Capítulo 11

Translating E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry into Spanish within the framework of Stylistics: Exploratory case study of "it's jolly"

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11.1. Introduction

Despite strong disagreement across the critical reception of E. E. Cummings, scholars agree in identifying unconventional punctuation and typography as hallmarks in this author's poetry. In as early as the 1920s, right after the publication of his first poetry collection, Munson stated that "Cummings makes punctuation and typography active instruments for literary expression. [...] His typographical design in every example reinforces his literary content. He has perceived that the printing-press has made poetry something to be seen as well as heard: he has realized that visual notations of auditory rhythms stimulate the ears of silent readers" (1923; in Baum, 1962: 10). This idea has been reinforced systematically with the passing of time, and it is still central when discussing Cummings' style. Tartakovsky, for example, considered that Cummings' reliance on punctuation "is unique in quantity and quality" (2009: 241). More recently, *The New Yorker* has published an article, titled "CAPITAL CASE. The Poetry of E. E. Cummings", in which they highlight the importance of graphology [1] in E. E. Cummings' style: "… there was [in 'i:six nonlectures' title]' the eschewal of capitalization, a feature that, combined with the near-absence of punctuation, most poetry readers would take to be defining of his style" (Muldoon, 2014). Although there are other aspects that also define Cummings' peculiar style [2], *The New Yorker* was merely reinforcing the idea that Cummings is very frequently (and mostly) acknowledged for his deviant use of graphological devices.

[1] As understood in this chapter, *graphology* refers to "the study of written and printed symbols and of writing systems" (OED, 2018), and constitutes one of the various levels of linguistic analysis, together with syntax, phonology, pragmatics, and so on. I have preferred the term *graphology*, although it is also referred to as *graphemics*, because this is the standard in stylistics. See Simpson (2004) and Wales (2011: 182).

[2] See especially Berutti (1970), Fairley (1971, 1975) and Cureton (1979a, 1980, 1981, 1985) on grammatical features, and Cureton (1979b) on morphological features in the poetry of E. E. Cummings.

Cummings' deviant graphology is present in the whole of his poetic production, but it is more easily acknowledged in those of his poems which display a higher number of experimental features. Very few of these poems, though, can be found in the Spanish translations by Canales (2014), Paz (1971; 1974) González de León (1978), Perednik (1995), Casas (1996), Fonseca (2003) and Cueto-Roig (2006), who have paid scanty attention to this part of Cummings' poetic production. The greater challenge that these poems may provide in being read, as recognized by Cummings himself [3], as well as the sometimes negative critical reception of these poems in particular, may have played an important role in this situation. As a consequence, Spanish speakers without a (good) command of English do not have access to the more experimental poems by E. E. Cummings: the ones which are the most representative of his style.

My overarching aim, thus, is to make E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry more visible for the Spanish-speaking community. I plan to achieve this by preparing and producing a bilingual edition of a selection of the most experimental poems (circa 160) published by E. E. Cummings together with my Spanish translations, which will be based on a stylistic approach to the process of translation (Boase-Beier, 2006; 2011) [4]. As part of this project, this book chapter particularly focuses on one of these experimental poems, "it's jolly" (Cummings, 2017: 285), in order to explore the feasibility of the project. Specifically, it will serve (1) to evaluate the viability of the project, (2) to identify possible risks this task may entail and (3) to improve the design of the project before implementing it, by advancing possible mitigations to such risks.

The sections that follow outline the theoretical background in this chapter (section 2) and briefly introduce what I understand by the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings, including a revision of the literature in this field (section 3). Then, I contextualize the poem and present a short summary of the main findings in my stylistic analysis (section 4), and, accordingly, propose a Spanish version of it (section 5). I end by discussing the findings, and by offering some conclusions.

[3] Cummings himself recognized the difficulty these poems implied to readers: "Critics, evidently, find it difficult to classify my poems in some way. This seems to be the difficulty that people have reading my poetry" (Wegner, 1965: 3).

[4] This project, which I have called *E. E. Cummings: poesía experimental*, consists of the translation of approximately 160 experimental poems published by E. E. Cummings, all of them written in free verse and displaying an extensive, unconventional use of English linguistic resources. These poems belong to the whole of Cummings' poetic production, from 1922 to 1963, to make it as representative as possible, but includes a higher number of poems published in *W* (Cummings, 1931) and *No Thanks* (Cummings, 1935), as the writer shows a stronger technical experimentation during these years. The selection reflects, to my belief, a wide representation of E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry, and adapts properly to the space limitations of a bilingual poetry anthology like this. The poems have been taken from the most recent and most trusted anthology of Cummings' poetry (Cummings, 2017), which is based on the original manuscripts and contains less typographical and layout mistakes than previous editions.

