

The Translation of the Shakespearean Obscenity in *As Alegres Comadres*

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Citation: Elizabeth S. Ramos, "The Translation of the Shakespearean Obscenity in *As Alegres Comadres*". *Via Panorâmica: Revista Eletrônica de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*, série 3, nº 4, 2015: 73-84. ISSN: 1646-4728. Web: <http://ler.letras.up.pt/>.

Abstract

The comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-8) by William Shakespeare was written at a time when the codes of rudeness, obscenity and indecency were less stringent. At that time, some tolerance prevailed towards the obscene language inserted by the playwright in his production by means of double meanings, metaphors, allusions and puns.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, due to the need to eliminate those constructions from a text that had become canonical, the Bard's idolizers banned obscenity from Shakespearean language, arguing that its use had been due to the playwright's desire to please less refined audiences. If, on one hand, that prevented Shakespeare's work from exclusion from school textbooks and family shelves, on the other, it led translators to ignore expressions with which Shakespeare built his lewd comical images.

The article thus proposes to expand the boundaries of thematic analysis of William Shakespeare's texts to the (re)construction of the obscene language in the film *As alegres comadres* (2003), directed by the Brazilian filmmaker Leila Hipólito, as an adaptation of the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, the film is understood as a rereading, allowing for questioning concepts such as authenticity, originality and hegemony, all so dear to a tradition that ignores the plurality of a cultural production and the inexhaustible condition of its plurality. Thus, the film is understood as a translation resulting from decisions made by Hipólito and her crew, which only in the realm of utopia could be identical with the Shakespearean text, for it encompasses the singularities of the translator.

Throughout the article the term obscenity is used as a reference to the transgressing lexicon having to do with sexuality, being central to observe the solutions found by Leila Hipólito to recreate the Shakespearean lewdness in her filmic text.

Key words: William Shakespeare; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; intersemiotic translation; Leila Hipólito

The lively comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-8 or 1600-1) by William Shakespeare was written at a time when the codes of rudeness, obscenity and indecency were less stringent amongst the populace. At that time, some tolerance prevailed towards obscene language, that is, the transgressing lexicon having to do with sexuality inserted by the playwright in his production by means of double meanings, metaphors, allusions and puns.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the attempts to moralize the plays for the sake of decorum and rectitude, obscenity was eliminated from the Shakespearean production, which had then become canonical. After all, it was argued that the use of lower forms of language had been due to the playwright's desire to please less refined audiences. If, on one hand, that sort of action prevented Shakespeare's work from being completely excluded from school textbooks and family shelves, on the other, it led translators to ignore expressions with which Shakespeare built his lewd comical images.

In the specific case of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* lewdness is somehow hinted right at the title of the play. The mentioning of Windsor, site of the famous castle, builds an antinomy with the adjective *merry* applied to the wives who are pleasurable, delightful, amusing. The title indicates therefore that Windsor relates to the market town, populated by middle-class tradesmen and merchants in this "citizen comedy", in which characters are quite distant from the world of the nobility or the aristocracy. The distance is manifested particularly in the use of language which is far from the patterns set by the fifteenth-century nobility who defined the rules of decorum and the parameters of humour within the limits of the adequate social conduct.

In addition to the two "merry wives" - Mistress Ford and Mistress Page - Shakespeare brings into the scene characters which he also inserts in some of his Henry plays: Sir John Falstaff, Mistress Quickly, the trio Bardolph, Nim and Pistol, a Welshman, a French native speaker - who make comic and lewd use of the English language by means of polyphony. Such wealth of vocabulary created and used by the playwright in a plethora of characters reflected times of major transformations derived largely from the English maritime expansion which, naturally, affected the sixteenth century English language. Shakespeare's most popular comedies, therefore, build creative innuendos that may result in lewdness, involving both grotesque and graceful bodies and language, the high and the low levels of society, the native and the foreign uses of English. And as there was not what we now know as special effects, the audience was accustomed to sharpen their eyes and ears in order to interpret the gestures, mimes and speeches of the actors, who also recreated in extraordinary ways invisible and unknown places and worlds.

Thus, the use of a particular language depending on the context where characters are inserted resulted from the transformative process derived, in its base, from the sea voyages. Plot and absence of decorum generate laughter, which is brought about by means of the character's accent, the register of their speech, the inappropriate use of words, their gestures or grotesque behaviour, all of them features which led critics to classify *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as the less "Shakespearean" of the playwright's works.

