SPANISH PERCEPTION OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS: HAMLET *AND THE TWO PARTS OF* HENRY IV

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Abstract: *The domain of Shakespeare's translation and reception highlights the alterity that the Shakespearean texts encounter and undergo when they are rewritten in other languages, but also the alterity that those texts so often foreground presenting a duality in the very scope of their representations, in the variety of their linguistic resources and of their characters. Taking into account the fact that identity and alterity can define the relationship between the self and the other considered as two entities belonging to different mentality codes, the purpose of the paper is to ascertain the reception of Shakespeare's works in Spain and the degree in which the Spanish perception of the English playwright figure was sometimes based on altered or false information which in the end influenced the reception of the plays and the collective memory of the people concerning them. The focus of the paper will be Hamlet and the two parts of Henry IV.*

Keywords*: translation, identity, alterity.*

The first Spanish translations of Shakespeare's plays date back to the late 18th century, comprising three major editions in a short time-span: the two-volume Nacente Collection entitled *Los grandes dramas de Shakespeare* (Barcelona,1872 and reprinted in 1880 and 1884), Jaime Clark's *Dramas de Shakespeare* (Madrid, 1870-1876) and William Macpherson's *Dramas de Shakespeare* (Madrid, 1873).

The intention of the Nacente Collection was surely to present all 37 plays in this edition but it comprises only 33 of them. Henry Thomas points out:

> When the second volume came out, Spanish readers had all Shakespeare's plays available in prose translations, except *The First Part of King Henry VI, The Winter's Tale,* and *Titus Andronicus*. Political and economic difficulties preceding the outbreak of the Second Carlist War no doubt prevented the completion, as it delayed the success, of the venture; but after the war ended in 1876, the volumes were more than once reprinted.

Actually, Nacente's collection had been sometimes dismissed as a second-rate edition because it depended heavily on previous French versions but its first merit is the fact that the collection represents the first attempt at offering Shakespeare's complete plays to the Spanish public. Also, it is for the first time that the following plays were published in Spain: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew, Troilus and Cressida, Pericles, All's Well that Ends Well, Love's Labour's Lost, Antony and Cleopatra, King Lear, Cymbeline, Henry VIII, Richard II, Timon of Athens, AMidsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV (Part 1),Coriolanus, Henry VI (Part 2),Henry VI (Part 3),Henry IV (Part 2) and Henry V*.

Therefore, the first translation of the two parts of *Henry IV* was published in the two-volume Nacente Collection of Shakespeare's complete plays in Spanish: *Enrique IV (Primera parte). Drama histórica en cinco actos* on pages 285-317 and *Enrique IV (Segunda parte). Drama histórico en cinco actos* on pages 331-463of the second volume.

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The second translation of these two plays was *Enrique IV. Primera y Segunda parte*, published in the Macpherson Collection, volume VIII, on pages 121-392.

Between 1873 and 1897, William Macpherson translated 23 of Shakespeare's works from the German version of August Wilhem Schlegel, the first one being *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (Cadiz, 1873). It was followed by seven others published in Madrid, including a review of *Hamlet* in 1879, two editions *of Romeo and Juliet* (1880 and 1882), *Macbeth* (1880), *Othello* (1881) and *Richard III* (1882). Each of the 23 works translated by him had an extensive prologue. According to Alfonso Par, if somebody had put together these prologues in order to form one book, it would have been the best book of criticism of Shakespearean plays of his time. For instance, the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* is actually a brief and accurate study of the work, identifying the sources that Shakespeare might have used, stating the interest the English writer had for his tragedy and analyzing the great relief of the characters achieved in the development of the action.

The third version is published in volume IX of the collection of the Prometeo Publishing House, in Valencia, the translation being attributed to Rafael Martínez Lafuente.

Together with Macpherson's translation, Astrana's and Valverde's versions have been the core of the rewritings of the two parts of *Henry IV* in the years to come. The first translation was published in 1932 and the second one in 1967.

