

## MISCELLANY

# SHAKESPEARE'S PHRASEOLOGICAL WORDPLAY AND TRANSLATION: A FEW OBSERVATIONS

José Luis Oncins Martínez  
Universidad de Extremadura

## ABSTRACT

This article reports on some of the results of two research projects on Shakespeare: one on the creative modification of phraseological units as a major source of his wordplay; and the other one on the translation of Shakespeare's comedies by the Extremaduran scholar José María Valverde. The first part of the article offers a review of the most salient kinds of modification proposed in the specialized literature up until now, suggesting a few that might prove equally useful for analyzing this essential component of Shakespeare's style. In the second part, after a few methodological considerations on the procedure and strategies for rendering this type of expression in Spanish, the article offers the traductological analysis of a selection of illustrative examples of these phraseologisms in José María Valverde's translation.

**KEY WORDS:** Shakespeare's style, phraseological units, creative modification, wordplay, translation.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo ofrece parte de los resultados de dos proyectos de investigación en torno a Shakespeare: uno sobre la modificación creativa de fraseologismos en su obra dramática, sin duda una de sus formas más características de juego verbal; y el otro sobre las traducciones de Shakespeare realizadas por el autor extremeño José María Valverde. La primera parte del artículo hace un repaso de las formas más usuales de modificación creativa que la literatura especializada ha identificado hasta la fecha, y se sugieren algunas otras que podría resultar igualmente útiles para analizar este componente tan característico del estilo de Shakespeare. En la segunda parte, después de algunas consideraciones metodológicas en torno a los procedimientos y estrategias para verter este tipo de expresiones al español, el artículo desgrana y comenta varios ejemplos ilustrativos de estas estructuras en la traducción de José María Valverde.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** estilo de Shakespeare, unidades fraseológicas, modificación creativa, juego verbal, traducción.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article reports on some of the results of two different but closely-related research projects carried out at the Universidad de Extremadura (Spain) during the last few years: one on Shakespeare's phraseological language—and more specifically on Shakespeare's creative modification of phraseological units as a major source of wordplay; and the other one on the translations of Shakespeare's comedies by the Extremaduran scholar and translator José María Valverde.<sup>1</sup> The relationship of the two projects appears too obvious, and in fact one can be said to feed on and complement the other. Indeed, if the quality of a translation can be best evaluated by focusing on those aspects of the source text that best reveal the idiosyncrasies of an author's style, there is no doubt that, with Shakespeare, any kind of wordplay—a staple of his style—lends itself nicely as an assessment yardstick. Moreover, the type of wordplay dealt with in the project becomes particularly suited to test the translator's work, for if wordplay generally represents a challenge for translators, it becomes doubly challenging—and hence doubly valuable for assessment—when it involves routine formulae, fixed expressions, idioms, proverbs or any other kind of phraseological units, an area of the linguistic system with a high degree of divergence across languages.

This article is structured in two sections that somehow try to reflect the procedural steps followed in this type of translation assessment research. The first one offers a review of the most salient kinds of modification proposed up until now, and suggests a few that might prove equally useful for analyzing this essential component of Shakespeare's style. The review draws mainly on the emerging branch of linguistics known as Phraseology but does not renounce to more traditional approaches like classical rhetoric or humour studies, which may equally help enrich our analysis. The second section begins with some brief methodological considerations with respect to the procedure and strategies for rendering this type of expression in Spanish, followed by the analysis of a selection of illustrative examples of these phraseologisms in Valverde's translation. Even though in the survey this author's works were collated with several other authors' translations, for the sake of space we will limit ourselves to comparing them only with those by Astrana, the only author, with Valverde, to translate Shakespeare's complete dramatic work into Spanish to date.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The two projects were funded, respectively, by the Consejería de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología of the Junta de Extremadura (Proj. no. 2PR02A030) and the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (HUM2005-01062). Both of them have been carried out within the activities of the Research Group GIALIRE (HUM021, Junta de Extremadura).

<sup>2</sup> This article—which is a modified and enriched version of an unpublished paper delivered at an international conference in Belgium (Oncins "Another") and a paper published in the same year (Oncins "Notas")—only deals with modified phraseological units. Therefore, it does not explore those units that appear in their canonical form, equally important in the dramatic text and also problematic for translators, especially in the case of proverbs and sayings, deeply rooted in the cultural milieu of Elizabethan England.

## 2. PHRASEOLOGICAL WORDPLAY AND SHAKESPEARE'S STYLE

Traditionally, studies on Shakespeare's wordplay have focused mainly on the lexeme or the individual word as the unit of analysis, whether they be polysemic, homonymic or homophonic. Spevack or Mahood, on the one hand, and Kökeritz, on the other, are paradigmatic examples of this approach on a semantic and a phonic level, respectively. Delabastita's monumental work deserves special mention as an exhaustive traductological study on *Hamlet* which stems from a not less exhaustive study on the Shakespearean pun.

