and narrative, and, for him, the narrative ends up "transforming places into spaces or spaces into places" (De Certeau 1988, 130). The writer and the translator take the reader by the hand when they describe an apartment, a street, a country, or a border.

GIBRALTAR, A TRANSLATIONAL CITY

[...] dual cities have their origins in conquest, when a stronger language group comes to occupy or impinge upon a pre-existent language which may itself have displaced another before it.
(Simon 2012, 3)

The city of Gibraltar (Jebel-al-Tariq, or "the mountain of Tarik," an Arab leader who led the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 CE), resting on its Rock, has been, as we all know, a British colony since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1704 Gibraltar was occupied by an English fleet involved in the War of the Spanish Succession and included in the Spanish territories ruled by the Archduke Charles of Austria, one of the pretenders to the throne (the other was Philip of Anjou, grandson of Louis XVI of France and legitimate heir according to the last will and testament of the last king of Spain, Charles II, who had died in 1700). However, the detachment that expelled the citizens from the city—they founded the town of San Roque, whence an irate stone lion stills looks threateningly over at the Rock—never left, not even when the war ended and Philip V was proclaimed King. One of the conditions of the famous Treaty of Utrecht (1713) was that Spain should recognize British sovereignty over the Rock of Gibraltar, the city, and the

port. The Treaty, which has never been revoked and is, therefore, still in force today, continues to be invoked by Spain today on the grounds that, among other things, the land occupied by Gibraltar Airport is in a neutral area that had never been signed over to the British and, therefore, was occupied illegally during the First World War.

More than three hundred years of British sovereignty have made Gibraltar a unique enclave. It is located on the southern tip of Andalusia and its only land border is with Spain. This Lilliputian territory is 5.8 square kilometers in size and has a population of almost 30,000 inhabitants, making it one of the most densely populated places in the world (4,290 inhabitants per square kilometer). As the original Spanish population of the city abandoned the Rock after the British occupation, it soon filled with immigrants from several places—Genoa, Portugal, India, Malta, Morocco, and Spain, among others—and also had a significant Jewish community, who had migrated to Gibraltar to “serve” the British troops and their families. As we have mentioned above, the city is also practically bilingual, English is spoken, as well as “llanito” or a kind of Spanglish spoken on the Rock which the locals call “suichito” or “switch,” a hybrid language where code switching is constantly used. Many Gibraltarians also speak fluent Spanish with a marked Andalusian accent.

Relations with Spain have never been easy. In Spain, whatever the ideology of the ruling party, Gibraltar is always considered to be a colonized territory which should be returned to Spain as it was taken by force in an act of war. Today most Gibraltarians think that the Treaty of Utrecht is obsolete, that history has shown that Gibraltar is a territory demographically, linguistically, and culturally different from Spain, and that the current autonomous status of the territory, approved by all its inhabitants, is proof of its democratic nature. Although the United Nations declared in 1964 that Gibraltar should be “decolonized,” under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht it could never be an independent country—it could only be British or, should the latter abandon the territory, Spanish. At that time, the United Kingdom refused to enter into any kind of negotiation with Franco’s Spain, and the Spanish government, in retaliation, closed the land border between Gibraltar and Spain, leaving Gibraltar isolated via land from 1969 to 1985. Recent attempts to set up negotiations to try to reach an agreement of British and Spanish cosovereignty of the territory have met the refusal of almost all the Gibraltarians.

In any case, there is still a problem between Gibraltar and Spain which is visible, especially at the moment, in the “queues” of cars and people that have been forming at the Spanish border crossing every summer since 2013, when the Spanish government decided to periodically tighten the con-

trol of vehicles and persons, which only adds to the active conflicts in the area of the Strait. In this case, however, it is a political conflict more than a social or cultural one, but it affects the daily life of people who live in the area and have become hostages, in a way, of decisions taken very far away for reasons they often do not understand. This “distance” from the centers of power can be seen in the references to the population of Gibraltar in the media.

Therefore, while the Spanish government said these queues were “necessary” to stop smuggling, Gibraltar’s Chief Minister, Fabián Picardo, denounced the “passivity” of the British government in this affair for fear of worsening relations with Spain (Ayllón 2014), and the Spanish workers on the Rock expressed their disagreement with the measures put into place by their own government (Romaguera 2013).

