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The RAT Trap?: The Politics of Translating Iberia

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw the role of translation within Hispanic Studies come under scrutiny. In part, this resulted from the reframing of approaches to language learning across the modern languages, which led to increasing emphasis on the development of generic and transferable skills. However, parallel developments in Translation Studies also made their mark on the reconfiguration of the discipline, through the incorporation of insights into the role of translation in the development of culture, in particular the formation of national literatures, and through strategic engagement with the metaphors of translation in order to address and account for different instances and patterns of cultural contact. Whilst both translation practice and translation research remain important within Hispanic Studies, they have been assigned very different values, drawing attention to the effective divisions between research and practice in the institution. Here I will attempt to re-engage the relationship between translation practice and translation research, by exploring the presence and effects of translation within the field. Focusing on the notion of Iberia, I will trace the different processes of translation that have contributed to its configuration, whilst drawing attention to the problematic transparency of the translation process as it is currently formulated within the discipline. This will be followed by the staging of a mode of reading-as-translation that might begin to attend to the politics of translating Iberia in the current context.

Translation and the Canon

The notion of Iberia has often, in British Hispanism, provided a way of bridging the gap between language, literature and area studies. Yet unlike other trans-national notions, such as Latin America (with its accompanying Latin-Americanism) and the Hispanic World invoked by Hispanic Studies and Hispanism, Iberia remains a relatively undeter-

mined figure, little more than a convenient umbrella over two nation states and their different constituent communities. Within the British institutional map, contemporary Iberian Studies (identified with the Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies, or ACIS) is defined by what it does not include, that is traditional or formalist literary study and its off-shoots. These latter are considered to be the domain of the oldest professional association of scholars in the field, the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland (AHGBI). Looking at what Iberian Studies does cover reveals the centrality of multidisciplinary:

... Spanish and Portuguese twentieth-century history, government and politics, foreign policy and international relations including with, and in, the European Union; labour and social movements; social and welfare policies; economics and business management, work and employment; spatial, urban and regional developments; regional nationalism and ethnic identities; feminist thought and gender policies; media, television, cinema, education and cultural policies; the governance and politics of tourism, leisure and sport; and Spanish and Portuguese language, linguistics and teaching methodologies.¹

Whilst this list roves across the disciplinary boundaries in the anglophone university system, seeking to include all areas of knowledge relating to contemporary experience of the Iberian Peninsula, it offers little sense of the kind of interdisciplinarity that might be produced, let alone the kind of community it might construct. Furthermore it is clear that the configuration of the area owes as much to changing disciplinary boundaries and tastes within the UK educational market as to any agreement about what should be studied and taught, and much less about how disciplinarity should be approached in the area of Iberian Languages and Cultures. The notion of Iberia is translated to suit the present academic context, drawing together cultural and area studies to produce a sense of inclusive coverage. However, the list is symptomatic of what this process actually entails. It reproduces the kind of domesticating translation critiqued by Berman, Spivak and Venuti, deferring the question of the translatability of the other by containing the problematic relationship between language(s) and culture(s) within an

¹ Drawn from the guidelines for contributors to *IJIS*, the journal of the Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies.

apparently democratic set of (sub)areas and disciplines. By moving beyond the current paradigm of ever-increasing inclusion, whereby a supposedly stable, unquestioned Canon is expanded by the incorporation of other texts, cultures, languages, subjectivities and approaches, we may achieve closer scrutiny of the ways in which the area defines and configures itself within the British institution. The aim is to propose and stage a theory of practice to engage with this multipositionality, based on Spivak's notion of 'reader-as-translator' ('Politics' 193).

