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Translation and (self-)censorship of foul language: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Traducción y (auto)censura del lenguaje soez: *¿Quién teme a Virginia Woolf?*

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Abstract: The use of strong language, an aspect heavily controlled by Francoist censorship, is a key characteristic of the film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Nichols, 1966), based on Edward Albee's 1965 play of the same title. This article investigates the impact of Francoist censorship on the translation of foul language in a translation of the play as well as in the Spanish dubbing and subtitling of the film. A comparative analysis reveals whether current translations have restored the linguistic elements that were subject to censorship.
Keywords: L Foul language; audiovisual translation; theatre translation; censorship; self-censorship.
Resumen: El uso de lenguaje soez, controlado con especial celo por la censura franquista, constituye un elemento característico de la película *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Nichols, 1966), basada en la obra teatral homónima de Edward Albee (1965). Este artículo investiga el impacto de la censura franquista en la traducción del lenguaje soez en una traducción de la obra teatral y en el doblaje y los subtítulos de la película. Este estudio comparativo muestra si las traducciones distribuidas en la actualidad restauran los rasgos lingüísticos que fueron objeto de (auto)censura en el periodo franquista.
Palabras clave: Lenguaje soez; traducción audiovisual; traducción teatral; censura; autocensura.
Summary: Introduction; 1. Censorship of foul language during the Francoist period; 2. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in Spain; 3. Data and methods; 4. Results, 4.1. Foul language in the original dialogues of the play and film, 4.2. Translation of foul language in the play and film; Conclusions; References.
Sumario: Introducción; 1. La censura del lenguaje soez en el Franquismo; 2. *¿Quién teme a Virginia Woolf?* en España; 3. Datos y metodología; 4. Resultados, 4.1. El lenguaje soez en los diálogos

originales de la obra teatral y la película, 4.2. Traducción del lenguaje soez en la obra teatral y en la película; Conclusiones; Referencias bibliográficas.

INTRODUCTION

Censorship was a compulsory process during the Francoist period in Spain (1939-1975), and authorization was required to screen a film or perform a play (Lobejón et al., 2021). This often led to textual deletions and changes aimed at manipulating or eradicating foul language, a major concern for Francoist censors. The traces left in the censorship records related to foreign films and plays allow us to gain a better understanding of any textual shifts that can be found between the source texts (STs) and target texts (TTs) from that time (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2025).

Several works for the cinema and theatre introduced to Spanish audiences bearing the marks of these censorship processes are still in circulation today. In fact, a work such as *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954), currently available on DVD, suggests that Francoist censorship is still influencing audiovisual translations today (Díaz-Cintas, 2019). The survival of plays and films raises questions about how they were translated, and whether retranslations have resulted in more accurate renderings of those aspects that underwent censorship in the past, including the rendering of foul language. As has been noted in related literature, the impact had by Francoist censorship is an underexplored but relevant research endeavour, considering the endurance of ideological manipulation in cultural products still being distributed today, as in the case of the *The Barefoot Contessa*.

The play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee (1928-2016) (Albee, 1965), and the film of the same title, directed by Mike Nichols (1931-2014) and produced and adapted by Ernest Lehman (1915-2005) (Nichols, 1966), underwent censorship in Spain (censorship records 44433 and 215-65), and the use of foul language in both was at the core of the censors' objections. The current article explores the impact of Francoist censorship on the translation of foul language in the performance-oriented translation (censorship record 215-65) of the play and the dubbing and subtitling of the film (Nichols, 1966). The following research questions are examined in particular: What effect did the (self-)censorship of foul language have on the translation of *Who's Afraid of*

Virginia Woolf?? Have modern audiovisual translations restored these censored elements?

The fundamental aspects of Francoist censorship and the (self-) censorship of foul language in the play and film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are detailed first, followed by a brief outline of the translations in Spain. After this, the data, methodology and results of the study are described and, finally, the main conclusions are highlighted.

1. CENSORSHIP OF FOUL LANGUAGE DURING THE FRANCOIST PERIOD

As O'Leary (2016) notes, there have been many forms of censorship at different times and in different contexts making it still a topic of current relevance. In particular, the ideological manipulation of translations seems to be a global phenomenon associated with totalitarian regimes (e.g., Merino-Álvarez, 2021; O'Leary et al., 2016; Seruya and Lin Moniz, 2008). The focus of this article is on Francoist censorship, although certain practices resonate regarding other repressive systems; for instance, Merino-Álvarez (2019) explores the connection between the Francisco Franco (1892-1975) and António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) regimes in terms of censorship of theatre.

