

“PERPLEX’D IN EXTREME”, OR [IN]FIDELITY IN  
TRANSLATION: READING AND PERFORMING  
SHAKESPEARE IN CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINA<sup>1</sup>

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The purpose of this article is to illustrate the reception of some Shakespearean plays in Argentina. Part 1 focuses on the limitations imposed by the audience’s moral taste upon the translator’s choices. Part 2 analyzes two cases in which source language (SL) texts have been heavily transformed, *i.e.*, “appropriated” by two Argentine contemporary playwrights.

### 1. Translation

In the Preface to his pioneering book, *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*, Eric Partridge reflects upon the hypothetical reception of his work: he conjectures, for instance, that it could have been published in the eighteenth century, but not in the Victorian period (Partridge xi). This is the general orientation I have in mind to see the problem in terms of translation. My first step will consist in comparing the translations of some strong words through the consideration of four versions of *Othello* currently available in Argentina. All of them are relatively cheap and

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apparently intended to be read, *i.e.*, there is no declaration of a particular intention to use them for specific stage purposes. The first one does not mention the translator's name. The second is a translation by Jaime Clark. The third one was done by Rolando Costa Picazo, and the fourth, by Jaime Collyer. I shall refer to them as follows: UT (unknown translator), JC, CP and CO. Significantly, three of these translations form part of a series identified as "classical," whereas the fourth makes explicit "Shakespeare por Escritores" [Shakespeare by Writers]. Jaime Clark published a five-volume edition of ten plays by Shakespeare in Spain between 1872 and 1876. It is significant that a roughly 120 year-old translation is now republished in Barcelona, a powerful centre of the publishing industry. The third one forms part of a series in which the didactic purposes are evident.

As regards the critical apparatus, UT does not include any. An Argentine critic, Antonio Pagés Larraya, contributes a prologue to JC: he introduces Shakespeare and discusses the main features of the play (*i.e.*, the nature of Iago's malignancy and Othello's jealousy). In CP the translator is also the author of the Introduction and the Notes: the former provides an academic discussion of editorial matters, sources, the characters' temperament and other critical issues, *e.g.*, the double time scheme and the nature of Othello's blackness. The latter offers information about cultural background, polysemy, connotation, etc. Concerning the fourth translation (CO), its general orientation is "*ofrecer versiones rigurosas pero contemporáneas hechas por quienes tratan hoy con cuestiones poéticas equivalentes a las que Shakespeare resolvió hace cuatro siglos...*" (Collyer 3) [to give rigorous but up-to-date versions by those who are dealing with poetic matters equivalent to the ones that Shakespeare resolved four centuries ago...].<sup>2</sup> The author states that these versions should avoid the "*temor reverencial*" [reverential awe] towards the bard and that they have been done by Latin American writers.<sup>3</sup> Supporting this, the author says that Spanish "*es una abundancia de variantes locales de un patrimonio común*" [is an abundance of local variants from a common patrimony] (Collyer 11).

UT and CO are prose translations. JC shows a bolder translation: he chooses the current 11-syllable Spanish line (*endecasílabo*) to match the English verse sections, and translates the prose passages in prose. He starts each line with a lower-case letter, a common practice in Spanish, which contrasts with English normal upper-case letters at the beginning of each line. Because the use of prose and verse is always dynamic in Shakespeare, Clark's strategies keep the general contrast between the loftier speeches of the "public" characters and the more vulgar ways of Iago when he talks with Roderigo, Othello, Cassio, etc. It is interesting that Clark chose a Renaissance rhymed pattern, a combination of an 11-syllable line with a 7-syllable one, to reproduce Desdemona's "Willow Song".<sup>4</sup> CP evinces a compromise: he uses capital letters in each line and keeps the English verse units. He does not try to recreate rhythm or rhymes except for some couplets which normally close a scene.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the general sight impression is interestingly ambiguous: it appears to be verse but turns out to be prose.

I would like to show different strategies used by the above mentioned translators to render insulting words referred or addressed to women. The general grounds are the ideas exposed, among others, by Camilo José Cela: he considers that words are not guilty of what they mean. Euphemisms, he says, are vicious forms which have substituted fashionable items for genuine items in the language. Because what is banned is not the concepts themselves but only some of the words that name them, he finds that euphemisms are unfair and sophisticated (Cela 17). Furthermore, he argues that words that have a long tradition in a language cannot be simply put aside by silencing them or banning them from the habitual register (23). I shall follow the definition of euphemism given by K. Allan and K. Burridge: "A euphemism is used as an alternative to a dispreferred (sic) expression in order to avoid possible loss of face, either one's own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party" (Allan & Burridge 11).

