Albur and sexual double meaning in Mexican Shakespearean translation

PhD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the prospect of translating Shakespeare's sexual double meaning by means of the vocabulary and behavioural traits pertinent to Mexican albur – a variety of friendly verbal duel with sexual puns. Following the functionalist approach of Skopostheorie, which focuses on purpose as the primary guideline for translational action, I deliver an overview of contemporary Mexican culture and society as a way of understanding how better to fulfil the purpose of my translation, which is to successfully convey sexual double meaning as a way of bringing Mexican audiences closer to Shakespearean theatre practice. Accordingly, I provide a description of albur and its particular dynamics in Mexican culture and consider the history of Mexican Shakespeare translation, which is inevitably tied to issues of colonialism and the strong influence of early Iberian translations. I then offer commentary on some relevant examples of easily accessible translated text for which the original displays sexual double meaning. Finally, I propose my own translation of selected sections of Shakespearean sexual double meaning as proof to the potential of my approach. The theoretical ground provided by Skopostheorie allows me to pursue a fluid translational action as opposed to a finished target text, therefore encouraging diversity in translation choices and signalling a more dynamic conversation between Mexicanity and Shakespeare tradition.

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HERE

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And to the word, the mother we share, always.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References and translations from Spanish are my own unless specified.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Cathedral of Merida in Yucatan, South-east Mexico, hosted a performance of *Hamlet* by the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre Company directed by Dominic Dromgoole. This stunning venue was their temporary backdrop as part of the Hamlet Globe to Globe tour. Built in 1602 (and therefore directly contemporary with Shakespeare's play), the Cathedral of Merida is the oldest in continental America. In 2014 and despite the rainy weather, there was a three-thousand-strong audience watching a performance of a play written in almost exactly the same year the venue had been built.[1] The text of the play was not translated, instead they displayed a summary of the action in surtitles by the stage. This is not a common occurrence in Mexico, and there was a certain level of confusion in the audience. However, despite this linguistic barrier, the success of the staging was still clear, particularly evident in the reviews by local newspapers.[2]

At that moment, I had already been teaching varying approaches to Shakespearean text to undergraduate and high school students for a few years. I had always found, especially with high-school students, that they frequently struggled to understand the text of Spanish translations available to them, but when faced with a staged or filmed version of good quality, they showed great interest. The success of the *Hamlet* Globe to Globe performance seemed to confirm what I already suspected: lack of interest in Shakespeare – which I had witnessed especially as a teacher – was due mostly to translations that were inadequate to the cultural and linguistic context.

Concern for the aforementioned situation led to the questions that motivate my research: Why are the majority of current Shakespeare translations into Spanish easily available in print so distant from Mexican readers/audiences? Is it possible

[1] http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com/hamlet/the-map/north-america/mexico?date=01+Jul+2014
[2] http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/2014/gira-hamlet-shakespeare-merida-1029359.html

to achieve a translation that is both faithful to the texts and capable of engaging contemporary Mexican audiences (including myself)? Is it possible –and how– to find and emphasize a point of contact between the language in the plays and contemporary Mexican language/culture? And, above all, could this point of contact become a bridge to a better understanding of the relationship between Mexican localities and the greater western globalised world?

Navigating through these matters led me to find a striking similarity between a certain type of irreverent and witty sexual humour common in Shakespeare's plays and a form of wordplay manifested in Mexican informal settings. This particularly Mexican game of puns is called albur, and it has led to the existence of a wide vocabulary of double meaning words incorporated spontaneously to everyday language. The intentional use of these in Shakespeare translation could lead to a better connection with Mexican audiences, therefore engaging in issues of national identity (looking inwards) and interactions with –and within– globalised western culture.

In this thesis I will provide evidence to support this through an in-depth analysis of albur and its relation to contemporary Mexican identities, then justify its value in making Shakespeare accessible to Mexican audiences by providing my own original translations. Drawing on Skopostheorie, I will argue that through the use of albur my translations are more suited to the purpose than the standard translations readily available in Mexican Spanish. In order to contextualise my thesis appropriately, I will begin by considering the interaction between local and global cultures and identities.

THE GLOBAL, THE LOCAL AND THE COSMOPOLITAN

The search for perspective on the interactions between localities and a more generalised global cultural current led me to question the notion – often mentioned somewhat lightly – of a possible cosmopolitan attitude within local identities, from

which arises the issue of defining what this notion is referring to and, following that, whether it is a concept that can help me answer my research questions.

In his influential 2002 study of cosmopolitanism and globalisation, Ulrich Beck states that "At the beginning of the 21st century the *conditio humana* cannot be understood nationally or locally but only globally".[3] In connection to this paradigm of global humanity, the concept of cosmopolitanism, elusive as it may be, can be defined, politically, as the idea of all humans living as a 'single community'.[4] It has different applications depending on the discipline within which it is working and has been historically tied to the tension between the global and the local, the universal and the particular.[5] In this sense, it can be interpreted as opposed to nationalism or patriotism, which focuses on the particular. The concept I am interested in, developed by Beck, presents an alternative to these ideas by suggesting that 'cosmopolitanism' could be replaced by 'cosmopolitanisation', meaning that the emphasis is in the process instead of its outcome. He argues for what he calls 'dialogic imagination' – as opposed to a monologic imagination, both concepts developed by Mikhail Bakhtin in the first half of the twentieth century and initially applying to the workings of narrative, but later used by Beck in the context of social and cultural studies –[6] that constantly recreates the other instead of internalising them: there is, he argues, a constant dialogue between self and imaginary other and it is this capacity, not a fixed set of characteristics, that defines 'cosmopolitanisation'. Consequently, the change towards the cosmpolitanising paradigm is not merely epistemological, but ontological as well; it involves the reinvention and dialogue with different cultures as well as with different times.

Beck explains that globalisation is complex, non-linear, non-dialectic; that it dissipates cultural polarities such as 'inside' and 'outside'; and that within societies

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[3] Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies", in *Theory, Culture & Society 2002* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE), Vol. 19(1–2): pp. 17–44

[4] Pauline Kleingeld, Eric Brown, "Cosmopolitanism" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[5] Michael L. Miller and Scott Ury, "Cosmopolitanism: the end of Jewishness?" in *European Review of History - Revue européene d'histoire.* vol. 17 no. 3. 2010.

[6] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination: four essays* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981).

confined by nation-states and their specific conditions, its internal equivalent is 'cosmopolitanisation'.[7] My work on Shakespeare belongs among the many manifestations of the cosmopolitanisation process: as a western cultural asset, Shakespeare has been assimilated and transformed to become part of different traditions, at the same time incorporating these traditions into one global Shakespearean universe.

According to Emily Apter, who deals with matters of post-colonial translation in the twenty-first century and the importance of translation shifts as powerful political energies, translation creates a zone of exchange that affects both source and target cultures. In this metaphorical border zone, a dialogue with imaginary others happens continually, so that it is an example of cosmopolitanisation in which cultural assets the size of Shakespeare, rather than remaining specific only to one culture, are transformed into cosmopolitan cultural values. It is a dialogue not a monologue, meaning that influence goes both ways. In her words: "the zone, in my ascription, has designated sites that are 'in-translation', that is to say, belonging to no single, discrete language or single medium of communication".[8] From the perspective of the local, the global is necessarily imaginary. While Apter's work expands to areas other than literary translation, the concept applies interestingly to Shakespeare in translation. According to her, the target text ceases to be a mere shadow of the source, always imperfect, and becomes valuable in itself, as it creates a tie to a new context and unveils new interactions between cultural forces. Sonia Massai subscribes to this notion as motivation for her interest in global and local Shakespeares; she applies Pierre Bourdieu's ideas and adheres to the belief that "Shakespeare can best be understood as the sum of critical and creative responses elicited by his work",[9]

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[7] For more on this, see Beck, "The Cosmopolitan perspective: Sociology of the Second Age Modernity" in British Journal of Sociology vol. 51 no. 1, 2000; "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies" in *Theory Culture and Society* vol.19 no. 1, 2002 and "Cosmopolitical Realism: On the Distinction between Cosmopolitanism in Philosophy and the Social Sciences" in *Global Networks* vol. 4 no. 2, (2004).

[8] Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A new comparative literature* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2006) p. 6

[9] Sonia Massai, *World-Wide Shakespeares, Local appropriations in film and performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 6

later proposing that "the boundaries of Shakespeare as a cultural field have not only stretched but moved altogether".[10] In most cases, boundaries are mobile because they tend to be arbitrary and as imaginary as the otherness that exists at the core of any national sense of self (identity). The dialogue with this otherness is in itself the ever-expanding, ever-moving border zone where self and other create something new. My thesis argues for the creation of new Shakespeares through localised translation, in this case with the knowledge and incorporation of albur as point of connection with the source text.

SHAKESPEARE IN MEXICAN TRANSLATION

Despite my initial struggle to find it – which relates to issues of accessibility that I will discuss in chapter 3 –, there is a tradition of Shakespeare translation into Spanish that has evolved along Latin America. However, as Alfredo Michel Modenessi argues, this is a tradition that attempts to emulate Iberian Spanish from the Renaissance or Siglo de Oro [Golden Age of Spanish theatre]. He explains this as a result of the fact that

> Many Latin Americans still regard 'original' texts as immutable authority. This provokes an abundance of literal translations whereby 'global' linguistic and cultural praxis penetrates daily experience in its original syntax but in the native lexis, often distorting and overwriting our efforts at constructing identity. In the case of Shakespeare, of literature, this is complicated by a puzzling unawareness of the opportunities it affords to differ[11].

In a way, the idea of producing new translations that sound anachronistic makes sense: it establishes proximity with Spanish theatre of Siglo de Oro –Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina. It could also be justified by Laurence Venuti's arguments against transparency in translation. Venuti suggests that "a translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic

[10] Massai, op. cit.
[11] Alfredo Michel Modenessi, "'A double tongue within your mask': translating Shakespeare in/to Spanish-speaking Latin America" in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004) p. 242

peculiarities makes it seem transparent",[12] and explains how this ties to the cultural dominance of the English language, as well as to economic and distribution reasons. Conversely, he says, there is much lost in this quest for transparency, especially considering the mentioned linguistic or stylistic peculiarities that characterise the original text. The struggle to maintain certain stylistic traits when the text is conveyed into Spanish seems to have been a major concern behind the work of some Hispanic Shakespeare translators.

Nevertheless, Michel Modenessi presents good arguments against it. He sustains that translations striving for stylistic and linguistic equivalence might be very valuable when directed at a certain reader, one that is familiar with the context, but not ideal when directed at wider audiences. This is particularly worrying when the translations are intended for staging, for which they will usually be ineffective. Text that is produced emulating Renaissance Iberian Spanish demands from audiences a secondary translation to their own contemporary codes, thus increasing the distance between source text and audience and resulting in confusion and loss of interest. He observes that in any case, Shakespeare translation in Latin America "has resulted in perpetuation of hegemonic paradigms in print, and creative appropriation in performance":[13] where translators have refused to update the language, directors have doubled their efforts to bring the texts closer to audiences.[14]

The work I will be doing in this thesis aligns with that of Shakespeare translators of younger generations, such as Flavio González Mello and Michel Modenessi himself. Some of these new approaches to Shakespeare translation are clearly more message-oriented, and more concerned with establishing a meaningful connection between text and audience.

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[12] Laurence Venuti, *The translator's invisivility* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) p. 1

[13] Modenessi, p. 3955

[14] In private conversation with me, director and playwright Flavio Gonzalez Mello commented on this situation. He explained that his main reason behind translating *Hamlet* instead of using one of the available translations for his 2015 staging was precisely the lack of Spanish versions in print that could be successfully used in performance for contemporary audiences. He literally said: "because I couldn't find a translation that I could work with, I did my own". He discusses his *Hamlet* in an interview that can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJGd-5cmEbU&t=428s

In short, even though Shakespeare is a global cultural asset of great importance, Mexican audiences –as Michel Modenessi points out– received it already in print from Spanish translators, and Mexican translators in the past have been reluctant to dig their hands in it.

In the spirit of hand-digging, I will be focusing on a very particular aspect of Shakespeare translation, the use of sexual double meaning, as a point of access for Mexican audiences. One of the most peculiar traits of Mexican culture, and one of the few that extend evenly through the whole country, is a kind of word game using sexual double meaning that we call albur. Despite its ubiquity, this tradition has a major cultural relevance within urban Mexico in particular, and I will argue that it offers the translator opportunities to create points of connection between Shakespearean text and the Mexican reader/spectator. It was my concern from the start to find a point of access to the translation zone between Mexican Spanish and Shakespearean text; it is my belief that integrating albur vocabulary to the dialogue with the imaginary other – the imaginary Shakespeare[15] – in Mexican identity is a means to localising the global. In doing so, Shakespearean translation has a way to contribute to the continuum of cosmopolitanisation continuum from a particular Mexican perspective. In my first chapter, I will provide a wide description of contemporary Mexican culture and explain how albur plays a role in issues of social change and gender inequality. It is worth saying as well that the idea of using albur as a point of connection is also in line with Venuti's rejection of transparency in translation. As I've said, this applies specifically to translation into English, but it's also relevant when the target culture is Spanish: by emulating Siglo de Oro Spanish, nineteenth-century Iberian translators were in fact obscuring the text. The aspect they were favouring was the temporal equivalence of language, which Michel Modenessi accurately explains as an issue of class and high culture. In this line of reasoning, Shakespeare was not traditionally intended as a product for the

[15] The existence of an imaginary Shakespeare in urban Mexico's cultural landscape is suggested by the success of the Hamlet Globe to Globe, but I will go deeper into it in chapter 3 when I discuss *Romeo and Juliet* translations.

masses –traditionally as in translating tradition– so its obscurity is justified as exclusivity. However, there is also an argument for ideas on translation equivalence that might allow this kind of translation to work for certain audiences. In general, one tends to wonder whether this situation responds to a sort of momentum that seems to be dying out. In emphasizing albur and working with contemporary Mexican Spanish, I will be obscuring the text as well, but the aspect I will be favouring is this particular type of humour. In my case, this 'obscuring' is intentional. In order to clarify certain aspects for a specific group, I need to use a language code that would be unavailable for other Spanish-speaking groups. I am choosing to favour one aspect of the stylistic characteristics of the source text –the sexual double meaning humour– for specific reasons; different audiences and translators might establish connections to other aspects of the text. The reasons behind my choice are varied. First of all, as I have said, cultural relevance. Second, social change and gender through popular culture. And third, experience (presentism) and connection with the audiences. Presentism is a term used for certain critical interpretations, but it can describe my approach to translation in the sense that it works as a connection to contemporary experience. [16] It is also compatible with the intention of making the translator as visible –and therefore accountable– as possible.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the type of translation that will serve my purpose, I follow the methodology associated with Skopostheorie. Developed in the 1970s, Skopostheorie is at the core of functionalist translation theory; it opposes the quest

[16] On this, Hugh Grady explains that, opposing historicism, presentist criticism looks at Shakespeare from a contemporary paradigm: "Presentism has been up to now a pejorative term; it was originally coined to designate universalizing historical methodologies that denied historical difference and naively imposed their own concepts and rationality onto an understanding of the past. But in the present situation in the field, we need to redefine and trans-value it as a positive term, to designate methods that understand the limits of historicism, its inability to transcend our own situation, and the need to come to terms with the past from within our current, unique point in history. We need to grasp, as Walter Benjamin put it, "the constellation which [our] own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus [we] establish ... a concept of the present as 'the time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (Illuminations 263)". Hugh Grady, "Shakespeare Studies, 2005: A Situated Overview" in *SHAKESPEARE*, vol. 1 no. 1, 2005, p. 114.

for 'equivalence' or 'faithfulness' that was previously seen in translation studies by focusing instead on developing a theory of translational action. By looking at translation practice as action instead of evaluating the product as final, Skopos works fluidly inside Apter's translation zone, creating a more equal relationship between source and target texts.

The word 'skopos' is Greek for aim or purpose and was introduced by Hans Vermeer into translation studies as the main force behind translational action. This includes the purpose of source text, target text and the whole translation process. The idea is that, more than seeking linguistic equivalence, a target text should respond to the purpose established for the translational action, which in turn seeks to be as compatible as possible to the purpose of the source text.

Before going into the specific theory that I will follow, I shall first clarify some concepts that will be discussed. I have suggested above that cosmopolitanisation is a necessary process of cultural globalisation from within; it is pertinent now to stress the fact that language and culture are indeed interdependent, so that linguistic transfer should be treated as cultural transfer. For this reason, and following Reiß and Vermeer, instead of 'target language text' and 'source language text', I will say 'target text' and 'source text'. The implication here is that, in the process of translational action, language is the central aspect, but not the only one to be considered.

In speaking of 'translational action', I am also following Reiß and Vermeer, that define it as "a generic term to cover both translating and interpreting",[17] later specifying that translating is "a specific type of translational action in which the complete source text and target text and all parts thereof remain accessible to the translator in such a way that the process as well as its result can be corrected at any time".[18] Correctability is then a necessary quality of translation. This is relevant to my work because it emphasizes the dynamic nature of the whole process of

[17]Katharina Reiß, Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014) p. 7
[18] Ibid, p. 9

cultural and linguistic transfer: a target text, or translatum,[19] is not considered to 'be' a translation, but to 'function' as a translation. By considering any target text as potentially temporary, a point is being made also about the dynamic nature of culture in general, and the responsibility of the translator is stressed by the possibility of constant reassessment. It is not then a specific translation that I am proposing in this thesis, but a view on possible multiple translations.

As I have said previously, language and culture are inevitably intertwined and are both changing constantly in time as well as varying from one individual to another. The unique combination of individual and collective components that come together in the production of a specific text pose a challenge to the translator, who needs to look at a particular situation not because of its objective value but in the light of the text being translated. Reiß and Vermeer argue that "translators must therefore know both the source and the target cultures; they must be bi-cultural. [20] For, in translation, the value of an event, with regard to its nature or its degree or both, may change."[21] The knowledge of both source and target cultures works as justification for certain translation shifts that might take the target text away from purely linguistic equivalence, since both culture and language – source and target respectively – exist in time and space. It is partly due to this argument that Skopos has been relevant in non-literary translation, where linguistic transfer is not prioritised. This applies to contexts where linguistic equivalence proves too difficult. In relation to my present work, it stresses the importance of dealing with specific commentary on editorial practice particular to

[19] Vermeer uses the word *translatum* to address the specific target text favoured by Skopostheorie, one that is not necessarily a faithful imitation of the source text. It is a type of target text determined by its skopos. On this, see Hans J. Vermeer, "Skopos and commission in translational action" in *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[20] Christiane Nord talks about its uses for advertising and generally non-literary translation and mentions that translation itself has been an issue here: functionalist approaches were only translated from German in the 90s and 00s. She also mentions that China seems to be an exception, and that for China and South Africa, Skopostheorie has become very relevant. This is consistent with what I found; I have found examples of Shakespeare translated into Chinese using Skopostheorie methodology. Christiane Nord, "Functionalism in translation studies" in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013). Jeremy Munday mentions Vermeer and Reiß, also Nord and Holz-Mänttäri, when discussing functionalist theories. Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

[21] Reiß and Vermeer, p. 25

Shakespeare's texts, as well as the use of historical and lexical references, since it is impossible to be physically immersed in the source culture. It is also worth mentioning that the success of this type of functionalist methodology in other areas is proof of its usefulness to me: removing the focus from the linguistic aspect of the translational action allows me to consider the desired effect in audiences as an important part of the purpose. For the matter of linguistic fidelity, I refer to Nord and the translator's commitment to the text, but also to the principle of correctability. It is a matter of the translator not drifting from the text, but also of them always being subjected to correction and improvement. The idea of biculturalism as a necessary aspect of translational action ties as well to the cosmopolitanising aspect of it: the translator, as a messenger between texts and cultures, needs to be as bicultural and therefore as active in cosmopolitanisation as possible.

In addition to the previous, and closely related to it, there is also the matter of effect: the reaction expected from the recipient of the text – in this case, original intended audiences – is inevitably tied to the skopos of the source text. Consequently, it stands to reason that it should be a key element of the target text production, since "translational action assumes a given target situation or, more specifically, expectations with regard to a target situation (…). From this target situation, it can be inferred whether and how the translational action should be carried out".[22] This is the reason for exploring Mexican identities in my first two chapters,[23] to adequately gauge and construct expectations regarding the target situation.

Translation, as defined by this theory of translational action, is a phenomenon of both the source and target cultures. Because it is "a specific form

[22] Ibid, p. 74

[23] The concept of translational action was first developed by Justa Holz-Mänttäri as a guideline for professional translation situations and later applied by Vermeer to a wider range of translations. The concept of "commissioner" also comes from Holz-Mänttäri, initially meaning the individual commissioning the translator, but then expanded by Vermeer as the defining focus behind it. On this, see Vermeer and Munday.

of interaction, it is more important that a particular translational purpose be achieved than that the translation process be carried out in a particular way."[24]

As an interaction, it is necessary to clarify that translational action "begins with a situation that always includes a preceding action, i.e. the source text; here, the question is not whether and how somebody acts but whether, how and in what respect the previous action is continued (translated/interpreted). Seen in this light, a theory of translational action is a *complex* theory of action".[25] Here, more specifically, "Nida and Taber refer to a subfunction of the general statement made above when they write: Even the old question *Is this a correct translation?* must be answered in terms of another question, namely, *For whom?*"[26]

Following from the previous, the most important rule of Skopostheorie is that translational action is determined by its purpose; when it comes to translational action, the end justifies the means. Within this paradigm, intratextual coherence takes precedent, stating that "a translation should be acceptable in the sense that it is coherent with the receiver's situation, that is, the target-text receivers should be able to understand the target text and interpret it as being sufficiently coherent with their own communicative situation and culture".[27] From this point of view, it is pertinent to go back to Michel Modenessi's arguments against the tradition of Shakespeare translation in Mexico: the fact that audiences are required to perform a second simultaneous translation when faced with a staging clearly constitutes an example of intratextual coherence not being achieved.

One of the most important advantages of working with Skopostheorie is the possibility of multiple translations from the same source text; I am arguing in this work that, in the case of Mexican culture and identity, connection with audiences is better achieved through the favouring of a specific aspect, and that means the use of codes that may be unproductive when faced with a different public.

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[24] Reiß and Vermeer, p. 89
[25] Ibid, p. 85
[26] Ibid, p. 86
[27] Xiaoyan Du, "A Brief Introduction to Skopos Theory" in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 2, No 10, 2012.

Of course, Skopostheorie is not without its critics and limitations. Christiane Nord discusses its main oppositions, which were later contested by Vermeer. [28] It has been argued that the literary text does not have a specific purpose and is therefore, impossible to apply Skopos to it. [29] To this I will respond that there is a combination of possible purposes that the literary text is continually serving, and these vary according to time and place: regardless of the existence of translations, Shakespeare's plays have a different skopos today than in the moment they were created. The translator will inevitably favour one of these purposes above the others. In my case, as I am focusing on one specific aspect of the plays, I will need to state clearly the purpose of my proposed translational action. I also find it necessary to emphasise that, in the case of theatre, successful staging is usually an inevitable purpose. My focus on double meaning ties to staging possibilities: because it is such a significant feature to Mexican culture, sexual humour through double meaning works as a connection to audiences that are so distant in time and space from the source text.

In doing this work, I am arguing in favour of local translations as a more successful approach to Shakespeare text. [30] By engaging closely with particular cultural values in the target culture, a local translation sets in motion new or forgotten energies within the source text, allowing for a more dynamic exchange. Shakespeare was writing for a very specific audience, one that not only defines the configuration of theatre at the moment, but also finds its place in a society that is in the middle of dramatic change. The Shakespearean stage has been looked at from a Bakhtinian perspective because it marks a particular crossover between

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[28] Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).
[29] Mary Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies: New paradigms or shifting viewpoints?* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006).
[30] For a definition of 'local' Shakespeare, I am following Sonia Massai in advocating the importance of Shakespearean appropriation as a means for post-colonial and non-western communities to claim cultural importance and accessibility. She also notes that "dominant critical trends are similarly shown to stem from and defend the interests of specific scholarly communities. Interesting similarities between adaptations and well-established schools of criticism have led some contributors to expose the local nature of dominant critical approaches" (p. 8). In other words, the idea of local, multiple translations and adaptations of Shakespeare that, in a display of cosmopolitanisation, establish a dialogue between specific, particular realities and the imaginary construct of the global cultural 'other', not only provides centralised cultural value to these realities, but also places them in a position to access this dialogue from an equal standing point.

strict religious prohibition and the permissiveness specific to the court, and as such represents a place of blurred boundaries: a place of carnival. [31] In this, it relates to some manifestations of Mexican performance – cabaret, carpa theatre – closely tied to the mechanisms of albur; establishing these similarities as part of the skopos for this translational action improves the possibilities of connection with audiences. Working for 21st century Mexican audiences represents a challenge, but it also means encouraging multiple translations to interact together. At this point it is important to return to Venuti and the translator's invisibility: taking responsibility for the translation means that the translator is owning their choices, therefore emphasising this particular element to the translational action.

Returning also to Apter, I have suggested conversations that would be encouraged by translating double meaning in a more accurate way. Approaching these questions through the focus of albur enables me to access these energies. As I will explain in detail on my second chapter, albur is a game that stems from a strongly misogynistic and homophobic aspect of Mexican culture. Albur games, in which the opponents strive to symbolically rape each other, take place spontaneously in informal everyday scenarios. The game in itself deals in sexual violence and domination, where the dominated is either female or homosexual male. This is the origin of it, but it has been subjected to appropriation on the part of the traditionally dominated, and thus turned into a force for change.

Specific issues of contemporary Mexican culture also defined the text selection I will be working with. The two main reasons for initially choosing *Romeo and Juliet* are its popularity and the use of homoerotic banter as humour, which resembles albur in its form and function. *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Troilus and Cressida* both contain sexual double meaning language being used by female characters, either in a friendly, teasing way or as a reaction against manipulation and the helplessness of their condition; the last one also deals with issues of

[31] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (Oxon: Routledge, 1989).

borders and cultural belonging. *Othello* also shows an example of a female character using sexual double meaning language, but the context relates it to issues of misogynistic violence. This will all be dealt with in more detail in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTERS

1. ON CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN IDENTITIES

This chapter attempts to establish the climate of identity crisis and change in contemporary Mexican culture and question the role Shakespeare translation can play in it. This in turn depends on two areas: the ways in which Shakespeare has served as a globalising agent for other non-western or semi-western cultures, [32] and the elements through which Mexican identity can be explored in Shakespeare's use of double meaning and sexual puns. This exploration is made possible by the existence of albur, a very particular manifestation of sexual wordplay that is exclusive to Mexican culture. Albur is already an outlet for social problems and gender issues, and as such provides a semantic code and cultural context where translating Shakespeare can be shown to be both relevant to and instructive for considering issues in contemporary Mexican identity.

The chapter begins with an account of the mechanisms by which national identities are constructed. Nationality is not a concept that comes to be exclusively inside the borders of a determined culture. It is an interaction between sameness and otherness that manifests in different aspects of cultural life.[33] Sameness is determined by a perceived common history, language, ethnic identity, traditions – all of which form a group of narratives that is far from homogenous but constitutes a shapeshifting mass of values that we tend to call identity. It is variable

[32] The concept of 'semi-western' comes from Claudio Lomnitz's *La nación desdibujada: México en trece ensayos* (México: Malpaso, 2016).
[33] On this, Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996); Ruth Wodak, Rudolph de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

and multiple, subject to manipulation and at the same time crucial to the social, political, cultural and economic life of a nation.[34]

In *Exits from the Labyrinth*,[35] Lomnitz frames the difficulties of analysing Mexican identity in terms of academic competence. Ever since the Mexican Revolution, Mexican identity has been explored in interpretative essays that lack the analytical depth provided by the theoretical and methodological framework of social sciences. These essays discuss valuable ideas and observations but tend to be closely linked to the political needs of their times and therefore should be treated with caution. The processes described are generally undisputable but variable in their possibilities depending on the interest of different factions. The political system that has manipulated identity discourse for the better part of the twentieth century has been rapidly falling into lack of credibility, the result of which is that – now more than ever – there is a crisis of Mexican identity, within and without Mexican borders. National identity is necessary in the process of interacting with a globalised 'outside' and, depending on the desired outcome of this interaction, diverse elements of identity are constantly manipulated by distinct political agendas, the collapse of which causes instability.

What is translated, and how, is an important part of the creation of the discourses which manipulate national identities. Payás acknowledges this in her historic account of translation in Mexico during the colony, citing Pym's concern with the role of translation in the development of cultural systems.[36] She directs attention to the fact that what, how and why we translate is closely related to who we are, and who we will be.

With that in mind, I go back to who we are at this particular moment. Lomnitz raises questions of institutional racism, crisis of political representation,

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[34] On this, Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Eric Hobsbawm and Terene Ryder, *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[35] Claudio Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).
[36] Gertrudis Payás, *El revés del tapiz: traducción y discurso de identidad en la Nueva España 1521-1821* (Madrid: Vervuert-Iberoamericana, 2010).

economic dependence and instability, connecting with previous authors who are possibly outdated but are significant in that they are still being cited as cultural references (Paz, Uranga, Ramos, Portilla). Racism within literature and translation is addressed by Payás, Lund[37] and Navarrete[38], as an issue concerning translation into Spanish, both from foreign languages and from indigenous languages.

It is also pertinent to mention certain aspects of gender, raised by Margo Glantz[39] and Beatriz Preciado[40] (among others that also draw from outdated but popular notions of Mexicanity) because of the close connection to albur and double meaning.

In the midst of all, the cultural traits that I am most interested in as spaces for exchange are the ones related to rite, festivity and humour. These provide an outlet for issues and anxieties previously mentioned (racism, sexism, classism) as well as a connection to my agenda for Shakespearean translation.

2. A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF ALBUR AND ITS RELEVANCE

To contextualise albur and its role in Mexican identity, it will be useful to describe Tepito, a significantly rough neighbourhood in Mexico City. Albur is a national phenomenon with regional nuances, but it is especially strong in a few places, of which the most important is Tepito.[41] The neighbourhood bears a set of characteristics that work in favour of cultural resilience and result in strong traits such as albur itself, but also the worship of La Santa Muerte [The Holy Death] and the importance of boxing as a National-Tepito sport (Hernández).

I am especially concerned with Tepito because of the particular way in which the neighbourhood has developed its identity, coming from a history of illegality and resistance against social injustice, and how it has influenced national

[37] Joshua Lund, *El Estado mestizo: Literatura y raza en México* (México: Malpaso, 2017).
[38] Federico Navarrete, *Alfabeto del racismo mexicano* (México: Malpaso, 2017).
[39] Margo Glantz (coordinator), *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos* (México: Taurus, 2013).
[40] Beatriz Preciado, *Manifiesto Contra-Sexual* (Madrid: Ópera Prima, 2002).
[41] Johannes Maerck, "Desde acá–Tepito, barrio en la Ciudad de México" in *Revista del Cesla* No. 13, T. 2, 2010; Alfonso Hernández Hernández, "Devoción a la Santa Muerte y San Judas Tadeo en Tepito y anexas" in *El Cotidiano*, núm. 169, septiembre-octubre, 2011.

identity as well, permeating through all social and economic classes. Its presence in Mexican cinema, television and popular culture is evidence of this (from soap operas to independent cinema, and now even Netflix shows; to music and literature). Here it is important to go back to gender, making a special mention of Las Cabronas de Tepito [The Badass Ladies of Tepito], of which albur champion Lourdes Ruiz is a part. As she states, albur is particularly tied to gender issues because of its original situation as an exclusively male activity; being able to participate in games of albur, to understand the semantic code and work with it, represents for the women of Tepito a symbolic conquest over the sexist discourse constantly directed at them. Strong female figures thrive in Tepito, represented in a way by the devotion to La Santa Muerte,[42] Las Cabronas, and the important presence of female boxers (also, a sport/game that used to be exclusively masculine) alongside their male counterparts. Neu's research on ritual insults as a way of airing social issues and establishing trust provides an explanation for the proliferation of albur in Tepito. [43]

The next section is a detailed description of the contemporary status of albur in urban Mexican culture. Helena Beristáin is the main source for this section, as most of the other work on it is closer to the kind of informal commentary and literary essay mentioned in the previous chapter. [44] However, Paz's recognition of albur as an important linguistic manifestation of Mexicanity needs to be taken into consideration due to the strong influence this writer still holds. [45] I will also discuss Lourdes Ruiz's recent book on albur, an informal and humorous 'manual' dedicated to those willing to improve their skills and participate in conversations where albur vocabulary is used. [46] It will correspondingly be useful, in clarifying the methods by which albur finds both its energy and its functionality, to go back to Neu and the mechanisms of ritual insult which, combined with ideas on humour

[42] In Spanish, Death is female.
[43] Jerome Neu, *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[44] Helena Beristain, "El albur" in *Acta poética 21* (México: UNAM, 2000); "La densidad figurada del lenguaje alburero" in *Revista de Retórica y Teoría de la Comunicación* (México: Logo, 2001).
[45] Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).
[46] Lourdes Ruiz; Miriam Mejía, *Cada que te veo palpito: guía básica (y unisex) para alburear* (CDMX: Grijalbo, 2018).

and play as a force for social change and resistance[47] and on its importance as part of collective rituals and social bonding,[48] should present a strong base for an exploration of its possibilities within Shakespeare translation and Mexican identity. Albur's constant presence in both literature and the theatre scene, as well as in massive cultural manifestations such as cinema, television, music and even advertising, is discussed next. In literature, some of its elements can be found in the tradition of pre-Hispanic jokes and playful songs with hints of double meaning that have survived throughout the Colonial Period but its presence became increasingly evident in modern and contemporary authors. Mid-twentieth century writers like Salvador Novo, Octavio Paz, Juan José Arreola and Rosario Castellanos incorporate it into their writing; the 1960s movement Literatura de la Onda [Literature of the Wave] (José Agustín, René Avilés Favila) and the rise of gay-themed literature in the 1980s (Luis Zapata, Carlos Monsiváis, José Joaquín Blanco; Alberto Teutle López in *Sexual History of the Global South*) make for a surge in popular low-class cultural manifestations like albur in more formal literary writing. In the twenty-first century, it is an important element in writers like Hugo Hiriart, Enrique Serna, Mario Bellatín, Luis Humberto Crostwaithe, among many others.

The mechanism of albur, being a manifestation of theatricality, is even more evident within the theatre scene, where it is a tool for political criticism (José Juan Tablada, Carpa Theatre, Yucatecan Regional Theatre) and gender experimentation in a repressive society. Cabaret Theatre (Liliana Felipe, Jesusa Rodríguez, Francis, Regina Orozco, Astrid Hadad), which is deeply rooted in urban Mexico, relies strongly on albur. It is also present in the work of more formal playwrights like Sabina Berman, Luis Mario Moncada and Flavio González Mello. Because it involves transgression of certain cultural values, and incorporating popular,

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[47] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (London: Continuum, 2002); *The Critique of Everyday Life* (New York: Verso, 1991); Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1949).
[48] Leonardo Da Jandra, *La Mexicanidad: fiesta y rito* (Oaxaca: Almadía, 2012); Victoria Reifler Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).

irreverent elements to literary culture; it could be argued that Bakhtin's concept of carnival applies to albur perfectly, but as much as that works in a different context, it is not very useful to my work, mainly, because Bakhtin's work was developed around a European cultural product, and in this case I am dealing with the interaction between western and semi-western cultures. Colonisation needs to be taken into consideration, and it indeed is. A more Bakhtinian focus would possibly shift attention towards class interaction; I want to focus on a different kind of opposition – and I am looking to view it as collaboration more than opposition –, the one that takes place between self and other, national and foreign.

3. SHAKESPEARE AND MEXICO, TRANSLATION COMMENTARY

In the first chapter of this thesis, I considered translation as a source for identity and, as such, an object of political manipulation. In the first section of this chapter, I revisit those ideas with the objective of directly examining the role Shakespeare translation has played in the landscape of Mexican cultural politics.

I trace back the history of Shakespeare translation and staging in Mexico from the time of Nueva España [The Viceroyalty of New Spain] – as possible – to present day. This section relies on historic accounts and especially on the work of Mexican researchers that have explored the reasons behind the particular characteristics of this line of translation in Mexico. [49] As the chapter develops, commentary on the way the cultural impact of translating and appropriating Shakespeare has affected other cultures' relations with a global westernised world will be necessary.[50] It is the combination of the history and politics of translation, both inwards and outwards, that will provide support for future explorations on Mexican identity and Shakespeare translation.

As a follow up to the chronological tracing in this chapter, it will be useful to present a panoramic view of the current status of Shakespearean translation,

[49] A mentioned before, Michel Modenessi, Calvillo.

[50] Massai, *op cit*; Michel Modenessi, *op cit*; Mark Thornton Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema*, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2013).

adaptation and staging, which is now going through a renewal/revival. The work of Michel Modenessi has, since the last two decades of the twentieth century, been striving towards a more popular – not so academic – approach to translation, with generally good results. González Mello's work is also particularly important to mention because he deliberately incorporated elements of albur into his production of Hamlet, which is particularly distant from academic justification, but was staged with great success in Mexico City for two years in a row. It is also pertinent to mention the work of authors and theatre professionals like Liliana Felipe, Raquel Araujo and Paco Marín among others.

A second section of this chapter will provide a more detailed look at the Shakespeare translations that are most popular in Mexico, focusing on the translation of sexual double entendre in order to evaluate the possibilities of generating one that is better suited to Mexican history and cultural heritage. The chapter is centred around *Romeo and Juliet* but the other plays that I am working on will also be considered.

The questions that I raise – and explore some possible answers to – in this chapter revolve around the extent to which the history of Shakespeare translation in Mexico is characteristically Mexican versus being based upon a collection of clichés inherited from Iberian traditions. In order to answer this, political and cultural factors need to be considered, so as to understand the motivations behind this history. *Romeo and Juliet* is a clear choice because of the way it deals with conflict, gender and sexuality; the main reason for including *Much Ado About Nothing* is the way in which double meaning and sexual humour thrives among female voices. There is also the possibility of lightness as a solution to violence and gender issues, which manifest themselves more dramatically in both *Othello*, where the issue of Desdemona's innocence is coloured by her verbal-sexual interactions, and *Troilus and Cressida*, where the metaphorical importance of woman within a context of borders, race and nationality resonates with a long-lived conflict in the Mexican northern border.

4. TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will firstly set the grounds for my approach to targeted translation following Skopostheorie through a description of its methodology and the clear enunciation of the skopos, which has been justified throughout the thesis through cultural background and examination of the current situation.

Translation, as Apter suggests, brings out the possibility for a place of exchange where the point of view does not necessarily favour source cultures (or target cultures for that matter) but, more akin to Zygmut Bauman's ideas on culture, source and target exercise a fluid influence over each other. [51]

Albur, as a cultural manifestation, stems from issues relating to both gender and colonial domination: it is a form of rebellion born from what Spivak defines as the subaltern, against cultural imperialism. [52] It is performative in its display of male domination, for there is no pre-established male or female sides to it, and in this way, despite its intrinsic duality, it allows for a fluid exchange between male and female elements. A special interest in albur queers the original text, bypassing colonial limitations that have kept Shakespeare as an imperialist commodity. Going back to Apter, by making it dirty, we make it ours; and hence part of the imaginary 'other' that Mexican culture interacts with in its flow of cosmopolitanisation.

On a second section, I will translate and discuss specific selections of the mentioned texts, targeting the issues that speak directly to Mexican sensibilities as points of entry for a cultural connection. Translating with the purpose of engaging with albur vocabulary signifies a series of shift that will have to be appropriately justified, as dictated by Skopostheorie's rules, by the purpose motivating the translational action and, more specifically, by the particularities of such vocabulary. An important part of this explanation of translation shifts will be provided by

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[51] Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

[52] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation", in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

commentary on Shakespeare editorial practice and the choices for the particular source I with which I will be working.

CHAPTER 1
On Contemporary Mexican Identities

I have established that I will be aiming, with the focus on albur as a tool for better translation of double meaning, to contribute to the evolution of a better dialogue between Mexican cultural identities and the globalised otherness of which Shakespeare is a part. I want, again, to emphasise the idea of dialogue, not domination or control. This is the intention behind subscribing to the idea of cosmopolitanisation as fluid and dynamic and calls upon the concept of dialogic imagination. This means that target culture is just as important as source culture and consequently – as upheld by Skopostheorie – the translator, before attempting any kind of translational action, needs to ensure a level of knowledge and understanding of the target culture that would support their choices in translation shifts and approaches as the best ones for the fulfilment of the purpose.
It is for this reason that my first chapter constitutes an overview of Mexican cultural identities and the particular aspects of them that will demonstrate the adequateness of my approach to translation.