Apart from mono-lexical puns, Shakespeare's texts also exhibit a different type of wordplay—less studied perhaps—based on structures larger than the word; namely, phraseologisms or phraseological units (PUs),<sup>3</sup> and more specifically those that have been modified and defamiliarized in their contexts of use through different discourse mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> Remember, for instance, Gregory's deliberate misinterpretation—through reliteralization—of Samson's idiomatic expression “to carry coals” (“to submit to humiliation or insult”) at the very opening of *Romeo and Juliet*: “*Sam*. Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals./ *Gre*. No, for then we should be colliers” (*Romeo and Juliet* I.i.1-2).<sup>5</sup>

While from a formal point of view these multi-word structures are different from the individual lexeme, functionally they differ but little, as through their occasional exploitation similar effects can also be achieved. In the case of the comedies, these effects are mostly humorous, as was to be expected. This preponderance of the comic element does not mean, of course, that one cannot find in Shakespeare's historical plays, tragedies and even many of his comedies plenty of “uncomic” phraseological puns (to borrow Muir's apt label). In fact, many instances of this type of modification are also used very often in confrontational dialogue to produce, rather than to release, tension. When this happens, the course of the conversation is disrupted by an uncooperative participant who deliberately either manipulates or misinterprets—or both—the words uttered by his/her interlocutor, giving way to what Coulmas calls “communicative boycott” (144), known in classical rhetoric as *asteismus* (Joseph 134): e.g. “*Timon*. Wilt dine with me?/ *Apemantus*. No; I eat not lords” (*Timon of Athens*, I.i.233-34). Although this strategy is closely associated with some forms of banter and friendly humorous repartee, it is on occasions

---

<sup>3</sup> Following Corpas, in this study we call a phraseologism or a phraseological unit a combination of stable lexical units composed of at least two words (*Diez* 131). Corpas's terminology is complemented at times with that of other authors like Fernando, Veisbergs, Moon or Naciscione.

<sup>4</sup> The alterations of PUs have received different denominations throughout the specialized literature, such as modification, manipulation, creative modification, creative manipulation, artistic deformation or exploitation. As for “defamiliarization,” this is a term employed by Zuluaga (*Introducción*) to refer to the effects derived from the modification of PUs.

<sup>5</sup> Quotations from Shakespeare's plays come from Wells and Taylor's edition.

a technique of offensive linguistic behaviour and the cause of sheer impoliteness (Oncins and Grandage).

The relatively new interest that linguists have shown in phraseology in the last two or three decades seems to be contributing to a shift in the focus away from mono-lexical to multi-lexical wordplay. As a matter of fact, over the past two decades, not only have essays on the semantic and textual aspects of PUs in nonliterary discourse proliferated, but there appears to be an ever-increasing interest in studying their use in literary texts, especially in those authors whose works have a special attraction for the potential of the comic element of language. Worth mentioning in this respect are the works of Navarro, Veisbergs, Gläser and, more recently, Sánchez (“Manipulación”), Naciscione and Rodríguez Martín.

Although up until now Shakespeare’s phraseological punning has not received the attention that it perhaps deserves, it has not passed completely unnoticed. Kjellmer, for instance, sees this sort of wordplay as a deviation from the norms of collocation in general and draws our attention to its dramatic function in Shakespeare:

Deviations from a collocational norm can be used intentionally with a definite end in view. ‘How every fool can play upon the word!’ says Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* [...] and it is true that such manipulations are mostly used for humorous purposes. Shakespeare’s own clowns and fools make abundant use of the trick (115).

In much more depth, Delabastita also deals with this type of wordplay in Shakespeare’s works. In the chapter on the structural aspects of wordplay—which he labels with the blanket term of *pun*—Delabastita dedicates several paragraphs to these structures which he also defines as “word combinations with a sum meaning that is etymologically based on, but can no longer be reduced to, the combinations of their component meanings” (108). For this author, it is precisely the distance between the compositional and the non-compositional meaning of some phraseological units that affords opportunities for wordplay. “If the compositional or literalized reading of an idiom refers to the original metaphorical quality of the idiom,” he says, “it will often cause an unexpected re-awakening of its dead or dormant image” (109).

