

THE VOICE OF THE TRANSLATOR AS ‘HEARD’ IN BRAZILIAN AND EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE TRANSLATIONS OF PUNS IN *LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST*¹

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Introduction

In his 1997 essay, “Mapping Shakespeare’s Puns in French Translations”, Malcolm Offord lists forty of the more than 200 puns to be found in Shakespeare’s play *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (*LLL*), nine of which he analyses as translated into French by François-Victor Hugo in 1866.² Offord divides Hugo’s “translation methods” (p. 254, Table) in six different categories: omissions, cognate terms, surface meaning, secondary meaning, both meanings, and new puns. Offord concludes that Hugo’s translation is “largely a ‘sanitized’ one, which amuses but is unlikely to produce the ‘dirty laughs’ Shakespeare’s text would have done” (1997, p. 254). In other words, Offord acknowledges 19th-century conditions of (translated) text production. The author points out that sexual and scatological puns are generally disregarded in that French translation. Moreover, in quoting Herbert Ellis’s 1973 *Shakespeare’s Lusty Punning in Love’s Labour’s Lost, with contemporary analogues*, Offord mentions that much of the verbal humor in *LLL* may have been lost to us after four centuries of linguistic changes in the English language, and that Shakespearean scholars today are bound to see puns in the play where they were never intended.

Lynne Magnusson (2002, p.158-159), in an essay on Shakespeare’s language regarding comic effects, discusses many of the wordplays found specifically in *LLL*, and writes:

The habit of word repetition and inversion slides seamlessly into the pervasive comic strategy of wordplay. Drawing on an early modern English vocabulary rich in homonyms and words with multiple meanings, *Love’s Labor’s Lost* and all the comedies revel in repetition-based verbal ambiguities and shifting significations. For various devices we would today all group together as “puns” (a word Shakespeare would never have heard), Elizabethan rhetoricians drew more discriminating terminology from their classical sources. For example, the term *antanaclasis* was used

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² Offord used a 1952 edition.

to refer to a work repeated in shifting senses, as where Berowne shifts between “light” meaning “truth” and “light” meaning “physical illumination” in the word repetition illustrated above [“Light seeking light doth light of light beguile” (1.1.77)]; whereas the term *paronomasia* referred to shifting between words similar in sound, like “suitor” and “shooter,” when Boyet asks “Who is the shooter? Who is the shooter?” and Rosaline answers “Why, she that bears the bow” (4.1.107-09). *Syllepsis* draws out two meanings with one use of a word, as where Berowne activates both the rhetorical term “style” and the like-sounding climbing “stile” in his mocking dig at Armado’s high language: “Well, sir, be it as the style shall give us cause to climb in the merriness” (1.1.196-97). Probably the most versatile pun for the dramatist, since it facilitates the dialogic interplay among the characters, is *asteismus*, where the play on words is between speakers, with the answerer returning an unlooked-for second meaning: “All hail, sweet madam, and fair time of day,” the King of Navarre greets the Princess of France, who answers him back as if he had made a weather report, “‘Fair’ in ‘all hail’ is foul, as I conceive” (5.2.339-40).

This last example from Magnusson’s study coincides with one of the nine examples quoted by Offord and presented with the French translation by Hugo.

Now, to the object of the present study: departing from Offord’s analysis, how were the same nine puns translated in 21st-century Brazil and Portugal? Are these nine examples sufficient to outline the strategies of two translators, or must we go through the forty puns that Offord chose to list in his essay? Do their strategies fall into the same six categories that Offord presents, or five are enough, or a seventh must be added, and so forth? And finally, what do these strategies tell about the translators as authors of the translated text?

