THE UN(TRANSLATABILITY) OF SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY PUNS: A CASE STUDY OF ROMEO AND JULIET'S EARLY RENDERINGS INTO FRENCH

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Abstract

"He was a savage who had some imagination," Voltaire noted of William Shakespeare in a letter in 1765, foreshadowing his country's tumultuous relationship not only with his works, but also with what is probably the most infamous aspect of his style—the bawdy puns. By analyzing two of Shakespeare's ribald wordplay as they appear in six renditions of Romeo and Juliet, the article aims to highlight how early French translators too sometimes interfered with them, for reasons ranging from perceived untranslatability, through their purported non-Shakespearean origin, to they allegedly being faults of the playwright's time or Shakespeare himself.

Keywords: bawdy; French; translation; pun; Romeo and Juliet; Shakespeare

1. A little more bard with a little less bawd

If nowadays theatre-going is regarded as an "elegant affair" (Mularski, Modern Theatre section, para. 4) and drama performances as "sophisticated expression[s] of a basic human need . . . to create meaning through narrative and metaphor" (Shalwitz, 2011: para. 3), in Shakespeare's day, the theatre was perceived as a form of entertainment the likes of bearbaiting rings and cockfight pits. By the time he became a household name in the industry, theatres had already been banished outside city walls on the official grounds that they could have acted as potential sources for yet another plague outbreak (MacKay 2011: 85). Such a decision would have been unanimously considered as a necessary precaution if it had not had an additional agenda as well. Their relocation marked, in fact, the peak of an extensive anti-theatre lobby conducted by the Puritans who disagreed with the "wanton gestures" and "bawdy speeches" made on stage (qtd. in Glyn-Jones, 1996: 269). Little did they realize or care to acknowledge that it was quite the other way around: the expectations of the audience dictated their presence and not vice versa. Yet, there is nothing to imply that Shakespeare in particular met them, as Robert Bridges assumes, "with a sense of self-abasement or of condescension" (qtd. in Wells, 2010: 1).

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For him, titillating wordplay came in different shapes and sizes and served a myriad of purposes other than to satisfy courtly and popular tastes. In Shakespeare's works, one can find ribald puns based on homonymy, homophony or paronymy, some feature once within the same textual fragment, while the effect of others relies on the multiple occurrence of the same term or syntagm within a portion of text (Delabastita, 1993: 194). According to Partridge, they can be further categorized depending on the degree of bawdy. He differentiates, for example, between non-sexual, homosexual and sexual ribaldry (2011: 9-12; 13-18; 19-52). As for their roles, Niagolov affirms that whereas some are meant to have a jocular effect on the audience, others "seem to go beyond [their] bounds," appearing in tragic or moralistic contexts (2009: 5). These taxonomies, however, are of fairly recent date, since for many centuries, Shakespearean scholars followed in the Puritans' footsteps.

2. Critical reception of Shakespeare's bawdy puns in England

Many attempts have been made, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to tone down, censor or rationalize the Shakespeare's (over)indulgence in bawdy wordplay, with probably the most illuminating example in this regard being the Bowdlers' expunged edition of his works, *The Family Shakespeare*. By taking the axe to the playwright's titillating wordplay, they aspired to turn "classical but problematic texts into icons of moral rectitude" (Miller, 2009: 100). What the two editors actually accomplished was to set the tone for a censorship campaign that lasted nearly a century, their name becoming eponymous with the act of censorship in general and with their handling of Shakespeare's ribald puns in particular. Although iconic, the Bowdlers' purgative approach to his works was not the first of its kind.

