

The Translation of Samuel Beckett's *mirlitonades* by Three Spanish Authors¹

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Abstract. The *mirlitonades* are short poems written by Samuel Beckett between 1976 and 1978. These minimalistic pieces reflect the poetic idiosyncrasies in his literary career and also in his personal life. Although Spanish literary culture has not been significantly affected by the work of Samuel Beckett—with some notable exceptions—it is surprising that the *mirlitonades* have been translated five times into Spanish. In this study, I will focus on three of those versions—Loreto Casado (1998), Jenaro Talens (2000) and José Luis Reina Palazón (2014)—with the objective of identifying common sources of interest for these translators in Beckett's poems. Attention will also be paid to the main points of convergence among the different versions, as well as their dissimilarities. In addition, the predominant methods that they adopted in translating the *mirlitonades* will be examined. The study of their lexical choices will ultimately reveal different approaches to Beckett's work, as well as the various images of Beckett as a poet that Spanish readers might have acquired through each of these versions.

Keywords: *mirlitonades*, Translation, Poetry, Reception in Spain, Samuel Beckett.

[es] Las *mirlitonades* de Samuel Beckett traducidas por tres autores españoles

Resumen. Las *mirlitonades* son poemas cortos escritos por Samuel Beckett entre 1976 y 1978. Estas piezas minimalistas representan la idiosincrasia poética predominante tanto en la carrera literaria como en la vida personal de Beckett. Aunque la cultura literaria española no se ha visto afectada significativamente por la obra de Samuel Beckett—con algunas excepciones destacables—es sorprendente que esta colección haya sido traducida cinco veces al castellano. En este estudio he centrado mi atención en tres de esas versiones—la de Loreto Casado (1998), Jenaro Talens (2000) y José Luis Reina Palazón (2014)—con el objetivo de identificar fuentes comunes de interés para estos traductores en los poemas de Beckett. Asimismo, prestaré atención a los principales puntos de convergencia entre las tres versiones, así como sus disimilitudes. El análisis de sus elecciones léxicas finalmente revelará diferentes aproximaciones a la obra de Beckett y las distintas imágenes de Beckett como poeta que los lectores españoles hayan podido percibir a través de cada versión.

Palabras clave: *mirlitonades*, traducción, poesía, recepción en España, Samuel Beckett.

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1. Introduction

Samuel Beckett wrote the *mirlitonades* between 1976 and 1978, and they were eventually published in 1978. Simple in structure but intense in content, these minimalistic pieces represent the poetic idiosyncrasy predominant in both Beckett's literary career and his personal life. Their inspiration draws in part on the 'kazoo', an English equivalent for 'mirliton' which consists of a simple musical instrument comprising two thin membranes and often brightly coloured. Additionally, they recall the old tradition of the nightwatchmen offering their "doggerel or trashy verse" (Kosters 1992: 95) to citizens on New Year's Eve: the 'vers de mirliton'. Beckett appropriated this custom for a new poetic concept which intentionally lacked literary sophistication and had "connotations of fragility and brightness, while not quite succumbing to the pejorative 'vers de mirliton' (Cohn 2001: 345), and which alluded to "a bad poetry, common, vulgar, unpretentious" (Cerrato 1999: 42). These short verses repeatedly suggest the confrontation with nothingness through the shape of a blackbird's song. As Knowlson (1996: 568) notes, "these 'rimailles', 'rhymeries' or 'versicules', as he first labelled them, were jotted down at odd moments in Ussy, in a hotel room or in a bar in Paris, Stuttgart, or Tangier on any handy scrap of paper", but they were also spotted on cards, envelopes and boxes of whiskey. Indeed, Cerrato also comments on the frenetic nature of the *mirlitonades*, being written without any order or logical scheme on the most unsuspected of surfaces, revealing Beckett's internal commotion of hidden words:

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Pieces of paper of daily use which indeed testimony about the daily nature existent in the origin of these short poems, frequently representing a dismissing abstraction and lack of references [...] The different variations and piled versions in any order and spatial disposition on the slight surface of a piece of paper reveal a certain feverish urgency in the claim of words. (43)

The Irish author took inspiration from his own experiences of life to write these short verses, in particular the long walks he enjoyed in Tangier, on which he frequently visited the cemetery of St. Andrew's church, 'ne manquez pas à Tanger / le cimetière Saint-André' ('do not miss in Tangier / Saint-André cemetery'). His emotional turmoil as a result of past memories created the ideal atmosphere for him to unwrap the broken pieces of his existence, ultimately to be recaptured in the *mirlitonrades*. Similarly, Knowlson argues that these little poems "were prompted by lines or phrases that had stuck in his mind during his reading" (569), thus reflecting reminiscences of Voltaire's *All Saints' Day* and La Fontaine's *Le Lièvre et les Grenouilles* (*The Hare and the Frogs*). To be found in the Beckett Archive at Reading University Library, the *mirlitonrades* constitute two different groups (Wheatley 2012: 47): "The scraps of paper themselves, and the *mirlitonrades* *Sotissier*, a leather-spined notebook, which one's first suspicion would have been that Beckett reserved for finished items", though it eventually became "only an intermediary stage in the writing process" (Van Hulle 2019: 68) since a vast array of the manuscripts were scrapped, and some others significantly diverge from the original poems.