Spivak introduces the notion of 'reading as translation' in an essay that explores the politics of translating postcolonial texts and cultures. After identifying the symbolic violence involved in every act of translation, the tendency to turn the other into the same, she is particularly critical of instrumental translation of subaltern women writers, used to stand for whole communities (Indian culture, third world women) or as signifiers of global solidarity amongst women. As an alternative, she proposes a mode of translation that is more sensitive to the rhetoricity of the text: 'The history of the language, the history of the author's moment, the history of the language-in-and-as - translation, must figure in the weaving as well' (186). Resistance to the global hegemony of English, and the accompanying 'betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest' (182), calls for the learning of languages. Instead of following the instrumentalist logic of globalization, she recommends the value of an intimate and erotic relationship with language, enabling surrender to the particular rhetoric and silences of the text. Spivak returns to this relationship in later writings, revisiting the negotiation between self and other in translation, and in particular the implications of Western translation of the texts of the Southern Hemisphere.² Here she proposes the notion of reader-as-translator (RAT) as a way of deconstructing the texts of Western culture, in order to explore the limits of their rhetoricity; how

² 'I am inviting the kind of language training that would disclose the irreducible heterogeneity of languages' (*Death* 9); 'To plot this weave... the reader must have the most intimate access to the rules of representation and permissible narratives which make up the substance of a culture, and must also become responsible and accountable to the writing/translating of the presupposed original' ('Translation' 13).

far they are translatable beyond the narcissistic space from which they are written.

I have appropriated the notion of RAT to stand both for the inevitability of translation in every reading of culture – that is the temptation to domesticate the other – and for the more utopian idea of translation practice conjured by Spivak. The reader-as-translator is trapped in her surrounding episteme, but may begin to imagine herself beyond it in the intimate negotiation of other languages and texts. This is not to be confused with the liberating illusion of cross-cultural communication contained within global or trans-national languages, rather in the painstaking deciphering of languages in relation, revealing the limits of communication in the contingencies of their texts. The focus, then, is to be on practice, and in particular on the relationship between theory and practice at a pedagogical level (rather than simply in terms of subject area and research community). This is the first level at which translation, and the notion of RAT enters into consideration. For in answering all of the questions raised by this book, the question of who is translating and/or re-presenting Iberian culture, and from where, is central. As has become the mantra of Translation Studies in the last few decades, the product of any translational action is always also an autonomous text with a function in the target culture.

Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there. (Venuti 'Translation' 468)

So it is that the re-imagining of Iberia within the British institution tells as much about the norms, location and conditions of production of the target context as about any 'real' Iberian culture. It is a translation that has produced a large remainder, in the symbolic violence it both remembers and forgets. In the *IJIS* list, for instance, whereas Spanish and Portuguese language, linguistics and teaching methodologies are included as separate entities, distinguished from (and within) Area Studies, the other languages of the Peninsula are subsumed into

identity politics. But let us defer for a moment the question of what's in a name, and the extent to which Iberia has any lived significance beyond a catch-all for the different subjects that have arisen out of the old Spanish department, in the expansion of the literary canon, and as a way of including languages other than Castilian. Instead, let us explore how recent developments in translation theory and studies have contributed and may still contribute to understanding the way in which the area is mapped, in order to suggest ways of renegotiating the translation processes involved in each re-imagining of Iberia within the institution.

The revision of the role of translation within the Hispanic Studies department may help to bridge the increasing divide between language and culture teaching within the institution, lending coherence and cohesion to a discipline that, as Jon Beasley Murray has shown, is unique in its multi- and cross-disciplinarity, due to the current global status of Spanish and the discipline's inclusion of a diversity of cultural formations and experiences (165). What Beasley Murray fails to recognize is that the institution is pragmatically unable to support such a proliferation in reality, and in many institutions what began as cracks and divisions in certain areas has led to the widespread separation of language teaching units from cultural or area studies elements, which are often left to wither on the vine or subsumed into a wider geopolitical configuration. In some ways the fragmentation of the discipline, the lack of a long-established centre of disciplinarity, has contributed to the market force effect. None the less, dehegemonization has produced some very interesting reconfigurations of the subject, which still may lead to new configurations based on diversity, cross-cultural communication, difference and plurality.

