Multilingualism and self-translation in Esmeralda, a short story included in Intaglio. A Novel in Six Stories by Roberta Fernández

Abstract:
Writing in a bilingual context has always been a challenge for Chicano authors and each of them deals with the questions of identity and language in a different way. Roberta Fernández published Intaglio. A Novel in Six Stories first in English in 1990, and made a translation of the book into Spanish with the title Fronterizas. Una novela en seis cuentos, published in 2001. As for many self-translations by other authors, it is more appropriate to consider Fronterizas as a recreation or a revised version of the original text. In this paper I want to focus on one story, “Esmeralda”, from a double perspective. First I will analyse the multilingual character of the source text, which contains several words and sentences in Spanish. Secondly, I will examine some of the translation strategies in the target text. The translation of a multilingual source text often involves specific translational problems. The question then can be asked whether the short story takes on a new meaning throughout its migration across languages. This short story collection by Fernández clearly interacts with the socio-political context of the Chicanos living in Texas. “Esmeralda” is a story about a young girl who has suffered a lot, but recovers her strengths and goes on with her life. The story reflects the vulnerability of Chicana women in a society dominated by men, but also the exceptional and strong characters of women who valorise their culture and try to find their identity in a border community. The concepts and methodology utilized in this analysis come from studies on short story cycles (Audet, Luscher), multilingualism (Grutman, Callahan, Yildiz), and self-translation (Grutman, Montini, Hokenson & Munson).