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THE MANY ANTIGONES: WHEN A TRANSLATION OF A PLAY BECOMES AN ORIGINAL WORK¹

SUSANA SCHOER-GRANADO²

susanaschoer@usal.es

University of Salamanca

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2757-3717>

Abstract

Antigone, the tragedy composed by Sophocles in the 5th century BC, has been reinterpreted as many times as there are types of translation. If we take into account the recent turns in Translation Studies, such as the outward turn, which is in favour of opening the concept towards other disciplines (Vidal Claramonte 2022: 9), it is particularly appropriate to study theatrical translation, where terms such as 'translation', 'rewriting' and 'adaptation' already converge. In order to find out what translations (in a broad sense) can emerge from a play, this article takes as an example the translation of *Antigone* published by Hölderlin in 1804 and the different versions derived from it. On the basis of this case study, theatrical translation as a space in which the concepts of translation and original can be expanded is reflected upon.

Keywords: Drama translation; Translation history; Original; Friedrich Hölderlin; *Antigone*.

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Resumen

Antígona, la tragedia compuesta por Sófocles en el siglo V a.C., se ha reinterpretado tantas veces como tipos de traducción existen. Si tenemos en cuenta los últimos giros experimentados en los Estudios de Traducción, como el *outward turn*, que aboga por una apertura del concepto hacia otras disciplinas (Vidal 2022: 9) resulta especialmente propicio estudiar la traducción teatral, donde, ya de por sí convergen términos como ‘traducción’, ‘reescritura’ y ‘adaptación’. Con el objetivo de averiguar qué traducciones (en un sentido amplio) pueden surgir de una obra de teatro, este artículo toma como ejemplo la traducción de *Antígona* publicada por Hölderlin en 1804, así como las distintas versiones a las que ha dado lugar. A partir de este estudio de caso se reflexiona sobre la traducción teatral como espacio que permite ampliar los conceptos de traducción y original.

Palabras clave: Traducción de teatro; Historia de la traducción; Original; Friedrich Hölderlin; *Antígona*.

1. Introduction

Translation history has given rise to many debates on fidelity to a supposed original text. To consider, however, that only those two opposites (the original and the derived) exist is limiting. In the world of theatre, in particular, built from adaptations, each more diverse than the latter, such a binary classification falls short.

The complexity that the relationship between the so-called original, its translations and all these concepts present is highlighted in the case of Sophocles’ tragedy, *Antigone* (441 BC). This is especially clear in the adaptations derived from German poet Friederich Hölderlin’s translations of the play, dated from 1804. To analyse it in more detail, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the origin of the work.

The play premiered in 442 BC in Athens and it wasn’t until two thousand years later that it was printed and distributed in Europe. Several editions of *Antigone*, still in Greek, started to appear in the 16th century in cities such as Venice and Paris, while Frankfurt had to wait until 1544. It was not until a century later that the first German edition of the play came into existence, with the title *Des Griechischen Tragödienschreibers Sophoclis Antigone, deutsch gegeben durch Martinium Opitium, Dantzig, gedruckt bei*

Andreum Huenefeld Buchhändler. It was published in 1636 by translator Martin Opitz (Martinium Opitium). Between 1760 and 1920 there were dozens of German translations of the play, almost ninety in total (Brecht 1985: 149).

Hölderlin's translation would be ready in 1803 and published in 1804 alongside the translation of *Oedipus Rex*. The combined volume was entitled *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles*. It was one of Hölderlin's last projects before the beginning of his stark mental health decline around 1806. The project was not very well received. Even though Hölderlin assured his editor that his translations would finally show the true nature of Sophocles' tragedies (MA II, 924f., Safranski 2018: 255), a combined number of factors led to the rejection of these versions by contemporaries and friends of the poet: the original Greek edition chosen, Hölderlin's own limited knowledge of Greek, the obscure language that made the meaning even more unclear and the deviation from what would be expected of a translation at that moment in history. His translation, thus, faded into obscurity for almost a century (Brecht 1985: 149).

The German philosopher Hellingrath rediscovered Hölderlin at the beginning of the 20th century. This resulted in the work of the poet, including his translations and the two essays they inspired (*Hölderlins Anmerkungen zum Oedipus und zur Antigonä*) being available in a number of the complete editions of his work that were published the following decades.

However, the relevance of Hölderlin's proposed version of *Antigone* for translation history does not end here. In February 1948, Bertolt Brecht leaves a permanent mark on the theatre of the 20th century with the first stage performance of *Die Antigone des Sophokles* (the full title being *Die Antigone des Sophokles nach der Hölderlinschen Übersetzung für die Bühne bearbeitet*) in Chur, Switzerland. This version is not a translation of Sophocles' play from the Greek, but rather a 'rewriting', if one can call it that, of Hölderlin's translation. Brecht, possibly guided by his fascination with the former German poet and the circumstances he was living through, changes the plot considerably. The second part of the play is particularly

affected while Brecht keeps many of Hölderlin's verses as they are and presents a new model of theatrical representation (Brecht 1985: 150).

In the Spanish speaking world, the reception of Sophocles' tragedy starts with a translation of the play by Antonio González Garbín published in Almería in 1883. It comes into existence relatively late when compared to other European languages. The first translation into French translation dates from 1573, the first into Italian from 1533 and the first into English from 1848. It must be said, however, that the plot of the play had already been recreated in Spain under other names, such as *La destrucción de Tebas* (1722), *Antígona y Emón* (1820) and *Argia* (1824) (González Delgado 2021: 2).

Hölderlin himself is rediscovered in Spain almost at the same time as he is in Germany: at the beginning of the 20th century. His *Antigone*, however, would take some time. In 1997 Martínez Marzoa publishes a translation of Hölderlin's *Essays* (1997) in which he does not include the translation of the play, but he does include the essay written about it, *Anotaciones sobre Antígona*. The Spanish speaking world would have to wait until 2014 to read Hölderlin's translations through the rendering by Cortés (Hölderlin 2014).