Half a century after Shakespeare's death, wordplay as a literary device rapidly fell from grace. This change in attitude coincided with a shift towards the rigid canons of neo-classicism, a cultural movement Charles II brought home with him from his French campaign (Delabastita, 1993: 254). It took less than ten years before this turn toward the Augustan cult of *le mot juste* affected the critical reception of, among many others, the dramatist's wordplay (Mahood, 2003: 10), as is evident from John Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesie*, an essay in the form of a leisurely dialogue between four speakers on the regrettable changes made in the field of performance arts. Yet this rationalizing scenario, whereby Shakespeare made heavy use of puns in reply to the demands of the culturally primitive society of his day, was hardly the appanage of seventeenth-century critics. As more and more annotated editions of Shakespeare's works started to be published, it only gained momentum, its popularity continuing to grow in the eighteenth century when other theories seeking to explain their presence emerged.

Despite the almost religious adoration to which Shakespeare came to be subjected to, eighteenth-century critics, in a fashion similar to their predecessors, were anything but tolerant of what they regarded as not befitting of a man the caliber of Shakespeare. As a result, increased efforts were directed toward the achievement of the highest possible degree of fidelity to the dramatist's original words. On the plus side, attempts such as these led to a greater understanding of his genius, yet a great deal of this progress was made at the expense of other aspects of his style, which were time and time again deplored and relegated to an inferior stylistic status. Hence, it comes as no surprise that, during this century, the attacks toward his bawdy instances of wordplay were more virulent than ever before.

3. The Bard and his early French translators

It was against this particular background that Pierre Letourneur's first ever French translation of Shakespeare's *intégrale* was published, a collection of his works in which, according to John Pemble, "[l]ewdness was discreetly censored" (2005: 85). Nearly half a century later, several of the indelicate passages and puns that escaped such privileged treatment, having been entirely expunged from Letourneur's rendition of Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, were restored through notes in the Shakespearean text by François Guizot who embarked on the journey of revising his predecessor's edition of Shakespeare's works (Shaw, 1993: 319). Twenty more years and the turn would come for Guizot's translations too to be reworked; Benjamin Laroche, a journalist who spent time in London as political exile, undertook this task, refining what Guizot and, by extension, Letourneur had done before him. Yet, while he sometimes aimed, if not even managed, to "substitute equivoques with equivoques, wordplay with wordplay," not a few are the textual fragments in which Laroche, in a manner similar to his precursors, completely obliterated any trace of ribald pun (1856: 11, my translation). It was with his revision of their renditions that this era of translational reworkings came to an end.

François-Victor Hugo, the fourth son of the French writer Victor Hugo, aimed to distance himself from the earlier French translations in rhymed alexandrines and opted for prose instead. The rendition process lasted seven years, between 1859 and 1866, with his *intégrale*, highly spoken of for its "faithfulness and felicitous invention" (Willems, para. 21), encompassing no less than eighteen tomes. For the first time in the playwright's history in France, neither was his indelicate language overlooked, nor his wordplay censured. This was, as Hugo the father put it in one of his essays, "Shakespeare unmuzzled" (1880: 187). Émile Montégut's translation of Shakespeare's works closely followed François Hugo's, receiving due praise for its innovative yet very much faithful recreation of "the good and bad jokes, the inexhaustible plays on words" (Schérer, 1891: 96) found in the playwright's works. Thirty more years would pass before another journalist, this time by the name of Jules Lermina, tried his hand at rendering Shakespeare's *oeuvre* into Voltaire's

language. Published in 1898, his translation of his works was praised by the reviewers at the *Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* for "being extremely literal" (1896: 712). While they make no mention of the manner in which this translator tackled Shakespeare's bawdy puns, one can only imagine that he followed in Hugo's footsteps at least to some extent.

The question that legitimately arises, more so in the French context than in any other, is whether the English and French critics' troubled relationship with his works influenced their handling of his ribald instances of wordplay. After all, their first encounter with him and his *oeuvre*, occurring as it did against the backdrop of an age marked by the Augustan cult of *le mot juste*, could not but leave a lasting mark on the French translators' attitude toward Shakespeare's most notorious of discursive elements. But then again, puns, all the more ribald ones, pose so serious a translational problem, not only into French, but into any language other than the Shakespeare's, that some deem it an "untranslatable stylistic phenomenon" (Ghanooni, 2012: 93), suggesting that they "owe their meanings to the very structure of the language to which they belong" and "once divorced from it and transported to another language, they could no longer operate as such" (Chiaro, 2010: 2). On the other side of the argument are those who posit that they have the potential to successfully travel across languages and cultures on the condition that translators adopt "an approach to wordplay translation that stops favouring ideal notions of translation and translatability . . . address[ing] instead the rules and norms that govern the translation of puns in actual reality" (Delabastita, 1993: 190). This debate, however, runs far deeper than this.