The organizational structure of Francoist censorship was subject to several changes during the period 1939-1978 in Spain. For instance, in 1965 and 1967, when the first translations of the play and film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* were introduced, the body that oversaw theatre and cinema censorship was the Ministerio de Información y Turismo, Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro (Ministry for Information and Tourism, General Directorate for Cinema and Theatre). A request had to be submitted to this body to perform a play or show a film; censors would then issue reports and would either ban or authorize the play, often with conditions. Apart from restrictions regarding the age of the audience and type of theatres, these limitations could also involve alterations to the (translated) texts.

By looking at several censorship records, the TRACE projects research[1] has shown that the manipulation of translations focused on

[1] The TRACE (TRAnslations CEnsored) research projects, based at the University of Leon and the University of the Basque Country, focused on the impact of Francoist censorship on the translation of cultural products (Rabadán, 2000; Merino-Álvarez, 2007).

different areas, namely sexual morality, politics, religion, and foul language (e.g., Gutiérrez Lanza, 2015; Gómez Castro and Andaluz-Pinedo, 2026). Censorship rules for the cinema exhibitons and theatre performances were issued in 1963 and 1964, the years immediately prior to the censorship of the play and film under study here (Orden de 9 de febrero de 1963 por la que se aprueban las «Normas de censura cinematográfica» and Orden de 6 de febrero de 1964 por la que se aprueba el Reglamento de Régimen Interior de la Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales y las normas de censura). Rule 13 banned foul language, the focus of this article: "las expresiones coloquiales y las escenas o planos de carácter íntimo que atenten contra las más elementales normas del buen gusto" (colloquial expressions and intimate scenes or shots that violate the most basic norms of good taste).

In the literature, the notion of *colloquial expressions* has been rendered in a variety of ways, such as *offensive and taboo language* (Ávila Cabrera, 2023), *bad language* (McEnery, 2006) and *foul language* (Merino-Álvarez, 2016) – the latter term being adopted here in accordance with other TRACE studies. In order to establish the type of words and expressions that we understand as foul language, the categories suggested by Ávila Cabrera (2014, pp. 79-86) are particularly useful: cursing, derogatory tone, insults, oaths, exclamatory swearword / phrases and subtle insults; animal names, death/killing, drugs / excessive alcohol consumption, ethnicity/race/gender slurs, filth, profanity/blasphemy, psychological / physical condition, sexual references / body parts, urination / scatology and violence.

In addition to the external censorship exercised by the censors, a trend for self-censorship by translators also occurred in translations from the censorship period (e.g., Gómez Castro, 2023; Merino-Álvarez and Andaluz-Pinedo, 2017). This recurrent practice meant that translators toned down controversial aspects as a means of gaining the authorization of the censors.

Although the impact of Francoist censorship on the translation of foul language in plays and films has received less systematic attention than other topics such as sexual morality, instances of this influence are also mentioned, as in the 1959 translation of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) (Pérez López de Heredia, 2004, pp. 363-368) and the 1955 and 1970 translations of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) (Merino-Álvarez and Andaluz-Pinedo, 2020). The present contribution, then, will add to the availability of textually-based

work within the TRACE framework in relation to foul language and censorship.

2. *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?* IN SPAIN

The set of texts pertaining to Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* includes theatrical and audiovisual translations in circulation in Spain for more than fifty years. Eleven theatrical productions are registered in the database of premières held by the Centro de Documentación de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música (the Spanish documentation centre for performing arts and music), including censorship record 215-65, in which the performance-oriented translation by José Méndez Herrera (1904-1986) is filed. It also contains the DVD version of the film, which continued to be distributed well into the 21st century.[2] Censorship was involved at the beginning of these textual chains of theatrical and audiovisual translations, as documented in censorship records 215-65 and 44433, which are available at the Spanish archive known as the Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) (Lobejón et al., 2021). In both records, foul language was chief among the objections raised by the censors.

The first request for a performance of the play in Spain (record 215-65) was filed in the AGA on the 8 November 1965 by the theatrical director José Osuna (1928-1992), using José Méndez Herrera's translation. The censors' reports make recurrent reference to foul language, with a variety of changes and deletions being proposed. For instance, «para dicha autorización sería conveniente, no obstante, que el adaptador realizara algunas modificaciones en lenguaje y crudeza de algunas situaciones» (for such authorization it would be convenient, however, that the adaptor make some changes in the language and crudity of some situations), and "no le encuentro otra objeción que la de ciertas malsonancias en la expresión coloquial" (I do not find any objection other than that related to bad language in the colloquial dialogues). Some reports also include a list of words and expressions deemed to need manipulation. Consequently, the censorship board authorized the production (23 November 1965) with

[2] There are also two reader-oriented Spanish translations (Albee, 1965 and 1997) and a published translation into Catalan (Albee, 1991), translated by Marcelo De Ridder, Alberto Mira and Jordi Arbonès, respectively. The analysis of these texts is beyond the scope of the present contribution, which focuses on translations used in the theatrical and audiovisual productions of the play.

several "adaptations" (substitutions and omissions) and, also, recommended a limited number of performances in Madrid and Barcelona.

