



Ecotranslation applied: two Spanish  
translations of H.G. Wells' *The Country Of  
The Blind*

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## 1. Introduction

The birth of the ecological movement in the 1960s motivated the conception of a new branch of Translation Studies known as Ecotranslation. This scarcely known theoretical research framework sets off from two main notions: firstly, the representation of nature in literature and secondly, the importance of the different roles and interpretations that nature can be provided with in literary works. From these bases, the goal of our pilot study is to apply this new nature-centered approach to the translations of H. G. Wells' short story *The Country of the Blind*, as rendered into Spanish by Íñigo Jáuregui (2014) and Alfonso Hernández Catá (1919). More precisely, this research aims at

- a) exploring Wells' own representation and use of nature in his revealing and symbolic work *The Country of the Blind*
- b) assessing to what extent Well's portrayal of nature is affected by the intervention of two chronologically separate translators.
- c) In case differences are observed, the study will try to established whether:
  - i. Differences are due to an effort by the translator to bring the portrayal of nature closer to the cultural schemas of a different culture
  - ii. The second translation, released after the ecological movement, filters any hints regarding a particular sensitivity towards the rendering of nature or a greater regard towards the environment.

To accomplish these goals, the paper is organized as follows: The theoretical background, where the main tenets of the Ecotranslation theory will be explained in section 2. A brief presentation of H.G. Wells and *The Country of the Blind* will also be added. Section 3 is devoted to methodological issues. In section 4, results will be described and analyzed. Section 5 is devoted to conclusions. Finally, a last section is reserved for further research considerations.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Ecotranslation as part of the new field of Green Cultural Studies

The birth of the ecological movement in the 1960s motivated the conception of a new branch of translation studies known as Ecotranslation. As indicated above, this recent and scarcely known theoretical research framework sets off from two main notions: firstly, the representation of nature in literature and secondly, the importance of the different roles and interpretations that nature can be provided with in literary works. As the goal of our pilot study is to apply this new nature-centered approach to the translations of an English literary text as rendered into Spanish, the focus of this section will lie on the establishment of the main theoretical premises of Ecotranslation, along with a brief review of its recent history. These tenets will serve as the basis for our practical analysis of the translations by Íñigo Jáuregui (2014) and Alfonso Hernández Catá (1919) of H. G. Wells' short story *The Country of the Blind*.

The underlying foundation of the theoretical framework considered in this research is the acknowledgement that nature is an intrinsic feature of humankind which simultaneously influences and is affected by human behavior. That is, Ecotranslation derives from a general awareness towards nature which emerged in the 1960s affecting all paths of life.

Following the new sensitivity, art critics and literary analysts soon recognized that up to the 1960s a human-centered approach to the world had prevailed in the artistic representation of nature. As Gleen. A. Love (1996: 229) stated in "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism", the belief that humans are the dominant force over "non-human" entities had become deeply rooted in society, leading to an unsustainable disregard towards nature. Moreover, since the focus was laid on human development and interaction, nature played a secondary role in literary works, functioning most frequently as setting or device to provide the work with a particular atmosphere. The general claim that disregarding nature was dangerous and mistaken extended widely among intellectuals<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In *Nature in the active voice*, Val Plumwood (2009) asserted that "... philosophers have exposed the dangerous logic of human-centered frameworks that devalue and background the nonhuman world."

It was during the period of the Depression and World War II when the importance of preserving the natural environment was stressed and the realization of the existence of an ecological crisis arose. This new socio-ecological consciousness can be understood as the motivation for the conception of the Deep Ecology Movement. It emerged in the 1960s, contributing to the abandonment of that anthropocentric viewpoint (Naess 1991 as in Badenes and Coisson 2010:7). In much the same way as the socially responsible Feminist Movement or the Black Power Movement, the environmental approach aimed at a transformation of the communities' regard towards the environment. It even led to the development of a new philosophy, named Ecosophy (Drengson 1997), which encouraged ecological harmony between the individual and his or her natural surroundings.

The influence of culture on the development of that ecological consciousness contributed to the emergence of the field of "Green Cultural Studies". This discipline merged the idea that culture is a factor that conditions people's mindset or ideological principles, with the idea that nature was an element which needed to be respected and praised. Thus, culture determined the outlook people would have on nature. Green cultural studies examined nature "for the purpose of foregrounding potential effects representation might have on cultural attitudes and social practices which, in turn, affect nature itself." (Hochman 1997).

The development of an individual's identity is shaped by the social context in which he or she was educated, thus distinct ideologies mold the understanding of reality. As Yehudi stated in *The Shaping of Men's Minds: Adaptations to Imperatives of Culture*, the environment is subject to continued change, a reality that forces cultures to transform their values correspondingly in order to guarantee their permanence in time. Culture is a "self-perpetuating system" and "one of the most important tasks in the study of culture is to seek an understanding of the means by which social systems shape the minds of their members in order to assure the perpetuation of their cultures" (Yehudi 2000).

