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A Turning Point in the Translation of Shakespeare into Catalan: The Case of Josep M. De Sagarra's *Macbeth*

Abstract: Josep Maria de Sagarra translated twenty-eight of Shakespeare's plays into Catalan in the early forties, at a time when Catalan language and culture were suffering severe repression due to Franco's regime. The manuscript of *Macbeth* by Sagarra is from 1942; and the first edition (an impressive hard-bound clandestine edition) is from 1946 or 1947. Before his translation, there were three other Catalan translations of *Macbeth*, produced by Cebrià Montoliu (1907), Diego Ruiz (1908) and Cèsar August Jordana (1928). The main purpose of this article is to show that Sagarra's translations marked a turning point regarding the translation of Shakespeare's works in Catalan culture. This is done by reflecting on both cultural and personal circumstances that led Sagarra to translate Shakespeare and by comparing Sagarra's translation of *Macbeth* with the other three from the first half of the twentieth century.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Josep Maria de Sagarra, Cebrià Montoliu, Diego Ruiz, Cèsar August Jordana, Catalan translations, linguistic analysis, performability.

1. Introduction

1.1. *Macbeth* in Catalan Culture

When surveying the Catalan translation history of Shakespeare, *Macbeth* appears to be the most frequently translated play up to our day. *Macbeth* has been translated into Catalan ten times so far, while *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* have all been translated seven times. The earliest translators of *Macbeth* into Catalan are Cebrià Montoliu (1907), Diego Ruiz (1908) and Cèsar August Jordana (1928). The present article will argue that Josep Maria Sagarra's 1942 translation represented a turning point in the translation of Shakespeare's works into Catalan. Catalan translators active in years subsequent to Sagarra—Jordi Pujol Cofan (1975), M. Àngel Conejero *et al.* (1991), Salvador Oliva (1988 and 2003, revised edition) and Miquel Desclot

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(2002, in verse; 2009, in prose)—have also contributed to *Macbeth*'s high status in the Catalan literary tradition. Indeed, in some cases the play had a huge impact on the translators' original works, as in the case of Diego Ruiz, who wrote *El boig sacerdot Macbeth* (1907).¹ The article will demonstrate the significant place *Macbeth* occupies in Catalan culture by situating Sagarra's Shakespeare translation enterprise in a cultural as well as biographical context and by comparing Sagarra's translation of *Macbeth* with the other three from the first half of the twentieth century.

1.2. The Translators of *Macbeth* Previous to Sagarra

The manuscript of *Macbeth* by Sagarra is from 1942; and the first edition dates from 1946 or 1947.² Before Sagarra's translation of *Macbeth*, three others had been published by Cebrià Montoliu (1907), Diego Ruiz (1908) and Cèsar August Jordana (1928). These three translations belong to different periods of Catalan culture, except for those of Montoliu and Ruiz, which only differed by one year. Despite that, these two translations are strikingly different from one another, as we will see further on. Let us examine when, where and why these three translations were published.

Cebrià Montoliu was the first Catalan author to translate *Macbeth* (1907). His translation was published in "Biblioteca Popular de 'L'avenç'". This collection aimed to incorporate foreign literature, particularly theatrical texts, into Catalan culture. From 1903 to 1915, this collection published twenty translations of plays from different authors, such as Shakespeare, Ibsen or Wagner (Esquerra 31). The incorporation of foreign authors into Catalan culture was one of the main objectives of Noucentisme, a cultural movement taking place in Catalonia from 1906 to 1923 approximately. This movement had the clear intention of enriching Catalan culture through writers who had acquired universal value. One of these authors was Shakespeare. The translations were an entry point to the main European texts and ideas into Catalan culture and also served to promote certain stylistic features which would help to fashion the Catalan language.

A year later (1908), the same translation was published, but with endnotes (78 pages) and a prologue (32 pages), which has since been deemed as the first essay on translation criticism in Catalan (Esquerra 151-152). Josep M. Fulquet (12) claims that Montoliu was the first translator who knowingly made an effort to solve the problem of the lack of classics in the Catalan language.

¹ The literal translation into English is *The crazy priest Macbeth*.

² In this article I use Sagarra's translation from 1959, because it was the last text revised by the author himself (he died in 1961).