Taking all of this into account, this study intends to address the relationship between a theatre play and its possible translations through the case of Hölderlin. After discussing some of the characteristics of drama translations, the relevant translations and the extent to which they correspond to the traditional concepts of translation and original will be analysed in more detail. Special attention will be paid to the versions of *Antigone* by Hölderlin and Brecht. This study seeks to explain why these two constitute such an interesting case study from the perspective of Translation Studies.

2. Some considerations

2.1. The concept of an "original"

First, it is pertinent to explain what is understood by original and translation, since the former concept is not exclusive to the world of translation.

The idea of genius, which has often been associated with the concept of originality, owes much to the 19th century and, in particular, to the German cultural movement known as *Sturm und Drang*. At that time something

original was considered to be something primitive, made first hand and authentic (Perloff 2012: 21). Our conception of the original has however changed a lot. Munday expresses that the translation process implies that the translator transforms an original text written in an original language into a text written in a different language and that the result is the translated text (Munday 2008: 5). Thus, the idea of what is original in translation is often defined by contrasting it with what is considered clearly unoriginal: the translation.

Moreover, the concept is now intrinsically linked to issues of intellectual property, at least in legal terms. By 1886 the Berne Convention had already regulated copyright, and it specified that:

Translations, adaptations, arrangements of music and other alterations of a literary or artistic work shall be protected as original works without prejudice to the copyright in the original work (Several authors 1979: Art. 2)

It begs the question then if these definitions are sufficient when describing certain phenomena, particularly in theatre translation.

2.2. *Regarding drama translations*

To start off, motivations when translating a play are diverse. One can distinguish generally between translations created for stage and those made to be read (Aaltonen 2010: 106; Perteghella 2004: 7-8). However, translations exist that try to bridge this gap and are used for both (López Lapeña 2015: 47). Cantero and Braga explain that theatre plays are, at the same time, literary works and theatre scripts (Cantero Garrido & Braga Riera 2011: 158).

This has been cause for debate. Some authors, such as Newmark (1992: 234), argue that the translator of theatre should only consider the audience of the performance. He admits, nevertheless, that notes could be added in edited versions of the play for selected readers (1992: 234). Braga (2011: 19), on the other hand, asserts that there are not two types of drama translation. He acknowledges phenomena such as:

[...] plays never performed on stage or the many translations of classical plays: some adequate for reading and some for performance (Braga in López Lapeña 2015: 47).

López Lapeña, however, does not consider translations that present physically impossible stage productions to be drama translations and calls them ‘dramatised novels’ (*ibid.*: 47-50).

Aaltonen (2010: 107) distinguishes three types of translations according to the homogeneity and size of the audience, the time, space and mode of the reception, as well as the anticipated life span of the text. The first he calls an ‘introductory translation’. It is written for a large and diverse audience of readers and theatre practitioners, and it may be either published in printed form as a book or circulated as a theatre script promoted in the publishing industry or in cultural centres. The second is a gloss translation, which is “confined to theatrical institutions which insist on tailor-making their own translations on the basis of a linguistic analysis of the source text” and its audience is normally very specific, such as playwright-translators (2010: 107). The last type, ‘the performance translation’ is “aimed at the reception in a particular theatrical context” and “intended to be received audio-visually, (...) its anticipated life span can vary from one production to many, even to an afterlife as an introductory translation” (Aaltonen 2010: 107).

It is possible, thus, for drama translations to have more than one life and to play multiple roles during their existence. In the case of *Antigone*, it is inevitable, because of its status as a classic and its longevity, to resort to the ideas of ‘retranslation’ and ‘indirect translation’ and to research the need of translating what is already translated.

Retranslations (new translations of texts already translated) are normally motivated by the ageing of the existing translation, a reinterpretation of former versions, the change of status from a marginal work to the main canon of literature of the original text or in order to reduce costs by not having to pay copyright fees for the existing translation (Venuti 2004: 25-38). These factors can be observed in several translations of Sophocles’ drama in both German and Spanish. The time that has passed since its inception is self-evident and it explains the need to update the translations, especially given that this is an important play for the history of literature.

What happens, however, with the two translations of Hölderlin’s version, the translations by Brecht and Cortés? These could be considered

indirect translations, in Gambier's sense (1994: 413), as they are translations of a translation (intra-lingual or inter-linguistic translations). Indirect translations tend to be criticised because they further increase the distance between the original text and the translated text and multiply the risk of error or manipulation (Rosa, Pięta & Bueno Maia 2017: 113-114). In addition, indirect translation has also been described as a first step towards a direct translation (*ibid.*). That said, this facilitating function is not always fulfilled: in the case of *Antígona*, Cortés decides to recover Hölderlin's version for the Spanish speaking world 200 years after its creation, at a time when translations of the work by Sophocles abound. Some of the reasons Rosa, Pięta & Bueno Maia (2017: 114) give for the existence of indirect translations are the lack of translations or translation competence, the difficulty to access the original text, to translate from a language which is culturally or geographically far from ours or, as Washbourne (2013) explains, unequal relationships between cultures and agents in the global system of translation. These are, however, not the case for Cortés nor for Brecht.

3. What kind of 'translations' are really being made of *Antigone*?

As the reader can observe in the former sections of this article, even though some of the concepts outlined until this point ('original', 'original text', 'author', 'translator', 'introductory translation', 'gloss translation', 'performance translation', 'retranslation' and 'indirect translation') can be applied to certain phenomena typical of drama translation, others are not as pertinent to the genre and to the specific case of Sophocles' and Hölderlin's *Antigone*.

Before analysing the motives behind the creation of these translations and the relationships between them, it is necessary to clarify the terminology employed. This is particularly necessary if translation is understood here in a broader sense, such as through the lens of the outward turn in translation (Vidal Claramonte 2022).

In this article a distinction will be made between a 'rewriting' (an intra-linguistic translation), a translation (an inter-linguistic translation to be published in print) and an adaptation (a stage performance). A 'retranslation' will thus be considered an inter-linguistic translation of a translation

or rewriting that seeks to be published. What is considered an ‘original text’ in the case of *Antigone*, as will become evident in the following pages, depends on the context.

The next section will provide an overview of the existing translations of Sophocles’ and Hölderlin’s *Antigone*.