That new social consciousness towards nature emphasized its importance not only as a physical reality but as a reflection of human activity imbued with cultural values. The relationship between culture and nature was coined as "cultural landscape", establishing

the idea that individual values are shaped by the landscape and, at the same time, as the natural environment is modified, it becomes a reflection of the values and lifestyle of the people who inhabit it.

What the multiplicity of perceptions of natural landscapes translates into is that each individual will reflect upon nature according to his or her own culture. In literature, “the eye of each writer selects and frames images in a singular way”.

For the purposes of this research, the scope of the influence of culture upon attitudes towards nature is narrowed to the use of literature as an instrument to transmit ideologies and attitudes. Nature writing, as Scott Slovic explained<sup>2</sup>, focuses on disclosing the correspondence between nature and the mind, prompting a change in the apprehension of the natural environment.

Nevertheless, the interest of this kind of research does not merely lie in the production of ecological texts, but also in the rendering of selected texts from their original languages and cultural contexts into different ones. The theory of Ecotranslation has set forth a way to implement those changes in the perception of nature, functioning as the means to shape texts according to the contemporary set of values in regard to ecological awareness of a determined culture.

## **2.2. Ecotranslation: a basic account**

As indicated above, Ecotranslation emerged as part of a more general movement of ecological awareness. However, for reasons which cannot easily be assessed yet, the obtaining of precise data on the field posed a complex task for the researcher. It seems as though the intellectual community had been slow at recognizing the value of Ecotranslation tenets. Consequently, for the purposes of this study, the pioneering account of Ecotranslation by Guillermo Badenes and Josefina Coisson will be recognized as a significant development of this theory of translation, despite the fact that it is more philosophical than practical in nature. However, it is important to note

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<sup>2</sup> Scott Slovic developed this idea in “Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology: The Interiority of Outdoor Experience”, an article included in *The ecocriticism reader: landmarks in literary ecology*, part three: Critical Studies of Environmental Literature. (Glotfelty Cheryll and Harold Fromm (eds.) 1996: 351-370)

that the field has been undergoing a gradual increase in interest and popularity throughout the last decades. Linguistic and translators associations have arranged symposiums on Ecotranslation contributing to the consolidation of the theory and enticing translators to incorporate Ecotranslation in their production. Examples of those symposiums are the ones sponsored by the American Literary Translators Association, who held the 5th International Symposium on Eco-Translatology in 2015.

This approach to the translation of texts in which natural and environmental issues are involved, claims that there exists a necessity to deeply explore the relation between nature and text to realize how a particular set of cultural values is realized in society through language.

If every translation involves a degree of adaptation of knowledge from the source text to comply to the target audience's requirements, Ecotranslation contrives to apply that manipulation of the text as an instrument to give prominence to a particular idea or participant, in this case nature, a reality that has invariably been placed in a secondary position, utterly functioning as background.

From an ideological point of view, the ecological study of translation intends to raise awareness about environmental issues and move society towards solving them. The representation of nature in a given text is not arbitrary but utilized by the author or translator to provide the environment with an intentional underlying meaning, aiming to influence the audience's standpoint on the issue.

### **2.3. H. G. Wells, social criticism and nature.**

H. G. Wells' (1866 – 1946) extensive literary production may be said to comprise two different thematic approaches. Some of this author's works, generally known as scientific romances, are devoted to science fiction and the exploitation of futuristic ideas. A second trail pursues the goal of social criticism through the exploration of individual and cultural conflicts, such as those derived from the unstable divergence of class or the inflated sense of the self.

The driving motivation for the development of those topics was determined both by his extensive scientific knowledge provided by his education at the Royal College of Science in London and his humble, working class upbringing and his socialist political standpoint. Wells even devoted an entire chapter to the development of his scientific studies in *Experiment in Autobiography*, a book in which he narrated his life up to 1934. His experience as a biologist, physicist and geologist provided him with the possibility to approach the world from a different perspective and, most importantly, to transmit that innovative interpretation of nature in his works, as he stated “the synthesis of the sciences composed a vital interpretation of the world” (160). This scientific mood and particular awareness of nature in Wells proves of utmost importance for our work.

Along with his scientific mood, Wells’ socialist ideology should be emphasized as well. Apparently Well’s political association to the socialist movement resulted from the global change that was taking place, a time for social and economical restructuring. “We denounced individualism; we denounced *laissez-faire*. The ownership of land and industrial capital was to be “vested in the community” (203). So, a social criticism may be said to underlie his works deriving from his ideology. More importantly, Wells believed that people were blind to the changes that were taking place around them. This would possibly constitute the triggering thought that led him to produce challenging stories, in order to disrupt that ignorance in which people were absorbed.

It was the combination of an inquisitive mind with a strong commitment to free society from its limited and materialistic view of the world what led Wells to develop an interest in what H. E. Bates refers to in *The Modern Short Story* as “heavenly stories with an earthly meaning – perhaps more accurately an earthly warning.”

#### **2.4. Nature in *The Country of the Blind*.**

*The Country of the Blind* is a short story fraught with a remarkable depth of meaning and symbolism, thus it allows for a great multiplicity of interpretations.