This is, therefore, a deep-rooted problem with no easy solution. Gibraltar is a prosperous place with a high standard of living—it is, in fact, the second most prosperous territory in the European Union, which is in stark contrast with the Spanish region surrounding it. The Campo de Gibraltar is a depressed area with a high level of unemployment and is still far behind other areas of Spain. But, this prosperity is due, above all, to the fact that it is a tax haven where companies and financial institutions pay hardly any taxes, which would explain the huge amount of investment and increasing number of companies registered on the Rock. From Spain it is argued that this prosperity is largely due to fiscal rules and regulations, which are very different to those in Spain and prevent investment, for example, reaching Campo de Gibraltar, the area around the Rock. The Gibraltarian stereotype as seen from Spain is that of a smuggler on a motorbike who takes advantage of his situation as an islander with respect to Spain to obtain economic benefits, but who, deep down, is just an Andalusian in denial. From the Gibraltarian point of view, Spaniards are considered to be provincial individuals anchored in the past who have never been able to understand that Gibraltar is not a part of Spain, that its population is more heterogeneous in comparison to that of Spain, and that it is so prosperous. Whatever the case, we cannot forget that currently more than seven thousand Spaniards work in Gibraltar and that many Gibraltarians have invested large amounts of money in properties in Spain.

This “insularity” or impermeability of Gibraltar, even though it is not an island as such, has led to it being a place of stability and freedom in contrast with the turbulent history of its neighbor. During the nineteenth century, the Rock was a refuge for Spanish exiles who had to abandon their country for political reasons and were making their way to the United Kingdom or other European countries. During the twentieth century the Rock, as a British territory, maintained standards of religious freedom and tolerance which were un-



2. Views of Gibraltar

known in Spain, especially during the Franco regime, and this would make it a more advanced society in all aspects. We cannot forget the famous wedding of John Lennon and Yoko Ono which took place in Gibraltar in 1969, a media event highlighting the “modernity” of the Rock, which was much closer to the “swinging London” of the 1960s than backward, conservative Spain. In any case, the closure of the border crossing in 1969 made communication between Gibraltar and Spain almost nonexistent.

Today, Gibraltar (or “Gib” as it is known in Britain) could be any town on the southern coast of England, or perhaps the Channel Islands. There are typical references found in British territories, red telephone boxes, “bobbies” and the Union Jack, which continues to fly in many places. The supermarkets and shops belong to British groups—Marks and Spencer, BHS, Boots, Morrisons, and so on—and the pubs are authentic. However, this translation of a southern space to a northern one does not include all the codes or elements: in Gibraltar people drive on the right, as they do in Spain; the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, the most “British” space in the whole area, is built in an oriental style with horseshoe arches over doors and windows; at the entrance to the city the Muslim fort, which could never be seen in an English town, is still standing strong; and the Andalusian accent of the inhabitants when they speak Spanish or “llanito” assimilates them to their neighbors in Campo de Gibraltar. There are two theories regarding the origin of the term “llanito,” both related to the clash between languages. According to one theory, “llanito” was coined in Gibraltar in the early twentieth century by Andalusian workers who would hear Gibraltar mothers call their “yanitos” (the Spanish diminutive for Johnny—Johnnito) and began to call all Gibraltarians “yanis” (Johnnys), which led in turn to the current “llanitos”

or “yanitos.” The other theory is that the word derives from the large number of “Giovannis,” or “Giannis” as they are familiarly called, in the large Genoese colony which settled on the Rock. The simultaneous use of Spanish and English can often be very amusing. Main Street, the commercial artery of the city, is also called the “Calle Reá,” and Gibraltar is “Gibrartá,” both in “Ilanito” and Andalusian Spanish. Manuel Leguineche (2002, 2) mentions his surprise when a Gibraltarian bobby replied “Zí, zeñó” to the question “Do you speak English?”

This way of speaking is only the reflection of the coexistence of asymmetrical spaces where at least two cultures live side by side or occasionally clash. It is a way of speaking that, as Susan Bassnett states (in Simon 2012, n.p.), shows the fundamental importance of languages shaping cultural, geographical, and historical space. In effect, the particular language used in Gibraltar demonstrates the power of language to mark the urban landscape, to understand it, and how important it is to *listen* to cities (Simon 2012, xix and 1), especially these types of cities which are contact zones (see Pratt 1992), noisy streets of polyglot neighborhoods.

These are very clear examples that language is an area of negotiation, a space where connections are created through rewritings and where ideas circulate, converge, and clash in the translational city, which imposes its own patterns of interaction and these emerge out of their spaces and their own narrative pasts (Simon 2012, 2). But in Gibraltar, as in Tangier or the Strait, languages share the same terrain but rarely participate in a peaceful and egalitarian conversation. And there is some, albeit not a great deal of, Gibraltarian literature, written mostly in Spanish by authors like Héctor Licudi, Alberto Pizzarello, or Elio Cruz (see Yborra Aznar 2005). More recent writers, however, write in both languages (Mario Arroyo, for example) or only in English. One of the most interesting current Gibraltarian authors is Trino Cruz, a poet who writes in Spanish, translates Moroccan poetry from Arabic, and defends the multiethnic and multilinguistic character of the territory. These and many other authors allow us to see that translation (or self-translation, depending on your point of view) “can no longer be configured only as a link between a familiar and a foreign culture, between a local original and a distant destination, between one monolingual community and another. [. . .] The Other remains within a constant earshot. The shared understandings of this coexistence change the meaning of translation from a gesture of benevolence to a process through which a common civility is negotiated” (Simon 2012, 7).

