

**ARTHUR MILLER'S
A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE IN SPANISH**

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When I first came across the 1980 Spanish translation of Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* I thought I had just found one more acting edition of a Spanish production of a play originally written in English. Little did I know then I was to start revising my ideas on describing and studying drama translations and that I was to find out some striking facts about the history of the translation (may be translations) of this play into Spanish.

I shall begin then with the Spanish edition which lies in the origin of this paper. Published by MK Ediciones in its collection Escena (Scene) number 17, it is presented by its target author, translator or adaptor, José Luis Alonso, as an acting edition of the production, staged for the first time on January 11th of the same year, 1980. The play was directed by the target author-translator who also wrote an introduction to the edition of the play as well as a blurb which is going to prove highly significant in this work.

In the blurb, José Luis Alonso clearly states that the play which was first produced in New York is not the same that was later presented in Europe. He says that Miller revised and enlarged the text. And this revised text is, according to what the translator-director points out in the back cover of the edition, presented to the audience in the Spanish edition of the play.

Only by paying some attention to the copyright section in any edition of the play in English one can see that this text was first published in 1955 and later revised in 1957. So it must be the 1957 version Mr. Alonso has used for his adaptation and production. It must surely be the basis for this edition since the 1955 version was not to be published or performed again after its New York premiere. Since only the English title and author are mentioned in the Spanish edition and no copyright of any English edition or publishing company are

quoted, one is bound to assume that the translator is just giving his source explicitly in the blurb.

Therefore it is understood that the source text that should be used in comparing and describing this Spanish translation is the 1957 revised edition. Six different editions of this text are kept in the British Library in London. Contrariwise no edition of the one-act version ever reached this library. As far as I could investigate, these six editions reproduce virtually the same text and by comparing them, it was soon established that they are all printings of the 1957 revised version which could also be easily found in public libraries and bookshops alike. The Penguin edition being the most popular one of these.

Having decided the source text and target text that were to be studied and compared, it was only a question of carrying out the description of the translation and its relation to the source text. The first attempts at doing so were shocking. The target text did not seem to correspond to the source text in many ways. The title was equivalent, the number of characters was basically the same and so were their names and the number of acts. Nevertheless the dialogue (record of speech of the characters) or frame¹ (stage directions) did not seem to correspond generally with those of the English text. This amazing fact led us to reflect further on the unit of comparison and description of drama texts. Since the division in acts seemed to be the same in both texts and the comparison line by line proved almost impossible to carry out, the need for a different way to proceed in this particular case was urgently felt.

Divisions in scenes or even episodes were not useful either since they did not seem to correspond in any logical way. The more I tried to compare target and source text, the more the translation became a clear rewriting of the original. Some ingredients could be tasted in it but the final product and effect were quite different and, above all incomparable. It was difficult to figure out what type of translation this might be since deletions, modifications and additions of parts of the text could not be clearly traced and were intermingled with a basic skeleton that could only be supposed, not actually found. It was not a case of free adaptation of a text or of partial translation. It seemed to be more a case of a rewrite, a different play written by the target author having the source text as inspiration or excuse.

This dead end in the process of studying the translation made me reflect on the advisability of using a unit of comparison for my work which would be smaller than acts, scenes or episodes, and which could be identified as an integral part of drama texts. This unit, which I postulated, is composed of the lines spoken by an actor/character including his/her name and the stage directions related to this part of the record of speech and was called "utterance" ("réplica" in Spanish). The utterance would be useful to study and compare original and translation first at a macro (global) level, number of utterances per act or/and scene, and further on at a micro level: linguistic comparison of specific utterances with their original counterparts.

This unit which was defined and applied to the analysis of this play, in the first place, seemed to work wonderfully for any translation but this. When comparing the number of utterances per act in *A View from the Bridge — Panorama desde el puente*, it was clear that this acting edition of the play, Spanish version of the 1957 edition, had been significantly reduced. One fourth of the original had been lost (266 utterances less than the original in the first act and 20 in the second). But the difficulties and contradiction lingered. When approaching the text itself, and bearing in mind the number of utterances deleted, most of the utterances that seemed to have been translated did not correspond to their counterparts in the original revised version.