This research focuses on the most straightforward understanding of the social criticism implied through the narration, along with the role attributed to nature in the

reinforcement of that message, setting aside a wide variety of other possible readings and literary interpretations of the story for further research (see Section 6).

Wells develops *The Country of the Blind* around the existence of two separate worlds: The Country of the Blind, which we label as World 1, and the world outside this space, or World 2 for us. The former is presented as a rural valley, inhabited by a community of blind people, while the latter is depicted as vast and difficult to access from the comfortable area constituted by the valley. The two worlds are described as two different cultural landscapes separated by a clear frontier, also expressed in terms of natural elements. See for example reference to "...frightful gorges", "icy pass", etc. (1)

Most important for our purposes is the fact that the division of the natural environment in the story does not merely respond to the author's particular interpretation of a setting, but to his intention to symbolically represent a social message in the narration as well. Wells criticizes narrow conceptions of what the world truly encompasses, resulting from unquestioned beliefs and prejudices. The comfort of limiting any human concerns to a finite sphere, of blindly believing what has been previously established as true, results in the incapacity to acknowledge what reality behind that confinement may offer; in other words, it results in the rejection of any potential evolution.

The portrayal of this idea in the text is epitomized not only in the existence of two opposing worlds but also in the contrast between the concepts of light and darkness. Light embodies the ability to perceive different realities and understand how, despite any disparities, communities are equally capable to grow and progress. In *The Country of the Blind*, the outer world is what represents this accepting and tolerant side of society and is consequently associated with brightness: "The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire, and the little things in the rocks near at hand were drenched with light and beauty" (11).

Darkness denotes that rigid mindset which is built around blind faith towards a biased and prejudiced tradition. The narrow-mindedness of the inhabitants of the Country of the Blind is depicted as darkness: "Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe

and understand nothing whatever that he told them” (5), as well as the impoverishment that individuals who are subject to that way of thinking undergo: “I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imaginations stoop...” (10)

Moreover, underlying this criticism of narrow conceptions of what the world truly encompasses is the notion that the environment determines the development of communities, what William Howarth, in *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*, understood as “the effect physical conditions have upon beliefs” (1996: 79).

This assumption can be made on the basis that, in the story, the idea the blind community has of how the world is -and, correspondingly, their set of values and attitudes- derives from the physical dimensions of the space they inhabit and their geographical confinement. Their ideas are as limited as they physically are: “They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world; thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe, from which the dew and the avalanches fell” (6).

The outer world is in contrast presented as overwhelmingly broad, inaccessible for a community such as the blind, who are adapted to a finite territory which they are familiarized with, “the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child’s story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall.” (5).

Even from this very limited set of data the conclusion may be reached that part of Wells’ literary success in this case lies in the fact that he solidly built his story on a symbolic structure involving nature and the cultural relationship which is usually established between human beings and their environment. In this sense Wells’ *The Country of the Blind* proves a most adequate text for the purposes of our investigation.

### 3. Methodology

As mentioned in the Introduction, the aim of this research is to further apply the recently introduced theory of Ecotranslation to the rendering of an English short story into Spanish. Our first step was to study the theoretical setting grounding this new approach to translation studies, which focuses on the role of nature and cultural landscapes in literature and, most importantly, the use of translation as an instrument to mediate between authors, texts and the reader's standpoint with regard to the presence of nature as the main element in the text. Because of the scarce amount of theoretical information obtained, the analysis of the texts required the formulation of tentative premises based on the conclusions extracted from the previous body of investigation along with our own findings.

It was through the familiarization with this theoretical basis that the originality of the object of research was made explicit. The availability of previous case studies in Ecotranslation is very limited, being it even harder to find explorations of Anglo-American authors.

The second step in this challenging enterprise consisted in the selection of an appropriate literary short story and its translation(s) into Spanish, to apply the theoretical tenets of Ecotranslation to a real case. Our search was led by two basic ideas: theme and translation variation. A key factor when deciding what story would be the most adequate to study Ecotranslation was the narrative's theme: the presence of nature had to necessarily be a driving force of the story. After going through a few compilations of short stories, *The Country of the Blind*, by Herbert George Wells presented itself as a great example of a story in which nature functioned as one of the most important elements driving the course of action. The second factor influencing our decision was a potential chronological variation in translation. We aimed to test whether older and more recent versions of the same text showed different translational strategies and /or a different awareness towards ecological issues, significant to an Ecotranslation approach to texts. The selected text proved adequate enough, since it provided two great translations into Spanish carried out in different time periods. More precisely, the one written by Alfonso Hernández Catá and Íñigo Jáuregui's text.

Though initially unplanned, the selection of *The Country of the Blind* added a third strength to my research. It contributed to the originality of my project, since to my knowledge there are no literary analysis of the role nature plays in the narrative. Critics have rather focused on its overt social criticism, which is extraordinarily carried out by Wells, but this fact has taken away much of their attention from the most important character of the story, as is nature.