It should be pointed out that the translations of Shakespeare that had been provided in Catalan (and in Spanish) before Montoliu's translation were often adaptations mainly from French and Italian translations in which some passages were deleted or changed. Montoliu's translation is hence a reaction to the previous translation practices: "Si l public té l gust viciat, raó de més pera purgalo" (Montoliu, Proleg xxxvi).³ Montoliu argues that important literary works should be translated the way they are, without suppressing passages or changing them.

Diego Ruiz's translation of *Macbeth* was published in 1908 by the Estampa d'E. Domenech press (in the series "Biblioteca Popular dels Grans Mestres"). This collection attempted to translate all of Shakespeare's plays and make them available to the public. Although in general these translations are not considered to reflect a high literary standard, many people became acquainted with Shakespeare's works thanks to them. Even though the collection failed to translate all the plays, it managed to publish 16 of them.

Ruiz (Pablo Picasso's cousin) is not best known for his literary work and translations, but rather for the anecdotes about his person. A year before Ruiz translated *Macbeth*, he wrote a tale entitled *El boig Macbeth sacerdot*. Josep Julià Ballbè and Jordi F. Fernández (150) suggest that Ruiz's translation of *Macbeth* emerged from his ambition to become director of a mental hospital, for which reason he attempted to soften the image he had given through his writings and translations. Julià and Fernández's theory is that not only did Ruiz want to prove that he knew the original play in English, but also that his skills as a psychiatrist were complemented by readings and literary exercises. The translation of *Macbeth* would remedy the negative effects his previous tale had provoked: *El boig Macbeth sacerdot* (provocation)—*Macbeth* (expiation). *El boig Macbeth sacerdot* was regarded as a blasphemous tale because Macbeth is not a king but a murderer priest who works in a church.

The other Catalan translator of *Macbeth* before Sagarra was Cèsar August Jordana, who translated the play in 1928 in "Col·lecció Popular Barcino". Moreover, he also translated ten other Shakespearean plays, some sonnets and one adaptation. According to Xavier Fàbregas (186), Jordana aimed to translate more of Shakespeare's works, but his plan was cut short when the Spanish Civil War started. In 1936 Ramon Esquerra (187-188) regarded Jordana as the final Catalan translator of Shakespeare. Esquerra, at this point, did not know of Sagarra's translations because Esquerra is believed to have died in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War, and Sagarra began translating Shakespeare in 1941. Jordana was a writer, a translator, a journalist and an editor known for his neatness and accuracy when correcting texts. He was fluent in English, French

³ Translation: "If the public has an infected taste, there is more reason to purge it."

and Spanish, and could read and speak in German, but, above all, he had achieved mastery of Catalan literary style (Campillo 6).

Fàbregas (187) affirms that Jordana's translations are 'faithful' to the original and with an extremely correct Catalan language, taking into account that the grammar rules of Catalan had been set only fifteen years before, in 1913, by Pompeu Fabra (*Normes ortogràfiques*). On the other hand, he states that they are plain, more like a black-and-white picture than a colourful and vivid one. It must be noted that Jordana's translation of *Macbeth* is in prose, which was the tendency in those years, as we can observe by the translations of the complete works of Shakespeare into Spanish by Luis Astrana Marín (1929).

1.3. Sagarra's Translations of Shakespeare

On 26 January 1939, Barcelona was occupied by Franco's troops. As a result, a dreadful period for Catalan culture began as one of the main objectives of Franco's regime was to annihilate Catalan identity. The period immediately after the war was the most severe in cultural terms because the Catalan language was forbidden in all areas. Translations were seriously affected by the new regime: any translation into Catalan was considered an attempt at globalisation and modernisation, which was strongly opposed by the Spanish government (Bacardí 17). Moreover, numerous personalities were exiled from the country: politicians, professors, scientists, writers.

Within this context, Josep Maria de Sagarra (1894-1961) translated twenty-eight of Shakespeare's plays into Catalan. Sagarra was a well-known poet and dramatist, one of the very few who managed to earn a substantial income by writing plays before the Spanish Civil War. Why did he decide to translate Shakespeare in 1941? When Sagarra came back to Barcelona after four-year exile in different places in France—Paris, Saint-Sulpice-la-Pointe, Prada de Conflent and Banyuls de la Marenda—he realized that the cultural world in which he had worked before had vanished: social gatherings, clubs, publications, and, more importantly for him, theatres. Direct contact with the public was then impossible, as was making a living from it.