In my previous article on *LLL* and translation, “Portuguese-speaking Shakespeare in Two Recent Annotated Translations of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*” (Viégas-Faria 2012), I quote Solange Mittmann (2003) on various notions and concepts that tackle the role of the translator as mediator between the source-text (ST) and the translated or target text (TT). Mittmann (p.136) states: “the translator-function is responsible for the organization of the different voices present in the translation process, as well as responsible for steering the translated text towards a certain interpretation.”³

It will be seen again, in this article (next section), that both Aimara da Cunha Resende (translator of *LLL* into Brazilian Portuguese) and Rui Carvalho Homem (translator of *LLL* into European Portuguese), in these merely nine examples taken from Offord’s essay, add notes to the TT — that is, they explicitly bring their “voices,” their erudite interpretation of the ST to be “heard” by their potential readers.

³ My own translation from the author’s text in Portuguese.

However, this is a corollary finding, and the main question remains: how do Resende and Homem solved the translation problem posed by puns in *LLL*? Meaning, what were their strategies? And then, do they match 19th-century Hugo's French translation methods (as categorized by Offord)?

Nine puns analysed in translation

Based on his analysis of François-Victor Hugo's 1866 translation into French of *LLL*, Malcolm Offord (1997) proposes six categories of translation methods or strategies when it comes to translating puns:

- (1) Omission
- (2) Cognate terms
- (3) Surface meaning
- (4) Secondary meaning
- (5) Both surface and secondary meanings
- (6) New puns

(1) Omission — Offord's (1997, p.251) example for omission is the following, where Hugo omitted the wordplay Shakespeare constructed with "pricket" (a 2-year-old buck deer), "sorel" (a 3-year-old buck), "sore" (a 4-year-old buck), "L" (the letter "L" and the number 50 in Roman numerals), "sore" + "l" (sorel), and "L" + "sore" ("fifty sores").

LLL (4.2.67-78)⁴

HOLOFERNES

The preylful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket,
Some say a sore, but not a sore till now made sore with shooting.
The dogs did yell. Put "l" to "sore," then sorel jumps from thicket,
Or pricket sore, or else sorel. The people fall a-hooting.
If sore be sore, then "L" to "sore" makes fifty sores o' sorel.
Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one more "L."

Let us now see how Resende solved the equation and then what Homem's solution was.

ACR⁵ (2006) – p.102

Viajando, a virgem um veado vislumbrou. [78]
Ao qual deu uns dois anos, provavelmente.

⁴ All passages (and numbering of lines) are taken from The New Folger Library edition, taken in the present article to be the ST.

⁵ Aimara da Cunha Resende.

“Que o quê! É um cervo de quatro”, outro falou.
 E o tiro o pôs de quatro, realmente.
 Cães latiram; o cervo a sebe saltou.
 Seja cervo, ou seja sofrido veado,
 De todo lado, tiro ele levou.
 Se sofrer é sofrer, então, coitado,
 Cinquenta sofrimentos suportou.
 E o *L* romano nele foi gravado. [79]
 Assim eu, co’um cervo só, simplesmente,
 Faço cem, desde que outro *L* acrescente.

Footnote 78 – I chose to substitute “viajando, a virgem” [she is on a voyage, the virgin] for “the Princess, avid to go hunting” from the source text, in order to construct the alliteration chosen by Holofernes as the basis for his epitaph.

Footnote 79 – The “L” referred to by Holofernes is the number 50 in Roman numerals.

RCH⁶ (2007) – p.90

Predatória, a Princesa visou, vitimou um veadito;
 Mas constou que era um corço a carcaça que assim se caçou,
 Que acocada saltou de entre as sarças ao som dos latidos.
 Fosse corço ou veado o bicho caçado, o povo exultou.
 E eu chamo-lhe gamo e aclamo a caçada real
 Nestes versos versáteis versando o veado mortal.