Access to translations entailed uneven difficulty. While the very recent Íñigo Jáuregui's version was available at the UCM's library, Alfonso Hernández Catá's translation, being an older text, took more effort to find. It was only in the National Library that we were allowed to make a digital copy of the original text in order to facilitate our analysis.

After having established the theoretical basis and selected the short story (and its translations) on which the practical application of the theory of Ecotranslation was to be carried out, the following step was to limit the amount of information which was obtainable from the short story.

Since the scope of the research lies on the translation of natural elements, every aspect of *The Country of the Blind* which did not relate to it was discarded. Still, the natural elements in the story were many, so it was necessary to further narrow them. A literary analysis of the story suggested three possible initial thematic subcategories, adequate to our goals. References to what we established as World 1, which corresponded to the world of the Country of the Blind and its description; references to a World 2, representing the outer world or civilization; and references to the frontier separating World 1 and World 2. These three categories would help us to identify any differences in the translators' conscious or unconscious rendering of the message.

From that point on, a manual selection of the descriptive references to the natural elements which belonged to each category was carried out. After the collection of the examples on which the analysis would lie, a chart including the original source text instances and their corresponding equivalents in the target texts was created for the sake of comparison. This would allow an easier systematization of any variances or

transformations introduced by the Spanish translators on the role of nature in the text and of any divergences found between the two.

The chart made implicit the necessity to reduce, once again, the amount of instances of the most prototypical examples used. The focus of the research required to further narrow the set of natural elements to be analyzed due to the extension guidelines of our paper. Among the initial selection of thematic subcategories, it was the reference to World 1 what we understood as the most representative instance of the importance of the role of nature throughout the development of *The Country of the Blind*.

The references to World 1 were consequently arranged in two tables: a) the first one establishing the lexical variation found in anaphoric references to World 1 in Wells' text and their equivalents in the target texts, and b) the second one, registering the collocations of the selected noun phrases in three columns, namely source text and translations. In chart 1 the number of times a particular expression occurs in any of the three texts was recorded, in order to measure fluctuations in the rendering of style. Page numbers refer to the original edition published by T. Nelson in 1919, to Alfonso Hernández Catá's 1945 edition published by Librería Hachette and Íñigo Jáuregui's 2014 translation in Nórdica Libros.

The tables allowed for the subsequent qualitative analysis of data. The scrutiny of results aimed ultimately at elucidating to which extent the choice of translation procedures and the translator's intervention in the text was determined by a contemporary cultural stance upon the importance of nature. That would in turn drive us to assess whether a deeper sensitivity towards environmental issues would have influenced Jáuregui's version of the story.

**4. Analysis of results**

**4.1. Quantitative analysis of results**

CHART 1 Lexical variation in anaphoric reference to W1					
W1 original		1919		2014	
<b>Country of the Blind</b>	16 times (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11)	<i>País de los ciegos</i>	11 times (4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 20)	<i>País de los ciegos</i>	16 times (9,10,18,27,29,34,36,44,45,54,59,60)
		<i>Tierra de ciegos</i>	3 times (12, 14, 15)		
		<i>Comarca legendaria</i>	1 time (6)		
<b>Valley</b>	33 times (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8)	<i>valle</i>	30 times (4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20)	<i>valle</i>	29 times (9,10,12,13,14,15,18,23,24,26,27,29,40,42,45,55,59,63,65,76,78,80)
		<i>Vallecillo</i>	4 times (5, 8)		
				<i>éste</i>	1 time (12)
				<i>allí</i>	1 time (13)
<b>The world</b>	34 times (1,2,4,6,8,9,10,11)	<i>Mundo</i>	27 times (5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19)	<i>Mundo</i>	31 times (9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 32, 35, 36, 37, 40, 44, 45, 49, 62, 63, 65, 70, 76, 77)
		<i>Universo</i>	4 times (13, 16, 18)		
		<i>Vida</i>	1 time (10)		
<b>The village</b>	9 times (3, 4,5,6)	<i>Pueblecillo</i>	3 times (8, 9, 11)	<i>Aldea</i>	7 times (24, 26, 34, 35, 42, 78)
		<i>Pueblecito</i>	1 time (11)	<i>pueblo</i>	2 times (24, 51, 63)
		<i>Aldea</i>	2 times (10, 11)		
		<i>Ciudadela</i>	2 times (8, 13)		
<b>Universe</b>	1 time (6)	<i>Orbe</i>	1 time (13)	<i>Universo</i>	1 time (49)
<b>That fastness</b>	1 time (1)	<i>El refugio</i>	1 time (4)	<i>refugio</i>	1 time (10)

That remoteness	1 time (1)	<i>El edén de donde no había sido expulsado</i>	1 time (5)	<i>Las lejanías</i>	1 time (13)
Somewhere over there	1 time (1)	<i>Un lugar arcano de la montaña</i>	1 time (5)	<i>Algún lugar “allí arriba”</i>	1 time (14)
Snow-rimmed basin	1 time (1)	<i>Solitario vallecillo</i>	1 time (5)	<i>Cuenca bordeada de nieve</i>	1 time (14)
Secluded place	1 time (3)	<i>Vallecillo</i>	1 time (8)	<i>Aquel lugar cerrado</i>	1 time (24)
Community	2 times (2)	<i>Colmena ciega</i>	1 time (6)	<i>comunidad</i>	2 times (15)
		<i>País de los ciegos</i>	1 time (5)		