NATIONAL IDENTITIES

According to Mexican sociologist, anthropologist and 'pensador'[53] Roger Bartra, "la nación es el más hollado y a la vez el más impenetrable de los territorios de la sociedad moderna" [The nation is the most trampled on and, at the same time, the most impenetrable of modern society's territories].[54] He argues that beyond the physical existence of frontiers, there are many 'strange and subtle cultural forces' responsible for the identity of a certain country. While it is true that, as a concept,

[53] 'Los pensadores/el pensador' translates literally as 'the thinkers/the thinker'. The figure of the pensador usually refers to a non-academic commentator of national culture. Despite offering a superficial analysis of national issues, pensadores were –still are, to an extent– highly regarded by the public in Latin America. As I will discuss further ahead, they need to be considered because of their importance in the shaping of national identities.
[54] Roger Bartra, *La jaula de la melancolía: identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano*, (México: Grijalbo, 1987) p. 15.

nationality is elusive and ever-changing, it is however counterproductive to ignore that these forces mentioned by Bartra have been the object of much consideration through the twentieth century and are inevitably tied to concepts of identity and self. There are many elements to the construction of nationality that can be – and have been – identified and studied and it is helpful, as I attempt to understand the workings of social and cultural contemporaneity, to have a defined approach towards these elements in mind. I will now go through a series of concepts around national identities that will be relevant in my subsequent analysis of Mexican contemporaneity; this is aimed towards establishing connections to albur and exploring the different manners in which it can interact with Shakespearean translation practice.

In *The Identity of Nations*, Montserrat Guibernau points out that the manner in which national identity works within the context of a contemporary nation-state is rarely spontaneous; political factions with specific interests in mind are at work in most of the cases. [55] This is a point which will be examined later in further detail, with special consideration towards the ways in which institutions favoured concepts of nationality through the second half of Mexico's twentieth century, as discussed by Claudio Lomnitz.[56] The reason for mentioning it now as a first instance is my intention to establish, as it is essential to my work, that (Mexican) nationality is a deliberate process and, as such, is susceptible to alteration at any moment.

Nevertheless, before going into particular aspects of Mexican identities, a broad outline on the concept of national identity is required, if only to clarify which aspects of it become more relevant in relation to translation and its politics. In *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*,[57] Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart discuss the importance of linguistic representation in the constitution of

[55] Monstserrat Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
[56] Claudio Lomnitz, *La Nación Desdibujada*, (Barcelona: Malpaso, 2016).
[57] Ruth Wodak, Rudolph de Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

identity, which in the case of national identity works both through the discourse of social actors (media, political institutions, etc.) and on an informal social level. It is through this kind of representation that social groups are formed and relations of dominance are either openly established or concealed.

Identity can be understood as sameness or equality throughout time, therefore it is useful, because it provides a strong base for later discussion, to go back to Ricœur's work, particularly his ideas on how qualitative sameness (*Idem*) is preserved by the possibility of continuity replacing quality or extreme resemblance.[58] Communities can track the series of small – or not so small – changes through a recount of the events that led to those changes and their subsequent consequences, and this ensures their identity through the existence of institutions that build up a structure for the continuation of sameness. For both individuals and communities, the narration of these events is crucial in the understanding of self and sameness, but the mechanisms of this narration vary depending on the subject, be it single or collective.

Narrative identity, again defined by Ricœur, is a character's identity, and its configuration is intended to make sense of dissonance within a narration, so that transformation is incorporated into the definition of identity. [59] The most important aspect of this is that narrative identity derives from the telling of a story, therefore allowing for the past to be assimilated in a series of corrections and variations to previous versions of the same story: physical and psychological change is explained through specific events chained together in time, allowing for the individual to maintain a sense of self despite evident differences with the past-self.

Ricoeur's concept clarifies the process of finding connections along a series of changes, but it still applies in a different way to nations than it does to individuals, so the issue of dissonance between individual and collective identities

[58] Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as another* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).
[59] Ibid.

remains. Physical change affects nationality particularly in its territorial dimension which, in the words of Guibernau, is important because "territory has traditionally been the people's primary source of nourishment",[60] but

> "when turned to landscape, territory achieves a completely different meaning for those who belong, (…) people come to regard the landscape as embodying the traditions, history and culture of the nation they share with their ancestors. The landscape, be it urban or rural, also represents our heritage to future generations (…) a source of beauty, admiration and exploration. It is turned into a symbol of the nation which embodies traditions, ideas, aspirations and sentiments, some of which evoke a strong sense of national belonging."[61]

Physical change transforms national identity by altering the psychological aspect of its configuration; the psychological landscape. It is this aspect that presents the greater challenge for a thorough analysis, for it is not one individual, and therefore not a single psychological identity, that needs to be dealt with, but a flowing cluster of ideas that affect individuals and social groups in various different ways.

Collective identity can be seen from two different perspectives: social identity as a construct over individuals that are part of a group – in which the person is the subject – and group identity in relation to systems, where the focus is the group itself, not the individual. The lines between the two approaches are blurry, precisely because individuals belong to several social groups at the same time, and these groups belong to different systems. Resulting from this, there is never a single national identity, but a spectrum of possible sources of identification that frequently overlap, allowing for lines of conflict to fade in favour of a shared idea of unity. For the present work, the use of singular or plural when referring to national identity will depend on whether the focus is being directed at the common aspects of collectiveness (singular) or at the differences between sections or individuals of the shifting whole (plural).

[60] Guibernau, p. 23
[61] Ibid.

If one tries to understand Bartra's choice to forego any serious discussion on the concept of nation itself, especially when his *Jaula de la Melancolía* is a well-respected essay dealing with Mexican identity, it could be explained by the fact that, as he argues, there is no unified definition of it; however, it is probably more closely related to specific characteristics of some sectors in Mexican academia that encourage a more literary, less empiric approach to social and cultural studies. I will come back to this later, as it relates to particular aspects of Mexican identity politics, but before going into the specifics, it is important to clarify that discussions on the idea of nation frequently revolve around two conceptions of it, deriving from the German *Willensnation* or *Staatsnation* – the political Nation, existing as an act of will from the citizens – and *Kulturnation*, based on culture and often defined by language and ethnicity.

When concerned with improving cultural receptivity to something as distant in both time and space from contemporary Mexico as Shakespeare might seem, the cultural aspect could be argued to be of a more pronounced relevance than the political one, since the presence of otherness manifests in this instance at a cultural level, Shakespeare is and has been more a cultural asset than a political influence. Nevertheless, in the case of Mexican culture, the status of the political Nation needs to be carefully accounted for, for the lack of ethnic and linguistic uniformity[62] creates conflict in regard to the set of standards that allow for an idea of cultural unity to exist: there is a separation between Spanish-speaking and Indigenous – a term that includes all the sixty-nine languages spoken besides Spanish – that consequently derives from a separation between the different indigenous regions and their influence in regional Spanish language variations. This separation is pertinent to both language and ethnicity, and is worth mentioning, among other reasons, because it leads to somewhat forced but useful solidarities between people of very different origins. The forced opposition between the

[62] According to INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography), by 2015, 6.6 percent of the Mexican population over five years of age were native speakers of an indigenous language, Spanish being their second language. Besides Spanish and Náhuatl, there are 68 recognised languages in Mexico.

interests of the Spanish-speaking and those of the Indigenous communities makes any effort towards resistance to the abuse carried out by the white, Spanish-speaking hierarchies a demand for cooperation between indigenous communities. Besides this, the unique relation between political and cultural nationality that is made possible by the particularities of Mexican political class – a point which will also be thoroughly revisited in a following section of this chapter – plays an important part on what cultural identity means for contemporary Mexico. In any case, this separation does not imply complete alienation of the indigenous communities; while there are cases where this happens, most groups exist on a spectrum of conformity to European ideas of 'civilisation'.

Considering all of this, it is most productive in avoiding a one-dimensional analysis to rely on the nation as a complex construction of cultural representations that are filled with meaning through shared stories, which create the necessary sequence that connects past and present and allows for collective imagination to relate to the historical foundation of the State, making it possible to bypass the deep ethnic and linguistic differences that are undeniably present and an important part of the culture.

According to Stuart Hall, there are five aspects to the narration of a national culture or the collective approach to narrative identity.[63] The first one is the narrative of the nation, evidently present in State-sanctioned education, but also in literature, media, everyday culture and rituals. It creates a link between everyday life and the idea of a national destiny. Through being present in everyday situations, the narrative of the nation is ever moving from past to future thanks to its participation in a quotidian present. The second aspect is an emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness; it aims to maintain an underlying but always present image of an unchanging and uniform National character – in the case at hand, ever present in type characters like Mexican machos and Mexican mothers

[63] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996).

seen throughout both academic and popular culture.[64] The third aspect is the invention of tradition, which allows for an understanding of confusion, turning despair into a way of building community. Albur is an example of this, as it is an outlet for social oppression, cultural – and tragically, many times physical – rape and defeat. The fourth one is the foundational myth or myths of origin. Hall states that they "provide a narrative in terms of which an alternative history or counter-narrative, which pre-dates the ruptures of colonisation, can be constructed";[65] for Mexico, myths of origin rely strongly on contemporary reconstructions of the pre-Hispanic foundational stories, as well as idealisations of the War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution.[66] This phenomenon is consistent with the fifth and last aspect, the fictitious idea of a 'pure, original folk'. In the present case, this leads to a conflict. Idealisation of indigenous cultures on the page and screen goes hand in hand with complete rejection towards the actual living indigenous people, a political strategy that is meant to work toward the unification of cultural identity. It is strongly rooted in the cultural policies at work during the Porfirian dictatorship and manifests itself, for example, in aesthetic aspects of contemporary racism.[67] Many social issues emerge from it, like racial profiling for certain jobs – a clear majority of cleaners, construction workers and farmers in Mexico are identified as indigenous[68] – and the loss of sectional identities, which ties to the question of whether it is possible to hold a strong sense of national identity when there are so many differences to cover through the discourse of mainstream national culture.

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[64] I will discuss these stereotypes further ahead, they are strongly supported by cinema from the first half of the twentieth century, Mexico's golden age of film, and the constant presence of products like Telenovelas and series (e.g. *Mujer, Casos de la Vida Real* and more recently *La Rosa de Guadalupe*) that strongly influence Mexican audiences in their ideas of self and nation.

[65] Hall, p. 614

[66] Idealisation of the national past is not uncommon in the construction of national identities, and in the case of Mexico it can be especially short-sighted. The presence of a mythical 'Indio' [undefined Indigenous person] in the Mexican imaginarium unifies cultures that have little in common under the vague characterisation of Aztecs or Mayans in the same way the idealisation of Independence or Mexican Revolution heroes acts as a blanket for diverse and sometimes opposed movements in the different areas of the country. On this, see Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

[67] Shelley E. Garrigan, *Collecting Mexico* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2012).

[68] Alicia Castellanos Guerrero, *Imágenes del Racismo en México* (Iztapalapa: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2003).

This question remains unanswered and, for my specific purposes, needs not be answered. Again, I am not proposing a single strategy on Shakespeare translation for Mexico, not even when concerned with sexual double meaning, but rather an approach that will highlight aspects equally relevant but differently manifested throughout the various regions of the country. Albur, as will be seen in the following chapter, is a cultural trait that appears throughout these regions, though its vocabulary and expression might vary from one to another.

HISTORIC CONSIDERATIONS

Officially, the birth of Mexico as a free country goes back to the nineteenth century, after the ten years of Independence War culminated with the entrance of the Army of Three Guarantees to Mexico City in 1821. However, after a very turbulent period of around one hundred years, pensadores and politicians started focusing on National Identity issues at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1951, Samuel Ramos, whose work set an important landmark for the type of essays on the Mexican characters that would thrive during this period, explained that the valorisation of Mexican nationality is constructed upon the base of a series of adverse collective experiences. [69] This is consistent with Hall.[70] Defeat and shame are assimilated into tradition and thus strengthen communities: for each battle lost there is a celebration of the martyrs that died defending their country, an enemy to hate and a traitor to blame for things going wrong. However, during the surge on 'Mexicanity' essays of the mid-twentieth century, Santiago Ramírez argued in his 1959 book *El Mexicano, Psicología de sus Motivaciones* [The Mexican, Psychology of their Motivations] that this assimilation is not always successful for mestizos – mix of Spanish and any indigenous ethnic background, i.e. most contemporary Mexicans –, that they tend to be torn between two conflicted identities that compel them to refuse their indigenous origins while, at the same time, resenting the violence inflicted on native

[69] Samuel Ramos, "El complejo de Inferioridad", in *Anatomía del Mexicano* (México: Random House Mondadori, 2013).
[70] Hall.

American populations by the Spanish, therefore rejecting the European part of their heritage as well. [71]

The other side of this conflict lies in the construction of foundational myths that idealise both indigenous and criollo – Spanish born in America – heroes, which can be found both in informal media and official publications such as textbooks and government websites.[72] By the end of the 1980s, amid social crisis brought about – among other reasons – by paternalism toward marginalised mestizo and indigenous communities, Guillermo Bonfil reflected on this same conflict, placing it in terms of social and political failure. His book *México Profundo* [Deep Mexico] is an exploration of the division between what he called 'Imaginary Mexico', the westernised project of a successful, democratic society, and the 'Deep Mexico', the vast population that did not share the set of cultural standards, norms and aspirations of western civilisation. [73] Claudio Lomnitz later comes back to the idea and its consequences from a twenty-first century point of view in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico.*[74]

In *El Estado Mestizo*, Joshua Lund explains how the idealisation of a homogeneous Mexican race, the mythical but non-existent mestizo, follows a very specific political agenda that gained momentum especially during Porfirian times, when the dictator embodied the figure of this mixed Mexican man that embraced European culture while professing pride in his mestizo status – a highly educated, Europe-oriented dark skinned man that appeared at that moment as perfect example of Mexican citizenship.[75] He argues that racialisation is merely the aesthetic expression of a political struggle for land and power, a struggle that is traceable throughout the national narratives enforced by the State as a means for strengthening certain aspects of identity. On this subject, Guibernau explains that "by creating a national education system and national media, and by promoting a specific 'national' culture and an 'official' language, the nation-state contributes to

[71] Santiago Ramírez, *El Mexicano, Psicología de sus Motivaciones* (México: Grijalbo, 1977).
[72] http://www.gob.mx/sep
[73] Guillermo Bonfil, *México Profundo* (México: Grijalbo, 1987).
[74] Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minesotta Press, 2001).
[75] Joshua Lund, *El Estado mestizo: Literatura y raza en México*, (México: Malpaso, 2017).

the dissemination of a distinct national identity among its citizens."[76] This identity is therefore manipulated by political interests and, in the particular case of Mexican race issues – as addressed by Lund –, works to legitimise property and power by erasing indigenous population, assimilating them into a fabricated 'mestizo' identity.

Returning to Guibernau and the basics of how the nation-state builds identities, she stresses that the process requires the reciprocal recognition of others. Thus, as Lomnitz also points out, it is an interaction with the outside that never stays unmoving. The defining criteria for nationality is then a matter of continuity over time and differentiation from others, a distinction that proves important in terms of inclusion and exclusion: those who are not members are therefore strangers, and eventually bring out the possibility of enmity. Guibernau cites the "creation of common enemies" as a crucial aspect to "the emergence and consolidation of a sense of community among citizens united against external threat, be it imminent, potential or invented;" [77] the importance of considering this aspect when dealing with translation studies in general, and specifically with Shakespeare translation, comes from the possibility of Anglophone cultures being set as antagonistic to Mexican society due to a long and complicated history of evident conflict and veiled – and in some cases coerced – collaboration between Mexico and the United States. Due to the social, cultural and economic prominence of Anglophone countries, the nature of this relationship colours global interactions, and therefore needs to be carefully examined in order to approach translation in a productive way. It may be evident that the focus of this section is on duality and conflict throughout the history of Mexican identity building. This is a key aspect that can and should be challenged through translation as a means for pursuing a dialogic, collaborative relation with the otherness rather than a more conflictive, oppositional one.

[76] Guibernau, p. 25.
[77] Ibid.

On a side note, but still as relevant, popular culture in Mexico tends to an increasingly dramatic visualisation of the government as 'the enemy'. This will be explored in the following section.

CONTEMPORARY MEXICO

Any discussion that deals with concepts revolving around 'the contemporary' is, from the start, difficult to pinpoint. The word's etymology suggests something that 'goes together' with time, in which case it is safe to assume, stemming from the most basic interpretation, that the use of it implies movement and change. As the purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of contemporary Mexican identity, not limited to a defined period in time, the task may prove somewhat diffuse. As a result, I will be treating contemporaneity as a fluid continuum and I will provide more detail when talking of events closer to the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Guibernau mentions that individual identity as an idea, and thus a matter for thought, becomes a common issue during the nineteenth century, but its relevance declines at the beginning of the twentieth in favour of a discussion of identity that reflects both the individual and the collective. It is an appropriate starting point for a reading of Mexican identity, especially since it coincides with the post-revolutionary surge on studies about Mexicanity. Political intentions behind the construction of nationality, as mentioned before, were at work in a powerful way during this period of national redefinition and these studies, as well as the pensadores producing them, became key figures in the build-up of what now works as contemporary Mexican identity. Their relevance, however, becomes a problem when pursuing a satisfactory study in terms of academic competence. As Lomnitz explains, "some of their legitimacy in the social sciences stems from the fact that they present 'artistic' perceptions of social reality",[78] a situation that is made more confusing because the respect that the pensadores were granted

[78] Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space*, p. 8.

throughout the twentieth century produces what he calls "literature-envy" as a phenomenon that affects many social scientists throughout Latin America.[79] In his words, "the transition from the production of empirical studies to the production of general interpretative essays is seen as a sign of intellectual maturity, not a symptom of escapism".[80] This leads to ideas of Mexican national culture being based on opinions and not sound analysis. This makes them volatile and susceptible to becoming subject of even more dramatic exploitation in the pursuit of political agendas and, eventually, causes them to be discarded and recycled into stereotypes. Lomnitz concludes that "the 'tradition' consists more of posing an identity problem than of an increasingly precise theory of the ways in which a cultural and historical dialectic has played out in Mexico's present".[81] On the subject, Lund comments that pensadores are "una categoría sorprendentemente importante en la historia cultural de México" [a surprisingly important category in the cultural history of Mexico],[82] while also stressing the relevance of social and political ideas in literary production. The particular case of the pensadores needs to be taken into account and dealt with carefully: despite their lack of serious empiric research, they need to be considered, not only because the processes they describe are generally undisputable, but because of their importance as a key part of these same processes.

Nonetheless, because it is the objective of this section to convey an idea of what contemporary Mexicanity means, it is productive to start from the present – or as close to it as possible – and consider how the collection of notions worked on by and through the pensadores as well as other mechanisms for establishing identity affects, transforms and is transformed by contemporary issues.

Nationality itself, in contemporary Mexico as in general, is a sectional issue; like most countries, Mexico is one and many. United by official history and

[79] Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space*, p. 8.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Lund, *El Estado Mestizo*, p. 17.

political barriers that form an illusion of shared past, some shared experience of the world, it is also divided by many subtle but strong inner frontiers: language, class, ethnicity, educational level, region of origin. Since the last decades of the twentieth century, and progressively until the present day, the political system that has manipulated identity discourses towards – among many things – national unity has been falling into lack of credibility; this process has resulted in a crisis for Mexican identity, but as Lomnitz argues in "Ayotzinapa y la Crisis de Representación",[83] a somewhat surprising effect of this growing lack of credibility has been a will for unity and solidarity amongst Mexicans beyond social and cultural barriers. It was previously established that one of the aspects of building nationality is the acquisition of a common enemy; due to recent political processes that will be addressed presently, the political class has become this common enemy, not only to lower classes but to upper-middle and privileged sectors of Mexican society.

Lomnitz states that "en términos generales, la crisis de representación actual emana de las tensiones entre la fluidez de las inversiones de capital y de los circuitos migratorios, por una parte, y la fijeza de los territorios políticos, por la otra" [in general terms, the current crisis of representation emanates from the tensions between fluidity of capital investments and migratory circuits, on one side, and the fixity of political territories, on the other],[84] and that in cultural grounds such tensions "se muestran claramente en una suerte de desarticulación entre el ritual político y la realidad material de los sujetos políticos" [are clearly visible in a sort of disarticulation between the political ritual and the material reality of political subjects].[85] To explain how this works for Mexican society, he focuses on the events of the 26th of September 2014, when a group of education students from the city of Ayotzinapa attempted to collect money and confiscate a few buses, apparently, for a trip to Mexico City. The students arrived at the city of Iguala

[83] Lomnitz, *La nación desdibujada.* pp. 43-60.
[84] Ibid, p. 42.
[85] Ibid.

when the wife of the mayor was hosting an event, and upon their arrival, for yet unclear reasons, there was a shoot-out in which five people died. Forty-three students were then kidnapped by the municipal police and later handed to a cartel – for which both police and municipal government were working – to be 'disappeared'. According to some confessions, the students were murdered and their bodies burned in a dump. Lomnitz states that these events mark a turning point in Mexican political life because, despite not being the deadliest tragedy in the alleged war against the narco, the Ayotzinapa dissappearances led to the most important social movement since the beginning of the war in 2006; they speak of a deeper crisis than the ones of 1968[86] and 1994[87] and made the collective cry for justice stronger and more painful than ever.

The crisis of representation that Lomnitz refers to has been gestating for a long time. Socially, it comes from the separation between a society that has experienced a rapid and profound transformation and the politics/media systems whose corresponding change has been lazy and ill-directed. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, Mexico experimented a transition brought about by the demise of its agricultural sector in favour of the manufacturing one, accelerated development of urban centres, drastic changes in gender roles and family organisation, significant migrations to the United States, an indigenous rebellion and a dramatically lethal war against the narco. All of this came alongside economic reform that presumed a gradual democratic transition, in other words, the new situation required new leaders. It should be kept in mind that the same political party was in total control of Mexican government from 1929 to 1989, when it started losing local governments and majority in Congress. All Mexican presidents from 1929 to 2000 were members of this party. The new leaders, however, were equally subject to corruption, which prompted the alleged 'solution'

[86] Another moment in which the government took the lives of innocent people in order to silence a political protest organised by students. The number of victims is still unclear, some sources place it around 325.
[87] The year of the Zapatista indigenous rebellion, a guerrilla movement that continues to work on some states along the south pacific coast of Mexico.

of giving representatives a higher salary and benefits, so that they would not be tempted by illegality. The result of this was the existence of a new class of millionaire politicians that had control over the economy, which prompted the increasing shadiness of affairs relating to matters of money. At the same time, the institutionalisation and professionalization of academia separated serious research from the public, allowing for the use of clichés and stereotypes in public discourse – here, the pensadores played a significant part. Besides this, investigative press has been subject to constant violence, making serious journalism one of the most dangerous occupations in Mexico. Lomnitz argues that "el resultado combinado de todo lo anterior es que, tras un período de treinta años de transformación profunda, la sociedad mexicana ya no se conoce a sí misma" [the combined result of all of the above is that, after a thirty-year period of deep transformation, Mexican society does not know itself anymore].[88]

It was in this climate of confusion and general discontent, and perhaps in some sense because of it, that the growing rift between conflicting sectors of society was bridged by tragedy. The events of Ayotzinapa appealed to traditionally opposing groups in a way that no previous movement had accomplished: the students were members of a group that had been protesting against president Peña Nieto's education reforms, but among the sectors participating in the massive demonstrations denouncing their disappearance were many that supported these reforms. They were also mostly indigenous, coming from a rural, low-income community, but their case was supported by urban middle and upper-middle classes. Lomnitz stresses that the cultural and political significance of this level of participation lies in the fact that it is a symptom of ongoing social change. The confusion about identity is overcome by a common enemy – the corrupt government –, pointing towards at least one common source of national identity. The process of political unification that Lomnitz mentions had its most evident

[88] Lomnitz, *La nación desdibujada*, p. 50.

result in the election of Andres Manuel López Obrador as president in 2018, which I will return to presently.

In the same manner, faced with a common external enemy, Mexico unites. Mexican foreign ministry's response to Trump's comments on NAFTA and the border wall he intends to build – August 2017 – reiterated the refusal to pay for the wall in any way, while at the same time offering help with the aftermath of hurricane Harvey.[89] So, how does one measure identity in this particular moment? It is in pursuit of a serious answer to that question that the previous section of this chapter has offered an overview of the diverse aspects relevant to the construction of national identity of which, as I shall show in chapter 2, albur is both a product and an agent for social transformation.

In "La ropa sucia del nacionalismo: zonas de contacto y la topografía de la identidad nacional" [The dirty laundry of nationalism: contact zones and the topography of National Identity],[90] Claudio Lomnitz speaks of National Identity as a construct tailored by international networks of intellectuals, specialists and politicians; mostly disguised as strictly local invention. Looking at identity in this light helps to understand Mexican sense of self, particularly as it expresses in its relationship with the perceived otherness, as multiple as it may be.

At the beginning of this section, I mentioned how relations between the citizens and the political class in Mexico have been rapidly deteriorating since the 1980s. There is, as it was established, a strong economic component to this process, and this implies the increasing mistrust in narratives that incorporate progress and development into nationality discourse. The shifting of dependency relationships with powerful countries – in Mexico's case, as in most of Latin America, this refers principally to the United States – also affects this situation. Lomnitz concludes that "las nuevas dependencias implican fragmentación de intereses y dificultades para moldear un sentido de dirección convincente para la

[89] http://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/27/politics/mexico-border-wall-trump-tweet/index.html
[90] Claudio Lomnitz, "La sopa sucia del nacionalismo: zonas de contacto y la topografía de la identidad nacional" in *La nación desdibujada: México en trece ensayos* (México: Malpaso, 2016).

colectividad nacional" [new dependencies imply a fragmentation of interests and difficulties in the task of shaping a convincing sense of direction for the national collectivity].[91] Both socially and economically, Mexico has understood itself in its relationship with the United States.

It is safe to say that Mexico's interaction with the rest of the world has been at least partially subordinated to its relationship with the US: as a nation that evolved from being dependent on Spain to being dependent on the United States, it has been subject to manipulation and exploitation. The servile attitude of the Mexican political class towards the United States, however, is never a popular one. Former ambassador José Guajardo,[92] in an article on the current Mexico-U.S. situation, spoke of the long-lived resentment that Mexicans share towards their northern neighbour, and how despite being somewhat dormant since the signing of NAFTA, it has never really disappeared. He mentioned that, as children, Mexicans are taught how the United States stole half their country; and the very popular story of the Niños Héroes [Hero Children], a dramatic tale of a group of very young cadets that got trapped at the Chapultec Castle – used as a military school at the time – during the American Intervention War in the nineteenth century and defended their position to the death, tells contemporary children that it is always preferable to die wrapped up in the National Flag than to yield to the cruel invaders (a.k.a. the Americans).

So, what happens now that this powerful nation is once again openly antagonistic to Mexico? Guajardo feared – and more recent developments might be proving his fears valid – that Trump's racism may put an end to the forced cooperation between the two countries, which actually runs very deep. What would this mean for Mexican identity? If Mexico's contact with the world is coloured by the United States, does that mean the contemporary surge in racism extends to other countries beyond their neighbour in the north? And perhaps more

[91] Lomnitz, *La nación desdibujada*, p. 77.
[92] https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/11/donald-trump-us-mexico-relations-215594

dramatically, does it extend to Mexico itself, in its construction of national identity and self-worth?

Broad as this discussion may seem, seeking answers to these questions will prove an important part of approaching the political implications of translation in the process of understanding national identity in a globalised world. This necessitates a return to Lomnitz's ideas in *La nación desdibujada*,[93] particularly his thoughts on the construction of Nationality from the outside, and his reinterpretation of the mid-twentieth century ideas of dependence among developed and underdeveloped countries. On the construction of nationality, he points out that:

> se ha demostrado que la identidad nacional se confecciona en redes transnacionales de especialistas, intelectuales y políticos, muchos de los cuales deciden cubrir sus huellas y contar sus cuentos como si fueran invenciones estrictamente locales. Este paso de relatos internos sobre los orígenes de la identidad nacional a relatos que entienden el nacionalismo como producto cultural generado en una red de conexiones transnacionales es, por lo tanto, de gran trascendencia.
>
> [it has been proven that national identity is tailored in transnational networks of specialists, intellectuals and politicians, many of which decide to cover their tracks and tell their stories as if they were strictly local inventions. This passing from internal stories about the origins of national identity to stories that understand nationalism as a cultural product generated in a network of transnational connexions is, therefore, of great importance.] [94]

So, Mexican identity is partly (greatly, even) constructed on the outside, on the northern outside. The reason for the great influence of the United States on Mexican self-value is explained also by Lomnitz as a matter of social, political and economic dependence.[95] He argues, going back to theories of dependency, that

> el desarrollo no era el futuro del subdesarrollo; más bien era su gemelo malvado. Las naciones dependientes no eran versiones más jóvenes de las grandes potencias capitalistas; eran igualmente viejas y constituían la fuente perenne del poder de aquellas. El intercambio desigual y las economías de extracción mantenían dependientes a los países dependientes.

[93] Lomnitz, *La nación desdibujada.*
[94] Ibid, p. 80
[95] Ibid.

> [development was never the future of underdevelopment; it was always its evil twin. The dependent nations were never younger versions of the great capitalist powers; they were equally old and constituted the perennial source of their power. Uneven exchange and extraction economies kept the dependent countries trapped in this dependency.][96]

The financial crises of the 80s, 90s and 2000s, however, eliminated any possible hope for emancipation, and more importantly for the subject at hand, brought back the nineteenth-century idea that, on a world-wide scenario, Latin American opinion did not matter. Because the focus of the United States was shifted towards Middle East, dependency led to abandonment from the nearest and more powerful neighbour. This abandonment has its own evil twin on the inside of Mexican borders: financial hardship led to the exponential growth of corruption and, as a counterpart, mistrust towards the political class; the State – defeating its purpose – was only looking to ensure the welfare of its own employees and it became gradually harder to deny it. In the midst of these circumstances, Mexicans, as a collective figure, ended up abandoned by the capitalist superpower as well as their own government.

Historically placed in an abusive relationship with the United States, a common outcome of Mexico's collective search for more favourable identity traits is the creation of illusory positive notions, such as an exacerbated idea of masculinity that turns the "Mexican Macho" into a caricature. In an article from 1967, Américo Paredes placed the origins of machismo in the Conquest, when Spanish soldiers would rape indigenous women, thus originating mestizaje [miscegenation] on large scale.[97] As pensadores Octavio Paz and Samuel Ramos did before him, he remarked on the mix of hatred and admiration towards the Spanish father-figure – that later melted into the idea of the United States and western civilization – and the combination of love and disdain for the victimised mother-figure; he later noted that the word 'macho' was not considered positive

[96] Ibid p. 66-67.
[97] Américo Paredes, "Estados Unidos, México y el Machismo" in *Journal of Inter-American Studies* Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan 1967).

until 1940s, when in popular songs the male character typically goes against the 'gringos' [Americans].

The opposition between the positive and negative views on the national character – both male and female – created confusion, for which, back to Stuart Hall, tradition works as a soothing force. While social and political consequences of the Revolution are hard to assess, one very clear result of the strife for nationalism is that Mexicanity – and especially Mexican inferiority, that Emilio Uranga preferred to call 'insufficiency' – became a crucial subject of the kind of superficial yet relevant reflection offered by pensadores;[98] throughout the century, insufficiency was counterbalanced by the idealisation of the mythical indigenous in the official national discourse and, on a social level, by the slow and steady strengthening of traditions.[99] Due to its nature and the strong identification with popular levels of Mexican culture, albur holds an important place among these.

In *El laberinto de la soledad*,[100] an exploration of Mexican identity that has been profoundly influential to contemporary notions of Mexicanity, Octavio Paz dwelled on the importance of patriarchal gender roles in the constitution of Mexicanity. Half a century later, in a post-feminist age, it is notable how much of the Mexican character still revolves around the mentioned status of macho for women as well as for men. Having what it takes to be a man means being 'cerrado' [closed] – brave, honest and especially not making oneself vulnerable, not trusting anyone. The female, as an opposing character, is usually considered 'open', that is, weak, vulnerable, dishonest and tricky. Paz said that the attributes most valued, even in women, are those that would be, in a Mexican context, ascribed to masculinity. He explained this by discussing the process of colonisation as a confrontation between male and female, where the Native American civilizations become the female that gets culturally raped by the colonizing Europeans.

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[98] Emilio Uranga, "Ontología del Mexicano" in *Anatomía del Mexicano* (México: Random House Mondadori, 2013).
[99] On this, see Ricardo Pérez Monfort, "Nacionalismo sin Nación Aparente: La Fabricación de lo Típico Mexicano 1920-1950" in *Política y Cultura* Num. 12 (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1999).
[100] Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, (Mexico; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).

Historically, it is common knowledge that this is not even a metaphor: it is literally how mestizaje happened. The weight of these ideas in a contemporary society, however, owes much to the fact that, by addressing them without a profound analysis, figures like Paz legitimise them.

Still a referent for discussions on Mexicanity, Paz suggested that the use of forbidden words, the only living language in a world of academic expressions, speaks loudly about national identity. It is, as he said, poetry within everybody's reach, and every country has theirs. For Mexico, he claimed that the most important of these words is the verb 'chingar', that literally means 'to fuck' but is also used in many other ways and as a source for some very particular concepts, the most important one being 'La Chingada':

> ¿Quién es La Chingada? Ante todo, es la Madre. No una Madre de carne y hueso, sino una figura mítica. La Chingada es una de las representaciones mexicanas de la Maternidad, como la Llorona o la "sufrida madre mexicana" que festejamos cada diez de mayo. La Chingada es la madre que ha sufrido, metafórica o realmente, la acción corrosiva e infamante implícita en el verbo que le da nombre.
>
> [Who is La Chingada? Above all, she is the Mother. Not a flesh and blood mother, but a mythical figure. La Chingada is one of the Mexican representations of Maternity, just like La Llorona --the crying woman-- or the "suffering Mexican mother" that we celebrate each tenth of May. La Chingada is the mother that has suffered, in a metaphorical or a real way, the corrosive and insulting action implied in the verb that names her.][101]

Thus, a big part of Mexican identity, a concept that in this regard must be perceived as a flowing range of social and individual construction, is a constant conflict between feelings towards a raped mother, loved and despised at the same time, and the begrudged admiration towards a violent father figure that is also subject of hate.

The overwhelming misogyny of Mexican – arguably Latin American, but especially Mexican – culture has recently reached alarming levels, with an average of ten women and girls murdered every day throughout the country, going only by the cases that get reported.[102] The normalisation of violence and abuse against

[101] Ibid, p. 31.
[102] https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/english/10-women-are-murdered-mexico-every-day

females, present in every definition of Mexican identity, has been cause for increasingly fervent feminist protests and demonstrations, an important example of this being the 'glitter revolution',[103] a series of protests against misogynistic violence and impunity.

Violence manifests in popular understanding of the Pre-Hispanic elements of the culture as well. As I mentioned previously, indigenous cultures in Mexico, though many and not unified, are usually reduced within popular perception to the Aztec empire and the Mayans: it is a common perception that the Spanish came and fought the Aztecs in Central Mexico, and the Mayans in the Southeast. This oversimplification of the Conquest comes from the Spanish records of the time of the Conquest, that called all American cultures 'Indians', and contributes to misconceptions that encourage and at the same time nurture sexist and violent ideas.

TRANSLATION FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

In a study on the situation of indigenous intellectuals in regard to the Mexican state, Natividad Gutiérrez recounts the historical attempt of populist Mexican governments to gradually erase indigenous populations through the idealised notion of a homogeneous cultural and ethnic mix. She points out that "Indian peoples possessed two historical traits that de facto excluded them from the nation-building process: their indigenous languages and what were perceived to be anachronistic cultures. Thus, for them to become part of the national mainstream, they had to be 'Mexicanized'".[104] This starts with them accepting Spanish as official language, while there was always an official show of respect to indigenous languages and an intention of preserving them as part of the nation's cultural origins, the living members of indigenous communities were encouraged to learn

[103] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/26/desperation-and-rage-mexican-women-take-to-streets-to-protest-unabated-sexual-violence-glitter-revolution
[104] Natividad Gutiérrez, *Nationalist Myths and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) p. 92.

Spanish as a tacit requirement for participation in national discourses. This led to indigenous languages being cause for discrimination, as they were thought to represent backwardness and ignorance.

Among the valiant attempts of keeping indigenous languages alive against this strong nationalist current, Gertrudis Payàs highlights the importance of little known but fundamental work of translating from classic or politically significant languages to minority or underprivileged languages.[105] She states that these are comparable to the documented case of Shakespeare translated to Quebecois in a particularly nationalist tone.[106]

Payàs denounces the fact that, though there is a vast collection of studies on national identity, very few consider translation and its importance in the matter. While her study is more concerned with finding traces of lost originals in translations of indigenous-language texts, she makes a point to say that texts translated, along with the conditions and modalities of the transference, are never random: they follow a social consensus of what is desirable or convenient towards the incorporation into national culture. This is an aspect that I will go back to when analysing the most popular Shakespeare translations, for the moment it will suffice to mention it in favour of the importance of translation as a political activity, and move to discuss Pym's thoughts on the role of the translator in a globalised world.

In "Globalization and the Politics of Translation Studies", Anthony Pym refutes the idea that the adoption of English as lingua franca will signify the eventual disappearance of a market for translations.[107] He argues that, while the ease of a common language works for certain aspects of social exchange, the actual increase in the demand for translations counters this notion. Beyond that, he makes a case for political engagement on the part of translators and academics as a

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[105] Gertrudis Payás, *El revés del tapiz: Traducción y discurso de identidad en la Nueva España (1521-1821)* (Madrid: Vervuet-Iberoamericana, 2010).
[106] Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alternity in Quebec 1968-1988* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
[107] http://usuaris.tinet.cat/apym/on-line/translation/globalization_meta_02.pdf

result of ethical consideration. Praising the creation of the International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS) in 2004, he stresses, in a global present that holds the possibility of drowning out difference, "the propensity of Translation Studies to defend the local, the particular, the minor, even from the perspective of its most wilfully globalized association".[108] This is in line with encouraging translation that focuses on local differences and, in my case, with highlighting Mexican traits through translation, especially those that are susceptible to becoming a connection between source text and target culture, as is the presence of sexual puns and double meaning that might not even work so easily for contemporary English speaking audiences.

BACK TO THE MEXICAN CASE

The analysis in the first sections of this chapter shows a situation that supposes increasing uncertainty since the last decades of the twentieth century. A distinctive aspect of the change that Mexican identity is undergoing is separation: between reality and previous discourse on nation and society, between most sectors of society and the government issuing this outdated discourse,[109] between Mexican society and the global world – by way of the United States. In this context, my approach to Shakespeare translation seeks to minimise those separations by dealing with some of the inner dissonances of urban identities – issues of gender and class that were briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and will be explored in the next one – through the appropriation of a global cultural symbol in a translation that focuses on aspects connecting it with festive and humorous aspects of Mexican culture.

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[108] Ibid. p. 12.

[109] Though the situation has apparently changed since the election of López Obrador, the general feeling is still one of mistrust towards the political class. The increasingly significant movements against violence towards women are one aspect of this, but it is also evident in the general feeling of illegality and instability constant throughout the country. On a personal note, I would like to mention that the mechanisms of this new government, attractively called the 'fourth transformation' (4T), are very similar to populist strategies favoured by previous PRI-era administrations and, even worse, to those of right-hand governments such as Bolsonaro's and Trump's.

This is where the importance of albur lies. I will go into a full discussion on its history and mechanisms in the following chapter, but for the moment I will briefly explain my reasons for considering it an important target in Shakespeare translation.

