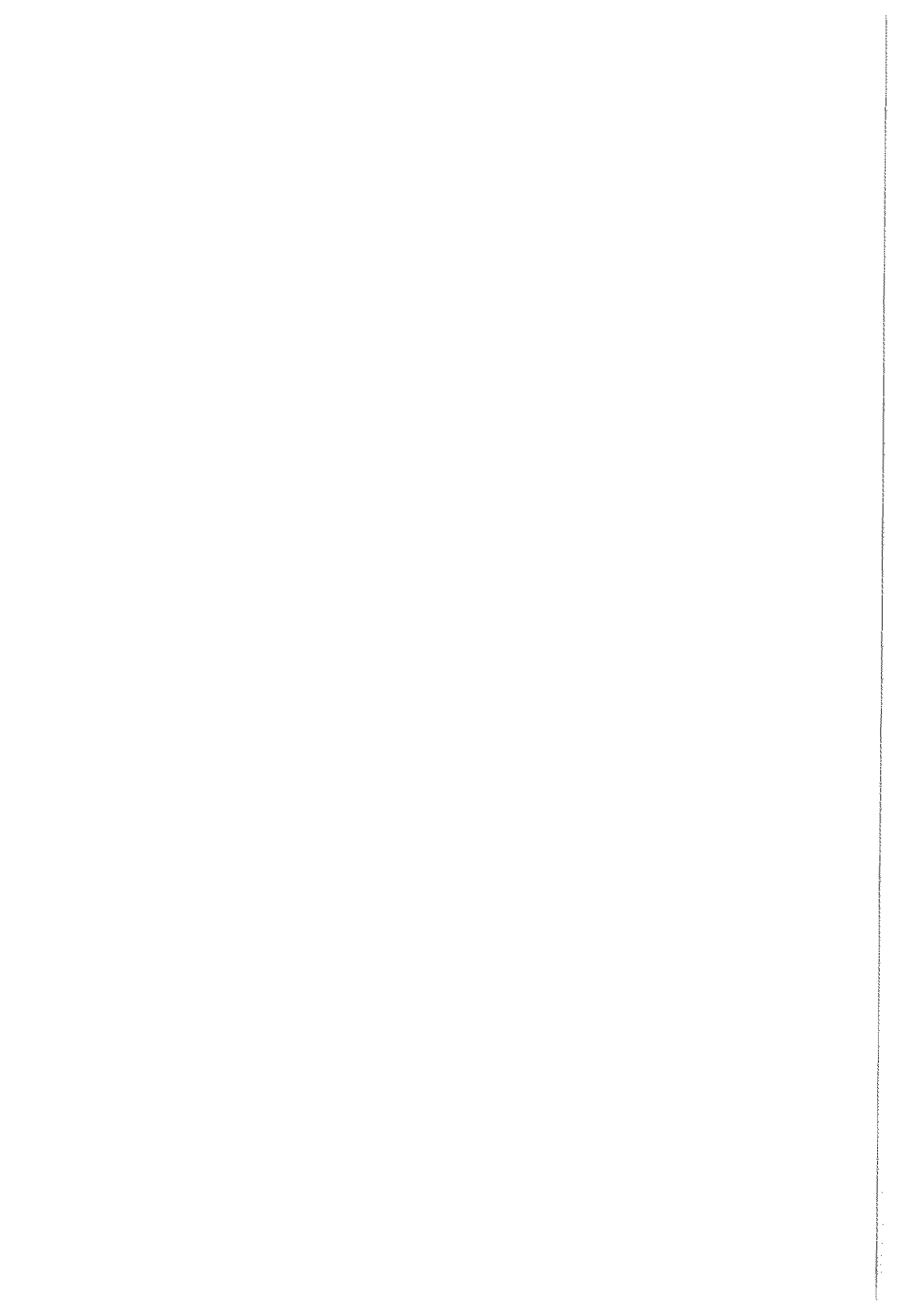


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**ANALYSING ACCEPTABILITY OF
DRAMA TRANSLATION:
A TRANSLATION TO BE READ OR TO
BE PERFORMED? THE SPANISH
VERSION OF STOPPARD'S
*ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN
ARE DEAD***

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Introduction

This paper takes into consideration some of the translation problems inherent in literary texts and even questions the very possibility of translating a dramatic text such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as a piece to be performed successfully in a given target culture. Our assumption is that the text's remarkable literariness makes it extremely difficult to translate. And it is precisely that feature what makes the text and its Spanish translation attractive and compelling for us to undertake this analysis.

After having enjoyed watching and reading this play in English, one as a native speaker of another language usually starts wondering about how to translate some of the puns into one's mother tongue and also feels curious about how the play has been in fact translated if a published version exists. Surprisingly, there are very few translations of Stoppard's drama¹ into Spanish although he has been a rather successful playwright in his own cultural milieu. This lack of Spanish versions is even more noticeable when considering the enormous popularity that in particular *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* has enjoyed in the source culture. There must be reasons for this absence of Spanish translations, specially at a time when the number of translations from works written in English exceeds those from any other language in the Spanish literary market.

1. *Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto* (1969) and *El verdadero Inspector Hound* (1988) both translated by Alvaro del Amo and published in Cuadernos para el diálogo, libros de teatro: Madrid

Stoppard's title makes reference to two literary characters –Rosencrantz and Guildenstern– most readers would probably identify as belonging to a mythic tragedy in universal literary history. And as we have all experienced once, no reader approaches *Hamlet* or even a re-elaboration of it with innocent eyes. Even unwillingly, the reader has been informed about the revenge, the psychological labyrinth, the characters' obsessions not to mention the tragic end, bringing up certain expectations about *Hamlet* or even a pastiche on it. When dealing with such a universal play those expectations are raised not only to English speaking readers but also to non-native ones, who have probably become familiar with the tragedy in a translated version. Up to this point only "readers" have been considered, although we are aware of the fact that a dramatic text is mainly intended for performance. As it will be discussed below, this is an important aspect to consider when analysing the resulting product of the cultural transference involved in the process of translation, that is, the Spanish translation of Stoppard's comedy.