The cases which I propose in source text (ST) show no avoidance of strong terms used to insult a woman.<sup>6</sup> I will consider eight occurrences of

“whore”: (1) 3. 3. 365 (Othello talking to Iago, referring to Desdemona); (2) 4.1.173 (Iago to Othello, referring to Bianca, Cassio’s mistress); (3) 4.2.21 (Othello alone, referring to Emilia); (4) 4.2.74 (Othello to Desdemona); (5) 4.2.91 (Othello to Desdemona); (6) 4.2.122 (Emilia to Iago, referring to Desdemona); (7) 4.2.129 (Emilia to Iago, referring to Desdemona); (8) 4.2.163 (Desdemona to Iago, referring to the very word). The results are the following (figures indicate the number of occurrences):

UT: “*ramera*” = 2, “*adúltera*” = 2, “*infiel*” = 1, “*querida*” = 1, “*moza ladina*” = 1, “*veneciana*” = 1.  
 JC: “*ramera*” = 1, “*prostituta*” = 2, “*adúltera*” = 2, “*moza astuta*” = 1, “*astuta cortesana*” = 1, “*manceba*” = 1.  
 CP: “*puta*” = 4, “*ramera*” = 4.  
 CO: “*ramera*” = 7, “*putilla*” = 1.

It appears that CP is bold enough to use “*puta*”, *i.e.*, the strongest Spanish word to render “whore”. All the translators show a tendency to mitigate Desdemona’s boldness in case No. 6, when she utters “I cannot say ‘whore’”.<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that UT and JC exhibit a wider scope of choices. Some of them, however, *i.e.*, “*manceba*”, “*querida*”, “*infiel*”, “*cortesana*”, are weaker than the insistent word used by Shakespeare. The only occurrence of “*putilla*”, a somewhat lighter derivative from “*puta*”, refers to Bianca.<sup>8</sup>

Next I will consider eight occurrences of the word “strumpet”: (1) 4.2. 83 (Othello to Desdemona); (2) 4.2.85 (Othello to Desdemona); (3) 4.2.87 (Desdemona answering Othello); (4) 5.1.78 (Iago to Bianca); (5) 5.1.120 (Emilia to Bianca); (6) 5.1.121 (Bianca answering Emilia); (7) 4.2.78 (Othello to Desdemona); (8) 4.2. 80 (Othello to Desdemona). I assume that “strumpet” is as strong as “whore” in Shakespeare’s lexicon. Othello uses it four times to address Desdemona or to refer to her. These are the results:

UT: “*ramera*” = 3, “*meretriz*” = 1, “*adúltera*” = 1, “*infame*” = 1  
 (2 ST occurrences are not translated).

JC: "*prostituta*" = 4, "*ramera*" = 3, "*pérfida*" = 1.

CP: "*ramera*" = 5, "*prostituta*" = 2 (1 ST occurrence is not translated).

CO: "*ramera*" = 4, "*ramerilla*" = 1, "*putilla*" = 2 (1 ST occurrence is not translated).

"[P]uta" is never used. CO uses "*putilla*" twice (cases 5 and 6), both referring to Bianca. By far "*ramera*" is the word that CP prefers (5 times), and so do UT (3 times) and CO (5 times, one of them through the diminutive form). "[P]rostituta" is used twice by CP, and four times by JC. It is noticeable that UT and JC use the adjectives "*infame*" and "*pérfida*", omitting the nouns. These adjectives do not necessarily refer to sexual matters. Because CP has insistently used "*puta*" for "whore", it seems that "strumpet" appears to him weaker.<sup>9</sup> Taking into account all the translations it can be seen that four occurrences of ST "strumpet" are not translated at all: omitting any translation or keeping only an adjective are ways of softening the impact of "dirty" words upon the readership. In any case, because no occurrences of ST "whore" are left untranslated, my conclusion is that "strumpet" "sounds" stronger to the translator than "whore".<sup>10</sup> I link CP's choices with new "democratic" practices in Argentina, *i.e.*, some slackening of formality or rigidity to be associated with the last dictatorship, not necessarily shared by CO, which forms part of a series addressed to a whole Latin American audience. I find a dynamic, *increscendo* strategy in the occurrences of the strong word for "whore" chosen by CP. There is a reluctance to use this strong term in the other translations, as if wishing to weaken Othello's coarseness. In CP's case, the other occurrences belong to Emilia (thrice) but Desdemona "doesn't dare" to utter it: "*No puedo decir 'ramera'*", in CP. Now, this translation, because of its rather old-fashioned appearance, *e.g.*, in using capital letters at the beginning of each line and the formal pronoun "*vos*", creates an interesting dramatic effect, *i.e.*, some mixture of registers in using the strongest word to render "whore".