The unit of comparison had proved only useful in a global approach to the text revealing deletions of original text in the translation. Nonetheless, something definitely awkward about the translation had to be studied and explained since the vast majority of translated playtexts under study were rendering results and did not pose problems of this kind. You could trace partial translations, full translations, faithful renderings, drama versions abundant in non-equivalences or additions; but you could actually tell what type of translated text you were facing through a study of version and original. *Panorama desde el puente* was strangely unequivocal and any actual relation with the original was too complex to trace and explain.

Another course of action was open when this target text ceased to be the only translation known and the 1980 performance the only point of reference of the staging of this play in Spain.

Looking for other Spanish versions of this play, a translation published in Argentina in 1956 was found in the Fundación Juan March in Madrid. The date of this edition on the one hand, and the fact that both *A View from the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays* were presented together as in the first English edition, on the other, were enough to realize that this was a translation of the playtexts as they were performed in a double bill in 1955 in New York. Furthermore, the translator, who is also the publisher, warns the public in the first page that this translation is copyright and the only version in Spanish authorized by Arthur Miller.

Seeking other stage productions of *A View* it was soon discovered that the play had been first performed in Spain in 1958, three years after the not very successful New York production at the Coronet Theatre in a double bill with *A Memory of Two Mondays*, two years after Peter Brook's successful London Production for which Arthur Miller revised the text, and one year after the Paris production. This Spanish version was signed then by José López Rubio, member of the Spanish Royal Academy of the Language, and both performance and translation were highly praised by the critics at the time. This version has not been printed so far and it is therefore difficult to say whether it was translated from the revised English text or not. Theatrical customs at the time would have favored a production following the line of the London or, at any rate, the Paris

production. Whatever the circumstances, this production of the play in Spanish was anything but ignored by the critics.

In fact, when the play was produced in Madrid, twenty two years later, critics kept making reference to the 1958 performance of the play paying more attention in the review to the content and impact of the play in its first production than to the actual productions on which they were supposed to be commenting.

This led us to contemplate the published translation under study in a different light. If the work of translator-director José Luis Alonso was ignored, if the play itself was commented on constant reference to the first Spanish production, it could very well be because there was almost nothing new to it. The twofold task of translator-director as presented in the edition, seems to be reduced, in the words of theatre critics, to one: that of director. Unlike the first performance in 1958 when the director, actors, and translator's work were distinctly and separately qualified, this 1980 production seemed to be presented as a shadow of the first.

Since the text translated by José López Rubio does not seem to have been published at any time, there is no chance of comparing both acting translations. The opinion of theatre critics is all that is left as a point of reference.

Having found a reading edition of the one-act play as it was published in 1955 and having established the date of the first performance in Spain, the task of studying our 1980 translation seemed to be no easier in any respect. For one thing the 1956 Argentinean translation could not help us as it clearly is a version of the first one-act play published and performed with *A Memory*. The text of the first performance in Spain was not to be found and therefore could not help in any way the development of our study.

And so I was back again to comparing the 1980 translation with the 1957 English revised version. Different courses of action were tried and the study was approached from diverse angles. Since acts did seem to coincide in number, scenes in the original were identified and were correspondingly traced in the translation. The result was poor: not all the scenes in the original were present in the translation and those which were appeared to have been translated very irregularly, the number of utterances per scene was always different and so were stage directions. By comparing scenes² and episodes³, it also became patent that the end of the first act and beginning of the second in the translation did not coincide with the division in the original. After a comparison of scenes in the source and target texts one would conclude that both dialogue (record of speech) and frame (stage directions and the like) were consistently modified in quantity as well as quality.

Before attempting a final comparison of parts of the texts and draw conclusions as to the types of changes which had taken place, another possible, but, in principle, improbable comparison was carried out. The 1956 Spanish one-act edition, a straight translation from the first 1955 English text was compared with the 1980 two-act adaptation of the playtext revised by Miller.

This comparison was undergone just before putting pen to paper and give results of the so-far only possible comparison. It was the last resort.

The only drawback of such study was the fact that, being out of print and available through a restrictive library, only one third of this Argentinean edition could be copied and used as the basis of the study. In spite of this, the task of partially comparing both target texts was undertaken and successfully completed. The utterances and episodes in José Luis Alonso's version could be traced in the Argentinean translation in exactly the same sequence, virtually the same number and undoubtedly the same basic content. The resemblance between both target texts, with just a few exceptions, was that existing between an original painting and a replica to which some strokes to the taste of the copier had been added.