As a result of that more or less long acquaintance with the Shakespearean tragedy, readers and audience expect to recognise parts, symbols, images from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when watching or reading a play as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. In a way we are all perhaps indebted to the many critics who have produced a huge amount of what is called Shakespearean metaliterature for those expectations. Likewise writers have also revised the literary tradition either in search for inspiration, by rewriting previous texts as in a sort of palimpsest as Genette suggests, or in an attempt to establish links between the past and the present, seizing motives, lines, characters, and so on. Obviously, Shakespeare has been a rich source, and many authors have provided evidence of *Hamlet's* pervading influence in the several genres and languages (i.e., Charles Lamb's tale on *Hamlet* or Laforgue's *Hamlet* are only two of the numberless instances).

Tom Stoppard is one of those contemporary playwrights who have relied on previous texts, by transforming or contaminating them, to create several of his works, and among those pieces with a Shakespearean background we find Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Despite our interest in the play itself, our main concern is on describing the type of translemic relationship established between Stoppard's dramatic piece and its Spanish translation in 1969, the only one that exists and which was undertaken by the Spanish film critic, Alvaro del Amo.

A descriptive analysis of translations

The approach followed here when discussing the Spanish translation of Stoppard's play is based on the latest developments in Translation Studies,

and particularly in the ideas postulated by the so-called “Manipulation School”². Its members –James Holmes, Gideon Toury, Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Theo Hermans among others– have mainly developed a descriptive branch more concerned with the translation of literary works. In their view, target texts derived from a source text with a literary intent do not have an inferior status or are assessed only by their formal or semantic faithfulness/equivalence to the source text alone. By contrast, the descriptive approach they adopt has a target-oriented perspective. What the descriptive researcher examines is the translation process, product and function in each target culture, so as to find out the norms imposed by the cultural polysystem, which shape the translation process, its product, and its function in that context. Those norms determine the type of texts, original and translated, deemed as acceptable in that society, bearing relevance as to which translated texts become successful in the target culture, or even establishing which ones are eventually translated and which not. The relation of equivalence established between ST (Source Text) and TT (Target Text) has nothing to do with the prescriptive slant of previous theories. It has to be verified for each pair of texts, ST and TT in a given historical moment, being each relationship of equivalence unique. This is also another instance of the type of information we obtain by following descriptive research.

According to the Israeli scholar Gideon Toury³, the norms are deduced from the analysis of both ST and TT. They indicate the dominant methods and strategies adopted by the translator in a given historical moment and for a given project of translation. Those norms also involve pragmatic or extralinguistic constraints to translation activities related to ideology, or the poetics of the translator. That is to say, the strategies followed by the translator indicate an emphasis either on adequacy or on acceptability of the target text. Therefore, what the researcher must find out is not how much the translator has deviated formally or semantically from the ST, but according to what principles. That implies that the translation follows some dominant norms regarded as correct in the light of several parameters, dictated usually by institutions and persons (patrons, relevant professionals of literature) who control the literary production from the aesthetic and ideological point of view in the target culture.

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2. A good introduction to the philosophy and the theory of this group may be found in what is considered as their manifesto: Hermans, T. (ed.) (1985) *The Manipulation of Literature. Studies in Literary Translation*, London: Croom Helm.
 3. Gideon, T (1995) *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

The steps followed in our analysis of both ST and TT rely basically on the theories suggested by Gideon Toury, and by Rosa Rabadán's work⁴ on translatic equivalence. Roughly speaking the model of analysis proceeds in three basic steps:

- 1) Textual analysis of ST and TT
- 2) Comparison of the of units of translation resulting from the previous analysis
- 3) Arrangement in a hierarchy of relevance of the prevalent criteria guiding the translation of the ST into a given TT

By comparing both texts we learn about type of transformation the ST linguistic and textual material has undergone during the process of translation, and above all, about the type of equivalence which underlies that transformation. Hence, in this model the concept of equivalence acquires a dynamic, functional and relational nature, and it is stated in the light of the relationship manifested between each ST and TT pair (Toury 1995)⁵.

The translator through the ST analysis arrives at a very personal interpretation it, and consequently, he writes a TT which exhibits purpose or function, linguistic and textual properties essential to the text as he understands them. The resulting product will either indicate an emphasis on adequacy to the source text, or rather an acceptable literary text to readers in the target culture according to the dominant norms of the polysystem. André Lefevere (1992)⁶ points out social and cultural aspects such as patronage, ideology, the poetics of the translator, the universe of discourse, or current criticism as essential factors determining the type of texts selected for translation and the sort of acceptable target text to be produced. As a result of those constraints, the translator makes decisions about the text's mode and medium (to be read, to be performed...), intended reader (with a minimum cultural level, a particular literary background), TT's purpose, and so on.

Similarly, text analysis performed by the descriptive researcher reveals the linguistic and extralinguistic factors relevant in that communicative situation implicit in the process of translation, and it provides the researcher with clues about that context in which communication takes place, and, as well about the norms which have determined the resulting target text. Therefore, identifying translation problems and the solutions given will suggest the norms which

4. Rabadán, R (1991) *Equivalencia y traducción. Problemática de la equivalencia translética inglés-español*, León: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de León.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Lefevere, A. (1992) *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London: Routledge.

directed the process of translation in the case of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and may eventually shed some light on the cause for the scarce number of Spanish versions.

