

**MAKING MALLORCAN MISCHIEF:
TRANSLATING, REHEARSING, AND PERFORMING THE *ENTREMÈS DEL PASQUEDÓ*
AT THE 2022 *OUT OF THE WINGS* FESTIVAL**

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ABSTRACT: Catalan-language theatre from the Middle Ages is completely unknown in the Anglophone world, even though the Catalan Countries have rich performance histories from this historical period. An unknowing audience presents both opportunities and challenges to any theatre translator, but the transition from page to stage is not a simple transaction. Considering translation as a space for playful probing and creative intervention, this article reflects on the rehearsal process for the Mallorcan cuckoldry play, *l'Entremès del Pasquedó*, which was performed as part of the *Out of the Wings* festival in the summer of 2022. By looking at how the rehearsal process led to (re)translating, as well as (re)negotiating the jump from text to body, this article highlights that theatre translation is a never-ending process and, much like texts from the Middle Ages, it can continually be reimagined and reworked in new contexts.

KEYWORDS: Theatre Translation, Translation for Performance, Rehearsal, Cuckoldry, Catalan

1. Introduction

From beautiful stained-glass windows and vivid manuscripts to public spectacle and complex religious ceremony, performance permeated every aspect of life in the Middle Ages. The religiosity of these creative outbursts, whilst important, is all too often overplayed in our collective imagination and perception of the Middle Ages, much to the detriment of comic cultural outputs that revel in lust, gluttony, and sadism – or rather, those attributes that we may deem ‘low brow’, or indeed all-too-human. The ongoing survival of supposedly lewd texts speaks to their sociocultural and political importance, but that does not necessarily guarantee their transferral into other languages. Translation and theatre, as bridges between languages, geographies, and temporalities, and as potential power brokers, have a vital role to play in reimagining the Middle Ages, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and providing entertainment to contemporary audiences. Plenty of ink has been spilled in celebrating Early Modern theatre from certain contemporary European states, and bringing those theatrical gems to contemporary audiences is often framed as a grand cultural affair, which is then validated by specific theatre venues. Over the years, these established canons have certainly benefited from ‘a reiterative process of reshaping and reframing’, a definition for the cultural dynamics of reception offered up by Coolahan (2020), which has only served to entrench them further. But what does that mean for those minoritised theatre cultures on the periphery and far from the booming centres of Empire? And, considering the theatre translator, what additional demands condition the translation process and eventual move from page to stage when dealing with a late medieval text?

The purpose of this article is to document and reflect on the process of (re)translating, rehearsing, and performing my English-language translation of the anonymous Mallorcan

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cuckoldry play, *L'Entremès del Pasquedó* (Huddleson, 2022), at the *Out of the Wings* Festival, which took place at the Omnibus Theatre in London, in July, 2022. As Boehm observes, performance is 'intrinsically ephemeral' (2001, p. 28), and so we must consider this performance as a one-off, but the rehearsal process itself, as I argue here, serves as a moment for reflection and creative intervention as we move from page to stage, from written text to spoken language, and from stage direction to physical embodiment. Throughout this article, I refer to performance itself as a form of translation, moving away from the framing of translation as one-dimensional, interlingual exchange. This is because theatre translation, as noted by Lass (2023, p. 128), requires 'multi-level acts' as we work across the warp and weft of signs. At the heart of this layered inquiry, I ask: What does it take to successfully translate and stage a relatively unknown Mallorcan cuckoldry play from the late Middle Ages for a contemporary audience? By considering how we translate, rehearse, and perform this play, I want to point to where performance takes us and how the languages of the stage, going above and beyond an actor's utterances, enable a new way of (un)seeing and understanding theatre from the (late) Middle Ages. Such a contribution is timely, given that whilst there is already a slew of academic writing dedicated to translating and performing Early Modern and contemporary plays, theatre from the Middle Ages is found wanting. Valuable contributions from Enders (2011) and Parsons and Jongenelen (2012) have helped put translated plays from the Middle Ages into the hands of readers and actors alike, but there is no additional reflection on how these translated plays take to the stage itself.

In this article, acknowledging the gap between a translated play from the Middle Ages making that perilous jump from page to stage, the main focus will be on the developments that emerged during our rehearsals via Zoom and onsite at the Omnibus Theatre. Several absorbing accounts of what happens when a piece of theatre in translation enters the rehearsal room have been documented by Marinetti and Rose (2013), Stevens (2016), Jeffs (2018), Maitland (2019), and Pfeiffer, Richardson, and Wurm (2020). There are also engaging explorations of the power dynamics that come to life within the rehearsal room, such as those that affect deaf actors (Richardson, 2019), and questions of relatability when performing a rehearsed reading in translation through digital means (Balduino P. Fernandes and Corbett Garcez, 2022). Whilst invigorating and pioneering, none of these accounts emerge from translating and performing plays from the Middle Ages, and this gap in the literature may lead some to think that there is nothing exciting to be said about translating and performing theatre written before 1500 A.D, particularly that which exists beyond the dusty literary canon. As I shall argue in this article, there is plenty to be thought about as these texts still speak to us, and, at the same time, there is lots of room for experimentation and creative inquiry, if only we are ready to take risks in our translations and our performances. It is my hope that this account will encourage more translators to experiment and reimagine plays from the Middle Ages and grant them a new life onstage.

