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4.48 PSYCHOSIS IN SPAIN: TRANSLATION, PERFORMANCE, RECEPTION AND GENDER

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Abstract

Sarah Kane's plays have been translated and performed several times in Spain. *4.48 Psychosis* has been staged and published in Spain in Spanish, Catalan and Galician on some occasions. In this paper we will analyse the published versions by Matteini (Kane 2006b), Matamala (2014) and Varela (2019), which is the last one to be staged, by the company La Fármaco for Teatro Español (2023), focusing especially on the visibility and agency of the female translators and on the treatment of the gender ambiguity of the main dramatic voice of the original play. Through the paratexts and the reception of their work and processes, the results will be compared with those of Spurno & Zucchi's (2022) analysis of Spregelburd's translation (Kane 2006a), originated and published in the context of Argentina.

Keywords: Sarah Kane; Theatre translation; Paratexts; Gender; Agency.

Resumen

Las obras de Sarah Kane han sido traducidas y representadas en varias ocasiones en España. *4.48 Psychosis* ha gozado de varios estrenos y ediciones en España en español, catalán y gallego. En este trabajo se analizarán las versiones publicadas de Matteini (Kane 2006b), Matamala (2014) y Varela (2019), que es la última que se ha llevado



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a escena, en montaje de la compañía La Phármaco para el Teatro Español (2023), centrándonos especialmente en la visibilidad y la agencia de las traductoras y en el tratamiento de la ambigüedad de género de la voz dramática principal de la obra original. A través de los paratextos y de la recepción de sus trabajos y procesos, se compararán los resultados con los del análisis que hacen Spoturno & Zucchi (2022) de la traducción de Spregelburd (Kane 2006a), originada y publicada en el contexto de Argentina.

Palabras clave: Sarah Kane; Traducción teatral; Paratextos; Género; Agencia.

1. Introduction

4.48 Psychosis premiered in June 2000 at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in London. Since its premiere, the play has been almost inseparably tied to the fate of its author, who committed suicide at King's College Hospital just months later. The central themes of the text—mental illness and suicide—carry a strong biographical element. However, as David Greig proposes, the play is much more than a suicide note, and our aim is “not to search for the author behind the words but to freight the plays with [their] own presence” (Greig 2001: xviii).

From a theatrical perspective, although this paper does not aim to categorise the play within a specific school or period, it is worth noting that it exhibits some typical characteristics of post-dramatic theatre, as many authors have suggested:

A decentred structure, the dilution of characters, the almost complete absence of stage directions, an unconventional use of language, punctuation and layout, indeterminacy of the situation and of the dramatic conflict reveal *4.48 Psychosis* as part of this tradition (Spoturno & Zucchi 2022: 10).

In this sense, the form fits perfectly with the theme, since “the text vividly portrays the travels of a psychotic mind within the limits of dramatic and discursive indeterminacy” (Spoturno & Zucchi 2022: 2).

The play's canonical status, post-dramatic nature, textual complexity, and the discursive ambiguity of its dramatic voice make *4.48 Psychosis* a highly compelling object of study from the perspective of Translation Studies. This becomes even more relevant when viewed through a gender

perspective, as there is a reflection on one's body and identity running throughout the play—not only textually and thematically, but also linguistically and performatively: “there are no delineated voices, and no textual indication of the number or gender of the performer” (Greig 2001: xvi).

Several authors have emphasised the importance of this queer reading (see Tycer 2008, Reckendrees 2021, and Hamamra 2022). Kansız, while acknowledging that the main dramatic voice is female, highlights that the language (or absence thereof) that Kane uses to convey this ambivalence is inherently ambiguous, allowing the play to be performed by both actors and actresses:

The silence of the stage directions regarding the name and sex of the patient significantly contribute to the decomposition/disjunction of the patient's body on stage because in this way the patient can be represented by both male and female actors and bestowed with multiple bodies on stage (Kansız 2017: 281).

Delgado García, in turn, considers that *4.48 Psychosis* presents “non-individuated characters that open up the possibility for non-normative subjectivities” (Delgado-García 2012: 237). This is reflected in the play's language, its use of pronouns, and its emphasis on body dysphoria (“Do you think it's possible for a person to be born in the wrong body?”), which encourage a queer interpretation of the dramatic voice:

4.48 Psychosis resists the normative presumption of a correlation between gender identity and gendered corporeality, as well as the existence of a binary gender paradigm – male and female (*ibid.*: 242).

However, this ambiguity, when staged and embodied by a performer who is observed and interpreted through a gendered lens, inevitably becomes concrete: “In speaking and performing these playtexts, presentations of particular bodies are inevitably made, and physical contours of subjectivation are consequently imposed” (*ibid.*: 246-247). If we understand staging as a form of intersemiotic transformation, it is worth considering whether what Delgado García observes about the imposition of physical and bodily limits concerning the gender of the main dramatic voice in *4.48 Psychosis* also applies to interlingual translation.

Spoturno and Zucchi have recently addressed this question within Translation Studies, analysing the construction of the ethos and the translator persona in Rafael Spregelburd's translation into Argentine Spanish in 2006. In their conclusions they point out that:

while Spregelburd's translation uses dramatic strategies and techniques that successfully foster the image or ethos of a rupturist playwright, it still stresses the autobiographical character often attributed to the text (Spoturno & Zuchi 2022: 5)

One of the elements that most reinforces this conclusion is “the female gender construction of the main voice in the [translated] play” (*ibid.*: 5).