Alternatively, it is a well-known fact that Beckett's poetry in Spain has received little attention. Certainly, Spanish literary culture has not been significantly affected by his work, with some exceptions. In fact, as Fernández-Quesada *et al.* claim in their introduction to *Samuel Beckett in Spanish*, the required conditions for the optimal acquisition of his work in Spain were not met, and have resulted in an irregular reception, in which some key works have been neglected (2019: 9).

The problem with *mirlitonrades* consists of its apparent simplicity, which is an apt terrain for the translator to build upon the original text to create his/her own literary work. Surprisingly, this poetic collection has been translated five times, which shows an unusual interest in Beckett's poems. The *mirlitonrades* have been translated by Loreto Casado and appeared in a volume called *Quiebros y Poemas*, published in 1998, that not only contains the *mirlitonrades*, but also the poems written in French (1937-1976) —the so-called *Poèmes*— and a poetic analysis by the translator. The second translation of *mirlitonrades* was done by the poet, essayist and translator Jenaro Talens in 2000 within the volume *Obra poética completa*, also containing an initial commentary by Talens himself, who renames them 'letanías' ('letanies'). The third translation published in Spain belongs to José Luis Reina Palazón, and it is called "Muestrario poético de Samuel Beckett"; it was published in *Barcarola* journal in 2014.

Though there are five translations of *mirlitonrades* into Spanish —among which it is worth mentioning the translation of Tomás Salvador González in *El signo del gorrión* no. 3 (1993) and Lucas Margarit's in *Beckettiana* no. 3 (1994)— I have focused my attention on the aforementioned versions published in Spain. Our selection criteria correspond to the circulation of the different editions of the *mirlitonrades* among Spanish readers. We have opted to focus on those editions which may have reached a wider readership: the translations by Casado, Talens and Reina Palazón. Although *El signo del gorrión* —where Salvador González published his version— was a respected poetry journal (it closed in 2012), it had a regional scope and consisted of small print runs. For its part, *Beckettiana*, the leading journal of Beckett Studies in Argentina, was not digitalized until 2017 and therefore it was of difficult access outside that country in 1994, when Margarit published his version. On the contrary, Casado's and Talens' translations were published in edited volumes which contain a foreword signed by the authors and a selection of Beckett's poems translated into Spanish. Moreover, *Barcarola* journal remains active —its last number was published in December 2019— and, most importantly, it currently provides internet open access. According to these facts, it could be deduced that a more broad audience has read these translations due to the circumstances and formats under they were originally published.

This paper aims to comment on the main convergences and disparities found in these translations in order to detect common sources of interest for these authors in Samuel Beckett's original verses. Alternatively, it will examine how Beckett's poetry has been received in Spain, analysing the predominant procedures these authors have chosen in translating the *mirlitonrades*. The study of their lexical choices will ultimately reveal different approaches to the work of the Irish author.

2. *Quiebros*, by Loreto Casado (1998)

Quiebros —"dodges" or "swerves" in English— is the name Loreto Casado assigned³ to her translation of *mirlitonrades* within the volume *Quiebros y poemas*, published in 1998. Casado is doctor in French Philology, professor and translator of Eric Satie, Louis Aragon, Sami Naïr and Eric Rohmer, among others. In the epilogue to *Quiebros y poemas*, Casado argues that the name 'quiebros' evokes the plain, naked poetry reflecting the poetic

³ Casado recently (2019) stated, about this paper, that "the choice of the term [quiebros] responded to its different meanings: the gesture, the disarticulation, but especially the variations in the voice – a dodge in the voice, a warble. I did not explain this in the epilogue, but I believe I have alluded to this on some occasion" (private correspondence with the author).

gesture underlying Beckett's work and life. As a matter of fact, poetry is perceived by Beckett in general terms as "the antithesis of metaphysics" (Casado 1998: 121). In this edition, the actual chronological order of publication has been altered in order to situate the *mirlitonades* in the first place, in an unusual attempt to emphasize the significance of these light verses beyond the lure of the well-known poems written between the 1930s and 1940s. In words of Casado, these 'quiebros' "suggest the confrontation with nothingness, with the worst things, as a kind of joke to fate, in the paradoxical form of a blackbird's tune" (22). In fact, Casado perceives the *mirlitonades* as echoes of the poet's voice, and also as those voices resonating in his memories. This intimate perception serves as a skilful structure by the translator to grasp the poet's voice, re-elaborate his words and translate them into the Spanish language.