It can be noted that Resende used two synonyms for “deer,” the words “veado” (and wrote down in the TT that it was 2 years old) and “cervo” (Resende wrote down it was 4 years old), omitting a third possibility, whereas Homem managed to use three synonyms for “deer” (“veado/veadito”; “corço”; “gamo”), with no mention to the possible, disputed age of the animal the Princess shot with arch and arrow. Homem omitted the puns with the letter “l/L”, whereas Resende preserved “L” (the number 50), omitting the “sore + l/sorel” pun. Resende kept the 12-line structure of the ST, and Homem changed it to a 6-line composition. So, I believe we can say that, yes, Offord’s categorization works in this example for these two other translations of *LLL* — omission was employed as a translation method by both Resende and Homem, who produced verse translations that recreate in Portuguese rhymes, prosodic features, alliterations, assonances.

(2) Cognate terms — the next category, cognate terms, is exemplified by Offord (1997, p.251) with Hugo’s translation of the following passage from *LLL* (4.2.79-81), where

⁶ Rui Carvalho Homem.

the French word “talent” is a true cognate of the English word “talent”. French and Portuguese being Romance languages, one would expect that for much of the lexicon in both languages we would be able to find true cognates. In this case, this happens to be true – “talento”, in Portuguese, means “talent” as well.

LLL (4.2.79-81)

NATHANIEL – A rare talent!

DULL – If a talent be a claw, look how he claws him with a talent.

And let us see how Resende and Homem solved the pun in translation, given that “talent” was another way of spelling “talon” (claw of a bird of prey) in Shakespeare’s time. By the way, Hugo used “talon” (“heel” in French) for the second occurrence of “talent” and took advantage of the similar sounds of the French words “talent” and “talon.”

ACR – p.102-103

NATANIEL – Que talento garrido!

LERDO – Se talento garrido fosse garra, ele garra o mestre-escola com bajulação.

RCH – p.90

NATANIEL – Raro talento!

BRONCO – Se for um talento de ouro, até se diria que lho está a cravar.

Resende qualifies “talent” as “garrido” (elegant; ornate) and plays with “garrido” and “garra” (claw), and recreates the ST wording (*garra* – claw; *ele garra* – he claws) in Portuguese, adding an extra touch of humor to it, for “ele garra” is non-grammatical, typical of uneducated people in Brazil, or else it is an extremely informal and entertaining way of talking – which is in accordance, at all levels, with the character, Dull. (When “ele agarra” would have been the “correct” pronunciation.) Homem, in a similar manner, plays with the adjectival phrase that qualifies “talent” – “de ouro” (“of gold”), and then puns with “cravar” (to claw/to mount [a precious stone in a setting of gold]). In both translations, the wordplay is constructed from “claw” (“garra/agarrar” or “cravar”), and not from “talent,” the cognate term. So, the conclusion here is that neither translation fits the category “cognate term.” And yet, neither do they fit the category “omission”.

It seems to me that a seventh category could be added to Offord’s list: *compensation*. This is a common strategy in literary translation: where the translator

finds she or the target language lacks the resources to translate a certain type of wordplay, she may compensate at some other point of the TT with the same kind of wordplay or else with some other sort of linguistic creativity that is allowed for by the resources of the target language – where the ST has no pun, for instance, a pun may be created to compensate for a pun that could not be translated at some other point in the ST. Which was the case in this example (Shakespeare’s pun on “talent”): Resende recreated the pun immediately after, with “garra” (claw; he claws); and so did Homem, with “cravar” (to claw; to set a gem in a [gold] mount).

Offord (1997, p.252) offers a second example for the cognate-term translation method, emphasizing that Hugo’s translation employs only one of the two simultaneous meanings of the word “arms” (“armes” in French; “armas” in Portuguese – same case), i.e., it does not fall into the category.

LLL (2.1.45-46)

MARIA – A man of sovereign parts he is esteem’d,
Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms.

ACR – p.45

MARIE – Homem de incomparáveis atributos,
Treinado em artes, glorioso em armas;

RCH – p.60

MARIA – De dotes notáveis, dizem-no ímpar,
Destro nas artes, glorioso nas armas.

“Arms” here is understood both as “weapons” and “limbs.” Both Resende’s and Homem’s translations omit the second meaning, therefore omitting the pun, the very same case of the French translation analyzed by Offord.

