Interpreting, Performing and Translating Isabella

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the divergent perceptions of Measure for Measure*'s Isabella in different reception spheres: critics of the play have either described Isabella as a hysterical character whose reactions are caused by repressed sexuality, or have defended her right to sexual freedom and have underlined her difficult position, as central to the outcome of other characters' destinies but manipulated by them; on the stage, directors' attitudes towards her have partly been reflected in the choice of the actress, which inevitably determines the audience's interpretation of Isabella's role in the play and of the play as a whole. This is studied here by considering two very different RSC productions of* Measure for Measure. *Finally, the article examines two translations of the play into Spanish – a reader-oriented one and one meant for performance, in order to show how these different target texts reflect differing attitudes towards Isabella's character and to her relationship with the other main characters in the play.*

(KEYWORDS: controversy, critics' interpretation, directors' choices, translation strategies, audience reception).

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las opiniones divergentes que ha suscitado la Isabella de Medida por medida *en distintos ámbitos de recepción: los críticos de la obra, o bien la han descrito como un personaje histérico cuyas reacciones vienen motivadas por una sexualidad reprimida, o han defendido su derecho a la libertad sexual, subrayando su difícil posición en la obra, pues Isabella resulta fundamental para los destinos de los demás personajes pero es, a su vez, manipulada por éstos; en el teatro, las actitudes de los directores hacia ella se han visto en parte reflejadas en la elección de la actriz, que condiciona inevitablemente la interpretación del* *público respecto al papel de Isabella en la obra y a ésta en su conjunto. Esto se estudia aquí analizando dos producciones de la RSC muy diferentes entre sí. Por último, el artículo analiza dos traducciones de la obra al español – una orientada a la lectura y otra a la representación – al objeto de mostrar cómo estos diferentes textos meta reflejan actitudes distintas hacia el personaje de Isabella y hacia su relación con los demás personajes principales de la obra.* (PALABRAS CLAVE: controversia, interpretación crítica, decisiones de los directores, estrategias de traducción, recepción del público).

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* stands as a rather controversial play, at least as regards critical reactions and analyses. It is a play based upon a world of contrasts, which pervades the language (most speeches are built on antitheses), sets characters in opposition and marks the structure of the play in several ways: on the one hand, the rhythm changes dramatically as the play moves on to the second half – "the first half is all abstract debate, all talk, talk, talk: the second is all action" (actress Juliet Stevenson, in Rutter 1988: 39); on the other hand, the axis on which the tragedy is first established shifts from the conflicts provoked by the moral righteousness of a puritan law-giver to the dilemma and pain of a woman's sacrifice; finally, the tone of the play is also antithetical, since what had definitely started as a tragedy – both the central motives of the plot and the main characters are typically tragic – suddenly becomes a comedy with farcical intrigues and a happy end, despite the fact that the major male characters had been threatened with death in the first half and the two female characters had had to deal with the threat of the deaths of others (Frye, in Sandler 1986: 151).

All this has created a certain feeling of confusion, increased by the fact that the play seems to confer "equal dramatic power to mutually exclusive positions" (McLuskie, 1985: 94) and that it discourages us from condemning people, since the characterization is immersed in an increasing sense of irony which never leaves us (Frye, in Sandler, 1986: 147), as we can neither really like or condemn any of the characters:

> We can't condemn Claudio for his fear of what he feels to be [...] a totally undeserved death: we can't condemn Isabella for turning shrewish when she feels betrayed by both Angelo and Claudio. [...] Angelo is certainly not more likable as a hypocritical fraud than he was in his days of incorruptibility, but he seems somehow more accessible. [...] But Isabella, in her invulnerable virtue, would not be anyone's favourite heroine [while] Lucio [...] retains something about him that's obstinately likable.
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> *Frye, in Sandler (1986: 147-8)*

Shakespeare thus imposes an insecurity of meaning on the reader (Rose 1985: 107) and leaves us with an unsettling feeling, particularly towards the main female character, Isabella, who has produced a "wider divergence of opinion" than any other character in the play (R.M. Smith 1950, in Rose 1985: 103), being alternatively defended or accused and greatly determining critics' reactions to the play as a whole. Critics of the play have either described Isabella as a hysterical character whose reactions are caused by repressed sexuality, or have defended her right to sexual freedom and have underlined her difficult position, as central to the outcome of other characters' destinies but manipulated by them.