In his lectures given at the British Academy in 1949, Thomas (1949:19) referred in particular to the translations of Astrana and Valverde. Astrana's success "was evident from the nine or ten editions of the *Obras Completas* and the thousand individual plays and poems" that had until that year circulated among the Spanish audience. Valverde`s *Teatro Completo* also enjoyed the same success and popularity as Astrana`s works, making their translations the basic source of Shakespearean knowledge available in Spain until the end of the century.

One issue that arises when translating literary works is the difficulty in approaching beliefs, customs and elements specific to the culture in question, in this case the Elizabethan culture, and rendering them as faithfully as the Spanish language would allow by using strategies as literal translation and cultural equivalents.

By compering certain scenes from the *First Part of Henry IV*, Laura Campillo Arnáiz (2003: 29) states in her article *Spanish translations of culture-bound elements in The First Part of Henry IV: a historical perspective* that:

> There is a clear tendency in Macpherson to accommodate the original cultural references to Spanish culture. Although this technique undoubtedly renders his translation comprehensible to the Spanish audience, some critics may think his acculturation process gives a distorted or unfaithful picture of Elizabethan society. Astrana's tendency, however, seems to be that of rendering the original culture-bound elements as literally as possible. Astrana very seldom replaces an Elizabethan culture-bound element by a Spanish equivalent, but rather keeps the original ones with minimum changes to their orthography. […]. Valverde does not seem to follow a definite criterion when translating culture-bound elements. In his translations, Valverde uses both of these techniques, thus showing no special inclination to either accommodate or to literally translate the original allusions.

Hamlet was the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Spanish, in the 18th century when "the prevailing literary conventions in Spain were very different from those of the Elizabethans." (Verdaguer, 2004: 129). Two translations of *Hamlet* were published during this period, one from French and one directly from English. The

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translation after the French version written by Juan Francisco Ducis, adaptation consistent with the neoclassical canon, was entitled *Hamleto, Rey de Dinamarca* and published in 1772 by Ramón de la Cruz.

In comparing the French and the Spanish version, there are scenes translated *ad literam* but Ramón de la Cruz changed their location. For instance, the third scene of the fourth act in the Spanish version is actually the third scene of the fifth act in the French version.

De la Cruz granted himself the freedom to change some dialogs and scenes, but also maintained an element introduced by Ducis concerning Ofelia, who becomes the daughter of Claudio and takes the name of Polonio to baptize a Danish gentleman. He even changed the last scene of the tragedy.

> *(Ofelia, arrodillada de suerte que no ve a Claudio hasta que se levanta.)*
> Ofelia: ¡Ah, señor! ¡Aún vivís! A vuestras plantas, (A Hamlet) / llena de confusión, vengo a pediros / gracia para mi padre. No lo dudo. / Esta la prueba es que solicito / de un Rey tan generoso, de un amante / que supo darme tantas de ser fino... [ras? / Pero... ¿Qué asombro es éste? ¿Por qué llo- ¿Y Claudio, dónde está? Norceste mío... / *(Levántase.)* / Señor... Yo quiero verle..., quiero... *(Lo ve)* / [¡Oh, dioses!] / ¡Oh, bárbaro! ¿Qué has hecho? //
> Hamlet: Lo preciso / para dejar al fin desempeñada / mi obligación. Los cielos, que han querido / castigar una culpa de mi madre (a) / fueran injustos, si de sus delitos / hubieran indultado al que no era / más que un vasallo suyo. No confío / que jamás me perdones este golpe; / pero si soy capaz de darte alivio, / tú lo meditarás más sosegada. / Ten compasión de mí, que quedo vivo / el día que te adoro y que te pierdo. / Y vosotros, daneses, convencidos / de vuestro error, venid donde os enseñe, / en la benignidad con que os recibo, / la lealtad que debéis asegurarme. //
> Ofelia: ¡Oh, cielo, justiciero y vengativo!
> Noroeste: ¿Quién podrá ser traidor con este ejemplo / y con esta piedad?
> Hamlet: Norceste amigo, / aplaudamos la mente de los dioses, / que distribuye premios y castigos, / y vamos donde aplaquen su justicia / nuestras voces y nuestros sacrificios.//

Three manuscripts of the version of de la Cruz are still kept: two of them in the Madrid Public Library (I-118) and the third one in the National Library (I6.095).