The representations of misuse of the English language inserted in some characters' speech led William Shakespeare to innovate. By means of linguistic flaws, the dramatist softens or disguises - never erases - creative puns with obscene content, inserted at particular situations. In Act III, Scene V, 37-38, for instance, Mistress Quickly, instead of saying "they mistook the directions" given by Mistress Page, says: "[...] they mistook their erection." To which Sir John Falstaff, the character with the best command of the English language in the play, responds: "So did I mine, to build upon a foolish woman's promise". He is obviously taking advantage of the lewd lead generated by Quickly's poor use of the language, to express his frustration for having been sexually aroused by Mistress Page's false promise to have sexual involvement with him.

Obscenity therefore depends on who speaks to whom, as well as on the context and the tone of the scene. In the case of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for example, a pun built by Mistress Quickly may be less subtle than one coming from Anne Page.

The fact of the matter is that Shakespeare's lexical inventiveness, which allows the audience the possibility of decoding the obscenity brought onto the stage, reproduces the language spoken outside the play houses, where the practices of the sex industry prevailed amidst decay, filth and smut. The theatres, brothels and taverns located in the south bank of the Thames were part of an "underworld, outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and the Puritans, a place where criminals operated, and the convicted were thrown into one of its five prisons" (Kiernan 17). In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mistress Ford demands that the servants John and Robert take the basket on their shoulders "[...] and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet Mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch by the Thames' side" (Act III, Scene III, 11-12).

In addition to an environment of decay, actors were literally vagabonds, operating in the margins of society, and could only acquire respect when sponsored by the nobility or court members.

Nevertheless, under variable cultural pressures, Shakespeare's works survived throughout time, taking multiple forms along the centuries. Recreating his language, and in particular his lewd language, imposes enormous challenges to translators and screenplay writers in apprehending and conveying the subtleties of the Shakespearean obscene language, in order to allow the audience at different times and places the pleasure of getting involved in the fabric woven by double meanings in scenes set in places as different as a palace, a bedroom, a tavern, or a street.

That being said, I want to examine the (re)configuration of some of the obscene language in *As alegres comadres*, whose translation into English could be *The merry gossipers*, a Brazilian film released in 2003, directed by filmmaker Leila Hipólito as an adaptation of the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, the film is understood as an adaptation that resignifies the dramatic text, a view which allows us to question concepts such as authenticity and originality both so dear to a tradition that ignores the plurality of a cultural production and the inexhaustible condition of its plurality, and confirms the Freudian conclusion that "every living thing is different and requires us to make some sort of effort to understand it" (Freud 80). Thus, the film can be seen as an intersemiotic translation resulting from decisions made by Hipólito and her crew

that only in the realm of utopia could be identical to the Shakespearean text, for it encompasses the singularities of the translator, and the particularities of a different kind of art, performed at a different time and place.

Therefore, if the Canon is to survive, it is certainly by means of translation/adaptation, even though there is no possibility for total reproduction of any canonical work, for they will be woven with fibres of a different intertextual relationship between the written and the filmic texts. But, even transformed, the original becomes indebted to its translation for its afterlife. "The work does not simply live longer, it lives longer and better, beyond the means of its author", affirms Jacques Derrida in his *Des Tours de Babel* (179).

Hipólito's film, shot in seven weeks in 2002, shifts Windsor to the Brazilian colonial town of Tiradentes, where the bankrupt and cheating aristocrat, João Fausto, plans to seduce and fool the two young and rich ladies, Mrs. Lima and Mrs. Rocha - the gossiping wives of the title. The potential victims, who are anything but naïve, come to grips with the trickster's intentions, and decide to entertain themselves in a joint vengeance plan. The problem is that jealous Mr. Rocha finds out about Fausto's attempts of harassment, and, trusting his wife corresponds to the cheater's intentions, develops plans to catch her in adultery. In parallel, there's the forbidden relationship between the gallant Franco and pretty Ana, who's been promised to Abrahão Silva, who, in his turn, ends up marrying a young man.

Hipólito's decision to openly address homosexuality brings together both the behavioural pattern of the English Renaissance when young men dedicated more attention to their bodies, skin, hair and ornaments, giving less importance to the sword, preferring environments where peace and courtesy prevailed, and aspects of our contemporaneity, with the recent legalization of marriage between individuals of the same sex in countries like Brazil.