In the light of these commentaries, it would seem clear that within this new emerging branch of linguistics, phraseology could prove to be of great use in approaching such an interesting though little explored component of Shakespeare’s discourse. On closer inspection, this device does not differ much from wordplay on individual lexemes, the mechanisms of which also have a lot in common with those of certain phraseological modifications: in both cases, what makes the device work is the possibility of interpreting a structure—whether simple or complex—both literally as well as figuratively, simultaneously. Although this dual literal/figurative feature is one of the defining characteristics of the majority of the PUs, one should not forget that neither are the PUs limited to idiomatic expressions alone, nor is the comic potential limited to the possibility of playing with their literal and figurative senses. However, as shall be explained next, many other PUs could be the source of much hilarity by virtue of their other defining characteristics, such as their fixed stability or the fact that they are multi-word structures, which allows for any dislocation of their constituents, provoking effects similar to those of lexical wordplay.

Although studies on English phraseology have multiplied over the last few years, their textual and pragmatic aspects, and in particular those pertaining to their creative manipulation, are just now beginning to receive their due attention. This lack of interest is probably connected with the idea that some linguists hold, according to which this phenomenon of phraseological modification should be banned from the field of phraseological studies proper, precisely because we are dealing with an artistic license here which thus deviates from standard language structuring. This is the argument supported by such theoreticians of the discipline as Mel'čuk or Schenk. The former makes the following comment in this respect:

Creativity concerns, of course, not only idioms but other phrasemes also, as well as derivation, lexicon, grammar—the whole of a language; there is nothing special here in regard to idioms. Therefore, all such cases of idiom deformation—related to wordplay, jocular use, or puns, for instance— should be consistently excluded from our consideration when we construct a theory of phraseology. They belong to a different domain: ARTISTIC CREATIVITY of speakers'. (Mel'čuk 213)

Along these same lines is Schenk's opinion that "methodologically, the ability of people to play with words is outside the scope of a theory of idioms proper; therefore, data involving word games cannot play a role in a theory of idioms" (259).

Against the view of authors like Mel'čuk or Schenk, over the last two decades others have decided to start to tackle the study of creative manipulation, in the conviction that the phenomenon can shed light on the nature and discursal function of phraseological units in general, both synchronically and diachronically. Moreover, these variations, far from being an isolated or exceptional phenomenon, are abundant in most languages. Thus, in German, for instance, Wotjak estimates their percentage in comparison with non-modified phraseological units between 30% and 50%; Corpas calculates 40% for a corpus of proverbs in Spanish (*Diez* 319), and similar figures have been reported for English and French by Arnaud and Moon and Moon.

The typology of modifications offered in the abovementioned studies—like those found, for instance, in classical rhetoric— can be of great help in providing a better understanding of their function within the context and design of the play where they appear and, consequently, also for the translator. Perhaps it would be convenient to recall what these systematic classifications are in a brief summary; and even, for the sake of a practical application without any theoretical intent, to broach a proposal for the study of phraseological units in Shakespeare's plays, by drawing on certain categories and analytical tools normally employed in the study of other related topics, such as the functioning of PU in the flow of conversation or the linguistic forms of humour.

The aforementioned authors substantially coincide in distinguishing between the modifications that affect form and those that are strictly semantic in nature. In the first ones, also referred to as structural (Veisberg) or internal (Corpas *Manual*), the modification affects either the structure of the unit, be it one or several of its components, or the syntagmatic relationships that hold between them. These trans-



formations are the result of certain mechanisms among which addition, reduction or elision, substitution, grammatical modification and fusion are included. In the second grouping, also called external (*Corpas Manual*), the alteration does not occur in the form of the unit but in its meaning; to be more specific, this is modified by the action of the context in which it occurs, which allows for the activation or actualization of the phraseological meaning of the unit as a whole or of some of its components. The opposite can also happen, i.e., a freer combination of words which arises spontaneously in the discourse coincides with the structure of a PU in such a way that along with its literal sense a phraseological interpretation of the same is also possible.

There are two further categories in the typology that allow us to better refine the analysis of the stylistic function in this type of structure because of their relationship with the interactive nature of dramatic discourse and the degree of specification and fine tuning they afford. These are the so-called monological and dialogical puns, two different kinds of wordplay that Delabastita sees, first of all, as a technique of floor-apportionment, but that he takes great pains to characterize differently in terms of how they may affect the course of conversation. Thus, whereas “monological puns are entirely contained within the speech of a single character and do not directly influence the subsequent development of the dialogue by inviting or generating a speech by another character,” dialogical puns, on the other hand, “rather act like conversational pivots, providing both the motive and a direction for the dialogue’s further development” (142). This device affords Shakespeare an invaluable means of dialogue control, one that stands out as genuinely Shakespearian. Indeed, in Delabastita’s opinion, it is his skillful mastery of this technique what makes him superior to his predecessors, as he reaches a higher degree of integration of language and dramatic action (143). Moreover, the distinction monological/dialogical becomes particularly useful for the analysis of Shakespeare’s dramatic discourse in general –and of the study of the *pun* as a device for verbal characterization in particular–, if only because the use of one or the other form of modification and their ensuing stylistic effects are directly related to the idiolectal traits of the characters that employ them.