The distorted view of history that was promoted as part of the official discourse of the government's national project during the twentieth century is an important aspect of Mexico's narrative identity, and this is where the practice of albur makes an appearance. Metaphorically, as has been said by pensadores, Mexicans are not only born from rape as a nation, they are also a product of three centuries of continued violence, a rape that goes on to become domestic, and many cultural traits, such as the love/hate relationship with the abusive male, can be interpreted as a defence against the ongoing abuse. As counterproductive as dwelling in the rumination of these notions may be for purposes of sociological and anthropological studies, it is the popularisation of this discourse that allows albur to be a verbal manifestation of misogyny and violence while at the same time allowing the release of tensions around them. Jerome Neu,[110] stemming from Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*[111] on the importance of poetic language as play, discusses how playful battles of insults in some social groups serve the purpose of satisfying the need for real heroics in a context where physical violence is counterproductive; they bring the players back from the struggle of real life to what he calls "the world of modern boyhood, of dares and boasts and visions of heroism".[112] These playful rituals, he argues, always happen in a friendly environment, where competition is verbal, and it feeds on – at the same time providing an outlet for – social anxieties and insecurities. As, in most cases, the insults relate to sexual dominance, the comfortable atmosphere encourages solidarity and allows for the players to be vulnerable about subjects that would never be addressed in serious discussions. This ties to Lefebvre's notions on the familiar and friendly that offer refuge from

[110] Jerome Neu *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy if Insult* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[111] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1949).
[112] Neu, p. 59.

the stress of routine and the workplace, as well as his take on laughter as an expression of a dark sort of freedom.[113]

Seen in this light, albur is both a metaphorical understanding of rape and a way to conquer it, an opportunity to be the triumphant male instead of the submissive female, though it might be added that the very word speaks of the risk involved in the game: the player has the chance to dominate their opponent but, to accomplish that, they need to cast themselves into the open vulnerability they are trying to escape. This, however, poses no real problem because it is all done in a friendly atmosphere. It is both open and closed, secretive and performative, and even though it reproduces a scheme of male domination, it is born and still lives most strongly among the dominated, that is, the lowest classes that are subject to social inequality and, especially more recently, the women belonging to these social classes.

Translating Shakespeare with a focus on sexual puns and the intention of establishing a more fluid interaction with an audience that considers albur part of their everyday life is in a way challenging him to an albur game. As will be clear in the next chapter, this means engaging in a friendly battle of wits, at the same level despite differences of gender, class or education (or in this case, time, space and cultural relevance), and in total freedom to deal with topics that otherwise might be considered taboo. It also means that the exchange will happen in good humour and prove beneficial to both participants and audience. I have said before, and will continue to stress, that this is a unique opportunity for Mexican audiences to engage in an aspect of Shakespearean practice that might not be so easy to access for other cultures, and this is opening a channel for communication with the globalised West that does not involve the assimilation or dissolution of locality but, on the contrary, it empowers local traits and brings them closer to being on a similar level.

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[113] Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

A brief explanation of Albur and its relevance.

ALBUR

According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española* [Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Spanish Language], the word 'albur' is a term that comes from Hispanic Arab and refers to something uncertain or risky, its definition frequently pertaining to games of chance. As for the meaning of it that applies to specifically Mexican Spanish, it states only "Juego de palabras de doble sentido" [game with words and double meaning].[114] This definition, though accurate and precise, comes across as very limited and not particularly useful in the attempt at explaining the actual characteristics of the game, to the point that it does not prove at all useful to work with. Its limitation, however, becomes an illustrative example of the challenges that come with attempting an explanation of this phenomenon. Besides its regular dictionary, RAE[115] provides an allegedly more targeted tool in its *Diccionario de Americanismos* [Dictionary of Americanisms] but its accuracy in this subject amounted to merely adding to the previous definition the line "anfibología con frecuentes sugerencias sexuales" [amphibology with frequent sexual implications],[116] which does offer one specific detail, but not enough for anyone not familiar with albur to get an accurate sense of what it entails. The Hispanic-Arabic word that according to RAE originates the term is 'al-buri', which itself comes from the Classic Arab word 'buri'. They both refer to a small, silver-white fish that is especially agile and difficult to catch, which would possibly suggest a semantic connection to contexts involving games of chance, love affairs and lies (all definitions provided by RAE). These connections are analysed by Sandra L. Oropeza-Palafox in an article on the semantic evolution of the word within a

[114] http://www.rae.es
[115] Real Academia Española de la Lengua [Royal Academy of Spanish Language]
[116] http://lema.rae.es/damer/?key=albur

Mexican context that traces the change from the name of the fish to a word that applied particularly to the first two cards in a game deck – which needed to be dealt as fast as the fish jumps to prevent being seen by the other players – to the game itself, then to include all games of chance and finally to the game of double meanings. She argues that this has become the main definition in Mexico because "el albur forma parte de la idiosincrasia de nuestro país. Luego de que la palabra se utilizó para nombrar este juego del lenguaje, cobró gran popularidad y los otros significados fueron desplazados y se han ido diluyendo" [albur is part of our country's idiosyncrasies. After the word started being used to name this game of language, it became very popular and the other meanings have been displaced or are being diluted].[117] However, interesting as this etymologic explanation might be, it does not provide much insight into the actual characteristics of these games of albur. I will therefore attempt a more detailed explanation of them from a social and cultural perspective, as well as dealing to a certain extent with relevant aspects of its historical evolution, linguistic characteristics and the actual mechanisms through which it comes to life. Having done this, in chapter 3 I will argue that albur is closely analogous to the sexual double entendres employed by Shakespeare, and as such provides common ground for a culturally relevant translation into Mexican Spanish.

In her 1998 thesis, *El albur en México: descripción y percepción*,[118] Julie Lavertue faced the same difficulty in finding a precise description of albur, for which she stated that there is not a unified definition because there is not one singular idea in the Mexican population as to what exactly does it mean, but rather a group of possible interactions that share certain characteristics; however, she was certain that it is a phenomenon that takes place only in Mexico and is not to be confused with the French *calambour* or 'ritual insults' in English, both of which have their own characteristics that set them apart, being only related due to their use of insult

[117] Sandra L. Oropeza-Palafox, "De peces, barajas, azar y doble sentido: la evolución semánticade la palabra 'albur'" in *La Colmena*, [S.l.], n. 101, p. 13-26, mayo 2019.
[118] Julie Lavertue, *El albur en México, descripción y percepción* (Ottawa: Université Laval, 1998).

in a friendly, humorous context. In her effort to find a specific description of Mexican albur, Lavertue took to the task of examining a series of definitions, among which she favoured Octavio Paz's, cited below:

> El juego de los "albures" –esto es, el combate verbal hecho de alusiones obscenas y de doble sentido, que tanto se practica en la ciudad de México– transparenta esta ambigua concepción. Cada uno de los interlocutores, a través de trampas verbales y de ingeniosas combinaciones lingüísticas, procura anonadar a su adversario; el vencido es el que no puede contestar, el que se traga las palabras de su enemigo. Y esas palabras están teñidas de alusiones sexualmente agresivas; el perdidoso es poseído, violado, por el otro. Sobre él caen las burlas y escarnios de los espectadores.
>
> [The game of "albures" –this is, the verbal combat made of obscene and double meaning allusions that is widely practiced in Mexico City– allows this ambiguous idea to be seen. Each one of the interlocutors, through verbal traps and witty linguistic combinations, attempts to overwhelm their adversary; the defeated is the one that cannot answer, the one that swallows their enemy's words. And such words are tainted with sexually aggressive allusions; the loser is possessed, raped, by the other. The laughter and mockery of the spectators fall upon him.][119]

Even though Paz places the practice as having originated in Mexico City and developed in the area of Tepito – a traditionally rough neighbourhood whose relevance will be discussed later –, this assertion is difficult (if not impossible) to prove since albur is widely spread throughout the country and there is no evidence that it is particularly urban. There is actually a National Albur Championship that has been carried out in the city of Pachuca[120] – another contestant for the honour of being the birthplace of albur – for over twenty years, and its presence and variety in other areas of the country suggests that it might have been evolving in a more or less simultaneous parallel manner since colonial times. Nevertheless, Mexico City, due to its sheer size, population and significance in the development of national identities, appears to be a thoroughly justified choice when trying to decide on a point of origin for the systematic observation of the practice. Regarding Paz, I would like to note that, though a figure of massive importance to Mexican cultural identity, he was still a pensador – as defined in the previous

[119] Paz, p. 14.
[120] https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2013/08/20/914507

chapter – and this gives certain ground to questioning the empiric rigour of his research. With this I am simply clarifying that, even though for practical purposes I am following Paz in considering Tepito as a birthplace for albur, it is just as possible it might have originated elsewhere simultaneously. Equally, I am directing my approach to the most generalised, urban styles of the practice, therefore the possibility of provincial points of origin does not affect my outcome.

In a study on Mexican masculinity and sexual identity, Ivonne Sasz explains the practice of albur as having strong effects on the constitution of Mexican young men's sexual identities. She frames it as some sort of rite of passage that then shapes adult masculine[121] behaviour:

> Albur is a rhythmic game of words and gestures that combines humour with insult. It takes place where men get together (...). Young men are initiated into this 'game' during puberty (...).
>
> An albur provokes hilarity by alluding symbolically to a sexual relationship in which one or more men —the winners— penetrate and another man (or his mother, his wife or his sister) —the loser— is penetrated. The insult consists of an affront to the virility of the other, an outrage and humiliation, based upon 'active' and 'passive' roles in a figurative sexual act between two or more protagonists.[122]

According to these two definitions, albur is a profoundly sexist and violent wordplay in which the main goal is to outwit and, in doing so, metaphorically penetrate the person to whom one is speaking; the penetration being traditionally equated to power or victory. However, as Jerome Neu remarks, the main purpose does not revolve around sex but rather an attempt at dominating the other.[123] The presence of a female proxy, usual in similar contexts like rap battles or 'dozens',[124] is not so common in albur. This is possibly related to syncretic Catholicism and the cult of the Guadalupe virgin, which renders the mother/virgin figure almost untouchable in a humorous context: offence to the mother is almost a hard limit,

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[121] I will discuss female participation in albur later in the chapter, but from personal experience, the initiation in the practice of albur during puberty is not exclusively directed at males. As this is my personal experience, it might be related to having grown up in a more urban setting, but I highly doubt it. It relates more closely, I would argue, to changes in the idea of femininity and advancement in the battle against misogyny.

[122] Ivonne Sasz, "Masculine Identity and the Meanings of Sexuality: A Review of Research in Mexico" in *Reproductive Health Matters,* Vol. 6, No. 12, Sexuality (1998) p. 99.

[123] Jerome Neu *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[124] Abrahams, Roger D. "Playing the Dozens" in *The Journal of American Folklore* 75, no. 297 (1962)

or at least a bigger taboo than homosexual domination.[125] As both Paz and Sasz mentioned, it is originally an exclusively male activity, but its dynamics among urban Mexican society have been evolving throughout the twentieth century – and into the twenty-first. What may have constituted a manifestation of machismo and discrimination has been increasingly appropriated by the victims of patriarchal domination (namely women and homosexual men) and brandished as a weapon of rebellion in urban, densely populated areas. I will discuss this more extensively in the following sections, when describing Tepito and national albur champion Lourdes Ruiz.

The social phenomenon can certainly be viewed from a Bakhtinian perspective since, as Fiona Paton argues, "if power is produced discursively, it can also be challenged discursively".[126] More particularly to the case, the same sexist structures that were originally used to express domination are being overcome as they are stripped of their momentousness and turned into a game in which the dominated can just as easily be dominant. I have previously mentioned how Beck took this same idea of challenging and especially establishing a dialogue through discourse, the Bakhtinian dialogic imagination, and applied it to social and cultural studies. Applying this to the issue at hand, it works in a separate yet parallel way on two different levels: on an immediate level, albur is a game where symbolic/metaphorical power is gained through clever manipulation of discourse in a display of verbal/linguistic skill; on a more abstract level, one of national identities and international validation as expressed through cultural influence and interchange, a similar symbolic dialogue is taking place between Mexican culture and a globalized Western otherness. Just as access to a skillful use of language and knowledge of albur vocabulary signifies a definitive advantage in a game of albur, the approach I am proposing to Shakespeare translation, for which albur

[125] On this, Blanca Solares, *Madre Terrible: La Diosa en la Religión del Méxixo Antiguo* (México: UNAM, 2007); Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz, "Los Cultos Marianos en América Latina: Guadalupe/Tonantzin y Aparecida/Iemanjá" en *Revista Iberoamericana* Vol. LXIV, Nums. 182-183, Enero-Junio 1998.
[126] Fiona Paton, "Beyond Bakhtin: Towards a Cultural Stylistics" in *College English*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2000).

vocabulary is a crucial tool, signifies a stronger channel for communication in the dialogue with the Western/Global otherness. In the end, for there to be game or sport, there needs to be relatively equal standing between the players, equal access to the rules and comprehension of the mechanics. In this metaphor there are many possible games happening between different cultural identities and Shakespearean translation and performance is one where Mexican audiences would benefit from a few more access points.

The idea of challenging power, in the social context that is being discussed, should not come as a surprise: the use of albur as a means of rebellion and cultural resistance is closely related to its colonial origins, however imprecise they may be. On this subject, some clarification is required. In many ways, Mexican contemporary culture is still tied to colonial structures and their social significance: independence was brought about by the higher classes, which in itself is reason enough to question the reality of alleged change in social hierarchies.[127] The European cultural ideal never ceased to occupy the higher ranks of social structure, and both wealth and cultural development have consistently been controlled by the white.[128] It may be worth mentioning that there is evidence of illegal, though quite open, slavery of certain indigenous communities in Mexico up to the twentieth century. All of this is illustrative of why it is still possible to recognize similar manifestations of cultural resistance to the ones developed in colonial times. Bartra's reflection on the pelado [a sort of very specific low-class city rascal] sheds some light on the way these manifestations are set to work.[129]

Bartra explained in *La jaula de la melancolía* that the pelado is the result of forcing the idealised rural character – the campesino or farmer – into a context in which he was faced with a hostile urban environment that required him to become part of the working class. Modern twentieth-century capitalism took the mestizo

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[127] Ricardo Pérez Monfort, "Nacionalismo sin Nación Aparente: La Fabricación de lo Típico Mexicano 1920-1950" in *Política y Cultura* No. 12 (México D.F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1999).
[128] On this, see Andrés Villarreal, "Stratification by Skin Color in Contemporary Mexico" in *American Sociological Review* Volume: 75 issue: 5 (2010)
[129] Bartra, *La jaula de la melancolía.*

out of the countryside and turned him into an outcast in a setting that antagonized everything that made up his identity. This socially enforced displacement is a crucial part of the breach between 'imaginary' Mexico and 'deep' Mexico that Bonfil discussed in *México Profundo*: the drive for a westernized, modern way of life created crisis in agriculture, and the paternalist measures taken by the government did not have the desired effect of restoring the Mexican farming economy to its previous success.[130] The outcome, Bartra argued, was a metamorphosis that could – and still can – manifest in many ways, most of which have in common the exaggerated projection of one trait of the Mexican 'new man': its violent character. This is the reason why most commentators, especially those identified as pensadores, tended to find a national prototype in the lower strata of society, especially since most of them considered the Mexican character from their own point of view, as part of the overpopulated, aggressively vibrant urban areas that are still unavoidable as centres for cultural exchange.

The inherent violence of the pelado is directed at himself as much as others; he is a victim of such neglect that he does not even manage to conceal his character wearing, as Ramos believed, his heart on his sleeve, with nothing to hide the inner workings of his mind.[131] This violence is also manifest in humour: laughter creates a safe space for him to be vulnerable while, at the same time, providing the above-mentioned possibility for heroics in an urban context. This is consistent with Neu's arguments regarding laughter as a source for heroism and release of anxieties, which are, as mentioned, derived from Huizinga's thoughts on poetic language, and at the same time due to social conditions and subversive nature relates to Lefebvre's thoughts on laughter as both refuge and revolutionary force.[132] Bartra thought that the new nationalism emanating from the 1910 Revolution, used as propaganda by the 'revolutionary' government in the mid

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[130] Bonfil, *México Profundo*.
[131] Samuel Ramos, "El complejo de inferioridad" in *Anatomía del Mexicano*, (México; Random House Mondadori, 2013).
[132] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (London: Continuum, 2002).

twentieth century, turned the pelado into an idealised symbol, the institutionalised incarnation of Mexicanity in the revolutionary modernity. This somewhat unfortunate archetype displays many of the peculiarities of the exploited barbaric population but transcends the figure of the melancholic indigenous that had been held as a romantic image upheld in both literature and cinema from the nineteenth century, and all through the first half of the twentieth. The urban pelado is a being between two worlds and his savage behaviour, of which albur is one of the key manifestations, is a coping mechanism, a response to the drama of "feeling the vertigo of modernity".[133]

I will go into the history and contemporary situation of albur in the following section but, previous to that and after circling around certain social specifications, I must first attempt a more precise definition of albur. In 1997, Helena Beristain read a paper on it at the University of Salamanca: she discussed its origins, its mechanics and the circumstances in which it has been working its way into various aspects of Mexican society. According to her, the real albur

> (...) resulta, pues, una especie de transacción social, de naturaleza dialógica, en que se calibran ingenio, imaginación, oportunidad, creatividad y rapidez de respuesta, dados durante el proceso de interacción verbal que transcurre entre expertos que compiten ante testigos.
>
> El juego se inicia, conforme a reglas no escritas, con la respuesta ante un reto, y termina adjudicando papeles simbólicos de calidad a un vencedor-victimario y a un vencido-victimado. El vencedor es más varón porque "coge" y no "es cogido", penetra y no es penetrado, (independientemente de la misoginia implicada y de lo discutible que resulte tal virilidad en términos psicoanalíticos).
>
> El combate verbal posee un valor simbólico fálico. Quienes interactúan son varones que apuestan y arriesgan su virilidad. El retador busca en su contrincante a un socio conocedor del código que les permitirá erigir, juntos, la "construcción simbólica interactiva".
>
> [(...) results in a sort of social transaction, of a dialogic nature, that calibrates wit, imagination, opportunity, creativity and the ability to produce a swift answer; all of which happens during the process of verbal interaction that takes place between experts competing before witnesses.
>
> The game starts, according to non-written rules, with the response to a challenge, and ends with the symbolic roles of winner-attacker and loser-victim. The winner is more masculine because he "screws" and "is not screwed", he penetrates and is not penetrated, (regardless of the implied misogyny and how questionable such virility could be in psychological terms). The verbal combat possesses a symbolic phallic value. Those who

[133] Roger Bartra, *La jaula de la Melancolía,* p. 126.

> interact are males that gamble with their virility, putting it at risk. What the challenger looks for in an opponent is a partner that knows the code, enabling them both to build an "interactive symbolic construction" together.] [134]

According to this, albur is a game but it is also the sociolectal variation[135] that allows for the particular game to take place. It is important to clarify that the presence of this variation in language is not limited to the moment when the game of albur is taking place: it can be found in jokes, everyday conversations, advertising, media and, generally, throughout the different spheres of human activity. It speaks of the existence of what Noé Gutiérrez González calls "código de alburemas" [code of alburemas],[136] a code consisting of conventionalised semantic displacements that constitute a series of common places referring to sexually charged concepts that would normally be considered taboo, but are addressed in a euphemistic manner. Beristáin notes that, to decipher albur, it is not enough to know the semantic implications of alburemas, it is also necessary to be aware of the syntagmatic possibilities that their interactions may enable. In her own words,

> las palabras coger, clavar, tirarse a, equivalen a penetrar sexualmente; en cambio pájaro, clavo, camote, chorizo, chile, chipotle, nabo, zanahoria, longaniza, salchicha, reata, cuarta, son el miembro masculino, mientras aro, argolla, anillo, agujero, nombran al esfínter anal. Pero conocer el código no basta para descifrar el albur, porque ello requiere (como veremos) no sólo de un diccionario sino también de un sintagmario
>
> [the words coger [to pick up; to fuck], clavar [to nail], tirarse a [to throw oneself at; to fuck], are equivalents to sexual penetration; on the other hand, pájaro [bird], clavo [nail], camote [sweet potato, yam], chorizo, chile [chili pepper], chipotle [chipotle chili pepper], nabo [turnip], zanahoria [carrot], longaniza [long, spicy pork sausage], salchicha [sausage], reata [rope], cuarta [riding crop] are symbols for the male organ while aro [hoop], argolla [shacke, ring], anillo [ring], agujero [hole] refer to the anal sphincter. But knowing the words is not enough to decipher albur, that requires (as we will see) not only a dictionary but also a syntagmary.] [137]

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[134] Helena Beristain, "El albur" in *Acta poética 21* (México: UNAM, 2000) p. 411.
[135] I am calling it here a sociolectal variation since it is shared by a particular social group, but for more practical purposes I will mostly refer to albur vocabulary, as it is the vocabulary resulting from this type of shared language variation what will enable my approach to translation.
[136] Noé Gutiérrez González, *Qué trabajos pasa Carlos: La construcción interactiva del albur en Tepito* (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas, 1993) again, I will refer to it as albur vocabulary.
[137] Beristáin, "El albur", p. 401.

The semantic displacement leading to double meaning tied to the words is mostly built on semantic associations, as is the case with *pájaro*, *zanahoria*, or *aro*, which are visually and conceptually related to their implied second meanings, but there could also be an element of phonetic proximity, as in *anillo* (it means ring, but is also an informal diminutive for anus) or *anís* (it means anise, but it is phonetically and orthographically close to anus), where the pronunciation of the word works as a reminder of the second meaning. This happens with the construction of albur dialogues, where units of meaning may sometimes rely on syntactic or phonetic proximity, or rather a combination of all previously mentioned forms of displacement interacting in dynamic ways. Most of all, and more than a specific vocabulary – though the vocabulary is important – albur requires a certain mindset that will enable the connections previously mentioned to flow.

HISTORY

According to Beristain's paper, it is almost impossible to determine a clear source for albur. Nonetheless, she considers it would be correct to state that it has been present in Mexico since before it was established as an independent nation. Georges Baudot and María Águeda Méndez's 1997 book, *Amores prohibidos: la palabra condenada en el México de los Virreyes* provides strong evidence for Beristain's claims.[138] The book is a detailed compilation of popular examples of erotic texts that during the Colonial period, because of their obscenity and immorality, where subjected to strong censorship from the Spanish Inquisition. In their introduction, the authors comment on the advantages of having access to the registry kept by the inquisitorial institution, allegedly responsible only for processing complaints regarding heresy and matters of religious doctrine, but that in practise became a receptacle of denouncements on a wide variety of subjects related to moral issues. For Baudot and Méndez, interested specifically in erotic-farcical poetry produced

[138] Georges Baudot, María Águeda Méndez, *Amores prohibidos: la palabra condenada en el México de los Virreyes* (México: Siglo XXI, 1997).

anonymously in the eighteenth century, the Inquisition's records provide "una muestra no desdeñable de las íntimas fermentaciones de una sociedad en acelerado proceso de cambio, así como de una escritura literaria marginal fascinante en más de un aspecto" [a non-negligible sample of the intimate fermentations suffered by a society in the middle of an accelerated process of change, and also of a marginal literary production that is fascinating in more than one aspect].[139] Their interest is tied to the role played by obscenity in a colonial (and later post-colonial) society that was developing in an environment of strong control by a strict religious institution, and the subject itself relates closely to matters of national identification that are crucial to my approach to translation. The use of some forms of semantic displacement comparable to contemporary albur can be seen in most of these texts, from popular songs to satirical narrations and heretic or explicitly sexual love poems.

Both Julie Lavertue and Helena Beristáin speak of the origins of albur as possibly Pre-Hispanic, with examples of sexual jokes and double meanings in Aztec and Mayan cultures.[140] In a 2002 article, Patrick Johansson describes albur as "escaramuza verbal con un velado carácter sexual que se desprende espontáneamente de una conversación informal" [verbal skirmish of a veiled sexual nature that initiates spontaneously from an informal conversation][141] and places one of its possible origins in the Cuecuechcuícatl*,* a Nahuatl word meaning 'song of tickling' or 'song for the itch'. He argues that albur "parece arraigarse en el pasado prehispánico de México, y más específicamente en cantos erógenos que buscaban propiciar la fertilidad de la tierra y estimular el crecimiento del maíz." [appears to have some roots in Mexico's pre-Hispanic past, and more specifically in erotic songs that sought to propitiate fertility of the earth and stimulate the

[139] Ibid, p. 13.
[140] Beristain says that Aztecs had a 'secret language', and Lavertue gives example of both Aztec and Mayan comically oriented wordplay.
[141] Patrick Johansson, "*Cuecuechcuicatl*, "Canto travieso": Un antecedente ritual prehispánico del albur mexicano" in *Literatura Mexicana* Vol. 3, No. 2 (México: UNAM, 2002) p. 1

growth of maize.][142] These songs, predictably, were forbidden during colonial times, but written records were kept of them, according to Johansson, because – and this is both interesting and pertinent to the subject at hand – out of context, the texts were too ambiguous to be considered erotic, and therefore likely to have been seen as (non-erotic) poetry by those Spanish benefactors interested in keeping record of pre-Hispanic cultures. The secretive nature of albur certainly seems to have one of its possible origins in this type of poetry, and the social and political circumstances that came with colonial times were the perfect scenario for this type of secretive linguistic game to thrive. The fact that indigenous population in Nueva España became the most oppressed sector of society makes the adaptation of these – and possibly many other – pre-colonial examples of games with language ambiguity a form of cultural resistance, as well as creating an outlet for social resentment and a way to boost the wounded pride through a revenge of sorts: the violent search for heroics turned to the world of play, and violations committed by the powerful could therefore be avenged by the powerless in a symbolic manner at least. Eventually, as the rebellious attitude against Spanish high classes became a constant among mestizos and criollos as well, guarded obscenity in double meaning permeated throughout society, leading to the existence of the type of texts collected by Baudot and Méndez; as these were decisively written in Spanish. It was this 'middle class' rebellion that eventually led to the Independence war, hence solidifying both the class system and the cultural traits that identified each social sector, but the presence of albur, though inherently low-class, steadily remained a constant point of contact between each of those sectors. It is partly due to its popularity across social strata that it has become a useful tool for advertising and media and this popularity is also one of the reasons I find it so appealing as a point of focus in Shakespeare translation.

Alongside Native American tradition, Beristáin speaks of Medieval and Renaissance Spanish literature as a source for albur's rhetoric mechanisms, if not

[142] Ibid.

the contents, and traces its manifestations in Mexican literature to the present day. She mentions that "en la literatura amorosa de la Edad Media y del Renacimiento, hay un lenguaje de la guerra empleado para el amor" [in Spanish love poetry from the Middle Age and the Renaissance, there is a language specific to war that is used do discuss love][143] and quotes Jorge Manrique and Luis de Góngora as examples of writers who used this type of language in their poetry. This is related thematically to the reasons behind my choice of the sections to be translated: the idea of love/sex and war as parallel activities is a constant in them, and the approach to it with an albur mindset is productive in that it emphasises their ludic nature and challenges strong gender oppositions. She also gives some examples of poetic compositions, especially Góngora's, that make use of double meaning as a humorous approach to subjects considered taboo.[144] The nature and structure of these compositions is unsurprisingly similar to that of some poems in Baudot and Méndez's book of forbidden colonial texts.

Regardless of it having a strong kinship to forms of poetry considered part of a high-culture canon, Beristáin insists that, "el albur tiene su origen en un lenguaje popular más abarcador, su semillero está en el bajo pueblo, de los cargadores y vendedores de los mercados, de los obreros de talleres y fábricas" [albur has its origin in a wider popular language, its breeding ground is in the lower classes, with market workers and vendors, labourers in workshops and factories].[145] The language developed in these environments, she says, is inherently playful and full of informal variation. Consequently, she clarifies that, even though the use of its social dialect may be present in many literary and cultural manifestations, the real game of albur happens in everyday life, it is spontaneous and festive:

> Quienes poseen la clave de ese lenguaje, al emplearlo se autorrecetan un rato de esparcimiento que implica la creación de una atmósfera tensa y el empleo de la sagacidad como herramienta de los interlocutores y los testigos. No se trata de un intercambio de insultos u ofensas, pues no provoca enojo y, por el contrario, funge como una especie de fiesta improvisada que adopta la forma de una competencia a base de filosa pericia imaginativa, pero esgrimida con espíritu deportivo.

[143] Beristáin, "El Albur" p. 404
[144] She mentions one of the sonnets attributed to Góngora in which the poet tells of a prostitute's life.
[145] Beristáin, "El Albur" p. 403

> [Those who possess the key of such a language, by using it, give themselves the opportunity of being amused for a short period of time. This implies the creation of a tense atmosphere and the use of sagacity as a weapon between the interlocutors and also among the witnesses. It is not an exchange of insult or offense; it does not mean to anger or outrage. On the contrary, it works as a sort of improvised festivity that takes the form of a competition where sharp imagination is at play, but it is always wielded in a friendly sporting way.] [146]

The friendliness of albur is also something she insists on. Unlike Sasz, who saw a great deal of misogynistic aggression in it, Beristáis carefully establishes that there is no real humiliation or offense, as both players – and the audience – are aware of the humorous nature of the game. To quote a traditional Mexican saying that applies perfectly to the situation, 'el que se enoja pierde' [whoever gets angry will lose].

TEPITO

In a more contemporary placement of albur tradition, it is beneficial to trace back its urban origins, which brings up the issue of Tepito. The importance of mentioning this one specific neighbourhood in Mexico City lies in the particularly relevant role it has played – and still plays – for urban Mexican culture.

According to Johannes Maerk, the relevance of Tepito has shifted from merely economic to cultural and political, especially during the twentieth century.[147] The neighbourhood, which he considers to be the heart of Mexico City, is home to around seventy thousand people, and has become a centre for illegal trade, a constant informal market where almost anything can be found and which the police has never quite successfully controlled. The trade inside Tepito is organised, he explains, through guilds of street vendors; some of them sell stolen merchandise, others specialise in recycled or used goods and some trade in discarded (but new and fairly legal) articles. The most prominent type of trade in the neighbourhood since the nineteen seventies, however, has been 'fayuca'

[146] Beristáin, "El Albur" p. 410,411
[147] Johannes Maerk, "Desde acá –Tepito, barrio en la Ciudad de México" in *Revista del CESLA*, No. 13, T. 2, 2010.

[counterfeit goods] and piracy. Maerk mentions the importance of this type of business, not only for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but as a means of control for pricing on a national level. Access to low-cost options, illegal or counterfeit as they may be, keeps the market for legal goods in check by providing more aggressive competition, one that is not subjected to any rule but that of supply and demand.

The economic prominence of Tepito is tangentially relevant to me because it ties to its cultural importance as centre for urban identification. Especially in the last decades of the twentieth century, local artists from the neighbourhood led a revival of popular culture that identified its culture to inherent Mexicanity. The movement was called 'Arte Acá'[148] and was an effort to provide an outlet for cultural needs of the locals. One of its initiators and most recognised artists, Daniel Manrique, sums up the ideals behind it in his drawing "La Gioconda", a localised version of Da Vinci's painting complemented by the words "México es el Tepito del mundo y Tepito es la síntesis de lo Mexicano" [Mexico is the Tepito of the world and Tepito is the synthesis of what is Mexican].[149] This tells of a general perception of Mexico as a low-class country (the Tepito of the world), and therefore strongly identifying lower-class culture with national culture.

Tepito is also the birthplace of the cult of La Santa Muerte [The Holy Death], a very particular type of devotion to a female, friendly Death that can be considered a counterpoint to the devotion for the Virgin of Guadalupe. The strong presence of female figures is evident in the existence of this character, and so is the idea of a friendly illegality that leads to tying La Santa Muerte to criminals. According to Tepito researcher Alfonso Hernández Hernández, this is unfair.[150] He argues that it is a sense of social despair that makes Death a powerful figure

[148] The word 'acá' literally means 'here', so 'Arte Acá' would mean 'Art Here', but in a telling display of local semantic variation, it also refers to something that is of good quality or hip. I would translate it as 'cool', with the specification that it is a word used specifically by lower classes.
[149] Maerck, p. 539
[150] Alfonso Hernández Hernández, "Devoción a la Santa Muerte y San Judas Tadeo en Tepito y anexas" in *El Cotidiano,* núm. 169, septiembre-octubre, 2011.

and, in any case, the close relationship with it is evident in many aspects of Mexican culture.[151] Santa Muerte does, however, operate in the margins of what is accepted and, as such, she might help in areas where the Virgin might not want to get involved. Showing a stunning command of albur vocabulary, Hernández argues that those opposed to the Holy Death's cult are hypocrites: "Contradictoriamente, quienes mucho se espantan con la devoción de esta imagen conformada por huesos son quienes, bajita la tenaza, son fanáticos de "la sin hueso", también conocida como "la verdolaga enmascarada", por ser la autora intelectual de las "muertes chiquitas" con el tallado fino de hueso púbico." [Contradictorily, those who are easily scared by the devotion to this image made of bones are the same that, under the table, are big fans of the "boneless one" (phallic reference), also known as "the hooded purslane" (also phallic reference, by phonetic proximity), because she is the intellectual author of the "little deaths" (orgasms) through the fine carving of the pubic bone (this is a reference to masturbation)].[152]

The devotion of the Holy Death is also a marker of the importance of a certain type of female figure that holds sway in Tepito culture. As a mainly commercial setting, women have a big part in the economy of the neighbourhood, but this relevance comes as a contrast to the strong misogyny that permeates the environment. The result of this, among many other complicated factors, is an unusual type of control exercised by women that are recognised as having 'earned their place' in this almost tribal social organisation. The most evident example of this is 'Las siete cabronas de Tepito' [The seven badass ladies of Tepito], a group of women that were recognised in a 2009 documentary project by Catalonian artist Mireia Sallarés[153] and that sparked a movement to encourage younger females to become 'cabronas' as well[154]. The Holy Death is lovingly called cabrona, as she

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[151] The tradition of celebrating The Day of the Dead, constant in the whole Mexican territory with many local variants, is a strong evidence of this. Another good example of the symbolic presence of Death in a Mexican cultural landscape can be seen in the works of engraver José Guadalupe Posada that depict 'deaths' (skeletons) in festive situations that transcend class and economic level.

[152] Alfonso Hernández Hernández, Ibid. p. 40.

[153] https://www.macba.cat/en/las-7-cabronas-e-invisibles-de-tepito-un-proyecto-de-mireia-sallares-a06193

[154] Throughout Tepito, there are many murals and graffiti displays showing support and appreciation for the Cabronas Invisibles. The idea of them being 'invisible' is key to the intention of encouraging young women to be

represents an idealised powerful female figure that is, however, more attainable as a standard of femininity than the other strong religious figures (Virgins and Saints). One of the cabronas was Lourdes Ruiz, national champion of albur since 1997 who lived her entire life in the neighbourhood, taught courses on albur and in 2018 published *Cada que te veo, palpito: Guía básica (y unisex) para alburear*,[155] an illustrated book directed at audiences looking to learn how albur works in an informal context. One of the strongest motivations for her work was the reclaiming of sexual freedom through language; for her, albur was a rebellion against patriarchy since, in her own words, "vivimos en un país muy machista, donde a los machos se les ha olvidado que macho y hombre se escribe con 'm' de mujer y que arriba, abajo, atrás, adelante, con albur o sin albur, siempre va a estar una mujer" [we live in a very machista country, where machos have forgotten that macho and hombre (man) are both written with m for mujer (woman) and that on the top and the bottom, behind, in front, with or without albur, there will always be a woman].[156]

The type of female empowerment that comes with the grasp of language, especially in areas traditionally considered part of a male domain, resonates with certain specific moments within the plays I will address in a later chapter. For the specific situation of Lourdes Ruiz, both class and gender contributed to her access to albur vocabulary. She was born a woman, already a disadvantage, in a problematic but culturally rich area of Mexico City where violent struggle is a constant and one of the outlets for everyday violence is found in the use of albur. Another particular characteristic of Tepito is the neighbourhood's strong boxing tradition, which has led it to become home to a large majority of Mexican boxers that have had great success internationally. This ties back to Huizinga's thoughts on the functions of play and sport within contemporary societies, in which he includes poetic language and verbal competition. There is a symbolic overlap in the

'cabronas' as well; the collective identity is a manifestation of sorority. The common slogan found along the streets of Tepito reads "A las 7 cabronas e invisibles de Tepito, las de antes y todas las que vendrán" [To the 7 cabronas and invisibles of Tepito, the ones from before and all those that are coming after].

[155] Lourdes Ruiz and Miriam Mejía, *Cada que te veo palpito: Guía básica (y unisex) para alburear* (México: Penguin Random House, 2018).

[156] https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/03/08/mexico/1520468559_870727.html

roles played by both boxing and albur, the last one constituting a verbal alternative to physical sparring.

MECHANISM

The game starts merely with a verbal challenge: someone in the middle of a group of people might throw a line in double meaning expecting one of those present (usually anyone up for playing) to answer, or someone would, without realising, say something that might be understood in double meaning, thus prompting a response in kind. It happens in a casual way, in the middle of a normal conversation when no one is paying too much attention, and usually begins in a spontaneous manner: the initial line usually comes from an innocent phrase. A very simple example I usually give when trying to explain this is a common joke with which I grew: imagine going out to eat with a group of friends and being the one who is supposed to arrive first. Someone could then politely suggest 'agarra mesa grande' [grab a big table] because the group is large. To anyone outside the code, this sounds completely innocent, but once in the albur mind frame, one could easily understand 'agárrame esa grande' [grab my big one], in which the speaker would clearly be making a phallic reference. The correct albur response would be something along the lines of 'yes, but you'll sit on it, right?' or 'I know you like to sit on the big ones', after which the game would be on for as long as the participants are capable of finding suitable responses.

Both Beristáin and Lavertue provide examples of albur taking place in everyday situations – on the street, in a construction site, a mechanical garage, at the bar. These examples are a manifestation of what Lefebvre talked of when presenting laughter as a refuge from hardship within the routine of everyday life. Lourdes Ruiz frequently argued that laughter, and especially the albur jokes she was so fond of, provided relief from the illness she had suffered from since childhood. It is necessary to clarify that, as Neu explains, the play atmosphere takes

place strictly in a friendly setting.[157] If any of either the participants or the audience gets upset or feels genuinely insulted, then the game has failed. The ultimate objective is, as established, to make everybody laugh regardless of their final position in the game. In other words, even the loser ends up laughing, and so it becomes an example of how, as Lefebvre thought, popular laughter exists outside of the sphere of the officially accepted: the losing position would situate any participant in a shameful situation, and that would never be accepted in a context not pertaining humour, but comedy, when successful, creates a blanket of protection from social insecurity.[158]

As it used to be a typically male activity, it is most expected in places where men gather and spend time together, but its secretive nature allows for it to happen among people who do not participate in the code. It is almost impossible to define a timeframe for female participation in albur, especially because of this particularity. Before 1981 women were banned from cantinas,[159] and even then, the decree that made this discrimination illegal was met with anger from many sectors that argued the need for places where men could be free from the codes of conduct required by the presence of women.[160] This tells of the strong misogyny in Mexican culture and can be also considered a rough indicator of when it started shifting; however, it is not only a matter of gender but also, more importantly, of class. Women of higher social status were (still are, sadly) considered worthy of a misunderstood, outdated idea of respect and therefore kept more strictly separated from the male world. This would lead to less opportunity to openly participate in albur, but again, this is a wide generalisation for which many exceptions can be noted.

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[157] Neu, *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults*

[158] Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London; Routledge, 2006).

[159] A type of pub where working class men would gather. The prohibition included children and men in uniform, mainly because there was usually sex trade happening. Class is a un unavoidable element in this scenario, since entry was allowed for women engaging in any level of sex trade, which could go from 'fichar', a seemingly innocent practice in which women would trade chips (fichas) for dancing or talking (which often but not necessarily led to other less innocent dealings) to almost open prostitution.

[160] http://www.lavozdelnorte.com.mx/2014/10/05/la-cantina-ha-muerto-la-mujer-la-mato/

Those unaware of albur happening around them – either male or female – could become unknowing victims of mockery, but their presence is usually ignored. Thomas Conley would say that insult is either serious or comical depending entirely on the situation, which explains why albur is required to be both theatrical and intuitive: as previously explained, the intention is never to cause offense, thus the participants need to exhibit the type of intuition that would direct it towards a situation in which insult is considered comical.[161] This may seem somewhat contradictory but can be understood considering that audience participation is required not only as passive consumers but also as the agents of active feedback. It is always preferred to have an audience that can understand the dialect and, hopefully, take part in the conversation, laugh or cheer at the participants. In addition, the level of knowledge and ability of each individual participant dictates the extent to which they can get involved in the game. Good examples of this can be found in the works of singer/songwriter Chava Flores, famous for being apparently innocent but filled with double meaning – he sang for both ladies and gentlemen with the understanding that these 'ladies' were supposed to get only the superficial meaning and be content with it, while men could understand what the songs were really about. Whether the ladies in question actually stayed at the superficial layer of meaning is highly questionable but, as long as there was no open commentary on their part, the façade of propriety was maintained, and everyone involved was satisfied.