Both the site and the costumes worn by the actors and actresses take the spectator to the early nineteenth century, when Brazil was still a Portuguese colony, a time when lewdness had been eliminated from Shakespeare's plays. That may be one of the reasons why the twenty-first-century audience is refrained from enjoying one of the most outstanding obscene references, i.e., the allusions brought up by some of the characters' names. That is the case of Mistress Quickly (*quick lay*), who is everyone's messenger, and whose name announces a character who chronically misunderstands or mishears other people, hearing sexually charged conversations where there are none. In the film, the character becomes merely Maria. Other characters such as Pistol (a clear reference to a phallic weapon), Slender, and Shallow do exist in the film narrative but their names are not mentioned. One of them becomes merely Cabo Luiz, or Corporal Luiz in English. The erasure of the other two characters' names raises some critical consideration: both subaltern subjects are unable to be inscribed in the new language even if their names can be a source of laughter resulting from obscenity.

On the other hand, John Falstaff, the character with the best command of the English language in the play, as pointed out above, is ironically assigned as the voice of power. Although losing his title "Sir", he is a Portuguese man, who represents the

metropolitan authority in the colony in those days. The choice may reinforce the fact that in the Shakespearean text Falstaff is the protagonist, after all.

Hipólito then moves to the opposite extreme end of the colonial social scene, and chooses an African-Brazilian actor to play Sir Hugh Evans, the local Welsh clergyman in the Shakespearean play, in a clear attempt to present the racial plurality which was being formed in the colony in the late years of the nineteenth century, with the abolition of slavery (1888). Her choice to transform the character into a priest of African origin deprives him of the comical effect Evans' accent grants the play text with its polyphonic and ambivalent linguistic games.

On the other hand, quite often the comical effect, which emerges from the misuse of language is hinted at by the filmic resources of images of objects, body language or facial expressions. That somehow visually translates William Shakespeare's use of metaphors, avoiding, for instance, the direct mention of female and male genitals or sexual activities of any sort. The camera can then translate lewdness by concentrating in a character's eye or body movement, or forms of objects leading the spectator to have a good laugh.

In the very first scene of the film, the audience is presented with a combination of linguistic and image solutions allowing the decoding of lewdness. The city Judge Luiz Braga regrets not being a young man any longer, for otherwise he would resort to his sword to solve a specific problem. The scene translates Judge Shallow's words from the play text: "Ha! O' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it" (Act I, Scene I, 36) The dialogue between the judge and a young man, bringing together terms as youth and the sword, a phallic weapon mystified after sword fighting became a historical and prestigious challenge for the defence of a man's honour (Briost, Drévillon, and Serna 12), helps the film's audience to identify the term as a metaphor for penis.

Still in Act I, but later on in Scene 3, 30-31, Sir John Falstaff says that: "There is no remedy: I must *cony-catch*", to which Pistol responds: "Young ravens must have food", alluding to the act of copulating with a woman roughly or even brutally. Shakespeare borrows from the French language the word "con", meaning not only vagina, but also an idiot. He then adds the "y" to anglicize it, and "cony catch" ends up fully revealing Falstaff's intentions - to fool the wives in order to get some sexual and financial advantages. The dialogue summarizes the personality of the play character for whom sexual desire goes hand in hand with his wish to make some money without too much effort. We can't help thinking of Balzac, when, in his *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, he concludes that "the excesses of love require some rest and repairing nourishment".

Sigmund Freud in his *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious* provided a clear picture and a generous assessment of Falstaff's personality, based on the close affinity of humour to the comic, thus going beyond the character's body features and moral weaknesses:

The grand humorous effect of a figure like the fat Knight Sir John Falstaff relies upon savings in contempt and indignation. We do, it is true, recognize that he is a good-for-nothing glutton and swindler, but our condemnation is disarmed by a great number of factors. We understand that he knows himself just as well as we do; he impresses us with his wit and, apart from that, his bodily prodigiousness has the contagious effect [upon us] of making us regard his person comically instead of seriously, as though our demands for morality and honour could not but bounce off so fat a belly. What he gets up to is harmless on the whole and is almost excused by the comic baseness of the figures he cozens. We admit, the poor man has a right to live and enjoy like the next, and we almost feel sorry for him because in the most important situations we discover him as a plaything in the hands of a figure far superior to him. That is why we cannot get angry at him, and why we add all the indignation we save on him to the comic pleasure that he otherwise creates for us. Sir John's own humour actually arises from the superiority of a self which neither his bodily nor his moral defects can rob of its cheerfulness and its security. (Freud 10, Notes)