(3) Surface meaning — Offord’s (1997, p.252) third category of Hugo’s translation methods, surface meaning, is exemplified by the following passage, where “bound” means both “in bonds” and “constipated.”

LLL (3.1.131-134)

ARMADO – Thou wert immured, restrained, captivated, bound.
COSTARD – True, true, and now you will be my purgation and let me loose.

ACR – p.76

ARMADO – [...] estavas emparedado, contido, cativo, confinado.
CABEÇÃO – Certíssimo. E agora o senhor me purga e deixa tudo solto. [47]

Footnote 47 – There is here a double meaning that deserves to be emphasized in performance: “purge” and “let loose” could be referring, at the same time, to “purge one’s sins”/“give a laxative” (in English, as in Portuguese, by means of a clyster). And “to free”/“to let everything loose.”

RCH – p.76

ARMADO – Estavas encarcerado, peado, cativo, aprisionado.

ARTOLAS – É verdade, é verdade, e vós agora ides ser a minha purga e dar-me soltura.

Both Resende’s and Homem’s translations follow in Hugo’s steps, and let go of solving an unsolvable pun, and keep in the TT only the first (default) meaning of the word as found in the ST.

It should be pointed out that Offord (1997, p.252) writes this is “the largest category of examples” found in his analysis of Hugo’s translation, examples that “give priority to the surface meaning and ignore the underlying one, which obviously entails the loss of the original ambiguity.”

(4) Secondary meaning —the fourth category of translation methods is secondary meaning, and the Shakespearean passage chosen to illustrate it is the following, where “capon” means both “love letter” and “chicken” (OFFORD 1997, p.252).

LLL (4.1.60-62)

PRINCESS – O! thy letter, thy letter; he’s a good friend of mine.

Stand aside, good bearer. Boyet, you can carve;

Break up this capon.

ACR – p.87

PRINCESA – Me dá logo essa carta, me dá já. [57]

É um grande amigo meu; chegue pra lá.

Boyet, se és, na verdade, bom de faca,

Abre a bichinha. [58]

Footnote 57 – The change of pronouns here (from “senhor” [you sir], that the Princess is using to address Costard, to “tu” [you] can be found in the original text as well, and may be an indication of the Princess’s excitement, when she senses there is something novel and much more interesting ahead. (See Woudhuysen, 4.1, n.55).

Footnote 58 – Shakespeare here is playing with both meanings the word “capon” had in his time: “a castrated male chicken” and “a love letter.” Since in Portuguese there is no similar expression with such double meaning, I chose to translate “Break up this capon” as “open up this [female, diminutive] animal/any [diminutive] thing [stuff].”

RCH – p.83

PRINCESA – Ah, dá-me a carta, a carta! Ele é um meu bom amigo.
 Aguarda, bom portador. Boyet, podes trinchar:
 Abre-me esta peça.

Neither translation has a word like “capon,” with two such specific meanings at the same time, for there is no such thing in Portuguese. Both translators resort to protean words (*bichinha* = thing; *peça* = piece). It seems to me that Homem’s solution apparently comes closer to what is intended when he chooses the verb “trinchar” (carve a bird to be served during a meal), while Resende uses the verb “abre” (open or cut open – with a knife/”faca,” a necessary meaning from the previous line). But then she translates “capon” as “bichinha” (thing; stuff – very, very informal register), which in turn could be read also as a “female little animal” (and this would very seldom be the word’s default meaning). So, in a way, yes, we could say that Resende recreated the pun here, whereas Homem resorted to the secondary meaning – not explicitly, but rather via the verb employed in the previous line, and his translation then fits into this category of Offord’s translation methods.