Two letters were written by José Osuna in response (and registered in the censorship record), in which he tried to retain certain instances of foul language. The first letter states that, whereas omissions and substitutions of some of the expressions indicated had been carried out, other expressions, such as *mierda* (shit), had been retained, arguing that they were a necessary part of the characterization. It also documents the fact that the *mise-en-scène* should not emphasize these terms unduly. However, on 1 February 1966 the censorship board dismissed this petition. In the second letter, José Osuna states that all the required modifications had now been carried out, except in four cases where it was considered that they would seriously harm the play and thus could not be substituted or omitted from the text. In the letter he explains that without these expressions there would be a lack of coherence: "Es muy difícil cambiar frases dentro de unas situaciones pensadas y escritas justamente para decir esas frases" (it is very difficult to change sentences within situations conceived and written precisely to say those sentences). Another argument used was that the theatrical programme itself warned the audience to expect this type of language in the performance. On 8 February 1966, the censors also dismissed this second letter. These documents are interesting in that they illustrate the importance attached to foul language in the censorship process. They show the opposing views held by the censors and the director of the theatrical production regarding the translation of foul language, and document the various attempts at negotiation, where power clearly wins out over reason. The translation of the play can also be found in the censorship record, with crossings-out and substitutions marked directly on the translation itself by the external censors.

The play was authorized with these textual manipulations for audiences over 18 years and premièred at the Teatro Goya in Madrid on 15 February 1966 (Álvaro, 1967, p. 225). Reactions to the play in the press also included allusions to foul language, referring for example to "una acumulación de palabrotas y obscenidades" (an accumulation of swearwords and obscenities), but also stating "uno no se asusta de las palabras; cree, por el contrario, que (…) han sido culpablemente limadas en la versión española" (we are not scared of the words; on the contrary, we believe that they have guiltily been polished in the Spanish version) (Álvaro, 1967, pp. 228-230).

The first hurdle facing the film was the Production Code Administration (PCA)[3] in the source context. Parallels can be found between the foul language identified as problematic by the Spanish theatrical censors and the list of offensive terms from the script produced by the PCA. These included *hijo de puta* and *son of a bitch*, *escroto* and *scrotum*, as well as *montar a la anfitriona* and *Hump the Hostess*, respectively (Leff, 1981, p. 463). The dubbing and subtitling of the film also underwent censorship in Spain. In censorship record 44433, two requests were authorized for one-off screenings of the film with subtitles (March and April 1967). However, in a later request (June 1967), the screening of the film was banned throughout the country due to rules 1, 13 and 18, which objected to the use of foul language and lewd scenes. As with theatrical translation, references to the harshness of the dialogues are noted in a report. A letter of appeal from the company Interpeninsular Films pleads for a reversal of the decision, giving the following reasons: the artistic value of the work as recognized by the award of Oscar nominations for the actors; the fact that the film had been authorized in the United States by a Catholic board; that it had already been shown twice with subtitles and was received by the press with interest; that the theatrical performance of the play had been authorized; that the company would limit the film to screening in places with more than 10,000 inhabitants, and that they would be willing to change instances of foul language. Other documents in the record include an appeal by Warner Bros, stating: "The few slang words which occur are generally used anywhere and everywhere without anyone taking offence. (…) *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has been passed by the Censors in all the countries where the picture has been presented so far." A telegram is also filed from Frankfurt Warner Bros to London Warner Bros indicating that the German censors had authorized the film without cuts for adults over eighteen years old. It is notable that the arguments used in negotiations by the agents interested in screening the film in Spain (such as mentioning awards, the success of the work in other countries, and the acceptance of textual cuts) seem to be part of a trend that has also been noted in previous case studies (e.g., Merino-Álvarez, 2000, pp. 132-139; 2003, p. 645).

[3] The PCA, established in 1934 as the US film industry's self-regulatory body, enforced the Motion Picture Production Code and granted films a Seal of Approval. Although films could technically be released without this seal, its absence limited their commercial prospects, making compliance with PCA requirements a practical necessity.

The censorship record shows that the dubbing into Spanish was authorized on 23 September 1967 on the condition that the film be screened only in places with more than 10,000 inhabitants, and with adaptations, as specified in the following instructions: "suprimir del texto las expresiones groseras e inaceptables" (delete rude and unacceptable expressions from the text). For the authorization of the subtitling, the company indicated that they intended to use the dialogues authorized by the censorship board. The authorization of the Spanish subtitles for the film is registered in the record on 11 May 1968, with the proviso that it be authorized only for audiences over eighteen years old, without adaptations, and could only be shown in places with more than 10,000 inhabitants.[4] The film continues to be distributed in DVD format today.

All in all, the censorship records show that the issue of foul language and its (self-)censorship was central to the introduction of the initial translations of both the play and the film of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in Spain.