Analysis of the Source Text

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is regarded as the first of Stoppard's successes and a landmark in post-war British theatre. The piece displays one of the playwright's most characteristic hallmarks, which has remained a constant in Tom Stoppard's production. He has handled different type of material writing for different media - theatre, radio, television and the cinema (adaptations)- and made several translations from other languages, (for example, Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* performed in 1973 at the Greenwich Theatre). The author has long been acquainted with mixing and contaminating texts, adapting or using material for his own purposes. That combinatorial craftsmanship is the most relevant device in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, a formula he probably started exploiting when the play was first planned.

As for the status of the text in the Anglo-american context, we may say that the play/text has undergone several stages: it was first written in verse and in one act around 1964. It was later re-elaborated until it was three acts long, acquired its present title and was performed by amateur actors in 1966 in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, famous for its experimental theatre shows. The play was staged professionally in 1967 both in Great Britain and America, and Stoppard was then acclaimed as a remarkable playwright. The play's radio broadcast followed in 1978, and in 1990 the film version directed by Stoppard himself was awarded the Golden Lion in Venice.

By contrast, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* was granted very little attention in the Spanish culture as it is clear from the fact that there has only been one Spanish translation of the text to the present, and the play has never been performed on a Spanish stage in this language.

Bearing all this in mind, let us now analyse in closer detail the ST, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, so as to grasp some other important factors which contribute to the play's complexity and the challenges it may raise in translation.

As it was pointed out above, just from the title one may guess Stoppard borrows a considerable amount of material from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The new play focuses on two subordinate characters, but Shakespeare also lends him plot, and even whole speeches from one of his best-known tragedies. The type of textual transformation *Hamlet* undergoes in Stoppard's hands, by

which a “hipotext” (Genette, 1989)⁷ or first text is rewritten by means of additions, reductions, transpositions from verse to prose, change of perspective and so on, is a common literary device. Yet in Stoppard, the establishment of intertextual (or transtextual) relations is regarded as a basic procedure. No wonder why Harold Bloom himself calls Stoppard “an almost obsessive contaminator for perhaps no other dramatist relies so crucially upon the trope of interlacing” (Bloom, 1986)⁸. In our opinion, what partly makes the play so attractive and difficult to translate is this intertextual quality. Moreover, if the act of translating is regarded as another instance of textual transformation or rewriting, we could as well assert that the text’s complexity increases in the translated version as a result of a double process of transformation.

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* Stoppard alters the “hipotext” (*Hamlet*) by taking two rather disliked characters from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and changing their status from minor to main characters. That rises new expectations about the two young courtiers, and that precisely seems to be the key for the dramatic achievement of this comedy.

Interaction between Hamlet-Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the SC (Source Culture)

Let us now examine some of the changes operated in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as compared to *Hamlet*.

According to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* -though we are aware of the editorial and textual controversy about the fullest, authentic or original version-, the young courtiers are summoned by the king, who allegedly employs them to cheer up Hamlet and discover the real cause of his melancholy:

CLAUDIUS: (...) I entreat you both,
That, being of so young days brought up with him,
And since so neighboured to his youth and haviour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time; so by your companies
To draw him into pleasures, and to gather
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, opened, lies within our remedy.”

Hamlet, II, ii, 10-18 / *Rosencrantz & G*, I, p.27

7. Genette, G. (1989) *Palimpsestos. La literatura en segundo grado*. Madrid: Taurus.

8. Bloom, H. (ed.) (1986) *Tom Stoppard*. New York, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.

In Stoppard's play, Ros and Guil, as they are called for short, are not cognizant of Claudius' hidden motives, and they are seen conducting clumsy conversations with the Prince, who discovers they have been sent for. Hamlet distrusts and mocks them, not letting his secret be uncovered, as we know from *Hamlet*. Thus, we see Ros and Guil engaged in rhetorical conversation, wondering about their real role in this play, about how to act on and off-stage, and how to succeed in their errand. And what is even worse, they get caught up in the plot Claudius has set up for Hamlet: to send him to England and to his death under Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's custody.

In Shakespeare's tragedy, they are supposedly, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, also killed on their arrival to England. The two young courtiers disappear from the stage in *Hamlet* IV,ii as they carry the Prince to England. Only two brief references to them are made in Act V,ii: the first one, when Hamlet explains to Horatio how he took from Ros and Guil the letter which carried his death sentence to England, and replaced it by a similar one written by himself, telling the king of England that:

HAMLET: (...)Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allowed.
Hamlet, V, ii, 45-47

To what Horatio replies:

HORATIO: So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.
Hamlet, V, ii, 56

Ros and Guil's fate is more or less certain from these lines. And yet there could be a chance by which they might have disentangled themselves from their destiny: Stoppard assuming in his first version that the king of England in Hamlet's time might be another of Shakespeare's tragic characters, i.e., King Lear, explores the idea for its dramatic potential. Consequently, in this new setting, there was a possibility that on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's arrival in England, the King might be mad and that circumstance would have allowed Ros and Guil the chance of saving their lives or at least a different fate.

It is precisely from that presumption that Stoppard decides to explore some of topics present in *Hamlet* (Teruel, 1994)⁹ - such as the cause of Hamlet's

9. Teruel Pozas, M. (1994) *Tom Stoppard: la escritura como parodia*, Valencia: Universitat de Valencia (pp.109-113)

madness (Act II, p.49), questions about life and death (Act II, pp. 63-64; Act III, p.81, p.93), art and nature (Act II, pp. 59-60), performance and the theatre in general, endowing it with philosophical, aesthetic and metadramatic matter- or new issues, such is the possibility of salvation for the two characters.

With that in mind, the British playwright shows the two obedient courtiers living their off-stage existence in Denmark and outside *Hamlet*. The audience sees Ros and Guil passing time, tossing coins in the air, playing rhetorical games, waiting for something important to demand their participation in the Shakespearean plot.