4. The concept of pun and its translational potential

Ascertaining whether wordplay is indeed doomed to be lost in translation is impossible without clarifying the concept of untranslatability. As is the case with the notion of pun, identifying a definitive, unanimously accepted definition for this property of an utterance is troublesome, for it means different things to different scholars at different times throughout the history of translation theory. The bottom line enunciated by Davidson is that when claims are made that a term in a language cannot be reproduced in another,

one can ask why, and get in return a description of the nuances, the specifics, the implications that the word carries in its own language. The description is, then, a translation, or at least a paraphrase, so translation was in some degree possible. (qtd. in Domínguez et al., 2015: 83)

However, with wordplay, things are rarely that simple; as Joseph Addison aptly put it as early as 1711 "to try a Piece of Wit, is to translate it into a different Language: If it bears the Test, you may pronounce it true; but if it vanishes in the Experiment,

you may conclude it to have been a Punn (qtd. in Chiaro, 2010: 2). Hence it is that one of the arguments brought forward in favour of its untranslatability is that, more often than not, wordplay does not have a similar, let alone identical, counterpart in a foreign tongue (2008: 573). From this point of view, the pun poses as much, if not more, translational trouble than a poem does, for while the former owes its translative inflexibility to "the need to adhere to the rules of rhymes, stanzas, cadence and metre" (2010: 4), the linguistic untranslatability of the latter is triggered by language boundness (Delabastita, 1993: 174), cultural specificity (Bassnett, 2013: 35), source text-bound ambiguity (Catford, 1965: 94) and, in some cases, prosody too (Newmark, 1988: 217). Yet even so poetry is systematically translated. Or is it really? Prominent figures such as Arthur Schopenhauer, for example, posit that poems are rather "rewritten" (qtd. in Urban, 2001: 4) than rendered into other languages. Hence, since the poetic genre and instances of wordplay share many a similarity in terms of translational potential or, better said, lack thereof, it would only be natural to assume that puns too leave translators, language-wise, with the sole option of recreating them in other tongues, a task all the more daunting as it also implies ensuring their safe passage from one culture to another.

As a result, it hardly comes as a surprise that the other main reason for which some experts in the field believe wordplay to be untranslatable is that these stylistic phenomena are "one of the most culture- bound instances of language manifestation" (Tatu and Sinu, 2013: 41), chiefly because they have to "play on knowledge which is shared between sender and recipient" (Chiaro, 1992: 11). It is through this cultural common ground that the punning connection between the original writer and the source-text audience is established. Not a few are, however, the situations in which readers of original works too fail to recognize wordplay for what it is: many of them do not survive the test of time and even if the editor manages to get across the meaning through an explanatory footnote, for example, the essential quality of the pun is lost when it requires an explanation to become visible. Sadly, the likelihood of this happening is far greater in the case of target-text audiences that usually interact with foreign writers via translations of their works. Yet despite all these limitations, some scholars have not yet abandoned hope in its capacity to travel well across languages and cultures.

According to Dirk Delabastita, its translatability is intrinsically linked to the translator's ability to distance him/herself from the idea of reaching a perfect correspondence between source- and target-text puns and focus more on what actually makes a wordplay what it is. Such an approach, however, usually brings about a certain degree of separation from the original text. The question then arises: how much is too much? The answer is that no one knows for sure. Even so, one thing is certain: in this context, it is the function that precedes the form and not the other way around. Unsurprisingly, many are the times when a faithfully translated pun fails to produce in the target audience an effect similar, let alone identical, to

the one that the original wordplay has on source-text readers. "For the sake of recreating" its function, what the translator must do is to "depart from source text structures" (Delabastita, 1994: 229). Only by doing so, he/she can find the words, phrases, linguistic phenomena or stylistic devices that have the potential to successfully fulfill the mission originally set out by the source-text pun. However, not a few are the cases in which an instance of wordplay possesses profound cultural undertones.