3.1. *Translations and rewritings following Sophocles’ Antigone*

Firstly, all direct translations made from Sophocles’ *Antigone* from Ancient Greek into both German and Spanish (and many other languages) should be mentioned. Among these is the translation of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin in 1804. All of them are translations and retranslations in the most evident and intuitive interpretation of both concepts.³

Secondly, there is the rewriting of *Antigone* by Bertolt Brecht in 1948 based upon Hölderlin’s work. Even though this version has been called an adaptation many times, it could also be considered an intralingual translation as described by Jakobson (1959). However, if one examines Brecht’s work in more detail it becomes clear that it is not just a mere reformulation of Hölderlin’s drama. In the prologue to the translation by Cortés, she explains how Brecht keeps a huge part of the existing dialogues and monologues, because what interested him was the language of the translation—the thing he modified was the message (Hölderlin 2014: 22-29). Just as the play becomes about a conflict between men, gods and destiny in Hölderlin’s hands, in Brecht’s hands it becomes a conflict between men and a tyrant. As Cortés cleverly indicates, Sophocles’ version is mythical, Hölderlin’s translation is philosophical, and Brecht’s translation is political (Hölderlin 2014: 14).

Brecht’s version being considered a translation is also backed by one of the more recent turns in Translation Studies, the outward turn. It defines translation as “the activity to which no epistemological change is alien” (Vidal Claramonte 2022). As Gentler expresses, the translation is now a transformation in a broad sense:

3. From this point onwards the article will focus on Hölderlin’s translation as an original text.

one of the most important processes that can lead to revitalizing culture, a proactive force that continually introduces new ideas, forms or expressions, and pathways for change (Gentzler 2017: 8).

This perspective also allows us to interpret the performances as both intra- and interlinguistic representations of *Antigone*, as translations of the play that are just as valid as those put into writing.

3.2. *An outline of adaptations for the stage*

Before continuing with the discussion on *Antigone*'s performances on stage it should be mentioned that there is the methodological obstacle of how difficult it is to find exactly how many performances there have been. The farther in time from us, the more complex this data is to find. For this same reason it is quite significant to contrast which information has been preserved and which performances have been able to remain in the collective and written memory. Despite all this, the internet has made finding out which performances are currently going on much easier.⁴

As mentioned, Hölderlin's *Antigone* would have to wait until its first stage performance in the German speaking world on the 26th June 1918 in Zurich, more than a century after its creation. It was followed by Darmstadt (1923) and Vienna (1940). The first two decades of the 21st century alone saw five other versions of this text on stage: *Antigone von Sophokles* (Theater Tri-bühne Stuttgart 2008),⁵ *ANTIGONE. Bocksgesang von Hölderlin nach Sophokles* (Theater Willy Praml 2020),⁶ *Gemeinsamschwesterliches Antigone – Antigonos – Antigonä* (Toihaus Theater 2020),⁷ *Tanzen ist besser als töten Sophokles, Friedrich Hölderlin, Martin Walser: Antigone* (Theater Konstanz 2023)⁸ and *Antigone* (Halle Saale 2024).⁹

4. May 2024.

5. <<https://www.tri-buehne.de/produktion/antigone-2008>>.

6. <<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/kultur/theater-willy-praml-antigone-nach-hoelderlins-uebersetzung-16929804.html>>

7. <<https://toihaus.at/projekte/gemeinsamschwesterliches-antigone-antigonos-antigonae>>.

8. <<https://www.die-deutsche-buehne.de/kritiken/tanzen-ist-besser-als-toeten/>>.

9. <<https://halle.de/verwaltung-stadtrat/presseportal/nachrichten/nachricht/beigeordnete-besucht-premiere-von-antigone-im-neuen-theater>>.

After its debut in 1948, Brecht's *Antigone* was performed in 1951 in Greiz under the direction of Otto Ernst Tickard. Brecht, in fact, congratulated Tickard for this work and sent him a prologue to be incorporated in the performance (Brecht 1985: 151). From then on, this version has seen the stage more than once, most recently in Hamburg in 2011, in Senftenberg in 2015, in Recklinghausen in 2017, in Luxemburg, Wiesbaden, Heidelberg and Württemberg-Hohenzollern in 2018, and in Berlin and Austria in 2019 (Suhrkamp Theaterverlag 2024).¹⁰ It is worth noting that, in 2018, Manfred Karge was in charge of bringing Brecht's drama to life once more in the now iconic Chur Theatre where it once debuted (Michels 2018).

While in the Spanish-speaking world there have been no stage adaptations of Hölderlin's drama, Brecht's has had more luck. In 1967 *The Living Theatre of New York*, an American theatre troupe, presented *Antígona*, Bertold Brecht in San Sebastián and Valladolid. Going by its reviews one can assume that it was a multilingual adaptation, but it has not been possible to find out who translated the text excerpts. In 1969 the *Teatro de la Universidad Católica de Chile* also debuted its own version, translated by Herbert W. Jung. More recently there have been some other adaptations, such as the production by the *La Ferroviaria* group in 2018 in Sagunt. This adaptation is based on the texts of Brecht, Anouilh, Marguerite Yourcenar and María Zambrano. Finally, in the same year, a Cuban *Antigone*, based upon Brecht's work and made by *Impulso Teatro*, premiered in the *Festival de Teatro Progresista* in Caracas.

In all these cases Johnston's definition of translation as an act that gives the work a new life comes to mind:

So translation is, in its own way, no less a performance, conjuring a book distant from us in time or in space into new life. In other words, reviving writing that is otherwise dead to us (Johnston 2015: 10).

For this author translation is a recreating art (an art that creates again). Even though there are many reasons why retranslations occur, the translator should juggle more than one responsibility at the same time, such as reaching a balance between the voice of the source text and that of the

10. <<https://www.suhrkamptheater.de/stueck/sophokles-antigone-tt-101193>>.

receiving context (Johnston 2013: 366). Johnston, who is both a researcher and professional drama translator, explains himself through a process he calls ‘writing forward’ and the ‘retranslation pact’. According to them, the most important thing for retranslation (which Johnston defines as a translation for the stage) is to offer a text comparable to the original that considers, above all, its representability (Vassallo 2022).