The first Spanish translation of the Shakespearean tragedy done directly from English was published in 1798 and was written by Leandro Fernández de Moratín, who used the literary pseudonym Inarco Celenio. He was a Spanish neoclassical dramatist who lived in London from 1792 to 1793 and, even though his main interest was the French neoclassical theatre, he did not try to adapt *Hamlet* to the neoclassical conventions and norms of the late 18th century.

According to Giuseppe Carlo Rossi, the two sides of Moratín`s personality, as an artist and a sensitive individual on the one hand, and as a critic and theoretician on the other, come together in his translation of *Hamlet*, one reflected in the translation itself, and the other in the comments he added.

In the prologue to the translation, Moratín describes his concept of translation, deciding to present *Hamlet* "as it is, not adding flaws to it or concealing the ones that can be found in the play".[2]

[2] "la obligación que se impuso de presentarle como es en sí, no añadiéndole defectos, ni disimulando los que halló en su obra."

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Two other works have been written against Moratín`s translation:

a) *Examen de la tragedia intitulada Hamlet, escrita en inglés por Guillermo Shakespeare y traducida al castellano por Inarco Celenio, poeta árcade* written by Escribiólo D. C.[ristóbal] C[ladera];
b) *Luis Carreras. - Retratos a pluma*. Paris, 1884.

But the protests against the first translation of *Hamlet* directly from English were without result and Moratín`s translation is the version which has influenced the most the Spanish translations to come.

The next translation, published in 1825 and entitled *Hamlet, tragedia en cinco actos, formada sobre las que con igual título se han representado (i) en los teatros de Inglaterra y de Francia, y arreglada a la escena española por D. J.[osé] M.[aría]de C.[arnerero]* follows exactly the French version of Ducis and is kept in the Madrid Public Library (I-36-10).

Another translation, entitled *Hamlet* and written by Pablo Avecilla, was published in 1856 at the C. González Publishing House, consisting of 53 pages. The author expressed his intention to repair, to arrange, Shakespeare‘s tragedy: “It would have been impossible to present it on scene with all the flaws of the original deftly kept by our Inarco Celenio, and I came up with the decision to arrange the translation of this illustrious pen according to the characteristics of the Spanish theater”[3] but his work hasn`t been received very well.

The next two rewritings belong to Carlos Coello. *El Principe Hamlet* published in Madrid (1872) at the publishing house of José Rodríguez was a three act tragic-fantasy drama (86 pages) written especially for the actor Antonio Vico, who played the title role when the play was staged in Madrid (at the Español Theater), and *El Principe Hamlet* published in Madrid (1877) at the publishing house of F. Fortanet which was intended to be an improved version of the first, consisting of 112 pages. This version had often been revived in Madrid and Barcelona in the last two decades of the century.

The differences between the two are mostly in the fourth scene of the first act, the third scene of the second act and in the last scene, changes that actually do improve the text.

The next translation brought into discussion is that of Jaime Clark, entitled *Hamlet*, which was published in the first part of the fifth volume of the Collection, followed by the version written by Mateo Martínez Artabeytia in 1872. Artabeytia used the norms suggested by Moratín but deleted the last two acts, therefore changing the perception that the Spanish theatregoers and readers had regarding the play.

The version entitled *William Shakespeare. - Hamlet. Drama em cinco actos, traducao portuguesa* published by the National Publishing House in Lisboan in 1877 had 149 pages and was translated by the King of Portugal, Luis I. Actually, at first, this work was offered as a gift to Adelardo López de Ayala, it wasn`t meant to be sold. The volume in question belongs to the Royal Public Library of the Court, known now as the National Library of Portugal.

Even though *Hamlet* was the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Spanish, it isn`t Shakespeare`s most popular play in Spain. This is the reason why there have been so many rewritings of the original text.