CHART 2 Descriptive collocations of W1<sup>3</sup>

W1 original		1919	2014
		Alternative expressions	Alternative expressions
Mysterious mountain valley (1)	1 time	<i>El valle misterioso (4)</i>	<i>Misterioso valle aislado (9)</i>
That valley so far open (1)	1 time	<i>El valle asequible (4)</i>	<i>El valle estaba tan abierto al mundo (9)</i>
The settlers did well indeed there (1)	1 time	<i>Los hombres vivieran en <b>aquel oasis</b> una vida prospera (4)</i>	<i>Los colonos hicieron un buen trabajo, prosperaron. (12)</i>
The valley (1)	1 time	<i>El <b>remoto</b> vallecillo (5)</i>	<i>El valle (13)</i>
Isolated and Forgotten valley (1)	1 time	<i>Aislada colonia (5)</i>	<i>Valle ahora aislado y olvidado (14)</i>
That snow-rimmed basin, lost to all the world (1)	1 time	<i>El solitario vallecillo: orillado de nieves(5)</i>	<i>Aquella cuenca bordeada de nieve y apartada del mundo (14)</i>
The whole valley (2)	1 time	<i>Recónditos pliegues del valle (5)</i>	<i>El valle a la perfección (14)</i>
The race (2)	1 time	<i>La vida de la <b>remota colonia</b> (5)</i>	<i>La raza (14)</i>

<sup>3</sup> Relevant qualifications of World 1 are highlighted in bold

Narrow shut in valley (2)	1 time	<i>Cañada angosta</i> (6)	<i>Valle angosto y cerrado</i> (18)
Lost Country of the Blind (2)	2 times	<i>El país de los ciegos</i> (6)	<i>El perdido País de los Ciegos</i> (18)
		<i>Esta comarca legendaria</i> (6)	<i>El País de los ciegos</i> (18)
The air grew cold and dark around him. But the Distant valley (3)	1 time	<i>Desde la gélida obscuridad el valle parecía, a lo lejos,</i> (7)	<i>El aire se volvió frío y oscuro a su alrededor. Pero eso sólo hizo que el lejano valle</i> (23)
Lost valley (4)	1 time	<i>Sepultado valle</i> (8)	<i>Valle perdido</i> (29)
Right over above there (4)	1 time	<b><i>Fuera de la verdadera tierra</i></b> (9)	<i>Allá arriba</i> (32)
The world (meaning their valley) (5)	1 time	<i>El mundo, es decir el valle sepulto en el anillo de montañas</i> (11)	<i>El mundo (es decir, su valle)</i> (40)
The Wall of the valley (8)	1 time	<i>Murado recinto</i> (15)	<i>Muro del valle de los ciegos</i> (59)
The Wall of the country of the Blind (8)	1 time	<i>Valle</i> (15)	<i>El muro del País de los ciegos</i> (60)
The lid of rock that covered their cosmic casserole (8)	1 time	<i>La tapa que protegía la gigantesca marmita imagen total para ellos de su mundo</i> (16)	<i>La tapa de roca que cubría su cacerola cósmica.</i> (62)
The world of the blind (8)	1 time	<i>Los ciegos</i> (16)	<i>El mundo de los ciegos</i> (63)
This blind world in the valley (10)	1 time	<i>El mundo ciego del valle</i> (19)	<i>Aquel mundo ciego en el valle</i> (76)
When sunset came he was no longer climbing, but he was far and high. (11)	1 time	<i>Al caer el sol ya había traspuesto tres picachos y estaba muy lejos del valle terrible.</i> (20)	<i>La puesta de sol no lo sorprendió escalando, sino lejos y en lo alto.</i> (78)
the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below. (11)	1 time	<i>el valle, perdido en el fondo de un lejano y gigantesco barranco.</i> (20)	<i>El valle se hallara en un pozo y casi dos kilómetros por debajo.</i> (78)

## 4.2. Qualitative analysis of results

After the systematization and tabulation of results, a qualitative analysis seems adequate. Results apparently suggest that for the characterization of the country of the blind, Wells presents a precise, objective and recurrent stance, resorting to a limited set of terms as the basis for the development of the narration. This means that from a linguistic point of view Wells' text shows a high degree of lexical cohesion as far as anaphoric expressions are concerned. More precisely, *Country of the Blind*, *village*, *valley* or *world* constitute stagnated spaces from which the reference of this legendary community rarely deviates, imbuing Wells' narration with a sense of forcefulness and consistency. In terms of symbolic meaning, Wells' strategy might be interpreted in different ways. The author's insistent intertwining of these four geographic spaces might point to his desire to portray the close-minded attitude held by the inhabitants of the country of the blind. In the story, the inhabitants of the country of the blind designated their territory as the only existing place on earth because their ideology did not allow them to think that there was something else beyond their limited retreat. Thus, there existed no difference in their definition of *village*, *country* and *world*. A symbolic way to epitomize the narrow attitude some people or even communities have when they restrict their appreciation of reality to what they are able to grasp and experience in their surroundings, rejecting any other ways of understanding the world<sup>4</sup>.