Throughout this piece, I have implemented a performance-as-research approach, given that actors (Daniela Cristo, Elena Sanz, and Joshua Welch) and a director (Sergio

Maggiolo) led the endeavour in the rehearsal room, and this framing serves as a conduit for better understanding the transition from page to stage and what kinds of changes took place as we moved from translation through to rehearsals and finally performing to a live audience. Performance-as-research is perhaps best defined as “hybrid enquiries combining creative doing with reflexive being” (Kershaw, 2011, p. 64). In the case of the *Entremès*, that involved experimenting with the actors and director, letting them make decisions on what worked best, and then reflecting on and dissecting the decisions we made as researchers-practitioners. Whilst this model is flourishing in Theatre Studies, it has also been adopted by theatre translators. For example, Angela Tiziana Tarantini (2021, p. 6), who has researched the process of translating a contemporary Australian play from English to Italian, uses this approach to better understand rhythm and gesture. This is an enlightening process as we may deem something to be appropriate when translating on a page, but then reconsider when we arrive at the stage. For theatre translators, such an approach is beneficial as it acknowledges that the stage is not only a place for presenting our work, but also a vibrant site of knowledge production. In my discussion around the translation and rehearsal of the *Entremès del Pasquedó*, to better navigate the gaps in existing scholarship on theatre translation and what happens in the rehearsal room, I rely on the two interconnected approaches (playful extending and foolish disrupting) outlined by Julia Gray and Pia Kontos (2018, p. 442), both of which will be expanded on later in the article, in their own practice of devising research-informed theatre.¹

2. Meddling monks and advantageous adultery: the *Entremès del Pasquedó* in context

The *entremès*, as genre across Iberian theatres, has undergone a number of transitions from its medieval origins through its Baroque manifestations up to the modern day. What is common throughout that timeline is the genre’s aim to excite and delight by dancing on the fine lines of social acceptability, thus enduring as a subversive force. During the Middle Ages, the *entremès* certainly had acquired saucy overtones in the Catalan-language traditions. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Jaume Roig’s *Espill*, from 1460, as a ‘bon pagès’ (good farmer) is no longer able to control his ravenous sexual desires after having seen an unspecified *entremès* (1978, p. 48). This is also apparent in the fragmentary play, *Diàlegs del cançoner d’Híjar* (n. d., but reproduced in Romeu i Figueras, 1962, pp. 31-33), as a young debauchee directly addresses a woman with: ‘*Com estau espituflada*’ (p. 31, literally: How’s it going, big breasts?).² Whilst other characters are shocked at this upstart, the female addressee seems to accept his utterance as a compliment and is eager to grant him some attention. Within the context of Mallorca in the Middle Ages, a number of

¹ Gray and Kontos developed and identified their approaches through an attempt to create research-informed theatre that would reflect and share the experiences of people living with dementia. In their work, Gray and Kontos deploy a third approach (inventive disrupting), which relates to space. As we had limited time for rehearsals and were fixed to one venue, we could not explore this particular approach in great depth.

² Despite its comedic nature, the reality that this play only survives in fragments makes it difficult to assume whether it is fully part of the *entremès* genre.

entremesos appear in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, all dealing with cuckoldry, marriages in tatters, and women usurping men's power. The *Entremès del Pasquedó* falls within that family of texts, and whilst the play is largely unknown beyond Mallorca, it is unique in that it has been continually revived at the local level throughout the centuries.

The *Entremès del Pasquedó* (hereinafter referred to as the *Entremès*) tells the story of a nameless Mallorcan fisherman and his wife, Llacinta.³ Beset by hunger and distressed by poverty, the pair find themselves at the bottom of the social ladder. The arrival of Easter hails a potential change in their economic circumstances as Christians swap meat for fish over Lent, resulting in a boon for fishing communities.⁴ The couple bicker over their lot in life, continually teasing one another, and then the fisherman reveals that he has heard that his wife is all too eager to chat with the local friar. Llacinta dismisses his revelation, stating that he is the only one she could ever love. Satisfied with her response, the fisherman makes his way to the sea. However, on his way there, the fisherman decides to enjoy some wine from his flask, but he is unable to stop himself from drinking the lot. This overindulgence knocks him into a deep sleep. A meddling friar finds the fisherman and reports back to Llacinta. The two of them then conspire and decide to dress the fisherman up as a friar. Upon awakening, the fisherman is bamboozled by his sudden 'transformation', albeit a rise on the social ladder. The fisherman pays his wife a visit to see if there is some solution to his predicament, but Llacinta and the friar, who is now posing as a fisherman, reject him and send him off. The rejected fisherman, aware of being duped and yet unable to do anything, brings the action to an end by acknowledging his own failures and warning the audience to learn from his mistake.