11.2. A Stylistic Approach to Translation

The theoretical background of my work draws primarily on the work by Boase-Beier (2006, 2011), who understands theoretical and practical translation within the broader context of stylistics. To make it clearer to the reader, I summarize below some of the main ideas exposed in her work (the ones I particularly assume here):

- *Style is as important as content in translation* (2011: 9). Style is in general important in literary translation and not in non-literary translation because the main difference between them is a difference in the role of style (2011: 11).
- *Literary translation is concerned with content, style and text-type*. A literary translation that does not go beyond content produces a translated text that says something but does not "do" anything (2011: 12).
- *Style forms part of meaning*. A distinction between content and style (what we say and how we say it) is an idealization, especially in literary texts (2011: 12).
- *Knowing the features of a particular text-type is an essential prerequisite for the translator* (2011: 14).

Parting from these and other ideas, Boase-Beier (2006, 2011) proposes a theory of translation that relies not just on the meaning of the text, but also on its style, wherein the style of a text is seen as "characteristic of a particular author […], or translator […] or of a particular register" (2006: 1). The question, then, comes to what exactly style is in this context, something Boase-Beier (2006) explains as follows:

> … what a concern with style means for translation studies is paying attention to what is unique to the text and its choices, being aware of patterns in the text, and paying close attention to the essential nature and function of the text. Increasingly, style has ceased to be viewed only in terms of its *linguistic features* and has come to include such issues as *voice*, *otherness*, *foreignization*, *contextualization* and culturally-bound and universal ways of *conceptualizing and expressing meaning*. To pay attention to style in translation study means to consider how all these factors are reflected in the text and its translation.
>
> Boase-Beier, 2006: 1-2 (my emphasis)

The Spanish translation I propose here is thus based on these principles. Particularly, it joins together literature in the field of the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings, with explicit reference to "it's jolly" (see section 3), and my analysis, which includes references to the context, the meaning and the linguistic features of this poem (see section 4). Because the translator needs to know all the features of the text before starting the task, as Boase-Beier (2006, 2011) claims, analysing the poem in terms of more than merely its linguistic features will allow me to consider what others have found in previous analyses, to get more insight into its linguistic features, and finally to carry out my own translation.

11.3. The experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings

In general terms, E. E. Cummings has been considered an experimentalist by critics, at least from the technical point of view:

> Cummings is [...] an experimental poet. Although his subjects, ideas and situations are frequently ultra-traditional [...], his techniques and devices are frequently ultramodern because he has taken a completely unique attitude toward rhyme, meter, stanza, grammar, syntax, and typography. In these matters he has either extended old devices beyond their usual function or has made new devices altogether. (Friedman, 1960: 87)

This claim is easy to accept by reading poems from the whole of Cummings' poetic production, wherein one will find in the very early readings that there is a regular use of linguistic "oddities", even in those poems in which he is more concerned with traditional composition and poetic conventions. For this reason, I think, the use of experimental technique in Cummings poetry is not a yes/no question, but a matter of degree. Compare, for instance, "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" and "l(a" below, published in 1922 and 1958 respectively, which represent examples of the experimental technique of E. E. Cummings to a very different degree:

Cummings, 1923	Cummings, 1958
the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls	l(a
are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds	
(also,with the church's protestant blessings	le
daughters,unscented shapeless spirited)	af
they believe in Christ and Longfellow,both dead,	fa
are invariably interested in so many things—	
at the present writing one still finds	ll
delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?	
perhaps. While permanent faces coyly bandy	s)
scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D	one
….the Cambridge ladies do not care,above	l
Cambridge if sometimes in its box of	
sky lavender and cornerless,the	iness
moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy	

Assuming that he is technically experimental per se, and that the more than 800 poems he published throughout his life are technically innovative to a greater or lesser degree [5], there is a difficulty in writing about the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings.

[5] In this sense, experimental poetry is constant in the whole of Cummings' production, with a greater number of examples in *W [ViVa]* (1931) and *No Thanks* (1935). After the early 1930s, there is a decrease in the use of experimental techniques (as I understand them) in Cummings' poems, but I believe that he never completely stopped experimenting. Even in *95 Poems* (1958) and *73 Poems* (1963), it is possible to identify the use of unconventional techniques.

To make it clearer to the reader, experimental poetry is specifically understood in this chapter as those poems in which Cummings uses an innovative technique to a greater degree. Examples include unconventional spelling, odd grammatical patterns or coinages. The poems to analyse and translate in my project are, then, a selection of what I consider to be "more" experimental, though I am sure the reader of Cummings will find other experimental poems in his literary *oeuvre*.