Helena Beristáin presents an example of albur in one of Flores' songs in "La densidad figurada del lenguaje alburero",[162] where she clarifies that the song, paradoxical and culteranista[163] in nature due to its elaborate chains of bawdy metaphors, pretends to conceal sexual and bodily matters while, at the same time, building up a complex criticism of social issues: the final message of the song, she

[161] Thomas Conley, *Toward a Rhetoric of Insult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[162] Beristáin, "La densidad figurada del lenguaje alburero" p. 55
[163] Culteranismo is the name of one of the variations of Baroque poetry. It is characterised by its use of elaborate and complicated metaphors, and its most important representative is Luis de Góngora y Argote.

argues, is that, while sex and corporality, however forbidden, are not harmful or damaging, true evil manifests in robbery, usury, exploitation, deceit, speculation, racism, defeatism. I find this pertinent to my work because not only is it an alternative use of albur vocabulary, it is also a creative approach to subjects – corruptions, dishonesty – that would be difficult to discuss in a humorous manner. The following is a fragment of the song in which, Berstáin clarifies, there is no real albur dialogue, merely a poetic use of the language. I will explain each line of albur following Beristáin's own commentary:

> Tuve una tienda en mi pueblo, / precioso lugar.
> Te vendía de un camote de Puebla / a un milagro a san Buto,
> pitos, pistolas pa' niños/ te hacía yo comprar,
> pa' tu cruda una panza o te inflaba / una llanta al minuto.
> Aros, argollas, medallas, podías tú adquirir,
> un anillo, un taladro, petacas, tu cincho de cuero,
> te enterraba en el panteón,
> te introducía en el cajón,
> antes con un zapapico / abría tu agujero.
>
> [I had a shop in my town / beautiful place. (According to Beristáin, this line operates as a parenthesis, the song ends with the same line. There is actually triple meaning in this phrase: the most immediate one is the literal one, the singer used to have a shop; the second and third ones are closely intertwined. The 'shop' is a metaphor of sexual prowess and virility, described as well-supplied and functional, therefore the image is one of nostalgia for youth, which marks the third meaning.)
>
> I would sell you a yam from Puebla / a miracle of Saint Buto, (Yam from Puebla is a type of traditional candy made from yams shaped as a cylinder, it is a phallic reference. Saint Buto is doubly suggestive, by phonetic proximity to 'zambutir' – a popular combination of 'embutir', to stuff, and 'zambullir', to submerge – and to 'puto', which is a derogatory term meaning male homosexual.)
>
> whistles, guns for children / I would make you buy, ('Whistle' is a very common phallic reference, as is 'gun'. Beristáin comments on the building of a semantic chain from one word to the other, which effectively creates an atmosphere of veiled obscenity that would lead the listeners to be attentive and consider every possible meaning. The phrases 'guns for children / I would make you buy' are forming a common hyperbaton in which the listener would interpret 'children / I would make you' for 'I would make you children', that is, 'I would get you pregnant.')
>
> for your hangover, some belly, or I would inflate / your tire in a minute. (Again, there is a semantic game with 'inflate' and 'belly' alluding to penetration. In a literal level, belly for the hangover is referring to the popular notion that tripe is good for curing hangovers.)

rims, hoops, medals you could acquire, (Both 'rims' and 'hoops' are a reference to anal sex, while the word 'medals' is phonetically close to 'me das', meaning 'you give me'. In other words, the rims and hoops – anal reference – are what 'you would give me'.)

a ring, a drill, suitcases, your leather belt, ('Ring' is another anal reference, and the possibility of having tacit nouns and pronouns in Spanish would enable the word 'drill' to function as a verb, so that the phrase becomes the very explicit 'a ring I drill'. The same happens with 'suitcases', which in popular slang is used as a euphemism for buttocks. The mention of a 'leather belt' is, according to Beristáin, an allusion to horse-riding, a very sexualised image as well.)

I would bury you in the graveyard (This line's immediate meaning is connected to the popular versatility of a small-town shop owner who could even, if necessary, double as grave digger. Behind that, albur suggests 'graveyard' as yet another anal reference. The same happens in the following line.)

I would insert you in the box (This phrase is parallel to the previous one, apparently discussing grave-digging services but hinting at sexual double meaning.)

before that, with a pick / I would open your hole (The context is still the same, here the songwriter is continuing with his analogy, and adding to it by using the word 'pick', which in Spanish is homophone to the first-person present tense of the verb 'to poke'.)][164]

It might seem difficult to picture the previous lines in a friendly context but it is essential to keep in mind that the intention is never to offend, which is why, in most albur games, the verbal aggression is usually directed at the interlocutor (either physical or, like in the song, hypothetical) and not at a female proxy. In the rare cases in which there is a female third person involved in the game, the images would usually not be so explicit and it would either be a sister or a wife; talking about someone's mother in a Mexican context is a dangerous choice, and one that would most certainly transform the ludic space into serious confrontation. The theatrical nature of albur is a good explanation for its friendliness: it is rebellious but only in a setting that mimics that of Lefebvre's festivals and in it the liberation from oppression happens through laughter. What sets it aside from Bakhtinian conceptions of the carnival, or the cycle of carnival and lent, is that it fits seamlessly within everyday life.[165] Conversely, with that caveat, albur could be

[164] Beristáin, "La densisdad figurada del lenguaje alburero", pp. 55-56
[165] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination: four essays* (Austin; University of Texas Press, 1981).

considered a manifestation of carnival if one were inclined to steer the analysis in that direction; this would however be counterproductive in the achievement of my purpose, since I am concerned with interactions between cultures at different sides of a horizontal axis. While class is definitely an important aspect to consider, it is not my purpose to focus solely on it. Nonetheless, it is crucial to bear in mind the significant role of albur in encouraging responsiveness between social classes, which brings me back to its essentially friendly nature, sprung from its inherent performativity. Beristáin asserts that no one gets effectively offended by albur for the same reason no one jumps on stage to stop Othello from killing Desdemona. As insult is merely symbolic injury, it is arguably possible for there to be yet another level of signification involved in an exchange of insult that is not really meant to offend.

Due to its cathartic qualities and the fact that it disturbs the social order, even if only in a symbolic manner, Beristáin considers albur a manifestation of the carnivalesque, but again, this may be accurate only to a certain extent and its relevance depends on the perspective from which the study of albur is being approached. It is more useful for my purposes to think about it in terms of the quotidian playful insults that are further interpreted in the light of Huizinga and especially Jerome Neu in their role as a release for social anxiety. Carlos Monsivais talks about how, from the chaos that was the Mexican Revolution, urban popular culture was born as a celebration of the grotesque, of physical and verbal aggression, of crassness;[166] this coincides with Bartra's conception of how the pelado became a representation of national identity, which in turn echoes Ramos, Uranga, Paz and many other twentieth century writers and pensadores. Monsivais argues that 'bad language' becomes a defense against the bourgeois and obscenity turns into an instrument of rebellion against the hypocrisy of Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship. Later manifestations of this glorification of the lower middle class folklore are the Salones de Baile (dance halls), the Carnival, and the Carpas (a

[166] Carlos Monsivais, "Notas Sobre Cultura Popular en México" in *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1978).

highly irreverent form of comic theatre, very critic of the government and society in general), where the audience is permitted to be swept away by erotic energies and impulses. Many of the most popular figures of Mexican mid-twentieth century cinema emerged directly from the Carpa theatre. The fame of characters like Cantinflas, Tin Tan and Resortes,[167] along with their depiction of urban life in Mexico City, is an example of this. When it takes place in this context, albur is certainly carnivalesque: it is a mask that allows the oppressed to mock the oppressor, a parody of whatever values are held the highest in a cultural priority list that was handed down without asking. It is also true that within the game of albur, both winner and loser are equal, and laughter is never truly judgmental. But then to stop there would be to limit its possibilities, and one must bear in mind that, as Bartra points out, the mask of the pelado is, paradoxically, his way of wearing his heart on his sleeve. The friendly environment warrants the possibility of openness and vulnerability, therefore bringing forth not only issues of sex and gender insecurities but also of class and social instability. The more recent appropriation of albur by women as a defense against patriarchy confirms its empowering possibilities for socially underprivileged or disadvantaged groups.

Beyond the comical explosion of subversive theatricality, the social dialect of albur is a part of everyday life – as I have mentioned before, it is present in work relations, popular culture, advertising – and, therefore, does not constitute a real suspension of social hierarchies.[168] It is also not limited to a moment of tolerated social rebellion. It would be more accurate to say it is a secret code that allows the discreet but ineffable rejection of those not familiar with the code, those 'outsiders' that seek to impose certain cultural traits – and succeed, for that matter. 'Outsiders' evolve from the Spanish colonizers to the wealthy high classes that presume to hold the cultural hegemony as well, and albur becomes a sort of defense against

[167] All three comedians are key figures in Mexican cinema from the middle of the twentieth century, also known as the 'golden age' of Mexican cinema. They portray the pelado character in a style that was inherited directly from Carpa theatre.
[168] Beristáin, "La densidad figurada del lenguaje alburero"

what Bourdieu called cultural and social reproduction. If, as Bourdieu argued, taste becomes a marker of class and cultural nobility; then embracing the opposite of what would be considered elegant or tasteful by higher class standards, even in members of this very high class – or higher middle classes that prefer to identify with lower class elements that feel more authentic – is an act of rebellion and a vindication of the post-colonial self in the face of cultural values perceived as alien.[169]

It belongs to the lower classes and sets a tacit agreement that works as a valve for social anger: the construction workers would not openly fight their bosses or talk back to them in any rude fashion, but it is perfectly accepted for them to engage in a game of albur, in which the boss would happily participate and most likely end up losing. In this sense, the mechanics of the game are simple enough. What makes it all the most interesting, however, is the way it was adopted by all cultural and economic levels of Mexican society, becoming a source of pride and national identification.

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Besides being present in many cultural manifestations, albur is now widely recognized by academics, mainly due to the publication, in 1960, of Armando Jiménez's *Picardía Mexicana*,[170] a compilation of popular Mexican sayings and jokes that constitute clear examples of the colloquial use of albur dialect. The book has reached its 143rd edition and, despite being aimed at popular audiences and lacking any significant academic input, boosted sociological study of popular culture and was followed by some other similar compilations, among which Lourdes Ruiz's is one of the most recent ones.

Along with the sociological aspect, albur is recognized for its linguistic complexity and cultural importance as a descendant of Mexican Baroque, which is

[169] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984)
[170] Armando Jiménez, *Picardía Mexicana*, (México: Editorial Planeta, 1991).

a result of the combination of Spanish/European Baroque and the Native American cultures during the time of Nueva España. Mexican Baroque is the most important artistic current in the colonial period and a manifestation of the semantic excess that comes from the mix of American and European traits. I mentioned previously how Beristáin sees albur's predecessors in hey figures of Spanish literature such as Luis de Góngora and Jorge Manrique; what is more, she also finds close connections to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the highest literary exponent of Mexican Baroque. The work of Sor Juana, especially, is characterised by a strong influence of hermetic philosophy, which in her writing frequently translates into a style that favours certain obscurity regarding semantic complexity. This a significant trait of Mexican Baroque, language is manipulated according to its connotative density and the lack of semantic balance within each word: the meaning is always bigger than the sign.

FEMALE PARTICIPATION

In her 1975 essay *Sorties*, Hélène Cixous discussed the way in which western thought is, for the most part, organized as a set of rigid oppositions that rule social, cultural and political practice.[171] She identified a confrontation between what she considered to be 'male' and 'female' elements of culture – which can be matched to oppositions such as 'culture/nature', 'form/matter', 'head/heart' and so on. The conflict is usually unbalanced, with the privilege falling on the male term of the pair despite the fact that the disadvantaged part, the female, is still necessary for the couple to exist. She attempted to transform this dualistic understanding by proposing a new approach (to writing and the study of literature, in her case), one that she called 'feminine' not because it privileges the female part, but because it aims to minimize the confrontation by means of finding otherness within both parts of the duality. Interestingly, she connected maleness with violence and conflict, and saw femaleness as a choice to open up to interactions that might be

[171] Hélène Cixous, "Sorties" in *The Newly Born Woman* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996).

more centred around cooperation and complementation. Frequently male-female interactions in Shakespearean discourse are framed in these terms, and this is a subject I will discuss in the translation section. As much as one would want to simply deny or ignore this confrontational approach present throughout western cultures, it is a productive source for metaphorical and semantic richness, therefore a fertile ground for double meanings. It is most useful, instead of merely looking past the oppositional nature, to regard it as collaboration by means of theatricality and play.

The recent evolution of albur in contemporary culture indicates the prospect that what appears to be – from a superficial point of view – a violent opposition similar to the ones Cixous describes, can also be interpreted as a spontaneous social deconstruction of such a confrontation.

Firstly, there is the historical dimension to consider. Provided that colonisation is a clash between colonised and coloniser, the disadvantaged female part is certainly played by the colonised. While albur takes place as a form of resistance among the victims of disadvantage, it is not automatically switching the dominant role to the underprivileged in a sort of cathartic allegory; it would be more accurate to argue that it is unfolding the possibility of alternance between male and female roles, in a way leaving it to chance and skill, and therefore stemming from the premise that the individual is indistinctly capable of performing any of the preconceived roles: male and female are interchangeable. Active participation of women in contemporary albur acts as evidence of this fact, either by imagining a symbolic phallus, pointing to proxies – hands, etc. – or quite simply taking a dominant attitude that subverts the traditionally submissive character of the subject of penetration.

As formerly mentioned, the late national champion of albur, Lourdes Ruiz, was known for her unparalleled abilities in this matter, which gave her the opportunity to lead a Diplomado de Albures Finos [workshop on 'elegant albur'] at the José María Velasco gallery of the Instuto Nacional de Bellas Artes [National

Institute of Fine Arts]; she called it 'elegant albur' because, even though the word may suggest vulgarity or rudeness among those not completely familiar with it, one of the most important aspects of it, one that Ruiz was always keen to stress, is the fact that it never resorts to real insult or offense, and it is never open about the strong sexual content. Being crass or explicit would be considered lazy and an indicator of the user not having real skill in the game. The course was free of charge, subsidized by the government, and had academic value.[172]

A woman playing albur automatically places herself in what appears to be a 'male' position, but taking a closer look at the dynamics of the exchange, it becomes evident that both participants are, by agreeing to the game, allowing themselves to be placed in a fluid space where they can be both in a female-submissive and male-dominant position. In an even bolder questioning of gender roles, when the female detaches herself from the submissive position without losing her feminine persona, as Lourdes Ruiz used to do, the connection between the dominance and penetration breaks and the game becomes decisively empowering for the female part if her wit and verbal skill allow her to succeed in her attempt. I am speaking here of females as a generalisation of the feminine element, but the instance applies to homosexual males if and when they choose to uphold a traditional 'passive' position as their particular assertive approach to the game.

The following is an example of a conversation (a game of albur) provided by Lavertue that will help to clarify the dialogic, collaborative nature it displays.[173] This is a key aspect of it because of the evident alternation of dominance between the participants. Ultimately, the goal is to keep the conversation rolling for as long as possible, so that it is expected and desired to switch between active and passive. As I mentioned earlier, the ideal opponent is one that would keep up, and

[172] http://www.galeriavelasco.bellasartes.gob.mx/
http://www.cuauhtemoc.df.gob.mx/
Both official government websites consulted on the 6th of November, 2015.
[173] Lavertue, *El albur en México, descripción y percepción.*

consequently the initiator of the game is expecting to flow in an out of both dominant and submissive roles. This example is taking place at the table, while the participants (in this case they are male but there would be no difference if they were female) are sharing a meal with a large group of people.

A: -Te molesto con el chile, es que me agarra lejos.
B: -Me pasas los frijoles de Apisaco**.**
A: **-**No, no puedo, porque a flojo nadie me gana y tengo mucha flojera.
B: -Te voy a aflojar los calzones.
A: -Bajohasta los talones.
B: -Me vas a bajar el cuero!
A: -Baja la voz, no seas tan expresivo.
B: (se queda sin replicar)

[A: Would you mind grabbing the chili for me? (Chili means penis, so the first participant is asking the second one to hold his penis)
B: Can you pass the Apisaco beans, please? (The second participant is playing with the name Apisaco and the word 'beans'. In Spanish, it sounds like an allusion to anal sex)
A: No, I can't because I am lazy, no one loosens it like me (Again, a reference to anal sex. In Spanish, being loose, 'flojo', means being lazy. The participant turns it into a verb to direct the aggression towards the other)
B: I will loosen your panties (This is pretty obvious, the participant is saying he'll pull down the other's underwear, women's underwear for that matter. Still, in a more explicit sense, the verb 'loosen' works as a reference to the action of preparing the other for anal intercourse)
A: I will pull yours down to your heels (Also quite obvious)
B: What you'll be pulling down is leather (Leather can sometimes mean skin, in this case, it is supposed to mean the foreskin)
A: Pull your voice down; don't be so loud (Here the participant is doing a metonymy: the voice represents the mouth, so this is a request to 'get down', a regularly used euphemism for oral sex)
B: (keeps quiet)] [174]

Evidently the second participant loses the game because they are not able to think of an appropriate response, nevertheless, during the interchange, the metaphorical penetration happened alternatively.

It is also visible in the previous example that, as with the previously quoted Chava Flores song, most of the references are allusive to anal sex between two men. This conversation could easily have happened between participants of any

[174] Ibid, p. 37.

gender, since any individual that participates in albur is equipped with a sort of imaginary penis and usually there would be no mention of having a vagina. The woman is capable, in this theatrical space where the most common forms of interaction are between two men, of completely assuming a male persona. This is remarkable because of its openness: in a culture that is still dominated by patriarchal structures, a woman can participate in a game that happens exclusively between two men. Mexicans are, for the most part, still chivalrous in their sexism: the things that are said in albur would usually not be considered appropriate when directed at a woman, but if she knows the code, she can play; she can be a man. This is a more traditional example of albur, contemporary variations will be discussed presently.

Something similar happens when the player is a homosexual male. It doesn't matter that, for patriarchal standards, he is as disadvantaged as a female: his victory depends on his wit. An important example of this is found in Salvador Novo's book *Sátira, el libro ca...*,[175] in which the poet, known for being openly homosexual in a highly sexist/homophobic culture (mid-twentieth-century Mexico City), assumes an aggressive male persona while making fun of some of the best known and respected intellectuals of his time – he uses the albur dialect in plenty of his poems, but the most important part is that he is perceived as a sexually aggressive male because he is the perpetrator of the verbal attack. The book is a compilation of poems, some of which Novo used to frequently send to his acquaintances as gifts. It is notable for his violence towards Diego Rivera, a well-known muralista [muralist][176] painter, social activist and a key figure in the constitution of twentieth-century Mexican identity to whom he dedicates a whole section; and for the fact that he mocks others, but also himself. On her thesis *Salvador Novo, navaja de la inteligencia*,[177] Reyna Barrera López speaks of how Gabriel Zaid called Novo "el

[175] Salvador Novo, *Sátira, el libro ca...* (México: Diana, 1978).
[176] Mexican artistic current that spanned from the 1920s to the 1970s and was a prominent factor in the official construction of the Post-Revolutionary imagery. Muralism is closely related to socialist activism, and contributed to the idealisation of indigenous cultures.
[177] Reyna Barrera López, *Salvador Novo, navaja de la inteligencia*, (México: UNAM, 1998).

poeta más macho de su generación" [the most macho poet of his generation] because he dared to come out as a loca ('crazy woman', a pejorative name for very feminine homosexual men in Mexico), and of the way his loud queerness was tolerated because of his talent and intelligence.

The previous applies to more conventional, orthodox forms of albur: women and homosexual men can play because their intelligence and knowledge of the code enables them to do so. In this context, there is no sexism among participants even though the game itself may be a mocking reproduction of patriarchal dominance mechanisms. It is a matter of gender understood entirely within performance, a display of the possibilities that the farcical element can present in regards to the flowing interchange of gender identification, which makes it a viable manifestation of the kind of subversion that Judith Butler discussed when pointing out the inherent performativity of gender.[178] From the moment the code of albur is set in motion, that there is a playful inversion: the role of 'manliness' is there for anyone to take, as a mask ('persona' in the most basic, Greek sense of the word). Lourdes Ruiz commented on this when, in an interview,[179] she explained her self-chosen title of 'verdolaga enmascarada': she argued that, besides the albur meaning of it as a phallic reference – to which I need to clarify that in a Mexican context calling someone a 'verga' [cock, dick] has good connotations, like saying someone is badass –, she chose it because 'verdolaga' [purslane] is a plant that grows everywhere, and the hood or mask is the anonymity that gives her freedom to be who she really is. The idea of manliness, however, becomes challenged in situations when assertiveness is no longer related to notions of physical penetration but rather to the possibility of assuming a more sexually aggressive position. Ruiz's described her work selling underwear in a market stall the following way: "Vendo calzones de bajo color y si la gente lleva dinero, pues mamelucos" [I sell pants of pale colours and if people bring money, then onesies

[178] Judith Butler, *Gender trouble,* (New York: Routledge, 2006)
[179] https://blog.seccionamarilla.com.mx/lourdes-ruiz-y-los-albures-para-mujeres/

(She uses 'low' as a substitute for 'pale', which in Spanish is spelled the same way as the singular first person of 'to lower', suggesting she would lower the customer's pants. The word for 'onesies', due to phonetic proximity, is a common euphemism for fellatio, therefore implying that, if the customer is willing to pay, she will pull down their pants and oblige)].[180] The idea is to use the same language as a means to empower female – or homosexual – sexuality; so one could construct phrases like "yo tan mojada y tú con tremendo paraguas" [I am getting wet and you have such a big umbrella (phallic reference)] or "quisiera ser la rama en la que se para tu pajarito." [I want to be the branch in which your bird (phallic reference) will stand].[181] As with any manifestation of popular culture and slang, albur is constantly shifting and therefore difficult to pinpoint; however, similarly to Chava Flores, Ruiz mentions popular ranchero singer Paquita la del Barrio as a significant advocate for albur from a female perspective.

PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The growing participation of women in games of albur relates closely to its recently growing acknowledgement as a socially accepted trait of Mexican culture, evidence of which can be found in the examples I have been discussing as well as in many others.[182] This reality is consistent with Zygmunt Bauman's notion of the liquidity of contemporary culture. He emphasised that "culture today is engaged in laying down temptations and setting up attractions, with luring and seducing, not with normative regulation".[183] Increasing perceptions of cultural elements manifesting as fluid (e.g. contemporary ideas of gender as a fluid social construct) would raise the question of their inability to keep their shape without a vessel, but also of their ability to dissolve into each other; thus creating new possible

[180] https://www.excelsior.com.mx/comunidad/muere-la-reina-del-albur-de-tepito-lourdes-ruiz/1307495
[181] These are from my personal albur repertoire, which means they are popularly used in Mexico and I have heard them many times among friends. Variations are multiple and depend on personal taste.
[182] The presence of albur elements in advertising of products that are related to the subject, such as contraception, lingerie or motels that charge by the hour, is clearly to be expected. However, its use is not limited to these particular categories of product; there are plenty of examples where albur has been used as a strategy to advertise practically anything, from antacid to food to bookstores and beer.
[183] [183] Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011) p.13

combinations that sometimes bring us closer to some overlooked or forgotten aspects of established intellectual – and artistic – assets. This is one of the reasons why enabling a direct contact with the popular low class manifestation of rebellion that albur started out as would allow for what used to be a cultural product destined for the consumption of the educated high classes – such as Shakespeare – to infiltrate popular culture in a more efficient way, thus opening a whole new range of viable interpretations. From an inside-Mexico point of view, it brings previously unattainable or at the very least distant sources of cultural identification closer to the ground, increasing their viability to become intertwined with low-class elements that would enable a better dialogue, not only with the local higher classes that were already in possession of them, but also to an international, global conversation around and about Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's use of innuendo and double meanings when speaking of sexual or otherwise obscene matters appears to be a widely unquestioned fact. That said, one would sometimes wonder about the impact that this Shakespearean manifestation of double meaning in relation to subjects considered dirty or obscene has on the contemporary perception of his work, especially in contexts that are distant from it not merely by issues related to temporality, but also by physical, sociological and historical factors. In 1947, Eric Partridge made evident that, even though Victorian academics strove to ignore the bawdiness of Shakespearean language, it is something that should be considered fundamental to the understanding of his works.[184] Contemplating this, and in light of the independent life of translations in an extremely conservative Catholic context – such as Latin America provides – it is possible to say that a good deal of it has been blurred by the aura of respectability and awe that even today surrounds Shakespeare's work. At least, it is safe to say that is what happens when Mexican audiences approach it. As I will discuss in a more comprehensive manner in subsequent chapters, there is a general idea of Shakespeare as a terribly

[184] Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 1947).

complicated, boring and generally unavailable author that is at the same time very important in the context of general culture and what is considered to be 'educated'. Nonetheless, there are also bits and pieces of Shakespearean tradition that reach audiences in an almost accidental, tangential way. These bits and pieces, that despite appearances are not in the least random, provide me with an opening point for the type of translation I will present in chapter 4.

I have discussed the presence of albur in this chapter as a second instance to the fulfilment of my purpose for this approach to translation and in the process I have confirmed that, aside from providing a useful device in the translation of double meaning, its relevance as a disruptive, vindicating manifestation of feisty Mexicanity makes it pertinent in a setting where social struggle is part of national identity. Albur has been a tool for social criticism (e.g. Chava Flores and his subtle protest masked as humour), release of repressed social anxiety and, more recently especially, female empowerment in an environment of constant harassment. As we will see in chapter 4, its use in Shakespeare translation takes advantage of a very specific sensibility already present in Mexican audiences, unlocking connections between cultural contexts that have seldom been explored. In the following chapter, however, I will contextualise the historical relations between Mexican culture and Shakespearean tradition.

CHAPTER 3

On popular translations of Shakespeare available in Mexico

The historical relationship between Shakespeare and Mexico is an interesting example of the politics of translation and its connections to power, class and the status of post-colonial cultural development. I have already suggested, following Alfredo Michel Modenessi, that Shakespeare entered Mexico from Spain, already in print and carrying a collection of idiosyncrasies peculiar to the origin of these already-printed translations. The effects of this, as Michel Modenessi argues, are varied and not generally favourable, resulting in a lack of connection with the text that is exacerbated when the public is faced with it in staging. Of the many particularities of the Spanish translations, the ones that are most relevant to me are the outdated varieties of Iberian Spanish and, especially, the unrepentant censorship to which the source text was subjected.[185]

As far as the history of Shakespeare translation into Spanish is concerned, conventions of time and target culture – namely a strong catholic morality and the language barrier that led to the use of French translations as source text – are to be held accountable for the translator's choices, and they may have been adequate to their purpose at the time. However, the adequacy of such translations to contemporary Mexican recipients has been questioned in recent times, and in some respects found lacking. Michel Modenessi has been a strong advocate for new paradigms in translation, having himself authored successful contemporary approaches to the text, and he is not alone in this. The concern, however, tends to come more from directors and playwrights – such as González Mello – than from academics. This is of course understandable, as they are the ones faced with the

[185] On this, Juan Jesús Zaro *Shakespeare y sus traductores: análisis crítico de siete traducciones españolas de obras de Shakespeare* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

challenge of delivering to contemporary audiences texts that will be difficult to understand, and not all of them are willing to work on their own translations, especially when the prospect of publishing them is not likely and the staging itself might run into many obstacles even using the available translations.[186]

According to a 1964 article by poet and chronicler Salvador Novo,[187] the first time Shakespeare was staged in Mexico was in 1821, when a local company performed *Hamlet*. The only evidence of this appears to be some praise to the leading actor by an anonymous admirer. Novo attributes the previous lack of Shakespeare in Mexican and Latin American theatres to what he calls "la 'cortina de hierro' que fue durante los siglos de la Colonia una cortina de agua, celosamente custodiada para impedir las transgresiones inglesas a nuestra dosificada cultura hispánica" [the 'iron curtain' that was during the Colonial centuries a water curtain, jealously guarded to prevent English transgressions to our measured Hispanic culture],[188] but in a more recent article Rafael Vargas argues that, after extensive research, he discovered evidence of performances at least fifteen years prior.[189] In any case, it is safe to date the first contact of Mexican stages with Shakespeare within the first two decades of the nineteenth century. As a note on the aforementioned political aspect of translation, even if there might have been exceptions to Spanish control over Mexican culture, there is evidence that Novo was not entirely mistaken in attributing the delay in this contact to censorship from the Spanish Crown: Vargas points out that "Miguel Ángel Vázquez Meléndez, autor de *Fiesta y Teatro en la Ciudad de México, 1750-1910: dos ensayos*, cuenta que 'las obras tenían que ser siempre a favor de la Corona; no se abordaban temas

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[186] The specific characteristics of Mexican social and political traditions, discussed in a previous chapter, tend to hinder certain aspects of cultural development: like many things, arts and culture are highly subsidised by the government. This makes for a particular manifestation of corruption where a lot of the funding for theatre comes from government grants and, therefore, is subjected to influence from powerful groups. In plain words, directors that are maybe not very famous or powerful get a limited amount of funding, which they will have to distribute wisely. That makes it more difficult for them to attempt or commission a new translation.
[187] Salvador Novo, "Andanzas de Shakespeare en México"
https://cdigital.uv.mx/bitstream/handle/123456789/2862/196432P621.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[188] Ibid p. 622
[189] Rafael Vargas, "Shakespeare en México" in *Confabulario*
https://confabulario.eluniversal.com.mx/shakespeare-en-mexico/

políticos, y el teatro dependía del Virrey, había un juez que vigilaba las funciones teatrales.'" [Miguel Ángel Vázquez, author of *Fiesta y Teatro en la Ciudad de México, 1750-1910: dos ensayos*, tells of how 'the plays would have to be always in favor of the Crown; politics were not discussed, and theatre depended on the Viceroy, there was a judge looking over theatre presentations'].[190] This stumbling and tainted start to Mexico's relationship with Shakespeare sets a precedent for how Shakespearean translation would evolve throughout the nineteenth century, and until approximately half the twentieth.

Even after becoming and independent nation, Spanish influence over Mexican culture remains strong in the nineteenth century – and arguably the twentieth. This means that, as Vargas clarifies, Shakespeare arrived late to Mexico because he arrived late to Spain, and initially from French versions of the plays. The first documented Mexican translation of Shakespeare is an 1881 version by Manuel Pérez Bibbins and Francisco López Carvajal of which Michel Modenessi, as quoted by Verónica Díaz, says "Hamlet no lleva a cabo ninguna acción violenta, cualquier cosa que sucede de muertes en la obra no va por mano de él" [Hamlet does not carry out any violent action, none of the deaths in the play are perpetrated by his hand.][191] Throughout the twentieth century, Novo registers a stronger presence of Shakespeare in Mexico and, as is clear in Michel Modenessi's more contemporary account of it, this presence has continued to grow into the twenty-first century. He mentions Jesusa Rodríguez's 1980 *¿Cómo va la noche, Macbeth?* [How goes the night, Macbeth?], a strangely dark version of *Twelfth Night* by Ludwink Margulles in 2004 and an interesting *Measure for Measure* directed by Mauricio García Lozano. He points out both Jesusa Rodríguez's *Macbeth* and García Lozano's *Measure for Measure* as important examples of how to establish a meaningful connection to contemporary Mexican political situation, both of them

[190] Ibid.
[191] Verónica Díaz, "Shakespeare en la Escena Mexicana" in *Milenio* https://www.milenio.com/cultura/shakespeare-en-la-escena-mexicana

dealing with issues of corruption and misogyny that are now more than ever relevant to Mexican audiences.

ON COMMON *ROMEO AND JULIET* TRANSLATIONS

In this section, I will be looking at translations of the sections of *Romeo and Juliet* that I will later work on in the following chapter. I will also be working with *Much Ado*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello*, but I have chosen not to go through the most available translations because it would come across as repetitive. For both *Much Ado* and *Troilus and Cressida*, it is not easy to come across any translation other than Astrana Marín's in Mexican bookstores and libraries. The most available version of *Othello* is the one by Menéndez y Pelayo that comes in the same Editorial Porrúa volume as *Romeo and Juliet*. These are both translators I will address presently when discussing *Romeo and Juliet*, and their approach to the other plays is similar. I will, however, provide the pertinent translations by these authors and their English equivalents as an appendix.

The reason for selecting *Romeo and Juliet* is fairly straightforward. Along with *Hamlet*, it is safe to say that it is the most popular Shakespearean play in the Mexican context. It has been adapted to many different formats and, because of its cultural resonance, almost every child that went to middle school in an urban context knows the basic outline of the story, not necessarily because it was covered by school programs, but more frequently because of some referents I will discuss presently. Consequently, it stands to reason that it would be easy to find at least the most common translations available. Besides the advantage of it being widely known, *Romeo and Juliet* presents many features that make it attractive for a work such as the one I am doing, namely, the treatment of gender and the connection between sex and violence, which goes along as a constant in the other sections as well.

The range of translations that are easily available for the other plays is significantly smaller: the Astrana Marín version tends to be the one to go to for both *Much Ado* and *Troilus and Cressida*, and for *Othello* there is also the even more dated Menéndez y Pelayo version that Editorial Porrúa uses. That is not to say that there are not many other contemporary translations, but they tend to be difficult to access in a non-academic Mexican context. For that reason, I will focus on *Romeo and Juliet* in this section. I will, however, provide Astrana Marín's versions as appendix. Menéndez y Pelayo's *Othello*, probably the most easily available one in Mexico, does not include the dialogue I will work with in chapter 4.

Official programmes for high school in Mexico are outrageously uneven. The Literature programme deemed compulsory by the Secretaría de Educación Pública [Department of Public Education, hereafter SEP] does not include any specific literary content.[192] It merely names the desired abilities that the student is intended to develop, namely, basic reading comprehension and writing skills. Private schools can either adhere to this study plan – and in the best cases define a body of knowledge to cover within the one year it spans — or follow the usually more adequate programmes developed by either public or private universities that cover high school education. In the case of UNAM[193] and UADY[194], the difference with the SEP programme is that they at least specify some content – authors and literary movements that students are required to know something about – and instead of one year, they have two years of literature. However, most schools stick to the programme designed for public schools, as it is less demanding and basically gives the teachers total freedom as long as they make sure the students finish high school. These schools usually rely on whatever the teachers might consider important to shape a vague overview of "Universal Literature", making for a remarkably uneven ground when it comes to building literary culture. In the best

[192] http://www.dgb.sep.gob.mx/informacion-academica/programas-de-estudio.php
[193] Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [National Autonomous University of Mexico]
[194] Universidad Autónoma De Yucatán [Autonomous University of Yucatan] Both UADY and UNAM are public but autonomous Universities.

cases, such as UADY[195] and UNAM[196] programmes and the more prestigious schools that adhere to them, Shakespeare is only covered at the most basic level.

Time and resources are limited, and teachers have to deal with poorly designed programmes that attempt to cram the whole History of Literature into one school year; as a consequence, it is simpler for them to resort to movie adaptations instead of getting the children to read. Luhrman's *Romeo+Juliet* (1996) is still very popular in this sense, speaking to young audiences that grow up in a context that brings them too close to gun violence and gang issues – which is the reality for a lot of children from Mexican urban areas, especially those attending public schools. Another loose Mexican adaptation, *Amarte duele* (Fernando Sariñana, 2002), translates the conflict between families to a matter of economic, social and racial differences, which are other issues that Mexican children can frequently relate to. In Sariñana's version, Renata/Juliet is a fair-skinned girl from a wealthy family in Mexico City that falls in love with Ulises/Romeo, a dark-skinned boy from the lower classes. The production took place during a very fruitful time for Mexican cinema; it was released two years after the iconic *Amores Perros* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000)[197] and contained many of the same ground-breaking elements: popular young actors, a realistic portrayal of slang and fashion both in the high and low classes, and a soundtrack featuring the most successful rock/pop musicians. *Amarte duele* was very well received by the public and remains another commonly used asset for high-school teachers.

Romeo and Juliet is the most adapted – for stage and screen – of the love tragedies, and its film versions are second in quantity only to *Hamlet.*[198] This is most likely a consequence of the fact that the play has many interpretative

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[195]http://www.prepa1.uady.mx/plan%20de%20estudios/5o.%20semestre/Analisis_literario_3.pdf
[196] http://dgenp.unam.mx/planesdeestudio/quinto/1516.pdf
[197] *Amores Perros* is Alejandro González Iñárritu's first feature film. It marks the beginning of a very productive era in Mexican cinema and received many awards, such as the BAFTA Award for Best Film Not in the English Language, the top award at Fantasporto, the Prize of the Critic's Week at the 2000 Cannes Festival and the Grand Prix of the Belgian Syndicate of Cinema Critics. It was also the first film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in twenty-five years.
[198] Patricia Tatspaugh. "The tragedies of love on film", in *The Cambrigde Companion to Shakespeare on Film.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 135-160.

possibilities. As Mark Thornton Burnett states, it is concerned with conflict and love, as well as with issues of civility, freedom and human rights. These subjects make it relatable within many different cultural contexts, especially those plagued by issues of violence, problematic social differences, sexism, racism. The fact that many versions and adaptations opt for a more optimistic outcome, Thornton Burnett suggests, emphasizes the point that there is in world cinema a tendency to focus on those specific aspects of the play that tend to function as 'globalization fragments' and are subject to reinterpretation.

The family conflict in the play, as is the case with *Amarte duele*, can easily be imagined upon a story of racism, social inequity, drug violence or corruption, making it relevant for many contemporary social groups. An interesting example of this is rapper Mykki Blanco's video for his song *High School Never Ends* (2016). The video, produced by Woodkid and directed by Matt Lambert, is set in rural Germany and portrays the secret lovers as two young men coming from opposing Far Left and skinhead Far Right families, thus dealing with issues of ignorance, racism and homophobia. The tragedy's emphasis on peace, freedom and civil rights is as relevant as it ever was, and the presence of Mercutio as a queer character provides representation for contemporary minorities. Above all, love as a source of new possibilities for dialogue and connection – spanning from the protagonists towards the whole of society – makes the play a cultural product that carries strong possibilities of generating new meaning.

In a context where formal education is irregular at best, popular culture and media become an indicator of cultural awareness. *Amarte duele* was nominated to several Mexican and Latino film awards, including Ariel Awards and the Mexican version of MTV Movie Awards; this speaks of its popularity among young audiences in the moment of its release and justifies the fact that it is still an important reference to contemporary Mexican pop culture. Almost six decades before, popular comedian Cantinflas, famous for his portrayal of a low-class rascal, acted on a *Romeo and Juliet* parody (*Romeo y Julieta*, 1943) which still comes back to

haunt our Sunday afternoons in open television and is also evidence of the continuous presence of the play as a constant motive in urban Mexican society. Even families that might not have had the means to pay for cable television, or go to the cinema very often, still had Televisa, the largest Mexican open television chain, to supply them with an assortment of Mexican films from throughout the twentieth century, among which Cantinflas has always been very popular. Regardless of the quality of the adaptation, the 1943 parody has managed to outline the play's plot in the most basic terms to a few generations of Mexican viewers.

To get a more accurate idea of what kind of translations are being read by Mexicans, I looked at the catalogues of the most important libraries, as well as the biggest bookstores.[199] The results were, sadly, not surprising. The strongest and most relied upon library system in Mexico is that of UNAM (Univesidad Autónoma de México), with a total of 135 libraries as of 2015. These libraries are organized in five different sections: high school, undergraduate and postgraduate, scientific research, humanities research, and university outreach and administration. Of these libraries, 107 are located in Mexico City and its surrounding conurbated area, and the rest of them are scattered among the different regions of the country. At the end of 2015, UNAM libraries had a total of 17,516,258 visitors, 54.25% of which used the libraries in the undergraduate and postgraduate section, and 33.42% the ones in the high school section.[200]

Other universities, such as Universidad Veracruzana, BUAP (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla), ITESM (Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey) and UADY (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán) offer important library services as well. There is also the José Vasconcelos, the biggest government-run library in Mexico City, but it is not nearly as important as the

[199] Libraries: UNAM, Biblioteca Central; Biblioteca José Vasconcelos; Universidad Veracruzana, Red de Bibliotecas; BUAP, Red de Bibliotecas; ITESM, Red de Bibliotecas; UADY, Red de Bibliotecas. Bookstores: Gandhi; Fondo de Cultura Económica.
[200] http://dgb.unam.mx

formerly mentioned. Because there is no national library system as such, University libraries are still the most important research facilities across Mexico, both for students in any level and for the public in general.