There are two other occurrences that I want to consider because they appear euphemistically in ST: one is "guinea hen": 1.3.315 (when

Iago is scolding Roderigo), and the other is “housewives”: 2.1.112 (when Iago is talking to Desdemona). In the first case Ridley’s footnote says that though the reference is derogatory, Iago “would hardly call her (*i.e.*, Desdemona) a prostitute” (40). It is worth noticing that while CP makes Iago commit himself very early as regards Desdemona’s demeanour making him use the dysphemism “*ramera*”, UT resorts to the neutral “*mujer*” [woman], JC renders “*polluela*” [little hen], but a tender connotation may be introduced through the suffix “*-uela*”, the result being some inconsistency, perhaps irony, and CO gives “*gallinitas pintarrajeadas*” [gaudy little hens], a literal translation with an undertone suggesting a prostitute.<sup>11</sup>

The other example is “Players in your housewifery and housewives in your beds”. Ridley gives “gamblers” as a probable gloss for “players” and comments on “housewives” as follows: “perhaps only ‘wantons’... but the antithesis in this line...suggests both possibilities, either that in bed women are unduly economical of their favour or that it is only in bed that women really give their minds to business” (55). UT renders “*perezosas en todo menos en la cama*” [lazy everywhere except in bed]. JC translates “*en la cama, activas*” [active in bed] and CO “*desvergonzadas en sus lechos*” [shameless in their beds]. CP, again, ventures “*ramera*”, which makes things straightforward from the very beginning. Because no translator except CP uses the strong word (“*puta*”) to translate “whore”, we must infer that through dysphemism CP is pointing out a clear and univocal sense in what is rather oblique in ST.<sup>12</sup>

It is understandable, I think, that JC avoided *the* strong term: not only because of linguistic and moral tastes, but also because this is a verse translation, normally associated with “poetic” prestige and manners. Similar prudish considerations apply to UT, which is apparently more recent than JC: it must be understood that the publishers of a cheap book which belongs to a series called “*Biblioteca de formación literaria*” must have had in mind secondary school students.<sup>13</sup> The procedures for this are manifold, *i.e.*, omission, derivation through suffixes, hyperonyms.

## 2. Appropriation

My examples of appropriation are two: *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. The first, by Griselda Gambaro, is given the title *La señora Macbeth*. Griselda Gambaro is one of the best known contemporary playwrights in Argentina. About the foreign influences that she might have received, she considers that tracing back connections with European writers implies accepting a colonialist spirit which has been imposed from the centres. Her early reading of Dostoevsky may account for some tragical elements in her plays. She identifies with marginalized people and "innocent trespassers" (Interview 23). She knows that her plays have been compared to Michel Foucault's theory of power, but she says she prefers poetry or fiction to essays.

*La señora Macbeth* was staged in 2004 in Buenos Aires. The characters are few: Lady Macbeth, the three Witches and the Ghost of Banquo. On stage is a huge throne attached to a grotesque swing and a toboggan. The witches are not fully presented as such: they appear as maids or as a chorus. The language is Riverplate dialect but it contains some strange features. For example, the formal addressing form, "*señora*" [lady] demands a corresponding pronominal formality, *i. e.*, "*Ud.*" and the verbal forms that go with it. Instead, all the verbal forms correspond to the informal and local pronoun "*vos*": this creates an odd atmosphere, a mixture of respect and confidence reinforcing the fact that the witches sneer at *la señora* while obeying her. Without any trace of rudeness, the style resorts to several colloquial expressions, some of them originated in popular football jargon.