According to Lluís Permanyer (136-137), Sagarra had the idea of publishing in bibliophile editions—hard-bound editions with no publishing data to prevent the police from identifying the publishers, as Catalan was a forbidden language—for two reasons. Firstly, the number of copies would be limited, which would allow the task to be clandestine. Secondly, this kind of edition would bring him a better profit margin. His first sponsor was Santiago Martí (known as "Martí dels Ferros" ["Martí of the Irons"]), but Martí cancelled their agreement in 1945. Then Sagarra proposed the making of a business relationship with Fèlix Millet, who accepted the deal.

2. The Comparison of the Four Translations of *Macbeth*

In order to answer the question of why Sagarra's translation is so different from the previous Catalan ones, I shall now analyze three different passages from *Macbeth*, paying particular attention to some of their stylistic devices. The first scene (4:1:10-19) is uttered by the witches; the second (1:7:1-28) is a monologue by Macbeth; and the third scene (2:3:20-29) belongs to the Porter.

The selection of these scenes has been made according to thematic and stylistic criteria. On the one hand, the scenes belong to three different discourse circles described by Crystal and Crystal (553): the first passage is from the witches' circle, the second passage is from Macbeth's circle and the third is both from Macbeth's circle (the Porter) and the Scottish court's circle (Macduff). On the other hand, I chose passages which are linguistically and stylistically different between them, so that we can find passages in prose or verse, tetrameters or pentameters, blank lines or rhymed lines, among others.

2.1. Analysis I: The Witches' Passage (4:1:10-19)

In the first passage analyzed the three witches are in a cavern, making spells and casting a series of ingredients into a cauldron. The incantation is determined by repetition, which is achieved through several elements: rhyme, rhythm and alliteration. Although repetition is a distinguishing characteristic of the whole play, it is most obvious in the witches' speeches. In Russ McDonald's (50) words: "The repetitions that create the music of *Macbeth* are enchanting, dangerously and thrilling so. Just as Macbeth unconsciously takes over the seesaw rhythms of the weird sisters, so an audience can scarcely resist the incantatory allure of the protagonists' speech."

Let us now examine how and to what extent the Catalan translators have managed to translate these features. In Shakespeare's text, the two first lines are an illustrative example of what was explained above, where rhyme, rhythm and alliteration converge: "Double, double, toil and trouble, / fire burn and cauldron bubble." Apart from the repetition of the word "double", there is a structured rhythm, formed by four trochees (/x) per line: /x /x /x /x. Besides, there is a consonant rhyme between "trouble" and "bubble" and numerous alliterations.

Diego Ruiz's translation ("Aumenteu, aumenteu penes y trastorns! Foc, abrusa; caldera, ronca!") lacks all the three elements before mentioned: it is a non-rhymed and non-rhythmic prose, which is wholly opposed to the original. Although Cebria Montoliu's translation of the play is in prose, there is an intention to produce some stylistic effects as far as the witches' scenes are

concerned; that is why this passage is in verse. He proposes: “Afany i neguit redobla; / cremi l foc, borbolli l’olla”. The lines are both heptasyllables, with an assonant rhyme (–obla / –olla) and some alliterations (/f/, /β/ and /k/). Cèsar August Jordana’s version (“Doble, doble, treball i tribull; crema, foc, i caldera bull”) does not use a characteristic meter, as it is in prose, but it does convey the consonant rhyme (–bull) and the alliterations (/d/, /β/, /bb/ /r/, /l/ and /k/). On the other hand, Sagarra’s translation (“Au, treballa, canta i vola; / canta, foc, i bull, cassola!”) is in heptasyllables, with the trochaic structure of the original, and it rhymes (–ola). Unlike Jordana, Sagarra does not offer a wide range of alliterations (/k/). In these two lines, Jordana’s translation appears to be better than Sagarra’s, but the result is not the same for the whole passage, as Dídac Pujol (*Josep Maria de Sagarra* 103) remarks: “It would seem, then, that Jordana’s version is [phonically] superior to Sagarra’s. But a glance at the rest of the passage proves the contrary: [formally speaking,] Sagarra is very superior to Jordana.”