2. Objectives

Following the model proposed by Spoturno and Zucchi (2022), which emphasises the study of paratexts to analyse the subjective construction of the translator's agency, this paper examines other translations of *4.48 Psychosis* into European Spanish (Matteini [Kane 2006b], Matamala Pérez [Matamala Pérez 2014] and Varela Lasheras [Kane 2019]). The aim is to determine if, as in Spregelburd's translation, the autobiographical dimension often attributed to the original text is preserved through the gender construction of the main dramatic voice and its staging.

To examine the translators' agency in the reception of the play and its visibility mechanisms, we will analyse various paratexts, including prologues, translators' notes, interviews, reviews, and other texts related to the translation process. We will also examine the reception of these translations in reviews, as well as their presence in the posters, brochures, programs, and websites of several productions. The goal of this paratextual analysis is to explore the agency of the translators, their visibility or invisibility, and to compare the processes behind the three translations with the reception of each version. This will help us determine whether there is a correlation between self-visibility strategies and the actual visibility of the translators.

Finally, the translation strategies used to address the treatment of gender in the original play will be compared, with a particular focus on aspects related to the body in representation and staging, as well as the

performative (de)construction of the gender ambiguity of the main voice. To examine how these translation strategies are reflected on stage, Varela Lasheras' translated text (Kane 2019) will be compared with the performative and dramaturgical strategies used in La Phármaco's adaptation of the play (June 2023).

3. Notes on agency, visibility, and theatre translation

First, it is important to note that, in Spain, literary translation—including theatre translation—enjoys the same rights as original works under the Spanish Intellectual Property Act. Therefore, under Spanish law, translators are regarded as creators. However, these rights are often violated, as highlighted in the code of good practices agreed upon by the Spanish Association of Literary Translators (ACE Traductores) and the Spanish Association of Stage Directors (ADE). Its preamble states:

In Spanish theatre, it is common to use pre-existing translations or specially commissioned translations, which are then adapted into 'versions.' In many of these cases, the translator's name is not mentioned, and their work is not remunerated (Several authors 2014, our translation).

Furthermore, as Fernández (2012) observes, this process of invisibility is even more pronounced for female translators, who generally receive fewer awards for their work and are less frequently mentioned in the press when compared to their male counterparts.

To counteract these processes of invisibility, female translators employ various strategies to make themselves visible. One of these methods is the use of paratexts to expose their agency and ethos or, in Spoturno's words, the discursive image:

that can be attributed to the Implied Translator, the agency originating and directing the reading of translated narrative discourse (Spoturno 2017: 191).

The use of paratexts or metatextuality, in turn, as Castro Vázquez observes, is a feminist translation strategy that:

involves the inclusion of prefaces, translator's notes, and other paratexts to explain the political intentions behind the translation, justify interventions in the text, convey its inherent strangeness, and clarify meanings

that might be lost in translation, opting in this case for the obvious visibility of the person who translates (Castro Vázquez 2008: 294, our translation).

In the case of theatre translation, we argue that the involvement of translators in rehearsals or in the process of creating the staging of the play (the ultimate object of study of this paper) serves as an additional mechanism for making their agency visible. However, this contribution is often not acknowledged in the epitexts of the production, such as posters, programs, announcements, or reviews.

We understand paratextuality as defined by Yuste-Frías:

accompaniment of a text by discursive, iconic, verbal-iconic, or purely material forms that introduce, present, surround, accompany, and materially wrap the text in its own medium (peritext), or extend it beyond the physical medium in which it is published (epitext) (2015: 320, our translation).

In this paper, we will also distinguish between the source text and the stage text, following the terminology outlined by Martínez Valderas and López Antuñano (2021: 15). However, we must clarify that, contrary to what a text-centric perspective might suggest, we do not consider the stage text to be a paratext of the source text. Rather, the stage text is the true theatrical text. And the source text, in any case, a peritext of it. Therefore, while we will analyse the source texts, the ultimate focus of this study is the analysis of the stage text of *La Fármaco*, whose production we attended in June 2023.

From this perspective, we aim to go beyond the binary that separates translating for the page and translating for the stage, which positions the translator as a step before the theatrical staging creation (and thus more susceptible to the invisibility or dismissal of their work). We believe that this dichotomy, which may apply to 'text-based' theatre or to a notion of theatre as literature rather than as spectacle, falls short when analysing translations of post-dramatic plays. It also fails to fully capture contemporary theatrical and spectacle production processes and systems. Likewise, following Johnston's (2017) concept of theatre translation as a collaborative act, we believe that understanding translation as an additional hermeneutic

element in the creation of staging—just like lighting, costumes, or acting—can help recognise the theatre translator’s role and reinsert them into the authorial creation process as a fully-fledged author.

4. 4.48 *Psychosis* in Spain: some context

A quick review of the recent literature on *4.48 Psychosis* in Spanish is enough to confirm that one of the main interpretations of the play is the autobiographical reading. For instance, Bonilla Agudo argues that the “*tintes autobiográficos son más que evidentes*” [autobiographical aspects are more than obvious] and that the play “*tiene mucho que ver con la vida de la autora*” [is closely related to the author’s life] (2005: 299). Consequently, some authors have emphasised the “*experiencia femenina*” [female experience] of the voice or dramatic voices in the original, or “*su estrecha vinculación con la biografía de la dramaturga*” [its close connection to the playwright’s biography] (Martín Villareal 2020: 64). Martín Villareal, despite acknowledging that “*el propio texto se separa de un reconocimiento autobiográfico por medio del uso de una primera persona con un género no marcado*” [the text itself is detached from an autobiographical acknowledgement through the use of a first-person narrative with an unmarked gender] (*ibid.*: 64-65), does not hesitate to refer to “*la protagonista*” [the female protagonist] and the “*fragmentación de la identidad femenina*” [fragmentation of female identity] (*ibid.*: 67), or to interpret the character’s experience as the artistic expression “*de la mujer como sujeto doliente*” [of the woman as a suffering subject] (*ibid.*: 64). In contrast, Blanco de La Lama (2017), who analyses the play from the perspective of post-dramatic theatre, is more cautious of the autobiographical interpretation or character identification, regardless of their gender.