3. Data and Methods

This study focuses on the translation of foul language in the play and film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The data analysed were as follows: the source play (Albee, 1965), the Spanish performance-oriented translation by José Méndez Herrera (censorship record 215-65), the original script of the film, the dubbing (transcribed), the original subtitles, and the translated subtitles (Nichols, 1966).

The framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 2012) was adopted for the analysis, and translation is considered as a series of decisions (Levý, 2000, p. 148) made with certain priorities and restrictions (Zabalbeascoa, 1999) within a polysystem (Even-Zohar, 1990) where extratextual factors affect text production. In line with Rabadán's framework (2001, pp. 39-40), the aim here is to "identificar los modos de despliegue y repliegue textual" (identify the modes of textual folding and unfolding).

After relevant paratexts have been examined, including the censorship records, consistencies in the analysed translations were identified

[4] The dubbing scripts and subtitles are not filed in the censorship record, so it is impossible to identify these cuts; similarly, we cannot know for sure whether these texts are the same ones still commercially available on the DVD.

regarding foul language. To detect this type of language in the original texts, a procedure suggested in the TRACE studies was applied (cf. Gómez-Castro, 2009). This involved using corpus tools to search for a list of anchor words denoting foul language in the STs. Anchor words are defined as "terms which are the physical representation of the problematic topics for the authorities of Franco's regime" (Gómez Castro, 2009, p. 375). The software used to search for these words was TAligner (Zubillaga et al., 2015; Sanz-Villar and Andaluz-Pinedo, 2021), owing to its advantages in terms of the analysis of parallel corpora made up of dramatic texts. TAligner allows aligning translations with their original texts at the utterance level and obtaining concordances. The identification of anchor words in the STs provided the corresponding translated segments of translations aligned with the STs in the corpus. The search included all the anchor words suggested by Gómez-Castro (2009, p. 137), with a few more being added from our own study of the texts, a practice suggested for the enlargement of this methodological resource (Andaluz-Pinedo and Gómez Castro, 2026). Thus, the anchor words studied in the corpus were: *ass*, *ball*, *bastard*, *bitch*, *bray*, *bugger*, *Christ*, *cluck*, *crap*, *damn*, *floozie*, *goddamn*, *hell*, *hump*, *Jesus*, *mount*, *pig*, *plough*, *prick*, *puke*, *screw*, *simp*, *son of a bitch*, *sub-human*, and *up yours*.

We began by comparing the occurrences of the anchor words in the original play and film to ascertain the degree of comparability of the corresponding translations. We then classified the translation techniques observed in the performance-oriented translation, the dubbing, and the subtitles. Drawing on the classification of translation techniques noted in Gómez Castro (2009) for the analysis of censorship, the following categories which involve the alteration of the original text were used: *omission*, registering cases where foul language from the original is not present in the translation; and *substitution*, for the instances in which foul language in the original is replaced with a milder expression in the translation.

The category used for instances where such language is indeed reflected in the translations was *transfer*. The translation techniques registered were then studied from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective in order to ascertain consistencies in terms of the most frequent types of shifts in each case, why these might have been adopted, and their "textual-pragmatic consequences" in terms of the treatment of foul language (Gómez Castro, 2009, pp. 379-380).

4. RESULTS

Foul language was identified as being a recurrent feature in the original dialogues of the play and film, and differences were observed between the most frequent translation techniques in the theatrical and the audiovisual translations.

4.1. Foul language in the original dialogues of the play and film

The analysis found 148 occurrences of English anchor words related to foul language in the original play. Ninety-seven occurrences of these anchor words were found in the original film script and subtitles (which are practically a transcription of the script), many of which coincided with those in the play. More specifically, 62.8% of the anchor words relating to foul language in the play also occurred in the film in the same context*;* in 60.8% of cases the same word was used, and in the remaining 2% similar terms were found (for instance, *damn* in the play and *goddamn* in the film). Therefore, the main trend here was that most instances of foul language in the play were retained in the film. It can be argued that the maintenance of foul language as a characteristic element of this theatrical work was essential in the film adaptation. We also found that, in comparison with the play, only 4.1% of the foul words used were added, with most instances in the film occurring in the original script of the play (95.9%).

In general, the English film script and subtitles remain close to the play's original dialogues*,* and this general trend is reflected in foul language specifically. In this sense, as Edward Albee claimed in an interview included on the DVD: "I was lucky because the producer, who wrote the screenplay, didn't screw up my text. It was still pretty much there, though there were cuts. But the film basically represented the play fairly" (Nichols, 1966). This similarity between the play and film scripts makes it possible to draw comparisons between translations in both spheres within the field of drama (Esslin, 1990).

Table 1 compares the anchor word *damn* as found in the play and film, in which the proximity of the two products can be appreciated.