These characters' newly acquired dimension in Stoppard's text produces a feeling of puzzlement. One might ask: Why did he choose focusing on Ros and Guil? Is it because in this play their fate is going to change significantly? The transformation operated obviously brings about new expectations on readers and viewers.

Seen from this perspective, Stoppard's play may be seen an instance of Shakespearean metaliterature. In our view, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* illustrates how a playwright can act as a critic -parodying actions, characters and dialogue in a newly created play- though Stoppard himself acknowledges this is just one of the by-products (Teruel, 1994:113). At the same time, he also pays homage to a literary myth, and rewrites it in a kind of literary exercise. Stoppard enjoys intellectual games and giving clues to his readership/audience so that he himself reveals his main device in this play as a flaw in Ros's character in what sounds as a kind of self-reproach:

GUIL (*turning on him furiously*): Why don't you say something original! No wonder the whole thing is so stagnant! You don't take me up on anything -you just repeat it in a different order.

ROS: I can't think of anything original. *I'm only good in support* (emphasis mine)

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, III, p. 78

Ros's words insinuate the play's primary strategy: reliance on intertextuality, the building up of a new text on the basis of a mythical and famous dramatic work. It is a fresh text, a variation of a previous one which makes strange a familiar plot, revisiting some of the topics of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and, which eventually results in a parody -a distinct literary artefact.

However, the parody, in this case, is not to be taken in its narrower sense of ridiculing the Shakespearean text. It is rather a symptom of the contemporary interest raised in rereading and rewriting the literary tradition.

In support of this conception is Linda Hutcheon (1985)¹⁰, who redefines of the concept of parody as “the repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity”. And, this is exactly what Stoppard does. Nevertheless, to achieve that distance and so the dramatic and the comic perspective he must have a well-informed audience or readership, who make use of their literary knowledge.

The same could be said of the recipients of the translated version. Thus, the success of the Spanish translation would also rest on the readers or audience’s perception of a common ground shared by both plays, and the departure or transformation from the Shakespearean text of Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. Achieving that is probably one of the greatest challenges facing the Spanish translator as it will be seen below.

In order to create the distance and the effect of re-elaboration in this new play the main characters in *Hamlet* are just overheard: Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius and Hamlet’s exact words and actions are repeated but in a different context, interwoven with Ros and Guil’s comments ([...] “He’s depressed!... Denmark’s a prison and he’d rather in a nutshell” *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 42), so that the effect achieved is of watching or reading from a different standpoint. A clear illustration of this is found in Act II, as Guil and Ros discuss the best way to question Hamlet about the cause of his madness:

GUIL: I can’t for a life of me see how we’re going to get into conversation.
(*HAMLET enters upstage, and pauses, weighing up the pros and cons of making his quietus*)

(*ROS and GUIL watch him*)

ROS: Nevertheless, I suppose one might say that this was a chance... One might well... accost him... Yes, it definitely looks like a chance to me... Something on the lines of a direct informal approach... man to man... straight from the shoulder... Now look here, what’s it all about...sort of thing [...] (*He has moved towards HAMLET but his nerve fails. He returns*) We’re overawed, that’s the trouble. When it comes to the point we succumb to their personality [...].

(*OPHELIA enters, with prayer book, a religious procession of one*)
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, II. p.55

These comments on how they are supposed to approach the Prince are followed by Hamlet’s address to Ophelia (“Nymph, in thy orison be all my sins remembered [...]”), which corresponds to the first lines of the Hamlet-Ophelia

10. Hutcheon, L. (1985) *A Theory of Parody. The teaching of twentieth century art forms*, London: Methuen

meeting being spied by the king and Polonius. These become a cue to the Shakespearean text, directedly quoted from Act III, i, 90-93, which is cut off shortly after by Stoppard's introduction of a new element absent in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, i.e., Ros's subsequent reaction to what the two courtiers witness:

ROS: It's like living in a public park!
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, II, p. 56

This constant shift from the Elizabethan to the Stoppardian stage and style in a way "desacralises" the events presented in the Shakespearean text, or rather turns the play into a different thing: it is much more than a parody with a comic intention. In Stoppard's hands the play becomes a literary exercise.

Readers and audience witness some recognisable scenes from Shakespeare's tragedy, but these only provide a background for the main action, this time written for Ros and Guil as protagonists. Most of the play's dialogue is held between Ros, Guil and the Player (the leaders of the tragedians who visit Elsinor) but Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has its "entrances" and "exits". There are about 15 direct quotations ranging from a few lines to complete scenes from *Hamlet*, not considering isolated key words scattered here and there that establish almost unconscious links with the Elizabethan text. Most of them are intermingled with Ros and Guil's off-stage comments and the new play stage directions:

<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Ros and Guil</i>
1. II, ii, 1-49	I, pp.26-28
2. II, ii, 203-208, 213-218, 220-225	I, pp.38-39
3. II, ii, 349-364, 369-373	II, p.40
4. II, ii, 507-520	II, p.45
5. III, i, 10-31	II, p.54
6. III, i, 90-93	II, p.56
7. III, i, 145-148, 161-168	II, p.58-59
8. IV, i, 32-39	II, p.65
9. IV, ii	II, pp. 68-69
10. IV, iii, 1-6	II, pp. 69-70
11. IV, iv, 9-14	II, p. 71
12. IV, iv, 30-31	II, p. 71
13. V, ii, 39-40, 44-46	III, p.92
14. V, ii, pp. 349-368	III, p. 96. (end of the play)

Those passages, inserted in a new context, are foregrounded in different ways marking the distance but, at the same time, the intimate relation between both works and the dependent status of Stoppard's piece from the Elizabethan tragedy.