In addition to these adaptations there are also other audiovisual translations derived from Hölderlin’s *Antigone*. In 1949 Orff premiered an opera based upon his text. Brecht was critical of it and called it “exoticising” (Brecht 1985: 149). There is, in addition, the film *Antigone des Sophokles nach der Hölderlinschen Übertragung für die Bühne bearbeitet von Brecht* (1992) by Straub and Huillet, which strives to keep as close to the drama performance as possible. This last adaptation is included in DVD form in Cortés’ 2014 translation.

3.3. A specific case: translation with a critical apparatus

As well as translations, retranslations, rewritings and performances (made into film or for the opera), there are also other relevant possibilities for this study: translations that contain some kind of critical apparatus and that are not necessarily created for an academic readership.

Cortés’ translation includes, in addition to the translation of the text of *Antigone* and a DVD with the Straub and Huillet film, a prologue that comprises the evolution of the drama from Sophocles to Straub and Huillet. It includes notes from the translator (footnotes for the prologue, grouped together at the end for the translation itself).

This is, then, another concrete type of translation (in the sense established for this article): a translation with a critical apparatus, annotated and with characteristics typical of philological translations (as described by Bühler 2000: 35) because it contains an interpretation and the translator’s notes to explain the strategies used by them. Cortés’ *Antigone* does not distinguish itself from previous translation because of its eminently reinterpreted or philological nature, as it is only the first Spanish translation of the text. These kinds of translation, such as the one by Cortés, tend to be bilingual and contain information that is not intended for the

average reader, such as studies or essays regarding the translated text. In this article they will be referred to as ‘translations with a critical apparatus.’

In addition to Cortés’ version, Hölderlin’s essay itself (*Hölderlins Anmerkungen zur Antigona*) is also worth mentioning. As has been mentioned, this essay was already translated into Spanish in the 1990s, even before the play. Spanish is not the only language it has been published in, either as an essay by itself, together with the Hölderlin’s drama or even with Sophocles’ play. For these reasons, it is worth asking whether this is not also a kind of translation of *Antigone*: originally from Hölderlin’s ideas and later as part of the critical apparatus of some editions.

In his classification of the metapoem, in fact, Holmes (1969) includes the categories “critical essay in language of the poem” and “critical essay in another language” (see Figure 1) as another reading of the original text. This classification could be just as useful in drama translation, as it is also a genre with a proclivity to be interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Hölderlin’s essay, from this perspective, would not form part of the play itself, but would be a one of the elements of the ‘meta drama.’ It would be, so to speak, a critical essay about the drama which ends up translated as well. This line of thinking connects with Benjamin’s theory that a translation is a text that completes and enriches the original (1923/1963).

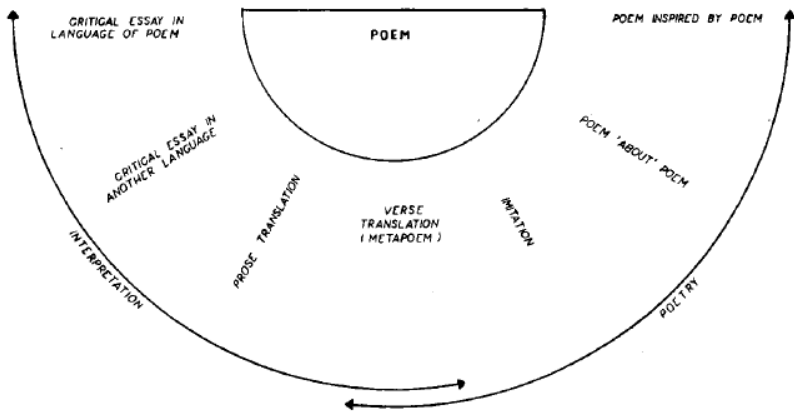


Figure 1. Holmes’ metapoem, 1969

The variety of translations derived from Hölderlin's *Antigone* is reflected in Figure 2. It should be noted that it is difficult to uncover the exact origin of the Spanish performances/adaptations of Brecht's *Antigone*, as they could have been adapted from an existing and already published Spanish translation or directly derived from a German adaptation. The audience is usually not privy to this information. This is even more true in the Spanish speaking world, as there is no tradition of publishing the theatre scripts of certain stage performances.

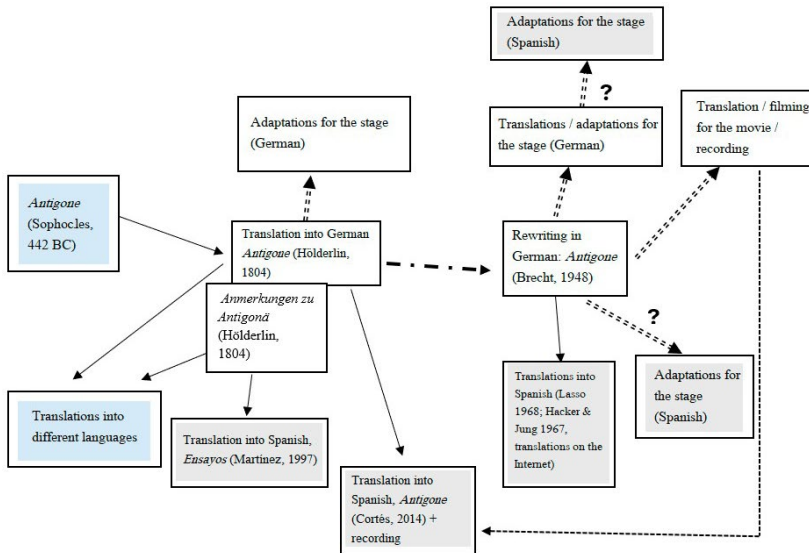


Figure 2. Translations of *Antigone* from Hölderlin's version (Spanish translations are marked in grey)

If one continues to apply the ideas of the *outward turn* to the case study, one can observe that the concepts of 'original' and 'copy' have grown, as each translation turns out to be an original in a sense (Vidal Claramonte 2022). As Figure 2 proves, this is especially the case in Hölderlin's translation and Brecht's rewriting (and of course in Sophocles' writing), as they are focal points that give rise to further versions or interpretations.