In traditional rhetoric we also find at least a couple of categories that can be related to the mechanisms of creative manipulation which become particularly useful in the new paradigm of text analysis, and, in consequence, applicable to the analysis of dramatic dialogue as well. They are the classical figures of *distinctio* and *reflexio*, with which we usually acknowledge a wide array of wordplay given many different names over the last four or five centuries. No one doubts of the advantages that these rhetorical figures have for the pragmatic study of humour in Shakespeare’s dialogues, especially if we bear in mind that the first of these figures, *distinctio*, springs from the repetition of a word in one turn of speech but with different meanings; and in the other, *reflexio*, the repetition occurs across two different speakers, so that the second person repeats the word of his/her interlocutor but with a different meaning. The same can be said about *anacalasis* and *antanaclasis*, alternative denominations for *reflexio* according to Lausberg (132), and even about amphibology, *asteismus* or calembour, discursive tricks also based on the relationship between signifiers

and signifieds, and in which the words are subjected to all sorts of distortion and manipulation. The diversity in the terminology poses difficulties when delimiting such a large array of discursive devices, a result of the many linguistic realizations that such a complex phenomenon as wordplay can display.<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, it appears clear that the conversational phenomena and the rhetorical figures described are closely related to some of the types of phraseological modification proposed by the aforesaid authors.

Finally, it seems appropriate to mention the distinction suggested by both Freud and Bergson between two main kinds of humour: intentional and unintentional. This distinction allows us to pinpoint and make some relevant distinctions about the linguistic and stylistic forms that humour takes on. In his classic study on jokes and the unconscious, Freud discusses the differences between the laughter provoked by the intelligent joke and that caused by the fortuitous lapse, a distinction that Bergson similarly expressed a few years later as “the witty and the comic”. According to Bergson, “A word is said to be comic when it makes us laugh at the person who utters it, and witty when it makes us laugh either at a third party or at ourselves” (32). It seems all too clear that this distinction between conscious and unconscious humour observable in ordinary discourse can help us better understand phraseological modifications, which can also be classified as conscious and unconscious. As a matter of fact, upon evaluating a text or the portrayal of a character, one can see how important it is whether or not a joke or any quip spoken by a character is intentional, or, on the other hand, a result of his/her linguistic incompetence and therefore something unintentional.

In the case of Shakespeare, there can be no doubt that this type of classification and process of alteration often mentioned by those who study verbal humour can shed much light on the textual function of some comic devices like spoonerisms or malapropisms, for example, as they almost invariably refer to unintentional wordplay.<sup>7</sup> These distinctions are equally important for understanding Shakespeare’s style and humour, and especially the characterizing function that wordplay in general and the manipulation of PUs in particular have. The use of one form of modification or another will determine the idiolectal scope and as a result the character’s type. Thus, while such characters who consciously manipulate the language usually exhibit the qualities and virtues associated with those who possess a good command of discourse –mental agility, intelligence, wit-, those who incur in unconscious errors merely project the negative image of someone who is incapable of expressing him/herself properly.

---

<sup>6</sup> This terminological diversity dates back to the major rhetorical treatises in Shakespeare’s time. Peacham, for instance, calls it *asteismus*, while Puttenham refers to it as ‘antanaclasis or the rebound’.

<sup>7</sup> On the distinction between intentional and unintentional (or conscious/unconscious) humour, see Simpson’s chapter “Linguistic Approaches to Humour.” In this chapter –an excellent overview of the main linguistic theories on verbal humour–, Simpson inspects the catalogue of unintentional errors included under the heading “Freudian slip” (16).

### 3. THE TRANSLATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL MODIFICATIONS: VALVERDE AND ASTRANA COMPARED

The translation of modified PUs poses a true challenge for the translator. Added to the difficulty of translating the wordplay itself, s/he must negotiate the transference from one system into another of a structure that is both highly idiosyncratic and well-rooted in the source language, and for which there may not even exist an analogous counterpart in the target language (neither conceptually nor formally). Thus, in order to confront this task the translator must, first of all, identify and interpret the original phraseological unit (OPU). For this first step, the translator of Shakespeare counts on a wide variety of reference works, stretching from general dictionaries like the *Oxford English Dictionary* as far as those specialized glossaries on Shakespeare's proverbial language like Tilley's. Then, s/he must search for the most appropriate equivalent, which should naturally be the one that best reproduces the defamiliarization effects of the original unit in the source text.