In Stoppard's text there is, for instance, a continuous shift from blank verse (corresponding to some of the passages from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) to prose (in Stoppard's re-elaboration and additions). Also Ros, Guil and the Player speak a different linguistic variety of English when they talk outside Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. They use Early Modern English when they interact with the characters in Shakespeare's play, repeating exactly the very words assigned to them in *Hamlet*, but shifting to contemporary conversational style in their off-stage existence. Their informal conversational style is marked by an extremely quick turn-taking, hesitation, repetition, momentary breaches of communication, idiomatic phrasing, and proverbs generating misunderstanding due to deliberate ambiguous expression.

Therefore, perceiving the playwright's parodic intention requires not only a literary knowledge of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but also presupposes a linguistic background enabling one to recognise the diachronic gap between the Elizabethan text and style and the contemporary one.¹¹

Those shifts will entail several problems in a translated version. In order to solve them Alvaro del Amo, the Spanish translator, explicitly resorts to a well-known Spanish translation of *Hamlet* (Astrana Marin 1932)¹² so as to distinguish the classical text from Stoppard's expansions.

Similarly, some stage directions in Stoppard's play correspond to parts spoken by main characters in *Hamlet*. They describe the action of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as "upstage", while Guil and Ros observe everything from "downstage", waiting for the appropriate time to make their entrances. What in the text appears as stage directions takes the form of mime or "dumbshow" in performance. That is the case of Ophelia's reporting to her father of her meeting with Hamlet and his strange behaviour (Act II, i, 77-81, 86-96). The transformation of the Shakespearean text in this instance consists in the shift of personal pronouns from first and third person to third person only. That operation weakens the intensity of a highly emotive scene, turning it into a quite impersonal or objective narration, and hence producing the parodic effect of reported speech in stage directions, and mime in stage performance. We will see that in the translated version (TT) the textual link

11. A good illustration of this would be the contrastive use of the warm, friendly or commanding "thou/thine" versus the cold, formal, and respectful "you/your" in Shakespeare's text and the absence of that opposition in current forms of address in contemporary English.

12. Astrana Marín, L. (1932) *Obras completas de William Shakespeare*, Madrid: Aguilar, 2 vols.

between *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* created through stage directions is difficult to keep.

Another bond with the Elizabethan tragedy is the preservation of a recurrent device in Shakespeare's dramatic works: the "play-within-the-play". However, the audience is different this time. The "Mousetrap" is performed by the tragedians in a rehearsal Ros and Guil attend (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, II, p.57), instead of Claudius and Gertrude as it happens in *Hamlet*. The pauses in the dress rehearsal give ample room for the existential and the metadramatic discourse, which is carried out between the two young men and the leader of the players, resembling in many ways Hamlet's discussion with them in Shakespeare's tragedy. Moreover, the play-within-the-play is expanded, offering not only a flashback of the events that take place in *Hamlet* before the opening scene of the first act, that is, the murder of King Hamlet and the "overhasty" marriage. This time the play-within-the-play does not stop there. It continues showing in retrospect, Ophelia and Hamlet's painful meeting, but also anticipates the "closet-scene", Polonio's death, Hamlet's voyage to England and even Ros and Guil's death. As a result, the whole tragedy is condensed into a few pages (pp. 57- 62) and several minutes of acting, and the focus is placed in the two courtiers who are unable to recognise their impersonation in that parodic show. Simultaneously, the Player acts as a chorus producing a rather pedestrian summary of the Shakespearean tragedy and making value judgements from a contemporary standpoint on everything the audience or readers witness as Hamlet does while witnessing the "Murder of Gonzago". Again recognising the parodic value of this device requires a competent reader with a thorough knowledge of the textual source, i.e. *Hamlet*.

Ros and Guil also provide several summaries of *Hamlet's* bare facts. Without all the verbal and poetic richness that characterises Shakespeare, the text changes in nature radically. Their practising a dialogue where one of the courtiers "acts" as Hamlet and is interrogated about the cause of his melancholy is also another strategy, a way of summarising and providing comments on the action:

ROS: Let me get this straight. Your father was king. You were his only son.
Your father dies. You are of age. Your uncle becomes king.
GUIL: Yes.
ROS: Unorthodox.
GUIL: Undid me.
ROS: Undeniable.[...]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, I, p. 37.

Or:

ROS: To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother

popped on to his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice. Now why exactly are you behaving in this extraordinary manner?

GUIL: I can't imagine! (Pause.) But all that is well known, common property. [...].

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, I, p. 37-38

This is the setting (offstage or downstage existence), a different context, where Stoppard places these lower characters, raising questions about life and death, appearance and reality, fate and the law of probability, drama and performance. The change of focus produces a defamiliarizing effect allowing them an almost human personality, independent of their role in a previous play. Ros and Guil appear thus as bewildered human beings waiting for something really important to take place in their lives as it happens in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, another work with which it also bears resemblance.

The irony appears as the two characters, who seem to be given a more independent role here are gradually exhibited as mere puppets deprived of self-control. They suffer continuous flaws of memory, they are unable to remember their past and feel overwhelmed by Hamlet's witty evasions and subterfuges. (cf. *Hamlet*, II, ii, 349-373, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 41):

GUIL: I think we can say we made some headway.

ROS: You think so?

GUIL: I think we can say that.

ROS: I think we can say he made us look ridiculous [...]

GUIL: What about our evasions?

ROS: Oh, our evasions were lovely. "Were you sent for?" he says. "My lord, we were sent for..." I didn't know where to put myself.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, II, p. 41

As it obvious from this scene, they do not seem to have enough information about what their end is, all of which alarms them and increases their lack of confidence little by little, revealing their theatrical existence as the only one. They live in a claustrophobic plot as it happens with *Hamlet*, where all the action, for most of the play lies on "words, words, words".