Aware of the scarce fame Beckett's poetry has traditionally had in our country, Casado has endured the arduous task of unravelling the obscure simplicity of the Beckettian verses and conveying their actual meaning in a clear, understandable manner for the Spanish reader, though they actually keep the characteristic pauses, silences and repetitions found in the original version. Far from deleting these rhetorical devices, she remains loyal to them and simply respects their existence. Ideally, certain sounds and combination of sounds can evoke specific representations of metaphysical concepts in the reader's mind. The translator, aware of the existence of these mind representations, skilfully maintains the original intended message of the poem when adapting its verses to the Spanish language, keeping the irony existent in the original verses. As Van Hulle (2019) claims, "Beckett's is a world of tragicomedy, of both Democritus and Heraclitus, both the laughing and the weeping philosophers together, as in the *mirlitonade* that Beckett chose to give pride of place: 'en face / le pire / jusqu'à ce / qu'il fasse rire', facing the worst until it turns to laughter. And in this process, the surviving words keep one company" (83).

Indeed, when comparing some fragments of the original with Casado's translation, it is easy to detect the reasons for its success. The 'company' Van Hulle alludes survives even in the Spanish translation, for the integrity of the text is wholly respected:

en face	de frente
le pire	lo horrible
jusqu'à ce	hasta hacerlo
qu'il fasse rire (Beckett 2012: 210)	risible (Casado 1998: 5)

The reader, even if unfamiliar with Spanish, can easily observe here that the rhythm of both fragments is congruent in their essential musicality and also in their original lexical simplicity, which conveys the idea of a kind of naked poetry devoid of unnecessary artifices. Indeed, Cerrato comments that Beckett simplified the version of this poem in the *Sotissier*, which had formerly included 'en fasse', but which would eventually become 'en face', a soberer version in clear allusion to the idea of confrontation, which Casado translates literally as 'de frente'. Additionally, it can be inferred from the example above that the translator used many words containing the Spanish phoneme /e/, a notable phonaesthetic effect used to adapt the rhyme of the original verses in French containing the phoneme /i/. Similarly, Casado's predominant use of the device of hyperbaton consists of altering the original syntactical arrangement of the poems in order to confer on them a poetic nature in the target language (TL). This device can also be seen in "fin fond du néant", which, as Wheatley observes, "enacts a pursuit of a 'something there'" that, in the final line, the poet assures us 'ne fut que dans la tête'" (53). Casado's translation reveals a similarity to, indeed a faithfulness, to the expressive and despairing language that Beckett uses in the French:

fin fond du néant	hondo fondo de la nada
au bout de quelle guette	al final de qué vigilia
l'oeil crut entrevoir	el ojo creyó entrever
remuer faiblement	algo apenas se movía
la tête le calma disant	la cabeza le calmó decía
ce ne fut que dans ta tête (Beckett 2012: 210)	sólo en tu cabeza fue (Casado 1998: 11)

Concerning formal procedures, in this translation even the accents are placed in relation to the analogy of signifier-signified, making the words enclose the musical succession of the verses. 'Fin fond du néant', 'remuer faiblement' and 'la tête le calma disant' are translated to maintain the expressive strength they suggest in the French version. Similarly, the alliterative use of the /n/ sound in Spanish 'hondo fondo' and the rhyming consonants in 'movía' and 'decía' lead to a strenuous perception of the poem itself, reflecting again the infinite exhaustion that the verses transmit.

Although Siles (2005: 81) argues that the adverb ending in '-mente' should have been maintained at the end of the fourth line, and 'tu cabeza' could have been substituted by 'tu mente' in the sixth verse "in order to save the rhyme without any difficulty", it is worth noting that Casado's proposal here is more concerned with preserving the emotive nature existent in the source text (ST) rather than respecting the rhyme. In words of Landers (2001: 99), "it should be noted that 'verse' is not synonymous with rhyme; classical Greek and Roman poetry was unrhymed, just as 'verses' in the Bible did not rhyme in their original Hebrew and Greek".

Intriguingly, Cerrato alludes to Beckett's intended meaning through the word 'head', referring to an individual who fears the possibility of something existing "out there" and his logical thoughts relieving him of his suffering, in that the vision "only exists in his mind" (55). In this sense, such a realization, knowing that his fears are only an illusion, a product of his mind, alleviates the pain of the anguished eye which glimpses a misleading universe outside. Considering these mental implications, it might seem appropriate to accept Siles' proposal and translate Beckett's 'tête' ('head') as 'mente' ('mind') instead of Casado's 'cabeza' ('head'), which produces a variation in the rhyme and does not necessarily imply the mental connections that Cerrato talks about. However, the dynamics of her translation combine the artistic perception of a poet and the lexical awareness of a translator in service of the poetic message, this beyond the formal parameters used to make the verses rhyme. She maintains the original meaning of 'tête' not only due to the needs of a literal rendering but also in connection with Beckett's repeated inclusion of the abstract, intangible representation of the skull throughout his literary career. Beckett had defiantly depicted the skull in the poem "The Vulture"⁴ in the collection *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935) —"of my skull shell of sky and earth" (2012: 5)— and would appear with yet more repetition in *Worstward Ho* (1983), obsessed as he was at the end of his life with the abstract representation of the mind: "in the skull all gone. All? No. All cannot go. Till dim go. Say then but the two gone. In the skull one and two gone." (46). As Kusters (1992) observes,

Much of Beckett's poetry, and his latter poetry in particular, is located, or so it seems, in the dark inside the head: under the dome of the skull, between the face and the back of the head, just above the neck, under the poet's breath. [...] It is hard poetry. [...] (93)

Hence, the interpretations vary considerably and are open to debate. However, it is worth considering that Casado's literal translation of 'tête' as 'cabeza' seems most appropriate, for it remains loyal to Beckett's intentions to represent a naked poetry devoid of rhetorical artifice by using a plain word instead of a more ambivalent term, and at the same time refers to the aforementioned representation of the skull as the materialization of the human mind. Beckett himself had previously alluded to these illusive connotations in Proust, referring to them as 'cosa mentale' (2006: 538).