*Macbeth*, the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies, has been substantially reduced in *La señora Macbeth*. The latter comprehends six scenes. *La señora Macbeth* appears as a compassionate, slightly ridiculous woman: she wants to welcome the King offering a banquet for poor children. She declares that she wants to wash the children's feet, an evident allusion to Christ. She is tender towards little animals as well. Her somehow silly discourse mixes impulses towards freedom and eroticism. It is coherent with the recognition that "*Yo no pienso*

*nada, se lo dejo a Macbeth, que lo hace por los dos.*" [I don't think anything. I leave thinking to Macbeth, who thinks for both of us]. She exhibits her husband's letter proudly. It contains a syntactically strange though powerful formula: "*¡Salve rey, que serás!*" [Hail the King to be!]. Afterwards she blames the witches for having encouraged her husband to become a murderer (sc. 2). After the murder, in which she has been an accessory, she comforts Macbeth. Macbeth repents of his confession to his wife rather than of his desire to kill the king. Sc. 3 is a long monologue uttered by Lady Macbeth: eventually Macbeth had convinced his wife that inviting children would offend the king. The impressive passage about the dagger is reported in the following way: "*Fue Duncan quien movió el puñal en la mano de Macbeth y lo dirigió a su pecho para que el puñal lo atravesara ... Puta confiada.*" [It was Duncan who guided the dagger in Macbeth's hand and pointed it to his own heart to pierce it ... Presumptuous whore!] News is manipulated, guilt vanishes: "*la duda imprecisa busca dueño y cuando no lo encuentra cae sobre cualquiera.*" [Imprecise guilt is after an owner and when it does not find any it falls on anyone]. The same manipulation happens when Banquo's Ghost appears. Lady Macbeth accuses him of being unthankful towards Macbeth, who wanted to give a banquet for him. At the end of this scene (sc. 4) we perceive that *la señora* hesitates: she does not know the extent of her responsibility in murders.

In the following scene the witches foretell that Macduff's wife and kids will be slaughtered. *La señora* refuses to believe them. Again, she blames the witches. But Macbeth, she says, would not dare to touch a child: "*¡No es un carnicero, mi Macbeth! Solo un hombre con ambiciones.*" [He is not a butcher, my Macbeth! Only a man with ambitions]. Gambaro introduces theatre within the theatre: the witches personify Lady Macduff, her son and the murderer, while *la señora*, astonished and chorus-like, contemplates what is going on. Lady Macduff says: "*Sin embargo, recuerdo que en este mundo hacer daño es a veces loable y hacer el bien es a veces tomado por locura peligrosa ¿de qué me sirve entonces, esa defensa femenina de decir: no he hecho daño a nadie?*" [However, I remember that harm is sometimes

praiseworthy in this world, and doing good is sometimes understood as a dangerous insanity. Then what is the use of this feminine defense in saying "I haven't harmed anybody"?]. *La señora* Macbeth refuses to believe that what she has witnessed is just a masquerade. Then the witches command her to look at her hands: they are tainted with blood. In the following monologue *la señora* breaks a mirror (a combination of *Snow White* and *Richard II*): at his moment she discovers that she is many *señoras* Macbeth, one of them rejecting the other. Theatrical representation and reality become confused. A report is given on how the prophecy about the wood of Birnam and Macbeth's defeat are being fulfilled. *La señora* Macbeth dies.

Gambaro has said that she had not reread Shakespeare's play in order to write her play. And Pompeyo Audivert, who was in charge of the *mise en scène*, has said that it was not necessary to have read *Macbeth* to understand Gambaro's play. Hints from Shakespeare are there: for example, when *la señora* says: "*todos los perfumes de Arabia no podrían perfumar esta pequeña mano*" [all the Arabian fragrances would not be enough to perfume this little hand], when she realizes that Macbeth has killed sleep, or when she mentions Macbeth's robes and crown as ill-fitting for him. It is more important to show how often *la señora* refers to children, an echo of the controversial passage from *Macbeth* (1.7.55). Not only does *la señora* Macbeth think of inviting poor children, she also mentions her desire to give Macbeth sons who would replace Banquo's offspring on the throne. But when she becomes aware that the prophecy cannot be abolished, she does not care for them any longer. She discards frantically the idea of becoming Macbeth's daughter and eventually announces that she is going to procreate herself to become a queen (sc.1). Little birds, babies, *la señora* as an innocent baby, form part of an imagery that dwells on the idea of innocence and purity. However, the action can be deciphered in contemporary terms. For example, *la señora* speaks about the helplessness of a woman covered by a *chador* and humiliated, a reivindication of Muslim women. More relevant is the speech in sc. 6, when she mentions corpses that appear in a ditch or in the river, a clear