In that absurd situation there is ample room for apparently nonsensical pastimes and conversation, where we find some of the linguistic devices from which some of the play's comic drive derives. Stoppard displays a great command in the manipulation of literal and figurative meaning, by means of rhetorical games and continuous word-play, all of which causes breaches in communication, and also the comic effect, due to different types of ambiguity created in Stoppard's play by several means. We offer the ST and TT:

1. Ambiguity of personal reference:

PLAYER: The old man thinks *he's* in love with *his* daughter.

ROS (appalled): Good God! We are out of our depth here.

PLAYER: No, no, no, ~~he~~ hasn't got a daughter— the old man thinks *he's* in love with *his* daughter.

ROS: the old man is?

PLAYER: Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks.

ROS: Ha! It's beginning to make sense! Unrequited passion!

(ST, p. 51)

Actor: El viejo cree que está enamorado de su hija.

Ros (*abrumado*): ¡Gran Dios! **Aquí estamos sobrepasados por todas partes.**

Actor: No, no, no. *El* no tiene ninguna hija. El viejo cree que está enamorado de *su* hija

Ros: ¿Del viejo?

Actor: Hamlet enamorado de la hija del viejo, cree el viejo.

Ros: ¡Ajajá! **Esto empieza a ser sensato!** ¡Pasión no correspondida!

(TT, p. 60)

(N.B.: Some of the obvious translation mistakes in this short extract have been emphasized in boldtype)

2. Homophony:

GUIL: We must have gone north, *of course*.

ROS: *Off course?*

GUIL: Land of the midnight sun, that is.

ROS: *Of course*.

[...] I think it's getting light.

GUIL: Not for night

ROS: That's far north

GUIL: Unless we're *off course*.

ROS: Of course.

(ST, p. 74)

Guil: Debemos ir hacia el Norte, no hay duda.

Ros: ¿No hay duda?

Guil: El país del sol de medianoche, eso es.

Ros: No hay duda.

[...] Me parece observar un cierto resplandor.

Guil: No de noche.

Ros: Hacia el Norte, tan lejos.

Guil: Sin desviarnos de la ruta

Ros: No hay duda

(TT, p. 82)

Analysing acceptability of drama translation: a translation to be read or to ...

3. Polysemy:

GUIL: You are evidently a man who knows his way around.

PLAYER: I've been here before

GUIL: We are still finding our *feet*.

PLAYER: You should concentrate on not losing your heads

(ST, p. 49)

Guil: Nosotros aún estamos siguiendo la huella de nuestros pasos.

Actor: Procurad concentraros, no vayáis a perder la cabeza.

(TT, p. 58)

4. Alteration of collocations:

Stoppard also delays recognition and understanding by changing a word or phrase from fixed patterns, as is the case of transforming proverbs or wrongly quoting the "Lord's Prayer". Thus, fixed elements of a sentence are repeated in a kind of litany replacing always the same parts by different forms. Thus "Give us daily our daily bread" is transformed into:

Source text	Target text
Ros: Consistency is all I ask Guil (low, wry rhetoric): Give us this day our daily mask (page 30)	Ros: ¡Todo lo que pido es un poco de consistencia! Guil: (<i>abatido con retórica amargura</i>) Pongamos a este día nuestra careta diaria. (p.37)
Guil: Consistency is all I ask! Ros: Immortality is all I seek... Guil (dying fall): Give us this day our daily week (page 34)	Guil: ¡Sólo pido un poco de consistencia! Ros: Sólo aspiro a la inmortalidad... Guil (<i>deprimido</i>): Dadnos este día nuestra diaria semana... (p. 42)
Ros: ...All I ask is a change of ground! Guil (coda): Give us this day our daily round (page 71)	Ros: ... ¡Todo lo que pido es un cambio de escenario! Guil (<i>como un centinela</i>): Concédenos este día nuestro círculo diario (p. 79)
Guil: And we've got nothing. (A cry.) All I ask is our common due! Ros: For those in peril on the sea...Guil: Give us this day our daily cue Guil (coda): Call us this day our daily tune (page 77)	Guil: Y nosotros no tenemos nada(<i>Un grito.</i>) ¡Sólo pido la recompensa que nos corresponde! Ros: Por los que se encuentran en peligro en el mar... Guil: Concédenos en este día nuestro diario sustento. (p.85)

Proverbs:

*To look a gift horse in the mouth

Ros: [...] No point in looking at a gift horse till you see the whites of its eyes, etcetera (ST, p. 55)

Ros: [...] A caballo regalado no le mires el diente, etc (TT, p. 65)

It is at the recognition of some of these basic devices where Amo's translation most clearly fails, usually denoting a too close literal rendering of Stoppard's rhetorical games and deliberate word play. In translation some of those puns lose all relevance and the perception of the intended meaning is never achieved.

**The translated version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*:
Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto (1969)**

Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto is the title of the Spanish version by Alvaro del Amo, published in *Cuadernos para el diálogo* in 1969. This edition was promoted by a group of intellectuals who strongly opposed Franco's regime, and who used the magazine as a means to express their disagreement with the political and social situation. They also published a collection of dramatic works by native and foreign playwrights in Spanish version, among which we find *Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto*.

It might be inferred from this type of publication that the translation was intended to reach competent readers with a wide cultural and literary background: an élite, people with a liberal profession, university graduates or undergraduates, literary critics acquainted with the greatest works of universal literature among which Shakespeare's probably ranges first. The translator's awareness of the type of public this translation would reach accounts for the selection of the ST. An evidence of this exclusive target readership is the existence of only one translation, probably due to the literary and cultural specificity of this play, thus the limited range of people it could attract. Amo's translation still remains as the only Spanish version published in this country.