The first Spanish editions of *4.48 Psychosis* were published in Buenos Aires: J. Arrambide’s translation (Kane 2004) and Rafael Spregelburd’s translation (Kane 2006a). In Spain, the first translation published was by Carla Matteini (Kane 2006b), which is now very difficult to find. In 2014, María Eugenia Matamala published a critical edition as part of her doctoral thesis (Matamala Pérez 2014). The most recent translation is by Eva Varela

Lasheras for Editorial Continta Me Tienes (Kane 2019). Lastly, there is also a Catalan version by Anna Soler Horta (Kane 2015).

Many of these translations have been staged in Spain in several instances. In Centro de Documentación de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música online database, we find technical data sheets for some of the play's productions in Spain.¹ Some mention the translator and others do not. The first group includes the productions by Teatro del Astillero (2002), a show co-produced by Consorcio Salamanca, Behemot S.L., and Teatre do Noroeste; Néstor Saied's production, directed by Luciano Cáceres for Teatro Fernán Gómez in Madrid (2009), with a translation by Rafael Spregelburd; Teatro en Tránsito's production, directed by Carlos Aladro, with a "translation and version" by Carla Matteini, at the Sala Fernando de Rojas of the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid (2010); and The Three Keatons' production, in Catalan translation by Anna Soler Horta, directed by Moisès Maicas with the collaboration of Iván Morales, which premiered on September 9, 2015, at the Sala Joan Brossa of La Seca Espai Brossa and on November 2, 2017, at Sala Beckett in Barcelona. In the second group, the files for the following productions do not specify who was in charge of the translation: Nut Teatro's production (2007), directed by Carlos Neira, performed in Galician, at Sala Nasa in Santiago de Compostela (A Coruña); Xtremo Teatro (2007), directed by Luisa Torregrosa (no additional details available); and Aula Municipal de Teatre de Lleida (2007), directed by Mercè Ballespí, apparently in Catalan (the translator is not mentioned in the programme).

Here we include a non-exhaustive chronological list of the first performances of each production of *4.48 Psychosis* in Spanish that we have been able to locate in Spain; we do not differentiate between large, medium, and small productions:

- 2002. Peninsular Spanish translation by Carla Matteini, directed by Guillermo Heras, show co-produced with Consorcio Salamanca, Behemot S. L. and Teatre do Noroeste.

1. Source: <https://www.teatro.es/profesionales/sarah-kane-3278/estrenos>.

- 2009. Argentine Spanish translation by Rafael Spregelburd, directed by Luciano Cáceres and premiered at Teatro Fernán Gómez, Madrid.
- 2010. Peninsular Spanish translation by Carla Matteini (Kane 2006b), directed by Carlos Aladro and premiered at Círculo de Bellas Artes/Teatro Fernando de Rojas, Madrid.
- 2018. Peninsular Spanish translation by Daniel Rabanaque (Kane 2010),² adapted and directed by Elisa San Miguel for Sala Tarambana, Madrid.
- 2021. Peninsular Spanish translation by Anna Soler Horta (unpublished), directed by Moisès Maicas and premiered at Teatro del Barrio, Madrid.
- 2023. Adaptation to Spanish by Alejandro Espeso, directed by Alejandro Espeso, La Gárgola de Haikus company, premiered at Teatro La Encina, Madrid.
- 2023. Peninsular Spanish translation by Eva Varela Lasheras (Kane 2019), adapted and directed by Luz Arcas' company, La Phármaco, and premiered at Teatro Español, Madrid.

5. The reception of *4.48 Psychosis* in Spanish through its paratexts

Before beginning to analyse the Spanish paratexts of *4.48 Psychosis*, primarily of the versions by Matteini, Matamala Pérez, and Varela Lasheras, we must clarify that we will distinguish between paratexts resulting from the translators' agency (such as prologues, footnotes, interviews, or articles, as well as their participation in the rehearsals or staging of their translation), which serve as self-visibility mechanisms, and paratexts which are external to the translators (such as the editorial design, posters, programmes, production notes, announcements, or reviews published in the general press and specialised media), in which there may or may not be external

2. The translator, in his personal blog (<https://aquariablog.wordpress.com>), erroneously points out that the text had never been published in Spanish. He also says that he used the Italian edition of Einaudi as a source to support his Spanish translation (Rabanaque 2010).

recognition of the translators.³ The objective is to assess whether there is a correlation between the invisibility mechanisms of translators in the paratexts created by others and the generation of the translators' own paratexts where they explain their work. To do this, we will first gather and discuss the paratexts created by non-translators. In the following section, we will analyse the translators' agency and the translation process, with a particular focus on the agency and visibility of Eva Varela Lasheras' processes in relation to the stage translation by *La Fármaco*.

To analyse the peritexts and epitexts of the main stage translations, we have searched repositories and archives such as those of Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música of Spain, Centre de Documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques, as well as digital newspaper archives, websites and audiovisual media from producers and companies.

5.1. Editorial peritexts

In this section, we will focus on the paratextual elements surrounding the published Spanish translations of *4.48 Psychosis*, primarily the covers and back covers, which were not directly created by the translators.