I shall here analyse this difficult and controversial Shakespearean character in different reception spheres, with both a textual and a performance approach and in both a source-culture and a target-culture context, with the aim of throwing some light on the reasons why the perceptions of Isabella have been so divergent and, ultimately, on the factors which intervene in the interpretation of drama characters and tests.

1. INTERPRETING ISABELLA

Isabella is certainly the most problematic character in *Measure for Measure*. Her famous line "More than our brother is our chastity" (2.4.185), encapsulating her dilemma, has been the centre of all sorts of criticisms and it has mostly been interpreted as the product of inhibition or of an obsession with sex, which makes her sanctity cold and self-centred. RSC actress Juliet Stevenson informally summarises most people's negative reactions to this character: "Nobody likes Isabella. They think she's a prig, that she's running away from the world into the convent because she's frightened of her own sexuality. They won't forgive her for valuing her virginity above Claudio's life" (in Rutter 1988: 26). This actress and Paola Dionisotti, both of whom have played Isabella with the RSC, insist, however, on the need to understand this character's position: when Isabella enters the play (not until scene 4), everything has already been established by three men – the Duke, Angelo, and Claudio – but she suddenly becomes the axis around which the action revolves: she has to deal with everybody's contradictions, even with hers, and she is asked to redeem her brother, who has been condemned for a vice she herself condemns. Isabella's dilemma must be analysed in the context of her Christian conviction, in which the body may be sacrificed to redeem the soul rather than the other way round, which therefore makes death dealable with. That is why both actresses find that controversial line the "trickiest of the performance" and insist that it can only be interpreted within Isabella's values: "Isabella speaks the line with utter conviction. If you're Isabella, 'More than our brother....' is *fact*, not opinion." (Dionisotti, in Rutter 1988: 26). They find it very difficult to play Isabella to nowadays audiences, who do not share the concepts of damnation and grace that are so fundamental to the play. But they both find her very attractive and, in fact, the most courageous character in the play (in Rutter 1988: 26).

Jacqueline Rose (1985) and Kathleen McLuskie (1985) have studied different critical analyses of Isabella.[1] and they both conclude that she can only be interpreted in the role that the text itself allows her. McLuskie rejects a possible feminist interpretation of the play: "Feminist criticism of this play is restricted to exposing its own exclusion from the text. It has no point of entry into it. for the dilemmas of the narrative and the sexuality under discussion are constructed in completely male terms and the women's role as the objects of exchange within that system of sexuality is not at issue. however much a feminist might want to draw attention to it" (McLuskie 1985: 97).[2] Rose. for her part. is surprised at the accusations that Isabella has received – which have been even stronger than those against *Hamlet*'s Gertrude: "Given that *Measure for Measure* is one of Shakespeare's plays where it is generally recognized that his method of characterization cannot fully he grasped psychologically (the weakness of Claudio as a character. the allegorical role of the Duke). then the extent to which Isabella has been discussed in terms of consistency. credibility and ethics is striking" (Rose 1985: 105).

Like most of Shakespeare's female characters. Isabella is dependent upon the men. who are usually the initiators of the action in his plays so that the women appear in relationship to them as wives. daughters. lovers or mothers – and in a reactive. rather than an active. position. This does not mean their psychology cannot be as complex as that of men or that Shakespeare does not give them "endless avenues to explore". as all the actresses who discuss his female roles in Rutter's book thoroughly agree (1988: xxiv-xxv). Isabella is also initially in a reactive position but she soon becomes the centre of the action: her dilemma will loom large in the first half of the play and her own sexuality is the spark that sets off the main crises.

Interestingly. and ironically too. her sexuality plays a major role in all her scenes. when all that she had wanted to do was retire into a convent: her pleading with Angelo becomes a sexual conflict itself: the fact that she is showing her face when she is about to take a vow which will forbid her to ever speak uncovered to a man (Rose 1985: 117). Her voice. her excessive propriety and the paradox she represents as a sexually attractive nun all provoke the central male character's sexual desire and inner conflict; she gradually becomes aware of her own sexuality. so that even her language is tinged with eroticism. particularly in her scenes with Angelo. while both characters had initially been "paralysed by moral rigidity" (Frye. in Sandler 1986: 146).

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[1] "Isabella has been described as a 'hussy' [...]. 'hysterical' [...]. as suffering 'inhibition' [...] or 'obsession' [...] about sex. She has also been revered as divine" (Rose 1985: 104): Rose does not share other more favourable analyses either: "The basic accusation [her lack of sexuality] does not greatly differ from the more measured interpretations of Isabella's slow growth into humanity which have been offered against it" (Rose 1985: 105).