(5) Both surface and secondary meanings — the passage from *LLL* chosen to illustrate the fifth category of translation methods, both surface and secondary meanings, relies on the following pun: “taking it in snuff”, meaning both “taking something angrily” and “putting out a candle” (OFFORD 1997, p.252-253). This category (both meanings) does not mean the pun is recreated in the TT, but rather that the pun is divided in two, and both meanings present in the ST are written down, i.e., they become explicit, in the target language.

***LLL* (5.2.24)**

KATHARINE – You’ll mar the light by taking it in snuff

ACR – p.159

CATERINE – Se se zangar, o claro se acaba

RCH – p.118

CATARINA – Estragais a luz se me escutais de humor escuro.

Resende’s and Homem’s solutions are quite similar to Hugo’s solution in French, so they qualify as fitting into this category.

And another example for this category is presented by Offord (1997, p.253), but this time it illustrates how Hugo's French translation was unable to render both meanings of the pun.

LLL (4.3.2-3)

BEROWNE – they have pitched a toil [they have set a trap for deer hunting]; I am toiling in a pitch [I am struggling in a net set for trapping fish] – pitch [tar] that defiles

ACR – p.113

BIRON – Lançaram uma armadilha. E eu estou preso em um laço negro como o piche – e o piche avilta –

RCH – p.94

BIRON – Eles batem a presa até uma brenha, mas eu debato-me e estou preso de um breu, um breu que conspurca –

Translator's note (p.166) – Berowne refers here to Rosaline's eyes, described in 3.1.189 as "two pitch-balls." Together, these two references may allude to Ecclesiasticus, 13: "Whoever touches pitch will be defiled."

Resende's TT shows a translation of meanings, whereas Homem's TT shows not just the meanings intended, but also a linguistic game that is well played in terms of resonances (phonomorphological and semantic): *batem/debato-me*; *a presa/estou preso*; *uma brenha/um breu*, and repetition: *um breu/um breu*. One cannot fail to notice that it resembles the construction of the same passage in the ST.

This means that Resende, just like Hugo, was unable to render both meanings, whereas Homem accomplished the translator's task⁷ of recreating the pun, and still fits into Offord's category of *both meanings*.

(6) New pun — the sixth and last of Offord's categories of [Hugo's] translation methods is new pun (1997, p.253). The author recognizes the effort on the translator's part "to demonstrate his pun-producing virtuosity." Two passages from *LLL* are reproduced to illustrate this category. In the first one, the word "elder" means "older than" and the tree elder. In the second one, the words "hail" (greeting) and "fair" (pleasant) are distorted to mean weather conditions.

⁷ A pun of my own intended here, in reference to Walter Benjamin's 1923 famous essay, "The Translator's Task."

LLL (5.2.673-675)

HOLOFERNES – Begin, sir; you are my elder.

BEROWNE – Well follow'd: Judas was hang'd on an elder.

ACR – p.208

HOLOFERNES – Sendo mais velho que eu, pode ir em frente

Pois sabugo velho queima primeiro. [205]

BIRON – Isso! Ele se enforcou num sabugueiro.

Footnote 205 – In the original text, at this point, there is a pun with “elder,” meaning both “mais velho” (older than) and “sabugueiro” (the tree). In order to create the wordplay in Portuguese, I added this extra verse to the translated text, “For an old elder tree burns first,” which allowed me to preserve the idea of the Shakespearean text.

RCH – p.145

HOLOFERNES – Ide vós primeiro, senhor, que sois mais velho.

BIRON – E vós de seguida: Judas enforcou-se sem demora.

Here the idea is that Berowne should go first, for he is old (Holofernes's elder). Berowne then twists the meaning of Holofernes's remark and “agrees” with him: yes, he (Berowne) is an “elder” on which Holofernes should be hanged. I fail to see how the two translations into Portuguese could be read as instances of punning or wordplay. Resende's translation is annotated, and Homem's translation works with the ideas of one going first (“primeiro”) and the other immediately after (“de seguida”), but neither one connects their translations semantically with the idea that “he hanged” (“enforcou-se”). So, according to my interpretation, the translations into Portuguese do not create new puns and therefore do not fit into this sixth category.