In all the libraries mentioned, there is at least one copy of Astrana Marín's translation, *Obras Completas*[201] (1929), and most of them also have copies of Guillermo MacPherson's 1880 edition.[202] Manuel Àngel Conejero's version from the late nineteen eighties is also available at the UNAM central library and large bookstores but is significantly less common due to the edition's higher price and the fact that most bookstores over the country do not carry the more expensive editions.[203] Conejero is an important Shakespeare translator in the Iberian contemporary context. He is the founder of Instituto Shakespeare, a foundation that focuses both on producing high-quality translations and forming capable Shakespearean actors. Translations by Instituto Shakespeare are published by Editorial Cátedra, famous for the high quality and academic value of its editions; however, even if his version were more available, Iberian Spanish translations, as Modenessi points out,[204] are usually unsuccessful in a Latin American context because they force the audiences to translate from a different variety of Spanish, thus interfering with the whole experience of watching or reading the play. In any case, the most commonly found throughout is Porrúa's 1968 publication, now on its 24th edition. It is on every library and most bookstores, where it is available at a very low price. To clarify the importance of the price difference, it is helpful to point out that minimum wage in Mexico is established to 73.04 pesos per eight-hour day – that is, 3.16 pounds.[205] The cheapest available editions of *Romeo y Julieta* are priced around 30 pesos – 1.30 pounds – while the most expensive one, Conejero's, is 236 pesos – 10.20 pounds. In order to acquire this edition, a person earning minimum wage would have to dedicate the payment of three whole

[201] Luis Astrana Marín (translator). *William Shakespeare, Obras Completas* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1951).
[202] Guillermo MacPherson (translator). *Obras Completas de Guillermo Shakespeare* (Madrid: Luis Navarro Editor, 1885).
[203] Manuel Ángel Conejero (translator). *Romeo y Julieta* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988).
[204] Alfredo Michel Modenessi. "Have you made division of yourself? Shakespeare en español a ambas orillas del Atlántico" en *Paso de Gato* Año 15, Num. 66, 2016.
[205] http://www.conasami.gob.mx/bol_salario_minimo_2016_11122015.html

working days, which of course is not likely to happen. The existence of cheap editions as an alternative may sound like a possible solution, but these low-quality publishing companies, to cut their expenses and deliver a lower-priced product, use outdated and inappropriate translations that are in the public domain and don't credit translators. Porrúa, along with some others, uses Menéndez y Pelayo's version from 1881, but it does not clarify this in any part of the book. It is important to mention that most free online Spanish versions of the play are also the ones that are in the public domain, therefore, they do not constitute an important alternative to the cheap print versions.

On the possible reasons for the lack of adequate translations available for the Mexican public, Modenessi argues that

> Shakespeare arrived in Latin America in the beginning of the nineteenth century as a legacy of 'high culture' via translations and productions originating in Spain and, more to the point, already in print. Many theatre artists and most audiences and readers still approach Shakespeare through received notions of production and reception.
>
> Translations of Shakespeare, whether for publication or production, are rarely commissioned in our midst, and publishers or directors seldom seek academic advice.[206]

When he speaks of what was considered 'high culture' in the Mexican nineteenth century, he is referencing the pre-Revolution exaggerated admiration towards all things European – Spanish, in this particular case. As I discussed more thoroughly in chapter 1, this attitude remains in some sectors of the Mexican population, feeding on feelings of inadequacy that come as a result of a very particular sociohistorical circumstance also discussed elsewhere. Books that were printed in Spain were, and for many people still are, considered higher in quality. Both for general audiences and for performers/producers, it is expected that, in Spanish, Shakespeare should sound Iberian and old. Translations are rarely commissioned precisely because they are not deemed necessary: for many people Shakespeare is supposed to sound distant and weird.

[206] Alfredo Michel Modenessi. "A double tongue within your mask: translating Shakespeare in/to Spanish-speaking Latin America" in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

Modenessi also claims that Astrana Marín's translation, being easily available, is the most commonly used among both readers and directors despite being stiff and difficult to read, and that this perpetuates the common misconception that Shakespeare should be translated in a sort of sixteenth-century Iberian Spanish. The frequent use of Menéndez y Pelayo's translation could very well contribute to that effect.

The inevitable connection between Shakespeare and the Spanish Renaissance is definitely an important aspect to consider when thinking about the reasons for this phenomenon. We are familiar with Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca, and also with Mexican Baroque playwrights, like Sor Juana or Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, that share the same language: Mexico was then Nueva España, so there was not yet a true notion of Mexican Spanish. However, the reason for attempting an imitation of Renaissance Spanish when translating Shakespeare might also reside in the belief that the source language is entitled with a certain 'universality' that should be 'faithfully' translated into a different sign system. If the translator is striving for as little alteration to the original text as possible, it might appear to follow that a variety of Spanish used at the same time as the play was written would be the best option. Pertinent to this, Ileana Dimitriu states that "up to about thirty years ago, this 'essentialist' model of linguistics-based translation characterised general knowledge of the translation process. It focused on various aspects of language/text transfer, while ignoring the social, cultural and political contexts in which texts are produced, and then translated/reproduced".[207] In this particular case, seeking equivalent semantic units to Renaissance English supposes opting for Renaissance Spanish instead of seeking an overlap in social, cultural and political context between source and target cultures.

[207] Ileana Dimitriu. "Expanding English: the case for cultural and linguistic translation" in *English Academy Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2002.

Summing up the previous issues, Dimitriu concludes that "views on translation have always been concerned with what can be briefly reduced to a basic question, charged as it is with ideological implications: is translation an act of imitation, i.e. text-reproduction, or is it a form of text-production, i.e. creative re-writing?".[208] Considering that alteration to the text is inevitable, the creative translator is subject to a higher level of responsibility towards achieving whatever goals might be set for their work. Therefore, as Juan Carlos Calvillo, on an argument for retranslation, states, "ninguna traducción, por canónica o eficiente que sea, agota la potencialidad significativa de su texto fuente" [no translation, no matter how canonical or efficient it could be, exhausts the potentiality of meaning of its source text].[209] This is compatible with my choice of Skopostheorie as a methodological approach to translating, as the correctability – that consequently signifies the existence of multiple translations – goes hand in hand with the moral responsibility assumed by the translator when they undertake their task.

In terms of publishing, as I have mentioned, there is also the matter of easy availability: it is cheaper to use public domain translations than to commission new ones, which becomes a problem especially when dealing with text that is meant to be staged. Theatre performance demands fast response: the staging does not stop in order to give the audience a chance to look up any unfamiliar concepts; it is therefore useful to consider that the target language should approach the target audiences as much as possible. Speaking more concretely of Iberian translations, Modenessi argues that "toda traducción deriva de una fuente alejada en praxis lingüística, tiempo y espacio de la lengua meta; mas en su propio dominio, la traducción no está obligada a seguir un conjunto preestablecido de normas. Las fuentes son fijas, pero las traducciones son libres." [every translation derives from a source that is distant from the target language in linguistic praxis, time and space; but in its own domain, translation is not bound to follow a pre-established set of

[208] Ibid.
[209] Juan Carlos Calvillo. "'Si al hacerlo quedara consumado': dos traducciones mexicanas de *Macbeth*" en *Paso de Gato* Año 15, Num. 66, 2016.

rules. Sources are fixed, but translations are free.][210] The fact that this has not been taken into consideration until recently, he writes, has many problematic consequences for those who attempt to adapt Shakespeare to Mexican stages, as well as for readers and viewers. When faced with the staging of a text that is not only a translation but also one that was not made considering contemporary Mexico as a target culture – even if it was made by contemporary Mexicans—, viewers are forced into a step further away from the original; they are expected to comprehend a language that is not their own, for which they must perform a secondary translation. Instead of going directly to Mexican Spanish, the text goes through Iberian Spanish, and the result ends up being an unexpected, hurried translation of a translation. Modenessi reminds us that translating into Spanish is not the same as translating into Spanish alterities,[211] meaning Latin-American Spanish variations. When speaking of his recent, and very successful,[212] staging of *Hamlet* in Mexico City,[213] Flavio González Mello explains that, after consulting several of the available translations, he decided to work on one of his own. He considered most of them unfit for staging because the translators "suelen partir de la premisa de que los héroes shakespeareanos, en español, deben hablar como personajes de Lope de Vega; de este modo, convierten los textos en piezas de museo" [usually subscribe to the notion that Shakespearean heroes, in Spanish, should speak like Lope de Vega's characters; this way, they turn the texts into museum pieces.][214] This serves to prove Modenessi's point, and in consistency with it I turn to the idea of purpose (Skopos) as main feature of a translation. The target text purpose is thought of as a continuation of the source text purpose, which in this case is, among other things, a successful staging. To comply with that purpose,

[210] Modenessi. "Have you made division of yourself? Shakespeare en español a ambas orillas del Atlántico".
[211] Modenessi is using the word 'alterities' in its anthropological sense, referring to the multiple Latin American variations of Iberian Spanish as manifestations of 'otherness' that stem from the same dominant source in combination with local cultures.
[212] http://www.teatrounam.com/criticon10/category/hamlet/
http://www.arteycultura.com.mx/hamlet-la-emblematica-tragedia-de-shakespeare-bajo-una-mirada-eclectica/
[213] *Hamlet*, translated and directed by Flavio González Mello, was staged at Foro Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Centro Cultural Universitario, from September to December 2015 and from May to June 2016.
[214] Flavio González Mello. "Shakespeare desde las tablas chilangas", in *Paso de Gato*, Año 15, Num. 66, 2016.

it is necessary to depart from the idea of chronological equivalence between the source and target languages. It is also important to assess semantic displacement regarding puns and connotations, but that will be addressed in the following chapter.

Among the more contemporary translations, the ones that are most commonly found in Mexican libraries are Pablo Neruda's 1964 adaptation *Romeo y Julieta*[215] and Ma. Enriqueta González Padilla's 1998 version.[216] The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda was one of the most important Latin American writers in the twentieth century; he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Oxford in 1965 and won the Nobel prize for Literature in 1971. Parallel to his literary career, his involvement in politics as a member of the Chilean Communist Party was a key aspect of his personality. His translation of *Romeo and Juliet* is an example of both Chilean Spanish as a target language and 1964 Chile as a target culture. It was done specifically to be staged for Chilean audiences, for which the poet justified the removal of certain elements and the addition of others. Gregary J. Racz says about it that "putting aside the question of its (mostly positive) reception, Neruda's Spanish version remains remarkable for the frequent departures from its Shakespearean source text, mostly notable in the form of omissions effected at nearly all points and on all levels of the play".[217] He cites various reasons for these omissions: the poet's political affiliations, firmly seated in socialism, make him prone to look for the social cause within the play as well as to minimize the cultural references that he deemed representatives of European cultural dominance, which is why, in his version, Mercutio's Queen Mab speech was almost lost, and indeed does not make the first edition; but there is also the fact that most of the time the decision to delete certain sections responds to aesthetic and practical considerations. The play was, Neruda thought, too long, and

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[215] Pablo Neruda (translator). *Romeo y Julieta; W. Shakespeare* (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2001).
[216] Ma. Enriqueta González Padilla (translator). *William Shakespeare: La tragedia de Romeo y Julieta* (México: UNAM, 1998).
[217] Gregary J. Racz. "Strategies of Deletion in Pablo Neruda's *Romeo y Julieta*" in *Latin American Shakespeares* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 2005) p. 71.

would be even longer in Spanish. More important at this time, Racz also argues that he smoothed out most of the bawdy wordplay, in some cases because he considered it untranslatable, but in others it was either in consideration to Chilean susceptibilities or, more frequently, to shift the audience's attention away from the teenage romance and into the social and political issues that he deemed more important.

The second version previously mentioned is a good example of how the subordination of Mexican Spanish to which Modenessi refers to can separate the play from contemporary readers and audiences. *Proyecto Shakespeare* [The Shakespeare Project] was an unprecedented attempt to systematically translate all of Shakespeare's plays into Spanish. Its founder, Enriqueta González Padilla, argued, quite truthfully, that "al crearse el Proyecto no existía ninguna obra de Shakespeare editada por la Universidad Nacional" [when the Project was created, none of Shakespeare's works was edited by the National University],[218] and also that "las traducciones de éste que se encuentran en librerías y bibliotecas son anticuadas o deficientes" [the translations that are available in bookstores and libraries are outdated or deficient];[219] which is why she intended to offer a set of better translations accompanied by preliminary studies and critical annotations that were supposed to constitute "un valioso auxiliar para especialistas, actores y profesores" [a valuable aid to specialists, actors and professors].[220] Juan Carlos Calvillo,[221] in his review of González Padilla's *Macbeth* translation, says that, in all of her translations, she turns to Iberian Spanish in an attempt to achieve a more canonical-sounding text. While Calvillo does not perceive this as a problem for the staging possibilities of her versions, Michel Modenessi considers that this imitation of an alien language accomplishes very little in terms of successfully getting

[218] Enriqueta González Padilla. "Noticia sobre el Proyecto Shakespeare" http://ru.ffyl.unam.mx/bitstream/handle/10391/1605/17_ALM_07_1995_1996_Gonzalez_219_223.pdf?sequence=1
[219] Ibid
[220] Ibid
[221] Calvillo, "'Si al hacerlo quedara consumado': dos traducciones mexicanas de *Macbeth*".

through to audiences and readers.[222] The Project, however, was orphaned by González Padilla's death and has yet to come back to life at the hands of Juan Carlos Calvillo.

As Neruda's multiple omissions prove, one of the biggest difficulties of translating Shakespeare is the constant use of puns. This is also one of the most characteristically appealing aspects of the plays in their original language. In order to evaluate the differences between the common translations, I will compare translations by Astrana, Menéndez y Pelayo, Neruda and González Padilla to contrast their treatment of sexual double meaning in *Romeo and Juliet*: the dialogue between Samson and Gregory at the beginning of 1.1, the exchange between Romeo and Mercutio in 1.4, and what is considered to be the most obscene dialogue in the play, Mercutio's summoning of Romeo in 2.1.

A PRETTY PIECE OF FLESH

Sampson and Gregory's dialogue, right after the prologue, constitutes a sort of friendly banter between two of the less important characters in the play. It is full of humour and makes for a refreshing contrast to the serious mood that the foreboding in the prologue sets. However, it is no simple task for a translator to convey the light-spirited dirty jokes exchanged by the two servants. The part that I focus on in this chapter is the moment when Sampson starts talking about what he will do to the women of the Montague house:

> SAMPSON: 'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men I will be civil with the maids. I will cut off their heads.
> GREGORY: The heads of the maids?
> SAMPSON: Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt.
> GREGORY: They must take it in sense that feel it.
> SAMPSON: Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known that I am a pretty piece of flesh.
> GREGORY: 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been Poor John. Draw thy tool – here comes of the house of Montagues.[223]

[222] Modenessi, "Have you made division of yourself? Shakespeare en español a ambas orillas del Atlántico".
[223] William Shakespeare. *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) 1.1.20-31.

For a bilingual Mexican, brought up in the midst of a culture that values the double meaning and sexual puns of albur, the friendly exchange of sexist jokes in the context of low-class young men seems all too familiar. Good-natured competition amongst young men is something that can be easily recognized in any context, but the fact that this attitude is expressed through bawdy wordplay establishes a strong connection with how young Mexican men – and women — convey their need to prove themselves amongst their equals. In her study on masculine identity in Mexico, Ivonne Sasz states that "stories are told in all-male company that exaggerate knowledge about sex and sexuality and experiences of penetration (…) as the most important ways they have of affirming and reaffirming masculinity".[224] This interesting and, to a Mexican reader or spectator, potentially central aspect of the dialogue practically disappears in most Spanish translations. As a result of ignoring the parts of it that might be considered obscene, Menéndez y Pelayo's version, more than a century old, barely makes sense to contemporary readers:

> SANSÓN: Lo mismo da. Seré un tirano. Acabaré primero con los hombres y luego con las mujeres.
> GREGORIO: ¿Qué quieres decir?
> SANSÓN: Lo que tú quieras. Sabes que no soy rana.
> GREGORIO: No eres ni pescado ni carne. Saca tu espada, que aquí vienen dos criados de casa Montesco.
>
> [SANSÓN: It does not matter. I will be a tyrant. I will finish the men first and then the women.
> GREGORIO: What do you mean?
> SANSÓN: Whatever you want. You know that I am not a frog.
> GREGORIO: You are not fish, nor meat. Draw your sword, here come two servants of Montague house.][225]

It is plain to see that the sexual wordplay is lost but, even more disturbingly, the dialogue loses much of its purpose. Menéndez y Pelayo, in his introduction to this translation, states himself that he decided to suppress the "aberraciones contra el buen gusto, en que a veces incurría el gran poeta" [aberrations against good taste,

[224] Ivonne Sasz. "Masculine Indentity and the Meanings of Sexuality: A Review of Research in Mexico", in *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 6, No. 12, 1998.
[225] Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (translator). "Romeo y Julieta" in *Dramas de Guillermo Shakespeare* (Barcelona: Biblioteca Arte y Letras, 1881).

in which the great poet sometimes incurred][226] because he considered that his glory did not rest upon such "pueriles menudencias" [puerile trifles].[227] Following this decision, he intentionally cut out what he thought was insulting, rude and puerile: the sexual puns and double meaning. Because he attempted to wash away what he considered to be dirty language, a dialogue that was meant to work as witty ends up being pointless and confusing.

In chronological order, the next important translation is Astrana Marín's, almost a hundred years old and one of the most popular ones:

> SANSÓN: Igual me da. ¡Me mostraré tirano! Cuando me haya batido con los sirvientes, seré cruel con las doncellas. Les voy a cortar la cabeza.
> GREGORIO: ¿La cabeza de las doncellas?
> SANSÓN: La cabeza de las doncellas o su doncellez. ¡Tómalo en el sentido que quieras!
> GREGORIO: Quienes habrán de tomarlo en algún sentido serán los que lo sientan.
> SANSÓN: ¡Pues me sentirán mientras pueda tenerme en pie, y es sabido que soy un bonito pedazo de carne!
> GREGORIO: Más vale que no seas pescado; de serlo estarías convertido en un Pobre Juan. ¡Saca tu herramienta, que vienen dos de la casa de los Montescos!
>
> [SANSÓN: I do not care. ¡I will show myself a tyrant! When I have fought with the servants, I will be cruel to the maids. I will cut off their heads.
> GREGORIO: The heads of the maids?
> SANSÓN: Either the heads of the maids or their maidhood. ¡Take it in the sense you want!
> GREGORIO: Those who shall take it in any sense will be the ones that feel it.
> SANSÓN: Well, they will feel me as long as I can keep on my feet, and they know that I am a pretty piece of flesh!
> GREGORIO: You better not be a fish; you would become a Poor John. ¡Take out your tool, there come two of the house of the Montagues!][228]

Evidently Astrana tries to keep the translation as literal as possible; in his own words, "arduos problemas asaltan al traductor que acomete la larga tarea de verter fielmente un texto como el de Shakespeare, que reputa sagrado" [difficult problems await the translator that commits to the lengthy quest of faithfully conveying such a text as Shakespeare's, which he values as sacred.];[229] "es preferible un traductor literal a un traductor infiel (…) porque Shakespeare *no es*, como creen algunos, el autor salvaje, grosero y truculento" [it is better to be a

[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Astrana Marín, p. 262
[229] Astrana Marín, p. 20

literal translator to an unfaithful one (…) for Shakespeare *is not,* as some may think, the wild, rude and tricky author].[230] He says both that he is trying to translate literally and universally, and that Shakespeare is not rude or wild (which is probably why he disregards the sex puns). While Menéndez y Pelayo tries not to be too literal, Astrana vows to convey every word as precisely as possible, but he still adheres to the principle that he should edit the parts he considered too rude and wild.

In his strife for accuracy, Astrana is conforming to the nineteenth-century idea that the translator must alter the text as little as possible. In "Expanding English: The case for cultural and linguistic translation", Ileana Dimitriu discusses how the view on translation has changed in the last couple of centuries. She says that, up until the middle of the twentieth century, "conventional views on translation considered the source text to be sacrosanct and did not grant translation equal status to the original.",[231] which led to the quality of the translation being evaluated exclusively in its similarity to the original text. On the foundation for this rigidness, she states that

> The need to give the 'original' (that is, the source-text) the status of being 'invariant', or 'universal', is based on the Romantic notion of original genius and inalienable authorship, with the consequence that attitudes towards translation became reductionist; highly normative and rigidly prescriptive straightjackets - of formal alignment with the source text - inevitably placed the translated text in a position of inferiority.[232]

In the case of Astrana, as in many others, the attempt to produce a 'universal' translation, one that stays as literally close to the original as possible, ends up backfiring: everybody sort of understands the words, but few get the meaning behind them. Some unfortunate changes also contribute to make the dialogue less funny and more disturbing in a sense that he probably did not intend. In Sampson's line from v. 22, Astrana substitutes 'civil' with 'cruel'. He is clearly following some editors that turn to Q1, an allegedly 'bad' quarto, to emphasize the

[230] Astrana Marín, p. 20-21.
[231] Dimitriu, p. 38.
[232] Ibid, p. 37.

violence and hatred among the servants of the houses, but the lightness implied in the idea of conquering the enemy by attacking the men and seducing the women transforms into something darker when, in Astrana's version, Sampson threatens to take either their heads or their virginity – kill them if he cannot rape them. In Spanish, there is no equivalent to 'maidenhead', so the literality of the translation transforms what could be interpreted as civil seduction – an important concept throughout the play – into cruel rape.

Astrana's choice, later followed by González Padilla, is interesting because of its implications within the target culture. When Sampson says that he will be 'civil' to the ladies, he is establishing a contrast between his attitude towards men and women: males, he will murder, but females he will be civil to, and take their virginities. Violence against women is not accepted, as is made clear by Gregory's confusion when Sampson threatens to take "the heads of the maids". The point is that, to triumph over men, he must defeat them in combat; but the women he would have to win over in a civil manner.

With that said, it appears to be quite counterintuitive to choose 'cruel' as an equivalence, which is what makes the choice so remarkable. As has been said before, both Astrana and Menéndez y Pelayo strive to 'clean up' the obscener aspects of the play, but this, I believe, goes a little beyond that. There is still a vague reference to the maids' virginities, so the obscenity should remain, but for the Spanish translator it is somehow made more acceptable by the fact that it is laced with violence.

At this point it is important to mention that an interesting aspect of *Romeo and Juliet* is the way female sexual desire is acknowledged. Juliet's soliloquy in 3.2 is an outstanding example of this, and also features the word 'civil' referring to the night that would enable her desires. When, at the very beginning of the play, Astrana opts for 'cruel' instead, he is denying women any possible desire to engage in sexual relations. Taking their maidenheads must necessarily be a cruel affair,

because it is impossible to think that they might be seduced in a civil manner and eventually agree to it.

Sampson is engaging in an open recognition of the fact that, yes, conquering women is taking their maidenheads, but, as Juliet also says in her soliloquy, they very much have the possibility of yielding to seduction and enjoying their defeat. Astrana's Sansón says the opposite: no woman could possibly agree, in a civil exchange, to the taking of her maidenhead, therefore the matter must necessarily be a cruel act of rape. This is both detrimental to the humorous nature of the dialogue and contrary to the treatment of female sexuality throughout the play.

Another unfortunate substitution in this translation is that of being able to stand for 'tenerse en pie'. The translation, *pararse* or *estar parado* has a clear sexual connotation that is not present in *tenerse en pie* – a more common expression in Iberian Spanish. Evidently Astrana was more focused on delivering the exact words than on conveying the general feeling of the dialogue, but it is also fair to mention that the pun, while easily imagined when Mexican Spanish is the target language, is not as simple to handle when being conveyed into Iberian Spanish. According to the Real Academia Española's Spanish dictionary, the American definition of 'parar' is "poner algo o a alguien de pie o en posición vertical" [to place something or someone standing or in a vertical position],[233] whereas the Iberian one is "detener e impedir el movimiento o acción de alguien" [to stop and prevent someone's movement or action].[234] From the American definition it is quite logical that in Mexico 'estar parado' – which literally means 'to stand' as opposed to the Iberian 'to be still' – in a quite popular use of metonymy, becomes 'tenerla/o parada/o', that is 'to have (the penis) standing'.

Astrana is subscribing to a type of translation that Reiß/Vermeer describe as a three-part model in which the translator seeks to translate meaning, with the implication that it is possible for meaning to stay the same and the understanding

[233] http://www.rae.es
[234] Ibid.

of translation as a process of decoding from the source language and recoding into the target language. This model seems to overlook the complexities of both source and target cultures, and the particularities if time and space in translation.

It is also a small scale example of the possible adverse effects of what Emily Apter, citing Franco Moretti, calls "the market wave":[235] it appears to be economically profitable to opt for a unified translation that favours Iberian Spanish in an attempt to cover the whole of Latin America just as a wave covers the sand, but, in doing so, the possible overlapping areas between the original text and each particular context, the nuances that could make the translation more intimately relatable, are mostly overlooked. Modenessi's idea of translating for Spanish Alterities is a cry against the wave that seems to swallow the particular possibilities of a more specifically targeted translation.

Neruda's adaptation from 1964, while not ideal, is by far the most successful in this regard. There is little commentary on this translation, except for what the poet himself said in an interview and a few reviews and articles on it. Neruda talks about discovering another theme behind the love story. In the presentation to his translation for Shakespeare's Jubilee, the Year of Shakespeare, he says that the play is "un gran alegato por la paz entre los hombres" [a great plea for peace amongst men].[236] Before looking at it closely, it is also important to remember that, while he was working on this translation, Neruda was very much involved in left wing political campaigns. As I have said before, he was a member of the Chilean Communist Party and a close advisor to president Salvador Allende, in favour of whom he renounced a presidential candidacy in 1970. His strong political convictions are clearly evident throughout all of his works, and his translation of Shakespeare is no exception. Aside from his stress on peace amongst men, freedom and civility, he also tends to reject certain cultural references that he deems representative of bourgeois cultural aspirations and changes some verses to

[235] Emily Apter. *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* p. 180.
[236] Racsz, p. 82.

more popular Chilean forms of poetry in an attempt to encourage the appropriation of the play among his public as well as a celebration of his own cultural values.

The success of this adaptation when it was first staged resides in no small part on his decision to translate into Chilean Spanish instead of keeping it Iberian. Although he respected Astrana's version, the poet showed an acute knowledge of his own culture and audience when he chose to make the play as local as possible. When confronted with the trickier aspects, such as the use of double meaning, he attempts to keep the puns as similar as possible, while making the characters speak in a colloquial way:

> SANSÓN: Es lo mismo. Quiero que me tomen por tirano. Cuando haya peleado con los hombres seré cruel con las muchachas. Les romperé las cabezas.
> GREGORIO: ¿Las cabezas de las muchachas?
> SANSÓN: Sí, las cabezas de las muchachas o bien les romperé algo mejor. Tómalo como quieras.
> GREGORIO: Ellas lo tomarán como lo sientan.
> SANSÓN: A mí me sentirán cuando me tengan encima. Ya se sabe que tengo bien puesto mi pedacito de carne.
> GREGORIO: ¡Saca tu herramienta! Llegan dos de la casa de los Montesco.
>
> [SANSÓN: It is the same. I want to be taken for a tyrant. After I have fought the men, I will be cruel to the girls. I will break their heads.
> GREGORIO: The heads of the girls?
> SANSÓN: Yes, the heads of the girls, or I'll break some better part of them. Take it as you want to.
> GREGORIO: They will take it as they feel it.
> SANSÓN: They will feel me when I am on top of them. Everybody knows that my piece of flesh is very well placed.
> GREGORIO: Take out your tool! Here come two of the house of the Montagues.][237]

The poet also replaces 'civil' with 'cruel', which is likely due to the influence of Astrana's version in Latin America. Nevertheless, the way he handles the whole 'heads of the maidens' part constitutes a big improvement in terms of delivering the double meaning. When his Sampson says he will 'break some better part of them', he is directing the audience's attention to the obvious sexual implication. It is also necessary to say that to 'break someone's head' is less violent than cutting it

[237] Neruda, pp. 6-7.

off, so when he speaks of breaking the girls' heads, though still violent, he is not really making a death threat, and it is more evident that the expression is a pretext for the subsequent joke.

Much less fortunate is the result of Enriqueta González Padilla's work. It is considerably more recent and should be better suited for contemporary Mexican audiences: she is Mexican, and the translation was commissioned by UNAM. Nevertheless, as a part of Proyecto Shakespeare, it is "written conventionally in Iberian Spanish and poorly distributed at higher prices".[238] The use of notes to explain the difficulties of translation in this edition is certainly helpful, but the actual translation still falls short when focusing on the playful nature of the dialogue:

> SANSÓN: Es igual. Seré cruel: cuando haya combatido a los hombres, seré más cortés con las mujeres y les cortaré la flor.
> GREGORIO: ¿Las flores de las mujeres?
> SANSÓN: Sí, las flores de las mujeres o su doncellez. Tómalo como quieras.
> GREGORIO: Ellas deben tomarlo como lo sientan.
> SANSÓN: A mí deben sentirme cuando pueda levantarme, y ya se sabe que soy un bonito pedazo de carne.
> GREGORIO: ¡Qué bueno que no seas pescado; si lo fueras, habrías sido un pobre Juan! Saca tu herramienta, aquí vienen unos de la casa de los Montesco.
>
> [SANSÓN: It is the same. I will be cruel: once I have fought the men, I will be more courteous to the women and cut their flower.
> GREGORIO: The flowers of the women?
> SANSÓN: Yes, the flowers of the women or their maidenhood. Take it as you want to.]
> GREGORIO: They must take it as they feel it.
> SANSÓN: They should feel me when I can stand up, and it is known that I am a pretty piece of flesh.
> GREGORIO: It is a good thing that you are not a fish; if you were, you would be a Poor John! Take out your tool, here come some of the house of the Montagues.][239]

González Padilla tries to solve the problem presented by 'maidenhead' by substituting it for 'flower'. This gets the point across, but it is an anachronism and makes the whole line sound a bit ridiculous – to contemporary Mexicans, that is – while distancing the audience/reader from the text. She also substitutes 'to stand' for *levantarse*, which seems an odd choice when, in a Mexican context, the synonym

[238] Modenessi, "A Double Tongue Within Your Mask".
[239] González Padilla, *La tragedia de Romeo y Julieta.* pp 53-54.

pararse would work much better for the clear sexual implications previously discussed. The use of *levantarse*, a word that does not carry the same sexual meaning as *pararse*, makes the whole 'pretty piece of flesh' line somewhat confusing, especially when she translates it literally. As can be seen in Neruda's translation, the pun works better for a Latin American audience when instead of 'being a pretty piece of flesh', Sampson can 'have a pretty piece of flesh'. In the text, the young man is evidently alluding to the qualities of his penis, this is furthermore clarified when Gregory answers comparing it to a skinny fish. In a Mexican context, *carne* (flesh, meat) is a very common albur word for penis, but it is usually a piece of flesh that someone owns. Saying, literally, that a person 'is a pretty/good piece of flesh' would more likely be equivalent to saying they are 'a fine piece of ass', rendering them a passive recipient of sexual advances. Evidently, this is contrary to what Sampson is attempting to communicate. As is the case with the Astrana translation, this comes from considering that, like Reiß and Vermeer say in regard to this type of translation, "the primary unit of translation is the text. Words are only relevant to the translator insofar as they are elements of the text".[240] Disregarding the behaviour of words within the target culture is a dangerous consequence of this idea.

PRICK LOVE FOR PRICKING

The dialogue between Romeo and Mercutio in 1.4 is an even clearer example of how inadequate translations might damage an understanding of the play. The vagueness of the translation attempts is far from innocent and springs both from a false sense of solemnity usually attributed to Shakespeare's tragedies and from some sort of modesty that deems the puns too rude for conservative Spanish speaking audiences. This probably responds to the homoerotic nature of the wordplay: despite being the central issue in games of albur, homosexuality is an even bigger taboo than rape. It is partly because of the highly transgressive nature

[240] Reiß and Vermeer, p. 28.

of male homosexuality that it comes to be common subject of jokes in the lower classes. Samuel Schmidt points out that, as a generalized cultural trait, Mexicans lean towards maintaining an irreverent attitude regarding everything, especially on issues that in formal conversation are considered taboo.[241] This apparent contradiction is what allows albur to act as a release mechanism for class inequality: lower classes thrive in mocking tragedy and restriction as a form of social resistance, and this includes laughing at social norms. Shakespeare, however, is strongly linked to European culture, which is dictated by upper classes and, therefore, separated from any manner of wordplay that would make light of something regarded as obscene as homosexuality. Ivonne Sasz argues that "the stigma attached to homosexuality, as lacking in manliness, is applied exclusively to men who are penetrated"[242] as in this case, metaphorically, is Romeo; because of this, it would be difficult to picture him both as 'lacking in manliness' and as the romantic hero in a heterosexual love story. It is then quite understandable that translators might have trouble with this sort of exchange:

> MERCUTIO: You are a lover, borrow Cupid's wings
> And soar with them above a common bound.
> ROMEO: I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
> To soar with his light feathers, and so bound
> I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
> Under love's heavy burden do I sink.
> MERCUTIO: And, to sink in it, should you burden love –
> Too great oppression for a tender thing.
> ROMEO: Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
> Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.
> MERCUTIO: If love be rough with you, be rough with love;
> Prick love for pricking and you beat love down.[243]

To most contemporary bilingual Mexican audiences, the words 'sore', 'shaft', 'sink', 'prick' and 'pricking' used in the same scene would bring up the playful battle of *albur* and its homoerotic components. However, when faced with Menéndez y Pelayo's translation, the effect is lost:

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[241] Samuel Schmidt. *Seriously Funny: Mexican Political Jokes as Social Resistance.* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).
[242] Ivonne Sasz, p. 10
[243] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet* (1.4.17-28).

MERCUTIO: Pídele sus alas al amor, y con ellas te levantarás de la tierra.
ROMEO: Sus flechas me han herido de tal modo, que ni siquiera sus plumas bastan para levantarme. Me ha atado de tal suerte que no puedo pasar la raya de mis dolores. La pesadumbre me ahoga.
MERCUTIO: No has debido cargar con tanto peso al amor, que es muy delicado.
ROMEO: ¡Delicado el amor! Antes duro y fuerte y punzante como el cardo.
MERCUTIO: Si es duro, sé tú duro con él. Si te hiere, hiérele tú, y verás cómo se da por vencido.

[MERCUTIO: Ask for love's wings, and rise from the ground with them.
ROMEO: Its arrows have wounded me in such a way, that not even its feathers suffice to lift me up. It has bound me in such a way that I cannot pass the limit of my pains. Sorrow drowns me.
MERCUTIO: You should not have burdened love with so much weight, for it is very delicate.
ROMEO: Love, delicate! On the contrary, it is hard and tough and sharp as the thorns.
MERCUTIO: If it is hard, then you be hard with it. If it hurts you, hurt it, and you will see how it will give up.][244]

Clearly Menéndez y Pelayo fails to convey, not only the subtle mention of matters that would have been considered too vulgar in nineteenth-century Spain, but also Mercutio's constant mockery of love, which is an important part of what makes him such an interesting character. By making fun of Romeo, he provides balance to an otherwise very sorrowful scene, and emphasizes the playful relationship between the boys. All of this simply disappears in the 1881 version.

Exactly the same thing happens with Astrana's version:

MERCUCIO: ¡Sois un enamorado! ¡Pedidle a Cupido que os preste sus alas y remontaos con ellas hasta las cumbres!
ROMEO: ¡Demasiado cruelmente herido estoy por su flecha para que pueda remontarme con sus leves alas; y tan postrado me tiene que no puedo elevarme más allá de la negra pesadumbre! ¡Caigo agobiado bajo la carga abrumadora del amor!
MERCUCIO: ¡Pues como caigáis encima, aplastaréis al amor con vuestro peso! Es mucha opresión para tan tierno ser.
ROMEO: ¿Tierno el amor? ¡Demasiado áspero, demasiado rudo, demasiado violento y pincha como el abrojo!
MERCUCIO: Si el amor es áspero con vos, sed áspero con él; si os pincha, pinchadle y acabad por rendirle.

[MERCUTIO: You are in love! Ask Cupid for his wings and soar with them to the mountains!
ROMEO: Too cruelly am I wounded by his arrow to rise on his swift wings; and so prostrated he has me that I cannot rise above the black sorrow! I fall exhausted under the overwhelming weight of love!

[244] Menéndez y Pelayo, p. 174.

MERCUTIO: Well, if you fall on top of it, you will crush love with your weight! It is too much oppression for such a tender being.
ROMEO: Tender, love? Too hard, too rough, too violent and it stings like the thorn!
MERCUTIO: If love is hard on you, be hard on it; if it stings you, sting it and finally beat it.][245]

Besides the absence of sexual wordplay, Astrana's version could arguably sound more outdated than Menéndez y Pelayo's, probably due to the strict literality of the translation. When it works in a successfully humorous manner, Mercutio's distaste for love and its dynamics provides a light-hearted reflection on the power struggle that arises around matters of the heart. Surrendering to love is seen as renouncing one's virility, being tied to a woman's will, so that when Romeo is pierced and lays helpless under love's burden, he is being stripped of his manliness and made equal to a woman. Love entails a certain level of emasculation, but this is talked about in jest because it is also a necessary experience and, even if it is not expressed openly, anyone can relate. When removed from its lightness, the dialogue turns Mercutio into a bitter character and, more importantly, loses a whole layer of interpretative possibilities that would fall into the area of what Emily Apter calls "traumatic proximity".[246] On the contrary, it would be a significant achievement for linguistic barriers to be acknowledged and transcended in favour of a possible shared sociohistorical circumstance, namely, a shared experience.

Neruda's adaptation, though much friendlier and contemporary, still ignores the innuendo. In his case, as with Menéndez y Pelayo, the omission is intentional:[247]

MERCUCIO: ¡Estás enamorado! ¡Pídele alas
A Cupido y remóntale con ellas!
ROMEO: Estoy tan malherido por sus flechas
Que no me sostendrán sus breves alas
Y tan atado estoy por mis dolores
Que no podré elevarme y derrotarlos.
¡El grave peso del amor me abruma!
MERCUCIO: Si le caes encima lo lastimas
Es harto peso para un ser tan frágil.
ROMEO: ¿Un ser tan frágil, el amor? ¡Es rudo,

[245] Astrana Marín, p. 270.
[246] Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature.*
[247] Racz, "Strategies of Deletion in Pablo Neruda's *Romeo y Julieta*".

Brutal, violento y clava como espina!
MERCUCIO: Trata mal al amor si él te maltrata,
Clávalo si te clava y lo derrotas.

[MERCUTIO: You are in love! Ask Cupid for his wings and surpass him on them.
ROMEO: I am so badly wounded by his arrows that his brief wings will not sustain me. And I am so tied up by my pains that I cannot rise and defeat them. The serious weight of love overwhelms me!
MERCUTIO: If you fall on top of love, you shall hurt him. It is too much weight for such a fragile being.
ROMEO: A fragile being, love? It is rough, brutal, violent and stings like a thorn!
MERCUTIO: Mistreat love if it mistreats you, sting it if it stings you and you will defeat it.][248]

While the playfulness of the dialogue is completely lost, from a rhythmic point of view, the translation is beautifully made. It is flowing and natural, if still too serious.

As with the previous example, González Padilla also disregards the homoerotic banter:

MERCUCIO: Estás enamorado,
Pídele prestadas las alas a Cupido,
Y con ellas remóntate
Por encima de los límites normales.
ROMEO: Tan cruelmente herido estoy con sus flechas
Para elevarme con sus leves alas,
Y tan encadenado
Que no puedo salvar la distancia
Que me libre de mi tediosa pesadumbre.
Me hundo bajo la pesada carga del amor.
MERCUCIO: Como te hundas en él, aplastarás al amor,
Opresión muy pesada para tan tierno ser.
ROMEO: ¿Es cosa tierna el amor? Es demasiado áspero,
Demasiado rudo, turbulento en demasía,
Y pincha como espina.
MERCUCIO: Si el amor fuere áspero contigo,
Sé áspero tú con el amor. Hiere al amor
Cuando él te hiera a ti
Y así lo rendirás.

[MERCUTIO: You are in love, borrow Cupid's wings and soar with them above the normal limits.
ROMEO: So cruelly am I wounded by his arrows to rise with his light wings, and so chained that I cannot go the distance that would free me from my tedious heaviness of heart. I sink under the heavy weight of love.

[248] Neruda, p. 17.

> MERCUTIO: If you sink in it, you will crush love, too heavy oppression for such a tender being.
> ROMEO: Is love a tender thing? It is too rough, too rude, turbulent in excess, and stings like a thorn.
> MERCUTIO: If love were to be rough with you, you be rough with it. Hurt love when it hurts you and that way you will defeat it.][249]

In a footnote, González Padilla explains the way Shakespeare plays with the words 'soar' and 'sore'; and the different meanings of 'bound', but she says nothing of the more obvious double meaning of words like 'shaft', 'prick' or 'sink'. This gives cause to wonder if, in her case, there might also be an intentional omission of the homoerotic implications of the dialogue. One must bear in mind that González Padilla was aiming at a more serious version of the play, meant as a work of consult, not as a text to be staged; which might be accountable for the lack of humour in her translation.