The world that we see onstage, wherein a priest and a woman can outsmart a fisherman, is part of a social imaginary taking shape, or a 'not-actual (or not-yet-actual) world' as Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, p. 103) would describe it. This imaginary is, perhaps, part of a larger ploy that seeks to 'give people reasons for actions' (*ibid.*, p. 102). Whilst the fisherman could certainly be seen as a representation of corrupted pride (for his dislike of priests) or gluttony (for his fondness of the drink), neither his wife nor the priest, considering their own mischievous schemes and intentions to flaunt social order, could be deemed counterbalanced personifications of virtue. Furthermore, at the end of the play, the fisherman's wife and the priest are awarded new lives following the fisherman's ousting. The fisherman, the backbone of the community, has fallen and yet, rather paradoxically, by becoming a priest, has also risen on the social ladder.

Whilst the ribald content of the *Entremès* may surprise some of us, we can see that, as the power of the Catholic Church waned over the peoples of Christian Europe, contumacious priests and their unruly ilk became easy targets for searing ridicule. Such figures populate literary canons across Western European languages from the French

³ It is worth noting that Llacinta is the only character in the play to be named.

⁴ Texts, such as *El Llibre de la Cort de les Roses*, reveal special financial agreements for Lent being drawn up between fishermen and the universities of Castelló d'Empúries and Roses during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in order to prevent overly exploitative pricing.

fabliaux such as Guèrin's *Du prestre ki abevete* ('The Priest who peeked'), and short plays such as the fifteenth-century *Farce de Martin de Cambray*, to the well-endowed, yet regrettably celibate, priest who is celebrated in Iseabail Ní Mheic Cailéin's Gaelic poem, *Éistibh, a Luchd an Tighe-se* (circa 1500), or the priest in John Heywood's English farce *Johan Johan The Husband* (1520). Even in religious texts themselves, priests are fair game for satire. For example, in the Galician *Cantigas de Santa Maria* number 327, one priest becomes deformed after fashioning himself some undergarments from a stolen altar cloth. Whilst Van Liere (2008, p. 32) argues that "the notion of a corrupt medieval church has its roots in the Protestant historiographical tradition of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", it is clear from these literary examples that humour and laughter, at the expense of a priest or that of the larger institution of the Catholic Church, were commonplace.

Aside from these literary sources, there are also historical documents which present us with concrete examples of priests behaving badly. Drawing on cases from across fourteenth-century Catalonia, Armstrong-Partida asserts that priests "went to great lengths to engage in a relationship that could offer them a sexual outlet, companionship, and perhaps even love" (2017, p.82). Thibodeaux (2015, p. 152) notes, whilst there had been an active 'resistance' throughout Europe to the new ideal of a celibate clerical masculinity, there was a clear understanding of what was deemed appropriate behaviour for a priest by the late Middle Ages. This newly established ideal of clerical masculinity, which supposedly went hand in hand with celibacy, would become rich material for comedy. As the *Entremès del Pasquedó* has no recorded performance history from the Middle Ages, and its vexatious content could be seen as an attack on the Church, I believe it is important to consider whether this dramatic text, in its manuscript form, could well have been written simply for private reading by an individual (perhaps even a priest), and not entirely intended for live performance. Such a textual reality would pose challenges for any translator, but we should recognise that the infrequent and rudimentary stage directions indicate that our anonymous playwright had some understanding of how theatre works.

If the text was indeed meant for performance, or even just guilty reading in private, it is clear that searing political criticism prowls along between the lines. In his analysis of the carnival satirist, Charles (2005, p. 11) reminds us that underneath the "overt comedic façade often lurks a more politicized agenda predicated on a particular form of laughter". In the *Entremés*, it is clear that the bountiless cuckold, as a clown-like figure, is the target for our collective laughter from start to finish. The fisherman's masculinity is under constant scrutiny and re-negotiation, as is that of the priest. The strict social hierarchy that sets them on specific rungs is also being undone and twisted around through their role reversal. As Classen (2010, p. 3) argues, laughter is an invitation to 'either join a community or invite others to create one'. And it is clear that our collective laughter, arising from this fisherman's misfortunes and the priest's role switch, is creating a community. However, reflecting on this, we may want to ask ourselves what sort of community is taking shape or coming into being as a result of our collective laughter. Is this a community of *criticism*? And if so, how might that shape the translation? And, continuing along with the practical

purposes of translating and performing the text, how does that contemporary community differ from or perhaps resemble that of the Middle Ages?