The edition by Teatro del Astillero includes *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis*. The cover does not feature any illustrations, but it does indicate below the titles of the plays that it is a "Castilian version by Carla Matteini."

Matamala's translation is included in her doctoral thesis, which presents a critical edition of the complete works of Sarah Kane. It is available in open access. We have no evidence that her version was used in any production.

Finally, the edition by Editorial Continta Me Tienes, which contains the complete works of Sarah Kane, features a close-up of Sarah Kane on its cover, "reinforcing an autobiographical reading" (Spoturno & Zucchi 2022: 3-4). This is similar to the Argentine editions by Losada and Artes del Sur, which, however, do not include the translator's name on their covers. The

3. For methodological and practical reasons, we exclude from this analysis an important mechanism for recognising translation authorship, which is protected as a right under the Spanish Intellectual Property Act, although it does not necessarily imply visibility: the collection of royalties for derivative works.

back cover of the Editorial Continta Me Tienes edition states: “Traducción de Eva Varela Lasheras y prólogo de María Eugenia Matamala” [Translation by Eva Varela Lasheras and prologue by María Eugenia Matamala] (Kane 2019).

The Catalan version published by Lleonard Muntaner also features the translator’s name, Anna Soler Horta, on the cover.

5.2. *Theatrical peritexts*

In this section, we will describe the paratextual elements related to the translation and the autobiographical interpretation of the original play related to the performances of *4.48 Psychosis* premiered in Spain. These include posters, brochures, programmes, press advertisements, and the websites of the theatres and companies involved.

On the poster for a 2002 performance in Salamanca by Teatro del Astillero, featuring Carla Matteini’s version, the front of the brochure, just below Sarah Kane’s name and before the names of the actors and other contributors to the production, reads: “Translation and dramaturgy: Carla Matteini.” The name of the director, Guillermo Heras, appears at the bottom. The press release (Several authors 2003) of another Teatro del Astillero production, premiered at Teatro de la Estación in Zaragoza in 2003 and also directed by Guillermo Heras, highlights Carla Matteini’s role. It notes that she not only translates Sarah Kane’s words, but also brings them to stage. In the technical sheet for the premiere of this production on January 16, 2003, at Teatro Rialto in Valencia,⁴ Carla Matteini is credited with the translation and dramaturgy.

Rafael Spregelburd’s translation, under the direction of Luciano Cáceres, premiered at Teatro Fernán Gómez in Madrid in 2009. On the theatre’s website, the name of the translator is listed in the technical sheet, following the director’s name. The translator also appears on the poster and in two dossiers that can be downloaded from the theatre’s website.⁵ It is also stated that:

4. Source: https://documentacionescenica.com/peripiecia/consultes/espectacle/espectaculo_1976/448-psicosis.

5. Source: <https://www.teatrofernangomez.es/prensa/448-psicosis-de-sarah-kane>.

Rafael Spregelburd has been responsible for translating the play into Spanish. He met the author in 1998, when he participated in the International Summer Residency organised annually by the Royal Court Theatre in London (our translation).

In an interview with the director, he explains that, for this reason and because it was the first translation of the play into Spanish, he could not alter a single comma of Spregelburd's version: "The first translation was made into Argentine-Spanish, and I see now that I cannot even change a single comma or a line" (Díaz Sande 2010, our translation).

The website of the *Círculo de Bellas Artes* in Madrid⁶ includes the technical sheet for the production by Carlos Aladro, featuring a version by Carla Matteini, which premiered in 2010. The translator's name does not appear on it, but it does appear in a promotional video in third position, right after the name of the actress, Beatriz Argüello, and the director.⁷

The website of *Sala Cuarta Pared*⁸ mentions that the text is available in the *Teatro del Astillero* edition, but does not credit the translator. Among the keywords used to describe the theme of the play, "woman," "gender," and "femininity" are particularly relevant to our study. This is the same production that was staged in Salamanca in 2002. On the website of *Teatro del Astillero*, the prologue to the project "*Crónicas del desasosiego*" is available in the form of production notes signed by Guillermo Heras, where "respect for the texts" is emphasised. However, Heras (n.d.) does not address the translated nature of these texts in his notes. In the show's technical sheet, Carla Matteini is credited with "translation and dramaturgy", listed before the director. In the synopsis, written by Carla Matteini (n.d.), the connection between the author's suicide and the play is reiterated: "a disturbing title for the chronicle of her near suicide" (our translation). The translator does not mention her translation process at all.

Soler Horta's version is an interesting case. Published and performed in Catalan, in a show directed by Moisès Maicas and premiered in several Catalan theatres since 2015, it has also been staged in Spanish, in a version

6. Source: <https://www.circulobellasartes.com/espectaculos/sarah-kane-4-48-psicosis/>.

7. Video available here: <http://v1.ceciliamolano.com/tag/sarah-kane/>.

8. Source: <https://www.cuartapared.es/obra/4-48-psicosis>.

by the same translator. In Madrid, the Spanish translation by Anna Soler Horta (unpublished) premiered at Teatro del Barrio in 2021. The translator's name appears on the technical sheet published on the theatre's website⁹ and in Moisés Maicas' biography, where she is described as a close collaborator: "Together with translator Anna Soler Huerta, her creative partner, she programmed various plays by international authors" (our translation). However, her name is not listed on the poster or in the trailer, which only feature the names of the actress and the director. In this case, the autobiographical interpretation of the play is less explicit. For instance, in a press release published by several media outlets, it is stated that the goal of the production is for the audience to stop "looking for the author in the words of the text" (Several authors 2021, our translation). Additionally, in the production dossier, which includes some of the director's notes, we read:

Experts agree that *4.48 Psychosis* is Sarah Kane's most autobiographical play, but reducing it to a farewell letter would significantly diminish it (Maicas n.d., our translation).