In her well-known course on translation, Baker proposes the following strategies for the search of what she calls the "equivalence above word level," (46) although only for collocations and fixed and idiomatic expressions: use of an equivalent PU similar both in form and meaning; use of a PU of similar meaning but different in form; paraphrasing; omission; and compensation. As the space available for a more detailed description of the translation strategies employed for this type of units is limited, apart from Baker's reminder, let it suffice to say that these will depend, to a large extent, upon the nature of the OPU to be translated, always bearing in mind the aforementioned external as well as internal, monological and dialogical, conscious and unconscious factors.<sup>8</sup> However, we will take the space of a few lines to reproduce Valverde's commentaries on the initial stages of translation, as in his words we will find not only several keys to his work method but, what is more important perhaps, his attitude and disposition towards "the problem":

Even at the risk of appearing very simplistic, I must confess that the worst difficulty that I have found is translating wordplay [...] It wasn't possible to resort to the comfortable footnote "untranslatable wordplay," and even less to cutting or circumlocution [...] Therefore, whenever I find a joke I think it is necessary to try another analogous joke in Spanish, adding what the original wordplay is in a note, so that the reader can appreciate the margin of difference, and more often, of failure[...] I do not believe, like a certain praiseworthy translator who preceded me, that one should consider such wordplay as blemishes or extemporaneous weaknesses, but as the frontier of Shakespeare's stylistic "mannerism," and perhaps the key to his style. ("Notas" 1) [my translation].

---

<sup>8</sup> Other studies where strategies for translations and reflections on this theme are also given are Veisbergs, Roberts, Zuluaga ("Análisis") and Corpas (*Diez*), especially chapters XI, XIII, XIV and XV.

As one can glean from these words, Valverde's disposition cannot be more adequate for surmounting the stumbling blocks that he comes across.<sup>9</sup> And this is not merely a declaration of good intentions. In fact, his success rate for translating wordplay is not only superior to Astrana's, but in the whole of his works he avoids footnotes of excuses for not translating some particularly difficult passages. The same cannot be said of Astrana, in whose texts such "evasive" notes appear too often.<sup>10</sup> Thus, from these brief commentaries that he also makes on the problems that puzzle the translator of Shakespeare's works, one can conclude that his entire attitude has hardly anything to do with Valverde's: an unmasked pessimism overwhelms him before the magnitude of the task at hand:

The treasury of Shakespeare's lexicon with its limitless supply of wordplay, amphibology, concepts and rare images, bleeds the last resources of any language dry [...] Yet includes the continuous use of popular sayings, proverbs and dark allusions to contemporary events [...] Ask the translator, then, to comply with the rules of Fray Luis: "He who translates should be faithful and exact, and if it were possible, number the words and give out an equal share and no more" Who could do this more perfectly than the author himself? (13) [my translation].

A selection of illustrative examples of modified PUs in their dramatic context is given in the next few paragraphs with the purpose of assessing Valverde's translation in comparison with Astrana's. Due to space limitations, only three passages have been selected: each one contains a distinct form of modification that will be firstly explained in detail. Even though the sample is small it somehow represents the treasury of Shakespeare's phraseological wordplay.

The first example comes from the first act of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The context in which it occurs is that of the first scene of the play in which Slender accuses Bardolph, Nym and Pistol of making him drunk with the sole purpose of robbing him of his money. The phraseological modification takes place in the last part of Bardolph's speech, where he accuses Slender of imbibing to excess; Bardolph is interrupted by Evans, who corrects him and calls him ignorant.

---

<sup>9</sup> Valverde always maintained his position in this matter. The same reflections are almost literally repeated in the introduction to his translation and almost thirty years later again in "Confesiones de un traductor shakesperiano."

<sup>10</sup> Notes of this kind abound in Astrana's text. Here are some examples: 'Toda esta escena, graciosísima en el original, no ofrece sino una idea pálida en la versión, a causa de sus chistes, retruécanos, anfibologías, alusiones y equívocos' [this entire scene, while hilarious in the original, is given but a mere shadow of the truth in this version, due to his jokes, wordplay, amphibologies, allusions and equivocations'] (in *Much Ado about Nothing* III.ii, when Dogberry and Verges appear for the first time); 'Sigue una serie de juegos de palabras, absolutamente intraducibles al castellano' [a series of plays on word follows which are absolutely untranslatable into the Spanish] (in the amusing dialogue between Speed and Proteus, at the beginning of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*); 'Sigue el juego de palabras, que ya no abandonará el autor en el curso de la comedia, y que hace de la misma poco menos que intraducible' [the author continually uses wordplay throughout this comedy, which makes much of it almost untranslatable] (at the start of *Love's Labour's Lost*).



BARDOLPH I say the gentleman had drunk himself *out of his five sentences*—  
EVANS It is 'his five senses'. Fie, what the ignorance is!  
(I.i.159)

As becomes clear, this modification is one of the unconscious ones that were described before.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Evans's protests are geared towards Bardolph's ignorance in saying "five sentences," thus altering the final part of the OPU ("out of his five senses").