3. By hook or by crook: Bringing Mallorca Out of the Wings

The *Out of the Wings* Festival, which first began in 2016, is a celebration of theatre in translation from across Iberia and Latin America. The translations selected for the Festival are treated to a reading in a London theatre with actors and a director. Over the years, the Festival has seen over thirty translated plays come to life onstage, several of which have been picked up by larger theatres, publishers, and other festivals. However, the majority of work that makes the cut for the Festival is either ultra-modern or relatively contemporary, with fewer older texts being presented and reaching the stage. This is, admittedly, a result of what is pitched for the Festival. As the translator of the *Entremès* and being intimately aware of certain textual features within the text, I was concerned whether a Mallorcan *entremès* could pass muster when presented alongside exciting and provocative work from the present day. When bringing a humorous piece to the stage, the last thing anyone wants is to be met by an audience in the grips of a painful silence and a state of bewilderment. And what's more, considering the potential for error between the jump from page to stage, would the translation and performance elicit laughter for the *right reasons*? How do we carry the humour of cuckoldry and the socio-political discourse of the play across temporal, geographic, and linguistic boundaries? And within that complicated juggling act, what is going to be left behind?

Mallorcan theatre, regardless of its time period, is largely a stranger on the Anglophone stage. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, Mallorca, with its sun-soaked, sandy beaches, is both exotic and, thanks to the package holiday and ethically questionable reality TV shows, quite familiar to a British audience. This mediated familiarity also works against the task of the translator as saturated beaches, high-rise apartments, and hordes of oily or sunburnt tourists do not scream 'high culture'. Offerings from popular culture, such as the sexual exploits made immortal through song by Ivor Biggun or the sickeningly sweet island extolled by Chris Wolff, do not help matters. Yet, in reality, Mallorca plays a central role in performance in the Middle Ages, but this legacy is rarely packaged for and sold to contemporary tourists. The *Cant de la Sibil·la*, a religious chant from late Antiquity that describes the Christian Apocalypse, continues to draw in crowds on an annual basis and is broadcast on local television and radio. The ritual even goes on tour and is performed in churches in Andorra, Catalonia, and Valencia. Furthermore, the *Consuetes mallorquines*, a rich collection from the twelfth century, featuring religious plays depicting events from the Bible, alongside the lives of Saints, are continually mentioned in academic scholarship. These plays, as Massip and Kovács (2017, p. 425) note, are not just textual treasures, but the detail in their staging gives us an insight into the ritualistic life of the Cathedral of Mallorca. And yet, despite their cultural significance, these plays, performances, and rituals remain untranslated.

Translating from the Mallorcan context into the Anglophone means starting from zero, or perhaps even starting in the red. In light of this reality, the driving force throughout the translation and rehearsal processes was that of eliciting laughter (for all the right reasons) and showing a contemporary audience, our community built through communal laughter, that a five-hundred-year-old play still has a place on today's stage. Humour is, as D'Arcens qualifies it, 'notoriously difficult to anatomise' (2014, p. 5). This view is echoed by Milner Davis (2013, p. 3), who contends that whilst farce is traditionally considered a 'lowly dramatic genre', its execution on the page and on the stage is 'very challenging'. Translation, if anything, further complicates this very messy affair as we grapple with the element of another language, in this case, Catalan, and the temporal framework that engulfs the *Entremès*. Chiaro (2010, p. 1) warns that verbal humour 'travels badly', and this evident not only in the jump between languages, but also within the temporal shifts that a language may undergo. Looking to the English language itself, Derrin (2020, p. 4) considers the fool's various jests that arise in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606) are no longer funny to us, and it is the 'elements of absurdity and surprise in performance' that bring us to laugh. What time has cruelly robbed from spoken language, the performing body can and may have to make up for, and this will become apparent later in this article.

4. Performance leading translation: actors as textual agents and creative collaborators

As stated earlier, the comical nature of the *Entremès*, and its desire to evoke laughter in an audience, and thereby create a community of sorts, was something that we always had in the back of our minds as we entered the rehearsal room. This nagging thought would shape and influence many of the decisions taken by the actors and director as a creative team working from my translation. Considering the temporal gap between the writing of the text in medieval Mallorca and its contemporary performance in London, the play's internal drive to make people laugh brings with it a burning question: Is this *Entremès* still funny today or has its humour been lost to time? And, if interventions are needed, what strategies could actors and directors implement to make the play comical again?