	Play	Film dialogues	Film subtitles
STs	MARTHA: (…) It finally snapped! And	I finally snapped. And I'm gonna howl it out. And	1379 01:25:28,545 --> 01:25:30,445

	I'm going to howl it out, and I'm not going to give a damn what I do, and I'm going to make the damned biggest explosion you ever heard.	I'm not gonna give a damn what I do. And I'm gonna make the biggest goddamn explosion you've ever heard.	I finally snapped. 1380 01:25:30,881 --> 01:25:35,011 And I'm gonna howl it out. And I'm not gonna give a damn what I do. 1381 01:25:35,185 --> 01:25:39,349 And I'm gonna make the biggest goddamn explosion you've ever heard.

Table 1. Similarities between the original dialogues of the play and film.

Conversely, 37.2% of instances of foul language in the play were not present in the film dialogues (37.2%). This might be due to factors in the adaptation that fall outside the scope of the present study, although some cases may be related specifically to the list of offensive words given by the PCA to the studio (Leff, 1981, p. 463).

Table 2 includes the anchor word *ball*, one of the terms deemed problematic by the PCA, which was part of the original play but was avoided in the film adaptation. This clearly affects the translations; although the reference is absent from all translations, the change required by the censors was made to the play after translation, but before the audiovisual translations were produced. In other words, even though transfer is found in the comparison of the audiovisual TTs with their STs, the avoidance of foul language tends to occur in all the TTs. In the theatrical translation, Nick's utterance is a reaction to the foul language (deleted by the censors), so that this piece of textual manipulation illustrates the loss not only of an instance of foul language but also causes a lack of coherence, as indeed the director José Osuna had argued in his letter to the censors (see above). In the film, the original texts contain deletions of the following utterances together with the foul language, thus avoiding the problem of incoherence in the theatrical translation.

	Play	Film dialogues	Film subtitles
STs	GEORGE: (…) you must not forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his... right ball, you might say. NICK: You might not understand this… but I wish you wouldn't talk that way in front of my wife.	You mustn't forget Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his right arm. I'd use another word, but we leave that sort of talk to Martha.	453 00:30:03,255 --> 00:30:08,386 You mustn't forget Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his right arm. 454 00:30:08,560 --> 00:30:11,723 I'd use another word, but we leave that sort of talk to Martha.
TTs	JORGE: (…) Marta es la hija de nuestro amado Jefe. Y para él es, como si dijéramos... su [CROSSING-OUT AND ADDITION: riñón] derecho. NICK: No sé si lo entenderá... pero preferiría que no hablase usted así delante de mi mujer. (Back translation: JORGE: Marta is the daughter of our beloved boss. And for him she is, we might say… his right [CROSSING-OUT AND	Y no olvidéis que Marta es la hija de nuestro querido patrón, su brazo derecho. Iba a decir otra cosa, pero eso se lo dejo a Marta. (Back translation: Don't forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss, his right arm. I was going to say something else, but I leave that to Martha.)	442 00:28:58,710 → 00:29:02,703 No olvidéis que Martha es hija de nuestro jefe, su mano derecha. 443 00:29:03,350 --> 00:29:06,228 Emplearía otra palabra, pero le dejaré eso a Martha. (Back translation: Don't forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss, his right hand. I was going to say

	ADDITION: kidney] NICK: You might not understand this… but I'd prefer you wouldn't talk that way in front of my wife.)		something else, but I leave that to Martha.)

Table 2. Differences between the original dialogues of the play and film.

4.2. Translation of foul language in the play and film

The occurrences of the anchor words found in the STs led to the study of 342 translation solutions in the TTs: 148 in the performance-oriented translation and 97 in each of the audiovisual translations. The analysis of the translation techniques registered in both the performance-oriented translation and the audiovisual translation regarding foul language shows differences in terms of their distribution from a quantitative perspective, a contrast which can also be appreciated qualitatively in specific examples from the TTs.

In the performance-oriented translation, the most recurrent translation technique observed was substitution (58.1%), followed by omission (21.6%), and transfer of content (20.3%). A closer look at substitutions in this translation shows that most (45.3%) were already part of the target text submitted to the censors and seem to be part of the translation process, pointing to self-censorship, many of these involving the use of a milder expression instead of foul language. The remaining substitutions (10.8%) were recorded as crossed-out and replaced expressions in the text filed in censorship record 215-65, where the external action of censors is apparent. Changes intended to lessen the offensive load of the play often also affected meaning or naturalness.

Table 3 shows an utterance from Martha which is part of a violent argument with George. This utterance includes two instances of foul language (*hell* and *bastard*) and their corresponding translation solutions which appear to be part of the translation process. These were classified as substitutions since foul language is not retained: *The hell I won't* is rendered as *¡Que no lo diga!* [That I don't say it!] and *you bastard* as *basura* [rubbish]. Thus, the strength of the utterance is lessened, despite its

importance for characterization and the creation of atmosphere in the original play. Also, the translation of *you bastard* is unnatural in the target language, which seems to influence the credibility of the prefabricated orality of the dialogue.