Another significant feature of the *mirlitonades* is the absence of punctuation marks, which is also characteristic of Beckett's overall writing. Such a lack of punctuation implies a challenge for the translator since he or she can only interpret the precise meaning of the poem through its intonation and the context of the surrounding words, which will ultimately determine its direction. This peculiarity is made especially evident in the shortest poems, such as the following one:

d'ou	de dónde
la voix qui dit	la voz que dice
vis	vive
d'une autre vie	de otra vida
(Beckett 2012: 217)	(Casado 1998: 55)

In the example above, the verses could be interpreted as a question, although punctuation marks do not appear in the ST. Another possible reading might suggest that these verses are the statement of a consequence, the logical result of a former reflection "while considering that the *mirlitonades* constitute a series with continuity (...)" (Casado 1998: 601). In general terms, Casado's version gives substance to Beckett's voice and to his constant comings and goings, something found, albeit latently, in all his poetry. The *mirlitonades* place the subject in time and space through words, and Casado's translation retains the essence of this poetic exercise.

3. *Letanías*, by Jenaro Talens (2000)

Jenaro Talens, poet, essayist and translator, is the second translator of the *mirlitonades* published in Spain. He has worked widely on the translation of various prominent authors, including William Shakespeare, Herman Hesse, T.S. Eliot, Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney. His version of the *mirlitonades* belongs to the volume *Obra poética completa*, published in 2000. The name chosen by Talens for the *mirlitonades* is *letanías* ('litanies'), which perhaps suggests a less romantic and more prosaic appreciation of the poems than Casado's *queibros*. In fact, Talens' translation adheres more to a classical, orthodox translation of the poems, lacking the poetic devices used by Casado that generally respect the essence and musicality in the original verses:

⁴ Beckett also alluded to the topic of hunting in the poem "The Vulture", published in the 1935 collection *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates*. The language used in this poem to represent a dichotomy between the flying vulture and its prey is more dehumanized, erudite and complex than the words Beckett employed in writing the *mirlitonades* forty years later. As Cerrato puts it, "in fact, this is an age [the one of *mirlitonades*] when Beckett revealed a great proficiency in the French language. One of the indicators is precisely the choice of a popular verse and the rejection of literary prestige, instead of the more neutral and erudite methods of his former poetry" (55).

Table 1. Comparison of versions of “fin fond du néant”, translated by Casado (1998) and Talens (2000).

Beckett's ST	Casado	Talens
fin fond du néant au bout de quelle guette l'oeil crut entrevoir remuer faiblement la tête le calma disant ce ne fut que dans ta tête (2012 : 210)	hondo fondo de la nada al final de qué vigilia el ojo creyó entrever algo apenas se movía la cabeza le calmó decía sólo en tu cabeza fue (1998: 11)	al final de qué acecho creyó el ojo atisbar el fondo extremo de la nada moverse débilmente la cabeza le calmó diciendo sólo fue en tu cabeza (2000: 183)

As can be seen, there are superfluous elements in Talens' translation conveying disorder to the reader. As Wheatley notes, “syntactically too, the poem [“fin fond du néant”] is unusual in beginning as it does with the noun-phrase; disambiguated into prose the sequence would presumably be ‘l'oeil crut entrevoir remuer faiblement [la] fin, [le] fond du néant’ [...]” (54). In Talens' version, the syntactic pattern underlying the whole linguistic structure dissipates again and again in the succession of a too literal translation. In fact, he alters the original arrangement of the first verse “fin fond du néant”, placing it within the third verse. On this occasion, the translator ignores the crucial fact that “each line in Beckett's text is a system ‘où tout se tient’” (Ballesteros 1993: 153). Instead, Talens carries out critical changes that completely modify the full understanding of the poem. For instance, he translates “fin fond du néant” as ‘el fondo extremo de la nada’, using what Roman rhetoricians called *variatio*: introducing a new element instead of maintaining the rhythmic disposition of the original. The article ‘el’ had been avoided by Casado, who simply began the verse with the adjective ‘hondo’. Moreover, the translation of ‘fin’ as ‘extremo’ suggests a hyperbolic interpretation of this word, thus perceived by the Spanish reader in a more intense manner than might have been inferred from the ST.