Data also reveal a second feature relevant for our purposes. The author's depiction of this community of blind people is determined by the idea of separateness. Wells insists on the fact that the blind are detached from the rest of civilization, as clearly evidenced in instances such as "lost to all the world," (1) or "lost valley" (collocation he uses four times). Moreover, the idea of separateness is reinforced by expressions such as *cut off*, *isolated*, *distant*, but mainly by the consistent presence of a natural frontier, acting more

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<sup>4</sup> The idea is clear. The reader will have no problem to see that in the country of the blind, the community is locked in their own convictions as a result of the consideration that apart from their valley nothing else exists. Actually Wells ironically refers to their worlds as "the world (meaning their valley)" (5), emphasizing this idea that their acknowledgement of what reality comprises is constricted to a limited stretch of land. A similar idea is reflected in the blind community's ignorance of the existence of an outer world: "the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall." (5)

as a protagonist than a setting in the story<sup>5</sup>. The division between the blind community living in a “snow-rimmed basin” and the outer world is symbolically embodied by a physical frontier, referred to as “rocky slopes” (5), mountains (3, 4, 8, 9) and “gorges” (1).

The analysis of Wells’ selection of expressions concerning symbolic spaces also suggests that the world of the blind is markedly detached from the world of men throughout the story. This is observed in expressions such as “cut off from all the world of men” (1) or “the world beyond the mountains where men lived” (9), which stress the contrast between *men* and *the blind*, as if, in a way, the latter were something external to mankind.

Finally, the fact that there is a constant discrimination between “the world of the blind” (8 occurrences of the expression) and “the great free world” (10), must be mentioned. This great free world is further described as “the world beyond the mountains” (9). It is a world modelled by humankind to a greater extent, “a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses” (11), very much in contrast with the rural valley of the blind.

The abovementioned arguments seem to confirm the idea that it is through nature that Wells materializes his judgment of society. Wells establishes two distant worlds, separate from one another; a closed, rural and blind one and a greater, urban, civilized one. More particularly, Wells seems to achieve his purposes through the recurrent use of a reduced set of carefully selected expressions referring to physical spaces. Nature apparently consolidates as a pivotal character in Well’s story and a challenge for translators.

A second step in our analysis requires the consideration of the translations carried out by Alfonso Hernández Catá or Íñigo Jáuregui. The charts devoted to lexical variation

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<sup>5</sup> In literary terms, this may be interpreted from two different perspectives. On the one hand, that detachment from the outer world can symbolize the previously developed idea of a society which restricts its understanding of reality to its own set of values and beliefs. On the other hand, it can be a tool to reinforce the barriers between minorities and the rest of society. This alienation of a population of individuals who have thrived despite their particular situation is again a concept used to render the futile establishment of barriers between communities who believe they are different but in fact share the same underlying humane values.

and descriptive collocations where comparative data were introduced, will guide our commentary.

In general terms, Jáuregui's translation, published in 2014, encompasses a much more literal approach, rendering Wells' original terminology into the closest equivalent expressions in Spanish. He seems to have strived to assume the role of an invisible agent in the translation process, specifically focusing on the establishment of formal correspondences between the source and target text. This translation derived from Jáuregui's concern for linguistic accuracy runs the risk of sometimes losing part of the essence of the story. Conversely, Hernández Catá, who developed his work in 1919, seems to have focused his translation on the establishment of dynamic equivalents between the source and target texts, faithfully representing the main character of *The Country of the Blind*, Nature, from a more personal and subjective approach.

The tables above are revealing in this line. As previously mentioned, Wells resorts to a bound set of terms to define the central character of the story: the country of the blind. Wells grounded the development of the story on three recurrent expressions to which he attached the portrayal of the blind community, namely "Country of the Blind", "valley" and "village"<sup>6</sup>.

In Íñigo Jáuregui's work the translation is structured around the establishment of lexically equivalent concepts, which are "País de los Ciegos", "valle" and "pueblo". There are two instances in which he uses "éste" and "allí" instead of "valle" and "aldea" as an alternative to "pueblo". If this strategy was intended to avoid the repetitive nature of the source text, part of the content would have been lost. It has to be noted that for English *village* there is a wide range of Spanish terms conveying different nuances derived from the general definition of "a settlement usually larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town"<sup>7</sup>. So, Jáuregui may have decided to include "aldea", a word which minimally deviates from the original meaning of village by denoting a smaller extension, to include in the translation a certain connotation of smallness and delicacy.

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<sup>6</sup> He also uses the term "world" repeatedly, but not to exclusively refer to the Country of the Blind, so its analysis will not be included in this part of the research but later, when contrasting the references to the world of the blind and the human world.