allusion to those who disappeared during the last Argentine dictatorship (*i.e.*, drowned in the Río de La Plata). In the same vein, several occurrences of the word “*poder*” give the idea of impersonal power: “*Y si aparecen cadáveres en una zanja o en el río, de esa acción soy inocente porque mi poder no lo ordenó*”. [And if corpses appear in a ditch or in the river, I am innocent of that action because my power has not commanded it]. *La señora Macbeth* must be associated with brutal power but the suggestion is that, while loving Macbeth and admitting that she herself is ambitious, she does not share the decision to murder, she ignores the dead, she cannot believe that her husband is capable of such evils, and she eventually justifies crime on the ground of *raisons d'état*.

Gambaro has also emphasized the issue of the grotesque. In sc. 4, for example, the witches are trying to amuse *la señora* after the assassination of Duncan: they carry *la señora* to the top of the toboggan and push her down softly.<sup>14</sup> *La señora Macbeth* shows feminine subordination to, and acceptance of, male power. Olga Cosentino, writing in *Clarín*, an Argentine popular tabloid, says that *la señora Macbeth* can be connected with the wives of some contemporary tyrannical leaders: Imelda Marcos, Madame Mao, Nicolas Ceaucescu's wife and some other obvious local paradigms. The issue of identity can be illustrated at its best when one of the witches describes *la señora* as a transvestite. The emergence of different selves at the end of the play reveals paraphrenia. *La señora* asks: “¿Quién soy? ¿Cuál es mi naturaleza? ¿Acaso soy un hombre y sólo llevo ropas de mujer...? [Who am I? What is my nature? Am I perhaps a man wearing a woman's dress...?]”

The second case of appropriation is a play written by Luis Cano, *Hamlet, de William Shakespeare*. One can properly say that in it “time” (but also text) “is out of joint”. Cano has said that *Hamlet* is a dream transformed into a nightmare (*Memorias íntimas*). The sequence of events is looser than the one developed by Gambaro in *La señora Macbeth*. The atmosphere grows strange as we see dead characters resurrect. This happens with Polonius and Ophelia. The structure of the

play can be described as if the "original" scenes had been heaped up, taken out and then recombined at random. Intertextuality is mainly achieved through allusion and paraphrase. Their scope is wide and can be shortly described as follows: (1) Shakespeare: a) *Hamlet*: "En este instrumento hay mucha música" (1.1) [In this instrument is much music]; "Algo está podrido en Dinamarca" (said by Marcelo in 1.2) [Something is rotten in Denmark]; "Si buscan al príncipe, ahí lo tienen" (said by Polonius in 2.4); [If you are after the prince, here you are]; "¡Qué pedazo de mierda es el hombre!" (said by Ophelia in 2.2) [What a piece of shit man is]; "ay, pobre de mí. ¡Vete a un convento!" (Ophelia, *ibid.*) [Alas, Go to a nunnery!]. b) The sonnets: "No longer mourn for me" (in English in Cano's play: this is said by the Ghost in 1.11); c) *Richard III*: "Mi reino por un trago" (said by Rosencranz and Guildenstern in 3.11) [My kingdom for a drink]; "Ni ricardos contrahechos ni graciosos" (5.1) [No crooked no gracious richards]; d) *Macbeth + Hamlet*: "Cavar implica un acto y un acto tiene tres partes, que son: actuar, hacer y ejecutar. ¡Esa es la cuestión!" (said by the Digger in 5.1) [To dig implies an act and an act has three parts, to act, to do and to perform. That is the question!]; e) *The Tempest*: "Estamos hechos de la misma materia que nuestros muertos" (said by Fortinbras in 5.10) [We are made of the same stuff of our dead]. (2) Other authors: a) Edgar Allan Poe ("The Raven", "The Fall of the House of Usher"); b) José Hernández (*Martín Fierro*, the Argentine national poem); c) T.S. Eliot (*The Love Song of J. A. Prufrock*); d) Lord Byron (directly mentioned); e) the Gospels. The King says: "Vas a encontrar una oveja atada. Vas a desatarla y traerla. Y si alguien te pregunta, vas a decir 'mi padre la necesita'" [You'll find a sheep tied. Unfasten it and bring it here. And if somebody asks you about it, you'll answer "My father needs it"] (Mk. 7: 24); the Parable of the Solid Rock (Mt. 7: 24), Genesis, etc.