The only Catalan translator who uses a strongly marked rhythm is Sagarra. Montoliu makes an attempt, but the lines do not have the same number of syllables (usually from six to ten) and there is an assonantal rhyme (except for the two last lines), which is always less perceptible than a consonant rhyme. Ruiz and Jordana’s translations are in prose. In addition to the consonant rhyme and regular rhythm, Sagarra also employs several alliterations: “Pell tendra de serp de riu, / bull dins l’infernal lleixiu. / Ull de llangardaix verdós” (/k/ and /f/) or “fibró de serp sense ulls, / a dins el brou dóna bulls” (/bb/ and /β/).

2.2. Analysis II: Macbeth’s Soliloquy (1:7:1-28)

The next passage is a soliloquy by Macbeth at the end of the first act, when he is weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of murdering King Duncan. Shakespeare’s text is written in blank verse with abundant alliterations and metaphors connected with religion and law, along with colloquial language about fishing, horse-riding and jumping (Shakespeare 117). As in the previous passage, alliterations are crucial here: “Macbeth’s words take on multiple meanings, and the sound of one word generates another (‘surcease’ – ‘success’)” (Mangan 193).

As a result, the first part of the soliloquy is characterized by sibilant sounds, giving the impression that Macbeth’s words are being whispered in an unstoppable flowing manner. There is a compactness to the language, what has been called a “see-saw rhythm” (Kermode 208). As stated above, this belongs first to the witches and then to Macbeth, who is influenced by the witches’ language. What is also relevant is the repetition (here and in the rest of the play)

of the word “do” and its derivations, as well as its inclusion in some names; for instance: “deed”, “done”, “undone”, “dunnet”, “Duncan” and “Dunsinane” (McDonald 49).

How did the four Catalan translators render this passage? The only translator respecting the rhythm of the original is Sagarra, whose text is written in decasyllables. The other three translators (Montoliu, Ruiz and Jordana) translated this passage into prose. Let us focus on the first line and half of the second: “If it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well / it were done quickly” (notice the word “done” used three times). Ruiz and Jordana’s translations do not pay attention to this repetition: “Si tot consistís en ferho aviat estaria resolt” (Ruiz uses the word once)⁴ and “Si hom ho ha de fer, cal que ho faci de pressa” (Jordana uses the word twice). On the other hand, both Montoliu and Sagarra use the word three times, just as the original, and start with the sibilant sound and the repetitions: “Si un cop fet ja estigués fet, llavors molt bé que s fes depressa” (Montoliu); “Si fos fet, quan ja és fet, fôra millor fer-ho de pressa” (Sagarra).

In the next lines we find one of the most characteristic Shakespearean expressions: “surcease, success”. This is impossible to translate into Catalan respecting both the form and the meaning. Despite that, Sagarra tries to compensate the loss with more sibilant sounds than in the original. If we take the fragment starting with “If the assassination...” and ending with “the be-all and the end-all” (1:7:2-5), the number of sibilant sounds in the original text and in the four translations is the following:⁵

Shakespeare
If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and
catch,
With his surcease, success, that but this
blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all
(total number of sibilant sounds: 10-11)

Note: if we pronounce the last syllable of surcease and the first of success together, there are 10 sibilant sounds; if we pronounce them in two different syllables (there is a coma between them), there are 11.

⁴ *Fer* means “do” in Catalan.

⁵ According to Julià and Muné (186), the Catalan sibilant sounds are /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /ts/, /dz/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/.