[3] “Imposible fuera presentarla en escena con todos los defectos del original que diestramente conservó nuestro ilustrado Inarco Celenio, y yo concebí el pensamiento de arreglarla al teatro español sobre la traducción de tan ilustre pluma”

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William Macpherson states that:

> Surely, the main reason why this play had been granted such an importance in the world of letters is not the artistic perfection of the work nor perhaps the dramatic interest it contains. The reason lies mainly in the deep interest that the strange character of the hero inspires us and constant admiration produced by the unparalleled talent through which his extraordinary qualities are underlined.[4]

He published his own version of *Hamlet* in the third volume of his collection, on pages 257-410. He adds that "Hamlet is the deep thinker, the cult philosopher, the man of great talent and excellent education, whose feelings have been deeply disturbed by sudden and very violent shocks."[5]

The next important translation was published in 1886 in Mexico by Fernando Sandoval and comprised 4 acts (76 pages) written by Manuel Pérez Bibbins and Francisco López Carvajal.

Artur Masriera also wrote his own version entitled *Hamlet, príncipe de Dinamarca* published in Barcelona in 1898 by the L` Atlantida Publishing House, comprising 240 pages. The author states that he has followed the edition of Steevens and Malone which was published in 1826 in London.

The play was also adapted for the Spanish theatre by Luis López Ballesteros and Féix González Llana in Madrid (1903), version consisting of 187 pages. This adaptation had received a warm reception being therefore often revived and used for staging the play for years to come.

Ricardo Calvo and his company staged this version of *Hamlet* in Madrid. Because the text had been specially devised for the stage, it relied on the resources of contemporary Spanish theaters. One of these resources is the "fairly elaborate painted scenery" which had been reused; for instance, "the backdrop for the opening scene also served for the Ghost's apparition and, later on, for some other outdoor scenes." (Pujante, Hoenselaars, 2003: 184).

Another version, translated directly from English, is the one belonging to José Roviralta Borrell, who also added his own philological and explanatory notes. The translation was published in Barcelona in 1905 by the La Renaixensa Publishing House and consisted of 200 pages, the last 50 pages representing the notes of the author.

Antoni Bulbena Tosell praises the version of Roviralta in the prologue of his own translation, *Guillem Shakspeare - Hamlet, princep de Denamarca* (148 pages) published in Barcelona in 1910 by the F. Giró Publishing House. He also states the difficulties in translating Shakespeare's works, deciding to solve these difficulties by deleting passages and even entire scenes, thus influencing the opinion of the Spanish readers and theatregoers.

One of the complaints of the Spanish theater companies may have been that the female roles were not important enough in the play. This is the reason why some

[4] "Seguramente no es la perfección artística de la obra, ni acaso el interés dramático que encierra, la razón principal de habérsele concedido tamaña importancia en el mundo de las letras. El motivo yace principalmente en el profundo interés que el extraño carácter del héroe nos inspira, y en la constante admiración que nos causa la maestría sin par con que se patentizan sus excepcionales cualidades."

[5] "Hamlet es el pensador profundo, el culto filósofo, el hombre de gran talento y de esmerada educación, en una palabra, cuyos sentimientos han sido brusca y hondamente perturbados por violentísimas conmociones."

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leading actresses as Sarah Bernhardt, Gloria Torres, Margarita Xirgu and Nuria Espert decided to play the title role.

A distinction between the early and the more modern translations must be made. In his regard, Isabel Verdaguer (2004: 132) states that:

> The history of Shakespeare translations into Spanish reveals one clear tendency from the accuracy pole towards the adequacy pole. The earliest translations were heavily determined by the norms of the receiving culture, and consequently nearer the acceptability pole. The more modern a translation gets, the more likely it is to aim at reproducing the original text as accurately as possible.

When coming in contact with the different translations of Shakespeare`s plays, the Spanish theatregoers and readers had the impression that the sequences of events, the characters and the conclusions to be drawn were the result of William Shakespeare`s will and imagination.

Therefore, the Spanish perception of the English playwright figure was sometimes based on altered or false information which influenced the identity of William Shakespeare and his plays in Spain.

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