The language(s) in which such cross-cultural communication might take place is, of course, a moot point. The current restructuring of the institution, in many ways already ingrained in the United States, notwithstanding their enviable resources in other areas, and the increasing division pedagogically between language and culture, feeds an assumption, undermined by most of us in our research, that language is merely communicative of instrumental meaning, in the sense of communicating information. Thus, language learning and linguistic skills are easily separated from cultural knowledge. Part of this process is based on a critique of outdated models, in particular the

grammar-translation model used in the language departments of old. However, such moves do not take into account shifts in understanding of communicative competence, from Bachman onwards. Nor do they acknowledge poststructuralist thinking which shows language as constitutive of meaning. The parallel turn to the cultural in translation studies offers a way out of this impasse by joining together linguistic and cultural description of the translation enterprise, producing fresh insights into translatability.³

In the 1970s House demonstrated how readings of translation as the translation-grammar method led to its attempted removal from language teaching. Translation-grammar was misrepresented and attacked for not being explicit, for its lack of attention to context and setting, for its roots in the teaching of dead languages and its almost exclusive focus on literary texts. Translation was pigeon-holed as a skill rather than an approach appropriate to the production of linguistic competence, but this was done with little attention to research or to what happens in the language classroom. It came to be viewed merely as a product, appropriate only to language testing. Pedagogical developments since House have helped to counter such a view, exploring the use of translation to build a number of areas of competence, from lexico-grammar to reading comprehension to sociocultural knowledge.⁴ At the same time, there has been increasing recognition that the supposed removal of translation from the language-teaching classroom never has taken place. Translation continues to be used as a form of assessment, even where it is not taught; and students continue to translate, whether they calque words, structures or cultural referents. Above all, there is increasing reliance on translation in gaining access to cultural texts and information. In university modern language departments, where the setting for much of the teaching is at the very least bilingual, it seems strange to exclude cross-lingual techniques and expertise. Instead of consigning translation to the list of skills, it is time to take on board research

³ Snell-Hornby presents the best-known model of interdisciplinarity in translation studies, but there are numerous theoretical and practical enterprises along similar lines.

⁴ See, for instance, Bush and Millán.

within Translation Studies that places emphasis on translation as process. Negotiation between languages and cultures can then be made explicit and power relations and assumptions can be fully addressed and questioned. To do otherwise is to accept that language and culture are divided, and see them as separate if complementary objects of knowledge.

As far as the canon of Iberian Studies is concerned, the problems hinted at before of the inseparability of canon-formation and institutional concerns, the simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal nature of such enterprises is one that can be observed in the recent proliferation of readers and companions to Spanish Cultural Studies and Hispanic Studies, often produced by a diversity of contributors who reflect the increasing diversification of the area. However, the revisions of the canon all have a common source in responding to previous configurations of the discipline. The presence of modern languages in the curriculum cannot be separated from the major changes in the sociohistorical climate at the end of the eighteenth century: the growth of interest in national character and the underpinning of national identity within Europe, the spread of trade links making it advantageous for the bourgeoisie to learn languages to improve their business with other countries in Europe and further afield. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century however that Spanish became a university discipline in its own right, and its acceptance as a discipline cannot be separated from commercial interests (special purposes, as we might call them today), aesthetic taste, national stereotyping and the Humanist focus on literature as the 'truest' expression of human genius and the national spirit. The development of the modern languages as a discipline, then, cannot be separated from a particular sociohistorical context, which has had a variety of effects on the configuration of that discipline.

The late-coming of Spanish, like that of other Modern Languages, means that it has never really been taken seriously as a discipline, thus creating an additional need for reflection on the constitution of the object of study. This is what led to the translation of approaches from other more established disciplines, such as the appropriation of the grammar-translation method used in the teaching of Classical languages. At the same time, the hybrid nature of Hispanic

Studies has allowed for its incorporation into a variety of metadisciplines, such as Humanities, Arts, Cultural Studies, Area Studies, European Studies, Comparative Literature and/or Studies. This situation has both added to the indeterminacy and lack of clarity about the object of study and contributed to its interdisciplinarity. The application of theories and approaches borrowed from other disciplines (especially English and British Cultural Studies, from which debates on canon are unproblematically translated), raises questions of translatability and redraws power/knowledge boundaries. The move away from literature responds partly to student demands, in an increasingly consumer-led institution, as well as to the embrace of cultural and area studies. Yet this focus on the subjects students are interested in ultimately reinstitutionalizes narcissism, and reaffirms exoticizing, othering tendencies. According to Davis (5), the author now most commonly found on undergraduate programmes is Lorca; he is the most representative text of the pragmatic canon of Iberian Studies. With the reduction in access to textuality, language becomes seen as something separate, either instrumental for the learning of culture or as something that is supplemented by additional optional cultural knowledge, as a kind of cultural tourism. Is that what Iberian Studies is ultimately – a form of cultural tourism?