The combination of the character's linguistic and body features is fully eliminated in the film scene which shows the three men sitting around the ale house table. Fausto, while drinking his beer, acknowledges he is broke and needs to cheat someone in order to get some money. To that Cabo Luiz answers "youngsters need food". Since Fausto does not give the lead with a pun, the corporal's answer does not offer the possibility for a double meaning.

Virility being considered a virtue in Shakespearean days, courts and villages invented different models of the virile ideal. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* preservation of such a virtue depended, in great part, on the fidelity of the wife to her husband. The breach of this requirement is to be represented by the horns, endowing men with less human and more animal features. The term *cuckold* is therefore a constant in the comedy under consideration, since the play deals with the potential breach of the wives' loyalty to their husbands, stimulated by Sir John Falstaff's harassment. At one point in the play (Act II, Scene II, 281-2) the character expresses his horror towards cuckoldry by saying: "Cuckold! Wittol! Cuckold! The devil himself hath not such a name".

The expression is also repeated in the film in Portuguese numerous times, and, in the final scene, just like in the play, the character does appear with huge antlers, being punished for what he had intended to do to Mr. Ford. The film ignores the punishing and guilt aspects and injects some lewdness into the scene. Falstaff offers his body for the wives to enjoy it, and adds: "Quanto aos chifres, deixo-os para vossos maridos" ("As for the antlers I leave them to your husbands") (1:30:32).

The word horn also holds a polyphonic feature, being associated to penis, as we may observe in Act V, Scene V, 1ff., when Sir John Falstaff says: "The Windsor Bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me! - Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love, that in some respects makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast!"

Earlier on in the play, the character uses a nautical metaphor to build an obscene pun. In the third scene of Act I, he says to Robin: "[...] Sail like my pinnacle to

these golden shores" (74-75). Here, the word "pinnacle", a small speedy boat with a single mast, establishes a phonological connection with the male genital both in a homophonic and a metaphoric word play. In the film, Fausto orders his servant to deliver his letters to the wives merely saying: "navegue como minha caravela, para as costas douradas" ("sail on like my Portuguese sailing boat, to the golden shores"), thus making lewdness vanish with the exclusion of the oral word play. Nevertheless, the image is compensated by the expression "costas douradas", which in Portuguese also means "golden back".

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, obscenity is not limited to men's speech. In Act II, Scene I, 85-88, both Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, use terms such as "board" and "hatches" as nautical metaphors to refer to sexual preliminaries in the following dialogue:

Mistress Page: He would never have boarded me in this fury.

Mistress Ford: Boarding, call you it? It'll be sure to keep him above deck.

Mistress Page: So will I: if he comes under my hatches, I'll never to sea again.

The film repeats the same dialogue in Portuguese substituting the metaphor "hatches" by "quarterdeck", thus preserving the subtle obscenity reinforced by the facial expressions of both female characters.

One of the best examples of obscene language in the Shakespearean theatrical production can be seen in *The Merry Wives of Windsor's* Act IV, Scene I 37-75, in the famous Latin lesson. Here the reader or the play and the spectator are presented with creative plays with words which, by means of homophonic effects, raise sexual connotations: the plural of "hic, haec, hoc" as "horum" certainly alludes to "whore"; "focative case" instead of vocative generates a phonological play with the word "fuck"; the "genitive case" is confused with "Jenny's case", "case" being a metaphor for vulva. Access to those creative examples of lewdness built by a witty use of language is denied to the film audiences for the scene is not translated either by means of image or verbally.