Thus, the general plot functions as a sort of skeleton which sustains three sequences. One of these is theatrical practices. Contemporary Argentine theatrical discourses are criticized. Illusion is broken in a Brechtian way when the King says "Soy el mejor actor danés" (1.3) [I am the best Danish actor]; Horatio mentions a contemporary local author

together with Richard Burton (1.9). Hamlet says “*Esta obra de cuatrocientos años que escribí hace apenas un mes*” (2.8) [This four hundred year-old play that I wrote just a month ago]. An actor comments ironically that the speeches cannot be learned by heart if they are continually changed. Comments are made by Hamlet about a humiliated actor’s ambition to utter the “To be or not to be” soliloquy. There is an explanation by Horatio about the theatre-within-the-theatre effect and the *mise en abîme*, a comment on the medieval connection between world (or kingdom) with theatre treated with contemporary political nuances. Finally, there is Horatio’s invitation to settle the limits between reality and fiction as *Verfremdungseffekt*: “*Vamos a jugar a hacernos los muertos todos, y con los ojos fijos aparentar ser reyes. ¡Reyes de nieve puestos al sol! Ustedes, que se ven pálidos y miran, actores mudos*” (5.7). [Let us play a game. Let us pretend that all of us are dead and kings with motionless eyes. Snow kings in the sun. You, who look pale and dumb actors]. In the same vein, the King’s speech in 3.4 makes trite, if slightly mocking, comments upon theatrical practices. He praises the play, announces that a TV broadcasting is on schedule, declares that art can achieve salvation, that the play has got its copyright, that actors have new opportunities for work. The King’s superiority reflects obliquely King Claudius’s speeches, but his opinions entail a metacomment on the performances, on the play, on Argentine contemporary situation, on modern theatrical practices.

The second focus is the author’s complex relationship with Shakespeare, perhaps *via* Stephen Dedalus. In his *Memorias íntimas* Cano speaks about his obsession with Hamlet and with authorship (anxiety of influence): “*A medida que releo la obra de Shakespeare me parece estar descifrando la historia de una vida que alguna vez fue mía*.” [As I reread Shakespeare’s play it seems to me that I am deciphering the history of a life that was once mine]. Shakespeare is the ghost who writes Cano, a familiar ghost, a spectator of Cano’s writing. Cano feels he is sometimes Hamlet, or Ophelia, or madness, or Burbage performing Hamlet. In 1.4, Hamlet says that his own son, Hamnet, drowned eleven years ago. In 3.2, a sort of chorus says:

*"¿Shakespeare? Lo conozco de nombre. Es el que escribe parecido a Byron. No creo que conozcas a Byron. No, no es el Hamlet de Shakespeare. Hamlet estaba terminado cuando Shakespeare escribió la última palabra. Aburrido, rancio, desabrido".* [Shakespeare? I know of his name. He is the one who writes like Byron. I don't believe you know Byron. No, this is not Shakespeare's Hamlet. Hamlet was finished when Shakespeare wrote the last word. Boring, rancid, insipid]. In Act 2.17, Horatio exclaims:

Hamlet, ¡vivir con él,  
Qué aburrido,  
Siempre gruñendo y llorando,  
.....  
*sus parlamentos magníficos,*

[Hamlet, living with him / how boring! / he is always grunting and crying / ... / his magnificent speeches]. Luis Cano is facing the same problem Pierre Menard faces: authorship being put at stake through anachronism and wrong attributions. This seems to me Luis Cano's most interesting accomplishment in the play, showing that *Hamlet* (or any significant work) must be reinvented from time to time. This blurs the boundaries between translation and adaptation.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, as Carlos Pacheco notices, Cano's play shows no perceptible differences in the language the characters use, as if any of them could, so to say, take up Hamlet's voice. This happens as if an anonymous power were governing them all, "washing at their identities", in Philip Larkin's phrase. A mixture of languages highlights the problem of authorship. In 1.11 the Ghost speaks in English but Hamlet does so in Spanish. Hamlet starts his soliloquy: "To be-no part of it" and goes on in Spanish. This mixture creates a pastiche effect which, I think, reveals the permanent transformation of the author, who invents old fables, modifies them in a Protean way and uses several enigmatic vehicles.<sup>16</sup> Luis Cano's text is disruptive of theatrical practices in other ways: what can be read between brackets are not properly