[2] Pilar Hidalgo also warns of some contemporary analyses "against the grain". which may result in anachronistic interpretations of Shakespeare's plays: "Shakespeare's comedies assert sexual differences and register male and female as something natural and taken for granted. This does not mean that some female characters are not presented with some notable sympathy which led Clara Claiborne Park to say. on a note which has disappeared from the latest criticism. that 'Shakespeare liked and respected women: which is something not everybody does'" (Hidalgo 1997: 32) (my translation).

Rose compares the accusations that both Gertrude and Isabella have received on the basis of their sexual roles: "Gertrude in *Hamlet* of too much sexuality, Isabella in *Measure for Measure* of not enough. In both cases, the same notion of excess or deficiency has appeared in the critical commentaries on the plays. [...] In both, sexuality entails danger and violates propriety, or form. [...] Sexuality appears as infringement, and in each case it is the woman who is the cause" (Rose 1985: 95-97). In McLuskie's view (1985: 97), Isabella's action is determined by her sexuality and is basically defined in Angelo's lines (2.4.134-7) summarising the argument about whether Isabella will give up her brother and thus be more than a woman, or submit to Angelo's lustful entreaties, and so be less than one.

Like many Shakespearean women, Isabella is put on trial, but she is also at the centre of the final resolution of the play, when all the intrigues which had been set up by the manipulating Duke come to an end and Isabella becomes "the Duke's staged masterpiece" (in Northrop Frye's words [Sandler 1986: 152]): she plays an important part in Act 5 – albeit with not many lines –, first to disclose Angelo's hypocrisy and real character, then when she is tested once again at the end of the play, since it is not until she pleads with the Duke for Angelo's life – still thinking that Angelo has had her brother executed – that it is revealed that Claudio is alive.

II. PERFORMING THE PART OF ISABELLA

The different interpretations of Isabella on the metatextual level are matched on the stage by directors' choices regarding this character, which reflect their attitudes towards her.[3] We shall study this by comparing two very different productions of *Measure for Measure* by the Royal Shakespeare Company, which will show how directors' decisions inevitably determine the audience's interpretation of Isabella and of the play as a whole. We shall focus on two important aspects belonging to different sign systems of the performance text, which will illustrate divergent dramaturgical choices between these productions: a) the choice of the actress for the role of Isabella, and b) the interpretation of a stage direction concerning her final exit.

The first of these two RSC productions was directed by Barry Kyle in 1978, with Paola Dionisotti as Isabella, and received all sorts of unfavourable comments in reviews (such as "wayward", "miscast" and "directed by a noodle" [Rutter 1988: 26]). *Measure for Measure* returned to Stratford five years later in the hands of Adrian Noble with Juliet Stevenson playing Isabella and winning wide acclaim. Rutter (1988: 40) describes the new reception situation for the play: "in 1983, both the political and the theatrical climate had changed. 'Feminist' had made

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As Aston and Savona explain (1991: 100), "[i]n twentieth century traditions of Western theatre, the responsibility for organising the theatrical sign-system has fallen to the director" and his/her dramaturgical choices usually reveal an underlying ideological intent (1991: 109).

its way into the vocabulary; chastity was being reclaimed as a sexual option; Isabella was ripe for recuperating: and Juliet was ready to take on the challenge."

Northrop Frye (in Sandler 1986: 145) suggests that when we are reading Shakespeare we should think of ourselves as directing a performance of the play in question, so that one of the choices we would have to make is "the kind of actors and actresses that seem right for their assigned parts". An actor is definitely not an empty sign (Aston & Savona 1991: 103), since he generates a whole unity of signs by means of which he conveys character to the spectator: factors such as age, physical attributes, costume, manner of walking, etc. will acquire significance on the stage, so that this choice is not at all inconsequential.