Perhaps it would be impossible to find a PU in Spanish that corresponds literally to the original. Nevertheless, it should not prove too difficult to find an equivalent phrase from a functional-pragmatic point of view and subject it to a process of defamiliarization capable of producing a similar comic effect. Although Valverde and Astrana have not resorted to a phraseologism, they have used a very similar strategy, thus succeeding in partially rendering the flavour of the Elizabethan text. By employing the phrase "cinco sentidos," which, even though it lacks the same idiomatic value as the original it still possesses a marked collocational character, they manage to distort Bardolph's words to such an extent as to add a certain dose of humour. Astrana himself translates Bardolph's speech as "El caballero bebió hasta perder sus cinco sentimientos." Valverde, who possibly comes somewhat closer to the mark by transforming "sentidos" into "sentencias," translates "El caballero se emborrachó hasta perder sus cinco sentencias".

The second example, found in the third act of *As You Like It*, constitutes one of the forms of conscious modification which, as Kjellmer (115) pointed out, are usually spoken by clowns and fools. This modification appears in the jocular comment that Touchstone makes to Corin, a shepherd, when both exit the scene following Celia's orders:

CELIA Come, shepherd, go off a little. Go with him, sirrah.  
TOUCHSTONE Come shepherd, let us make an honourable retreat, though not *with bag and baggage, yet with scrip and scrippage*.  
(III.ii.156)

On this occasion, a love for wordplay inspires Touchstone to make up a phraseologism—"scrip and scrippage"—which he builds out of one that is already a well-established set phrase, "bag and baggage": "a military phrase denoting all the property of an army collectively, and of the soldiers individually [...] to march out (with) bag and baggage, i.e. with all belongings saved, without surrender of anything; to make an honourable retreat" (*OED*, *bag* 20). The comical effect arises from the juxtaposition of these two expressions which, although similar formally and

---

<sup>11</sup> As mentioned above, modifications of this kind constitute one of the main identifying traits Shakespeare uses to characterize an endless number of comic characters, memorable precisely for their linguistic incompetence, such as Dogberry, Verges, Elbow, Mrs Quickly or Launcelot.

semantically, evoke totally different if not opposing images. So, on the one hand, “bag and baggage” is evocative of a military scenario and, on the other, “scrip and scrippage” brings to mind the *locus amoenus* of the pastoral and bucolic, which is coherent with the context of this scene, as the word “scrip” was used at the time to refer to a shepherd’s bag or pouch, which Corin himself surely would be wearing at that moment. The discrepancy between the connotations of both PUs is even more comical due to the second element in the binomial, “scrippage,” Touchstone’s *ad hoc* invention with which he manages to reproduce the paronymic relationship that exists between the two elements of the canonical PU and the phonic symmetry which is common to both. This modification is but one example of a long list of plays on word that Touchstone pulls out of his fool’s hat and inexhaustible wit to the delight of the audience.

Once again, what is funny for the audience of the original play sends the translator into despair. The problem is that in Spanish the PU “bag and baggage” has its equivalent in “armas y bagaje,” a phrase that is similar idiomatically and formally speaking, as it also presents a binomial structure, but which differs semantically—and phonetically—as in its two constituents one does not find the paronymic relationship that exists between those of the OPU. Thus the fact that Valverde managed to preserve, at least in part, the jocular flavour of Touchstone’s speech by reproducing the phonic similitude is meritorious indeed. Here is his proposal:

PIEDRA-DE-TOQUE. Vamos pastor, hagamos una honrosa retirada, aunque no con armas y bagaje, sino con zurrón y equipaje.

Astrana’s version seems more rough-hewn as he opts for a binomial whose words lack the original rhythm and grace –although he sticks more faithfully to the vocabulary of shepherding:

TOUCHSTONE. Vamos, pastor, hagamos una retirada honrosa, si no con armas y bagajes, a lo menos con cayadas y zurrones.

The third and last example can be found in the first act of *Much Ado About Nothing*. The modification occurs in the context of one of the aforementioned forms of dialogical wordplay where a character consciously manipulates a PU uttered by an interlocutor, giving rise to the rhetorical figure of *reflexio*—a conversational strategy that Coulmas, as was mentioned above, has labeled “communicative boycott”. As can be seen, this modification by Beatrice operates on the PU pronounced by the messenger, which she uses to attack Benedick, the man with whom she will paradoxically get married:

MESSENGER I see, lady, the gentleman *is not in your books*.

BEATRICE No. An he were, I would burn my study.