	Play
ST	MARTHA: The hell I won't. Keep away from me, you bastard! (…)
TT	MARTA: ¡Que no lo diga! ¡Aparta de mí, basura! (Back translation: MARTA: That I don't say it! Keep away from me, rubbish!)

Table 3. Substitution in the performance-oriented translation.

Table 4 provides an example of a substitution due to external censorship: the translation of *Screw you!*, *¡Vete a la mierda!* (Go to hell!), was not accepted by censors, who crossed it out and replaced it with the softer and less natural *¡Vete a tomar viento fresco!* (Go and get some fresh air!). This is one of the four changes that José Osuna asked censors not to implement due to the importance of using foul language at that juncture in the drama, at the point when the guests are about to enter the house (censorship record 215-65).

	Play
ST	MARTHA: SCREW you! (Simultaneously with MARTHA'S last remark, GEORGE flings open the front door. HONEY and NICK are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then...)
TT	MARTA: [CROSSING OUT: ¡Vete a la mierda! AND ADDITION: ¡Vete a tomar viento fresco!] (Simultáneamente con la última observación de Marta, Jorge abre de par en par la puerta de entrada. En el umbral están Honey y Nick. Hay un breve silencio. Luego...) (Back translation: MARTA: [CROSSING OUT: Go to hell! AND ADDITION: Go and get some fresh air!] (Simultaneously with Marta's last remark, Jorge flings open the front door. Honey and Nick are in the entrance. There is a brief silence. Then...)

Table 4. Substitution due to external censorship
in the performance-oriented translation.

Another frequent technique registered in the performance-oriented translation was omission. As in the case of the substitutions, a few omissions (1.4%) can be traced back to the influence of the censors, in that they are marked as crossings-out in the translation filed in the censorship record.

The example in Table 5 corresponds to the first utterance in the play, so this deletion made by the censors affects the audience's first impressions, a relevant moment that sets the tone for the entire play.

	Play
ST	MARTHA: Jesus…
TT	MARTA: ¡Me cag[CROSSING-OUT]…! (Back translation: MARTA: For[CROSSING-OUT]!)

Table 5. Omission due to external censorship in the performance-oriented translation.

However, most of the omissions (20.3%) seem to be due to self-censorship since no external cuts were observed in the translation. Deletions were found that affected only an anchor word, or indeed a lengthier fragment containing the term, which effectively caused these parts of the dialogue to disappear in the translation.

Table 6 illustrates the first case, where the anchor word *son of a bitch* is deleted, and Table 7 shows two utterances containing the anchor word *plough** that were completely cut from the performance-oriented translation.

	Play
ST	MARTHA: (gets up, moves quickly, threateningly, to GEORGE) All right, you son of a bitch...
TT	MARTA: (se levanta rápida, amenazante hacia Jorge) Verás ahora, pedazo de... (Back translation: MARTA: (gets up quickly, threateningly to GEORGE) You'll see now, piece of...)

Table 6. Omission of word in the performance-oriented translation.

	Play
ST	NICK: Exactly… An inevitability. You know… Take over a few courses from the older men, start some special groups for myself… plough a few pertinent wives… GEORGE: Now that's it! You can take over all the courses you want to, and get as much of the young elite together in the gymnasium as you like, but until you start ploughing pertinent wives, you really aren't working. The way to a man's heart is through his wife's belly, and don't you forget it.
TT	

Table 7. Omission of fragment in the performance-oriented translation.

Finally, transfer is also registered, such as in the fragment in Table 8, where *cluck* is translated as *imbécil* (stupid), keeping foul language in the performance-oriented translation.

	Play
ST	MARTHA: (impatiently) Yes. They're married. To each other. Cluck! (…)
TT	MARTA: (impaciente) Sí, casados. El uno con el otro. Eres imbécil. (…) (Back translation: MARTA: (impatiently) Yes, married. To each other. Stupid! (…))

Table 8. Transfer in the performance-oriented translation.

In the audiovisual translations, the dubbing techniques found include transfer (45.4%), substitution (39.2%), and omission (15.4%), and in the subtitles, transfer (66%), omission (19.6%) and substitution (14.4%).

When these results are compared with those for the performance-oriented translation, the main trend seems to show that an effort has been made to retain foul language, although there is a secondary trend where some of the cases are reduced.

Figure 1 summarizes the percentages for the translation techniques registered in the three target texts studied.