This comic scene revising basic Latin grammatical principles doesn't appear in the Quarto text, and is often cut out of the stage version of the play, and just as often rejected by critics as insipid or insignificant. It is a marginalized scene within a play that has itself long been marginalized in Shakespearean studies. Indeed, for centuries *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was considered to be a pure entertainment piece, dashed off in a hurry in order to satisfy a passing whim of the Queen. (Déprats)

William Shakespeare's subtle double entendres, a trend of style in his days, carried a great deal of wit. The spectators, free from the interdict and motivated by a sense of relaxation were puffed up with pride after being able to share the transgression shown or referred to on stage, as they unveiled the verbal games, understood the humour,

and laughed. Often the obscene language metaphorically undressed the actor, exposing to the public the degradation of his bodily needs or functions, thus inducing the comical effect in a situation where there was no intimacy between the spectator and that *persona* on the stage.

Everyone regardless their level of education was able to laugh cunningly, ignoring behaviour patterns, the limits imposed by what was considered as an adequate conduct, and the norms of decorum set by the sixteenth-century English nobility. Laughter could result from the multiple plots, the mixed identities, the misuse of the language, the character's bodies, gestures, and foreign accents (seen in Caius, the French doctor who is Mistress Quickly's master and has a broken English; and in Hugh Evans, the local clergyman, who's Welsh, and speaks in an accent that the other English citizens may find very amusing).

The fact of the matter is that there is no obscenity without transgression, meaning that the erasure of the disorder established by the rupture of the interdict results in the erasure of obscenity. Therefore, transgression goes beyond and completes the interdict, justifying its existence. For the impulses of the sexual activity to be released, thus revealing pleasure, the interdict must be transgressed. That is what we witness, for instance, in the period of Brazilian Carnival, a festivity in which permissiveness not only is allowed, but also expected.

That transgressing feature is precisely what dismisses obscenity to the realm of jokes, which, in their turn, observe obscenity through the lenses of shameless sexuality, since the experience of transgression, even in its condition of an expected complement of the interdict, generates the necessary anguish for the state of violence associated to it: "Essentiellement, le domaine de l'érotisme est le domaine de la violence, le domaine de la violation. [...] il y a dans la nature et il subsiste dans l'homme, un mouvement qui toujours excède les limites, et qui jamais ne peut être réduit que partiellement" (Bataille 23/46).¹

Both texts - the play *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the film *As alegres comadres* - confirm Bataille's consideration, by finally bringing Falstaff to the woods, carrying huge antlers on his head, reinforcing a certain similarity between the Shakespearean comedy and the seasons' medieval plays, defining what Northrop Frye calls the *green world*, where the ritual of triumph of life and love upon the waste land is reaffirmed. "Thus, the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world" (Frye 182). The *green world* is thus associated to the world of dreams and desire, which conflict with the madness of the world of experience.

Surrounded by Nature in a world of fairies, Falstaff's attempts of transgression are not only punished, but reaffirm the evil particularity of the profanity of sexual activity outside the married bed.

Revitalization or subversion of the canon?

Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1937), published in a volume entitled *Illuminations*, brings an epigraph by Paul Valery which clearly addresses the derivations and implications of the subversion of the canon:

[...] In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art. (Valery 225, quoted in Benjamin 217)

Let us take Valery's assertion, and associate it to the usual denotations of the verb "to subvert" which are often used to mean "to turn upside down, to revolve, to ruin, to destroy, to submerge, to pervert, to plunge, to revolutionize".

A quick glance at the meanings above may help us to argue that intersemiotic translations or adaptations of the canon are not subversive, as much as they do not operate on the basis of "infidelity, betrayal, deformation, violation, vulgarization, and desecration" (Stam 54).

In order to build our argument, we may, for instance, deconstruct the negative terms above, applying a different frame of mind to each of them. An adaptation of a Shakespearean play into mass media, i.e., the cinema, is indeed a movement "to turn it upside down", for adaptations do make a work of art accessible to the great public previously excluded and prevented from their right to enjoy canonical productions. In this sense, translations and adaptations indeed are "revolutionizing" tools, which deconstruct rather than "destroy" the aura of canonicity. Finally, by "plunging" into the original, the translator is able to build a critical view of the previous text, inserting in the new work signs of his/her contemporaneity.

Therefore, translating in the form of adaptation is no easy task, and requires a broader understanding of the term "subversion", expanding it to a work of "reconciliation of languages" (Derrida 200), inscribed by the translator's subjective interpretation of the original. If we concentrate in the lewd and malicious use Shakespeare makes of the lexicon in the construction of comical images with sexual content, we will soon come across difficulties which are sometimes unimaginable even to the translator who takes on the task of transforming the dramatic texts into other languages, i.e., from the written to the filmic language. That difficulty certainly stems from the struggle to reconcile both original and translated text, instead of operating simply an act of subversion.