When tapping into the source and target cultures "common pool of allusions" (Gottlieb, 2009: 22-23) is not an option, translators are, more often than not, faced with two alternatives: to opt for either "an 'assimilationist' approach by canceling the elements that are alien to the target culture or . . . an adherence to source norms by retaining source culture specific elements" (Gáll, 2008: 3). The former translational strategy, for which Venuti coined the term 'domestication', implies "the ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values" (Venuti, 1995: 15). In other words, the foreignness of an original literary work is minimized by conforming it to the mores of the target-text audience. This is accomplished by eliminating culture-bound words and localizing cultural elements in order to make them intelligible and idiomatic for the foreign readers (Hover, 2014: 8). However, domestication also entails some risks as not a few are the cases in which the translator is compelled to depart so widely from the original literary work in his/her quest for the closest recipient culture equivalent that s/he inevitably changes the atmosphere of the context where the pun appears, the tone with which it is delivered and the personality of the character uttering it (Chiaro, 2008: 601). The other translative method, which Venuti calls 'foreignization', produces renditions that do not interfere with the cultural specificity of the source text. Among the most distinctive features of foreignized translations, primary is the preservation of source-text instances of wordplay more or less in their original form. Yet, if taken to the extreme, this technique too has adverse effects on these instances of language: since it involves the use of "poststructural strategies that foreground . . . puns," this foreignizing strategy can lead to "discontinuous, fragmented, and less than unified final texts" (Gentzler, 2001: 39).

As is evident, in the process of translation, losses, gains and changes are bound to occur. Whether they are detrimental to the effect of wordplay on the target audience, it depends solely on the translator. By making educated decisions about what to sacrifice, add or adjust, he/she can preserve the function of a pun and therefore its capacity to be recognized for what it is by readers of translations. To this purpose, Dirk Delabastita put forward a collection of wordplay rendition solutions. Coupled with the translator's irreproachable command of both source and target languages, ability to appreciate humor, creative writing skills and deep understanding of the socio-cultural background of the original author and his/her literary works, they constitute the recipe for successful pun translation. It is to

investigating whether early French translators managed to follow it in the context of *Romeo and Juliet* that the article herein now turns.

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5. Case Studies

Example (1) features an exchange between Sampson and Gregory, the Capulet servants, which Partridge perceives to be "frank and . . . coarse" (2001: 35).

(1) *Romeo and Juliet*	Benjamin Laroche	Émile Montégut	François Guizot
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 what sense thou wilt. (1.1.18-23)	*Samson*. N'importe, je veux me conduire en tyran : après m'être battu en enragé contre les hommes, je serai cruel avec les femmes ; je ferai main-basse sur elles. *Grégorio*. Eh quoi ! Sur leur **vie** ? *Samson*. Ou leur **vertu**. Prends-le dans le sens qu'il te plaira. (2)	*Samson*. C'est tout un ; je veux me montrer tyran : quand j'aurai combattu avec les hommes, je serai cruel avec les filles, je leur secouerai les puces. *Grégoire*. Secouer les puces aux filles ! *Samson*. Oui, leur secouer leurs **puces**, ou bien leurs **pucelages** ; arrange cela dans le sens que tu voudras. (33)	*Samson*. — Cela m'est égal, je veux me montrer tyran. Quand je me serai battu avec les hommes, je serai cruel avec les filles : je leur couperai la tête. *Grégoire*. — La tête des filles? *Samson*. — Oui, la **tête** des filles, ou bien…. : arrange cela comme tu voudras. (281-282)