The concept of supplementation, by Carlson (1985), is of interest here. According to this concept, “performance [is] a supplement looks back, builds on what is in the written text, adds to it and then replaces it” (Aaltonen 2010: 108). These are translations that are also the origin of new translations of a diverse nature without disappearing completely in the process.

Not all derived translations receive, however, the same treatment.

4. How does a translation become an original text?

If we consider here that an ‘original’ is not only characterised by being the point of origin of a translation nor its degree of newness, but by its reception in a new culture, new questions arise. Firstly, when does a translation become an ‘original’? Which characteristics does it have to possess?

Laiho states the condition of being an ‘original’ is not only dependent on the characteristics of the work, but also by the ontological and epistemological assumptions by those who classify a work as such (Laiho 2013: 123-124). In addition, he explains that a binary vision of the topic (a text being either an original or a translation, with no middle ground) might be limiting. The concept of originality is also related to factors such as perception, familiarity and the power balance between two elements. Beyond questioning if a translation and its original are the same and if a translation is always in a subsidiary role, the questions to be addressed, inspired by the case of *Antigone*, are as follows: are the translations derived from Sophocles’ work (and then from Hölderlin’s) just as original as each other? In other words, do all of them have the same degree of genius, do they receive the same reception, do they play the same role in the literary system they are being translated into, and do they have the same protection and rights?

To answer these questions the following hypotheses will be analysed:

1. For a drama translation to become, by itself, an ‘original’ (a text, whether translated or not, which serves as a basis for new proposals and interpretations) it must have an available written version.
2. A translation’s recognition depends on the status of the translator.
3. A translation’s recognition depends on the historical moment it was made in.

4. A translation's recognition depends on its added worth or innovation.

In addition to this exploration, this study will review the current reception of Hölderlin's *Antigone* in the Spanish-speaking world. As Aaltonen explains:

Plays are a site for self-study, gaining information and deepening our knowledge of ourselves and the others who inhabit our world. (Aaltonen 2010: 105).

With all of this in mind, the study will seek to explain what the background of these two translations can tell us about our history and society.

4.1. *The availability of the translation*

One could argue that, in relation to translations whose objective is to be the base for an audiovisual representation (which can be and often are fleeting if they are not recorded in some way), for a translation to be remembered, for it to reach "literary fame," so to speak, it must be easily available. Is this the case for our two translations?

As mentioned, the first edition of Hölderlin's translation was published in 1804 alongside his translation of *Oedipus Rex*. Hölderlin's translation of the drama, however, only started to receive recognition once its translator was brought back from obscurity and it was published in the critical edition of Hölderlin's complete works compiled by Hellingrath, Seebass and Pigenot between 1913 and 1923. This coincides with its first stage adaptation (1919). Cortés (Hölderlin 2012) references the Frankfurt Critical Edition (1943-1985, edited by Beissner) and Lacoue-Labarthe's French translation of *Antigone* in her translation. Even though this is not an exhaustive list, other than the critical editions, one can find Hölderlin's *Antigone* in Böhm and Ernst's *Gesammelte Werke* (1905) by the publisher Eugen Diederich and in the reprints of the 1804 version made in 1918 and 1986. Although it is a drama translation, it is quite easy to find it in German. Hölderlin wrote it for publication, rather than adaptation to stage.

Brecht's rewriting, however, is even easier to find. Even though it premiered as a stage play first, and later as a published text, the author made it

available to the public shortly after its premiere through the *Antigonemodell* 1948. This publication contains his version of the stage play, pictures of it in Chur and sketches by Caspar Heher, among other items. It boasts a couple of reprints by itself (1949; 1955), it was also published as part of the complete works of Brecht (1964) and it has been reedited and published with more information on Brecht's innovative model (1985).

In Spanish, however, Hölderlin's translation and Brecht's rewriting are not easily found. Of the first we only have Cortés' version. Of the second one can find two translations published almost at the same time: the first appeared in the 13th volume of a collection of Brecht's dramas (1967) published by Nueva Visión and translated by Jung and Hacker (1967-1973), while the second was published in a magazine in 1968 and translated by the poet Lasso de la Vega (1968).

Although surprising, the 2012 edition of all Brecht's dramas published by Cátedra does not include *Antigone*. Even though the reasons for this omission are not clear, it could be because this edition does not consider Brecht to be Antigone's author. By extension, then, Hölderlin does not deserve the consideration either. It is clear, once again, how the roles of original and translation, author and translator, can change constantly.

In addition to all translations available in written form and published in an analogical format, it is also possible to find translations of Sophocles' and Brecht's versions on the internet, in particular in the blog *Marxismo y Literatura*, by the *Seminario Multidisciplinario José Emilio González* of Universidad de Puerto Rico in 2013 (Several authors 2013).

In short, we can conclude that in German there are many editions of *Antigone*, both in Hölderlin's version and in Brecht's. Both are included in the corresponding complete works, which is not the case in Spanish. In this case, could it be argued that the status of these translations may also be due to the prestige of their translators?

4.2. *The status of the author-translator*

When Hölderlin published his version of the Greek tragedies, these were received so badly that even some of his acquaintances were ashamed of them (Brecht 1985: 149). We know that it was not the choice of drama that

his contemporaries disliked, as just four years after its publication (1804), another translation of *Antigone* (by Fridrich Rochlitz) premiered in the Weimarer Hoftheater. The screenplay is kept in some libraries. It was, then, the way Hölderlin translated that displeased his contemporaries.

After Rochlitz's *Antigone* came others, such as the adaptation of 1841, directed by Ludwig Tieck (Brecht 1985: 149). To put it in perspective, Hölderlin's version would not be seen on stage until 1918. In other words, Hölderlin's translation did not reach some fame until Hölderlin himself became famous, which was at the beginning of the 20th century.