If we begin to see the way in which the discipline is configured at different moments in time as dependent on the norms of the target culture (and the power relations between source and target culture), we may begin to see the value of translation theory and studies to recognize and account for this. Strategic use of translation can be employed to alert students to slippages in meaning, to help produce readers and translators who are critically aware, alert to norms that might exclude the heterogeneity of language and culture. Interdisciplinarity could also be more easily re-imagined as something strategic, dialogic and dependent on community. Venuti, for instance, faced with his constituency of US undergraduates, calls for focus on the ethical and political dilemmas in the translation process, with a political agenda: centred on minority status, as opposition to the global hegemony of English. Thus, translation ceases to be a fixed product, where language is fixed normatively, but part of a wider system of meaning-making and representation and also a web of

different skills, knowledges and competences. Ultimately, translation represents a way of reintroducing progressive degrees of metacritique into the undergraduate programme, with the question of translatability placed centre stage rather than just pandering to a more inclusive programme, without changing the centre.

So far I have shown how far we are caught in a RAT trap with each redrawing of the discipline of Spanish/Iberian/Hispanic Studies, whatever we care to call it, by which we are doomed to translate, reproducing the norms of the target context, handicapped by the problem of translatability. However, Spivak's reformulation of the role of reader-as-translator in her work offers a way out of the trap, through emphasis on strategic critical and dialogical encounters, which encourage an intimacy and sensitivity of practice, a process of self-effacement and a displacement of the dominant norms of the target culture. It is by revisiting our relationship with the object of knowledge that we might address how far strategies for inclusion may also exclude, and how the changing location of boundaries and borders might contribute to redrawing and repositioning the centre. Modern Languages departments may and ought to be the sites where such renegotiation could take place, sites where the different objects of study are constituted differentially and contribute to each other's configuration. If the definition and role of language teaching are reassessed, alongside those epistemic catch-alls 'culture' and 'identity', then the use value (even the inescapability) of translation must become apparent, and offer a way out of the relentless narcissism of disciplinarity.

Dancing in the Margins

Let us return now to the figure of Iberia, approaching it through the work of reader-as-translator. One of the most recognizable evocations of the idea of Iberia since the Romantic period has been the limning of exotic otherness in the figure of the Spanish gypsy, through the hypostasis of different cultural forms into the quintessential flamenco

and the ‘eternal’ conflicts of passion and violence.⁵ It is a translation that can be read in numerous versions of the Carmen myth, as well as in contemporary identification of a Spanish heritage cinema in the work of Carlos Saura after the Transition. Here, we will explore a particular translation of the Iberian gypsy, as performed in Francisco Rovira Beleta’s film *Los Tarantos* (1963). On the surface, it stands as a trans-adaptation of two other texts: Alfredo Mañas’ *La historia de los Tarantos* and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The whole story of *Los Tarantos* is, however, rather more complex, for closer scrutiny of the film reveals it to be an overdetermined intertext, in which origins are tantalizingly equivocal. Its relationship with Mañas’ play is displaced by its fixing of setting – Barcelona in the 1960s – as well as numerous changes made to plot, characterization, dialogue and resolution, which ultimately mark a change in the power relationships figured by the film. It is a site of negotiation, a remapping of other texts, related to the process of translation. A reading of the film’s negotiation of identity offers the reader-as-translator the opportunity to trace a story of translation of Iberia, as a simultaneously colonizing and counter-colonizing activity.