<p><i>Montoliu</i> <u>S</u>i l'<u>assassinat</u> p<u>ogués</u> acabar amb le<u>s</u> con<u>seqüències</u> i haure <u>s</u>ucc<u>és</u> amb llur acabament; <u>s</u>i aque(s)t cop fo<u>s</u> tot i la fi de tot aquí (total number of sibilant sounds: 12)</p> <p>Note: I have counted the sounds as they sound in today's standard central Catalan. For example, I do not know if in 1907 Cebrià Montoliu pronounced the "s" in <i>aque<u>s</u>t</i>.</p>	<p><i>Ruiz</i> <u>S</u>i el crim no port<u>és</u> cap con<u>seqüència</u>, y l'<u>èxit</u> del cop fo<u>s</u> <u>s</u>egur (total number of sibilant sounds: 7)</p>
<p><i>Jordana</i> <u>S</u>i el crim p<u>ogués</u> impedir el cà<u>st</u>ig i <u>ass</u>olir l'<u>èxit</u> amb la mort d'<u>ell</u>; <u>s</u>i el cop fo<u>s</u> el tot <u>a</u>cí ba<u>ix</u> (total number of sibilant sounds: 9)</p>	<p><i>Sagarra</i> <u>S</u>i l'<u>assassinat</u> p<u>ogués</u> ca<u>çar</u> to<u>tes</u> le<u>s</u> con<u>seqüències</u>, i con<u>sumat</u> p<u>ogués</u> atrapar l'<u>èxit</u>; <u>s</u>i el cop fo<u>s</u> tot i <u>s</u>i ho acab<u>és</u> tot (total number of sibilant sounds: 17)</p>

Now let us look at the translation of “that his virtues / will *plead* like angles, *trumpet-tongued* against / the deep *damnation* of his taking-off” (1:7:19-20): “Que ses virtuts, com angels *amb trompetes*, *clamaran* la *damnació* d'aquesta mort” (Montoliu); “Que ses virtuts, angels de la seva guarda, arreu *pregonarien* el crim” (Ruiz); “Que les seves virtuts *pledejaran* com àngels amb veu *trompetejant* contra el *damnatge* de la seva mort” (Jordana); and “Que les virtuts seves / *com trompetes* angèliques, *durien* / *damnació* damunt d'aquesta mort” (Sagarra). With respect to the orthography, Jordana's translation is more modern than those of Montoliu and Ruiz. However, it is very literary, in the sense that it uses a high style and that it is more suitable to be read than performed. Thus, he employs words and sentences which are hard to declaim and pronounce on stage, such as *pledejaran*, *trompetejant* or *damnatge*. Instead, Sagarra's options are easier to pronounce: *com trompetes*, *durien* and *damnació*. This can be explained by the fact that Jordana used to produce novels while Sagarra was well accustomed to writing plays that were performed on stage with great success.

2.3. Analysis III: The Porter's Passage (3:2:20-29)

The last passage analyzed belongs to the Porter's scene. The most important feature to bear in mind is that it is written in prose, the rhythm hence being nothing like the passages we have seen above, although there are certain types of

repetition. After the famous knocking of the door and the Porter's answers,⁶ Macduff and the Porter start a dialogue containing sexual connotations. For instance, in "we were carousing till the second cock", 'cock' refers to the animal (they were drinking until the second cock crowed; that is, until very late), but 'cock' also meant "penis" (as it does now) (Williams 72). The sexual allusion is established through the references to lechery that come after that. In Ruiz's translation there is no trace of a sexual connotation ("La festa ha durat fins al segon cant del gall"),⁷ neither is there in Montoliu's translation ("hem estat trincant fins al segon gall").⁸ Jordana's translation renders the colloquialism of the passage using *gatzara* and *quiquiriquic*,⁹ but it lacks the sexual reference. However, Sagarra's translation ("L'hem correguda fins al segon cant del gall") conveys the meaning of the original more than the other Catalan translations. According to the *Diccionari català-valencià-balear*, *córrer-la* means: "divertir-se, anar a festes, principalment llicencioses" (s. v. *córrer*, expression b),¹⁰ so Sagarra's option implies some licentiousness, especially of a sexual kind.