<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionaries online. Definition of "village". [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com)

Apart from those variations, the lexemes used in the original story and Jáuregui's translation share similar connotations to a great extent. The word *village* implies the idea of a rural environment in which human presence prevails over nature. Both texts present constancy in the use of "country", a term in which the inhabitation of human beings is, to a certain extent, equated to the importance of nature.

Differently from Wells and Jáuregi, Hernández Catá seems to utilize an increased range of expressions to refer to this world of blind people, which confirms his intention to imprint the original story with a personal touch, to filter the text through his own eyes. To refer to the symbolic region of this community of blind people he not only introduces the phrase "país de los ciegos", but also "tierra de ciegos" and "comarca legendaria". This means that Wells' recurrent insistence is diluted and that Wells' nature, as he depicted it, may be manipulated, enriched, adorned.

As for Wells' use of both *valley* and *village*, results show that these terms are marked by the inclination of Hernández Catá towards the use of diminutives, as proved by the expressions "vallecillo", "pueblecito" and "pueblecillo", which ascribe to the narration a greater degree of subjectivity. This linguistic strategy does not only add some affective connotations or a subjective tinge to the story (Santibáñez 1996) it may also be said to cause a different emotional response in readers. According to the basis established by Mendoza (as in Santibáñez 1996):

- a) A small entity is usually more manageable than a bigger one.
- b) A small entity usually looks potentially less harmful than a bigger one.

Consequently, the conclusion may be drawn that Hernández Catá implied that, on the one hand, the country of the blind was in fact a much smaller reality than the blind community assumed it to be, a notion further emphasized through the contrast with the references to the outer world, and on the other hand, that it is a harmless community which does not present a threat to the rest of society. This might imply some kind of subtle disregard or underestimation. Thereby, the use of diminutives seem to contribute slightly negative connotations for the country of the blind and a clear personal intervention in the representation of one of the author's main characters.

As suggested above, through the notion of separateness Wells insists on two ideas to describe the valley: its alienation from social contact and activity, and its confinement within a set of natural frontiers. This approach to the representation of the territory inhabited by the blind community was adopted in Jáuregui's translation as well, which, as previously mentioned, holds to a faithful rendering of the original expressions into Spanish introducing a minimal degree of variation. Thus, Wells' expressions mirroring the isolation of the Country of the Blind: "that now isolated and forgotten valley" (1), "lost Country of the Blind" (2) or "distant valley" (3), are rendered in Jáuregui's translation as "valle ahora aislado y olvidado" (14), "perdido país de los ciegos" (18) and "el lejano valle" (23).

Wells further rendered this idea of separateness through the interpolation of the concept of physical confinement to social isolation. The use of adjectives such as "narrow shut-in valley" (2), which Jáuregui termed as "valle angosto y cerrado" (18), or the existence of "the wall of the Country of the Blind" (8), "el muro del País de los Ciegos" (60), confer to the country of the blind that sense of material enclosure and limitation.

In his translation of the collocations used by Wells to characterize the Country of the Blind along with its natural surroundings, Catá introduced a significantly richer and more subjective set of expressions. He termed the village as "remoto vallecillo" (5), "cañada angosta" (6) or "sepultado valle" (8), for example. It is interesting to note that this last construction points to a certain meaning of death being added to Wells' account of the isolation of this territory. In fact, a similar expression reinforcing the idea of death and burials is used by Catá further below, which implies a change of focus in the description of the valley. When Wells introduced the noun phrase "the world (meaning their valley)" (5), in Catá we find "el mundo, es decir el valle *sepulto* en el anillo de montañas" (11).

Catá's subjective tinge is confirmed throughout his text. When Wells refers to the Country of the blind as *there*, in "right over above there" (4), Hernández Catá introduces the expression *verdadera tierra*, "fuera de la verdadera tierra" (9). This turns to be a key construction in Hernández Catá's translation, demonstrating his explicit participation in the interpretation of the story. Catá takes sides, assigning the value of

truth to the outer world “el mundo vasto y libre” (19). This idea may find further strength in Catá’s expression “comarca legendaria” (6) to refer to the Country of the Blind. The use of *legendaria* might convey the notion that this is a country belonging to the fictional domain, deprived from any possible attachment to reality. Moreover, Catá employs the noun phrase *colmena ciega* (5) when Wells solely writes *community* (2), another procedure instilling subjective and affective nuances to his version of the story.

As for Hernández Catá’s use of “Eden” (5), a brief commentary seems appropriate. This metaphorical reference is not included in Wells’ story. In fact, the expression in the source text is “that remoteness” (1). *Eden* may introduce the idea of a bucolic environment unspoiled by sins to promote the later introduction of the concept of punishment. But most importantly, the use of this term may also be explained as an adaptation to the historical context in which this 1919 translation was developed. The biblical tradition was regarded as one of the pillars of the values and beliefs of the early twentieth century Spanish society. Thus, the use of a concept with which the audience was familiar fostered the association of this idealized garden to the territory depicted in the story.

As previously discussed, Catá’s account of nature in *The Country of the Blind* seemingly reflects a translator’s centered approach to the text. He introduced subjective nuances and a stronger human flavor to the story, contributing a higher arousal of emotions on the readership.