Some of the problems in translating *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

First, owing to the expansions of the primitive play by Stoppard himself of the ST and the several versions of it which have been performed, some might argue that in translating Stoppard's play we could find, as with Shakespeare's plays, some textual problems. However, as far as the translation is concerned there is no such textual problem since the version published by Faber and Faber in 1968 was authorised by Stoppard himself and that is the one selected by the Spanish translator of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Nonetheless, there is a more relevant aspect of the play that actually poses problems for the translator: its intertextual and parodic quality and, hence its literariness. As we have seen in the analysis of the ST, understanding

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern requires a competent reader, familiar with *Hamlet's* text and able to trace connections. This is even more a need in the TC (target culture), where without a minimum degree of recognition of its links with the mythic tragedy, the translation would be lacking the dramatic perspective and the defamiliarising effect its author intended, and with that the comedy would disappear. Intertextuality and parody are inseparable in this case.

This intertextual aspect of the ST entails an urgent need to have recognisable material in the TT from which the translator departs so as to create that parodic or defamiliarizing effect. The problem appears when we realise that there is no such thing as a unique *Hamlet* in Spanish.

According to Esteban Pujals¹³, apart from the several translations by Spanish Romantics -among which we find Moratín's version (1798)- and James Clark and William Macpherson's translations in the 19th century, the most relevant Spanish translations of *Hamlet* since the 1900's were written by Luis Astrana Marín (1930), and Jose M^a Valverde (1967-68). By 1969, Astrana's philological translation had probably earned a recognition as the Spanish *Hamlet* of the 20th century. That is the reason why we assume Stoppard's translator borrowed it as the "canonical text" in Spanish, and the standpoint from which he could reproduce Stoppard's departures, creating his own version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Summarising the results yielded by the comparison of both ST and TT we may enumerate a series of characteristics regarding each text, and draw some conclusions as to what type of norms have shaped the Spanish translation by Alvaro del Amo, and the kind of translation equivalence we may establish for this textual pair:

* **Source text:**

1) **Author's intention:** It is a play written as a literary experiment, which ends up being a highly intellectual comedy. As a result of Stoppard's writing technique one of the by-products is a piece which might also be viewed as a critical reflection on Shakespeare's text from the perspective of a contemporary English playwright.

2) **Acceptability:** For the 1966 British audience, who attended the first performance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the play was probably perceived as an example of the experimental drama they were ready and

13. Pujals, E. "Shakespeare y sus traducciones en España: Perspectiva histórica" in *Cuadernos de Traducción e Interpretación*, 5-6, 1985, 77-85.

willing to see. For readers of the published version the dramatic text allowed more time for a more comprehensive understanding of intertextual relations, some of which may go unnoticed in the frenetic rhythm of performance. This is also due to the fact that the textual version, as we have seen, makes several explicit references to the Shakespearean text. Nevertheless, the text references to the native literary tradition facilitates the audience perception of a distance between *Hamlet* and this new play.

3) Cohesion: From the different levels (phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic and textual) in which we could test the cohesive devices contributing to text's coherence and relevance, we have focused our attention rather on the discursive and intertextual levels. Much of the text's coherence and significance rests upon the multiple references to the Shakespearean text. Questions of register, stylistic and diachronic varieties have been indicated. The coherence of dialogue and monologues corresponding to Ros and Guil's off-stage life is sometimes on the verge, and in most cases solved either by reference to the Shakespearean plot, or after the whole scene is over when linguistic ambiguity is overcome (at the syntactic and lexical levels mainly).

4) Context of situation and intertextual relations: There is a clear contrast in the ST between Shakespeare's language and the aesthetic quality of his text (blank verse, rich imagery, word-play, etc) as compared to the contemporary variety of English used in the dialogic exchanges between the main characters of Stoppard's play. Intertextuality is the most relevant property which provides Stoppard's text with an artistic quality. Thus, the readers' perception of the play being a re-elaboration of a previous text, raising new expectations, is essential for a true understanding of the text's import.

*** Target Text's analysis:**

Preliminary norms or criteria which guide text selection for translation:

Alvaro del Amo, the Spanish translator, also a film-critic interested in contemporary experimental drama, choose a very challenging text which is difficult to translate mainly due to its literary specificity based on a complex network of connections with *Hamlet*, a universal play but nevertheless belonging to a different literary culture and originally composed in a different language. Therefore, the manipulation the author exerts on the language provoking a twisted and delayed apprehension of the meaning intended is an obstacle but an incentive for the translator as well.

Despite its complexity, the type of readership for which Amo planned this version (Spanish university graduates, intellectuals, writers, teachers of literature opposed to the lack of freedom of the dictatorial regime) was probably willing to read contemporary drama, which subverted the Establishment (epitomised here by a “sacred” text). It was a dramatic text that involved rewriting or transforming a canonical work, demanding an intellectual effort even for the informed Spanish reader.

1) Translator’s intention: Though not explicit in the prologue, it is certainly to present the latest innovations in British drama and introducing experimental works which would refresh demanding Spanish readers. However, there is a very important difference between the ST and TT’s purpose. While the ST is just the fullest textual version, also intended for performance and adaptations, the TT is to be read rather than performed. Consequently, the translator resorts to notes of translation, and a different typography, for example, when it comes to distinguishing the “Shakespearean” from the “Stoppardian” text.

2) Acceptability and intertextuality: If we consider the text’s marked intertextual character and literary specificity, we could restrict the type of reader interested in Stoppard’s play in translation to a small group of scholars or intellectuals attentive to the latest innovations in British drama, and contemporary versions of *Hamlet*.

Identifying the contrast between verse/prose, Elizabethan/contemporary styles in the TT is essential for an effective recognition of a “sacred” text (Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*) inserted within the contemporary and prosaic transformation Stoppard’s text reveals.