The title of the film, and its release in 1963, frames it as a translation or adaptation of Alfredo Mañas’ play, first performed in Madrid’s Teatro Torre in March 1962. The impact and relevance of the play can in many ways be identified with the theatrical aesthetic in which it was grounded. This was no social realism of the type we might identify with Buero Vallejo or Sastre, nor was it a conservative comedy of manners. Indeed, criticism of the play was strong from many areas because of its non-conformism. Most critics focus on the formal aspects of the play, its relationship with classical models of tragedy, its symbolic and tragicomic aspects, even its resonances of *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet its ideological world, the relationship of its

⁵ Charnon-Deutsch offers a superb analysis of how the portrayal of the Spanish gypsy came to underpin ‘discursive formations implicated in the evolution of European nationalisms’, and of the economic and productive logic behind ‘the collapse of gypsy identities into Andalusian identity, which by the twentieth century came to stand for Spanishness both outside and, to an extent, inside Spain’s cultural arena’ (22).

discourses with the social situation of contemporary Spain, seem to have been far more difficult to address.

En un reaccionario panorama teatral como el nuestro, en que parecen estar definitivamente entronizados el conformismo y la mediocridad, en que sólo a los tontos o a los no comprometidos con la realidad se los estimula oficialmente a seguir mostrándonos su particular y ya superado concepto del drama o su deformada visión de la vida, resulta difícil, por arriesgado o por total carencia de perspectiva, aceptar el mundo formal e ideológico de tu brillante y trágico testimonio, camuflado poéticamente tras la sencilla y conmovedora historia de amor entre Tarantos y Camisones. (A. Marquerie ABC, reproduced in Mañas 321–322)

Even the few who appear most aware of the social significance beneath the surface of the play, present this in the kind of essentialist, universal and transcendental terms we might associate with readings of *Romeo and Juliet* since the Romantic period.

In many ways, the conflict between Camisones and Tarantos is portrayed as an ‘eternal’ one, played out within a non-specific setting in a small square that marks the limits between the upmarket and downmarket parts of a seaside town. The fitful narrator – Juan Encueros – watches from outside his home, an old flamenco bar, the Royalti. At the edge of the stage is the sea, which punctuates the whole story with its cyclic rhythms, sometimes representing the rising passion of the star-cross’d lovers, Ismael and Juana, sometimes the pull of death. Mirrors are used to reflect the multifarious perspectives of the different characters, and to catch the desire for presence of the dancing gypsies. Yet any mythical explanations of the tragic outcome, although structurally inscribed within the play, are rejected as false consciousness at the end. The eternal long-time marked by the sea is problematized in an ending of conflicting choruses. For Mañas, it is the story of Spain, a conflict between two Spains:

“El hombre es una pasión inútil”, ha dicho Sartre. Yo pienso muchas veces que España entera y de arriba abajo es una pasión inútil. Con *La historia de los Tarantos* he pretendido reflejar una parcela de esa pasión española tantas veces absurda, retórica, e inútil. (Mañas 321)

Thus, the echoes of *Romeo and Juliet* are down-played to emphasize the fragmentation of the gypsy conflict, caught in the repeated phrasing of the characters’ language and their dancing, mirrored in the

multiplying mirrors of Juan Encueros' wall, and the endless roar of the sea.

CAMISÓN.—No rayaba la tierra: rayaba el corazón de su hijo. ¿De qué os quejáis? Vuestras provocaciones y vuestros desafíos han matado a tu hijo. ¿Me oís, Tarantos? ¿Me oís? El mar no ha sido. No ha sido el mar. No ha sido el mar.

SOLEDAD.—¿De qué te sirve tanto com tienes, Camisón? Echa tus onzas al mar a ver si puedes comprar la muerte de tu hija. Apareja todos tus caballos a ver si puedes sacar a tu hija del pozo de la muerte. Más caballos tiene el mar. Más caballos tiene el mar. (388, repeated on 389)

Any temptation to read the conflict purely as the eternal myth of star-crossed love or in terms of a mythical Iberia of violently passionate gypsy clans is undermined in the play through metatheatricality, in the sense that it is repetition of this myth that is demanded by the outside world through the commodification of Iberian gypsy culture. We witness this both in Soledad Taranto's desperate plea for Juan to teach her daughter to dance like him (345–48), that she might save her family from their desperate poverty, and in the snippets of sevillanas broadcast from Madrid, Paris, London and America that are caught on the rich gypsy children's transistor radio (338–39). The exoticizing tendencies of the spectator's gaze produced by the lack of intimacy of an inadequate reading are thus contained within and share responsibility for this tragic cycle. What the reader-as-translator must see is its source in social inequities, in the marginalization of a whole community in the rural South to the poverty gap. As Angustias, who hails from the richer eastern coast of Spain, observes: 'En mi tierra la riqueza es un gozo y no un insulto como aquí' (333).