Primary among the reasons why he labels it as such is that it contains a horizontal near-homonymic pun on 'head', 'maid' and 'maidenhead'. According to him, by exploiting the partial likeness of structure and difference in meaning between Sampson's 'heads of maids' and 'maidenheads', an allusion is made to the hymen (2001: 184) or virgin state, as Williams puts it (1996: 200). The following paragraphs display a contrastive analysis of the playwright's text and three of its early French translations:

A cursory look is enough to see that all three translators went to quite great lengths to recreate the source-text wordplay in the target language. Yet changes have also

been made. From Laroche's rendition of Sampson's second line, for example, the reference to 'the heads of the maids' disappears. Hence, in his translation, the effect of this pun draws more on the dialogical exchange between the two characters than it does in the Shakespearean text where the confrontation between the denotative 'heads of maids' and the punning 'maidenheads' occurs within Sampson's reply. What further distinguishes Laroche's rendition from the original excerpt featured above is his translation of 'to cut off'. Specifically, he replaced it with 'faire main-basse sur quelqu'un', which can mean either 'to pillage' or 'to take' as in 'to take someone's life'. Consequently, in Laroche's translation, the dialogue between the Capulet servants changes to a large extent: through his 'faire main-basse sur quelqu'un', Laroche's Sampson infers that Montague women are the property of their husbands and since, in this context, it can allude to both the act of killing and raping, his use of this phrasal verb can potentially lead to confusion. It is for this reason that Gregory asks whether he refers to taking their lives or their chastity, a question whose answer triggers the pun. Yet according to Delabastita's wordplay translation strategies, Laroche's rendition of the original horizontal pun does not necessarily qualify as wordplay. What he actually did was to "recreate its [the pun's] effect by using some other, wordplay-related rhetorical device" (Delabastita, 1993: 207)—in this particular case, the alliteration of the consonant 'v' in 'vie', 'life' and 'vertu', 'virtue'.

Émile Montégut, on the other hand, refrained from extracting or inserting material in his version of the Capulet servants' dialogue. In a fashion similar to Laroche, however, he too substituted 'to cut off' with a phrasal verb the meaning of which slightly deviates from the original. Specifically, he opted for 'secouer les puces à quelqu'un' which translates as either 'to tell somebody off' or in this context, 'to give someone a smack'. The motivation behind Montégut's choice is that, when confronted with its paronym, 'pucelage', the target-language counterpart of the English word 'virginity', in Sampson's second line, the wordplay is activated. Yet, in Montégut's rendition, Gregory's reply to his colleague's declaration of war plays a less important role in the unfolding of the pun than it does in the original text since his question is turned into an exclamation. In contrast with his predecessor, however, he actually succeeded in recreating the wordplay by replacing it with a semi-parallel wordplay where of the two words in the Shakespearean text, one only is preserved, yet in a punning construction.

About François Guizot's rendition, there is not much to say. What he did was to translate 'heads of the maids' word-for-word into French and eliminate 'maidenhead' altogether from his version of this dialogue. However, he did justify his decision by adding a footnote in which the reader is told that Sampson's reply features a pun on 'heads of the maids' and 'maidenheads' that is untranslatable into French (1873: 282). Judged against Delabastita's competence model, it becomes evident that Guizot used two different wordplay translation strategies: his omission of the phrase "or their maidenheads" qualifies for the PUN > ZERO rendition

method, while the footnote he inserted is perceived by Delabastita as a technique of compensating for a lost pun. Or perhaps, by relegating it to an editorial note, he deliberately sought to eliminate it from his translation. This latter scenario is all the more plausible as his predecessors managed, at least to some extent, to reproduce this instance of wordplay into the target language, without omitting any of the punning words from their translations.