(I.i.75)



Notice here how Beatrice's reply demetaphorizes the idiomatic expression "to be in someone's books". This phraseologism was fairly common at the time (Tilley B534); it remains alive in contemporary English in this and variant forms like "to be in somebody's good/bad books," and is registered in the majority of bilingual dictionaries. In Spanish there is an expression of similar metaphoric structure and base – "no estar una materia en los libros de alguien" – although its meaning is quite different: "serle extraña [la material] o ajena a su manera de pensar" (*DRAE* 2001). What we have here then is an example of a "phraseological false friend," which as such could lead the over-confident translator to err.<sup>12</sup> On this occasion, Astrana falls into the trap of being too literal, and by translating the messenger's speech word for word he manages to reproduce some kind of dialogical wordplay but one that has little to do with either the meaning or the function of the original one. Here is his translation:

MENSAJERO. Noto, señora, que el caballero no está en vuestros libros.

BEATRIZ. No, y si lo estuviese quemaría mi biblioteca.

Valverde, on the other hand, successfully surmounts the obstacle through a compensating strategy. To be more precise, he more freely translates the noun "books" by postmodifying it with "de devoción". This allows him to reproduce not only the modification by Beatrice in the original text, but also the affective nuance in the interlocutor's words. In this regard, his solution approaches the source text much more closely than Astrana's:

MENSAJERO. Señora, veo que ese caballero no está en vuestros libros de devoción

BEATRIZ. No, y si lo estuviera quemaría mi estudio.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, although the examples commented on are merely a small sampling of a much larger collection, the fortune that befalls these phraseologisms in the hands of Valverde and Astrana permits us to extract a few conclusions about the nature and quality of their translations. Perhaps what stands out the most is that the results obtained by both authors are in part a consequence of their own attitudes towards these translation difficulties, those that inspired the reflections they included in the notes that accompany their texts. So, one can easily glean that the effort Valverde made in his search for the best analogy

---

<sup>12</sup> Another such phraseological false friend found in Shakespeare is the idiomatic expression 'to carry coals' (= "to do dirty or degrading work, to submit to humiliation or insult" [*OED*, *coal* 12]), which since the 17th century shares in form but not meaning with the PU 'to carry coals (to Newcastle)' = 'to take a thing to where it is naturally plentiful; to do what is absurdly superfluous' (*OED*, *coal* 13).

for the joke helped him find solutions that are sometimes ingenuous and others, at least, guarantee the comic effects of the original text. On the other hand, when Astrana attempts to translate these same modified strings, he either does not succeed, by choosing the dead-end road of literality, or passes it by, in thinking himself incapable of competing with an author whose rich lexicon, as he himself said, “agota los últimos recursos de un idioma”. As a result, Valverde’s traductological attitude is not far from the mark of this degree of reasonable faithfulness that he achieves in rendering these and other particularly difficult passages in Shakespeare’s comedies. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about Astrana’s attitude and results.

The conclusion that Valverde’s translation preserves the phraseological punning of the original text more faithfully than Astrana’s coincides with the results reported on a number of studies on Shakespeare in translation.<sup>13</sup> However, it is only right to add that Astrana’s effort and achievement deserve some praise and recognition, as he started the arduous task of translating the complete works of Shakespeare at the turn of the last century (c. 1920), a time when neither the main lexicographical compendiums nor the huge amount of critical works and editions that Valverde later on enjoyed were available yet.

## WORKS CITED

- ARNAUD P. and Rosamond MOON. “Fréquence et emploi des proverbes anglais et français.” *Lieux communs, topoï, stéréotypes, clichés*. Ed. C. Plantin. Paris: Kimé, 1993, 323-341.
- BAKER, Mona. *In Other Words*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- BERGSON, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1999.
- CASTILLO BLANCO, Laura del. *Estudio textual y traductológico de Henry V*. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 1998.
- CORCHADO PASCASIO, María. Teresa. *Estudio textual y traductológico de The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 2004.
- CORPAS PASTOR, Gloria. *Diez años de investigación en fraseología: análisis sintáctico-semánticos, contrastivos y traductológicos*. Vervuert: Iberoamericana, 2003.
- . *Manual de fraseología española*. Madrid: Gredos, 1996.
- COULMAS, Florian. “Idiomaticity as a Problem of Pragmatics.” *Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics*. Ed. H. Parret, M. Sbisà, and J. Verschueren. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981. 139-151.
- DELABASTITA, Dirk. *There Is a Double Tongue*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993.
- FERNANDO, Chitra. *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.
- FREUD, Sigmund. *El chiste y su relación con el inconsciente*. Madrid: Alianza, 1981.

---

<sup>13</sup> See, among others, Oncins Martínez (*Estudio*), Del Castillo Blanco, Sánchez García or Corchado Pascasio.