In fact, the disproportionate freedom and arbitrariness in Talens' translation might find its origin in the advice he gives the reader in his commentary on “Letanías”: “in any case, the reader can turn to the original text in order to enjoy a plurality of meanings difficult to keep in translation” (Talens 2000: 297)⁵. However, such “plurality of meanings” could be triggered by a more intimate understanding of Beckett's verses, as Casado and Reina Palazón have demonstrated in their translations. On the other hand, Talens' translation probably lacks the emotive nature always present in the other translations, this made evident through his lexical errors:

(...) ensuite à plat sur la droite ou la gauche la gauche ou la droite (Beckett 2012: 212)	después tumbado sobre el lado derecho o el izquierdo el izquierdo o derecho (Talens 2000: 193)
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In this case, his lexical infidelities have their origins in the expression ‘tumbado sobre el lado /derecho o el izquierdo’, which adds an element not contained in the original line. Additionally, a semantic mistake can also be observed: Talens interprets ‘el lado / derecho o el izquierdo’ instead of the more successful ‘tumbado sobre la derecha / o la izquierda’ proposed by Casado, whose meaning is not radically different in the TL, but adheres to a more literal translation of the original poem. Furthermore, Casado's translation is more concerned with musicality and maintains the text's poetical recreation:

Table 2. Comparisons of “flux cause”, translated by Casado (1998) and Talens (2000).

Beckett's ST	Casado	Talens
flux cause ¹ que toute chose tout en étant toute chose donc celle-là même celle-là tout en étant n'est pas parlons-en (2012: 213)	flujo causa que cada cosa que sigue siendo cada cosa incluso aquella también aquella que sigue siendo no es digámosla (1998: 23)	flujo causa de que cada cosa sin dejar de ser cada cosa por consiguiente aquella incluso aquella que sigue siendo no lo es hablémoslo (2000: 195)

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, translations from Spanish are my own.

⁶ As Wheatley claims, “the close attention to the question of time continues: the repetition in line four for instance (‘toute chose/tout en étant/toute chose’) harmonizes expertly with the mood of Heraclitian non-self identity, since the form of being at issue, however reinforced, still disappears in the penultimate line (‘n'est pas’) (59).

As can be observed in Talens' translation, the unnecessary addition of the preposition 'de' in the first verse—as well as the direct object 'lo' in the penultimate one—only amplifies the feeling of redundancy. Similarly, 'sin dejar de ser' ('without stopping being') in the third line, translated in a negative sense, leads to possible confusion, since the original sentence conveys continuity, as Casado translates with 'que sigue siendo'. Although Talens retains the literal meaning of 'done', 'so', 'therefore' in English, through translating it as 'por consiguiente' in Spanish, he surprisingly omits the sixth line of the original poem 'même celle-à', this for reasons which are not clear. Once again, an ellipsis is found in Talens' translation, as occurred with 'fin fond du néant'. However, the reader might wonder whether this ellipsis actually respects the original content of Beckett's poem or is simply a rhetorical device which does not alter the meaning of the text. Depending on the reader's sense of what is to be permitted, such subtractions might be perceived as a free interpretation on the part of the translator. In general terms, and considering Beckett's meticulous use of words and sentences in his work, it might be interpreted as a lack of attention to and respect for the author's original intentions. Concerning the issue of creativity and its implications for the translation of a piece of poetry, Newmark (1991: 9) has made the following observations:

Creativity as its most intense is in translating poetry, where there are so many crucial additional factors: words as images, metre, rhythm, sounds. Inevitably, a good translation of a poem is as much a modest introduction to as a recreation of the original. But again the most successful is the closest, the one that can convincingly transfer the most important components of the source into the target text. The most creative translated poem is one that is most compressed.

Indeed, in the particular case of poetry, the act of translating leads to significant lexical choices which will eventually determine the reception of the ST in the target language. In fact, as Landers (2001: 97) argues, "the soul of poetry lies in the use of language in a figurative, metaphorical mode of expression that transcends traditional semantic limitations of language". The problem with *mirlitonades* consists in the apparent simplicity of the text, which is an apt terrain for the translator to build upon the original work as a means of creating his or her own literary product and to re-develop the poetic language of the original, thus generating new figurative connotations. For instance, when Casado translates 'parlons-en' as 'digámosla' ('let's say that'), this invites both the voice and the indirect object—the addressee—to say a word, one which refers to that obscure concept repeated throughout the text. Therefore, 'digámosla' might be interpreted as a cooperative interpellation between these two parts here; it is both a sentence and a statement of intentions. On the other hand, Talens adheres to a more literal translation of 'parlons-en': 'hablémoslo' ('let's talk about that'). In this case, there are no significant differences between the actual meaning of the words chosen in the TL ('digámosla' and 'hablémoslo'), but the latter implies a more participative meaning.