The production directed by Elisa San Miguel that premiered in 2018 at LAVA (Laboratorio de las Artes of Valladolid) and later at Sala Tarambana in Madrid sought funding through the Ulule crowdfunding platform on that same year. On the project's website, the play is presented through an entirely autobiographical interpretation: "*Psicosis 4:48* is a play that speaks about a real event" (our translation).¹⁰ Elisa San Miguel (2018) introduces herself as the director and adapter, acknowledging that "it has not been easy to adapt this play", both due to its theme and "due to the difficulty of the grammatical expression of the monologue" (our translation). For this production, the dramatic voice of the original was broken down into four characters. San Miguel indicates that one of them is "Sarah," identified as "Ella" [She]. On the other hand, although the project's technical sheet mentions that the translation used is by "Daniel Rabanaque," it does not explain the translation or adaptation process. The name of the translator does not appear on the production poster. The only names listed are

9. Source: <https://teatrodelbarrio.com/la-psicosis-de-las-448/>.

10. Source: <https://www.tarambana.net/espectaculos/psicosis-4-48/>

those of the actors and of Elisa San Miguel, credited for “adaptation and direction.” Other production participants, such as lighting and sound technicians, are credited in the brochure, but not the translator. On the Sala Tarambana website, the translator’s name appears in the technical sheet, but not in the two videos featured on the site: the trailer and a video presenting the artistic team.

On 12th March, 2023, a version entitled *Sarah 4:48*, which directly emphasises the autobiographical interpretation, was premiered at Teatro La Encina in Madrid. The production was directed by Alejandro Espeso and brought to life by the company La Gárgola de Haikus. In the press release published on the billboard of *Revista Godot* (Several authors n.d.), the authorship of the translation is not mentioned, but the “dramaturgy” is credited to Alejandro Espeso.

On 1st February, 2023, a production by students and graduates of the ESAD School in Málaga, directed by Nora S. Cantero, premiered at Teatro Echegaray, performed by No Estés Triste Producciones. On the theatre’s website, there is a synopsis of the play that links the play to the author’s suicide, describing it as “her farewell letter”, although the website also asserts that it is “mucho más que eso” [much more than that].¹¹ The translator’s name, Eva Varela Lasheras, is credited in the technical sheet. However, in the brochure, available for download on the website and formatted like a medical prospectus, it is noted that Kane’s play has been “translated into German, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Polish, Greek, Danish, Portuguese, Dutch, Romanian, and Russian” (Cantero n.d.). However, nowhere does it mention that the production is based on a translation, nor does it include the name of the translator. The press release published in *La opinión de Málaga* begins by reiterating the idea that, for many, the play “was a farewell letter” (Vivar 2023, our translation). The director is also indirectly quoted, stating that the play “is not one voice, but many” (our translation). The translator is not mentioned.

Finally, the most recent production, by the company La Fármaco, was staged at Teatro Español in Madrid in 2023. The introductory text sent as a

11. Source: <https://www.teatroechegaray.com/es/genero/teatro/40-festival-de-teatro/4-48-psychosis-1286>.

press release does not mention Sarah Kane's suicide nor does it promote a biographical interpretation. Instead, it focuses on "transversal issues such as drug addiction" (our translation), indifference, inequality, and violence, among others. On the posters and the technical sheet on the Teatro Español website, the translator's name appears alongside the author's, right above the director's name.¹² However, not only does Varela Lasheras' name not appear on the website of Teatro Madrid, but Luz Arcas, the director, is credited as the author of the "adaptation."¹³ The same happens with the official trailer of Teatro Español, which lists the names of the director and other production team members, including those responsible for lighting, scenography, and sound, as well as various others such as the video director, assistant director, and resident assistant director, but not the translator.

5.3. *Epitexts: reviews and commentaries*

In this section, we will describe how some critical epitexts address the translation and interpret the play. We will distinguish between critical epitexts generated in response to the various stagings of the play in Spanish and those stemming from the publication of the most recent translation, authored by Varela Lasheras.

Julio Bravo's review (2009) of the production premiered at Teatro Fernán Gómez in Madrid in 2009—directed by Luciano Cáceres and translated by Rafael Spregelburd—begins by discussing Sarah Kane's suicide and continuously relates the play to the author's biography. Bravo quotes the actress, Leonor Manso. The translator is not mentioned.

In his review of the production directed by Carlos Aladro and translated by Carla Matteini, Castro refers to the play as "a story which is more than real and that ends with the death of its author" (2012, our translation). Matteini is credited as translator in the technical sheet. Paisano's review of the premiere of this production in Seville also credits the translator. The critic begins and ends his brief review by referencing Sarah Kane's suicide,

12. Source: <https://www.teatroespanol.es/psicosis-448>.

13. Source: <https://teatromadrid.com/espectaculo/la-pharmaco-psicosis-4-48>.

which he uses to explain the text, even going so far as to state that the play “is an absolute and fiery defence of suicide” (Paisano 2012, our translation).

Ordóñez (2015) reviews Maicas’ production for *La Seca* in Barcelona, in the Catalan translation by Anna Soler Horta, defining it as “great” (our translation) and referencing Kane’s suicide from the outset. Fernando Muñoz Jaén’s review for *Vista Teatral* (2021) of Moisès Maicas’ production, in the Spanish version by Anna Soler Horta, for Teatro del Barrio, mentions the translator as the late director’s creative partner and briefly explains that the translation process went hand in hand with the direction:

He and Anna Soler Horta (translator of this play) formed a creative duo and together created this version of Kane’s monologue, which Anna Alarcón is now performing in Madrid (Muñoz Jaén 2021, our translation).