As we have seen, given its history and the composition of its population, Gibraltar is now also a hybrid or “dual” city whose complex, young identity is based, above all, on the wishes of its population to maintain their

status as a British overseas territory and not be absorbed in any way by Spain in the long term. It is clear that the friendly relations between the two parties at the beginning of the twentieth century collapsed, probably permanently, when the border crossing was closed from 1969 until 1985, isolating the two peoples and provoking in Gibraltar both anti-Spanish feelings and a lack of proficiency in the Spanish language. Even so, certain data (Grocott and Stockey 2012, 125) show that the inhabitants of the Rock consider themselves to be more and more Gibraltarian and less British, although it is not clear what this feeling, whose signs of identity are still fairly vague yet real, consists of, the city now celebrates a “National Day” on September 10 to commemorate the date of the first referendum, held in 1967, to reject annexation to Spain; the red and white flag of Gibraltar can be seen more and more often flying over the territory, “llanito” is sometimes used in the local press instead of English, and the project to publish the first local paper *Calpe Press* is already under way. This nationalist feeling would only assimilate Gibraltar to tiny European nations such as Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino, which are historically much older. If this “national” sentiment were to become consolidated, which does not appear to have happened yet, Gibraltar would be an example of a relatively new “heterogeneous,” hybrid, multilingual community, seeking to define its own identity, composed in turn of hybrid elements from different cultures.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Living in different places means growing separate selves, learning other languages and ways of being, and looking at the world from different vantage points, without ever quite belonging to any of them. The state of being of a foreigner wherever I am has become second nature to me. It is a condition that sharpens the eye and the ear, that keeps awareness on its toes, and that takes nothing for granted. It means also that whatever I am, the ghosts of other places and other lives are hovering close.
(Reid 1994, 3)

The linguistic forms used in a space like Gibraltar cause us to reflect on how difficult it can become to find or create equivalent idioms for local, nonstandard languages, but in general everything mentioned above in relation to other spaces such as Tangier and the waters of the Strait of Gibraltar confirms that “the translator’s dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to *local* realities [. . .] and to changing identities” (Simon 1995, 10). This is why nowadays, in a global and transcultural society, translation is a transversal and interdisciplinary activity that has much to do with geography, while only a few years ago they were both considered to be fields of research far removed from each other (Bassnett 2011; Vidal 2012).

By examining in this essay spaces such as Tangier and Gibraltar, cities of ethnicities with shifting centers and peripheries, sites of transitory events, movements, memories, open spirals of heterogeneous collaborations and contaminations, heterotopic, multiform and diasporic realities, spaces which undermine the presumed purity of thought (Chambers 1994, 93 and 95), we hope to have shown the need to access both space and translation in a different way, to have questioned what we understand today by space and why translation has forced us to very seriously analyze how ideology and power interfere in the creation of a space and a translation, what cultural contact points we have seen between peoples whose spaces become joined or clash in translations of those texts that define them in this way; what role is played by cartography of the places understood as texts; and how this concept of knowledge is instrumentalized in asymmetrical and multidirectional contexts.

From this point of view, translating in the hybrid spaces studied here, spaces like the Strait, Tangier, or Gibraltar that are sites of displacement, interference, and constructed and disputed historicities (Clifford 1997, 25), has shown itself to be a border experience able to produce powerful political vision, the subversion of binarism which makes us wonder how translatable these places/metaphors of crossing are, how like and unlike diasporas. What does it take to define and defend a homeland? What are the political stakes in claiming a “home” in hooks’s (1991) sense? How are ethnic communities’ “insides” and “outsides” sustained, policed, subverted, crossed by historical subjects with different degrees of power (Clifford 1997, 36)? Considered from this state of things, translation is a foundational activity, an activity of cultural creation that takes into account the unstable and liminal identities it transforms and that partakes of the incompleteness of cultural belonging in spaces informed by estrangement, diversity, plurality, and already saturated with a logic of translation (Simon 1996, 152, 165, and 166) and dual cities may not serve only to impose an alien and oppressive presence but also to be part of a process of exchange which involves “an active chain of response, a vivifying interaction” (Simon and St-Pierre 2000, 10).

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