Unlike the play which begins by marking the imaginary distance between the two gypsy clans, with the poor Tarantos observing the riches of the Camisones, their herds of horses galloping across the beach, the film begins with physical conflict like *Romeo and Juliet*. Rovira-Beleta thus chooses to prioritize a universal text, transposing it to what appears on the surface as a more local context: the gypsy barrios of 1960s Barcelona, soon to be shifted to suit the urban developers. He displaces the origin of his version, by rooting it in news of an alternative *Romeo and Juliet* project mooted by Peter Brook (Benpar 101). When he found Brook was no longer interested, he approached Mañas to help with the screenplay, but ended up

completing the adaptation himself due to the playwright's refusal to acknowledge the influence of Shakespeare in the work (102).⁶ In later accounts of the creative process, then, Rovira-Beleta displays a kind of 'anxiety of influence' in seeking to subordinate the Spanishness of the story to a more universal meaning. On the surface, at least, it is not the myth of Iberia that he wished to represent, but the myth of Shakespeare, read through the rhetoric of another language, another medium, another culture. Rovira-Beleta is the reader-as-translator, roving between two pre-texts, exposing the limits of their discourse in relation to his own. However, in other ways his re-membering of the stories displays the limits of his own discourse. His decision to centre the story on Tarantos and Zorongos rather than Camisones is fuelled by the desire to reflect two types of gypsy music. The use of a Barcelona setting is defended as giving access to more authentic gypsy experience on the margins of society, rather than the hybridized versions of the South. Finally, the apparent empathy of his more realist representation is undermined by the exoticizing clichés he later uses to pigeonhole gypsy culture:

Un Romeo y Julieta gitano era una idea maravillosa porque eso de dos familias contrarias que se toman la justicia por su cuenta está a la orden del día entre los gitanos. (...) Estoy seguro que si Shakespeare hubiese conocido a los gitanos de Barcelona o de la Camarga francesa no habría hecho pasar su tragedia en Verona. (101)

In terms of plot, Rovira-Beleta draws on both pre-texts, marking more heavily his reliance on Shakespeare, but basing any shifts on the work of Mañas. In *Los Tarantos* the young lovers meet at a dance, but here, instead of it being Juana who traverses the boundaries between the barrios, it is Rafael gatecrashing a Zorongo wedding, rather more apprehensively than his Mercutio-like friend, Moji (played by Antonio Gades). Like Juliet, Juana plays a more active, seductive role than in Mañas' play. The lovers escape the view of the other guests to the beach, and their first kiss takes place under water, as in Mañas, but there is less emphasis on the sea as a

⁶ Mañas eventually adapts his own play for the screen in 1989, as *Tarantos y Montoyas*.

counterpoint to their passion. As in *La historia de los Tarantos*, Juana is accepted by the Taranta (played by the emblematic Carmen Amaya), although it is for her unusual – in a Zoronga – skill at dancing rather than for her beauty and kindness, and a decision is made to seek to overcome previous differences and ask old Zorongo for her hand. The petition is rejected and leads to Zorongo's agreement to El Picao's engagement to Juana. In the play and in the film, El Zorongo's word, the story for the benefit of others, legitimates for El Picao his *machista* abuse and power over women. Juana's perception of her father's collaboration in this power narrative leads to her rebellion against her father: her denial of his name. In the play she escapes but is once more attacked by el Picao; her cries for help heard only by Ismael, who dies with her, reclaimed by the sea. In the film the power narrative leads to a series of stand-offs between the Picaos, Juana's brother and the Tarantos, the second of which culminates in the death of Moji (Antonio Gades). Juana escapes to rejoin her lover in his dovecote on Christmas Eve – *La Noche Buena* – but there they are murdered by El Picao, who is subsequently killed by Rafael's brother amongst the horses of el Zorongo. Whereas the resolution of the play draws attention to the continuing hatred between the two families, the film ends with symbolic reconciliation between them: El Zorongo gives La Taranta his hand. Outside, the grouping of the characters is reminiscent of groupings on the hill of Calvary in film versions of the story of Christ – underlining the redemptive quality of the story. Hope for the future is offered in the friendship of the younger representatives of the two families, who leave hand in hand.