He also revisits the autobiographical reading of the play. Muñoz Jaén states that “Kane killed herself shortly after finishing this play”, and immediately qualifies the play as a “testimony” (our translation). In this sense, the review by Carlos Herrera Carmona (2021), which describes actress Anna Alarcón as “Sarah’s alter ego,” also reflects an autobiographical reading of the play. Herrera, by the way, does not mention the translator (though he does mention the actress and the director). Horacio Otheguy Riveira (2021), who includes the name of the translator in the technical sheet accompanying his review, asks himself “Is Sarah Kane really Anna Alarcón?”. However, unlike the two previous reviews, he admits that he does not know.

Although the press release for the La Fármaco production focuses on other aspects of *4.48 Psychosis*, the reviews of the show mostly focus on Kane’s suicide and link it to the play. Bravo (2023) defines the play as “un demoledor testimonio sobre su enfermedad” [a devastating testimony about her illness]. Vidales, for *El País*, points out that the author’s suicide inevitably shapes “la recepción de la pieza y la disposición del público: no vamos para ver una obra sobre el suicidio, sino la obra de una suicida” [the reception of the play and the disposition of the public: we are not going to see a play about suicide, but the play of a suicidal woman] (Vidales 2023). Neither Bravo nor Vidales mention the translator.

Perales (2023) considers the play “el testamento de su autora” [the testament of its author] and, although she mentions in her review that “En

España tardó en traducirse” [In Spain, it took some time to get translated], she does not mention the translator of the production she reviews, not even in the technical sheet. Similarly, Caruana (2023) mentions Rafael Spregelburd’s translation: “hubo que esperar hasta el año 2009 a que llegara un hermoso montaje desde Argentina, con una valiosa traducción de Rafael Spregelburd” [We had to wait until 2009 for a beautiful production to arrive from Argentina, with a valuable translation by Rafael Spregelburd], but he does not mention the translator of the La Phármaco’s production, which is the one he is reviewing.

Vila (2023) also begins by discussing the author’s suicide. However, he does mention the translator, both in the review and in the technical sheet. So does Lomana, who also considers the play “una muerte anunciada” [a death foretold] (Lomana 2023).

A counterpoint to this case is García Miranda (2023), who does not mention the author’s suicide until several paragraphs into her review. She does not mention the translator (although her name is included in the technical sheet), but does mention María Eugenia Matamala, who wrote the prologue for Kane’s complete works translated by Varela (Matamala Pérez 2019). Interestingly, she uses the verb ‘translate’ several times in reference to the staging, for example, when she says that “no existe una traducción en escena de toda esa hecatombe vital que supone querer dejar de vivir” [the whole existential catastrophe of wanting to stop living has never been translated to stage]. She also attributes the translation of the play’s title to Luz Arcas, instead of to the actual translator: “*Psicosis 4.48* (Arcas invierte el orden original de los términos del título)” [*Psicosis 4.48* (Arcas reverses the original order of the terms in the title)].

Among the reviews of the Continta Me Tienes edition, we can highlight Pedraz Decker’s review(2021), where she says she is glad that the complete works of Sarah Kane are finally available. She also regrets that previous editions, in addition to being “very difficult to find”, had a translation that “was quite disappointing” (our translation). She describes Varela’s translation as “a great work, capturing Kane’s direct and stark style, while respecting her wordplays and punctuation, which are also typical of this author” (our translation). She also mentions the writer of the prologue, María Eugenia Matamala. In contrast, Brox’s (2019) review of the book does not

mention the translation or the prologue and barely includes the translator's name in the technical sheet.

5.4. *Translators' agency in epitexts: interviews and articles*

Matteini has significantly contributed to articles and interviews, where she discusses her work, her processes, and her understanding of theatre translation (see Matteini 2005). On these occasions, she has not only made theatre translation visible, but she has also actively advocated for it: "Vindicating this profession is a task that very few of us have taken on in Spain. People should say 'I am going to see or read this play because it was translated by someone whom I trust'" (in Jęftanovic 2000: 119, our translation). In many of her interviews and articles, Matteini has explained that, for her, the participation of the translator in the staging process, although unusual, is essential: "The author and the translator must be in rehearsals, and follow the development of the production; theatre is a practice that encompasses all fields, all aspects, so it cannot be isolated" (*ibid.*: 120, our translation). She also explains that, sometimes, she is only credited for the translation, and at other times, for both the translation and the dramaturgy:

Calling this 'adaptation,' 'version,' or 'translation' are mere semantic nuances; it does not matter to me, unless I actively intervene in a scene. In that case, I indicate it as Carla Matteini's dramaturgy. [...] I believe that the live and active role of the translator in the staging process is very important (Jęftanovic 2000: 120, our translation).

This distinction is undoubtedly vindicating. Matteini has on many occasions denounced the invisibilisation and harmful practices, which are unfortunately all too widespread, in contemporary Spanish theatre translation:

I believe that, from all of the above, it is clear that I support interventions in a text, but I prioritise loyalty to its author and their intentions. [...] Where is the boundary between the loyal freedom that I proclaim, which is where I believe the true work of a contemporary theatrical translator lies, and the brazen plunder that many have made of original texts and even previous translations? (Matteini 2001, our translation).

