

Who is Isabelle de Charrière, why should we analyze and translate her epistolary novels from French to Spanish, and how?

Aurora Garcia

University of Castilla-La Mancha

Isabella Agneta Elizabeth van Tuyll van Serooskerken (1740-1805), of Dutch origin, the future [Madame] Isabelle de Charrière by her marriage, is one of the first woman writers who defended the rights and values of her gender. Indeed, in her epistolary novels –mainly *Lettres neuchâtelaises* (1784), *Lettres écrites de Lausanne* (1785) and its sequel *Caliste, ou continuation de Lettres écrites de Lausanne* (1787)– themes such as the preference for love matches, the social status of the *Ancien Régime*, the authoritarianism hidden behind love, women’s education, and the rights of women can be found, together with descriptions of different sorts of women, ranging from the most privileged to the underclass.

This avant-garde and feminist spirit –present in all her novels and reflected in my own unpublished two Spanish translations of *Lettres écrites de Lausanne* and *Caliste, ou continuation de Lettres écrites de Lausanne*, and Elena Cano *et al*’s translation of *Lettres neuchâtelaises* in 2003– is the subject of my thesis (April 2019): “Madame de Charrière’s provincial novels: *Lettres neuchâtelaises* (1784), *Lettres écrites de Lausanne* (1785), *Caliste, ou continuation de Lettres écrites de Lausanne* (1787). Spanish versions with its translation studies”. These translations are germane because, first, the Spanish language is the second most spoken in the world; secondly, they give us a detailed overview of the Age of Enlightenment; and, thirdly, as we will show, social inequality today is, unfortunately, not much more different than before.

Then, to be able to conclude whether it is “*une bonne ou à une belle traduction*” (“[a good translation, or a beautiful one](#)”), to quote Robert Larose in *Méthodologie de l’évaluation des traductions* (1998), or neither, we shall first analyse the sociocultural basis of the novels. Therefore, for the translation process, after having examined the most representative translation strategies and the methodology for evaluating a translation, we shall compare and contrast Charrière’s texts with the different translations by considering, among other aspects, their adequacy, faithfulness to the original, or interpretation in the target language. We will establish a simple procedure by grouping all these concepts, in which the analyst and the translator will find a very useful tool. We will also look at the challenges of translating a literary text containing dialectal expressions without losing their cultural essence, and the role of the translator when he translates cultural or intertextual references.