Northrop Frye even describes the type of actor and actress he would like for Angelo and Isabella, who would correspond to the idea he has of them:

> If I were casting Angelo, I'd look for an actor who could give the impression, not merely of someone morally very uptight, but possessing the kind of powerful sexual appeal that many uptight people have [...]. If I were casting Isabella, I'd want an actress who could suggest an attractive, intelligent, strongly opinionated girl of about seventeen or eighteen, who is practically drunk on the notion of becoming a nun, but who's really possessed by adolescent introversion rather than spiritual vocation. That's why she seems nearly asleep in the first half of the play.
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> *Frye, in Sandler (1986: 145-6)*

This idea is obviously not shared by everybody, and certainly not by all directors of the play. Paola Dionisotti recalls that Barry Kyle saw Isabella unsympathetically, as someone who was very repressed, uptight and mean-spirited. She hints that it was probably her own appearance that won her the role since, with her "thin bony face" and "small mouth", she "could slip into that model for him very easily" (in Rutter 1988: 39). Kyle also thought of Isabella as "old", meaning forty, and as someone who had always wanted to go into a convent, which, considering the age she was cast in, would make her look rather frustrated too ("an extremist", Paola thinks, to 1978 audiences); and, to make sure the audience did not side with her at all, he made Isabella the older sister, casting Claudio as very young and innocent, which would inevitably put the audience on his side and make them regard Isabella's dilemma unsympathetically. Her costume was also significant, showing her austerity – "Wimpled, hooded and veiled, Paola's Isabella was the most rigorously habited Isabella at Stratford for a decade" (Rutter 1988: 32) – and, although the actress never discarded it, she used it as a very signifying prop throughout the performance, putting the hood back, rolling her sleeves up and getting dirt on the hem as Isabella's ambivalence towards retreat increased. She tried to show her habit gradually got in her way, and even pulled the wimple off when she thought Claudio was dead.

After the first night, Kyle himself realised he had not got it right with Isabella, particularly regarding her age and the image she projected, as Dionisotti remembers with some frustration: "It was the day after we'd opened *Measure for Measure*. We'd all read the reviews – some were awful. He came to me in my dressing room and said, 'I think we've gone all wrong with Isabella. [...] I think we should be thinking about [...] someone very very young, very innocent...'" (Rutter 1988: xx).

Juliet Stevenson was more fortunate with her director and was allowed to explore the positive sides of the character and reinterpret her. Her Isabella was "warm, vivacious, even sensuous" (Rutter 1988: 41). This actress insisted that the production should not be set in a contemporary situation if the audience were to sympathise with Isabella's dilemma and support her rather than take a detached and critical view of it. In this 1983 production, Isabella certainly came out as someone much more attractive than in the previous one, not just because of that tone given to the performance but also because of the external appearance of the actress: with the director's and the designer's approval, Stevenson rejected the habited and wimpled Isabella on the grounds that the nun's costume would stereotype her character,[4] while she wanted the audience to look at a person rather than see the image of a nun all night. Besides, she found the habit too restrictive for Isabella's constant changing, which is reflected in her language (Rutter 1988: 41-42). She was also cast as much younger than the previous Isabella and certainly not older than Claudio: we need only look at the pictures of these two productions to compare the very different images the audiences would have got of this Shakespearean character, which would inevitably have governed their reactions towards her.

The question of the nun's habit once more shows that theatre is a densely signifying system in which everything which is presented to the spectator is a sign. It also illustrates present-day directors' free hand in interpreting stage directions in classic texts, where the *Nebentext* (Ingarden's term for the text containing stage directions)[5] is inscribed in the dialogue, so that stage directions have to be extrapolated from it. Thus, although Shakespeare gives no *extra-dialogic* stage-direction[6] for Isabella's costume, a habited Isabella might however be deduced from the way she is introduced to Angelo by both Provost and Angelo's servant: *Provost*. "Here is the sister of the man condemn'd/ Desires access to you. / [...] a very virtuous maid./ And to be shortly of a sisterhood,/ If not already." (2.2.18-22); *Servant*. "One Isabel, a sister, desires access to you" (2.4.18). These might be taken as *intra-dialogic* stage directions.

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[4] "The deployment of certain signs and the exclusion of others constitutes an 'interpretation' of the role directed by the performer" (Aston & Savona 1991: 106).

[5] As opposed to the *Haupttext*, or main body of dramatic text (Aston & Savona 1991: 51)

[6] See Aston & Savona's classification of *extra-dialogic* and *intra-dialogic* stage directions: Aston & Savona 1991: 71-95.

and obviously open to interpretation. "The Nebentext. subject to interpretation by the director. designer. actors and technicians. adhered to with varying degrees of commitment and understanding. on occasion ignored. may or may not survive to inform the production" (Aston & Savona 1991: 73). This 1982 RSC production preferred to ignore the possible interpretation of these speeches as *intra-dialogic* stage directions. in order to make Isabella's appearance more complementary to the overall image she was to project.