The first thing that strikes any translator who glances at the *Entremès del Pasquedó* is its rich variety of rhyme schemes, some of which are frayed and imperfect, that punctuate the different characters' verse. Translating verse is an arduous and imperfect affair, as something is always going to be lost along the way. This reality often leads some translators to focus exclusively on meaning, often at the expense of the rhyme. In his reflection on translating Spanish-language *Comedia* into English, Matthews (2008, p. 39), for example, affirms that audiences should 'experience the play as verse', but also admits to certain worries regarding the textual form as it can 'become too distancing'. This concern, however, is rather suspect. Considering the temporal and cultural divides that exist, how distanced *should* theatre from another century be for a contemporary audience? If, as Venuti (2013) reminds us that translation 'changes everything', how much of a change should we expect to see in ourselves, triggered through exposure to different theatres? Theatregoers in London can regularly take in a Shakespearean play performed in verse at the Globe, and so

I saw no reason to shy away from verse when translating this Mallorcan text, but, going back to Chiaro's warning (2010, p.1), therein lies an important caveat: How has humour weathered the passage of time?

Considering that eliciting laughter was the main goal of the translation and performance, and it is certainly the *raison d'être* that pulsates through the *Entremès*, it is worth noting that the play itself does not rely heavily on verbal and linguistic humour. Instead, it is the onstage action, those non-verbal and non-linguistic acts, that serve as humorous moments.⁵ As London (2010, p. 212) reminds us, the text is 'just a part of the translational enterprise'. If anything, the emphasis on bodies to deliver humour is a relief for the translator as some of the risky acrobatics of communication are taken on by the director and actors. There are also some textual matters that have to be addressed in order to approach the *Entremès*, or indeed any other text that has come down to us from another age. When we reflect on the fragmented reality of the source text, the *Entremès del Pasquedó*, which finds itself spread across several manuscripts, and the many hands that it has passed through on its journey to the present day, it may be worthwhile considering how malleable the text is. In my own opinion, and after reading through various plays that recycle the *Entremès* and present it once again to Mallorcan society, such as the 1980 reimagining put forward by Llorenç Moyà Gilabert, it is worth considering the *Entremès* as a performance for the people and, therefore, a textual chameleon that wants to change itself for each new reading. As Emmerich (2017, p. 2) reminds us, we need to move away from the notion of a stable source text and begin to reframe it as 'a volatile compound that experiences continual textual reconfigurations'.

One of the issues with any older text is that language is subject to decay. In the following segment, Llacinta's utterance reveals issues in the rhyme scheme, and my initial translation failed to bring it to order:

Llacinta

Vols que jo y tu, per riure,
el vestiguem
de aquests àbits que dus
y que el dexam
al mitx des ras?

Frare

Per Déu, que bé has pensat !
Serà bon cas!

Llacinta

What say you if we, for fun,
were to dress him up
in one of your habits
and then leave him out
in the middle of nowhere?

Friar

By God! What an idea!
We are indeed a devilish pair!

In the rehearsals, the sudden thud in the rhyme scheme was apparent to all. The actors and director were not convinced at rhyming 'nowhere' with 'pair', and asserted that the rhyme

⁵ This textual reality, the need for a moving body, creates a paradox. As I have mentioned earlier in this article, and taking into consideration the lack of a performance history for this play in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern, I suspect that the play may only have been read by an individual or to a private group.

needed to keep flowing, despite what the text itself may indicate. After working through several alternatives, we arrived at a new translation incorporating ‘under the sun’ and carrying the rhyme forward into the friar’s utterance with ‘Our devilish trick is done!’:

Llacinta

Vols que jo y tu, per riure,
el vestiguem
de aquests àbits que dus
y que el dexam
al mitx des ras?

Llacinta

What say you if we, for fun,
were to dress him up
in one of your habits
and then leave him out
under the sun?

Frare

Per Déu, que bé has pensat !
Serà bon cas!

Friar

By God! What an idea!
Our devilish trick is done!

By making such a change to the translation and resulting performance, it is clear that we are subduing the text. However, in performance, an audience can follow the rhyme scheme and will not be perplexed by any unanticipated change in rhythm. It is ‘obvious’, as Malmkjær (2005, p. 71) admits, that any text that is translated from one language to another will sound different. As seen in the example above, textual instability in older texts should not be seen as a stumbling block, but rather as an invitation for creative intervention and imaginative play. Furthermore, rather than framing the performative turn within translation studies as a move *away* from written and spoken language, it is here that we see actors engaging with a translation to wed spoken language with the written.