The rest of the passage is suppressed in Ruiz's translation. Regarding Montoliu's, Jordana's and Sagarra's, there is not much difference between them, except for the translation of "Marry!". This expression, considered archaic in English, shows surprise and also the fact that the question should not have been asked because the answer is completely obvious. Ruiz and Jordana do not translate it, whereas Montoliu proposes *per cert*, an expression that does not express the intention of the original. The only translator who manages to render the exact impression of the original is Sagarra with "¿No ho sabeu?".¹¹

3. Conclusions

Taking into account the three passages analyzed, it could be said that Ruiz's translation is the one that differs the most from the English text, as he ignores the stylistic devices of the original and suppresses the passages that do not suit him (passages with sexual connotations). The reason for this may lie in an ultimate objective: he wanted to be the director of a mental hospital. In order to achieve this, he needed to soften the extravagant image that he had projected in his work. On the other hand, Montoliu's translation is remarkable because he

⁶ For further information about the Porter's scene, see Allen (326-36), Bloom (526-528), Brooke (79-81), Clark and Mason (13-20), De Quincey (97-101), Harcourt (393-402), Muir (xxv-xxix), Tromly (151-156) and Wickham (68-74), among others.

⁷ Translation: "The party lasted till the second cockerel's singing".

⁸ Translation: "We have been boozing till the second cockerel".

⁹ Translation: "Uproar" and "cock-a-doodle-doo".

¹⁰ Translation: "having fun, going to parties, especially to licentious ones".

¹¹ Translation: "Don't you know?".

was aware of the original form and conveys some features, he was the first translator of *Macbeth* into Catalan and he offered a thorough study along with his translation, an arduous task keeping in mind the linguistic tools available at the beginning of the twentieth century. With respect to Jordana's translation, although it is in prose, it is not as dull as Fàbregas (187) states (as discussed in section 2.1).

This article has argued that Sagarra marked a turning point in the translation of Shakespeare into Catalan for three main reasons. First of all, he translated twenty-eight of Shakespeare's plays, a number only surpassed by Salvador Oliva, who translated all of Shakespeare's plays into Catalan several decades later, in the eighties and nineties (nowadays he is revising his translations).

Second, Sagarra sticks to the form of the original; in other words: he renders the rhythm, the rhyme and the phonic patterns (such as alliterations) of the English text. Montoliu, Ruiz and Jordana do not distinguish between the rhythm of a passage by Macbeth from one by the Porter. The differentiation between prose and verse is essential. To begin with, it serves to indicate a thematic contrast between the scenes; the atmosphere and subject of one scene may be differentiated from others through the use of verse or prose. Then, it helps to define the characters' portrayals. For instance, the witches talk in rhymed tetrameters because they are swifter than pentameters: the witches are ethereal (they appear and disappear within seconds) and therefore they need a lighter discourse than the rest of the characters (the Porter, as a clown, speaks in prose, and Macbeth in pentameters). And finally, it is used to show the characters' evolution: the same character may speak in prose or verse depending on the circumstances. The most representative example in *Macbeth* is the case of Lady Macbeth. She speaks in verse during four acts but in the fifth she changes to prose, because she has become crazy. Lady Macbeth mixes events from the past, the present and the future, so she needs a form to express all this chaos, and verse is too measured; that is why she uses prose.

Nevertheless, Sagarra's respect for the form of the original has two consequences: he is sometimes not as literal as other translators and he often increases the number of lines. This is one of the main criticisms he has received from Salvador Oliva (211). For example, Macbeth's soliloquy studied in this article (section 2.2) has 28 lines in the English text, whereas in Sagarra's it has 35.

The third and most significant reason why Sagarra's translations meant a change in the translations of Shakespeare into Catalan has to do with the performability of a text. Neither Montoliu's *Macbeth* nor Ruiz's nor Jordana's were performed, while Sagarra's *Macbeth* has been performed on stage at least four times (1971, 1974, 1982 and 1996). Sagarra was fully aware that his text would be uttered by actors and has to be easily understood by the spectators, so he would opt for vivid, resonant and colourful words and expressions (Palau

i Fabre 689) as opposed to Jordana, who employs high language hard to pronounce (see section 2.2). Sagarra knew the exact ingredients for a play to have a successful performance, as he was a prosperous dramatist. It is noteworthy that Sagarra's translations of Shakespeare have been the ones performed the most on the Catalan stage after his death and until the present day (see Buffery 315-336). The major shift is that he moves away from the literary translations meant only to be read and starts the path towards today's practices, in which the translator works side by side with directors and actors (a theatre company hires a translator for the translation of a specific play; see Pujol, *Traduir Shakespeare* 49 and 51).

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