THAT KIND OF FRUIT…

In 2.1, Mercutio continues his teasing, even without Romeo there to listen. He calls out loud and conjures him by Rosaline's eyes, forehead, lips, legs and, finally, her 'demesnes'. Astrana's translation, "los parajes ahí adyacentes" [the lands nearby][250] might be interpreted in a sexual manner. Menéndez y Pelayo ignores the word and stops at the legs, and, while Neruda follows Astrana, González Padilla translates 'demesnes' as "perfections",[251] a word that does not carry the meaning intended in the original.

The sexual jokes get more intense a few lines later, when Benvolio warns Mercutio about the possibility of Romeo being annoyed because of his jokes, the young man answers:

> MERCUTIO: This cannot anger him. 'Twould anger him
> To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle
> Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
> 'Till she had laid it and conjured it down –
> That were some spite. My invocation

[249] González Padilla, pp. 84-85.
[250] Astrana Marín, p. 275
[251] González Padilla, p. 105

Is fair and honest. In his mistress' name
I conjure only but to raise up him.[252]

The idea of Rosaline's 'circle' (vagina) being the place where some 'spirit of strange nature' (some stranger's penis) stands until she has 'laid it and conjured it down' (had sex with it) would be, according to Mercutio, much more offensive than what he is suggesting, merely, that it be Romeo who is able to lay with her. After, he then explains to Benvolio:

MERCUTIO: If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
Now will he sit under a medlar tree,
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.
O Romeo, that she were, O, that she were
An open-arse, thou a poperin pear!

Here he is not only suggesting that Romeo fantasizes about having vaginal sex with Rosaline, which was clear on the previous lines, but even, as Stanley Wells suspects,[253] that he might want to also sustain anal intercourse with her. The double meaning to the word 'medlar' is first alluded to by the mention of ladies 'laughing alone', that is, free from social conventions that would not allow them to speak of sexual issues. He then goes on to call the fruit an 'open-arse' for Romeo's pear to 'pop in'. Medlars were also called 'open-taile' and, in French, *fruit de trou de cul*, which literally means 'arsehole fruit'. As rude as it may appear in writing, the pun takes on a whole new dimension when it is placed within the frame of Elizabethan staging. When Mercutio talks of Rosaline, or any girl for that matter, in the context of the play, he is talking of a character played by a young male actor. Even when Rosaline is not actually on stage, the audiences are aware of the presence of boys dressed as girls, and "a man, and especially a boy, who theatricalizes the self as female, invites playing the woman's part in sexual congress".[254] This subtle invitation to make the private laughter a public one

[252] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet* (2.1.23-29).
[253] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[254] Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4; Winter, 1988.

establishes complicity with the viewer in a gesture that can also be found among crossdressing Carpa theatre performers in Mexico.

As was previously noted, this is arguably the dirtiest dialogue in the play, and for that reason it is both very important and very difficult to translate. Menéndez y Pelayo, in a predictable display of good manners, makes a point of completely ignoring the innuendo, and limits himself to translating as follows:

> MERCUTIO: Verás cómo no; se enfadaría, si me empeñase en encerrar a un demonio en el círculo de su dama, para que ella le conjurase; pero ahora veréis cómo no se enfada con tan santa y justa invocación, como es la del nombre de su amada.
>
> [MERCUTIO: You will see that he will not; he would be mad if I would endeavor to lock a demon in his lady's circle, for her to conjure; but now you will see that he will not be angry with such a holy and fair invocation as his beloved's name is.][255]

Where the idea of conjuring spirits and demons is used as a metaphor for Rosaline having sex with some stranger, he translates it in a way that can only be interpreted literally. He cuts Mercutio's participation at that, eliminates all the lines that talk about the medlar and the pear, and concludes the scene with Benvolio saying good night.

Astrana, as he states in his introduction, strives for the most 'precise' translation possible, while still struggling with what he deems too cheap and vulgar to be Shakespearean. This is how he translates:

> MERCUTIO: Esto no puede enojarle. Lo que le enojaría sería evocar un espíritu de extraña nauraleza en el círculo de su dama, dejándole allí erguido hasta que ella lo abatiera y lo conjurara. Esto le causaría algún despecho; pero mi invocación es razonable y honesta, y sólo le conjuro en nombre de su amada para hacerle a él surgir.
>
> [MERCUTIO: This cannot anger him. What would make him mad would be to evoke a strange natured spirit in his lady's circle, leaving it standing there until she could knock it down and conjured it. This would cause him some despair; but my invocation is reasonable and honest, and I only conjure him in his beloved's name to make him come out.][256]

[255] Menéndez y Pelayo, p. 182.
[256] Astrana Marín, p. 275.

Just as Menéndez y Pelayo, he strips a whole layer of meaning from the words, making them only about Mercutio and Benvolio unsuccessfully calling Romeo before going to sleep.

When interpreting the next part, he was undoubtedly faced with hard choices. The underlying obscenity of the lines is impossible to deny and that clearly made him uncomfortable but, unlike Menéndez y Pelayo, his strife for exactitude in the translation prevented him from removing them. He translates:

> MERCUTIO: ¡Si tu amor es ciego, no puede dar en el blanco! ¡Ahora estará sentado bajo un níspero, y deseando que su dama sea esa especie de fruta a que se refieren las doncellas níspolas cuando ríen solas! ¡Oh Romeo, si ella fuese, ¡oh! si ella fuese un etcetera abierto y tú una pera poperina!
>
> [MERCUTIO: If your love is blind, it cannot hit the mark! ¡Now he is sitting under a medlar tree, and wishing his lady to be the kind of fruit than the medlar-fruit-ladies talk about when they laugh alone! ¡Oh Romeo, if she were, ¡oh! if she were an open etcetera and you a poperin pear!][257]

The confusing result of translating in a literal manner is somewhat minimized by a couple of footnotes in which he hastily explains that 'medlararse' sounds almost like 'open-arse' and that 'poperin pear' is part of a very obscene wordplay. He does not comment on the appearance of the medlar fruit – which is the main reason for it to be called 'open-arse' – or on 'poperin pear' being a pun; he says only that it is a kind of pear found originally in the region of Poperinghe. Astrana's discomfort and shock at what he calls "el juego obscenísimo de palabras" [the extremely obscene wordplay][258] is evident in the footnotes, as well as in the excessive use of exclamation marks. As much as he claims to be faithful in his attempt to convey Shakespeare's words to what he calls "la lengua más hermosa del mundo" [the most beautiful language in the world],[259] Astrana's contempt for what he considers to be the more offensive aspects of his work stands out as a beacon of identity: despite having attempted to translate word by word, he still managed to follow his own moral agenda. This is not unusual, as the presence of the translator's voice is

[257] Astrana Marín, p. 275
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid. p. 13

to be expected in any translation; one of the advantages of subscribing to the sort of translational action proposed by Skopostheorie is the acknowledgement of this voice. Of course, this would suppose a contradiction to Astrana's purpose of attempting a 'universal' translation that conveys meaning for any Spanish speaking audience.

Neruda's attempt follows Astrana's in some aspects. Like the Spaniards, he ignores most of the innuendo in the first part:

> MERCUTIO: No se puede enojar. Le enojaría
> si en torno de su amada yo invocase
> un espíritu extraño y lo dejara
> plantado allí hasta que ella lo sacuda.
> Esto lo ofendería. Lo que invoco
> es justo y es honesto, yo le pido
> en nombre de su amada que aparezca.
>
> [MERCUTIO: He cannot be angry. He would be
> If around his beloved I would summon
> A strange spirit and left it there
> Standing until she can shake it off
> This would offend him. What I summon
> Is fair and honest, I ask him
> In the name of his beloved, to appear.][260]

He, too, chooses to remain on the most literal interpretation of the whole 'summoning' reference, and later also removes the parts that are considered 'extremely obscene' by Astrana:

> MERCUTIO: Si amor es ciego, no daré en el blanco.
> Ahora estaré debajo de una higuera
> esperando la breva de su amada.
> ¡Ah! ¡Pícaro Romeo! Lo que buscas
> es un etcétera para tu nabo.
>
> [MERCUTIO: If love is blind, I will not hit the target.
> Now I will be under a fig tree
> Waitin for his beloved's fig.
> ¡Ah! ¡Rascal Romeo! What you seek
> Is an etcetera for your turnip.][261]

[260] Neruda, p. 25
[261] Ibid.

The poet retains some of the playfulness and the sexual theme, but he tones it down quite a bit. Changing 'medlar' for 'fig' makes a lot of sense because in some Latin American contexts the fruit serves as a euphemism for the female genital organ,[262] the same happens with his substitution of 'poperin pear' for 'turnip': the penis is usually called 'turnip' in some countries and, in any case, the metaphor would work in most Spanish speaking countries. However, Neruda is seemingly afraid of offending the decent Chileans with an explicit joke that veers into more restricted aspects of sexuality. The use of 'etcetera' instead of 'open-arse' in both Astrana and Neruda's translations is most likely to be based upon a euphemism on the Q1 version.

González Padilla also chooses to handle the translation in the most basic level of interpretation:

> MERCUCIO: No, esto no puede enojarlo. Lo enojaría
> Evocar un espíritu de naturaleza extraña
> En el círculo de su dama,
> Dejándolo ahí
> Hasta que ella lo hubiera abatido
> Y exorcizado. Eso sí que sería ofensa.
> Mi invocación sí que es buena y honesta.
> En nombre de su dama
> sólo a él conjuro para que aparezca.
>
> [MERCUTIO: No, this cannot anger him. I would anger him
> To evoke a strange natured spirit
> In his lady's circle,
> Leaving it there
> Until she had knocked it down
> And exorcized it. This would be offense.
> My invocation is good and honest.
> In the name of his lady
> Only him do I conjure to appear.][263]

It is easy to appreciate that her translation is very similar to Astrana's. Not only does it strip away the real meaning of Mercutio's jesting, but it also makes it difficult to comprehend. When the sexual innuendo is removed, the whole dialogue makes no sense to Spanish-speaking readers. Both González Padilla and

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[263] González Padilla, pp. 105-106

Astrana focus on maintaining the highest possible level of linguistic equivalence without ever taking into consideration the target culture and its own possibilities. Dimitriu argues that, when being aware of both source and target culture dynamics, "the translator can complicate, relativise, extrapolate, stretch and expand a text's zone of influence, thus making it increasingly relevant to new audiences".[264] This ties into Apter's idea of embracing the gaps in language or translation as valuable components in an effort to escape the conflict between two opposing sides. Viewing the text as a fluid, moving entity, enables the translator to focus on elements, like Mercucio's dirty jokes, that speak directly to distant sensibilities. Consequently, this is in accordance with the whole Skopos approach of text as process: the translation is one possible continuation of a process that starts with the text and, as such, it is full of possibilities that might find concretion in different translational actions.

The next part, she translates as follows:

MERCUCIO: Si el amor es ciego, no puede dar en el blanco.
Estará ahora sentado a la sombre de un níspero
Deseando que su amada sea la fruta
Que nombran las doncellas cuando bromean solas.
¡Oh Romeo, ojalá fuera ella
un níspero abierto y tú una pera poperina!

[MERCUTIO: If love is blind, it cannor hit the target.
He will be sitting in the shade of a medlar tree
Wishing for his beloved to be the fruit
That ladies speak of when they joke alone.
Oh Romeo, that she were
An open medlar and you a poperin pear!][265]

She translates the names of the fruits in a literal way and, unlike Astrana, does not even bother to explain on a footnote. She only says, in a note that could easily have been copied from the Spaniard, that poperin pears come from Poperinghe.

[264] Dimitriu, p. 46
[265] González Padilla, p. 106

TE VOY A LAVAR LA BOCA CON JABÓN, WILL

These four different translations exemplify some of the most difficult issues when attempting to bring Shakespeare to Mexicans. Menéndez y Pelayo's is just plainly outdated, however adequate it might have been in 1881. Its use of nineteenth-century colloquial Iberian Spanish makes it very hard for contemporary audiences to comprehend, which becomes a problem because of its easy availability. The common disregard for the importance of differences between translations make the cheapest ones the first options, and Menéndez y Pelayo's is what we get. Astrana Marín is also still distant, and the fact that he tries to be as literal as possible does not help; as González Padilla much later, he tried to provide a 'universal' translation without considering that both source and target texts need to function in time and space, and are also tied to behaviour and social convention. Neruda's version, despite shifting certain aspects of the play and ignoring others to serve a cultural and political agenda, is in itself a much more functional approach to Latin American Spanish-speaking audiences. It was done with a particular target culture in mind, making it more suitable for staging in Mexican audiences simply because contemporary Mexico is culturally closer in time and space to Chile in 1964 than it is to Renaissance Spain.

None of them, however, pay much attention to the sexual puns. When attempting a translation directed towards Mexican audiences, this is a big mistake, one that was also acknowledged by González Mello regarding his experience with *Hamlet*. On the translations he consulted, and the reasons for making his own, he argued that

> Todas –cual más, cuál menos— rasuraban pudorosamente las alusiones sexuales que Hamlet pronuncia en algunas escenas. Flaco favor se hace al Bardo lavándole la boca a sus personajes. El interés de rescatar esos 'albures isabelinos' me terminó de convencer de la necesidad de empezar de cero y traducir directamente el texto al español de México (e incluso, en algunos pasajes, al chilango).
>
> [All of them –some more, some less— modestly shaved off the sexual allusions that Hamlet makes in some scenes. It is a small favour that we do the Bard by washing off his characters' mouths. The interest I had in rescuing those 'Elizabethan albures' ended up

> convincing me of the need to start from scratch and directly translate the text to Mexican Spanish (and even, in some cases, to Chilango[266] Spanish).][267]

He strove to honour the true meaning behind the words, though he sometimes had to switch to less than conventional approaches to translation, such as incorporating the whole staging process – making it a collective effort that included actors as collaborators— to the task of pouring the play into Spanish. Sometimes, he said, the perfect wording was only achieved when the play was already in rehearsal. However removed from the more academic aspects this might seem, his four-hour adaptation that featured a foul-mouthed hipster Hamlet was a huge success, proving at least to some extent that, when trying to reach contemporary audiences, it is a good idea to handle the text with as little prejudice as possible. Most (if not all) of the reviews on it are good, and the play's success made it possible for it to have a second season one year after its initial one; it opened in 2015, then had another season on 2016. A common trait among the reviewers is admiration around the way in which González Mello hints at contemporary issues through the play; Leticia Olvera, from *Milenio* newspaper, praised the way the adaptation emphasizes the presence of betrayal and death in the play as a connection to corruption in the government (betrayal by the political class) and the tragedy of the many deaths that come as a consequence to organised crime conflicts and are silenced by this corrupted government due to its involvement in crime. She said that

> Flavio González Mello se ha caracterizado en sus trabajos dentro del cine y el teatro por su notable interés en los problemas sociales de la actualidad, e impresiona que un texto con poco más de cuatro siglos de escrito y generado desde una sociedad tan distinta, se vuelva tan personal; ahí la importancia de que la adaptación se comprometa con ambos mundos: la actualidad del autor y su actualidad como director.
>
> [Flavio González Mello, in his work within cinema and theatre, has always distinguished himself by his outstanding interest in contemporary social problems, and it is impressive how a text that was written over four centuries ago and comes from a society so different (from the Mexican), could become so personal; there lies the importance of adaptation to

[266] Mexico City lower class slang.
[267] González Mello, p. 57.

> show a commitment to two different worlds: the author's moment and the director's moment.][268]

She also emphasized how this is accomplished, among other things, by the presence of vulgar characters making jokes; the contrast between the two poor grave diggers and the two posh friends is accentuated and at the same time contradicted by the fact that they all share the same crude humour. This is used to introduce the heavier subjects in the play, keeping the public's interest throughout the staging.

Gerardo López, for *Arte y Cultura*, commented on how successful this adaptation was in dealing with the tragedy's subjects despite the fact that it is not done as a literal translation and in an award-winning review for UNAM's own theatre magazine, Gustavo Rodolfo Pontigo Solís marvelled at how a play as widely known as *Hamlet* can have new meaning and explore such contemporary issues. Like Olvera, he mentioned the successful way in which the play deals with political crisis and the use of humour – and albur – to achieve this:

> Aunque lo diga el programa de mano, Flavio González Mello NO dirigió Hamlet, lo que hizo va más allá de preguntar por la mejor traducción y montarla, primero hizo una perfecta disección del texto, lo tradujo dándole un giro único al "to be or…"; SE ES O NO SE ES, aparte de superar el sonsonete es un palíndromo, trasladó los albures y los juegos de palabras, hizo una deconstrucción, se adueñó de Hamlet, lo convirtió en algo que nos incumbe, con el lenguaje que usamos y nos entregó un montaje soberbio. El espectador no va a ver Hamlet al foro Sor Juana; se infiltra en el castillo de Elsinore y se acerca hasta el roce con los protagonistas.
>
> [Even though the programme says so, Flavio González Mello did not merely direct Hamlet, what he did goes beyond finding the best translation and staging it. He performed a perfect dissection of the text, translated it giving a unique twist to that "to be or…": "one is or one is not", that besides overcoming the now meaningless drone (He is talking about previous translations, almost unavoidably translating "to be or not to be" literally, as "ser o no ser". The phrase has almost lost its meaning.) turned it into a palindrome; translated albures and wordplays, deconstructed and appropriated Hamlet, turning it into something that concerns us, giving us a superb staging in the language that

[268] Leticia Olvera, "Hamlet contemporáneo: la sociedad en la fosa común" http://www.milenio.com/cultura/hamlet_contemporaneo-_sociedad_en_la_fosa_comun-Hamlet_milenio_dominical_0_753525005.html

> we actually use. The spectator does not go to the Sor Juana forum to watch Hamlet, they infiltrate Elsinore castle and come close enough to touch the protagonists.][269]

As is the case for these examples, most reviews focus on the way González Mello deals with contemporary issues and in the use of albur as a way to introduce these serious issues through humour. The double meaning wordplay comes as a surprise to audiences because it is not common to see it in Shakespeare translations.

If one is to understand the success of González Mello's adaptation, it is necessary to look at different aspects of it. He was attempting, he said, a connection to Mexican reality. This is possible because the tragedy itself deals with energies that can be clearly recognised in Mexican culture.

I find it necessary at this point to return to the idea of multiple translations: the quality of the translation is inevitably tied to the target as much as the source, and in these cases the target is too distant from both the audiences and the purposes I am interested in addressing. That is not to say they are not important and valuable work that has contributed to the ever-changing collective that is the Shakespearean world; they either serve specific purposes and are addressed to specific audiences or, in the case of Astrana, explore the possibilities of attempting a universal translation.

[269] Pontigo Solís, Gustavo Rodolfo, "HAMLET, soy espejo y me reflejo" http://www.teatrounam.com/criticon10/category/hamlet/

CHAPTER 4
Translation and Analysis

The previous chapter of this work was dedicated to the versions of *Romeo and Juliet* that are most available to Mexican contemporary public. In it, I specifically commented on the lack of emphasis in the sections that contain sexual double meaning; and the way in which it seems to disappear in most of the translations that are more commonly available in Mexican libraries and bookstores. As explained in that chapter, this is closely connected to the purpose and focus of such translations, namely a more accurate linguistic transfer and reaching a mainly academic audience.

Any translation that favours certain aspects of the original play must necessarily neglect others and, as previously mentioned, in the case of these works, sexual wordplay is definitely not central. In this chapter I propose ways in which it is possible to approach the translation with special focus on the puns and innuendos and justify the usefulness of considering this approach. In order to achieve that, I will go back to the sections that have already been commented on and work through possible options of translation. For this, I will first take a close look at the sections and identify the puns, always pursuing the intention (purpose) for each one of them, and then I will come up with a translation that fulfils the purpose for the puns – humour, yes, but with the particular nuances specific to each case. With this I will demonstrate the feasibility of effectively finding equivalence to the double meaning element.

Emphasising albur would of course affect the way language is treated throughout the whole plays, despite the fact that I will be focusing on specific sections; since the parts I am focusing on are fragments of whole plays, they will necessarily share a consistent approach to language and dialect with the whole final target text. As such, the translation brief for each play would clearly establish its

focus on cosmopolitanisation and the valorisation of Mexican culture in dialogue with Shakespearean canon.

As it is, the motivation behind this specific piece of work is to examine a type of translation that can function alongside other message-oriented works in the same area to encourage a more fluid and dynamic relationship between Mexican audiences/readers and the text. In doing so, it would be contributing to the validation of Mexican culture and traditions. As argued in chapters 1 and 2, because albur constitutes a fundamental feature of Mexican identity, not only does its connection to the Shakespearean text represent a possibility to encourage deeper understanding from targeted audiences, it also signifies support for Mexican culture, as it becomes another point of access to global conversations. The purpose of the translation in this chapter, which is to translate the puns in the most successful possible way, is consequently subordinated to that general one.

In previous chapters I have engaged with the sociocultural overview that goes alongside the successful fulfilment of my purpose: after having contextualised albur and thoroughly describing its mechanisms, it will become a matter of justifying each shift within the parameters established by those mechanisms. After having discussed key aspects of contemporary Mexican culture and having briefly looked at the evolution of Mexican Shakespeare translation and representation, there will be sufficient grounds to discuss the possibility of strengthening the image of Shakespeare, already colossal worldwide, as a part of that imaginary otherness that is western culture in the cosmopolitanising dialogue with Mexican localities. Needless to say, this imaginary interlocutor is both massive and multifaceted, always shifting according to the time and place from where it is seen, and what I propose here is merely one possible way to look at one of its many faces, born from my own time and space, for which in accordance with

Skopostheorie and the visibility – and accountability – of the translator, I take full responsibility. This clarification is necessary because the whole issue is delicate in terms of identity and culture and I must assert that by appropriating one of many possible ways in which Shakespeare relates to Mexican culture, I am not advocating for globalisation but merely striving to find places within it for upholding local identity traits. In this, I resonate with De Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto" in the urge to consume culture and make it part of oneself.[270] As Latin-American, post-colonial societies, the idea of cultural cannibalism, poetic as it is, illustrates a particular way to interact with colonisers: "carnal at first, this instinct becomes elective, and creates friendship. When it is affective, it creates love. When it is speculative, it creates science".[271] What I mean with this is that by consuming – cannibalising – Shakespeare, it becomes a part of us, and as such, we become a part of global culture – 'global' meaning, literally, world-wide – without losing our distinctive national identity.

As this chapter deals with my own translational action, it is pertinent to note that any attempt at translation would have to come from my own point of view, that of an individual that identifies as belonging to the urban sector of contemporary Mexicanity. The principle of correctibility, as enounced by Reiß and Vermeer,[272] has a dual effect on the process and results of this chapter: on the one hand, it allows me a certain amount of freedom from linguistic equivalence, for it was never my purpose to provide it; but on the other, it ties me to greater uncertainty regarding the outcome of my work and whether it will be successful in its individual purpose. Since I am striving for functionality rather than linguistic equivalence, the resulting target text is both stronger in constituting a continuation

[270] Oswald De Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto" in *Latin American Literary Review* vol. 19, no. 38 (Jul.-Dec., 1991), pp. 38-47.
[271] Ibid, p. 43
[272] Reiß and Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action*.

of the source text purpose and, at the same time, more dependent on the particularities of space and time to which the target culture is tied. Consequently, I will reiterate that multiple translations are consistent with the fulfilment of the greater purpose mentioned previously, especially considering the vast linguistic diversity of what I am – for practical purposes – calling Mexican Spanish. Every regional selection of Mexican Spanish, product of the pre-colonial language spoken in each region, has its own variations on albur vocabulary, and this might affect the ideal choices for translating double meaning; nevertheless, there is a wide range of albur components that are valid on a national level, and those are the ones I will be favouring in my translation.

I have mentioned freedom from linguistic equivalence. This, however, does not in the least amount to freedom from thorough justification of any possible translation shifts. On the contrary, it means that justification for linguistic shifts from literality will be provided according to sociological aspects of the particular use of language derived from albur. This goes back to the whole argument on providing Mexican non-academic audiences wider access to Shakespearean conversations taking place in a global scenario. There will be some occasions in which the choice for translation between two – or more – possibilities within albur vocabulary will depend more on the whole approach to the text; in those cases, the priority of purpose extends beyond the arguably simpler intent of translating humour, and goes into the determination of deliberately making a statement through the translation – which is already a statement in itself.

Plenty has been said about the universality of puns and wordplay. Salvatore Attardo, after defining puns as "a textual occurrence in which a sequence of sounds must be interpreted with a reference to a second sequence of sounds, which may, but need not, be identical to the first sequence, for the full meaning of

the text to be accessed" and clarifying that "the perlocutionary goal or effect of the pun is to generate the perception of mirth or the intention to do so",[273] argues that the processes by which they function, either to create humour or simply provide subtext (among other purposes), are similar in any language, and stem from either ambiguity or incongruity within the language. Ambiguity could be semantic or sound-based and it is ideally resolved for the pun or wordplay to be considered successful. In the game of albur, as with other similar manifestations discussed in chapter 2, the resolution is expected from an interlocutor.

Laughter works as a tool for social change and reflection, as well as an outlet for cultural anxieties that could otherwise be subject to social conventions that turn them into taboo; humour, in this particular scenario, becomes a safe space to deal with issues that might be too sensitive to deal with in serious conversation. I mention this because, as discussed more extensively in the first chapter, misogyny and homophobia are constant in Mexican culture; working through them creates tensions for which the constant presence of a subtle layer of albur-related innuendo in everyday life becomes a sort of valve that releases pressure and anxiety. Allowing these issues to be discussed 'jokingly' makes them less stressful, but it's still a difficult idea to get used to because they are certainly very serious problems. Appropriation of humorous insults on the part of the targeted groups can arguably prove beneficial to the empowerment of their identities: several examples of this can be cited inside queer communities and, more recently, feminist groups referring to themselves as 'feminazis', 'femi-nasties' or angry feminists. As a rule, the success of this situation depends on it coming from the affected minority, in which case abuse loses its power.[274] Dealing with issues of

[273] Salvattore Attardo, "Universals in puns and humorous wordplay" in *Cultures and Traditions of Wordplay and Wordplay Research*, De Gruyter (2018); https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkjv1f.7

[274] On this, see Luvell Anderson, "Calling, Addressing and Appropriation" in *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

culture and discrimination is always complicated: it is impossible to deny that many aspects of Mexican tradition are rooted in deep discrimination, but in identifying them as such I need to consider the risk of making them a symbol for Mexicanity and a defence against the influence of more dominant westernised culture. Conversely, ignoring the situation would lead us nowhere. There is already movement happening in the direction of cosmopolitanisation, a constant flow of influence and information that cannot be successfully limited, and my purpose falls close to finding a place for local identities within this movement. Examples of the ways in which this is possible can be seen in the intentional increase in the visibility of Muxe communities participating in Pride parades and similar events,[275] as well as the existence of Mayan feminist groups doing hip-hop.[276] These are only a couple of instances in which there is successful appropriation of western values that does not imply the subordination of localities to foreign values but a productive interaction that acts in benefit of all parts involved in the conversation by providing balance to interactions.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, humour also acts as relief for the more tragic aspects of the plot, making the lack of it in certain translations a problem of balance and rhythm as well as one of content. For this approach, I go back to some of Jerome Neu's remarks mentioned in chapter 2 about ritual and humorous insults and how the possibility of disrespect in a friendly environment acts as a catalyst for thought and change as well as social bonding. Albur sits clearly in this area of social expression, dealing with energies that would otherwise be deemed destructive and offensive in a liberating and transformative environment. In the case of both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the importance of sexual humour is magnified by the fact that it is commanded by women, which ties into albur as a

[275] https://oaxaca.eluniversal.com.mx/sociedad/20-06-2019/comunidad-muxe-presente-en-la-marcha-del-orgullo-gay-2019
[276] https://www.facebook.com/LasHijasDelRap/

means for female empowerment in a traditionally misogynistic Mexican society. The dialogue between Desdemona and Iago in *Othello* operates here as a contrast and as a marker of situations in which, because it is wielded by the most powerful participant – in this case, Iago – to repress, the same kind of humour reverses into real aggression towards Desdemona instead of a healthy and mutual release of anxieties.

As seen in chapter 3 when discussing Gonzalez Mello's translation of *Hamlet*, it is not always possible to translate puns and jokes exactly. What's more, there are usually many possible variations to each joke that might work differently in particular contexts. In connection to this, the idea of correctability manifests its relevance as an option for new – corrected – versions of each joke depending on situation and language variation, but I also mention this to add weight to the importance of multiple translations that would not compete with each other but address different scenarios, especially in relation to Mexican audiences. As I've been stressing, Mexican Spanish is not homogeneous; there are multiple local variations of it that are the result of the combination of colonial Iberian Spanish and the various indigenous languages being spoken at the time of colonisation – many of which continue to be spoken. Gesa Schole,[277] speaking of post-colonial Mozambique, makes a point of discussing how the local mix of European Portuguese and Bantu languages empowers local identity by appropriating – and transforming – the language of the colonisers. At the same time, it effectively represents a culture that does not identify with either of its sources exclusively. The presence of the specific language variation in the writing of author Mia Couto, Schole says, dignifies the indigenous culture and levels it with the colonisers, reversing their places to a certain extent. This is relevant to me because translating

[277] Gesa Schole, "Wordplay as a means for post-colonial resistance" in *Cultures and Traditions of Wordplay and Wordplay Research*, De Gruyter (2018); https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkjv1f.11

Shakespeare into local varieties of Spanish falls roughly into the same category. In her article on Quebecois as native language and its importance as target language, Annie Brisset discusses a similar situation, though the parallel is limited to the use of regional dialect as native language. She states that the existence of dialects within any official language complicates translation, as it adds an extra layer to the process and at the same time presents the translator with a choice between trying to emulate the specific dialect of the source – this is especially complicated in cases where the source and target are distant in both time and space – and aiming for a target text in the recipients' native language. She argues that, unless there is a particular reason for the translation to mimic the dialect of the source, the logical course of action would be to favour the target language. In cases where the targeted audience belongs to a cultural minority, this empowers local culture and allows them to establish a more personalised dialogue with the globalised West – which, as I've said, is aligned with my project –, but it is definitely not without its challenges. Brisset discusses how Luther's translation of the Bible, done in his own local variety of German, elevated this particular dialect to lingua franca, adding a referential quality to its vernacular status. The case of Mexican Spanish is more complicated because of the wide variety of local Spanish dialects in the world today – outwards and inwards, in many countries – but, especially with regards to its status as a cultural minority, Brisset's point stands: "translation becomes an act of reclaiming, of recentering of the identity, a reterritorializing operation."[278] I would also like to go back to Haroldo De Campos's "Rule of Anthropophagy",[279] a less metaphoric, applied revisiting of De Andrade's work, in which after discussing several notable examples of cultural consumption, such as Borges, Sor Juana and

[278] Annie Brisset, "The Search for a Native Language: Translation and Cultural Identity" in *The Translation Studies Reader* (Routledge; London, 2000) p. 346
[279] Haroldo De Campos, "The Rule of Anthropophagy: Europe under the Sign of Devoration" in *Latin American Literary Review* vol. 14, no. 27 (Jan.-Jun., 1986), pp. 42-60.

Vallejo among others, he stresses the influence that the anthropophagic post-colonial cultures exert upon the source culture itself. In terms of translation, this emphasises the importance of the target text not being considered as only relevant to target cultures but as a part of a massive, liquid continuum of cultural fluidity.

From a cultural point of view, humour is greatly contextual. This is a big part of the reason for some jokes and puns to fall flat when offered to contemporary English-speaking audiences; contextual and semantic shifts render the text too distant, and changes in pronunciation affect the possibility of sound-based ambiguity. There is a connection here to what Dirk Delabastita discusses when he mentions the stability of puns – and language in general. Puns rely on language stability, and this should be understood in terms of "a complex and historically variable constellation of factors"[280] than are difficult to replicate throughout time and space. Delabastita is dealing with linguistic transfer of puns and wordplay, which as he points out, is never separate from cultural context. In my case, since the linguistic yields to the cultural, it becomes important to advantage of cultural predisposition. In the same introduction, Delabastita mentions that "certain generations or groups of readers are more responsive to semantic slippage or doubleness than others, and will rediscover, discover or (should one say) invent puns by endowing potential double readings and verbal associations".[281] In other words, translation provides a possibility for, to a certain extent, rescuing this individual aspect of Shakespearean text: time and place provide a degree of stability – manifested in the language variations and behavioural patterns of albur – for humorous puns to take place.

[280] Dirk Delabastita, *Traductio: Essays on Punning and Translation* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014) p. 8.
[281] Ibid, p. 7.

Before going directly to the translation of the particular sections, it is important to add some comments on the reasons for my choice of source text editions. Plenty has been said about the unstable quality of Renaissance text and the differences between the early modern and contemporary ideas of authorship, in relation to this, it is useful to my purpose to regard the texts as process instead of finished product.[282] In her chapter of *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, Sonia Massai suggests that "the editorial process itself, far from neutralising the material instabilities in the early editions, endlessly transforms and reproduces an already unstable and multiple text".[283] Both in relation to language and text, 'unstable' seems to be a key word to my approach; instability in these two cases renders itself to movement and is semantically related to fluidity and transformation, which I already discussed from a cultural point of view. At the end of the quoted chapter, and paraphrasing Johnson, she concludes that "one could therefore argue that the absence of (linear) progress in the history of editorial treatment of Q1 and F1, far from making the motions of the editorial mind worthless, lends interesting insights into the wider cultural context within which the editing of Shakespeare's texts is inevitably embedded".[284] This acceptance of variation as something that reports cultural value allows me to perform my own translational action as a continuation of the authorial process; an idea that also ties into the whole fluid quality of translation as a means for cosmopolitanisation through the recognition of target cultures as valuable addition to the same undercurrent of editorial variation that was already part of Shakespearean tradition. In the interest of fulfilling this purpose, I decided to use the Arden Shakespeare's

[282] R. A. Foakes "Shakespeare Editing and Textual Theory: A Rough Guide" in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (1997), pp. 425-442; Andrew Murphy (ed) *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
[283] Sona Massai, "Working with the Texts: Differential Readings" in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) p. 186.
[284] Ibid, p. 203.

individual editions of the plays, because they provide the variations between early text sources. If and when my choice for translation differs from that of the edition being used as a source text, I will justify providing the reasons for such decision. I also find it important to clarify that even if in most cases I am following the edition's choices, it is crucial to examine the variations as part of the quest for better insight into cultural equivalence. Editorial differences provide nuance, and therefore examining them is key to another basic idea stressed within Skopostheorie, that of translating behaviour alongside verbal language.

I will now discuss each section and delve into the reasons behind my own approach to its translation.

ROMEO AND JULIET

1. GREGORY AND SAMSON 1.1

The first section that I examined is the initial dialogue between Gregory and Samson in 1.1.1-31:

> SAMSON - Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.
>
> GREGORY -No, for then we should be colliers
>
> SAMSON - I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.
>
> GREGORY - Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.
>
> SAMSON - I strike quickly, being moved.
>
> GREGORY - But thou art not quickly moved to strike.
>
> SAMSON - A dog of the house of Montague moves me.
>
> GREGORY - To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand; therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.
>
> SAMSON - A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.
>
> GREGORY - That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.

SAMSON - 'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall; therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall.

GREGORY - The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

SAMSON- 'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men I will be civil with the maids. I will cut off their heads.

GREGORY - The heads of the maids?

SAMSON - Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY - They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMSON - Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known that I am a pretty piece of flesh.

GREGORY - 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been Poor John. Draw thy tool – here comes of the house of Montagues.[285]

This is the first instance of character interaction in the play and, as such, holds the purpose of catching attention after the ominous prologue; the audience is faced with two young servants from the house of Capulet, Samson and Gregory, who appear to be discussing the possibility of an encounter with their enemies, the men of the house of Montague. The tone of their dialogue is light and joking, and it flows smoothly into the eventual confrontation with the Montagues, but it is at the same time charged with meaning and remarkably successful at setting the pace for the following action. Sex and violence are set as the forces powering the narration in all levels, and the lowly servants mirror the strong emotions swaying their masters. Or, at least, Samson seems to. Gregory's teasing works as a reminder of the unrealistic nature of such extreme emotions while, at the same time, creating incongruity through contrast with Samson's exaggerated bravado.

The first line of dialogue is massively charged: according to OED, 'carry coals' is a figure that alludes on various levels to being offended. On the most

[285] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet* (1.1.1-31).

immediate one, carrying coals was dirty work and colliers – it extends to the second line – were not only physically dirty most of the time, but also held a very low social status. People in the coal trade were also thought to be dishonest, so the offense goes beyond the physicality of having to perform degrading activity to the assumption of a questionable moral standing. The word 'coal' could also be related to certain skin conditions (ulcers, boils) that were cause of shame as well as physical discomfort and, on top of that, according to the pertinent footnote on the edition, "a sexual undertone to the phrase *carry coals* may be suggested by its association with 'privy lodging' and sex in John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*".[286] The swift progression to 'colliers', 'choler' and 'collar' is also rich in meaning, and an impressive game of both phonetic and semantic proximities intertwined; from 'choler' to drawing, which according to OED refers to extracting a sword from its sheath (hence the connection with choler) but also to the act of pulling or guiding the reins of an animal. This ties to 'collar' in the following line, which is phonetically close to 'choler'. The corresponding note in the edition favours "keep clear of the hangman's noose"[287] as the most obvious interpretation for Gregory's advice, but a collar is also used to guide domestic animals – hence the connection to 'draw' and to 'dog' a couple of lines after – and, in figurative way, to signify employment or servitude. We are reminded that they are servants, just as a "dog of the house of Montague" has his own collar to bear. The game of opposition between standing and moving, which includes its semantic neighbours 'stir' and 'run', forebodes the later more obvious use of 'stand' in a sexual sense, and also provides entry to the word 'wall'.

[286] Ibid, p. 124
[287] Ibid, p. 124

When Samson says he will "take the wall", he is boasting of his own superiority over man and maid of the house of Montague, for walking closer to the wall was meant to be a privilege as it was cleaner and safer, but then Gregory turns the phrase against him by as going "to the wall" meant giving way or being yielding, as the weak may do. Samson defends himself by turning violence towards sex – "thrust to the wall", which also alludes to being pushed aside, left in a position of neglect – and arguing also that he will push the men from the wall; the phrase 'push to the wall' – again, OED – speaks of driving someone to the extreme, in this case he is going beyond that and actually pushing them off, defeating them. Once he has started discussing his plans for the men and maids of Montague, Samson continues excitedly despite Gregory's attempts to calm him down; in his following line, there is a contrast between violence and civility that echoes throughout the play, though here it is, like everything else, a mockery. Again, the dynamic succession from maids to heads to maidenheads culminates in 'take', 'sense' and 'feel'; exploiting the possibility of interaction between these three words and its application to both the intellect and the body. 'Feel', in the most physical sense of the word, ties to 'stand' and 'flesh', which was commonly used as a euphemistic expression regarding sexual intercourse.

In the last two lines of this section, Gregory's retort brings Samson back to earth by continuing to mock his exaggerated aggressiveness – regarding both violence and sex – and treating it as nothing but a boast. His mention to not being fish might point out to "neither fish nor flesh", suggesting that Samson does not have the particular characteristics he is bragging about. "Poor John", as the editor's note clarifies, refers to a "salted and dried fish, usually hake, eaten during Lent –

hence lacking the sap and juice of Samson's self-professed sexual prowess and hardly likely to *stand*";[288] the word 'tool', the note mentions, is also a bawdy pun.

My own translation for each verse within the context of Mexican albur follows, along with the justification for shifts in linguistic equivalence:

SAMSON- Gregory, por Dios, no vamos a dejar que nos carguen de ofensas.

GREGORY- No porque entonces seríamos peones.

In this case, 'to carry coals' speaks of the servant's reluctance to putting up with offense, and Gregory's response is both a dismissal of Samson's cartoonish sense of dignity and a veiled allusion to the fact that, being employees, they are both merely carrying the weight of loyalty to their employer. They do, in fact, carry coals and the 'coals' they seem to be carrying are not their own, but Montague's. Gregory is always making a point towards caution that creates a contrast to Samson's readiness to take the fight onto himself. This layer of meaning would be lost if it were translated literally, thus contravening my intention to highlight it as it presents strong possibilities for a socially charged reading, so I chose to go for the more obvious 'carry offense' and then, instead of the play between 'coals' and 'colliers', rely on the fact that, in Mexican Spanish, the word 'peón' [pawn] applies to the different levels of interpretation possible in this dialogue. The first definition that comes up on the RAE dictionary is "Jornalero que trabaja en cosas materiales que no requieren arte ni habilidad." [Day labourer working on chores that require no specific skill or ability],[289] which can be tied semantically to 'collier', but it also means infantry soldier and chess pawn. It works because the use of the word ties the idea of carrying offense – like a labourer carries weight for somebody else, meaning then that the offense is not directed towards the servants but towards their master – to the fact that they are, indeed, foot soldiers for a quarrel that is not directly theirs; in the context of chess as well, pawns are the most expendable

[288] Ibid, p. 126
[289] http://dle.rae.es/?id=SVAZGEH|SVBnfmw

pieces, the ones that move first, and this is both the first dialogue and the first confrontation in the play. This is significant as well when it is connected to issues of class and social status.