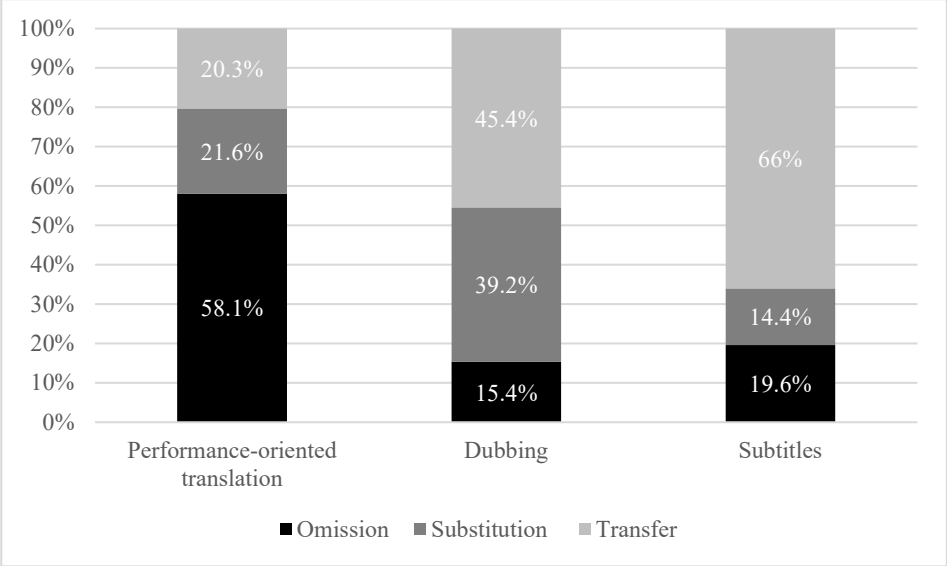


Figure 1. Percentage of translation techniques in the target texts.

Thus, in many of the cases where (self-)censorship in the theatre translation was found, the content is transferred in the audiovisual translations. For example, in Table 9, the translation of the anchor word *bastard* in the performance-oriented translation (*ruin* [despicable]) does not seem to maintain the force of the foul language, although it does to some extent reflect the meaning. However, in the audiovisual translations, this feature is transferred through the words *hijo de puta* (son of a bitch) and *cabrón* (asshole).

	Play	Film dialogue	Film subtitles
STs	MARTHA: You're really a bastard.	You really are a bastard.	1293 01:20:33,851 --> 01:20:35,546 You really are a bastard.
TTs	MARTA: ¡Eres ruin!	Eres un hijo de puta.	1253 01:17:25,110 --> 01:17:26,862

	(Back translation: MARTA: You're despicable!)	(Back translation: You're a son of a bitch.)	¡Eres un auténtico cabrón! (Back translation: You're a real asshole!)

Table 9. Transfer in the audiovisual translations.

Similarly, Table 10 shows omission in the performance-oriented translation and transfer in the dubbing and subtitling (the literal translation of *son of a bitch* for *de puta* or *hijo de perra*).

	Play	Film dialogues	Film subtitles
STs	GEORGE: (…) You disgust me on principle, and you're a smug son of a bitch personally (…)	You disgust me on principle, and you're a smug son of a bitch... (…)	980 01:04:22,447 --> 01:04:26,008 You disgust me on principle, and you're a smug son of a bitch...
TTs		Por principio no me agradas porque eres un hijo de puta lleno de pretensiones. (Back translation: On principle you disgust me because you're a smug son of a bitch.)	951 01:01:53,430 --> 01:01:56,945 Me das asco por principio y eres un engreído hijo de perra… (Back translation: You disgust me on principle and you're a smug son of a bitch…)

Table 10. Transfer in the audiovisual translations.

However, the avoidance of certain expressions was also registered for the audiovisual translations. In the dubbing, this was achieved largely through substitution, and in the subtitles through omission, perhaps due to the characteristics of each type of translation: synchronization in the dubbing and condensation in the subtitles. Table 11 shows substitution in the dubbing and transfer in the subtitling, where *son of a bitch* is translated

as *pobre desgraciado* (poor miserable boy) in the former and *hijo de perra* (son of a bitch) in the latter. Conversely, Table 12 contains an example of transfer in the dubbing where the expression *hijo de puta* (son of a bitch) is used to translate *bastards* but is omitted in the subtitling.

	Film dialogues	Film subtitles
STs	I never cornered the son of a bitch in my life.	1041 01:07:21,393 --> 01:07:24,726 I never cornered the son of a bitch in my life.
TTs	Yo nunca he acorralado a ese pobre desgraciado. (Back translation: I never cornered that poor miserable boy.)	1008 01:04:45,110 --> 01:04:48,147 ¡Nunca en la vida acorralé al hijo de perra! (Back translation: I never in my life cornered the son of a bitch.)

Table 11. Substitution in dubbing.