Example (2) introduces Mercutio's third successive ribald monologue. Here, among others, the Shakespearean character puns on the male sexual organ: in this context, 'poperin' is not a spelling variant of Popering(h)e, the town in West Flanders, modern-day Belgium, famous for its pears (Partridge, 2001: 213), but a bawdy wordplay on the phrase "pop 'er in" (Williams, 1996: 230-231). By drawing parallels between the Shakespearean text and three of its early French renditions, it becomes evident whether their translators managed to live up to Shakespeare's level of punning and raunchiness:

(2) *Romeo and Juliet*	Pierre Letourneur	Jules Lermina	François-Victor Hugo
Mercutio. [...] 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. (2.1.34-38)	*Mercutio.* […] — Sans doute, il va s'asseoir sous quelque arbre, et là, s'épuiser en voeux insensés. (36)	*Mercutio.* […] Maintenant va-t-il s'asseoir sous un nèflier et vouloir que sa maîtresse soit ce genre de fruit que les demoiselles appellent nèfle, quand elles rient toutes seules. O Roméo, que n'est-elle un nèflier et toi un **poire**… (160)	*Mercutio.* […] — Sans doute, Roméo s'est assis au pied d'un **pêcher**, — pour rêver qu'il le commet avec sa maîtresse. (276)

Judging by the length of Letourneur's and Hugo's renditions, it is evident that some words have not survived translation. In the first translator's version of Mercutio's speech, everything that comes after the first line completely vanishes. In fact, neither is that particular utterance faithful to the Shakespearean text. Specifically, the original Mercutio's reference to the medlar tree, which is actually a pun on a fruit known for being rotten before it is ripe, its female genitalia-like appearance and symbolic connection with the sex industry that constitutes the source of his cascade of bawdy wordplay, is replaced with 'quelque arbre', the French counterpart of the source-language 'some tree'. Instead of preserving the

following lines, Letourneur substitutes them with 's'épuiser en voeux insensés' which back-translates as something akin to 'exhausts himself in insensate vows' into English. Whether this phrase has an erotic connotation, I cannot say with certainty, as no mention is made of it in any other French work of fiction or dictionary of archaic slang. Assuming that it does, Letourneur's translational approach to the Shakespearean wordplay would qualify for Dirk Delabastita's PUN > PUNOID strategy whereby a wordplay is replaced with a rhetorical device—in this case, an ambiguous phrase, an ironic remark or an allusion, depending on the translator's intentions with this phrase.

Lermina, on the other hand, resorted, by and large, to rendering Mercutio's monologue word-for-word. It should be noted, however, that, in his translation, 'medlar tree' and 'open-arse', a regional ribald term for medlar, are substituted with the same member of the 'medlar' word-family, namely 'nèflier', the target-language counterpart of the English 'medlar tree'. Yet, there is an equally crude word for this fruit in French too—'cul-de-chien', i.e. 'dog's arse', but since it is Juliet's vagina that is likened to a medlar here, he avoided using this term for obvious reasons. As for the Shakespearean 'poperin pear', he eliminated 'poperin' altogether, compensating for its loss with a footnote in which he tells his readers that it is impossible to explain what Mercutio meant by 'open-arse' and 'poperin pear', yet he suspects some sort of a punning connection between 'open-arse', a dialect term for medlar and 'open-arse', the French counterpart of the German 'arschloch' and an equally bawdy allusion in 'poperin pear'. Then, in a manner similar to Letourneur, he comes up with a cryptic explanation for the Shakespearean phrase: specifically, Lermina posits that "la poire se greffe sur le nèflier", a statement that can be interpreted as meaning either that the wordplay on 'pear' grafts onto the one on 'open-arse', that the 'pear' penetrates the 'open-arse' or that the 'pear' is physically attached to the 'medlar'. Since he shyly resorted to 'arschloch' to refer to what he perceives to be the connotative meaning of 'open-arse', I believe that, for Lermina, 'poperin pear' alludes to either anal intercourse through its confrontation with his interpretation of 'open-arse' or the male organ as he then notes that 'pear' and 'pair' are homophones, two terms that brought together form the phrase 'pop 'er in pair' which is an euphemism of the penis and the two testicles (1898: 160). Yet, regardless of the imagery he sought to convey, one thing is clear: according to Delabastita's competence model, he did not manage to reproduce the Shakespearean pun, opting instead for an editorial technique to compensate for its loss. It should, however, be noted that in this case, unlike Guizot's, his footnote does not entirely gloss over the ribald sense of this pun, although the translator makes use of words from other languages to hint at it, putting forward an ambiguous explanation of its sexual connotations.