In a later text, Matteini discusses the difficulty of translating Sarah Kane, particularly because the person overseeing its translations at that time, the playwright's brother, was very meticulous about respecting all of the author's decisions, including punctuation, no matter how incomprehensible they might seem. In this text, Matteini also highlights the dysphoria of the main dramatic voice of the play:

When Sarah Kane committed suicide, it was her brother who reviewed the translations, and he almost rejected my translation of *4.48 Psychosis*—a poetic testament, a beautiful monologue written before her death—because I had not strictly adhered to her spacing. She is a person with psychosis who tries to commit suicide several times, writes five plays by the age of 28 and, let's say, depicts in them her dissociated world. Then numbers, letters, and wonderful texts appear, which are very poetic, but if you didn't respect the gaps she had placed there precisely to reflect moments of dysphoria and self-annihilation... well, he didn't like it (Enguix Tercero 2008: 287, own translation).

Varela Lasheras has given fewer interviews and published fewer texts discussing her translation process. However, as was the case with Matteini, her relationship with theatre goes beyond translation. In an interview with Antonio Hernández, it is mentioned that she “is the artistic director of Teatro La Puerta Estrecha” (Hernández Nieto n.d.) and that she has starred in, created, and produced various stagings. Although this interview does not address Sarah Kane's work or Varela's translation processes, it helps us understand the nature of Varela's agency as a translator: “I am a woman who has been on stage for many years. Always in the independent circuit, in alternative spaces” (our translation), she says. She is also a person with a feminist conscience who values the importance of visibility, as she explains when discussing her project *Hacedoras de la Puerta*: “We got together to do something for no other reason than to give visibility to women creators”; or when defining herself: “what the feminist movement is doing is making women visible, and it is doing it very well” (our translation).

Matamala has explained her reading of the play in her doctoral thesis and in some papers, where she acknowledges that the play is “devoid of stage directions and information related to space or characters” (Matamala Pérez 2017: 490, our translation). Matamala argues that the dramatic voice

is not an identifiable character but rather the result of “the splitting of the fragmented mind caused by psychosis” (*ibid.*: 491, our translation). In this text, Matamala avoids assigning an identifiable gender to the dramatic voice and refrains entirely from an autobiographical interpretation of the play.

5.5. *Translators’ peritexts: prologues, introductions and notes*

Matamala’s translation is part of her doctoral thesis, a bilingual critical edition of Kane’s complete works. One of her explicit objectives is to evaluate Kane’s work on its own merits and dissociate it from her biography, because:

viewing her work through the lens of her suicide is both unfair and reductive, as it diminishes the value of a unique and singular dramatic body (Matamala Pérez 2014: 12, our translation).

Given the academic nature of the text, Matamala’s translation is preceded by several chapters that contextualise Kane’s work within its historical and theatrical framework. The form and content of each play are also examined. Finally, a section is dedicated to discussing translation challenges and the decisions taken to address them.

When discussing the protagonist’s voice in *4.48 Psychosis*, Matamala employs gender neutral terms such as “voz” [voice] or “ser” [being], to avoid imposing a gender, although at times she uses feminine descriptors, such as “la protagonista” [the female protagonist] or “una paciente” [a female patient]. When analysing the text and its translation challenges, Matamala acknowledges that the lack of context, the ambiguity, and the dissolution of both being and language in the play make finding equivalents difficult. However, she does not directly address the issue of translating gender (or absence thereof).

One of the most common tools for self-visibility in translation is the use of footnotes or endnotes. Matamala employs numerous notes to justify her decisions. Among these, notes that reveal the intertextual nature of certain fragments, as well as the meanings of medical procedures, terms, abbreviations, puns, culturemes, and neologisms, are abundant. Her notes do not address the issue of gender.

Matamala is also responsible for the prologue (Matamala Pérez 2019) that accompanies the edition of Kane's *Obras completas* translated by Varela (Kane 2019). Although she does not specifically discuss translation in this text, we do find some hints of her interpretation of the play. Thus, she now consistently avoids imposing a gender on the main dramatic voice, referring to it as "voz" [voice], "ser" [being], or "yo" [I], among other ambiguous terms. She also avoids imposing an autobiographical reading, which is only briefly suggested in the statement that *4.48 Psychosis* is "the most intimate of her plays" (Matamala Pérez 2019: 27, our translation).

Varela writes a translator's note (Varela Lasheras 2019) for the Spanish edition of Kane's *Obras completas*. However, despite its title, she does not explain her translation process, and instead only presents her general interpretation of Kane's work. In addition, she includes four notes in her translation. In three of the four notes, she states that the neologism, word-play, or phrase accompanying it lacks an equivalent or is "untranslatable into Spanish" (*ibid.*: 442, our translation).

Finally, it could be argued that translation decisions in response to translation challenges are, in themselves, a demonstration of the translators' agency. In this sense, the following section will analyse how the issue of gender has been translated in Varela's stage translation of *La Phármaco*, comparing it with previous source and stage translations.

5.6. *Translating gender on stage*

In this final section, we will analyse the stage text of *La Phármaco*, which we had the opportunity to see live on June 30, 2023, and compare it with Varela's source text and with previous productions of the play in Spain.

La Phármaco is a Spanish theatre company founded in 2009 and directed by dancer Luz Arcas, which seeks to reject "the notion of the body as housing the individual, the anecdotal, the romantic" and instead "re-vindicates its capacity to embody a collective voice" (Arcas 2023). This statement of principles, as we have seen, aligns perfectly with the reflection on the body that Kane develops in *4.48 Psychosis*.

For Arcas, the body plays a crucial role in Kane's text: "It is a text written from the body; it has a bodily dimension of its own, it is the body

from which the word surges” (Bravo 2023, our translation). This corporeality is echoed by Natalia Huarte, the actress who embodies the protagonist’s voice in this staging:

There are very intense moments [...] in which the body reveals a truth that words cannot express. And, conversely, at times the word reveals truths that the body fails to convey (Bravo 2023, our translation).