5. Performance as creative intervention: invoking the languages of the stage

In this article thus far, my focus has been on grappling with spoken language in translation, as we navigate the shift from page to stage, and where performance can lead translation, taking us back from stage to page through linguistic interventions. However, the stage does not rely solely on spoken language, instead it is polysystemic when it comes to meaning-making. As translation for performance demands that we consider this reality beyond spoken language, I want to pay some attention to how performance can go above and beyond the translated text thus leading us to creative interventions as we engage with the languages of the stage itself rather than the articulate, moving bodies that traverse it. Playful extending, as defined by Gray and Kontos (2018, p. 444), is focused on developing interrelations, particularly how we convey a character onstage and how an audience then relates to that character. This process is ‘experimental’ and ‘responsive’ but relies heavily on paying “attention to things and people other than oneself” (*ibid.*). In Gray’s own practice (2023, p. 316), after working with her target group (individuals living with dementia), the process involved working through a range of gestures, movements, and word choices in order to come to an understanding of the character she sought to present. The desire to create a clear relation between the performer and the spectator is also echoed by scholars

within Translation Studies. Weighing up the loyalties that a theatre translator must navigate in the jump from page to stage, Johnston (2013, p. 366) recognises this need to establish interrelations, stating that the ‘concluding perspective of the spectator’ is the most important factor. In the case of the *Entremès*, these moments of playful extending would come through our experimentation with and use of light to add further meaning to a scene, adding another layer of comedic value to the *Entremès* which our audience could enjoy, and playing with props. Furthermore, as the translator, I wanted to ensure that an audience would come away from the theatre with a new interest for or an openness to Mallorcan theatre, which remains relatively unknown to Anglophone audiences.

The priest’s discovery of the sleeping fisherman and his subsequent plotting with Llacinta are pivotal moments within the *Entremès*. It is clear that power, oozing from sexuality and intimacy, is obtained by Llacinta through her interactions and dealings with the priest. During our rehearsals, we worked through the scenes involving the friar and Llacinta and continually asked ourselves how each character would occupy space onstage, how far or close to one another they would be, and whether they would perhaps touch one another. We felt this investigation was relevant, given that the fisherman is aware that Llacinta often talks to the priest and even mentions this early on in the play. In their argument for inventive disrupting, Gray and Kontos place an emphasis on how performers transform a space through actions that unlock its potentiality (2018, p. 445). In the theatre space, meaning can be unlocked through a gesture, e.g., an actor fanning herself to reflect how hot it is in their world onstage, or movement, e.g., actors moving around the stage to indicate travel. Whilst we cannot be entirely sure of a Mallorcan women’s sexual agency in the Middle Ages and how this would influence gesture and movement, Llacinta is a woman who knows what she wants out of life and is determined to get it. At the same time, the friar is set on starting a new life beyond his religious order. Our director then decided that we would explore the sexual nature of Llacinta conspiring with the priest. As we brought our actors closer together onstage during our rehearsals, we began to see that a sexual connection between the two made sense. Our inquiry would now begin to interrogate the languages of the stage to find an appropriate vehicle for expressing this sexuality.

Lighting, as a non-verbal language of the stage, was very much part of performance in the Middle Ages, just as it still is today. In Christian liturgical performance, as observed by Tydeman (1978, 166-167), light was a means of drawing attention to the sacred and righteous, as well as moments of revelation. That religious significance would be later lost with the rise of the Renaissance. Reflecting on staging performances in the candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Tosh (2018, p. 105) notes how such a theatre demands that directors and actors adapt to and work with the unsteadily lit space.⁶ One constraint in the space is that the lack of electrical lighting makes it harder to see the actors’ faces (p. 99). A few weeks prior to the rehearsals and performance of the Mallorcan *Entremès*, I was able to watch several scenes from the Spanish Golden Age being brought to life in a

⁶ It should be noted that this is a space designed for Early Modern theatre, but it does serve to highlight some of the issues that would also shape and influence theatre in the Middle Ages.

Performance-as-Research workshop, run by Barbara Fuchs and UCLA's Diversifying the Classics, in the Wanamaker. It became clear that actors would rely heavily on gesture, casting their bodies out towards the audience, to make up for the complications of performing in candlelight. With regard to the *Out of the Wings* Festival, we were fortunate enough to be performing in a contemporary theatre space, with a full array of technological tools to deploy as we wished. However, by comparing the two spaces, a new question for performance began to take shape: Considering the possibilities granted by modern technology, and the use of light historically to signal revelation, what comedic value does lighting bring with it?

Theatre translation scholars, such as Edwards (2007), Pavis (2003, p. 192), and Zatlin (2005, p. 171), have acknowledged the role of lighting in performance, but concrete case studies of how lighting can be used in theatre translation to convey meaning are in scant supply. In the case of the *Entremès*, through experimentation within our rehearsals and paying closer attention to mounting sexual tensions within the text, we noticed that the moment of conspiring between Llacinta and the priest has a particular intensity to it. As a result, we decided to introduce a sudden blackout as Llacinta and the friar discuss their plan to fool the fisherman. The lights would quickly come back on a few seconds later to reveal the two conspirers recovering from the heated throes of passion. In the final performance, as Llacinta tucked in her skirt and tried to tame her dishevelled hair, whilst our priest lay sprawled out on the table with a flask resting between the legs, our audience burst into riotous laughter. Lighting, as our means for articulating sexual tension, had heightened the comedic value of the scene. Furthermore, considering the temporal divide between Mallorca in the Middle Ages and a contemporary London, this intervention was a way of showing an audience that sexuality has always been a factor in human history. This creative intervention through lighting and the further accentuation of sexual possibilities certainly opens the performance up to criticism, as we are moving away from the source text and reimagining sexual norms from the time period. Sexuality, which engulfs the idea(l)s of chastity and monogamy, is a complex social construct. Within that maelstrom, it is important to remember that no one source can manage to encapsulate the entirety of it. Therefore, whilst we should not consider the *Entremès* to be a true depiction of sexuality in Mallorca at the time, I believe there is an artistic license to brush away the prudish image that we may project onto the Middle Ages.