This leads us to the second performance aspect we shall be dealing with. which also concerns the interpretation of a stage direction. namely that of Isabella's final exit. Shakespeare gives Isabella no words at the end: the last time she speaks is when. kneeling before the Duke. she pleads for Angelo's life: and she is assigned no words in the text when the Duke seems to propose to her after disclosing Claudio: "and for your lovely sake./ give me your hand and say you will be mine" (5.1.489-490): or after the Duke's final speech: "Dear Isabel.! I have a motion much imports your good:/ Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline./ What's mine is yours. and what is yours is mine" (5.1.532-535). after which he invites everybody to accompany him to his palace and they all "*exeunt*".

The "problem" here is what Isabella should do: it is probably open to interpretation once again. although we might also take the Duke's words as another example of an intra-dialogic stage direction. this time of the type that Aston & Savona classify as "n.1J. Action: other-directed". and thus interpret that Isabella's action is indicated by the Duke's words. so that she is supposed to take his hand and accept his proposal.

Neither of the actresses playing Isabella in those two RSC productions. however. were very eager to accept a conventional happy ending. Juliet Stevenson thinks Isabella was given no words probably because she does not really know what to say to the Duke's proposal (although this actress also points out that having no words in the last act is usually the case with other female protagonists in Shakespeare's plays). At the end of *Measure for Measure*. men have once again organised things. "So what should Isabella say or do? I used to take a long. long pause. in which I looked at everyone – drawing in the collective experience in a way. Then I took the Duke's hand" (Stevenson. in Rutter 1988: 52). Paola Dionisotti seemed less willing to accept the Duke's proposal. Her final speeches had been heavily cut by the director. and by the time the Duke's words came she said she felt weary and devastated. so she could not find the reason for a happy ending anywhere: "The fact that Shakespeare doesn't script Isabella's answer to the Duke's proposal but just leaves it with his line. 'Give me thy hand.' tells me she doesn't give him her hand. I think it's quite clear. Shakespeare is leaving an extremely big void there. a figure who goes completely silent and makes no commitment. She doesn't. He asks. But she doesn't" (in Rutter 1988: 40). It is not clear from Dionisotti's account. however. whether she finally took his hand. as the director probably wanted – he did want a happy end –. or she simply stood silently on the stage. by the Duke's side.

The question no doubt has to be negotiated in every performance. and some directors have taken advantage of this "openness" that seems to characterise the end of the play and have interpreted Isabella's reaction to the Duke in ways which others may consider unorthodox: McLuskie mentions a production of this play by Jonathan Miller, in which Isabella “literally refused the Duke's offer of marriage and walked off stage in the opposite direction" (McLuskie 1985: 95). She explains this theatrical decision in ideological and dramaturgical terms:

> Miller has been a powerful advocate for the right of a director to reconstruct Shakespeare's plays in the light of modern preoccupations, creating for them an afterlife which is not determined by their original productions. As a theatre director, he is aware of the extent to which the social meaning of a play depends upon the arrangements of theatrical meaning: which is different from simply asserting alternative “interpretations”.
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> *McLuskie (1985: 95)*

I would like to finish this section by referring to the way these two aspects were dealt with in the only Spanish production of this play I have record of, which was directed by Miguel Narros and put on at the Teatro Español in Madrid in 1969. The script was Enrique Llovet's translation of the play, which will be studied later. Isabella was played by Berta Riaza, which suggests that her performance was more in line with that of Juliet Stevenson since this Spanish actress conveys the impression of a strong determined woman and the reviews suggest that her performance was meant to make the audience sympathise with her – she was described in *Pueblo* as “*conmovedora y conmovida*” [“moving and moved” (my translation)].[7] She was, however, dressed as a nun like Paola Dionisotti – she is wearing a wimple and a habit in the photographs of that production published in *El Espectador y la crítica* –[8] but this is probably the norm in productions of this play, Juliet Stevenson's costume being an exception. There are no references to Isabella's final exit in the reviews, and Llovet has added no stage direction in that regard: however, and interestingly, the translator has deleted the Duke's proposal from 5.1.489-490 (he now only addresses Isabel there to say he *will* forgive Angelo) and has translated his final speech to Isabella in 5.1.532-535 simply into “*Isabel, querida Isabel... A ti quisiera hacerte feliz personalmente...*” [“Isabel, dear Isabel... I would like to make *you* happy personally...”]. Although these words might also be interpreted as a proposal of marriage, it is certainly a shorter, vaguer and slightly more surprising one than it was in the source text, since nothing has now been said of this kind before, so that the end of the play turns out to be even more ambiguous in this regard in this Spanish target text. But since those are now the Duke's final words, we may guess he probably took Isabella's hand and they all exited.