On the other hand, although the participants in this production reject reducing the play to the author’s suicide (“It is not a suicide note, although it may seem to be”, says Huarte in Herrero 2023 [our translation]), they do prioritise an autobiographical reading, albeit nuanced: “It is a play written from very specific physical states, and there the body is deeply marked by what its author, the main character, is suffering” (Arcas in Herrero 2023, our translation); or “I feel that it is autobiographical, without a doubt, but Kane was an artist, and I am sure that she prioritised ‘the work of art’ over her own situation” (Arcas in Ojeda 2023, our translation).

The body that Arcas brings to stage, represented by Huarte, is unmistakably feminine. Certain elements of the scene, such as tampons and a pregnancy test, reinforce this idea. However, it is through language that the imposition of the female gender on the protagonist’s voice is fully realised. Huarte’s character always refers to herself in the feminine form. If we turn to the source text on which the stage text is based, this should come as no surprise, since Varela does the same to resolve the grammatical gender ambiguity, which is much easier to achieve in the English original. Thus, in Spanish we read: “estoy aburrida e insatisfecha” (Kane 2019: 384) and “castigada,” “gorda,” “enferma,” “sola,” “ella,” “la paciente,” “amada,” “a mí misma,” etc.

When Huarte’s character refers to others, she uses the masculine form in Spanish: “todos,” “amigos,” “ningún suicida” and “el único doctor,” just as Varela does. The same occurs with the first ‘lover’; in both Varela’s source text and stage text, the character is male: “Cuando él se despierte” [“When he wakes up,” our translation] (*ibid.*: 386).

In the production by La Fármaco, Huarte begins by saying the text in an almost inaudible whisper. Although we have identified some omitted parts in the stage text when compared to the source text, such as the

fragment before “Recuerda la luz” [Remember the light] (Kane 2019: 384), which is the first audible sentence on stage, we were unable to clearly hear how the ‘hermself’ problem was addressed. Varela notes it as follows: “Kane utiliza aquí una simbiosis de los pronombres reflexivos en ingles *himself* y *herself*: ‘hermself.’ Intraducible al castellano” [Kane uses a symbiosis of the reflexive pronouns in English, himself and herself, to create ‘hermself’. It is untranslatable in Spanish] (*ibid.*: 442). In any case, it is clear that, in this staging, the “ella mismo” from Varela’s translation (*ibid.*: 384) was omitted. Other changes compared to the source text include some omissions and alterations in the expletives: “puto final” or “porque es la puta hostia,” instead of Varela’s “jodido.”

Without exception, previous source and stage texts also choose to feminise the gender of the ambiguous dramatic voice of the original. They also resort to the masculine form to translate references to others. Regarding the phrase “the broken hermaphrodite who trusted hermself alone” of the original, the solutions provided by the previous translators are similar to Varela’s. Spregelburd translates it as “la hermafrodita quebrado que sólo confiaba en sí mismo” (Kane 2006a: 91) and Matamala as “el hermafrodita roto que no confiaba más que en ella-mismo” (Matamala Pérez 2014: 699).

These decisions align with an autobiographical reading, except for Matamala’s. The most illustrative case is that of Matteini (2004), who considers Kane’s play “the chronicle of her own suicide” (our translation). Aladro, who used Matteini’s translation for his staging, states that he “gives a lot of importance” to the biography of the authors whose plays he brings to stage, quoting the example of “Kane writing about her suicide” (Pons 2023: 119, our translation).

6. Conclusion

After analysing the translators’ own paratexts and the external paratexts of the translations by Matteini, Matamala, and Varela, we found that the greater the agency—as reflected in the creation of their own paratexts—and the stronger the connection to the theatrical world—as seen in the cases of Varela and, especially, Matteini—, the greater the visibility achieved in the epitexts and peritexts outside of the translation. This suggests that, at least

in this case, there is a correlation between self-visibility strategies and the visibility of female translators. However, we continue to encounter situations in which there is an evident gender bias, particularly in some critical epitexts, where the female translator's name is omitted, where the translation decisions are assumed as taken by the directors, or where a previous male translator, Spregelburd, is directly mentioned, while the female translator responsible for the specific production reviewed remains invisible.

Secondly, we found that all published translations (except for Matamala's) and stage translations privilege an autobiographical reading to varying degrees. This, in turn, is reflected in the predominance of this reading at all levels of reception: from peritexts (such as programme notes, press releases, prologues, and covers) to epitexts (reviews).

Finally, as with Spregelburd, whose translation reinforced the autobiographical nature of the play, particularly in the female construction of the ambiguous dramatic voice in the original (Spoturno & Zucchi 2022: 5), we observe a preeminence of the female gender in all the translations analysed, even in choral stagings.

In the case of the La Fármaco's production, after analysing and contrasting it with several interviews and statements by Arcas, its director, it is worth considering whether the director's interpretation of the play's gender is developed beforehand or if it is directly influenced by the translation she has used as the source text. This also prompts us to question the depth of the translator's participation in this staging and, consequently, her involvement in the economic, social, or cultural impact of this production.

Be that as it may, it is obvious that translation plays a significant role in the interpretation of the original text. As a source text, each translation decision entails a series of changes that ultimately shape a particular reading, staging, and reception. For this reason, it is essential to affirm the importance of theatre translation, and, consequently, to incorporate it into the decision-making process that leads to staging, as well as acknowledging it in the texts derived from a specific stage proposal.

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