speaking stage directions: in many cases they are genuine speeches, *i.e.*, “literary” or dramatic texts without any further direction. This involves a deliberate confusion of planes, *i.e.*, the actors’ speeches and the author’s directions. The director has to decide whether off-voices (whose?) should utter these speeches or if actual actors (who?) are going to say them.

What I call the third axis is the allusions to the Falklands-Malvinas War. The missing (as in Gambaro’s play) and the victims of the Malvinas War are certainly two main obsessions in present Argentina. The first occurrence is a stage direction mentioning iron scoria and dismantled buildings.<sup>17</sup> When the play was staged, the Danish palace had the appearance of military headquarters in the open air, rust and saltpetre corroding everything. Horatio mentions cannons and parachutists in fancy dress (1.1). In 2.1 Hamlet says he has just come from a shooting practice in which he had to stab some cardboard English men.

The Malvinas setting justifies many occurrences of the word “sheep”, significantly in the above mentioned passage from the Gospels, where “sheep” replaces the donkey fetched by the Apostles. Allusion becomes straightforward in 4.1, when “*Campo de los gansos*” (Goosegreen, a place in the Malvinas) is mentioned. The monologue in which Hamlet is shocked by Fortinbras’s warlike march to repossess a territory that cannot contain the corpses of the soldiers that might die on it is paraphrased in sc. 3. Hamlet mentions seven hundred soldiers (roughly the sum of Argentine casualties) fighting for a piece of land not large enough to bury them.<sup>18</sup> The most straightforward allusions occur in 4.11: Hamlet reports that he has been murdering Englishmen. Then he has fastened the sheep his father was going to torture. Horatio mentions the ship that would not sink (the *General Belgrano* Cruiser, *The Invincible*, *The Titanic*?). Both Hamlet and Horatio recollect how they have come; brought by the last aircraft, all their dead friends sheltered under a little blanket. “*El Jefe arribó de visita, siempre borracho llegó en paracaídas*” (Act IV: “Requiem mass”) [The Boss arrived to visit us, always drunk. He came with his parachute]. At this moment the King asks: “*¿Dónde pondremos el casino de oficiales, dónde*

*estarán el comedor, los baños...?* [Where are we going to place the army club, the dining room, the bathrooms...?] Algae ("kelpers") and sheep are insistently mentioned. "Sheep" is clearly polysemous: cattle of the islands, innocent victims. In the *mise en scène* the setting emphasized military elements: boots, old uniforms.<sup>19</sup>

*La señora Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, de William Shakespeare are hypotexts of the corresponding Shakespearean hypertexts, which can in turn be considered hypotexts of their so-called sources. Gerard Genette's taxonomy allows us to consider both Argentine modern plays as transformations, but it can be an oversimplification to consider that "the same" (Shakespearean) stories are set on stage (14). According to the chart in which Genette synthesizes hypertextual practices, the Argentine plays should be considered "transpositions", seriousness being what distinguishes this practice from parody (Genette 42). In both cases, but more noticeable in Cano's play, the use of language implies deviation, agrammaticality, solipsism. According to Derrida, nobody speaks more than one language, nobody speaks only one language (Derrida 22).<sup>20</sup> The conflict between two languages, in which one is necessarily more prestigious than the other, entails new, unexpected tensions in Cano's drama. Not possessing the language means a consciousness of colonial alienation or historical enslavement: "Argentine" characters use a faulty English to perform a *Hamlet* that is related to an armed conflict with the United Kingdom. On the other hand it can illustrate "irreverent" peripheral practices, the ones described by Waisman in the case of Borges (Waisman 202 ff.). Peripheral countries, like Argentina, may receive all influences without being particularly attached to any. According to Deleuze-Guattari grammatical acceptability is the first condition in submitting to social demands. If grammar is order and stability, trespassing upon it implies deterritorialization, stretching the language to its very limits, challenge (Deleuze-Guattari 102). In the specific case of *Hamlet*, the topic of authorship, revented by Cano, illustrates J. Kristeva's ideas about the disappearing author, the interchangeability between the author and the addressee (Kristeva 190). Re-enactment implies infinite polyphony.