Generally speaking, Talens not only omits substantial lines of the *mirlitonades* but frequently breaks the mesmerizing rhythmic echo that haunts the reader as he or she perceives the musicality of the text. Undoubtedly, his intention to provide a faithful translation, which is itself set out in his preliminary observations in *Obra poética completa*, is made evident in his work. However, the repeated succession of lexical errors, semantic infelicities and vague choices of words is ultimately revealed. Although he admits in this preliminary text that the play on semantic ambivalences committed him to choose options which did not respect the literal sense in the ST in seeking to reproduce the transgressions of these (296), it has been demonstrated by Casado and also by Reina Palazón, as we will see in the next section, that literalism does not necessarily imply extreme accuracy in translation, but rather a respectful similarity and poetic coherence. In connection with the problem of literalism in translation, Newmark (2003: 70) argues that "the translation of poetry is the field where most emphasis is normally put on the creation of a new independent poem, and where literal translation is usually condemned". A faithful translation into Spanish from the Beckettian French requires originality, due to the possible ambiguities that might arise in the TL, but also in consideration of the ST. Such ambivalence of originality and respect for the source text when translating Beckett's *mirlitonades* might become an arduous enterprise, but it can potentially be accomplished. All in all, it could be affirmed that the repeated subtraction of lines in Talens' version removes the emotional charge provided by Beckett in the original texts. Perhaps his version has been overextended in comparison to those of Casado and Reina Palazón, which might explain why the *mirlitonades* have remained almost unnoticed in Spain. It is hoped that the discipline of literary translation and, more specifically, poetry translation, is now liberating itself from the inertia imposed by a monolithic cultural establishment. In fact, as Gallego Roca (2006: 24) puts it, poetry translated into Spanish has a strong theoretical nature nowadays, and its contribution to the advancement in the poetic language history field is becoming decisive.

4. "Muestrario poético de Samuel Beckett", by José Luis Reina Palazón

"Muestrario poético de Samuel Beckett", by José Luis Reina Palazón, contains, among other poems, the most recent translation of the *mirlitonades* published in Spain. Reina Palazón, translator and professor, has been awarded various prizes for his translations of authors such as Boris Pasternak, Rimbaud, Paul Celan, Mallarmé, Cocteau, Rilke and Goethe. His "Muestrario poético" was published in *Barcarola* no. 33 in 2014 and follows the same structure as can be found in the previously discussed works: a short preliminary essay and a selection of Beckett's poems translated into Spanish.

In his initial observations, Reina Palazón argues that the *mirlitonades* are “slight but cordially purposeful invitations to raise awareness on fugacity” (88), which is an enthralling definition of these little excerpts of poetic intimacy. Reina Palazón selected 11 *mirlitonades* to translate. The “fin fond du néant”, discussed above, is present in this selection, and can thus be compared with the translations by Casado and Talens:

Table 3. The three Spanish translations of “fin fond du néant”:
Casado (1998), Talens (2000) and Reina Palazón (2014).

Casado	Talens	Reina Palazón
hondo fondo de la nada al final de qué vigilia el ojo creyó entrever algo apenas se movía la cabeza le calmó decía sólo en tu cabeza fue (1998: 11)	al final de qué acecho creyó el ojo atisbar el fondo extremo de la nada moverse débilmente la cabeza le calmó diciendo sólo fue en tu cabeza (2000: 183)	Fino fondo de la nada al fin de tal acecho el ojo creyó entrever moverse débilmente la cabeza lo calmó diciendo sólo fue en tu cabeza (2014: 99)

Reina Palazón, in fact, merges Casado’s structure with Talens’ lexical choices. In the first instance, it would seem that the only innovation he has made is in his translation of ‘fin’ as ‘fino’ (‘fine’), in opposition to Casado’s ‘hondo’ and Talens’ ‘extremo’. Although Casado’s metrical schedule has been maintained, the words chosen are nearly the same as those used by Talens, except for ‘entrever’ (‘to glimpse’) in the third line. However, Palazón coincides with Talens in the lexical choice of ‘acecho’ (‘the act of waiting in a concealed position in order to launch a surprise attack’, according to *Collins Spanish-English Dictionary*) instead of Casado’s ‘vigilia’ (‘the property of someone who is keeping awake, not sleeping’, according to *Collins Spanish-English Dictionary*). Indeed, Cerrato (1999: 55) affirms that Beckett substituted ‘affût’, ‘to be lying in wait for’, as ‘guette’, ‘to watch out for’: ‘Here, substitution seems to be driven towards a more colloquial and less technical meaning within the vocabulary of hunting’⁴. Reina Palazón’s version respects the attributed connotations of hunting by keeping the word ‘acecho’, a term which undoubtedly evokes Beckett’s original intended meaning. Cerrato affirms that “substituting ‘affût’ by ‘guette’ seems to contradict what Beckett had repeatedly said regarding his search for a less rhetorical language through a foreign language” (55). Such apparent faithfulness to Talens’ translation and the omission of the changes proposed in the first version by Casado might suggest that Reina Palazón, in his role of translator, has considered that Talens’ preferences conform to a more polished and elaborate edition of the *mirlitonades*. However, in “silence tel que ce qui fut” the interpretations vary considerably:

silence tel que ce qui fut
avant jamais ne sera plus
par le murmure déchiré
d’une parole sans passé
d’avoir trop dit n’en pouvant plus
jurant de ne se taire plus
(Beckett 2012: 211)

Table 4. The three Spanish translations of “silence tel que ce qui fut”.