6. Riotous revelations? queer(y)ing and sexualising Mallorca?

Looking back to Gray and Kontos' performance framework (2018), we come across the concept of 'foolish disrupting', which is described as those moments where we pay attention to 'points of tension' or 'disorientation' (p. 444). This can often be moments where the actor, or indeed the translation, meet a moment of uncertainty or disconnect and there is a need to experiment further in order to find a way of moving things along. Gray (2023, p. 317) later expands on the idea of foolish disrupting, placing an emphasis on how the performer should 'experience and enact differently' in order to engage an

audience. In the case of performing the *Entremès*, both Sergio Maggiolo, as our director, and myself, as translator, were eager to tease at any queer potential within the play, in an attempt to disorientate our audience and to add other readings to the text. This desire was satisfied through our casting as we chose to have two female actors onstage, with Elena Sanz playing the role of Llacinta and Daniela Cristo playing that of the priest. It is important to acknowledge the subversiveness of this casting as it adds a further layer to the play's comedic value and would challenge our audience to rethink the gender dynamics of the play. Whilst the priest's gender swap has the potential for comedy in itself, it is also a deliberate attempt to question this male figure, as the priest serves as a representative of institutional and gendered power in Mallorcan society.⁷ Female sexuality, as a plural force in the Middle Ages, has been explored by several scholars, including Karras (2005), Evans (2012), and Harvey (2021), but there is very little on women's sexuality in Mallorca. The *Entremès*, by creating a world in which Llacinta can conspire with a priest, offers us some insight, however. We can see in the *Entremès* that laughter is being used to create a community and when that outburst is aimed at the priest and the cuckolded fisherman, both of whom are representative of power in Mallorcan society, we recognize its subversive quality.

Furthermore, through her jocose onstage dealings, the reality of a new, more successful life for Llacinta is all the more interesting when we consider how women who seek self-improvement in other plays are often the targets of collective laughter in theatre from the Middle Ages, as part of a wider trend of misogyny. For example, as a reflection and outburst of male anxieties, the learned ladies in the late medieval *Farce des femmes qui apprennent à parler latin* are mocked and undermined for having the desire to engage in learning. Even beyond the theatre stage, skimmingtons, as noted by Stokes (2012, p. 36), represent cruel public spectacles that 'mocked' any women with aspirations, reducing them to 'usurpers (of male authority), shrews, rebels, brawlers, or bawds'. Whilst acknowledging an active disenfranchisement of women, Bloch (1987, p. 8), in his article *Medieval Misogyny*, argues for a re-assessment of misogyny in medieval texts, asking whether it is an exclusively male enterprise or rather part of a 'larger cultural discourse in which women also participate'. In the *Entremès* itself, Llacinta is clearly the one who suffers from her husband's negligence, and yet she is clever enough to find a way of exchanging her liability for a boon.

Playful extension is a common reality in many translations for performance, given that it can be deployed in new circumstances to explore the dramatic moment, particularly for emphasising a character's feelings, thus making them all the more palpable for an audience. In Sarah Grunnah's 2021 translation of Calderón's *No hay cosa como callar* (c. 1639), this dramatic quality is brought sharply into view. At the end of the play, as a means of solving the reality of dishonour, Leonor is proposed to by her rapist, Don Juan. In Grunnah's

⁷ Given that the two men, the fisherman and the priest, are the targets of our communal laughter, I would argue that this play has its own proto-feminist edge. Our casting was an attempt to tease out the potential of such a reading.

translation, the line, 'Here is my hand, Leonor', is repeated over and over in the audio performance, each time with a different tone. This voiced repetition, as a playful extension of the text, is an invitation for a contemporary, Western audience to further contemplate the troubling scene. Despite our collective outrage at Leonor's circumstances, we must accept that marriage, as a means of litigating sexual assault, is perhaps the only remedy at hand for her. It was unlikely to have been Calderón's original intention, but the repetition of the line in Grunnah's translation and performance, as a point of reflection, serves to create a community around Leonor.