In contrast, Brecht did receive recognition during his lifetime. There is no clear separation between the premiere of *Antigone* and the moment he became famous, as both are irrevocably linked. If the worth of the translation depends only on the status of its translator, it should follow that once this author is publicly recognised in a second culture, in a receiving culture, the piece of work should attract the same level of enthusiasm. The attentive reader, though, will be able to deduce that this is not the case.

4.3. *The perfect moment*

Hölderlin's reception and the reception of his *Antigone* do not take place at the same time. Even though it is not possible to name the motives for this with certainty, the historical and cultural context must play a role in the selection of the texts that are translated. When analysing the moments when Hölderlin's and Brecht's *Antigones* popularity was highest, certain patterns come to the surface.

Hölderlin and his work are recognised in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. Shortly after that, a stage play based upon it premiered just before the First World War. This was just a year before the German public could enjoy yet another version of *Antigone* by Walter Hasenclever, which received the Kleistpreis (Brecht 1965/1985: 149). It seems evident that the drama was a success during those years in German speaking countries because of the questioning of the laws established by a tyrant in favour of older, more humane ones. In light of the historical context, one might think that this sentiment would resonate more with a German population

fully affected by the war than with the Spanish population, since Spain remained neutral in the conflict.

It was also at the beginning of the 20th century that other works by Hölderlin were translated into Spanish. However, this is not the case for his drama translation of *Antigone*. While it was modernism in general (closely connected with the renewal of poetic language that took place in Spain during that time) that led to the discovery of the German poet, it seems that the popularity of *Antigone* depended on its resonance in a particular historical moment. Hölderlin and his contemporaries' versions of the play after the failed French Revolution and the recovery of them after the outbreak and end of the First World War are perhaps two more examples of this phenomenon.

Brecht's version is created in Germany and Switzerland after the Second World War, while Spain is still going through the worst years of Franco's dictatorship. The 1940s and 1950s are thus not particularly fruitful for the reception of Brecht's works there. Even Hölderlin's reception, which had become stronger in the first third of the century, lost its momentum. Translators from Latin America and the Spanish intellectual elite exiled there therefore took over the translation work (Zavala Mondragón 2017).

The sixties coincide with a turbulent time: the civil rights movement, the Vietnam war and the subsequent protests. They are also the most successful years for Brecht (Aaltonen 2010: 106) and thus new translations and interpretations of *Antigone* emerged. Brecht's versions are translated into Spanish but this first occurs in Latin America. It is worth remembering that up to this point neither Hölderlin's nor Brecht's *Antigone* have been published in Spanish in Spain. The first translation in book form is an Argentinian edition, specifically in volume XIII of Brecht's complete theatre (1967), a work by Herbert Jung and Jorge Hacker (1967-1973).

Therefore, the reception of Brecht's plays in Spanish begins in Argentina: Dubatti expresses that in 1930 "the first case of Brecht's reception that we have on record takes place in Buenos Aires" and from the 1940s onwards there are frequent stage adaptations there (Dubatti 2013: 13). Jung's translation, in addition, leads to a stage play that premiered in 1969 in the Teatro de la Universidad Católica de Chile. Moreover:

Between (1940 and 1989) Brecht is thought of as a 'Marxist' author, an organic dramatist of the left, later identified with East Germany, a pedagogical author highly valued as a political guide in the independent theatre of Buenos Aires (Dubatti 2013: 18).

It is very possible then that we owe Brecht's discovery in Spanish to the influence he had on the other side of the Atlantic. In Spain, as Fernández Insuela states, "with the triumph of Franco and the ideas he embodied, it is obvious that Brecht's work was a complete departure from what could be tolerated by the new regime" (Fernández Insuela 1993: 124), and thus the country "missed the cultural and political train of western Europe" (*ibid.*).

In 1964 the US experimental theatre group *The Living Theatre of New York* moved to Europe. It was a self-imposed exile after staging a play (*The Brig*) that denounced the US military system. The group was suffocated by taxes and lawsuits; some of its members were even briefly imprisoned, after which they decided to move to Europe (Several authors 2024a). In 1967, possibly inspired by the already mentioned political and social circumstances in the US, they decided to bring *Antígona*, Bertold Brecht to the stage in Spain in places such as San Sebastián and Valladolid. These performances were trilingual: some narrative fragments recited in French, the last few lines in Spanish and everything else in English (Monleón 1967).

At this point, the Francoist regime was still in force, but in decline. This can be seen when, a year after the Argentine translation of 1968, Lasso de la Vega, already mentioned, contributes to issue 228 of December of *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* with his *La Antígona de Sófocles*. To put this in context, it is worth bearing in mind that:

As far as Spain is concerned, I think it can be said that, prior to the civil war, [knowledge of Brecht] was quite limited [...]. And in the post-war period it was not until 1966 that Brecht's plays began to appear on the commercial stage [...]. At the same time, in minority areas of Spanish theatre, especially in the circles of the Nuevo Teatro Español (New Spanish Theatre) and its closely related Teatro Independiente (Independent Theatre), a great interest in the work of the German author is kindled (Fernández Insuela 1993: 123).

Antígona would continue to be part of the forgotten works of Hölderlin for some decades. Interest in the German *Antígona(s)* awakened late in

Spain. Just a glance at bibliographic catalogues shows that the French and English were ahead of the Spanish in terms of reception.¹¹ In Spain, more and more foreign works are being translated, especially those that are lesser-known classics. The number of translations is on the rise, and not only of Hölderlin's most famous works. In 1997, Martínez Marzoa included *Anotaciones sobre Antígona* (Hölderlin 1997) in his essays.

Something similar has also happened in other countries.¹² Finally, in 2012 Cortés Gabaudan (Hölderlin 2012) published the first part of *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles, Edipo* in a trilingual edition in Greek, German and Spanish with an introductory study and extensive notes by the translator, as well as a DVD of Pasolini's version. In 2014 the second part, *Antigone*, followed it (Hölderlin 2014).

The interest garnered by Hölderlin's *Antigone* since the 1990s and especially in the first decades of the 2000s, however, seem to contradict the hypothesis that the work is translated as a response to a turbulent political moment. Considering that these translations originate in European countries both before and after the economic crisis of 2009, this does not seem to have been the trigger. In this case, however, there is another interesting detail. They are not only translations of Hölderlin's *Antigone*, but also translations of *Antigone's* accompanying essay.