Casado	Talens	Reina Palazón
silencio como el que hubo antes nunca más lo habrá por el murmullo desgarrado de una palabra sin pasado por haber dicho demasiado no pudiendo más jurando no callarse más (1998: 13)	silencio como el que existió antes ya nunca más existirá por el murmullo desgarrado de una palabra sin pasado por haber dicho demasiado no pudiendo más jurando no volver a callar (2000: 185)	Silencio tal como fue nunca volverá a ser por el murmullo desgarrado de una palabra sin pasado de haber tanto dicho no pudiendo más jura no callarse más (2014: 100)

Wheatley (55) observes, about this poem, that “As printed, and with no discernible gain from the ambiguity it causes, the word order is certainly odd”. Moreover, the reader can easily discern from these translations that in the two first lines, the three authors have chosen a different verb and different inflectional forms. While Casado chooses ‘haber’, Talens opts for ‘existir’ and Reina Palazón ‘ser’. These semantic divergences are as complicated as they are enriching since they reveal a variety of interpretations of a ST in French when translated into Spanish. Thus, while ‘haber’ and ‘ser’ evade lexical precision and facilitate the interpretation within the experiential framework of the Spanish reader, ‘existir’ suggests a more rhetorical construction.

Alternatively, lines 3 and 4 remain identical in the three translations: ‘por el murmullo desgarrado / de una palabra sin pasado’. However, differences are evident once more in line 5. While Casado and Talens coincide in ‘por haber dicho demasiado’, Reina Palazón uses ‘de haber tanto dicho’. His proposal is the least literal and even alters the original order of the words —‘de haber tanto dicho’ instead of ‘de haber dicho tanto’—which undoubtedly suggests a verbose style far from Beckettian austerity. Moreover, there is an added meaning for the word ‘trop’ (‘too’) in the poem. Cerrato comments that, in the *Sotissier* notebook, Beckett had previously used the word ‘tout’, subsequently replacing it with ‘tant’. However, the word ‘trop’ would be printed in the final version of the poem:

It maintains the sensation of overwhelming quantity and, at the same time, implies an auto-critic which excludes a certain former possible nuance of admiration for verbosity. Actually, for Samuel Beckett all the things said are too much. ‘All interpretation is over-interpretation’, he commented once. (58)

While Casado and Talens respect Beckett’s intention towards the word ‘trop’ by translating it as ‘demasiado’ (‘too’), Reina Palazón adopts the term ‘tanto’, which undoubtedly does not correspond to the connotations of excessiveness in the use of language Beckett sought to transmit.

Finally, the third line (‘jurant de ne se taire plus’) presents a paradoxical play of verbal constructions. As Wheatley puts it, “a constant feature of the poetic grammar of the *mirlitonades* is the avoidance of indicative verbal statement and pronomial identification” (53). In this respect, While Casado and Reina Palazón coincide in ‘no callarse más’, Talens introduces the periphrasis ‘no volver a callar’, adding a new redundancy to his above-mentioned repertoire of unnecessary repetitions when translating Beckett. Talens’ proposal implies a misleading interpretation of the line ‘jurant de ne se taire plus’, which literally means ‘not to shut up anymore’, instead of the pragmatically different line suggested by Talens, ‘swearing never to be quiet again’.

Incidentally, “ne manquez pas à Stuttgart” is also well-known within the collection of the *mirlitonades*. Beckett visited Stuttgart several times to adapt and produce various of his plays. More interestingly, this *mirlitonade* “dates from Beckett trip to that city in June 1977 for the Süddeutscher Rundfunk production of ‘Geistertrio’” (Wheatley 2012: 47). Always residing at the nearby Park Hotel, he regularly spent breaks from production at a pub called the Neckar-Klause, a source of inspiration for this short poem:

ne manquez pas à Stuttgart⁷
la longue Rue Neckar
du néant là l’attirait
n’est plus ce qu’il était
tant le soupçon est fort
d’y être déjà et d’ores
(Beckett 2012: 215)

Werner Spies, a correspondent from the Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR)—a regional public broadcasting corporation serving Baden-Württemberg—based in Paris, affirmed that “Beckett was happy in Stuttgart, although this was not a beautiful city. Nevertheless, this no-man’s-land approached him somehow” (Morawitzky 2016). Casado, Talens and Reina Palazón have attempted thus their translation of this poem:

Table 5. The three Spanish translations of “ne manquez pas à Stuttgart”.

Casado	Talens	Reina Palazón
no olvidéis en Stuttgart la larga calle Neckar de la nada la atracción no es lo que antes era tan grande la sospecha es de estar ya ahí y desde ahora (1998: 43)	no os perdáis en Stuttgart la larga calle Neckar la atracción de la nada allí no es lo que era tan grande es la sospecha de que está en ella desde ahora (2000: 215)	no dejes de ver en Stuttgart la larga calle del Neckar de la nada allí el atractivo no es ya lo que antes ha sido tanto la sospecha es fuerte de haber estado allí siempre (2014: 101)

These versions are the most dissimilar of the published Spanish translations of *mirlitonades*. While Casado suggests ‘no olvidéis en Stuttgart’ (‘do not forget in Stuttgart’), Talens advocates a more colloquial form (‘no os perdáis’) (‘do not miss’). Conversely, Reina Palazón introduces the initial line with ‘no dejes de ver’ (‘do not miss out’) and proposes the slightly outdated use of the preposition ‘del’ in the sentence ‘calle del Neckar’ (‘Neckar street’).