Surprisingly enough what was offered as a modern acting edition of the English text revised by Arthur Miller proved to be nothing but a slightly modified copy of a reading edition, the translation of the first 1955 English text. What I have not been able to investigate is whether the slight modifications effected upon the first Spanish target text are José Luis Alonso's or not. If the first text which was performed in Spain were to be found, this could probably be solved. There remains another necessary comparison: that between the 1955 English text and this 1980 translation whose author claims not to have used. But this study has not yet been undertaken for the first version has proved more difficult to find to date than any of its translations.

Having checked the close relation between the Spanish 1980 version and the Argentinean 1956 translation, the comparison 1957 revised English edition — Spanish acting edition was of secondary importance until the real source text used was established.

So far the facts of a long process of trying to study a translation. Now the facts which prove the close relation between TT1 (1956 Argentinean edition) and TT2 (1980 Spanish acting edition) which, in turn, will show rather than translation procedures or translator's strategies, the way some theatre professionals seem to go about producing in their own language a play originally written in a foreign language.

Since it would be impossible to give a full account of the findings, the two first utterances of one of the characters, Alfieri, at the same time lawyer and narrator of the story, and the first scene introduced by Alfieri's first speech, would be used for what they reveal of the relation between both target texts⁴.

Alfieri's opening speech as it stands in the Argentinean edition can easily be traced in the 1980 Spanish edition. There are some expressions which are a matter of choice in the rendering of the English original and when identical in both texts denote a close relationship between them. Thus idiomatic expressions like "pájaros de mal agüero" or noun phrases such as "casos realmente interesantes" are obvious examples of a direct relation between TT1 and TT2. Some linguistic items in TT1 seem to have been partially modified or adapted

in the 1980 Spanish version in different ways. Thus, “a sus mujeres, y sus padres y sus abuelos” becomes in TT2: “a sus mujeres, sus padres y amigos”. A stage direction: “se sienta en su escritorio” is reduced to “se sienta” in TT2. Changes in word order “Me siento en mi oficina, aquí, ...” becomes: “Me siento aquí, en mi despacho”. There are also changes in the morphological category of certain words. “Cartago” and “Grecia” become “griegos” and “cartaginenses”. There are deletions at different levels. Sentences like “Todo lo cual por cierto que es ridículo.” are deleted. Also, words in key phrases: “somos bien norteamericanos, somos civilizados. Partidos en dos mitades.” changing the meaning of a fundamental sentence. There are adaptations of proper names: “Red Hook” becomes “Red Rock” and there are also changes which prove fatal in the development of the story: “El nombre de éste era Eddie Carbone” (TT1) rendered as “Este se llama Eddie Carbone”, modifies the presentation of the protagonist and has different connotations as to the significance and perspective of the story.

If we take Alfieri’s second speech, the division at the level of the sentence is different. “Trabajaba en los muelles cuando había trabajo y volvía a su hogar con su paga y vivía. Y a las diez...” (TT1). “Trabajaba en los muelles cuando había trabajo y volvía a su hogar con su paga. Vivía y a las diez...”. Sentence 1, 2 and 3 in TT1 have been reduced to sentence 1 in TT2, sentence 4 in TT1 roughly corresponds to sentence 2 in TT2 and sentence 5 corresponds to sentence 3 in TT2. The stage direction in TT1 where we are told that Tony enters the scene is kept in TT2 but the character (Toni) has been deleted together with his record of speech in TT2. There are also adaptations of names “Marco” becomes “Mario” throughout, “Vinny Bolzano” becomes “Alberto Bolzano”.

In the first scene we find some examples of how the adaptor of TT2 substituted expressions used mainly in a variety of Spanish (that of Argentina) by their contemporary equivalents in standard Spanish. Thus we can read “alguien” instead of “tipo” referring to a man. But these changes are not consistently effected (utterance 90: “tipo” in both TT1 and TT2). In the same way we read “estamos en paz” instead of the Argentinean “estamos a mano”, “Ófídmeme bien” instead of “Oigan, ustedes dos”.

Apart from these examples that can be appreciated in Alfieri’s speeches, there are certain examples of how the author of this version did not, as he claimed, use the revised English edition but adapted from the existing Spanish translation (TT1). The episode where Eddie, Beatrice and Catherine talk about Catherine’s job is not present in either TT2 or TT1. The name “Katy” spelt with “K” in TT1 is adapted to the Spanish spelling “C” but such change is not consistent. So we can see “Katy” in page of TT2. There is no reference to Eddie and Beatrice’s children in the revised edition but we find some references to them in both TT1 and TT2. These examples corroborate our hypothesis that TT2 is but an adaptation of TT1.