11. In French, the translation of the essay comes before that of the play, but both get published much earlier than in Spain: in 1965 we find *Remarques sur Oedipe. Remarques sur Antigone* (translated by F. Fédier, Hölderlin 1965a) and *Remarques sur Oedipe. Remarques sur Antigone* (translated by J. Beaufret, Hölderlin 1965b), and in 1978 Lacoue-Labarthe published *L'Antigone de Sophocle* (Sophocles 1978). In English in 1983 *On tragedy 'Notes on the Oedipus'* and *'Notes on the Antigone'* (trans. Adler, Hölderlin 1983) get published and in 2001 Hölderlin's *Sophocles: Oedipus & Antigone* (trans. Constantine, Hölderlin 2001b). We now move to the late 1990s.

12. There is a translation of Sophocles from Ancient to Modern Greek accompanied by Hölderlin's commentaries (*Antigonē: Selides gia tēn Antigonē tōn Friedrich Hölderlin, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger by Stampulu and Gionas 2017, Sophocles et al. 2017*), a Portuguese translation (*Observações sobre Édipo ; observações sobre Antígona: Preceded by Hölderlin e Sófocles, Süssekind 2008, Hölderlin & Beaufret 2008*) a Finnish translation (*Huomautuksia Sofokleen kääntämisestä by Kirkkopelto 2001, Hölderlin 2001b*) and even one into Armenian (*Ֆրիդրիխ Հյդդերլինի ։ բանաստեղծական աշխարհի և նակատագրի նակատագրի քննություն փորձ from Unkhiunyan 2013*) (Hölderlin 2013), according to the Worldcat catalogue.

4.4. *The degree of innovation or added value*

It is therefore worth analysing what is actually being translated in the case of Hölderlin and Brecht, what, so to speak, is the added value of these translations and what they retain of the version from which they derive.

In the case of Hölderlin's translation, the added value resided in the language used and his way of translating. Unfortunately, his proposal was not attractive to the public of the 18th century. Brecht's added value to the text is not first and foremost the language, but his novel staging and message (the ideology and political lens) transmitted through the plot and adapted to the post-Second World War context.

Hölderlin maintains Sophocles' plot. Brecht, however, keeps Hölderlin's language. This is confusing, obscure language, full of metaphors that remind the reader and the public of the ancient and complex rhythm of the free verse (slightly adapted by Brecht). Brecht thus creates an *Antigone* as criticism and he inserts it in a new cultural movement, even though its roots are profoundly German and draw on Hölderlin's already timeless classicism. Hölderlin's words continue to resonate in each and every staging of Brecht's play. In this case, what legitimises Hölderlin's version is not Sophocles' original (whose translation was so heavily criticised), but Brecht's version.

All of this is not easily transferable to the Spanish-speaking world. Overlooking the translation difficulties, the Spanish-speaking context of reception does not have the same bond with Hölderlin's language and what it represents as the German context. Consequently, what is translated and adapted into Spanish is Brecht's political protest. Hölderlin is, at first, lost in translation. This could explain the more measured and tardy reception of his *Antigone*. It is very probable that the Spanish-speaking public and readers are not aware that Brecht's play is based upon Hölderlin's text. In German adaptations Hölderlin is, more or less, always present. Not so in Spanish. This may be because the most novel aspect of this translation is also the most difficult thing to translate: his way of understanding and translating the classical Greek poetic style. Of course, the lack of transparency and information regarding drama adaptation does not help either.

Cortés (Hölderlin 2014: 33-34), however, does not seek only to preserve the plot of Hölderlin's drama, but also his language as far as possible. It is a translation that does not only describe the text literally, it also tries to reproduce it in Spanish, even if that makes it more obscure. Thus, in a sense, she translates not only the language, but also the purpose of the poet.

Currently, in the publishing world, there are many translations of classics or ancient works which contain philological studies, translator's notes, etc. Not only is the text translated, but the process is explained and even the context of the original work is explained and interpreted for the readers. This helps the reflections of Hölderlin's essay to become part, to a certain extent, of every *Antigone*.

Aaltonen states that "theatre translation and performance are subsequent readings of a source text which they replace" (2010:109), so that:

both the translation and the performance are seen to need the authorisation of their source texts which always enjoy a superior status to its manifestations. (Aaltonen 2010: 109).

However, in these cases, both Hölderlin's version and Brecht's do not seem to need Sophocles, thanks to their availability, the status of their translators and their added value to the receiving culture at the ideal moment. The translation (or translations) enshrines the new original in the target culture and even in the original culture.

Cortés' translation, although it does not currently have all these factors in its favour, is also a product of its time, as it is a multimodal translation. In addition to being a bilingual version, it includes the 1992 film as another translation. It is therefore a different, broader way of understanding translation as an enrichment of the original.

To conclude the study, the reception of the translation of Cortés' *Antigone* will be analysed.

5. The reception of Hölderlin's *Antigone* in Spanish

Before clarifying if the Spanish reception of Hölderlin's and Brecht's *Antigone* is just as important as it is in German, it is necessary to mention that the translations are much more difficult to find in Spanish. The Argentinian

translation of Brecht's version is already over 50 years old and Lasso's is only available in print in certain libraries. No reviews have been able to be located. Cortés' translation, even though easier to find, presents its own difficulties, as there are now only limited copies.

Despite this, Cortés' translation has been received positively. In an article published by *El País*, Felix de Azúa (who has also written a prologue for a translation of Hölderlin's poems) states:

I would need twice as much space to give an account of this monument. Suffice it to summarise the following: I would say that it is the best book edited in Spain in 2014, for its audacity, for its courage, for its elegance (Azúa 2014).

He stresses that there is more than one translation of *Antigone* contained in this volume, and he highlights the "obscurity" of Hölderlin's plot and poetry, and the work done by Cortés.