⁷ Intriguingly, Wheatley (2012) argues that the poem “ne manquez pas à Stuttgart” was “regrettably disfigured by the omission in the Calder *Collected Poems* of the article in line three” (63). Hence, line three in the aforementioned edition reads ‘du néant là l’attirait’, whilst Lawlor and Pilling *Collected Poems* (2012) have included the definite article “l’”: ‘du néant là l’attirait’.

Moreover, Casado and Talens coincide in the translation of line 3,⁵ whereas Talens changes the order of the elements ('la atracción de la nada') instead of Casado's more poetic placement of the words ('de la nada la atracción'). Reina Palazón also inverts the syntactic order and pursues a semantic change, 'el atractivo', a masculine noun, instead of 'la atracción', a feminine one.

Surprisingly, the last line of the poem suffered the greatest alteration among the three translations. Casado's interpretation, 'de estar ya ahí y desde ahora'⁸ ('to be there and from now on'), is the most faithful reading of the original. Meanwhile, Talens audaciously includes Neckar street within the statement 'de que está en ella desde ahora' ('which is inside it from now on'), thus upgrading the street to a participative role: the suspicion Beckett talks about in his verses is indeed in Neckar, not in any other place, as might be deduced from Casado's and Reina Palazón's translations. However, Reina Palazón breaks the temporality and replaces Casado and Talens' 'desde ahora' ('from now on') with 'siempre' ('always'). Such an interpretation leads the reader to think that the suspicion related in the poem has always existed in Neckar Street and is not an innovative element introduced by the voice of the poem from the moment that statement is itself made.

This above analysis has revealed, then, that Reina Palazón remains respectful to the previous translations of *mirlitonrades*, but also proposes rhetorical variations which most likely do not adhere to Beckett's ST. After having observed the changes and contributions made by this translator, it can be argued that he combines the existing versions of Casado and Talens with his personal innovations. In other words, while he respects the former translations, he also modifies these and makes interesting innovations of his own, which provide a new perspective on the traditional interpretation of the poems. Notwithstanding his efforts to orientate Beckett's verses towards Spanish readers, it might also be seen how too many things are lost, and too many others are assumed. However, the mixture of audacity and tradition in Reina Palazón's version nevertheless involves considerable originality and reinvention.

5. Conclusions

In *Damned to Fame*, Knowlson made it clear how the *mirlitonrades* have traditionally been considered in the academic world: "Although they have been largely ignored by critics writing about Beckett's work, they offer startling insights into the darkness of his private moods at this time" (569). In Spain, Beckett's poetry has customarily remained unknown outside academic circles. As a consequence, in our country the *mirlitonrades*, his shortest poetic creations, have been overshadowed by other works, such as his theatre plays and novels, *Waiting for Godot* and the so-called *Trilogy* (*Molloy*, *The Unnamable* and *Malone Dies*) in particular. However, the translations under analysis here clearly demonstrate that the *mirlitonrades*, far from being eccentric compositions in French written by a novelist and playwright, are "echoes of a poet's own voice or of those resounding in his head" (Casado 122) and can also find their own space in the Spanish cultural realm.

Although it may be inferred that these short poems are cryptic and thus that it is difficult to bring them to a larger audience, they can indeed be interpreted through a close reading of the poet's personal experiences and an in-depth observation of the most characteristic features of his writing, these also being present in his other poetic works. Talens opts for a broadly literal translation of the ST and carries out few significant changes in this regard. In contrast, Casado, who also respects the former structure, also explores the considerable field of Beckett's intimacy. Therefore, despite his vague efforts to orientate the poems to a Spanish readership through the inclusion of verbal periphrasis, Talens' adaptation results in an excessively rigid text, one which lacks naturality at some points and sounds too redundant. On the other hand, Casado's translation might be considered as a more felicitous blending of Beckettian austerity and his innermost thoughts, which ultimately reveals an accurate and faithful version of Beckett's *mirlitonrades* in Spanish. By contrast, Reina Palazón appropriates both translations, while also exercising originality by reinventing the ST and revealing new possible interpretations.

Overall, the three translations into Spanish can all be seen as valid, and undoubtedly demonstrate that Beckett's *mirlitonrades* is an appropriate terrain for adaptation and reinterpretation in a language which is itself rich in lexical peculiarities and verbal inflexions. The translations of these texts not only illustrate the necessary redoubling of the interpreters' efforts here, but also that there exists in Spain a growing interest in a decluttering and accommodating of our language in favour of a more open approach to Beckett's poetry.

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⁸ Casado recently (2019) admitted that today she would translate 'd'y être déjà et d'ores' as 'de estar aquí y ahora ya' instead of the 1998 version 'de estar ya ahí y desde ahora' (private correspondence with the author).

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