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[7] All the English translations that I shall from now on include in brackets after all Spanish quotations will be my own. They will be literal translations meant to clarify what the quotations try to illustrate.

[8] Francisco Alvaro. El *Espectador y la crítica* (El *teatro en España* en *1969*).

III. TRANSLATING *MEASURE* FOR *MEASURE*

We shall finally see how Isabella's character has been portrayed in two Spanish translations of the play, which have been selected among the various target texts of *Measure for Measure* into Spanish because of their very different purpose and function:

- *Medida por medida*. William Shakespeare. 1993. Translated by Luis Astrana Marín. Madrid: Aguilar. [1st ed. 1934. Madrid: Calpe]

- *Medida por medida*. Willian [sic] Shakespeare. 1969. Translated by Enrique Llovet. Madrid: Escélicer. Colección Teatro Alfil.

Astrana's text is definitely reader-oriented, shows an approach to the source text mainly as a literary text, and is presented as a learned literal translation, as can be deduced from the surtitle on the first page, which reads (in my translation): "Introduction, translation and notes. First unabridged version from the English original." By contrast, Llovet's translation is clearly performance-oriented: in fact, it seems to have been commissioned for the production directed by Miguel Narros in 1969, and it is presented as a "*versión libre*" ["free version"], in that cautious way in which translators for the stage often offer their target texts in order to justify the shifts they have brought about to make the text acceptable to the reception norms of the target culture and to prevent any accusations of infidelity by those who strictly adhere to an extremely source-oriented concept of translation (Ribas 1992: 27).[9] Llovet's translation, however, cannot really be accused as "unfaithful" to the source text – whatever that term means in drama translation – while he also seems to have managed to create a really successful text in the target culture, as can be deduced from the reviews of that production.[10]

The scenes that have been analysed in order to study whether these divergent approaches have implied different translation strategies concerning Isabella are those in which she appears in the play: 2.2, 2.4 (with Angelo); 3.1 (with Claudio and with the Duke); 5 (all).

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[9] Llovet even includes an "*Autocrítica*" ("self-criticism") in his translation, in which he states that he has tried to clarify the main line of a play whose verse becomes difficult because of its depth and, on occasion, of its ambiguity.

[10] All the reviews quoted in *El espectador y la crítica*, from papers such as *EL ESPECTADOR*, *YA* and *MARCA*, describe Llovet's version as faithful to the source text's essence and at the same time appealing to present-day audiences, and they do not stint on their praise of his text.

In Astrana's text, Isabella's speeches usually contain more words than in the source text,[11] but that is simply a result of the literal approach of this translation, in which every semantic content is translated and some "unclear" sentences are explained in paraphrase or in footnotes. Her speeches have all been maintained in number and in length (as well as those of the other characters) and the lexical contrasts and parallelisms which pervade many of them have also been preserved. In general, the tone of her language and her attitude are very similar to those of the source text, but two things have to be noted which make this Isabella slightly different: first, she sometimes sounds rather milder and more ceremonious, particularly in the scenes with Angelo. Thus, "the blow of justice" (2.2.30) becomes "*severidad*" ["severity"]; "slipped", in her dangerous accusation to Angelo – "If he had been as you, and you as he,/ you would have slipp'd like him" (2.2.63-64) –, which provokes his immediate reaction "Pray you be gone", has been turned into "*delinquido*" ["offended"], which makes it more legalistic and less personal, and therefore less erotic, than in the source text; and her despairing "Spare him, spare him" (2.2.84) becomes a very mild "*Excusadle, excusadle*" ["Excuse him, excuse him"], which seems a bit too courteous in the context.

Secondly, Isabella's pauses, silences and stops for breath, which are marked in the source test by her poetic rhythm, are not observed in Astrana's prose translation: it would be up to the actress using this target test as a script to decide on her rhythm but the reader of this translation – a more likely receptor of it – has no indication of the tempo of Isabella's speeches, while the reader of the source text *may* have an idea by the half lines which finish and enhance some important words, the lay-out of the poetry and the rhymes.