Curiously, Azúa associates the play with another historical event: the murders perpetrated by ETA in the early 1980s. Azúa sees a link between both incidents, even though the dates do not align perfectly:

I remember how much we were aware of this tragedy in the Basque Country when, at the beginning of the 1980s, ETA murdered hundreds of people without anyone, neither Antigone nor Creon, objecting. This wasn't even a tragedy. A dead city (*ibid.*).

For this writer, Brecht has already gone out of fashion and is more critical of his version than that of Hölderlin:

It seems to me that Bertolt Brecht blundered in his version, either through inadvertence or sectarianism. In turning Antigone into an insubordinate woman who confronts the Nazi Creon, he did not suspect that the figure of the tyrant could be a premonition of Robespierre or Lenin. If Creon is also destroyed by the gods, it is because he wants to impose revolutionary virtue on the masses by force and terror (*ibid.*).

The importance of the historical context was already clear to Brecht: some years after the staging in Chur he deletes the prologue that alludes to the National Socialist era.

If one compares the review with the 1967 performance by The New York Living Theatre with the 2024 version by Lidia Soriano, taking

Azúa's comments into account, one can observe that the tone also varies greatly. The review by José Monleón in the journal *Triunfo* closes with this statement:

Half the theatre rose to their feet to applaud ardently. [...] Then they came forward, greeted and began to applaud us, them, the Living Group, those of us who were in the hall, those of us who had come from Madrid to see them, those who lived in Valladolid and had come to see them, perhaps also, those who were, in the end, the most affected, those who first knew who the show was against (Monleón 1967: 63).

In contrast to the clear political message of Monleón's review ('they knew who the show was against'), Linda Soriano, in an interview prior to the premiere of her version, underlines the importance of the multimodality and flexibility between different artistic disciplines in her work:

We are going to see a story embodied through the essence and aesthetics of Impulso Teatro, which takes into account the physical work, the use of live music both to imbue an atmosphere into each scene and to support the narrative of the play, the inherent theatricality, the substitution of scenes that, while Brecht entrusted to two characters in the staging, become choral songs, in situations executed from the visual, dances and many elements of great attraction to the spectator (Cazal 2024).

One review of Soriano's version states:

To see *Antigone*, by Sophocles, through the genius of Brecht, is to travel to the very origin of theatre in its condition as a formal art. It is to witness its hard core, the one that will define the manifestation forever. The tragedy of the individual in the face of the established order (...) (Valiño 2024).

It concludes that one can see a clear prevalence of Brecht's interpretation in the performance. Hölderlin, though mentioned in some reviews, fades to the background. This exclusion by Valiño is clear in the following sentence: "Although Soriano started from the post-war Brechtian adaptation, the greatness of these two theatrical geniuses naturally come together in this adaptation." Note the "two geniuses" here instead of three.

The arrival of *Antigone* to the Spanish-speaking world (and to other languages) seems to have been through more educated, specialised readers and through editions with a critical apparatus. Brecht's version remains firmly rooted in the world of stage performances.

6. Conclusions: Originell aber waren seine Übersetzungen stets

One of the conclusions gathered in this article is that the broadening of the concept of translation involves new challenges, among them terminological confusion and the need to categorise new (and old) types of translation.

It has been necessary to redefine or clarify some concepts ('rewriting', 'translation', 'adaptation' and 'retranslation') to fit this case study. The original has thus left its old definition of a source text from which all translations originate (Sophocles) to become the word that describes some translations (such as Hölderlin's or Brecht's). This is because of the way in which these new translations originate (through short-lived performances or ignoring the existence of the other original), the changes the author-translator makes, the historical moment of the translation and their relevance in the tradition they reinterpret.

The role that the concepts of author and copyright law play also merits examination in future studies. Venuti (1995) and Lee (2020) have already started this line of thought questioning the relationship between translation and *copyright*.

In addition, the legitimising power of translation has also been observed. Even though it is often said that "the presence of the original is the prerequisite for authenticity" and that "the original, (and) not its reproduction, what has the full aura" (*Oxford English Dictionary* in Perloff 2012: 22), after this review of the history of the *Antigones*, I believe I can say that translations, no matter the type (translations, rewritings, adaptations, etc.), have the ability to legitimise a text or a literary work. They transform them into starting points for new interpretations and new works of art, regardless of the medium in which they are created.

The meaning of 'original' depends on the culture that interprets the concept. Here one can see that the degree of singularity that makes a work 'original' (since all works of art owe something to their predecessors) is affected by other factors. These, however, are necessarily varied. The existence of available copies, the status of the author-translator, the political and historical circumstances for a culture and the added value of the translation are only some of them.

All this raises new questions. Is a translation then an original piece from the moment of its creation or also from the moment it is translated? Could Cortés' translation be canonised if it became as famous as Hölderlin's or Brecht's and there were translations made of it?

It is clear that translation can no longer be understood as a limited or limiting concept, just as it cannot be separated from its context and intention. Today in academia it is agreed that every translation has an element of originality. In his biography of Hölderlin, while discussing the translations of *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex*, Safranski (2019: 256) states "Originell aber waren seine Übersetzungen stets" (His translations were, without doubt, original) meaning that they differed from the rest of his contemporaries. Due to their position in a culture, in the literary canon and their effect, paraphrasing Orwell, some translations are more original than others. And yet, Safranski's statement can also be understood in a different way: "[the] translations are [or could be] always original."

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BIONOTE / NOTA BIOGRÁFICA

SUSANA SCHOER-GRANADO studied Translation and Interpreting at the University of Granada. She is currently working at the University of Salamanca, where she is doing her PhD in poetry translation with an FPU pre-doctoral contract. Her main research interests are poetry translation, Friedrich Hölderlin, German Romantic women writers and the history of translation, as well as the theory and practice of literary translation.

SUSANA SCHOER-GRANADO estudió Traducción e Interpretación en la Universidad de Granada. Actualmente trabaja en la Universidad de Salamanca, donde está realizando su doctorado en traducción de poesía con un contrato predoctoral FPU. Sus principales líneas de investigación son la

traducción de poesía, Friedrich Hölderlin, las escritoras del Romanticismo alemán y historia de la traducción, así como la teoría y la práctica de la traducción literaria.