In contrast with Letourneur and Lermina, François-Victor Hugo succeeded in accomplishing the seemingly impossible task of recreating Mercutio's wordplay, however, not without original content loss. Specifically, he replaced 'medlar tree'

with 'pêcher', the source-language equivalent of the English 'peach tree'. Afterwards, in a fashion similar to Letourneur, he substituted the rest of his lines with new material: "pour rêver qu'il le commet avec sa maîtresse," which back-translates as 'to dream about/of committing it with his mistress.' The question then arises as to what particular sin Mercutio refers to. The answer lies in Hugo's choice of 'pêcher' over 'medlar tree'. In French, 'pécher', the connotative meaning of which is 'to have intercourse with somebody' and 'pêcher' are homonyms ("Pécher"). It is through the confrontation of these two words that Hugo managed to render the Shakespearean pun into the target language in terms of language, punning and lewdness. However, with the loss of original content his translation underwent, it is difficult to accurately pinpoint which of Delabastita's wordplay translation strategies he used: on the one hand, his quibble on 'pêcher/pécher' conveys a similar punning message to Mercutio's erotically charged euphemisms for the male and female sexual organs, which qualifies it for a non-parallel pun whereby a similar punning allusion is created via words or syntagms that do not necessarily appear in the original text; on the other hand, it also fits the spectrum of Delabastita's PUN > ZERO and ZERO > PUN strategies since Hugo's rendition features missing punning source-text material and new textual content, which coupled with the slightly altered original text, activates the wordplay.

6. Conclusions

The parallels drawn in the previous section demonstrate that the factor responsible for the rather unsuccessful translations of Shakespeare's bawdy puns was not his poor reception in a France marked by an almost religious adherence to Aristotle's unities of time, place and action. If it had been so, this paper would have probably featured no faithful renditions of the selected Shakespearean instances of wordplay in terms of punning and bawdry. Therefore, while it is true that the dramatist's lack of conformity to the rules of classical decorum may have had some influence over the translators' perception of Shakespeare, at least in some cases, it did not serve as a source of translative bias against his use of ribald wordplay. Nor did their perceived untranslatability, for that matter, although other translators used it as an excuse for their inability to render them into their native tongue, as is evident from the footnotes that come with their renditions. However, among the conclusions emerging from this article is also the fact that the moderation of Shakespeare's language was not in any way an isolated phenomenon.

While making no pretense of offering, based on such a limited corpus, a full perspective on the early French approach to the translation of his bawdy wordplay, it should, however, be noted that, as is evident from Guizot's and Lermina's editorial notes, paratextual interpolations on the part of his translators served different purposes. Specifically, the former resorted to untranslatability as an excuse to shun rendering the wordplay on 'head of maids/maidenheads,' whereas the latter reserved the pun on 'poperin pear' for the more educated French

readership by deploying foreign words in an ambiguous explanation of its ribald undertoned. Finding two such distinct uses of editorial notes in only six renditions of a single Shakespearean play testifies to the absence of a unified critical stance on these instances of language-play and of a unanimously accepted strategy of tackling them in translation. On a not-so-separate note, the renditions featured in the previous section display an overall decrease in the use of strategies that lead to total or partial loss of titillating punning material and a gradual shift towards methods aimed at their preservation in a language other than the one in which they were initially written. As seen in the previous section, they do however imply a certain degree of separation from the original wordplay. Hence, there may be some truth in the claims according to which puns are rather recreated in than transferred to a foreign tongue. It is this process that challenges translators to use their command of the target language, knowledge of the socio-cultural background behind the author and his/her work, creativity, imagination and overall resourcefulness to preserve as many of the linguistic and metalinguistic features of an original bawdy wordplay as possible.

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