The shifts in plot and their symbolic significance are matched by changes in the wider framing of the film, and the perspectives it offers on the characters and conflicts. There is a continuous pull between further mystification of the story and a more concrete materialization of the conflict. So, for instance, the change in name of the male Taranto lead from the play's Ismael to the film's Rafael, suggests a deliberate attempt to parallel the lovers Rafael and Juan with Romeo and Juliet. The inclusion of Antonio Gades' character has the same effect, placing emphasis on the seriousness, sincerity and faithfulness of Rafael. The conflict over Juliet/Juana is, then, enacted by a Picao who takes his power from the duplicitous narrative of El Zorongo, and

a Romeo/Rafael, faithful to the mythical narrative of his forebear. The aspects of the wider framing of Rafael and Juana's story in the play, which seek or in some way depend on fidelity to Shakespeare's narrative and its representation throughout history are quite revealing in their emphasis on physicality, in the materialization of the Bard in the bodies of the gypsies. These fragments include the opening conflict and the meeting of the lovers. Beginning in a silent exchange of looks across a crowded scene of festivities, their encounter is choreographed to the beat of their rhythmic clapping, emphasizing their absorption in their respective physical presence. The flagrant seductiveness of Juana's dance which follows, prepares for their impetuous escape to the beach and stolen kiss between the waves. The formalized expressiveness of their meeting here translates the verbally-contained eroticism of *Romeo and Juliet*, and focuses the film on physical presence and desire.

More tantalizingly, there are echoes of Queen Mab in the mad dance down the Ramblas of the Mercutio character, Antonio Gades, whose embodiment of desire, of the fetishization of the bodily, has been reflected in Almodóvar's reframing of the episode in *La Ley del Deseo*. Moji's death, too, draws on that of Mercutio in Shakespeare, placing emphasis on the loss of his physical desirability, by counterpointing it with his 'manful' insistence on waving to the departing English tourists, as if to suggest that nothing is wrong. In them we find represented a certain kind of spectator and reader-as-translator, the spectator who desires the unproblematic, carnivalesque exoticism of Iberia, with its gypsies and flamenco, but not the violence, remaining ignorant of the real material conditions of existence there.

Such an historicized moment is also reflected in the recasting of the lovers' recourse to spiritual guidance. In this film, Padre Lorenzo is a conservative representative of the traditional values of state-sanctioned Catholicism. He can offer neither hope nor sanctuary to Romeo and Juliet, unless they have the agreement of their parents. His main concern is that they do not go too far in their physical contact; he is not interested in their story as one of possible reconciliation. The film underlines how the spectator should perceive this translation, just in case we do not have a Father Laurence with which to compare him,

by focusing on the lovers' helpless insignificance against the forbidding interior arches of Barcelona's Gothic cathedral, and the motif is picked up again with Moji's reference to his wound not being as wide as the door of a cathedral; but equally deathly, we might add to Rovira y Beleta's purpose. There is a fleeting echo of the farewells of the balcony scenes, in the Modernist garden of Juana's house, but the translation here is a tableau-like rendering of the mythical monument, rather like the configuration of the lovers' bodies at the ending of the film, draped beautifully across each other, as in most Romantic and romanticized recastings of the story. The hand across the void re-emphasizes a possible conciliatory message and then the camera moves to the lovers walking hand in hand across the beach. We are once more clearly in the realms of romantic myth.