	Film dialogues	Film subtitles
STs	I'll give you bastards five to come out from wherever you're hiding!	1466 01:35:37,721 --> 01:35:42,920 I'll give you bastards five to come out from wherever you're hiding!
TTs	Hijo de puta, quiero que salgáis antes de que cuente hasta cinco. (Back translation: Son of a bitch, I want you all to come out before I count to five.)	1417 01:31:51,950 --> 01:31:56,102 ¡Contaré hasta cinco para que salgáis de vuestro escondite! (Back translation: I'll count to five so you come out from where you're hiding.)

Table 12. Omission in subtitling.

Hence, the translations analysed show that there are different approaches to the way in which foul language is handled in the play and the film. There is a shift from the pervasive (self-)censorship of the performance-oriented translation towards transfer in the audiovisual translations. These also use omission and substitution, thus neutralizing

cases of foul language, albeit to a lesser extent than in the performance-oriented translation. This dissimilarity in the rendering of foul language between the performance-oriented and the audiovisual translations may be due to different factors. The assessment of these translations was carried out by different censorship boards and, although some considerations were shared, lack of consistency in the verdicts meted out by the censors was not uncommon at the time. It could also be the case that further cuts were made for the cinema with the audiovisual translations being updated more recently, although it is not possible to ascertain this for certain due to a lack of documentary evidence. In any case, to some extent, this divergence between the translations studied might also be related to the fixed nature of the image, to which the audiovisual translations are necessarily subordinate, a restriction that does not apply to translations intended for the theatre.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined a set of texts derived from Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, including the performance-oriented translation by José Méndez Herrera, which premièred in 1966, as well as the dubbing and subtitling of the 1966 film adaptation, which remains available on DVD. An essential trait of this original work for the theatre is the use of foul language, which serves as a means of characterization and, as such, is a crucial element in the dialogues and the evolution of scenes throughout the play. Yet, this type of language was precisely one of the elements that the censors sought to control and limit in both the theatre and the cinema, and indeed the reports of censors for these translations, filed in censorship records 215-65 and 44433, revolved round this issue. The recurrent use of foul language was deemed problematic by the censors when both the play and film were introduced for Spanish audiences. However, a variety of factors outweighed this obstacle, such as the international prestige of the work in question, limitations to the number of performances allowed for the play and the screening of the film, and textual changes. Thus, the theatrical translation, as well as the dubbed and subtitled film, did in fact reach Spanish audiences.

The present study has sought to reveal consistencies in the translation of anchor words denoting foul language in the play and film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Through a comparison of the translated products, and in light of the notion of intersemiotic chains of texts, we have found that

most occurrences of the anchor words in the original play had their counterpart in the original dialogues and subtitles of the film. Other cases of foul language found in the play were not present in the film, perhaps due to the influence of the PCA, or indeed to other kinds of choices relating to the adaptation of the play for the cinema.

Our findings have also provided empirical evidence of the degree of manipulation exerted on the performance-oriented translation as part of the censorship process. Various agents altered the translation as part of the negotiations, in which the censors stipulated a reduction in the use of this type of language before authorization was granted. This was mainly realized by substituting and omitting words or expressions deemed too offensive. On the other hand, the translation solutions observed in the dubbing and subtitling of the film tended to reflect the foul language used in the ST, although other translation techniques were also found. In the dubbing these were mainly substitutions, and omissions in the case of the subtitling, this possibly in relation to more general issues in these types of audiovisual translations, such as synchronization and condensation. Thus, different trends were found in the theatrical and audiovisual translations, in the latter case involving a greater instance of foul language. In the original work, foul language shapes the characters and evokes specific situations and atmospheres. It also acts as a feature of scripted orality. These nuances, however, are lost to varying degrees in the target texts (TTs).

The general trend involving the censorship in the theatre during Francoism was also found in the performance-oriented translation of Arthur Miller's (1915-2005) *The Crucible* (1956) (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2024). These analyses are limited to case studies and cannot therefore be generalized, although they could serve to hypothesize that other plays and film adaptations also contained similar types of textual alteration at the time. Further research is needed on the impact of Francoist censorship not only under Franco's regime but also beyond, to identify whether ideological alterations of original works continue in translations distributed today, such as in the case of the film *The Barefoot Contessa* (Díaz-Cintas, 2019). Implications of this type of research could involve raising awareness concerning the possible endurance of traces of censorship in modern texts and suggestions for their retranslation.

Thus, future work might consider the impact of Francoist censorship on the translation of foul language across a wider spectrum of theatrical and audiovisual translations, thus increasing the available data in this field

of research. The advance of digital technologies favours the systematic examination of large quantities of texts and may be usefully applied from this perspective. Corpus studies might focus on chains of texts diachronically, identifying the extent to which censorship still underpins translations that are distributed today and retranslations that have been produced over time. This, it seems, would be a potentially fruitful area of study, one in which textual folding and unfolding (Rabadán, 2001, pp. 39-40) seems to go hand in hand with the folding and unfolding of the phenomenon of (self-)censorship.

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