> SAMSON- O sea, quiero decir, si nos hacen encabronar, tendremos que sacar…
>
> GREGORY- Mejor saca el cuello de la soga, si quieres seguir vivo.

The play between 'coals', 'colliers', 'choler' and 'collar' is already lost because of the previous verses, and frankly untranslatable for this target, so I opted for sticking to the use of 'sacar' [to take out] and leaving it at that. This works as preparation for the innuendo that will come later, as in the context of albur, when the speaker only speaks of taking something out – without specifying what exactly they are taking out – it is generally understood as a phallic reference.[290]

> SAMSON- Me muevo rápido si me provocan.
>
> GREGORY- Te mueves rápido, pero no tan fácil.
>
> SAMSON- Un perro de la casa Montague me mueve.
>
> GREGORY- Moverse es temblar, y ser valiente es pararse, así que si te mueves, será para salir corriendo.
>
> SAMSON- Un perro de esa casa me hará pararme. Voy a poner contra la pared a los hombres y las mujeres de Montague.

The play between moving and standing seems to be slightly forced at first, because in contemporary Mexican Spanish it is not as common to say 'move' as a synonym for 'motivate' or 'urge', but it then becomes evident that 'moverse' [to move oneself] is contraposed to 'pararse', which literally means 'to stand' but also, when the subject is in motion, to stop moving. The introduction of this word is important, for as 'sacar' and later on 'cabeza' [head], it works as a link for the two

[290] One would say 'saca ésta' [take this one out] as a response to anyone using the word, thus requesting the other person to approach and handle the speaker's phallus.

ideas being brought together, battle and sexual encounter. In albur, the 'standing', like the 'drawing' or 'taking out' applies implicitly to the phallus.

> GREGORY- Entonces eres un esclavo débil, porque los débiles caminan junto a la pared.
>
> SAMSON- Claro, por eso las mujeres, débiles que son, van junto a la pared. Entonces, yo voy a poner contra la pared a los hombres de Montague y también a sus mujeres.

The meaning of 'wall' in Mexican Spanish tends to spread into a few separate words: 'pared' for the walls of a house or a building, 'muro' or 'barda' for walls meant for protection or delimitation, such as the walls around a piece of land, or a walled city. I chose to go with 'pared' because the expression 'poner contra la pared' [to put against the wall] is already a known image for sex, specifically when one of the participants is dominant and takes control of the situation. This choice makes it impossible to literally translate 'push Montague's men from the wall' – you don't push someone from the 'pared', you either push them from the 'muro' or from the roof, so I solved that by including them in the same expression. When used in a context of battle, it also alludes to the wall where soldiers were executed by firing squad. So, Samson could either be saying that he will rape both men and women of Montague, or that he will execute the men and rape the women.

> GREGORY- La pelea es entre nuestros patrones y nosotros, sus hombres.
>
> SAMSON- No importa, yo soy un tirano. Cuando haya peleado con los hombres, voy a ser civil con las damas, les voy a dar la cabeza.
>
> GREGORY- ¿La cabeza de las damas?
>
> SAMSON- Voy a dar mi cabeza por ellas, o más bien, les voy a dar mi cabeza. Tómala como quieras.
>
> GREGORY- La toman los que la sienten.
>
> SAMSON- Pues a mí me van a sentir mientras ande parado, y todos saben que para eso soy un buen pedazo de carne.

GREGORY- ¿Seguro no eres pescado? Más bien como un charalito. Sácala de una vez que ahí vienen de la casa Montague.

This last part of the dialogue is the most challenging in terms of the double meaning. There is no literal translation for 'maidenheads', so there was no way of making the connection without slightly altering the pun; the word 'cabeza' [head], however, is commonly understood as the head of the penis, the glans, so instead of having Samson take the heads of the maidens, I translated his 'civility' as 'giving his head for them', or 'giving them his head' – not to be understood as what 'giving head' means in contemporary English, but as giving them his penis, having intercourse with them. The reappearance of the verbs 'parar' and 'sacar', now evidently in connection to the mentioned head and, more emphatically, 'a pretty piece of flesh' – there I just switched 'pretty' for 'good' because it made more sense in a Mexican context – works perfectly with the teasing tone of the dialogue. In the end, I substituted 'poor john' with 'charalito', diminutive for 'charal', a small fish about eight centimetres long that is usually dried and sold as a common cheap snack in central Mexico.

The following sections present an extra challenge, first of all, because the double meaning works in a more complex narrative context, and second, because Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio, due to their social status but also the plot and their individual characteristics,[291] speak in verse. The decision to keep this distinction was not an easy one, especially because metric and accents work differently in Spanish, adding a new dimension to the process in an example of how "types of action can often not be exactly matched between cultures",[292] even when this is a case of transfer from verbal action to verbal action. The closest equivalence to the accent distribution that works for me in this case is

[291] John W. Draper, "Patterns of Style in *Romeo and Juliet*" https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274808587029
[292] Reiß and Vermeer p. 22

hendecasyllables, a common meter for popular rhymes consisting of eleven syllables in each verse. This meter allows for five accents to each line.[293]

2. MERCUTIO AND ROMEO 1.4

This scene marks Mercutio's first participation in the play. Just as Gregory and Samson were pawns in the Capulet-Montague confrontation, the young boys are more significant players, but still not at the source of the quarrel. Their childish bravado results in the ideally harmless and innocent act of crashing a party and flirting with ladies, meaningful because of the adversarial nature of the interaction between Montagues and Capulets, but well within the parameters of the Prince's order of keeping the peace. The close relationship between Romeo and Mercutio has led to speculation around the possible homoerotic nature of their exchange.[294] Over time, many contemporary productions have portrayed Mercutio as either female or intensely feminine – e.g. the Baz Luhrman's film version of *Romeo and Juliet*. There is a lot to be gained from this interpretation, which is partly explained by the manner in which Mercutio comes to be an antagonistic figure to both Rosalind and Juliet while at the same time insisting on his investment in any situation involving Romeo's possible sexuality.

In this first dialogue, there is a subtle homoerotic charge in the way Romeo speaks of his own situation; Mercutio plays along with the metaphor, engaging in a game of puns that sets the tone for the more explicit jokes he will be making later. The section I will work with is the following:

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[293] As part of my purpose, I cannot allow myself too much detail in the translation of verse. I am aware that there could be a more accurate translation in terms of meter, accents and rhythm, but this is not my priority. The choice is consistent with my brief. I will say, however, that I am partially adhering, when possible, to the Shlegel method. Recent translations into Spanish tend to favour free verse, which arguably works better when seeking linguistic equivalence, but I find that blank hendecasyllable serves my purpose better. On this, see Ángel Luis Pujante, "The Schlegel Model and Shakespearean Translation in Spain", https://buleria.unileon.es/bitstream/handle/10612/4879/Pujante.pdf?sequence=1

[294] On this, Joseph A. Porter, *Shakespeare's Mercutio: his history and drama* (Unversity of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill, 1988). I need to stress that my interest in translating Mercutio as a possibly queer character goes with the purpose of engaging with interpretations that provide visibility to energies that have been at struggle inside Mexican culture, and for which albur is both a release and celebration. The explosive, histrionic queerness of which Mercutio can be the vessel resonates with festive manifestations of popular theatricality that are a big part of Mexican popular culture.

MERCUTIO - You are a lover, borrow Cupid's wings
and soar with them above a common bound.

ROMEO - I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
to soar with his light feathers, and so bound
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

MERCUTIO - And, to sink in it, should you burden love –
too great oppression for a tender thing.

ROMEO - Is love a tender thing? it is too rough,
too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.

MERCUTIO - If love be rough with you, be rough with love;
prick love for pricking and you beat love down.[295]

The dialogue shows Mercutio trying to cheer his friend up and, as it is characteristic of him, he shows a certain mocking contempt for Romeo's situation. This is telling of the relationship between the two, as we know Romeo is prone to romantic infatuation and Mercutio knows not to take his moaning too seriously. The first two lines are innocent enough, he is merely encouraging his friend to snap out of it, use love to fly instead of falling. It is in the voice or Romeo that the dialogue turns to sexual territory: the connection between 'sore', 'enpierced' and 'shaft' is easily understood as referring to Cupid's arrows causing pain to the young man, but the choice of words lends itself to a more mischievous interpretation. While 'sore' can perfectly apply to the pain of heartbreak, when connected to 'enpierced' – spelled 'empierce' in the OED and said to be used mostly figuratively – it lends itself to a more sexual interpretation. When at the end of the line he uses the word 'shaft', for which one of the possible meanings is penis – 'shaft of delight', OED –, the play of double meanings between the friends becomes more evident. This also can be interpreted as having the purpose of letting us know that

[295] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, (1.4.17-28).

Romeo himself is not so serious in his infatuation; interestingly, after he falls in love with Juliet, he hides from Mercutio and refuses to engage in the friendly teasing. At the moment, however, he is going from one sexually charged word to another. The word 'bound' implies limitation but at the same time obligation, and in the following line, as it is a verb, it becomes movement. According to the editor's note, the use of 'pitch' immediately after, interpreted as the height from which a bird of prey will swoop down on its victim, ties to 'soar' and signals the predatory nature of sexual interactions. The connection between sex and violence continues when Romeo sinks under love's heavy burden, being in this case the passive participant in the love/confrontation. Mercutio continues to encourage him to be the more aggressive part and become the burden that sinks in love, and thus the game between love and combat continues with the oppositions between 'rough' and 'tender'. The conclusion is that love, being effectively 'rude', 'boisterous' and prone to pricking, needs to be treated with violence and made to submit, at least in Mercutio's opinion. The whole dialogue mimics combat in many levels, as the boys are verbally fighting while discussing violent and sexual interactions in the same level. The confrontation with love mirrors the confrontation between the two friends, who become partners in this game similarly to the manner in which the participants of a sexual encounter are both partners and enemies.

My approach to translating it relies heavily on the dynamics between the two characters, which in a Mexican context would be perfectly set for an informal game of albur.

MERCUTIO - Pues pídele sus alas a Cupido
y salta por encima del dolor.

ROMEO - Estoy más bien clavado por Cupido.

¿Cómo voy a saltar sobre el dolor?
Si su peso en mi espalda no me deja
ni siquiera pararme ya del suelo.

The two first lines are mostly literal, and set the mood for Romeo's response. The word 'enpierced' proved difficult to substitute, for it has an aggressive sexual charge to it, but it also speaks of defeat and pain. I decided to go with 'clavado', which literally means 'nailed', and then go back to 'parar' [to stand]. All the time, Romeo is assuming a female, passive attitude towards Love's aggression; he cannot stand up because Cupid's weight is at his back, which carries a sexual component – suggests mounting, raping – and at the same time he cannot have an erection. Love then proves to be emasculating, and Mercutio responds to this on the next lines.

MERCUTIO - Tendrás que estar parado para hundirte
en la parte más tierna del amor.

ROMEO - No tiene nada de tierno el amor,
es violento, se mete como espina.

MERCUTIO - Pues sé violento tú con él también,
y véncelo metiéndole tu espina.

The play on violence and penetration is clearer in this second part of the dialogue, where Mercutio takes Romeo's innuendo in stride and urges him to defend himself against Cupid's violent rape by becoming the active part. This is characteristic of the possibilities of albur linguistic code and social purposes. There is a wordplay between 'standing' and 'sinking' that works in Spanish as well, but instead of 'pricks' I chose to go with 'meter' [to introduce] as it is more suggestive of penetration. Mercutio's purpose seems to be the reversal of the initial symbolic penetration of Romeo by Cupid by urging him to stand (have an erection) and prick (rape) love in a rough manner.

Mercutio's exasperated mockery of Romeo continues in the next section, when he is talking to Benvolio after the party.

3. MERCUTIO AND BENVOLIO 2.1

At this moment, Mercutio is still thinking about Rosalind as his friend's love interest, Juliet is never the target of his sexually charged jokes. This is significant as a contrast to Rosalind's alleged refusal to engage in any kind of relationship with Romeo; it also marks a difference between Romeo's childish infatuation with her, that could still be catalogued as youthful play, and the fatality of his love for Juliet, which turns it into a serious affair. The translation of certain parts of this dialogue is particularly complicated because the dialogue is clearly targeting two specific characters engaging in a possible sexual encounter, it is not an allegory for violent confrontation or a mockery of love's effects. The homoerotic content, in this case meta-theatrical, is mostly lost in contemporary productions where female actors are available and audiences would not think of a young boy when Rosalind is discussed, but it is implied in both the manner and intensity of Mercutio's comments regarding Romeo's sexuality. The section is the following:

BENVOLIO - An if he hear thee thou wilt anger him.

MERCUTIO - This cannot anger him. 'Twould anger him
to rouse a spirit in his mistress' circle
of some strange nature, letting it there stand
till she had laid it and conjured it down –
That were some spite. My invocation
is fair and honest. In his mistress' name
I conjure only but to raise up him.

BENVOLIO - Come, he hath hid himself among these trees
to be consorted with the humorous night.
Blind is his love, and best befits the dark.

MERCUTIO - If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
Now will he sit under a medlar tree,
and wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
as maids call medlars when they laugh alone.
O Romeo, that she were, O, that she were
an open-arse, thou a poperin pear!
Romeo, good night, I'll to my truckle-bed;
this field-bed is too cold for me to sleep.
Come, shall we go?

BENVOLIO - Go then, for 'tis in vain

to seek him here that means not to be found.[296]

The connection between women, sex, magic and ardour or intensity is contained in the use of 'spirit' as a playful phallic metaphor; and it happens in *Henry V* (5.2.291) as well, speaking of a common joke. In this context, 'strange' is also a meaningful word: according to OED, one of its uses is 'strange woman', meaning harlot or prostitute, but even more to the point in this case, and considering the meta-theatrical homoerotic subtext, "to follow strange flesh" was a common euphemism for 'unnatural' sexual behaviour. It is important to mention that 'spirit' is in this context being used as sexual metaphor, just like 'flesh' would be – and was, in the first dialogue –, and therefore a "spirit (…) of some strange nature" ties perfectly to "that she were an open-arse" a few lines after. The bawdy suggestion was likely meant as a joke to engage the audience in a wink that carries outside the proper action of the play.

Again, I am working with hendecasyllables as the closer equivalent to the original meter of the verse. It is also one of the most common formats in Spanish poetry, making it easier for the dialogue to flow naturally:

BENVOLIO - Si te escucha, se va a encabronar.

MERCUTIO - No por esto, se encabronaría
si algún espíritu extraño y ajeno
se para y se le mete a la chica
y ella, como un conjuro, se moviera.
Eso sí, pero mi invocación
es justa y es honesta: en su dama
quisiera siempre que sólo entre él.

The way in which humour works within these lines points to building up of tension that originates from the presence of taboo in society. It starts with the

[296] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet*, (2.1.22-42).

suggestion of confrontation, Romeo will be angry if he hears Mercutio calling for him in a mocking tone. I chose the word 'encabronar' as a substitute for being angry because of its colloquial and superlative nature. The official translation from RAE is to anger or cross, but in a Mexican context it usually means someone is more than just angry, they are furious. Since it comes from 'cabrón' (literally male goat, though in a social context it means bully, bastard, asshole. As an adjective, it refers to a situation that is very difficult or grim. It can sometimes mean that a person is very good or skilled at something), a word that is considered profanity, it creates a mild shock that sets the mood for the tension that is to follow.

In Mercutio's response, I chose to forego the idea of 'rising up' and keep only 'se para' [it stands]. The word has been used before in a sexual way, and paired with 'meter' [to introduce, penetrate], it makes the sexual nature of the joke more evident.

BENVOLIO - Ven, está escondido entre los árboles
para estar solo con la intensa noche;
su amor, ciego, ama la oscuridad.

MERCUTIO - Si amor es ciego, no le va a atinar.
Se sienta bajo un árbol de papaya
pensando en su mujer y en esa fruta
que hace reír a las muchachas solas.
¡Romeo, si ella fuera, O, si ella fuera
sólo para tu chile, un culo abierto!
Buenas noches, Romeo, voy a mi cama,
en el campo hace frío, y tengo sueño.
¿Ya nos vamos?

BENVOLIO - Vamos, es en vano
buscar al que no quiere ser hallado.

Benvolio, like Gregory in the first dialogue, serves as a buffer, attempting to tone down Mercutio's lines by ignoring the double meaning and responding only to his wondering about Romeo's whereabouts. This provides some relief, but the tension rises even more in the lines that follow. The word 'medlar' works as a common

joke, meaning a fruit that quite explicitly looks like an anus, thus connecting to the use of 'open-arse' later on. In Latin American Spanish, papayas are quite universally regarded as a symbol for vagina, as 'chile' [chili pepper] is for penis, especially in Mexico; but there is not such a clear fruit or vegetable metaphor for anus. This is where the choice of going for the more explicit translation becomes slightly controversial. I kept is as it is with the intention of escalating the conflictive nature of the dialogue. The 'open-arse' line is the culmination of the innuendo, with Mercutio simply going off to sleep afterwards, so it is important for it to be shocking enough that the contrast would allow the absurdity of the whole dialogue to become the source of humour.

As I said, the suggestion of anal sex in a contemporary context – where girls are not played by male actors – might result in a slightly more aggressive manner of joke, but it is also addressed to a context in which the word 'culo' is sometimes made to imply genitalia as well. In some cases, it is also a sexist expression meaning woman, specifically a good-looking woman. For these reasons, I chose to use it instead of going back to 'papaya' or using some other expression that would direct the attention more toward vaginal intercourse. As with the majority of work I am doing in these examples, the main concern is what Reiß/Vermeer would call the "first refraction: culture specific conventions".[297]

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING 3.4

My main reason for including *Much Ado About Nothing*, aside from the fact that the use of double meaning is evident even from the title, is the complex possibilities of the female figures in it. It is implicit from the title that the strongest opposition at play is that of appearance and reality, the importance (or lack thereof) of 'noting', but the word 'nothing', also slang for vagina, suggests that there is too much trouble caused by either real or perceived sexual interactions between the

[297] Reiß and Vermer, p. 23

characters. Balthasar's song in 2.3 emphasizes that minimising their importance should be beneficial especially to women.

At the same time, the opposition that concerns me the most is that of the female characters. Beatrice and Hero seem to be two sides of the same idea of femininity, the open and the closed one. In the first chapter, there was some mention of the implications these same ideas of openness and closeness have in the context of Mexican perception of female ideals. The fact that Beatrice is openly witty and, it is suggested, sexually open as well, is significant in this matter, as she doesn't seem to suffer any long-term consequences for her actions. Hero is the one that remains closed and reserved, and she is the one that has to endure slander and rejection. Again, I am choosing to interpret the contrast between these two as a reversed cautionary tale because it resonates with the energies that I mean to tap into, and provides a perfect example of the female empowerment that comes with the control of language required for the use of albur; a point that Lourdes Ruiz insisted on several times – see chapter 2.

Beatrice's use of double entendre, as Cressida's, constitutes a defence mechanism, in this case acting as counterpart to her own heartbreak over Benedick's hinted deception.

The importance of Beatrice and Hero as counterparts ties to Benedick's final acceptance of his married-man condition, which conventionally turns him also into a cuckold. The idealisation of the female figure as closed and virtuous – Hero – is tied to youth and naiveté: looking past this appearance is what in this play means entering the world of marriage and, therefore, maturity.

It is never a simple task deciding which sections of the plays work most successfully to illustrate my proposal, but with *Much Ado About Nothing* it was especially complicated since most of the humour featured in it relies heavily on witty puns and double meanings. There is also the issue of sexuality viewed as battle, a theme that is present in *Romeo and Juliet* and – perhaps even more explicitly – in *Troilus and Cressida.* In *Much Ado About Nothing*, however, the direction of the

metaphor is reversed, as the main plot points towards the superficiality of this conflict. This is a comedy about reality and appearance,[298] and what comes through is that the seemingly fated confrontation between male and female that tends to carry catastrophic consequences for both sides is nothing but appearance – contrast Hero and Claudio with Romeo and Juliet or, perhaps more to the point, Othello and Desdemona – and the real struggle goes towards conquering pride and confronting reality. Though it may be stated that patriarchal status quo does not get actively challenged in it,[299] when one considers the transformative power of humour in society, it becomes possible to say that, in its own way, *Much Ado* could arguably be read as a play on the deconstruction of traditional masculinities. The evident complications of pursuing this in detail would take me too far away from my original purpose, so I will stay with the female side of it for the moment.

As a crucial part of the process of peeling off appearance and finding reality, women become active participants in their own stories, as is the case of Beatrice. From the start she shows great intelligence and strength in the manner in which she addresses men. However, unlike Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew*, she is not presented as an antagonist to them – except, of course, for Benedick. She commands great use of puns and metaphors, and even sexualises the Prince's words in 2.1.259-62. There is also the mild suggestion of her having been sexually active ("I know you of old")[300] which makes for a significant opposition to Hero's situation. This ties to Cressida's speech on keeping appearances, as she suggests that engaging in sexual activity might be unavoidable, but it is necessary to keep them a secret.

The importance of female characters in the context of Mexican contemporary culture and the use of albur relates to ideas of female empowerment

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[298] B. K. Lewalski, "Love, Appearance and Reality: Much Ado about Something." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* vol. 8, no. 2 (1968): pp. 235-251.
[299] Carol Cook, ""The Sign and Semblance of Her Honor": Reading Gender Difference in Much Ado about Nothing." *PMLA* vol. 101, no. 2 (1986): pp. 186-202.
[300] Wiilliam Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Much Ado About Nothing* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015) 1.1.138-139. Also, 2.1.255-257 "he lent it (his heart) me awhile, and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice".

and sorority that have been discussed previously, and it is because of this that I decided to include the following section, in which Beatrice and Margaret engage in playful banter that is heavy with sexual innuendo. It shows female capacity for participating in wordplay of a sexual nature, thus placing the women in a position of equivalence to their male counterparts.

HERO- Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE- Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO- Why, how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE- I am out of any other tune, methinks.

MARGARET- Clap's into 'Light o' Love' that goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE- Ye light o' love with your heels? Then if your husband have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns.

MARGARET- O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

BEATRICE- 'tis almost five o'clock, cousin. 'tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceedingly ill. Hey-ho!

MARGARET- For a hawk, a horse or a husband?

BEATRICE- For the letter that begins them: H

MARGARET- Well an you be not turned Turk, there's no more sailing by the star.

BEATRICE- What means the fool, trow?

MARGARET- Nothing, I, but God send everyone their heart's desire.

HERO- These gloves the count sent me, they are an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE- I am stuffed, cousin, I cannot smell.

MARGARET- A maid and stuffed! There's goodly catching of a cold.

BEATRICE- O God help me, God help me, how long have you professed apprehension?

MARGARET- Ever since you left it. Doth not my wit become me rarely?

BEATRICE- It is not seen enough, you should wear it on your cap. By my troth, I am sick.

MARGARET- Get you some of this distilled *carduus benedictus* and lay it to your heart; it is the only thing for a qualm.

HERO- There thou pricks't her with a thistle.

BEATRICE- Benedictus? Why benedictus? you have some moral in this benedictus?

MARGARET- Moral? No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning, I meant plain holy-thistle. You may think, perchance, that I think you are in love? Nay, by'r Lady, I am not such a fool to think what I list, nor I list not to think what I can, nor indeed I cannot think, if I would think my heart out of the thinking, that you are in love, or that you will be in love, or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. He swore he would never marry, and now in despite of his heart, he eats his meat without grudging. And how you may be converted, I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

BEATRICE- What pace is this your tongue keeps?

MARGARET- Not a false gallop.[301]

Despite possible interpretations of misogyny and a strongly confrontational relationship between men and women,[302] this is another instance in which humour and cultural responsiveness might render an alternative reading. As one explores the dialogue in relation to albur and its importance in certain kinds of female empowerment,[303] it becomes useful to go back to the idea of a metaphorical phallus discussed in chapter two. The ability to joke about sexuality equals having some control over it, being comfortable discussing it and, in doing so, pushing back against a verbal assault that – as far as albur's origins go – is born as both adversarial in nature and abusive towards women and non-straight males.

The friendly banter between Beatrice and Margaret, full of sexually charged jokes, comes as an easy teasing in a moment when Beatrice, due to her attraction to Benedick, seems to be losing some of her edge with words. Her comment about stables, which according to OED refers also to the horses that belong in such stables and, as clarified by the note in the edition, becomes "punning reference to

[301] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Much Ado About Nothing*, (3.4.36-86)

[302] see Thomas J. Scheff "Gender Wars: Emotions in Much Ado About Nothing" in *Sociological Perspectives* vol. 36, no. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 149-166

[303] here, aside from what is already mentioned in chapter two, I'd like to mention memes as part of cultural expressions that albur vocabulary has permeated, also as a weapon for female empowerment in some cases.

its sexual sense of 'erections'",[304] is somewhat expected after Margaret gave her an easy opening when mentioning 'light o' love' and playing with the fact that it "goes without burden", meaning that it does not need the bass harmonics of male voices, but also referring to a possible pregnancy.[305] The manner in which the established double meaning of the song – also in the pertinent note – prompts Beatrice into the game of wits meant to cheer her up bears an impressive resemblance to how albur appears in casual friendly conversations in a Mexican context.

The dialogue rolls smoothly into a moment that I need to comment on because it is a clear example of how, in an attempt to fulfil my purpose, I am translating behaviour and not merely linguistic action. The yawn in 3.4.48 would prove a difficult pun in Spanish, and I will address my treatment of it presently, but I want to mention it now and clarify that, due to its connection with 2.1.293-4, these previous lines would have to be dealt with in the same manner if the best effect should be accomplished. Nevertheless, the emphasis here for me is in the advantage of considering a more integral approach to the translation in order to achieve better effect in a possible performance.

I will now work through my own translation of the section, for which I will provide comments and discuss the reasons behind my choices

HERO- Buen día, prima.
BEATRICE- Buen día, Hero bonita.
HERO- ¡Oh no! ¿Cómo? ¿Hablas en tono enfermo?
BEATRICE- Es el único que tengo, yo creo.
MARGARET- ¡No! Mejor entónate, canta y no llores. Cántame, cielito lindo, y yo bailo.
BEATRICE- Si para eso tienes los talones ligeros. Si tu marido viene con buena montura, no le va a faltar establo para guardarla.
MARGARET- ¿Te sirven los talones para pensar esas tonterías?

[304] Shalespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Much Ado About Nothing*, p. 287
[305] Ibid.

The main difference between the original and my own version is the reference to the song. Margaret speaks of 'Light o' love', a popular dance tune at the time;[306] I chose to go with 'Cielito Lindo', a popular folk Mexican song that instructs the listener 'canta y no llores' [sing, do not weep]. It is pertinent to the situation, as Beatrice's usually cheerful nature seems to be saddened by a mysterious head cold, which may or may not be an excuse for the change in her humours brought about by her infatuation with Benedick.

The following joke about being light with the heels is easily transported to Mexican Spanish due to the popular euphemism of a woman being 'de cascos ligeros' [of light hooves] when she is liberal with her sexuality. This also ties in with the following joke, which falls in semantic proximity. I substituted 'stables' and 'barns' for 'montura' [mount, animal that is ridden] and 'establo' [stable] because the idea of riding keeps with the metaphor, but also because using a feminine in this case allows for the possibility of ending with the word 'guardarla' [to keep it, to store it] in feminine. In albur lingo, when one uses this word it generally implies a phallic image (one keeps the penis, 'la verga', inside).

The last line proves a challenge, as I wanted to continue with the use of 'heels', so I chose to go with the idea of 'pensar con los pies' [thinking with one's feet], which is a common way to chide in a friendly manner.

BEATRICE- Son casi las cinco, prima; ya deberías estar lista. Por dios, estoy muy enferma. ¡Ah-chú!
MARGARET- Salud… ¿dinero o amor?
BEATRICE- No necesito más que salud, sobre todo en este momento.
MARGARET- Bueno, imagínate que te vas mordiendo la lengua. Ya no sabríamos en qué creer.
BEATRICE- Pero ¿qué dice esta tonta? Me pregunto…
MARGARET- No nada. Sólo que Dios le da a todos lo que necesitan.

[306] Ibid.

The play with the yawn and the letter H proved impossible to translate in a direct way, so I decided to switch Beatrice's yawn for a sneeze, in a previously discussed instance of translating behaviour instead of going for mere linguistic transfer. It is common in Latin America, when someone sneezes repeatedly, to say 'salud' [health] on the first sneeze, 'dinero' [money] on the second and 'amor' [love] on the third. As Beatrice is supposed to have a head cold, Margaret can tease her about sneezing for love. This type of decision is supported by Reiß and Vermeer's remarks on the possibility of taking translational action beyond the verbal aspect of it.[307]

> HERO- Estos guantes que me mandó el conde, mira qué bien huelen.
> BEATRICE- No puedo olerlos, prima. Me da nauseas.
> MARGARET- ¡Nauseas! Está buena esa gripa. Es de las que se quitan a los nueve meses.

Here I switched 'stuffed' for 'nauseas' [dizziness, feeling nauseous] to play with the idea of morning sickness, then had Margaret say that Beatrice's cold is of the kind that heals after nine months. It is also a common Mexican/Latin American joke about pregnancy, specifically unwanted or concealed pregnancy, making it the closest behavioural equivalent for Mexican Spanish.

> BEATRICE- ¡Ay, que Dios me ayude! ¿desde cuándo me saliste tú tan cabrona?
> MARGARET- Desde que tú andas apendejada. A veces yo también tengo mis destellos.
> BEATRICE- Pequeñitos, casi no se ven. Ya no los escondas tanto. Pero de verdad, qué mal me siento.
> MARGARET- Mira, ten esta esencia de *carduus benedictus* y póntela en el pecho. Hace muy bien al corazón.
> HERO- Ahora sí, con el cardo, la picaste donde le duele.
> BEATRICE- ¿Benedictus? ¿Qué es eso? ¿Me estás queriendo decir algo más?
> MARGARET- ¿Yo? Para nada. Yo decía que te pongas la esencia de cardo. A lo mejor crees que yo pienso que tú estás enamorada. Pero no, señora. No soy tan tonta para pensar que es cierto lo que quisiera, ni quisiera no

[307] Reiß and Vermeer p. 31

pensar lo que pudiera, pero no puedo pensar, aunque me cansara de pensar; que estás o que estarás o que pudieras estar enamorada. Y, aun así, ahí tienes a Benedick, juraba que nunca se casaría, y mira, primero cae un hablador que un cojo. Cómo podrías tú igual cambiar de opinión, no lo entiendo. Pero lo veo en tus ojos, vas cayendo como muchas otras.

BEATRICE- ¿Cómo te corre tan rápido la lengua?

MARGARET- Rápido, sí. Pero no mal.

There is not much change in this last part of the section, except at the end. Because it is not an equivalent in terms of connotation, it was pointless to translate 'false gallop' literally, so I went with the traditional notion of things being badly done when they are done in a hurry, 'rápido y mal' [fast and wrong], to have Beatrice imply that because Margaret's tongue is fast, it is mistaken. To this, Margaret replies by clarifying that yes, her tongue is fast, but it is not wrong, as Beatrice clearly already knows.

The fact that, in this section, Margaret seems to be the wittier participant, a part usually played by Beatrice, goes back to the idea of love being not battle but surrender. Beatrice's quick intelligence, like Benedick's, has been her weapon all along, and one she wields skilfully. When she chooses – and it is a choice, both for her and for Benedick – to surrender, she gets to put it to rest for a while.

Both Beatrice and Benedick are characters that in some ways contradict the other examples I am working with, which makes for a very productive contrast, especially when considering the implications of working with comedy and tragedy. At this moment, I only want to point out that, while male characters in the tragedies are led to catastrophe by dwelling in the male, confrontational world – Romeo loses Juliet because he avenged Mercutio, Achilles is moved to violence by the loss of Patroclus and Othello falls into despair because he listened to Iago – Benedick sides with the females, and so becomes an instrument for reconciliation instead of conflict. This contrast supports the idea that, when peeling away appearance and reconciling with reality, sexuality is not confrontation but collaboration.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 1.2

Troilus and Cressida directly relates to both historical and present conditions of antagonism in the Mexican-American border: the struggle for domination of territory, symbolised by the possession of women, makes this play ideal for the exploration of both female and queer energies moving within a conflict that leaves them in a very unfavourable position. This is not to say that universal resonance cannot be sought after in most of the plays; but some of them, due to the specific situation that is portrayed in the plot and character interaction, hold a possibility to be reinterpreted to achieve richer meanings in certain space-time conditions. In general, it is possible to say that there is no evidence for *Troilus and Cressida* having a big influence among Mexican audiences; if any at all. It is not very well-known, but this can arguably, due to the element of novelty and the particular circumstances mentioned before, work as an advantage to a possible translation that revisits it in a more contemporary, colloquial language.

The section I am focusing on, both for its pertinent use of double meaning and the significance of female discourse in it, is the dialogue between Cressida and Pandarus in 1.2. Cressida is said to be a witty woman, and she shows this throughout the play in her mastery of wordplay, especially with her uncle. I am particularly concerned with this dialogue because it is a fluid battle of wits that shows her intelligence and value, but ends up on a sad note, with her explanation of why she must always fight, even when she is longing to surrender. In the case of both the play and the Mexican border situation the analogy between woman and land, love and war, is particularly strong.[308]

[308] On this I would like to comment that Zapatistas and feminist movements have found a united front around the idea of rejecting the violent acquisition of both the land and the female body. The slogan "ni la tierra ni las mujeres somos territorio de conquista" [neither land nor women are territory for conquest] is common among demonstrations organised by both movements. See
https://periodicoelsolacrata.wordpress.com/2016/05/31/ni-la-tierra-ni-las-mujeres-somos-territorios-de-conquista/
http://cdmch.org/cdmch/images/Carta_a_la_Comandanta_Ramona.pdf
https://eprints.ucm.es/49488/1/T40333.pdf

Cressida, like the Mexican women I discussed in chapter 1 incorporates wit and word games as a part of her defence, while also assuming her place as territory to be conquered:

> CRESSIDA- Here comes more.
> PANDARUS- Asses, fools, dolts; chaff and bran, chaff and bran; porridge after meat. I could live and die i' th'eyes of Troilus. Ne'er look, ne'er look, the eagles are gone; crows and daws, crows and daws! I had rather be such a man as Troilus than Agamemnon and all Greece.
> CRESSIDA- There is among the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus.
> PANDARUS- Achilles? a drayman, a porter, a very camel.
> CRESSIDA- Well, well.
> PANDARUS- 'Well, well'! Why, have you any discretion? Have you any eyes? Do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and so forth the spice and salt that season a man?
> CRESSIDA- Ay, a minced man; and then to be baked with no date in the pie, for then the man's date is out.
> PANDARUS- You are such a woman! one knows not at what ward you lie.
> CRESSIDA- Upon my back to defend my belly, upon my wit to defend my wiles, upon my secrecy to defend mine honesty, my mask to defend my beauty, and you to defend all these; and at all these wards I lie, at a thousand watches.
> PANDARUS- Say one of your watches.
> CRESSIDA- Nay, I'll watch you for that; and that's one of the chiefest of them too. If I cannot ward what I would not have hit, I can watch you for telling how I took the blow –unless it swell past hiding, and then it's past watching.
> PANDARUS- You are such another![309]

In the introduction to the Arden Third Series edition of *Troilus and Cressida*,[310] there is mention of the generalised lack of sympathy for Cressida in most successful presentations of the play during most of the twentieth century; she is mostly seen as a sexually manipulative woman that holds no loyalty for her lover or her kin. However, especially during the last two decades of the century, there seems to be a more understanding attitude towards the woman, as she is increasingly seen as a victim of war and misogyny. It is this reading that I subscribe to, because of the

[309] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Troilus and Cressida* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1998) 1.2.232-262
[310] David Bevington, "Introduction" in *The Arden Shakespeare Troilus and Cressida* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1998).

strong similarities it presents between her situation and that of many Mexican women, in both fiction and reality.

A strong support for this interpretation is the insidious presence of Pandarus, always trying to manipulate for his own convenience. The character's name, according to the pertinent note in the edition, is not innocent: he is "also called Pandar, with a generic suggestion that appears to be recognized by a shift of spelling in F1 to 'Pander.[311]"'[312] It is clear from the start what his role will be, not the protective uncle, guardian of Cressida's virtue, that he would have been expected to be – at least by her, according to her own words – but the opposite, the one from which she should be most wary of because, as her kin, he stands to gain from her worth as a maiden.

Cressida's interaction with Pandarus in the previous dialogue, when interpreted with an emphasis on her as a victim of patriarchy, becomes a sad manifestation of the woman's intelligence that will, nevertheless, amount to practically nothing in the end, since she has to rely merely on her looks and capitalised exercise of sexuality if she wants to ensure her own survival. She is aware of her condition and the role she needs to play, as she is of Pandarus's interest in her acceptance of Troilus and the reasons behind it. She is also acutely aware of the risk the situation poses for her, and the fact that she cannot trust her uncle.

The blatant exaggeration of Pandarus's praise prompts her to tease him, and interestingly enough, she keeps the upper hand throughout the whole dialogue, as her uncle never seems to be aware of it. This advantage is, of course, only symbolic. She is clearly dealing in more than one layer of meaning, which is why

[311] A go-between in clandestine love affairs; a person who provides another with the means of sexual gratification; a pimp, a procurer, *esp.* a male one (OED).
[312] Shakespeare *The Arden Shakespeare Troilus and Cressida* p. 127

when Pandarus mentions the attributes that would 'season' a man, alluding to an idea of maturity and strength (OED), she goes with the most immediate meaning and ties it to a cooking reference. She uses the word 'minced', which implies something that's been chopped or ground but also "deprived of some essential part"(OED), therefore using the different semantic possibilities of the word in her teasing. She does the same with 'date', which refers to something missing in the man, but then becomes a joke about age and sexual capability.

The play between 'watch' and 'ward' in the next few lines is just as witty but becomes, for Cressida, a sad self-deprecating joke on her own condition. It is in these lines that one can be sure of her sense of awareness, not only of her position in both society and war, but also of the manner in which Pandarus is using her to his benefit despite the risk this whole situation carries for her. The implication that she might end up with an unwanted pregnancy, in which case she'll be "past watching", signals to everything that is as stake for her in her uncle's pandering in favour of Troilus and serves to further explain her future actions.

Here is my version of the dialogue:

CRESSIDA- Vienen más.
PANDARUS- Asnos, tontos, tarados, pura cáscara, sopa sin carne. En cambio, podría vivir y morir en los ojos de Troilus. Ni los veas, ni voltees, que ya se fueron las águilas y quedan puros cuervos, ¡puros cuervos! Preferiría ser como Troilus que ser Agamemnon y tener toda Grecia.

In these first lines, the Spanish text hardly separates from the source. The slight variations are merely contextual, such as 'pura cáscara' [just peel/rind] instead of 'chaff and bran', and 'sopa sin carne' [soup without meat] instead of 'porridge after meat'. It is the same with the following lines, where the only significant change is that of Achilles being called 'bestia de carga' [beast of burden] instead of 'a drayman, a porter':

CRESSIDA- Los griegos tienen a Achilles, él es mejor que Troilus.
PANDARUS- ¿Achilles? ¡una bestia de carga, un camello!
CRESSIDA- Bueno, bueno.

It is in the following lines that the dialogue becomes slightly more sexual, and interestingly enough, it is Cressida who starts with the sexual puns. This is especially meaningful because it is precisely her own sexuality being discussed.

PANDARUS- ¡'Bueno, bueno'! ¿Eres tonta? ¿No tienes ojos? ¿Sabes de qué está hecho un hombre? Buena cuna, belleza, buena forma, hombría, conocimientos, amabilidad, virtud, juventud, liberalidad y en fin, ¿no son éstas las cosas que dan sazón al hombre?
CRESSIDA- Pero la sazón de nada sirve si la carne no está buena, y si no hay buena verdura.

In Cressida's response to her uncle, she jokes about the hypothetic man being baked 'with no date in the pie'. This is, as clarified in the pertinent note to the edition I am using,[313] a phallic reference reinforced by the following suggestion that the lack of date in the pie relates to the man's date (age) being out. As Pandarus provided a list of generic qualities to be found in an ideal man, she is countering his argument by speaking of the very physical, very tangible aspect of a man's ability to perform sexually.