Summing up, the comparative analysis of the lexical cohesion and variation of expressions and terms used to portray *world 1*, that is, the country of the blind, by H. G. Wells, Íñigo Jáuregui and Alfonso Hernández Catá enabled the identification of two different approaches to the interpretation of the role played by nature in the original story.

Wells created a text from an apparently objective viewpoint, which was acknowledged or respected in Jáuregui. Catá’s version proves a much more translator-centered text, where variations from the source text are introduced and subjectivity is added to the description of Wells’ main collective characters. In other words, whilst Jáuregui may be said to have adopted a semantic approach to translation, focused on the establishment of

formal correspondences to render the original story, Catá grounded his version on the transference of meaning, recoding his text to present nature from a more human and subjective point of view, thus developing his translation from a communicative perspective, in Newmark's terms.

## 5. Conclusions

This research revealed a set of essential considerations with regard to the application of the theory of Ecotranslation to Wells' original representation of nature in *The Country of the Blind* and its interpretation by Íñigo Jáuregui and Alfonso Hernández Cáta.

First, the selected story proved particularly adequate for the analysis. However given the dimensions and purpose of this contribution, an extremely reduced approach to the subject seemed required. The scope was consequently limited to the linguistic characterization of the world of the blind, the space symbolically portraying the author's most important character.

An initial acknowledgement of the symbolic weight the author attached to the role of nature in the short story facilitated the comparison between the source text and the target texts. The critical analysis of the story, thus, evinced a strong correspondence between environment and society in the original text. Nature was shown to be an essential instrument to figuratively reflect social concerns, more particularly the dissociation between a blind community of conservative self-content people and a progressive, open-minded, urban society. Through nature Wells described two opposite worlds or spaces divided by a range of mountains, indicating the difficulty to pass from the former space to the latter.

The establishment of this interpretation of the role of nature in the source text proved a necessary step to carry out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the translation procedures and textual correspondences found in the two selected translations.

In general terms, data confirmed that Jauregi's translation, published in 2014, encompasses a much more literal approach to the source text, rendering Well's original

terminology into the closest equivalent expressions in Spanish. In this line, one might consider that in his search for the most adequate correspondence between the English and the Spanish versions of the story, Jáuregui decided to play the role of the “invisible translator”. From the viewpoint of Ecotranslation, thus, and bearing in mind that this version was written after the ecological movement left its imprint on society, Jáuregui’s choice might be interpreted as a sign of conscious or unconscious respect towards to the original protagonism Wells conferred to nature over human actors.

Conversely, Hernández Catá, who developed his translation of *The Country of the Blind* in 1919, seems to have focused his work on the idea of human control over nature, even if this decision meant altering the precise way in which Wells articulated his ideas. Catá’s translating style allows for a personal intervention in the story; the translator seems to promote an adaptation of Wells’ text to the Spanish cultural schemas of the time, where humankind prevailed over nature, influenced it, modified it and adapted the environment to its necessities. In this line of thought, Catá’s variations and strategies are clearly noticeable. Certainly, his introduction of metaphorical references and use of a richer set of expressions to refer to the blind community imbues this translation with a personal voice and a subjective tone.

These conclusions were arrived at after a close three-sided examination of strategies used to portray what we called *World 1*, that is, the “world of the blind”. However, despite this restriction of analysis, it seems most likely that a larger comparison of structures in source text and selected target texts (comprising those used to describe *World 2* and *Frontier*) would render similar results.

## **6. Further research**

Given the limitations of this paper, a full description of *World 2* and the frontier between *World 1* and *World 2* remains to be detailed.

From a more interdisciplinary point of view, it would be of great interest to explore whether and to what extent an Ecotranslational analysis would support the assumptions

derived from different readings of the story. That is, whether translators were particularly sensitive or aware of one of these interpretations over the rest:

By way of example, some of these more unconventional readings may be mentioned:

1. The mountains establishing the frontier may be taken as a symbol of social prejudice. This would imply to understand the text as a warning that it is civilization what establishes a division between communities, conveying the moral that true disability is not found in the functional diversity of a person but in the obstacles imposed on them by society. In this case the mountains would act as main focus of analysis.
2. The focus of analysis could alternatively be the praising of a primitive and simple life in the world of the blind, against the evil of civilization.
3. The text could also be read as the “survival of the fittest”. In *The Country of the Blind* a community demonstrates their ability to adapt their lifestyle to the requirements of the environment despite their illness.
4. The existence of two different worlds could also be interpreted as a reflection of the concept of “divided consciousness”, setting forth the notion that human beings share a superficial and a deep side of emotions, respectively epitomized by the artificial world built by humans and the natural environment, as described by Scott Russel in *Speaking a word for Nature*. And in that case, the analytical focus would be the distress caused by nature’s immensity on the characters.

Leaving potential readings of the story aside, it is also to be noted that Ecotranslation would benefit from a wider practical application of its theoretical principles. This bottom-up approach would provide the model with a more solid framework.

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