- GLÄSER, Rosemarie. "The Stylistic Potential of Phraseological Units in the Light of Genre Analysis." *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications*. Ed. Andrew Cowie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 125-143.
- KJELLMER, Goran. "A Mint of Phrases." *English Corpus Linguistics*. Ed. Karin Aijmer and Bengt Altenberg. London: Longman: 1991, 111-127.
- KÖKERITZ, Helge. *Shakespeare's Pronunciation*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953.
- LAUSBERG, Heinrich. *Manual de retórica literaria*. Madrid. Gredos, 1966.
- MAHOOD, Molly. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. London: Methuen, 1957.
- MELČUK, Igor. "Phrasemes in Language and Phraseology in Linguistics." *Idioms: Structural and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Martin Everaert, Erik-Jan Van Der Linden, André Schenk, and Rob Schreuder. Hillsdale: Lawrence Earlbaum, 1995. 167-232.
- MOON, Rosamond. *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- MUIR, Kenneth. "The Uncomic Pun." *The Cambridge Journal* 3 (1950): 472-485.
- NACISCIONE, Anita. *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010.
- NAVARRO DOMÍNGUEZ, Fernando. *Análisis del discurso y paremias en H. de Balzac*. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1994.
- ONCINS MARTÍNEZ, José Luis. "Another Plea for 'Phraseo-stylistics' and Literature, or How the Study of Literary Texts Can Contribute to Develop Phraseology: The Case of Shakespeare." *The Many Faces of Phraseology: An Interdisciplinary Conference*, Louvain, Belgium, 2005.
- *Estudio textual y traductológico de Timon of Athens*. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 1996.
- "Notas sobre la manipulación crativa de fraseologismos en las comedias de Shakespeare y su traducción al español." *Insights into Translation*. Vol. 7. Ed. Luis Soto Vázquez. La Coruña: Universidad de la Coruña, 2005. 27-48.
- ONCINS MARTÍNEZ, José L., and Sarah Grandage. "Impoliteness Strategies and Wordplay in Shakespeare's Dramatic Dialogues." *Ensayos sobre Shakespeare/Essays on Shakespeare*. Ed. José L. Oncins Martínez, Manuel Sánchez García, Ramón López Ortega. Universidad de Extremadura/SEDERI; Cáceres, 2010. 215-228.
- PEACHAM, Henry. *The Garden of Eloquence*. Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1954.
- PUTTHENHAM, George. *The Arte of English Poesie*. Kent, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1970.
- ROBERTS, Roda P. "Phraseology and Translation." *La traducción: orientaciones lingüísticas y culturales*. Ed. Purificación Fernández Nistal and José M. Bravo Gozalo. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1988. 61-78.
- RODRÍGUEZ MARTÍN, Gustavo A. *Modificación estilística de las unidades fraseológicas en la obra dramática de G.B. Shaw*. Diss. Universidad de Extremadura, 2011.
- SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA, Manuel. *Estudio textual y traductológico de The Taming of the Shrew*. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999.
- "Manipulación fraseológica en la obra de Shakespeare." *Beiträge zur Phraseologie aus textueller Sicht*. Ed. Carmen Mellado Blanco. Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2008. 193-205.
- SHAKESPEARE, William. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- *William Shakespeare: Obras completas*. Trans Luis Astrana Marín. Madrid: Aguilar, 1967.

- *William Shakespeare: Obras completas*. Trans. José María Valverde. Barcelona: Planeta, 1968.
- SCHENK, André. “The Syntactic Behaviour of Idioms.” *Idioms: Structural and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Martin Everaert, Erik-Jan Van Der Linden, André Schenk, and Rob Schreuder. Hillsdale: Lawrence Earlbaum, 1995. 253-272.
- SIMPSON, Paul. *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003.
- SPEVACK, Marvin. *The Dramatic Function of Shakespeare’s Puns*. Diss. Harvard University, 1953.
- TILLEY, Morris Palmer. *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950.
- VALVERDE, José María. “Confesiones de un traductor shakesperiano.” *Shakespeare en España*. Ed. José Manuel González Fernández de Sevilla. Zaragoza: Pórtico, 1993. 187-191.
- “Notas de un traductor de Shakespeare.” *Ínsula* 211 (1964): 1 y 13.
- VEISBERGS, Andrejs. “The Contextual Use of Idioms, Wordplay, and Translation.” *Essays on Punning and Translation*. Ed. Dirk Delabastita. Manchester: St Jerome, 1997. 154-176.
- WOTJAK, Barbara. *Verbale Phraseolexeme in System und Text*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992.
- ZULUAGA, Alberto. *Introducción al estudio de las expresiones fijas*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter D. Lang, 1980.
- “Análisis y traducción de unidades fraseológicas desautomatizadas.” *PhiN* 16 (2001): 61-83.