LLL (5.2.372-373)

KING – All hail, sweet madam, and fair time of day!

PRINCESS – Fair in all hail is foul, as I conceive.

ACR – p.185

REI – Salve! Um bom dia, doce senhora! [Hail! Good day to you, sweet madam!]

PRINCESA – Se é preciso salvar, bom não seria! [If it needs saving, why would it be good?]

RCH – p.133

REI – *Salve*, gentil senhora, num lindo dia. [Hail, kind madam, on a beautiful day.]

PRINCESA – *Salvai-me* antes de um dia feio, é o meu desejo. [Save me from a poor day, this is my wish.]

Both Resende and Homem play with the word “salve” (“hail” and “save”) and solve the pun in translation in the same way, successfully creating a new pun.

Therefore, their strategy makes these two translations into Portuguese fit into Offord's sixth category.

Conclusion

Nine passages of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* were used by Malcolm Offord (1997) to illustrate the challenge of translating puns. The author investigated a 19th-century translation of the play into French and presented six categories of translation methods or translator's strategies: omission, cognate terms, surface meaning, secondary meaning, both meanings, new puns. The present study examined the nine passages in the play as translated into Portuguese by Aimara da Cunha Resende (Brazil, 2006) and by Rui Carvalho Homem (Portugal, 2007). It turns out that one of the categories, *cognate terms*, had no translation solution as such in neither of the Portuguese-language translations, for neither of the two examples provided by Offord. However, there was *compensation*, as explained above, and here I suggest a seventh category be added to Offord's six-category list (1997, p. 254, Table). As for the other five categories, my analysis of the two Portuguese-language translations corroborates Offord's findings — notwithstanding the small number of examples. It would be interesting to have all the 40 puns listed by Offord examined in the two translations, and here is my suggestion for another study, maybe even investigating other translations of the play into Portuguese (for instance, Barbara Heliodora's). I believe we are bound to find examples of translation solutions that fall into the category *cognate terms*.

One last question remains to be answered: how do these two translators, Aimara da Cunha Resende and Rui Carvalho Homem differ when it comes to presenting their translation solutions? On the one hand, Resende resorts to translator's notes much more often than Homem — in the nine examples, she has six notes and he has only one. So, one could easily say it seems clear that she wants to be “heard” when it comes to translating puns. Her “voice” is made visible in her TT through her footnotes.

At this point it is important to observe that while Homem's TT is part of a translation project connected with the University of Oporto, Resende's TT was originally written for a professional theater company that wished to stage that particular Shakespeare play. The Brazilian edition clarifies right at the Introduction (to the series “Traduções da Shakespeariana”) that whenever the translation of a given passage is “cultural” (non-literal), “it will be explained in footnotes. And footnotes will also be used whenever intertextual material within the original text needs to be acknowledged,

in order to clarify the allusions — to make them known and understandable to today’s readers” (Viégas-Faria 2012, p. 96).

On the other hand — and yet in a way championing the same viewpoint — Homem’s translation is part of the series “Shakespeare para o século XX,” a project that aimed at updating Shakespeare’s dramatic work’s translation into European Portuguese. According to Viégas-Faria (2012, p. 97), in the Introduction to his TT

[Homem] mentions he cannot resort to footnotes that will list all the possible readings for each passage of the text (a privilege of scholarly editions), but rather has to choose one version that preserves the largest range of meanings, and as close as possible to the source text — and making sure that the translated text will function on both page and stage.

Finally, it was fascinating to find that, apart from the first example, when Resende and Homem chose completely different approaches to translating several puns (6 in 12 lines), for all the other eight passages (1 pun each), the two translators came up with different texts (textual surface) but solved the pun translations similarly in terms of semantic choices (what meanings were deemed more important to the TT and what meanings of the ST could be lost in translation). Therefore, both Resende and Homem (with the exception of the first example) used the same translation strategies in their process of recreating puns.

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