In many ways, Rovira-Beleta's translation is little more than an expressionist recasting of the myth of star-crossed love, legitimating its use of gypsy culture to reflect this by recourse to the supreme canonical version – indeed, exaggerated recourse to it if compared with a similarly-themed film of the same period, *West Side Story* (1961). Yet there are also aspects of the film which, when read in relation to Mañas's play, suggest an attempt to demystify and historicize the narrative in a clear sociocultural context. Although I have referred to expressionist aspects of the film, its dominant tone and aesthetic is one of grainy documentary realism, the cutting is often clumsy, leading to a patchwork quality of scenes from gypsy life. Dancing is used mainly in the context of social gatherings, such as the wedding at the beginning, to mark the Tarantos' exuberant lifestyle; and Antonio Gades' solo fantasia clearly stands apart in this respect; hence, perhaps, my desire to associate it with the flights of fancy of the Queen Mab speech. In this, *Los Tarantos* departs significantly from the more marked expressionism of its more immediate source, and marks out a very different territory for itself from that of *West Side Story*. The setting of the film, in Barcelona's gypsy quarter of the Somorrostro, and the streets around the Ramblas and the Gothic quarter, gives a clear social context for the film in terms of the experiences of this marginalized community, that of *Barracòpolis* (Garriga 77–93). The film clearly seeks to show Barcelona from the perspective of the gypsy, defamiliarizing aspects of the city – such as

the Ramblas, the bull ring and the social gatherings, and this is underlined by the fragments of interaction with the world beyond the gypsy community: the spectators at the initial fight, the presence of the English women and their desire for exoticism and the Latin Lover, the encounter with the priest at the Cathedral, and Juana's distinctly vertiginous flight to find Rafael, through the raucous, nightmarish streets of a Barcelona on Christmas Eve. There is also an interior narrative in the film which offers an alternative story, that of the young children of the family who enjoy each other's help, trust and support, who work to reconcile Juana and Rafael, who dance together, who share brylcream from a shop, who are used to emphasize the marginality of the gypsies when they leave the shop, unnoticed by a passer-by with his nose firmly in the newspaper of his own concerns, who comfort each other at the end. In many ways their narrative is one which from the very margins, unnoticed by anyone, undermines the validity of the narrative of 'eternal' conflict, that of star-crossed love and of the violent passion of the gypsy (which we later find in Saura). However, it also offers the reader-as-translator a way in to consider the various ways in which the power of such stories can be reconfigured in translation, the struggles between the responsibility to seek a shared past of stories we might all recognize and the duty to face up to and negotiate particular differences, whether socially or textually marked.

In its alternately conflicting and converging pulls on two versions of the myth of romantic love, on representations of real time and of mythical time, *Los Tarantos* may not offer a coherent vision of the particular conflict between Tarantos and Zorongos, but in the gaps and overlaps between the different versions and perspectives on the same story, it presents an alternative narrative of the power struggles involved in re-presenting meaning – that of Mañas, perhaps, or that of Shakespeare, but surely more problematically that of the gypsy margins Rovira-Beleta places so ambiguously at the centre of his story. It is, then, significant that this alternative story, the hope for future reconciliation, in the creation of a different sense of collectivity, is represented symbolically by a tentative hand across the void. The tentative hand of the translator perhaps, a sign of contact and engagement, but one that is nevertheless partial and contingent. As a

reading of Iberia, *Los Tarantos* reproduces many of the clichés, but at the same time re-locates them to explore their temporal and spatial validity. Above all the film confronts and contains (indeed, entraps) the reader of Iberia, drawing attention to the symbolic violence contained within each reading of that figure. It is a call to communication, friendship and community, as well as a reminder of its limits.

Reading-as-translation demands negotiation of the different boundaries between languages, individuals and communities, drawn in the process of making meaning, in the very creation of a space of encounter between cultures. Through it we may observe or even achieve the transfer of a particular meaning, the communication of something transparent, accessible and 'universal', but as in *Los Tarantos*, this may be little more than the repetition of a cliché. What becomes more interesting is the relationship between the rhetoricity and silences of the text uncovered in the process, the sense of the limits of discourse, of that something beyond that cannot be fully translated. For the reader-as-translator, it is both a reminder of the translation trap, the inevitability of some degree of paraphrase and appropriation, and a sign of that more utopian goal of translatability.

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