Because the pie/date metaphor would not work in Spanish, I decided to go with 'carne' [meat] and 'verdura' [vegetables]. The word 'meat', when in a Mexican context, is usually a vague allusion to sexualised corporality. 'Carne' are the bodies when thought of only as participants in sexual activity. The word 'verdura' [vegetables] is more specific to the phallus, as it is a common Mexican albur word for it. Because of phonetic proximity 'verdura' is a euphemism for 'verga' [cock], so saying that 'the seasoning is useless when the meat is bad and there is no vegetable' equals saying that all those ethereal qualities enumerated by Pandarus are worthless if the body is not good for sex and the man's sexual prowess – the use of his 'verdura' – are compromised.

[313] Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Troilus and Cressida* pp. 152-153

PANDARUS- Típica mujer, no se sabe nunca cómo te vas a poner.
CRESSIDA- Pues me pongo de espaldas, para defender lo de enfrente, y con la cabeza defiendo lo demás. Me pongo, pero en secreto para defender mi fama y me pongo una máscara para cuidar mi belleza. Y todo deberías defenderlo tú, pero soy yo la que tiene que estar perdiendo el sueño en las noches.
PANDARUS- Si no duermes, habrá que ver lo que haces en las noches.

For the lines above, I chose to go with 'ponerse' [to put(oneself)] instead of 'to lie' because the verb carries strong sexual connotations. To say that someone is 'putting themselves', without any necessary follow-up, means to make oneself available to sexual intercourse. It is also used, in a more innocent context, to imply being unreasonable or hard to deal with, so when I had Pandarus say 'nunca se sabe cómo te vas a poner' [one can never know how you'll put yourself], he is talking about her humours being unpredictable, as a woman's would be. This correlates with her defensiveness, that she discusses in her response while taking the opportunity to address the source of this defensiveness: the fact that it is her own sexuality – and therefore, her own vulnerability – that is being threatened by her uncle's meddling.

After, I chose to go with 'perder el sueño' [to lose sleep (over something)] to reinforce her defensiveness but also because it allows for Pandarus's response. By saying 'habrá qué ver lo que haces en las noches' [one should see what you do at nights], he is expressing doubt over the reasons for her lack of sleep, but he is doing so by alluding to sight. I went with that expression because it allows for her response:

CRESSIDA- Ya quisieras ver lo que hago, pero de ti también tengo que defenderme. Si no puedo evitar que me den con la reata, puedo al menos evitar que vayas con el chisme – a menos que por el golpe se produzca una hinchazón, entonces ya no habrá mucho qué defender.
PANDARUS- Tïpica mujer.

I chose to adapt the use of 'watches' as closely as possible by stating that, from Pandarus, she also needs to defend (watch herself, watch him). After that, the main

difference from the source is the use of the word 'reata' [rope, lasso], also a very common albur word for phallus. It would be unclear to stick to only translating 'hit'; by specifying the weapon she is to be hit with (the rope), the need for secrecy and the nature of the possible 'swelling' that could come as a result of the blow.[314]

OTHELLO 2.1

The section of *Othello* that I work with is the dialogue between Desdemona and Iago in 2.1. Desdemona's questionable character is falsely suggested by her understanding and reactions to Iago's bawdy remarks, though in this case it works as an incentive for Iago's malice towards her. It is also interesting to point out that the villain's negative attitude towards women also speaks of his general lack of sympathy for those outside of his area of privilege.[315]

There is much to work with in terms of the situation of migrants and minorities,[316] and an interesting correlation could be made between Desdemona and Cressida as a continuation of the previous analogy that establishes women's bodies as territory for war and conquest; unlike Cressida, Desdemona chooses to side with the losing faction, she falls in love with the outsider, and that proves fatal to her – one could argue that it is her surrender to love in an unbalanced context that becomes the source of her misfortune. The body is again turned into a political territory, and it makes no difference that she can master the wit that would, in a different situation, become a shield in an adverse situation, she is doomed because she picked the wrong side.

It is interesting at this point to go back to *Huapango*: the film was unsuccessful in its conveying of the story because, aside from ignoring the witty

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[314] This is the sort of pun that –as most in this context– would have to be strongly supported by acting direction. I do not intend to go into that area, but I need to at least make a note on the importance of this being considered.
[315] Like Mercutio's, it has been suggested that Iago's misogyny stems from his veiled and antagonistic attraction towards Othello. This is consistent with the direction of my translation, but at the moment not very pertinent to the focus of this section. The subject of privilege in *Othello* is both interesting and relevant to problems with Mexican culture but would have to be dealt with separately for practical reasons. See Matz, Robert. "Slander, Renaissance Discourses of Sodomy, and Othello." *ELH* vol. 66, no. 2 (1999).
[316] This is one of the issues that need to be considered for future research because of its magnitude. For more on this, see Peter Erickson, "Race Words in Othello" in *Shakespeare and Immigration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

use of language that makes Desdemona a more rounded character and allows for comic relief in an otherwise dark story, there are no allusions to complex matters of privilege, race and migration that would be more than pertinent in a product intended for Mexican audiences.

The dialogue follows:

IAGO- Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me
You'd have enough.
DESDEMONA- Alas! she has no speech.
IAGO- In faith, too much!
I find it still, when I have list to sleep.
Marry, before your ladyship, I grant,
She puts her tongue a little in her heart
And chides with thinking.
EMILIA- You have little cause to say so.
IAGO- Come on, come on, you are pictures out of doors,
Bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens,
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
Players in your housewifery, and housewives' in…
Your beds!
DESDEMONA- O, fie upon thee, slanderer!
IAGO- Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:
You rise to play and go to bed to work.
EMILIA- You shall not write my praise.
IAGO- No, let me not.
DESDEMONA- What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?
IAGO- O, gentle lady, do not put me to't,
For I am nothing if not critical.
DESDEMONA- Come on, assay. There's one gone to the harbour?
IAGO- Ay, madam.
DESDEMONA- I am not merry, but I do beguile
The thing I am by seeming otherwise.
Come, how wouldst thou praise me?
IAGO- I am about it, but indeed my invention
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze,
It plucks out brains and all; but my muse labours,
And thus she is delivered:
If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,
The one's for use, the other useth it.
DESDEMONA- Well praised! How if she be black and witty?
IAGO- If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.
DESDEMONA- Worse and worse.
EMILIA- How if fair and foolish?
IAGO- She never yet was foolish that was fair,
For even her folly helped her to an heir.

DESDEMONA- These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i' th' alehouse. What miserable praise hast thou for her that's foul and foolish?
IAGO- There's none so foul, and foolish thereunto,
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.
DESDEMONA- O heavy ignorance, thou praisest the worst best. But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed? One that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?
IAGO- She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud,
Never lacked gold, and yet went never gay,
Fled from her wish, and yet said 'now I may,'
She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly,
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail,
She that could think, and ne'er disclose her mind,
See suitors following, and not look behind,
She was a wight, if ever such wight were –
DESDEMONA- To do what?
IAGO- To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.
DESDEMONA- O, most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband. How say you, Cassio, is he not a most profane and liberal counsellor?[317]

Just as Cressida talks about defending herself through her own wit, and Beatrice is rendered rather defenceless to Margaret's joking insults by her surrender to love, Desdemona is here prompting a conversation that revolves around sexual issues as a way to defend Emilia from her partner's verbal abuse. In a touching show of sorority, she metaphorically places herself in front of Emilia and becomes the target of Iago's insults.

Unlike Beatrice and Cressida, Desdemona is not taking part of a friendly confrontation. It is a man in this case bringing up female sexuality, and in a very unflattering manner. Contrasting with Pandarus whose joking adversarial attitude, while serving selfish purposes, is not directly aiming to cause harm; Iago does mean serious harm to Desdemona – and everyone around him, basically. It is important to note then that the use of puns and sexual language is not necessarily an indicator of healthy release of tension; when it comes from Iago, because it is

[317] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Othello,* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1997) 2.1.100-164

not happening in a friendly environment, it becomes a precursor to real violence. This resonates strongly with issues of sexual harassment and sexism in contemporary Mexico: the same language that is often used to abuse and demean women, when appropriated, becomes a source of power and freedom. I have discussed this before, and here it is especially significant because of how, depending on directorial choices, the scene could be intimately close to Mexican everyday realities. In addition to the examples that I mentioned before, the resignification of insulting language can also be seen in feminist cultural movements that encourage women catcalling men as a response to street harassment, and of course the significance of Lourdes Ruiz and her statements on how albur is a weapon for the vindication of female status; however, it is important to bear in mind that it is, essentially, aggressive and demeaning language. The inclusion of this dialogue alongside the other examples becomes a necessary reminder of how powerful language is, either as a creative or destructive force. After all, as Reiß/Vermeer insist on stressing out, language – and therefore translation – is action.

In the case of *Othello*, as the meter does not serve the same purpose as it does in *Romeo and Juliet*, I decided to go with a translation that foregoes versification in favour of expanding the possibilities of the dialogue.

Here is my Spanish version:

IAGO- Mire, si ella usara con usted los labios tanto como con mis oídos usa la lengua, estaría usted harto.
DESDEMONA- Pero si ni habla.
IAGO- Le juro que demasiado! Yo creo que cuando me voy a dormir, se calla por fuera, pero en el pensamiento regaña.
EMILIA- No tiene razón para decir eso.
IAGO- Ay, por Dios. Ustedes siempre son farolitos en la calle, cascabeles en las salas de fiesta, gatas salvajes en la cocina, santas cuando les conviene, diablas si alguien las ofende y juegan a ser esposas, pero en realidad sólo trabajan en la cama.

It is clear that Desdemona is defending Emilia, especially since she is evidently not as outspoken as Iago accuses her of being. Her mild response, along with Desdemona's intervention, effectively incites him to real verbal violence against women. In his statement, I substituted 'pictures' for 'farolitos' [lanterns] to allude to a traditional Mexican sayin, 'farolito de la calle, oscuridad de su casa' [a lantern in the street, but darkness inside the house]. I also clarified the 'play/work' metaphor, that will continue in the following lines.

> DESDEMONA- ¿Cómo se atreve? grosero, mentiroso.
> IAGO- No, es verdad, o que me parta un rayo. Ustedes se levantan para jugar y se acuestan para trabajar.
> EMILIA- De mí mejor no hable.
> IAGO- No, mejor no.

More than the previous sections examined in this chapter, this dialogue is heavy with sarcasm. Iago is being rudely dismissive of Emilia, which makes Desdemona step up to defend her, as she is more capable of responding.

> DESDEMONA- ¿Qué podría decir de mí, si tuviera que decir algo bueno?
> IAGO- Señora, no me pregunte esas cosas, si sabe que para eso soy muy crítico.
> DESDEMONA- Ándele, dígame. ¿Ya fue alguien al muelle?
> IAGO- Sí, señora.
> DESDEMONA- Ay, estoy tan preocupada, pero ya parece que voy a darle el gusto de verlo. Dígame pues, ¿qué cosas se le ocurren de mí?

Desdemona's mention of being 'not merry' but 'seeming otherwise' goes back to the whole theme of appearance and reality in *Much Ado*, in this case a sad opposite scenario. There is no place for reality here: even when her concern for her husband speaks of her love towards him, she is not willing to show any sort of weakness. This is also a good indicator of how unfriendly the context is here, and how destructive it becomes for the characters when sexual language is used in a hostile manner.

IAGO- Déjeme pensar, las ideas se me pegan al cerebro lentas como melaza. Pero mi musa ya está pariendo: si la señora tiene belleza e inteligencia, la segunda sabrá hacer producir a la primera.
DESDEMONA- Uy, qué halago. ¿Y si fuera fea y lista?
IAGO- Si fuera negra y fea, pero inteligente, entonces sabría encontrar blanco para sus trucos.

The use of 'black' as a synonym for unattractive poses a real problem in terms of translation, especially when the attempted result is a contemporary adaptation. It goes beyond matters of racism and class that are, of course, very much present in contemporary Mexican society: the problem is one of connotations. As much as being dark-skinned would make the hypothetical woman undesirable from a social point of view, the word 'negra' [black] is usually used as an endearment when directed towards females throughout Latin America. The same goes for 'morena' [dark-skinned], so in order to clarify the meaning, I chose to say 'negra y fea' [black and ugly], otherwise the play between black and white, so significant to the plot, would be lost. 'Blanco' [white, target, bull's eye] also works in different levels because it means white person, but also target.

DESDEMONA- De mal en peor…
EMILIA- ¿Y si fuera bella, pero tonta?
IAGO- Para meter la pata no se necesitan dos dedos de frente.
DESDEMONA- Está contando chistes malos de cantina. ¿Qué cosa horrible diría de la que fuera fea y además tonta?
IAGO- Ninguna es tan fea ni tan tonta que no sepa usar aquello para hacer las mismas cosas que las bonitas y listas hacen.

Iago's participation in the dialogue becomes increasingly aggressive and sexual, to the point that Desdemona dismisses him for his vulgarity. The double meaning of 'folly' does not stand in Spanish, so I chose to simplify the phrase and go with two common Mexican expressions, 'meter la pata' [to screw up], that usually means getting pregnant by mistake, and 'dos dedos de frente' [two fingers of forehead], meaning the minimum of human intelligence.

In the following lines, I used 'aquello' [that thing] as a common allusion to female genitalia, implying that the use of it is unrelated to both beauty and intelligence.

> DESDEMONA- Mire cuánta ignorancia, sólo le atina a decir maldades. Pero ¿qué podría decir de una mujer digna de verdad? Una que por su mérito no tema a las críticas.
> IAGO- La que sea bella, pero no arrogante; que sepa hablar pero controle su lengua; tenga dinero pero no presuma; sepa cómo y cuándo obtener lo que quiere; la que se enoje, pero decida no cobrar venganza; nunca sea débil en sabiduría para no cambiar el chile dulce del marido por el ancho del vecino; que sepa pensar, pero quedarse callada; que no se le vaya la cabeza por un hombre; si es que acaso existiera semejante criatura, serviría –
> DESDEMONA- ¿Para qué?
> IAGO- Parir idiotas y preocuparse por pendejadas.
> DESDEMONA- ¡Pero qué conclusión tan impotente! No le hagas caso, Emilia, aunque sea tu esposo. Cassio, ¿a poco no es fino el caballero?

Of the list of attributes that Iago cites as good qualities for the non-existent woman, the most challenging is the phrase 'change the cod's head for the salmon's tail'. It alludes to the folly of switching the husband for the lover,[318] and forebodes future developments in the plot, but does not work at all in a Mexican context. I switched varieties of fish for varieties of chilli, as it is a fairly widespread phallic reference: 'chile dulce' [sweet chilli] is used commonly for flavour in most dishes, but packs no heat, therefore it could be an equivalent for the common, everyday fish – the cod – while 'chile ancho' [wide chilli] is more flavourful and only required in a few specific dishes, and holds a stronger sexual charge because its name alludes to width – girth.

Desdemona's final response is dismissive, and establishes a correlation between wit and sexual prowess. The word 'impotent' [impotente] is as sexually charged in Spanish. The sarcasm at the end needs to be strongly emphasized, as it

[318] Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature,* (London: The Athlone Press, 1994)

is common in Latin America to say 'fino' [fine, elegant] and mean the exact opposite.

ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

The difference between discussing albur as a possibility and effectively working with it in translation has become evident in this chapter. General considerations yielded to specific challenges when going through with the translational action, and as I became more aware of the particular implications of each section selected, translating from this perspective enhanced my understanding of both source text and my prospected target text. First of all, it stands out that it is essential to state the general approach to Mexican Spanish required for albur to be performed successfully: it is not only the puns that need to be translated into a more vernacular language, they need to work in correlation with the context and, consequently, I had to work with popular sayings and expressions that are not necessarily sexual but still assist in building this correlation, which emphasises the importance of behavioural aspects to the translational action. My aim has always been to go for a more generic, popular, middle-class urban Mexican Spanish, but the differences in particular accents and dialects remain a strong aspect to consider when thinking about the characters' social status and standing in each play.[319]

It is also worth mentioning that, as one goes into the characteristics of each individual reading, it becomes increasingly evident that particular interpretations can effectively contribute much to global conversations around both Shakespearean practice and precise social and cultural movements relevant to Mexican and Latin American contemporary audiences. Contemporary conceptions of queer and female representation, an issue that is progressively relevant in the light of recent events, takes on a more central role as albur gives them a voice.

[319] Reiß and Vermeer stress the importance of biculturality in the translator: I mention these possible variations due to the importance of considering them within the aim of this translation approach, but as a translator I do not think it my place to engage in cultural contexts for which I am not fully equipped. I stated in the introduction, and have further upheld, that the only possible point of view I can speak from is my own, therefore I would not want to disrespect those of others by artificially mimicking them.

CONCLUSIONS

Human is political

This thesis is a first approach to a relationship that goes beyond text and into theatre practice. The main purpose was to open up the connections between Shakespeare's use of sexual puns and double meaning and Mexican tradition of albur, this with the aim of generating a closer relationship between Shakespeare and Mexican audiences. The benefits of exploring this relationship are multiple, from those relating to a better understanding and individual identification with Shakespeare's works to the quality and accessibility of resources for education. The most central one for me is that of improving the constant dialogue taking place between Mexican localities and the multiform, ever-changing globalised West; but advantage in this area is tied to many other ones in parallel scenarios. The purpose of the thesis, as well as the reason for my prioritising of this area, is specified in the questions posed in the introduction: why are most current Shakespeare translations into Spanish easily available in print so distant from Mexican readers/audiences? is it possible to achieve a translation that is both faithful to the texts and capable of engaging contemporary Mexican audiences? is it possible – and how – to find and emphasize point of contact between the language in the plays and contemporary Mexican language/culture? and beyond that, could this point of contact become a bridge to a better understanding of the relationship between Mexican localities and the great western globalised world? Throughout the research I have made big steps towards finding answers for them.

In my intention to improve contact between Mexican audiences and Shakespeare in translation and practice, albur was my chosen entry point from the start. The use of sexual double meaning in Shakespeare stood out as evidently similar to albur's linguistic and behavioural particularities and I wondered many times about the reasons behind the lack of interest for this connection in the

translations easily available for Mexican audiences. The answer to this was easily found in the first stages of my research, when it became apparent that the oversight was inherited from a tradition of nineteenth and early-twentieth century Iberian translations in which the fragments considered inappropriate were either edited or ignored. This omission of sexual double meaning reflects outdated values and attitudes and imposes an artificial limitation on the standard translations. By accommodating previously ignored features of Shakespearean language, my translations improve on this specific area upon those which are readily available in Mexican Spanish.

The need for a theoretical approach that provided parameters for a take on translation in which the target culture was considered as a part of the translational action – and not merely a silent recipient – led me to Skopostheorie as the most suitable choice. The reasons are both its focus on functionality and its emphasis in translation as a permanent process guided by the continuation of purpose. The importance granted by Reiß and Vermeer to the reality of multiple translations for multiple target cultures was also a key aspect in my decision, as well as the idea of correctability that supports the notion of translation as constantly evolving. Skopostheorie provided a set of steps to follow in the undertaking of translational action, the first of which was a detailed description of contemporary Mexican culture. The execution of this step also signified moving towards a better understanding of how international relations are a key player in the constitution of Mexican identities, therefore adding as well to the intention of targeting these relations on a cultural level.

The first chapter, as the initial step in the process, is the result of a careful consideration of the rapidly-changing scenario regarding Mexican politics and society, which includes the aforementioned tangle of international relations – critically, the one with the United States – but also an unstable situation regarding internal politics. This is historically expected but nevertheless complicated by many factors like the election of president Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the

escalating social movements that have increased the visibility – and, arguably, intensity – of gender violence adding up to an already difficult scenario of violence and corruption. As a strategy to navigate the tangle of national identities and decide what aspects of them to prioritise, I started the chapter by providing pertinent definitions of nationality that elucidate the importance of international communities as source for identity as well as placing myth and shared tradition – of which albur is an example – as key aspects of the construction of national narratives. The strong influence of international relations to the constitution of Mexicanity presents in itself an argument for the importance of translation as a means for both international cultural dialogue and national visibility and the difficulties presented by the situation were met by an increasing awareness of social and political conditions in Mexico. The difficulty of working with an ever-changing cultural and political landscape was met by keeping in mind that 'the contemporary' is movement and change. Giorgio Agamben's definition of contemporariness revolves around being somewhat detached from the actual zeitgeist and therefore being able to look at it from just enough distance.[320] Consequently, in my case, spatial distance was a source of slight displacement from the current situation in Mexico and this had a positive effect in terms of my ability to perform a productive analysis. There was also an unexpected challenge in the lack of consistent, empiric research on Mexican national identities, an issue I discussed when describing the existence of pensadores and their role within Mexicanity. In accordance with my own perspective of slight spatial and temporal displacement, the solution for this predicament lied in turning to work done outside of the Mexico, such as that of Lomnitz and Lund, as well as considering the more poetic, literary-oriented writing of pensadores for its descriptive and formative value in the area of national identity.

[320] Giorgio Agamben, "What is the Contemporary" in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)

The purpose guiding my translational action led me to ascribe particular emphasis to albur and its role in the interactions between different sectors of Mexican society. My second chapter is dedicated to its characteristics and connections with the aim of setting it at play in Shakespearean practice. Firstly, this makes sense for mere literary reasons – it improves the quality of translation when there is double meaning involved – but also it constitutes a source of identification and visibility for social issues both to the inside of Mexican everyday life – such as gender identities and social anxieties tied to sexuality and class – and to the outside, regarding international relations – as a unique way to relate to a strong, international cultural asset. For this, I found good sources especially in Helena Beristáin and her exploration on the phenomenon from a both social and linguistic point of view. Nonetheless, as it is a cultural manifestation that plays with the limits of the socially acceptable, finding academic sources for it was difficult. I was especially concerned with demonstrating how it has been used to address issues of social inequality and, more recently, gender inequality due to its performative nature. The performativity also brings it to a level with theatre practice and its decisively ludic nature encourages collaboration instead of confrontation. To support this, I relied upon Cixous's questioning of the male/female opposition in the history of literary analysis (among other things) which proved illustrative as a metaphor for how a perspective that foregoes opposition in favour of collaborative interaction presents many opportunities to address other more dramatic conflicts safely. The sources for everyday examples of albur and the interviews with Lourdes Ruiz, albur champion and advocate for it as source of female empowerment, are necessarily informal due to the nature of the phenomenon itself.

There is a great tradition of Global Shakespeares in translation and adaptation as well as an increasing interest in Shakespearean localities and how they establish new meanings by incorporating Shakespeare practice to local identities. Mexico might have been slow in building a relationship to Shakespeare but there is definitely one now, however incipient in comparison to that of other

traditions. Some successful examples of Shakespearean influence in Mexican cinema have been acknowledged in my third chapter,[321] and as an interesting counterpart, Mexican elements have been used – in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* – to emulate a similar setting to that of Shakespeare's Verona.[322] This speaks of a connection full of possibilities, of which it was necessary to acknowledge past stages and understand the reasons for the way in which it has evolved. In the spirit of inquiring into the manifestations of Shakespeare in Mexican localities regarding albur, I commented on a few examples of unsuccessful translation of double meaning and one successful one before addressing the translation of the selected sections. A big challenge in this was avoiding repetitive statements, for which the sections I commented were shorter than the ones I translated. The biggest issue, however, was keeping in mind that my purpose is not the same as that of the translators I discussed, therefore my commentary needed to stay focused on that purpose while not dismissing other translations because they do not adhere to it. I also ran into a practical difficulty with the González Mello *Hamlet* translation with albur elements in it. I was not able to quote from it because the director translated for his staging and has not, so far, shown any intention of publishing. This is significant to me because it stresses the usefulness of my translation purpose: even though it is proven that albur works well in a Shakespearean translation, it is not usually the focus of translations aimed for publication.

The challenges presented by the translational action itself were met by the guidelines provided by Skopostheorie, by which I mean that the process previous to the actual translation facilitated the validation of translational shifts and variants to the text. Choices made in translational shifts from the source texts are justified by the exploration of albur and Mexicanity effectuated in chapters 1 and 2 and preceded by close interpretation of the texts in search for the possible semantic

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321 Modenessi, "Cantinflas's *Romeo y Julieta*: The Rogue and Will" and "Looking for Mr GoodWill in "Rancho Grande"1 and Beyond: The 'Ghostly' Presence of Shakespeare in Mexican Cinema"; Thornton, *Shakespeare and World Cinema*.

322 Philippa Sheppard, "Latino Elements in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*" in *Latin American Shakespeares* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).

ambiguities that lead to sexual double meaning. There was some commentary on the variations of albur that happen in different areas of Mexico, and I debated the possibility of going into them. However, I found it contrary to the guidelines of Skopostheorie – and to my own purpose with this thesis – to engage in translational action from a perspective that is not my own. The stress on biculturality and behaviour translation placed by Skopostheorie on translational action prevented me from attempting this, as one of the points I strove to make from the start is that of the cultural and linguistic diversity throughout Mexican territory. The resulting translations are consistent with both the source text and the established purpose of successfully achieving sexual double meaning in the target text through the use of albur's vocabulary and behaviour.

To summarise, the outcome of the thesis as a whole – regardless of the areas open for further research – meets the initial aim of producing a kind of translation that recovers sexual double meaning in a satisfactory manner. This has a positive effect in education and local identities, as well as improving cultural conversations with international communities already engaged in Shakespearean practice and interpretation.

The four years in which this research has been undertaken have proved eventful in ways that effected my conclusions. Issues related to my topic and the questions I have aimed to answer through it seem to have been evolving at increasing speed; this has led to reformulating some of my positions. However, in a general sense, such issues have contributed to prove the importance of work of this kind, with the ultimate goal of enriching the reality of cosmopolitanisation while at the same time making a point of the difficulties faced by the undertaking of such an endeavour.

From a Mexican perspective, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United Stated was a critical factor in escalating an already conflictive border situation. The Trump administration has since the beginning been openly adversarial towards Mexican citizens, an attitude evident in its intention – being

carried out despite the initial disbelief of many – of building a wall marking the border between his country and Mexico.[323] There is much to be said about the complicated relationship between the two countries and its development throughout time. As I suggested in chapter 1, it has in the past been both confrontational and collaborative in equal measures, frequently simultaneously. However, it is safe to say that there has never before, outside of open military aggression brought by attempts at territorial expansion, been such an open rejection, not only towards Mexicans but the whole of Latin American population as well. The recent evolution of this conflictive situation, which has strong repercussions in cultural scenarios, contributed to solidify the direction and purpose of my work in the direction of pursuing cultural connection.

The border situation, already tinted by the racism openly endorsed by the U.S. government, became even more critical with the crossing of migrant caravans from Central America, starting in the first half of 2019. The caravans where at first received by the general Mexican population in a somewhat friendly manner but, as the Trump administration put pressure on Mexican government through the threat of tariffs and commercial blocks, the Mexican government was forced to change its attitude and comply with their regulations for migration. This capitulation was detrimental not only to migrants but also to local population, as it affected social and economic issues in the states near the Mexican south border.[324] Racism now extends increasingly towards the south, leading to stress over the relationship between Mexico and Central American countries from which asylum seekers are coming through our south border. This is only one example of the many ways in which the relationship between Mexico and the US affects the relationships between Mexico and the rest of the world, and that is not to mention how wounded Mexican identity already was by the manner in which it is portrayed in

[323] https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/washington-secrets/pace-of-border-wall-construction-doubled-work-on-private-land-begins
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-49574441
[324] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/trumps-border-policy-takes-toll-mexico-migrant-caravans-turned/
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-48036092

front of a globalised, Anglo-centric West. I return to this subject by way of conclusion because one of my strongest motivations in choosing translation as a research topic is its relevant role in the relationships between cultures that are placed in conflict regarding many other aspects of social, cultural and political development. Racism and friction between nationalities are increasingly problematic, especially since the imminent effects of globalisation inevitably connect us more closely to each other and, at the same time, they exacerbate the possible confrontation between localities and their idiosyncrasies. Shakespearean translation, study and performance in this scenario bear special significance considering how Shakespeare is already at work as a unifying element for both academic communities and general audiences.

In these confusing, challenging times in terms of international relationships, one tends to question the role of humanities in the search for better understanding even as we seek to affirm its importance. At the British Shakespeare Association conference 2019, dedicated to the theme of race and nationality, all plenary speakers were women of colour addressing issues of race and migration; Shakespeare's Globe's Refugee Week featured plays focusing on themes like displacement and otherness.[325] These are just two examples that illustrate the extent to which research in literature and the humanities can address national and international divisions. What questions can I take forward in my own research? Clearly, the first challenge would be to apply the approach developed here to the translation of whole plays, concentrating on the interaction between the sections where albur is prominent and the rest of the play. There is much to consider on the possibilities that research in albur offers to questions of feminism in Shakespearean translation. In both these approaches, the perspective of performance, bracketed off in this discussion, will become crucial.

From this perspective I conclude with a comment on a performance that encouraged me to think beyond the time and place of this particular piece of

[325] https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/seasons/refugee-week-2019/#about-refugee-week

research: the Shakespeare's Rose Theatre production of *Hamlet*, directed by Damian Cruden, in summer 2019. Serena Manteghi's Ophelia, powerful in her presentation of manipulation and abuse, made me aware of the extent to which performer and spectator are, in Quince's use of the word in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* 'translated': brought together, not divided, by their linguistic and cultural differences. Cultures are in this way translated from and into the shifting reality of the play turning source and target from opposition to collaboration in the production of new meanings. To quote Roger Chartier:

> Las obras, en efecto, no tienen un sentido estable, universal, fijo. Están investidas de significaciones plurales y móviles, construidas en el reencuentro entre una proposición y una recepción, entre las formas y los motivos que les dan su estructura y las competencias y expectativas de los públicos que se adueñan de ellas. Cierto, los creadores, o las autoridades, o los "clérigos", aspiran siempre a fijar el sentido y articular la interpretación correcta que deberá constreñir la lectura (o la mirada). Pero siempre, también, la recepción inventa, desplaza. distorsiona. Producidas en una esfera especifica, el campo artístico e intelectual, que tiene sus reglas, sus convenciones, sus jerarquías, las obras se escapan y toman densidad peregrinando, a veces en periodos de larga duración, a través del mundo social. Descifradas a partir de los esquemas mentales y afectivos que constituyen la "cultura" propia (en el sentido antropológico) de las comunidades que las reciben, las obras se toman, en reciprocidad, una fuente preciosa para reflexionar sobre lo esencial: a saber la construcción del lazo social, la conciencia de la subjetividad, la relación con lo sagrado.
>
> [The (artistic) works, indeed, have no stable, universal, fixed meaning. They are invested with plural and mobile significations, constructed in the reencounter between a proposition and a reception, between the forms and the motives that grant them structure and the competences and expectations of audiences that take possession of them. True, the creators, or the authorities, or the "clerics", aspire always to fix the meanings and articulate the correct interpretations that shall constrain the reading (or the gaze). But always, as well, reception invents, displaces, distorts. Produced in a specific sphere, the artistic and intellectual field, with its rules, its conventions, its hierarchies, the works escape and acquire density in a pilgrimage, sometimes through extended periods of time, through the social world. Deciphered through the intellectual and affective schemes that constitute the specific "culture" (in the anthropologic sense) of the communities receiving them, the works take, reciprocally, a precious source for reflection over essential matters: namely the construction of social bonds, the conscience of subjectivity, the relationship to the sacred.][326]

[326] Roger Chartier, "Prólogo a la edición española" in *El Mundo Como Representación: Estudios sobre historia cultural*, (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1992), p. XI

Appendix 1: Much Ado About Nothing

***Mucho Ruido y Pocas Nueces (Much Ado About Nothing)* 3.4.36-86**
Astrana Marín's translation

HERO- Buenos días, prima.

BEATRIZ- Buenos días, querida Hero.

HERO- ¡Cómo! ¿Qué es eso? ¿Habláis en tono sentimental?

BEATRIZ- Me parece que no sabría afectar otro.

MARGARITA- Entonad *Luz del amor* que no tiene estribillo. Cantadla y yo bailaré.

BEATRIZ- ¡Luz de amor con vuestros talones! Pues como vuestro marido tenga bastantes establos, veréis que no han de faltarle graneros.

MARGARITA- ¡Oh interpretación maligna! La despreciaré con mis talones.

BEATRIZ- Son casi las cinco, prima. Ya es hora de que estéis arreglada. A fe mía, que me encuentro extremadamente mal. ¡Ay!

MARGARITA- ¿Qué os falta? ¿Un halcón un caballo o un esposo?

BEATRICE- Sufro de la letra con que principian todas estas palabras, de la hache.

MARGARITA- Bueno, si no os hablo convertida en turca, no queda otro remedio sino navegar por la estrella polar.

BEATRIZ- ¿Qué quiere decir esta loca? pienso.

MARGARITA- Ya, nada; sino que Dios de a cada cual lo que su corazón desea.

HERO- Estos guantes me los ha enviado el conde. Despiden un perfume embriagador.

BEATRIZ- Estoy constipada, prima. No tengo olfato.

MARGARITA- ¡Doncella y constipada! ¿No será que habéis cogido un frío de castidad?

BEATRIZ- ¡Oh, venga Dios en mi ayuda! ¡Venga Dios en mi ayuda! ¿Desde cuándo tan chistosa?

MARGARITA- Desde que voz habéis dejado de serlo. ¿No me sienta admirablemente el donaire?

BEATRIZ- No se nota lo suficiente; deberíais llevarlo en el tocado. Por mi fe que estoy enferma.

MARGARITA- Tomad un poco de *Carducus Benedictus* destilado y aplicáoslo al corazón. Es el único calmante para un desfallecimiento.

HERO- Advierte que eso es pincharla con un dardo.

BEATRIZ- ¡*Benedictus*! ¿Por qué *Benedictus*? ¿Veis algún sentido oculto en ese *Benedictus*?

MARGARITA- ¡Sentido oculto! ¡Por mi fe, yo no he pretendido dárselo! Quise decir sencillamente cardo bendito. Quizá creáis que os supongo enamorada. No, por la Virgen. No soy tan tonta que dé crédito a cuanto se me ocurra, ni se me ocurre tampoco dar crédito a lo que quisiera; no, en verdad; no se me ocurriría pensar, aunque me volviera loca, que estáis enamorada, o que lo estaréis, o que podéis estarlo. No obstante, Benedicto era una persona tal como vos, y ahora se ha vuelto como los demás hombres. Juró que jamás se casaría, y, sin embargo, al presente, a despecho de su corazón, come su pan de amor sin repugnancia. Que vos os convirtáis, lo ignoro; pero se me antoja que comenzáis a mirar con vuestros ojos igual que las demás mujeres.

BEATRIZ- ¿Qué paso es ese que lleva tu lengua?

MARGARET- No es un falso galope.[327]

[327] Astrana Marín, pp. 1174-1175

Appendix 2: Troilus and Cressida

***Troilo y Cressida (Troilus and Cressida)* 1.2.232-262**
Astrana Marín's translation

CRESSIDA- Aquí están los otros.

PÁNDARO- ¡Asnos, tontos, estúpidos! ¡Paja y salvado, salvado y paja! ¡Potaje después de la cena! Podría vivir y morir contemplando a Troilo. No miréis más; las águilas han pasado; cornejas y grullas, todos ellos grullas y cornejas. Me gustaría más ser Troilo que Agamenón y todos los griegos juntos.

CRESSIDA- Entre los griegos está Aquiles, un hombre más valiente que Troilo.

PÁNDARO- ¡Aquiles! Un carretero, un mozo de cordel, un verdadero camello.

CRESSIDA- Bueno, bueno.

PANDARUS- ¡Bueno, bueno! ¡Pardiez! ¿Tienes alguna inteligencia? ¿Tienes ojos? ¿Sabes lo que es un hombre? ¿Es que el nacimiento, la hermosura, las bellas formas, la elegancia en el lenguaje, la virilidad, la instrucción, la nobleza, la virtud, la juventud, la liberalidad y otras cosas semejantes no son las especias y la sal que sazonan un hombre?

CRESSIDA- Sí; un hombre en picadillo para ser cocido sin dátil en un pastel, pues es hombre que no tiene sazón.

PÁNDARO- ¡Sóis una mujer extraña! No sabe uno en qué guardia estás.

CRESSIDA- En la guardia de mi parte posterior, para defender mi delantera; en la guardia de mi talento, para defender mis añagazas; en la guardia de mi discreción, para defender mi honestidad; en la guardia de mi disfraz, para defender mi belleza; en vuestra guardia, para defender todas estas

cosas; y en todas estas guardias cifro mi defensa, con mil precauciones a la vez.

PÁNDARO- Nombrad una de esas precauciones.

CRESSIDA- No; me precavería contra vos por lo que pedís. y ésta es una de mis mejores precauciones. Si no logro guardar lo que no quisiera ver tocar, tomaré precauciones para deciros cómo he recibido el golpe; a menos que dicho golpe no se hinche de modos que no pueda ocultarlo, y entonces no vale la pena tomar precauciones.

PÁNDARO- Sois una persona avispada.[328]

[328] Astrana Marín, p 1410.

Appendix 3: *Othello*

***Otelo (Othello)* 2.1.100-164**

Astrana Marín's translation

YAGO- Señor, si os regalara con sus labios tanto como me da a menudo con su lengua, ya os bastaría.

DESDÉMONA- ¡Ay! ¡Pero si no habla!

YAGO- A fe mía, de sobra. Lo noto siempre que me entran ganas de dormir. Pardiez, estoy seguro de que delante de Vuestra Señoría pone un poco su lengua en el corazón y sólo murmura con el pensamiento.

EMILIA- Tenéis pocos motivos para hablar así.

YAGO- Vamos, vamos, sois pinturas fuera de casa, cascabeles en vuestros estrados, gatos monteses en vuestras cocinas, santas en vuestras injurias, diablos cuando sois ofendidas, haraganas en la economía doméstica y activas en la cama.

DESDÉMONA- ¡Oh, vergüenza de ti, calumniador!

YAGO- No, es la verdad, o soy un turco: os levantáis para vuestros recreos y os vais a la cama para trabajar.

EMILIA- No os encargaré de escribir mi elogio.

YAGO- No, no me lo encarguéis.

DESDÉMONA- ¿Qué escribiríais de mí si tuvierais que hacer mi elogio?

YAGO- ¡Oh, encantadora dama! No me encarguéis de semejante obra, pues no soy más que un censurón.

DESDÉMONA- Vamos, prueba. ¿Ha venido alguien al puerto?

YAGO- Sí, señora.

DESDÉMONA- No estoy alegre. Pero engaño la disposición en que me encuentro, haciendo parecer lo contrario. Veamos, ¿cómo haríais mi elogio?

YAGO- No pienso en ello; pero, a la verdad, mi inspiración se agarra a mi mollera como la liga a la frisa; sale arrancando sesos y todo. Sin embargo, mi musa está de parto y he aquí lo que da a luz.

Si una mujer es rubia e ingeniosa, belleza e ingenio
son, el uno para usarlo, la otra para servirse de ella

DESDÉMONA- ¡Lindo elogio! ¿Y si es morena e ingeniosa?

YAGO- Si es morena y a esto tiene ingenio,
hallará un blanco que se acomodará con su negrura.

DESDÉMONA- De man en peor.

EMILIA- ¿Y si es hermosa y necia?

YAGO- La que fue hermosa nunca fue necia
pues su misma necedad le ayudó a procurarse un heredero.

DESDÉMONA- Esas son viejas paradojas para hacer reír a los tontos en las cervecerías. ¿Qué miserable elogio reservas a la que es fea y necia?

YAGO- Ninguna es a la vez tan fea u necia
que no haga las mismas travesuras que las bellas e ingeniosas.

DESDÉMONA- ¡Oh crasa ignorancia! A la peor es a la que mejor encomias. Pero ¿qué elogio tributarías a una mujer realmente virtuosa? ¿A una mujer que, con la autoridad de su mérito, se atreviera justamente a desafiar el testimonio de la malignidad misma?

YAGO- La que siempre fue bella y nunca orgullosa,
que tuvo la palabra a voluntad y nunca armó ruido;
que jamás le faltó oro, y no fue nunca fastuosa;
que ha contenido su deseo, siéndole fácil decir: «ahora puedo»;
la que en su cólera, cuando tenía a mano la venganza,
impuso silencio a su injuria y despidió a su desagrado,

aquella cuya prudencia careció de la suficiente fragilidad
para cambiar una cabeza de pescado por una cola de salmón;
la que pudo pensar, y nunca descubrió su alma;
aquella a la que seguían los enamorados y nunca miró tras sí;
ésta fue una criatura, si tales han existido...

DESDÉMONA- ¿Para hacer qué?

YAGO- Para dar de mamar a los tontos y registrar cosas frívolas

DESDÉMONA- ¡Oh, conclusión muy coja e impotente! No aprendas de él, Emilia, aunque sea tu marido. ¿Qué decís vos, Cassio? ¿No es un censor muy grosero y licencioso?[329]

[329] Astrana Marín, pp. 1479-1481.

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