As for the specific case of the translation of obscenity, we must bear in mind the extreme volatility and variability of the concepts of obscenity between the late

sixteenth century and the present day, subject to the interests and existing mechanisms regarding this sort of language in different geographies over time. In fact, there have never been safe criteria for establishing boundaries between what different societies consider being licit, illicit, and are able to tolerate, in the literary realm. Various terms labelled as offensive in a particular time and place are no longer considered as such in other times and places. On the other hand, a term or phrase that now seems extremely subtle with reference to obscene images could easily be understood as morally transgressing for an audience in the sixteenth century.

Moreover, Shakespeare does not make explicit use of so-called low words. He prefers to build a semiology usually dominated by the use of puns, homophonies, culturally specific terms, all identified by Barbara Heliodora, one of the most distinguished translators and Shakespearean scholars in Brazil, as “the curse of every translator” (Heliodora 101). Since these may not find a counterpart in someone else’s culture, they usually end up imposing difficulties in the reconciliation and transformation processes into Portuguese.

The temporal and spatial distances result in at least one more difficulty for the translation of aspects of language with sexual connotations: to be subtle and, simultaneously, direct. Four centuries after the staging of the Shakespearean plays, it often becomes difficult to fully identify the extent to which the lexicon used by the dramatist, in certain cases, fits the obscene label:

Au début du XVII siècle, encore, une certaine franchise avait cours, dit-on. Les pratiques ne cherchaient guère le secret; les mots se disaient sans réticence excessive, et les choses sans trop de déguisement; on avait avec l’illicite, une familiarité tolérante. Les codes du grossier, de l’obscène, de l’indécent étaient bien lâches, si on les compare à ceux du XX siècle. Des gestes directs, des discours sans honte, des transgressions visibles, des anatomies montrées et facilement mêlées, des enfants délurés rodant sana gêne ni scandale parmi les rires des adultes: les corps “faisaient la roue”. (Foucault 9)²

The fact that the translator is a careful reader cannot be dismissed either and a careful reading of all William Shakespeare’s comedies points to an author who is far from being just the playwright of innocence and amorous inclinations. As much as the tragedies, his comedies also draw attention to the vast spectrum of human experience in its folly, pains, sorrows, joys, and mordacity. The difference between the two genders relates basically to how situations are constructed, and the resources which are used, among which we find the use of language.

Concluding remarks

By adapting the play text, recreating it, without fully breaking the bond with the source, Leila Hipólito takes a critical stand (after “plunging” into the original) and builds a new network of intertextual dialogues which work as a projection of her

aspirations, cultural and social views associated to the several aspects of contemporaneity. In building her film, she basically answers the question: "Who is Shakespeare for me?" instead of considering the mere question of "Who's Shakespeare?" Her interferences in the source text, by means of eliminations, expansions, and re-significations of the Shakespearean language, make translation, therefore, a tool of empowerment and a search for reconciliation of differences between the past and the present. After all, a language on its own "is as if atrophied in its isolation, meagre, arrested in its growth, sickly" (Derrida 202). Translation, as a spring season, comes to revitalize and supplement what could otherwise be dormant after a long and severe winter. Hipólito's film therefore, regardless of being a good film or not, is what Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* lacked.

By reviewing the traditional ways of seeing translation we move in the direction of reconciliation, breaking hierarchies and healthily deconstructing the canon. William Shakespeare wrote his plays, and they are all around to be recuperated by means of translations, transformations, adaptations, interpreted by readers, film makers, play directors, song writers, sculptors, painters, all assessed by new publics.

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Notes

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¹ My translation: "Essentially, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, the domain of violation . . . it exists in nature and it subsists in the human being, a movement that always goes beyond limits, and can never be reduced other than partially".

² My translation: "Apparently, in the early seventeenth century a certain frankness was still in force. The practices did not seek secrecy; words were spoken without excessive reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had with the illicit a tolerated familiarity. The codes of rudeness, obscenity, decency were lax, when compared to the ones in the nineteenth century. Direct gestures, shameless discourse, visible transgressions, displayed anatomies, artful children wandering without hassle or scandal amongst adults' laughter: a display of bodies".