In fact this work in progress shows much more than that. It has some

fundamental implications to the study and description of drama translations and the nature of those texts which have been published, produced and offered to the Spanish audiences.

First and foremost, this very clear, too clear, relationship between TT1 and TT2 shows how naive sometimes it is to apply labels such as reading or acting editions to virtually identical products. If we had to judge by these two texts to tell the difference between a reading and an acting edition or translation, we would not know how to start.

The study and comparison of drama translations has to be based on texts but the field of study transcends the written page so that the stage has a fundamental role to play. Performances, after all, are the final target of translations. Other, pages, those of the original text or texts have to be taken into account as well since there is no such thing as a universal relationship ST-TT when describing translations. The question of the source text(s) used is at least as important as that of the target texts for they may hinder our study if we take the standard original text as the only source.

Once the source and target text(s) have been identified, a comparison of these on purely linguistic bases is not enough. There are some preliminary questions to be tackled before attaining the actual study and description of the translation. The way the TT is presented, the publishing company the presence or absence of references to the source author, original title, the holder(s) of the copyright, etc., are of vital importance to formulate an initial working hypothesis which may, as has been the case with this play, not been corroborated in further stages of the study.

When the actual comparison of ST-TT is carried out at a global, macro level the traditional divisions of playtexts into acts, scenes and episodes are not enough. A unit of description and comparison such as the utterance is useful when comparing the texts at a macro and micro level.

Finally the study of a translated text, its function and impact on a certain society is not restricted to the mere study of ST and TT, but sometimes has to be open to other TT and other ST which may have been used and may have a bearing on the text we are studying. In this field of drama tradition is present both in the page and the stage.

The study of the target text of *Panorama desde el puente* adapted by José Luis Alonso although not completed yet, has rendered results in questioning the way the play was offered to the reading public and theatre goers. It has also made us reflect on the usefulness of a unit of description and comparison of target texts: the utterance, which I have posited. It has also revealed a close relationship between texts far away in time, space and purpose.

NOTAS

1 — Juliane House uses these terms “dialogue” and “frame” in *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment*. Tübingen, Nair, 1981.

2 — Scenes are introduced by Alfieri’s speeches”

Scene I.1: “You wouldn’t have known it...” (p. 11).

Scene I.2: “He was a good a man as he had to be in a life that was hard and even” (p. 26).

Scene I.3: “Who can ever know what will be discovered”...” (pp. 33-4).

Scene I.4: “There are times when you want to spread an alarm,...” (pp. 49-50).

Scene II.1: “On the twenty third of that December...” (p. 59).

Scene II.2: “On December twenty-seventh I saw him next...” (p. 65).

Scene II.3: “Most of the time now we settle for half...” (p. 85).

3 — Episodes in Scene I.1.:

Eddie-Louis, friends greeting.

Eddie-Cathering, talk about her hair style and dress.

Eddie-Beatrice and Catherine, talk about the cousins who will arrive.

Eddie-Beatrice-Catherine, talk about Catherine’s job while setting the table. Eddie does not like it.

Eddie-Beatrice, talk about coffee like a married couple.

Catherine-Eddie-Beatrice: “When do cousins arrive?”. The case of Vinny Bonzano.

Eddie-Catherine, talk about her job and when she will start working.

4 — **First scene introduced by Alfieri’s first speech:**

ST: A. Miller, *A View from the Bridge*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987 (1961¹), pp. 11-25.

TT1: A. Miller, *Panorama desde el puente*, translated by Jacobo Muchnik & Juan Angel Cotta. Buenos Aires, Jacobo Muchnik Editor, 1956, pp. 10-20.

TT2: A. Miller, *Panorama desde el puente*, adaptation by José Luis Alonso. Madrid, MK Ediciones, colección escena, no. 17, pp. 9-16.

Second scene, introduced by Alfieri’s second speech:

ST: A. Miller, *A View from the Bridge*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987 (1961¹), pp. 26-33.

TT1: A. Miller, *Panorama desde el puente*, translated by Jacobo Muchnik & Juan Angel Cotta. Buenos Aires, Jacobo Muchnik Editor, 1956, pp. 20-28.

TT2: A. Miller, *Panorama desde el puente*, adaptation by José Luis Alonso. Madrid, MK Ediciones, colección escena, no. 17, pp. 16-22.