As an example of this target text's Isabella, let us read a section of her final soliloquy in 2.4 ("To whom should I complain?...") after her second interview with Angelo, which illustrates the general translation strategy used for this character: the metaphors she resorts to are the same; the punctuation and the length of sentences have been preserved, which may give an idea of her tempo: she sounds very emotional in the translation too, but the pauses are again not indicated and the lexical contrasts between important words are not highlighted by the syntactic structure or by the rhythm, as they are in the English text (notice in particular the emphasis on "abhorred pollution" – in a half-line – and the rhythmical contrasts "chaste/die" and "brother/chastity" in Isabella's two famous lines 184-185, in the source text):

> *Isab.* [...] I'll to my brother. [...]
> That, had he twenty heads to tender down
> On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up
> Before his sister should her body stoop

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[11] The source text edition that has been used for this paper is the following: William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*. A new edition, edited with an introduction and glossary by Peter Alexander. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1970.

> To such abhorr'd pollution.
> Then, Isabel, live chaste, and brother, die:
> More than our brother is our chastity. (2.4.180-185)
>
> ISABELA. *[...] Voy en busca de mi hermano: [...] que si poseyese veinte cabezas que colocar sobre veinte tajos sangrantes, las daría antes que su hermana humillase su cuerpo bajo una polución tan aborrecida. Por tanto, vive casta, Isabel, y tú, hermano mío, muere. Más cara que nuestro hermano es nuestra castidad.* (1993: 96)
> ["I'll go and find my brother: [...] who, had he twenty heads to put on twenty bloody blocks, would give them up rather than let his sister stoop her body to such abhorred pollution. Then, live chaste, Isabel, and you, my brother, die. Dearer than our brother is our chastity."]

At the end of the play, the Duke's proposal to Isabella is as evident in this translation as in the original: "Give me your hand and say you will be mine" (5.1.490) has been rendered literally into "*dadme vuestra mano y decid que seréis mía*" (1993: 486). In fact, his final words to Isabella can be interpreted as a proposal of marriage even more clearly in the Spanish text, thanks to the use of the word "*proposición*" ["proposal"] – which usually collocates with "*matrimonio*" ["marriage"] – for the Duke's English "motion": "Dear Isabel,/ I have a motion much imports your good; [...]" (5.1.532-533) > "*Querida Isabel, tengo que haceros una proposición que importa mucho a vuestra dicha.*" [Dear Isabel, I have to make a proposal to you which will be of interest to your happiness"] (1993: 486). Once again, we do not know Isabella's reaction to those words, since Astrana has remained faithful to the lack of a stage direction there.

Isabella has clearly changed her tone in Llovet's translation for the stage. She uses plainer and certainly more direct language, which makes her sound more assertive in general than in the source text and in Astrana's target text. Several strategies have been used for this: Llovet has changed the mood of many of her speeches, so that she is generally less exclamatory now[12] – "O just but severe law!" (2.2.41) > "*La ley es justa y a la vez severa*" ["Law is just and at the same time severe"] (1969: 28) – and her rhetorical questions in her reasoning with Angelo have frequently been turned into statements and assertions. She appears as much more daring and direct in her retorts to him: the following is a clear example of this, since she is changed from begging in the source text to actually questioning his explanations in the Spanish text:

> *Isab.* Yet show some pity. (2.2.99)

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[12] Although some exclamations ("¡No! ¡No! ¡No!") have been added in the middle of one of her speeches in 3.1, in which she rejects her brother's suggestion that she might surrender to Angelo's advances (1969: 42).

ISABEL. *La piedad no tiene nada que ver con eso* (1969: 30)
["Mercy has nothing to do with that."]

Llovet's test makes the meaning of her sentences and arguments come out much more clearly (notice the addition of "*Mucho*" here):

Ang. Why do you put these sayings upon me?
Isab. Because authority, though it err like others. [...] (2.2.133-135)
ANGELO. *¿Qué tengo yo que ver con todas esas máximas?*
["What do I have to do with those sayings?"]
ISABEL. *Mucho. La autoridad se equivoca [...]* (1969: 31)
["A lot. Authority errs ..."]

Her assertive tone is added to by the fact that her original hypotheses have mostly been turned into declarations of certainty, since conditionals have been translated into the indicative:

Isab. [...] I had rather give my body than my soul. (2.4.56)
ISABEL. *Yo sacrificaré mi cuerpo antes que mi alma.* (1969: 33)
["I will sacrifice my body before my soul."]

Isab. [...] Better it were a brother died at once
Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die for ever. (2.4.106-108)
ISABEL. *[...] su muerte momentánea es mejor que mi muerte eterna.* (1969: 37)
["... his momentary death is better than my own eternal death."]