Eventually, the topic is a new exploration of Stephen's theory about authorship as exposed in *Ulysses*. In the case of Griselda Gambaro this re-writing practice has antecedents, for example in *Antígona furiosa* (1986). The alteration of chronology, the disintegration and combination of episodes and allusions to Argentina's contemporary situation, definitely build a new dramatic reality. I would like to finish quoting James Clifford: "What we may ask a member of a cultural community is not 'where are you from' but rather 'where are you between'" (Clifford 97).

## Conclusion

It can be said that all translated texts are somehow biased. Part 1 has shown a general tendency to weaken the impact of strong words. In translations intended to be mainly used in schools, or to a lesser degree, for stage purposes, these words have been bowdlerized or mitigated. Part 2 has displayed the freest interpretations: in them, meeting Argentina's contemporary troubles implies recreating the texts, displacement, deterritorialization, recontextualization.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank my colleagues, Prof. Liliana López, from the Instituto Universitario Nacional de Artes, Prof. Cecilia Chiacchio and Prof. Silvia Enríquez, from the Universidad Nacional de la Plata, for their invaluable help.
2. All the critical passages have been translated by me.
3. This, at least, implies that "mere" translators are not considered writers.
4. This is a prestigious Spanish form cultivated, among others, by the famous Renaissance poet Garcilaso de la Vega.
5. *E.g.*, 2.1; 2, end of sc. 3.
6. See P. Chamizo Domínguez: "*El que una palabra dada (o una expresión, en su caso) sea sentida por los hablantes como un eufemismo o como un disfemismo no*

*depende de la palabra en sí sino del contexto, del uso que se haya hecho de dicha palabra o de las intenciones de los hablantes.*" [That a given word (or expression) be felt by speakers as a euphemism or a dysphemism does not depend on the word itself but on the context, the way this word has been used or the speakers' intentions].

7. Though partial homophony helps her reinforce her utterance: "It does *abhor* me now I speak the word".
8. As a general rule, diminutives have the effect of euphemisms. See P. Chamizo Domínguez.
9. But it is difficult to reject the opposite, *i.e.*, that the word "strumpet" is stronger and the translator feels the necessity to mitigate it through euphemism.
10. But see Note 7.
11. Eric Partridge gives "a prostitute" for "guinea hen". Concerning the usage of female animals to refer to prostitutes, see P. Chamizo Domínguez.
12. K. Allan and K. Burridge: "A dysphemism is an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression just for that reason" (26).
13. UT never uses the term "*cornudo*" to render "cuckold": in one instance he avoids any translation and in others he uses "*engañado*" [cheated] or "*deshonrado*" [dishonoured], which are obviously softer. Because JC does use the word "*cornudo*", I fancy that this term was more "viable" than "*puta*" to a nineteenth-century audience in Spain. In a footnote to chapter 16 of the First Part of *Don Quixote*, speaking about the insult "*puta*", the editors say that the word did not have in Cervantes' time the expressive and offending force that it has nowadays (García Soriano y García Morales, eds.) (351).
14. *La señora* is wearing a big satin overcoat, seemingly her husband's, and her hair is tied up with dozens of metal hairpins.
15. This blurring is what Sergio Waisman permanently emphasizes in *Borges and Translation. The Irreverence of the Periphery*. Apparently, the main characteristic of Latin American writers is a way of dealing with "central" or prestigious texts deterritorializing them, (mis)translating them.

16. In the performance, the actor who performed the Ghost's part did not know English: his faulty pronunciation served the purpose of confusing identities and languages, thus detaching from illusion.
17. Argentine workers went first to the Georgian Islands to dismantle some premises. It is not clear if they had a British permission. Eventually, this "incident" triggered the conflict.
18. Some people would say during the war: "The Malvinas are not worth fighting for. Argentina has already got a vast territory".
19. The late *de facto* President during the war, General Galtieri's voice was heard off-scene.
20. To support the topic of lack of absolute monolingualism, Derrida quotes from Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Du bilinguisme*, Paris: Denoël, 1985: 10.

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