In addition to queering through casting and expressing sexuality through light, following through with the notion of foolish disrupting, we decided to further explore the props that we could use for our rehearsals and eventual performance. As Barthes (1972, p. 26) reminds us, theatre relies on a 'density of signs and sensations', hence the theatre translator cannot overlook props and their potential meanings. From tissues and handkerchiefs (Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare's *Othello*) to lockets (Calderón's *No hay cosa como callar*) and the majestic arrival of angels and Saints, usually brought onstage within a mandorla or on a separate float, many plays hinge on discoveries and revelations, and it is through props that such disclosures are made. In the case of the *Entremès*, the only significant prop that serves as a vehicle for the action is the fisherman's flask. Despite its importance, the flask is only mentioned in the source text when the fisherman indulges in its contents, and when the priest notices it when he comes across the sleeping fisherman. Through our rehearsals, we noted that the flask was too important to have linger in the background. Although there is no stage direction to indicate that the flask is taken by the priest, in our rehearsals we decided that the priest should do just that. By taking the flask along to Llacinta, this prop, with its phallic symbolism, becomes a new representation of masculinity being transferred from the fisherman to the priest. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in the article, this prop was set between the priest's legs for when the lights came up following our brief blackout, creating an allusion to an erection. Whilst the flask was not going to elicit many laughs in the hands of the fisherman, when it was wielded by a female actor, playing the role of a male priest, our playful gender-bending became all the more humorous for our audience. This was certainly a deviation from what was on the page, in both the original and translated play, but as Boyle (2013, p.215) argues, theatre translation entails moving into a 'newly constituted space'. The *Entremès* obliges the translator, the director, and the actors to unlock its playful and jesting nature through performance, hence such a move made sense.

Putting the gender-bending agenda to one side, our actor, Daniela Cristo Mantilla, had recently broken her arm, leaving it in a cast. As director, Sergio Maggiolo decided to play with this physical feature, as part of our approach to foolish disrupting. The actor's bright pink cast was readied for our performance with the improvised symbol of a cross made from black masking tape, rendering it a comedic prop. When Daniela first came onstage to voice the friar's laments, she thrust forward her arm, revealing the black cross to the audience. This silly moment, as would be the case with the flask, evoked instant

laughter from our audience. Similar interventions, brought through by the actors themselves, have been noted in other rehearsal situations. Stevens (2016) notes that, in her own rehearsals for *Bailando sola cada noche*, actors were able to build on and go beyond the text by bringing in gesture, in this instance, putting a finger to one's lips as a hush to another actor. Through creative play with the body, the actor draws the audience's attention to the duplicitous nature of a male character.

7. Mallorcan mischief made and mastered: returning to the wings

Whenever we read, translate, or perform a play, we must always remember that theatre is a social ritual that seeks to create community and that it is more than mere words on a page. Reflecting on a collection of plays from the Middle Ages, as part of Chester 2010, Mitchell remarks that 'a true sense of *communitas*' (2010, p.102) was created through theatre as audience members discussed the play they had just seen. With its own desire to create community, the *Entremès*, by its own form and design, has a set of specific conditions that need to be satisfied: social order must be troubled, and an audience must be entertained. In rehearsing the translated text, which in turn led to making adjustments to both language and stage directions, we can clearly see how this play has travelled in linguistic, geographic, and temporal terms, but we would do well to observe how one thing, the play's very objective, remains the same: eliciting laughter. And that goal was met with our performance at the *Out of the Wings* Festival 2022 through a string of enhanced translation acts that came to life in the rehearsal room. However, as Aaltonen observes, theatre translation unleashes its own complications as, in comparison to literary translation, it is "more tied to its immediate context", and that a performance comes to life within "a severely restricted time and place" (2000, pp. 40-41). In that sense, it remains to be seen whether the *Entremès* can rise again elsewhere, imitate, or even innovate with the same interventions, and continue to generate laughter through performance.

In this article, I have demonstrated through this case study from the Catalan-language canon that translating and performing the theatre of the Middle Ages, whether manifested as the work in progress that takes shape in the rehearsal or the refined outcome that comes to life before a live audience, answers many questions, but also raises new ones. As evidenced in this article, the rehearsal room is, in many ways, an extension of the translation process. It may well be a workshop of refinement, and a site of playful interrogation and creative intervention, but the rehearsal room is also where we can clamp down, albeit for a fleeting moment, the never-ending process of translation. In the translation and rehearsal process, given the adherence to rhyme and verse, we are indeed guilty of what Boehm qualifies as 'instances of petty or high treason against the original text' (2008, p. 27). Concurrently, we need to recognise that the performance-oriented translator exercises a role that is under 'extensive reconsideration' (Bigliuzzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi, 2013, p. 11). In light of our textual transgressions, calculated risks, and numerous interventions in staging and embodiment, I am sure that our anonymous playwright can

forgive us for these crimes of passion, as many a laugh was to be had in London when a play from late medieval Mallorca took to the stage.

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