Angelo's language is also more direct: many of his rhetorical questions in his soliloquy in 3.2, as well as some of his questions to Isabella, have become statements too, which makes him now sound rather aggressive and certainly less ambiguous:

Ang Were not you, then, as cruel as the sentence
That you have slander'd so?(2.4.109-110)
ANGELO. *Eres tan cruel como la ley que lo ha condenado* (1969: 37)
["You are as cruel as the law that has condemned him."]

In Narros's 1969 production, Angelo was played by a well-known Spanish actor, Agustín González, who was reviewed in *Pueblo* as "*admirable*" and "*durísimo*" ["admirable and really harsh"].[15] This was no doubt partly due to the language his part was given in Llovet's text: Angelo is certainly notably harsher and colder, and sometimes less personal:

> *Ang.* Pray you be gone. (2.2.66)
> ANGELO. *La entrevista ha terminado.* (1969: 29)
> ["The meeting is over."]

And he is quite frank about his sexual attraction:

> *Ang.* Plainly conceive, I love you. [...] if you give me love. (2.4.141-144))
> ANGELO. *Te deseo, Isabel. [...] si tú accedes a acostarte conmigo.* (1969: 37)
> ["I desire you, Isabel [...] if you agree to sleep with me."]

Llovet has added a sentence which makes this character really clear, even too blunt, about his intentions (in my underlining):

> *Ang.* Believe me, on mine honour,
> my words express my purpose. (2.4.147-148)
> ANGELO. *So. Créeme. Te he dicho lo que siento. O te acuestas conmigo o mato a Claudio. Te lo juro.* (1964: 38)
> ["No, believe me, I have told you what I feel. Either you sleep with me, or else I swear I'll kill Claudio."]

The eroticism in Angelo's and Isabella's scenes has been reduced in this translation too: the word "bed", for instance, has disappeared from Isabella's very sensual speech in 2.4 (100-102). However, the danger entailed in her use of the word "slipped" (see 2.2.63-64 above) has been preserved in the Spanish word "*pecado*" ("sin")(1969: 39), with a rather more religious tone than in the source text (appropriate to the speaker's character, however), but certainly less distant and legalistic than in Astrana's text.

In general, Llovet uses a very natural modern language and, while the prose does not contribute to highlighting the lexical contrasts in Isabella's speeches – as happened in Astrana's text too –, this target text does show an attempt to reflect her rhythm and tempo: important pauses are here indicated by dots, such as those following the main sentences in her soliloquy at the end of Act 3 (2.4.180-185; see above):

> ISABEL. *[...] Hablaré con Claudio... [...] Estoy segura de que veinte cabezas*

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[15] In *El espectador y la crítica* (see note 8 above).

> *que tuviera, veinte inclinaría bajo el hacha del verdugo... Veinte cabezas, antes de ver prostituida a su hermana... ¡Defiende tu castidad, Isabel, aunque maten o Claudio!... La castidad es más valiosa que la vida de un hermano... [...]* (1969: 38-39)
> ["I'll talk to Claudio... [...] I'm sure that, had he twenty heads, twenty he'd bow under the executioner's axe... Twenty heads, rather than see his sister prostitute herself... Defend your chastity, Isabel, even if Claudio is killed!... Chastity is more valuable than a brother's life... [...]"

Finally, and interestingly, Isabella's speeches have all been maintained in number and in length while some of Angelo's monologues have been reduced, which reveals an intention to make this female character's presence felt at least as powerfully as that of the men around her.

CONCLUSION

Metalinguistic, extratextual and textual considerations have been combined in this study of *Measure for Measure*'s Isabella, in which I have tried to approach this character both in her textual role in the play and as a part to be played by an actress. These two approaches have been complemented by an analysis of two very different Spanish translations of the play, the comparison of which with the source test and that between two different RSC productions have served to illustrate the degree to which drama texts are open to interpretation: the divergence which all literary works may meet with in their critical analyses and readers' reception is more palpable in drama texts since directors', designers' and actors' views of each character and of the play as a whole are physicalised on the stage and audience reception is mediated by them. Being an interpretive act as well, drama translation – whether as a printed literary edition or as a script for performance in a target context – will also project different images of a play's characters, not just because what is normally good to read is not always good on the stage and vice versa, but because translators, like directors, mould their products according to their own views of the source text and of the translational norms of the target culture. As a controversial, indeed ambiguous character, Shakespeare's Isabella has served as a good example of all these spheres of interpretation that drama characters are generally subject to.

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