In the TT, the extracts from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* have been borrowed from the classical Spanish translation of *Hamlet*, written by Luis Astrana Marín (1932). Astrana’s translation is probably regarded by most readers as *the Spanish Hamlet* in the first half of the 20th century in this country. Spanish readers might not be able to remember the exact words but a note of the translator was inserted to warn them of the origin of the Shakespearean translation.

Astrana’s *Hamlet* is a profusely annotated version written in prose, and as a result the shift between verse and prose cannot be appreciated in Amo translation which incorporates it as an archaic, poetic text. The notes in Astrana’s translation explain ambiguities of meaning in Shakespeare’s text, making the text richer from point of view of meaning but losing the poetic impact of a good verse translation. In Astrana’s version the dominant norm dictates a preservation of content (semantic features) rather than of formal features. Astrana in his prologue to *Obras completas de William*

Shakespeare explains his method of translation: it is eclectic, keeping the text as literal and literary as possible and providing it with the classical or archaic flavour of the Spanish language used by writers in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Apart from that, Amo's translation is a written text to be read rather than performed. The prologue is a paratextual element essential for the contextualization of the ST and TT in the recipient culture. Amo presents a very personal reading of the play: his prologue implicitly suggests some parallelisms between Ros and Guil's alienated situation and the minor role Spanish citizens played in national politics, their lack of control over that situation, highlighting in both cases their want of freedom. The prologue also tells Spanish readers that Stoppard is not interested in recreating a Shakespearean atmosphere, dealing with Hamlet's interpretations or presenting an anti-Shakespearean *Hamlet*. He insists on the existing distance between the two worlds (onstage/offstage, Elizabethan/contemporary, secondary/main characters) as the core in which Stoppard's comedy is based.

3) Cohesion and coherence: As we have seen, the textual significance and coherence of the ST lies mainly in the perception of the distance between *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

In the TT cohesion and coherence are much more difficult to achieve. The mainly results from the impossibility of translating most of the times the rhetorical games, the word-play based on English homonyms and homophones, synonyms, polysemic relations non-existent in Spanish, ambiguity built on typical English structures (phrasal verbs), etc. Despite the great effort made to render this intricate play into Spanish, there are also some serious mistakes of translation, which denote a lack of knowledge of ready-made and idiomatic expressions and also a too literal interpretation of figurative language in translation.

Translemic relations and dominant norm:

It might be inferred from the previous contrast between ST and TT that the dominant norm implicit in Amo's translation dictates creating a similar effect of delayed but actual recognition of *Hamlet's* transformation, by stressing the remoteness between the two contexts and relying on textual and paratextual clues. In the *Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto*, the connection is provided by typographical means besides other paratextual elements (such as the prologue, and the translator's notes) indicating the superposition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in Astrana's version, and Stoppard's textual additions translated by Amo.

Astrana's *Hamlet* (which accounts for the parts borrowed from *Hamlet*) denotes a target-oriented translation, by avoiding a text that sounded too strange to Spanish ears. He rewrote a *Hamlet* that was acceptable to Spanish readers of the 20th century, as is obvious from the number of editions that have come out. Astrana's goal was preserving content and explaining imagery by annotating the text. From the formal point of view he made his *Hamlet* acceptable by adding some archaic vocabulary and structures, resorting to hiperbaton and adding more complex syntactic structures in an attempt to reflect the style of Spanish writers of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The parts translated by Amo also reveal a tendency to naturalness, though this is not always accomplished, and there is some lack of consistency in his use of translation strategies especially in the dialogues between Ros, Guil, and the Player, where we detect some inaccuracies on the propositional or referential level, lack of naturalness, or his inability to overcome problems due to deliberate ambiguity of the ST.

Model of equivalence

On the whole, we can say that the model of equivalence established in *Rosencrantz y Guildenstern han muerto* denotes a functional equivalence between the ST and the TT. What is preserved is rather that intertextual quality, made obvious rather by the references contained in the paratextual elements (prologue and a few notes of translation) which accompany the TT than by anything else. The ST's basic function is not so much preserving the aesthetic dimension of the original *Hamlet* as to produce a comic and defamiliarising effect that characterises Stoppard's work. The translator's work aims at provoking a similar reaction on the target audience, bringing both the Shakespearean text and Stoppard's transformation closer to Spanish readers, and above all, marking the difference between a canonical work and a literary experiment.

The translation can only be deemed as acceptable in the target culture in the light of what we have identified as the dominant norm of translation, and as long as the emphasis is put on its intertextual character and continuous shifts of context, above all, considering the TT is a product to be read. Otherwise, the text would not be acceptable and would instead reveal its flaws mainly due to some basic mistakes in translation.

Concluding remarks

Returning to a possible explanation to account for the lack of Spanish versions of Stoppard's comedy, we would suggest, first, the apparent

impossibility of achieving a good translation of some of the comic devices based on wordplay, as it was pointed out above. Second, the fact that the translation primarily relies on paratextual elements to prompt readers to look for the textual links with *Hamlet* makes it unfit for performance, which is in fact the real purpose of a playwright when he sets to write a new piece for the stage. If the TT's potential for performance is lacking then it loses all significance as a dramatic piece. On the other hand, the preservation of that potential eventually makes the challenge of translation worthwhile in the target culture. As this is not the case of the existing version, it seems that translators have either been discouraged by this first attempt or that they acknowledge the extreme difficulties that the text poses to any translator.

Anyway, each generation demands new versions and revisions (re-readings and rewritings) of literary works. Therefore tackling the translation of a text such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* seems a challenge someone bold enough should meet, as the enjoyment one experiences when watching or reading the original text is something worth translating.

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