Literature about experimentation in Cummings' poetry is quite extensive. Beyond the controversial critical reception of the earlier decades of his career [6], some critics recognized that Cummings' use of innovative technique contributed to the content of the poems (see especially Munson, 1923; Riding and Graves, 1927; Spencer, 1946; and Baum, 1954). A clearer, stronger interest in this matter arose in the 50s, with the first analytical approaches to the use of neologisms (Maurer, 1955) and to Cummings' linguistic devices (Von Abele, 1955; Friedman, 1960). The boom in formalism and the development of stylistics as an analytical approach to the reading of literature came together with a range of linguistic studies of Cummings' poetry, which looked at concrete aspects such as grammar [7], morphology [8], or graphology [9]. More recent approaches have reinforced the idea that there is not a clear cut-division between form and content in Cummings' poetry (Heusser, 1997), on some occasions linking the author's poetic style to the process of defamiliarization and foregrounding (Mannani, 1999-2002; Webster, 2001; Alfandary, 2007; Gomez-Jimenez, 2015, 2017a, 2017b). All these works have been very helpful in understanding the experiments undertaken by Cummings, and some of the poems in which they appear.

There is, however, a general feeling that the experimental poetry by E. E. Cummings remains in the background, with translations often looking at less avant-garde poems, at least those which have been translated into Spanish (Canales, 2014; Paz, 1971; 1974; González de León, 1978; Perednik, 1995; Casas, 1996; Fonseca, 2003; Cueto-Roig, 2006) (see Gomez-Jimenez, 2010). As claimed by Konstelanetz (1998), studying the experimental technique of E. E. Cummings is important within the author's criticism, not just because it may help in understanding better these poems, but also because it may show another side to Cummings —one which has received less attention—:

> Though the more innovative Cummings is commonly acknowledged, as is the more innovative Stein, Cummings criticism has usually concentrated on his more accessible writings, and most selections from his work have featured the easiest pieces. […] However, there is another, better Cummings—the most inventive American poet of his time, the truest

[6] On Cummings' (controversial) critical reception, see Baum (1962), Friedman (1972), Dendinger (1981) and Rotella (1984), who offer a wide, diverse collection of critical essays on the American writer.

[7] See Lord (1966), Berutti (1970), Fairley (1975), Freeman (1978) and Cureton (1979a, 1980, 1981).

[8] See Cureton, (1979b).

[9] See Crowley (1972), O'Brien (1973), Cureton (1986), Friedman (1992, 1996), Webster (1995); Alfandary (2002) and Tartakovsky (2009).

> successor to Whitman and in poetry the peer of Charles Ives and Gertrude Stein. […] If you focus upon his integrities, beginning with his refusal to title most of his poems and the creation of works that were (and still are) so easily identifiable (and could thus be feasibly published without his name), and including his full time devotion to his arts (in contrast to poets who have been publishers, professors and doctors), he becomes not only a persuasive professional model but a major American poet. (Konstelanetz, 1998)

In my attempt to add visibility to Cummings' experimental poetry for the Spanish-speaking community, it seems that looking for previous studies of these poems and doing my own analysis is a good idea, not just for the reasons mentioned above by Konstelanetz (1998), but also because, as explained by Boase-Beier (2006, 2011), knowing and understanding the features of a text is an essential task for the translator.

11.4. The Poem

The poem "it's jolly" (see below) was originally published by E. E. Cummings in 1926, under the title *is 5*, and subsequently reproduced in different editions of Cummings' *Complete Poems* (1971, 1994, 2017) [10]. The visual experiments, the plays on words, the fragmentation of the lines and the satirical tone of some of the poems stand out in this book (Kennedy, 1994: 282), which was also characterized by arranging the poems in a sequence which was retained in the subsequent poetry books: while the first poems usually deal with everyday life and sordid aspects, normally using a satiric tone, the last poems tend to deal with love and use a lyric tone. Because of the controversial critical reception of his previous poetry books, *is 5* (Cummings, 1926) included an introduction in which Cummings himself explained the peculiarities of his style:

> At least my theory of technique, if I have one, is very far from original; nor is it complicated. [...] If a poet is anybody, he is somebody to whom things made matter very little—somebody who is obsessed by Making. Like all obsessions, the Making obsession has disadvantages; for instance, my only interest in making money would be to make it. Fortunately, however, I should prefer to make almost anything else, including locomotives and roses. It is with roses and locomotives (not to mention acrobats Spring electricity Coney Island the 4th of July the eyes of mice and Niagara Falls) that my "poems" are competing. They are also competing with each other, with elephants, and with El Greco. Ineluctable preoccupation with The Verb gives a poet one priceless advantage: whereas nonmakers must content themselves with the merely undeniable fact that two times two is four, he rejoices in a purely irresistible truth (to be found, in abbreviated costume, upon the title page of the present volume). (Cummings, 1926; in Cummings, 2017: 235)

[10] The one I replicate here corresponds to the latter edition, *E. E. Cummings. Complete Poems 1904-1962,* which revises, corrects and expands the former ones. The texts and the order of the poems contained in this anthology are based entirely on the original manuscripts set originally by Cummings (Firmage, 2017: editor's note).

There are no previous critical approaches to "it's jolly", at least to my knowledge, apart from Levenston's (1992: 82) suggestion that the exclamation mark which appears in the middle of the poem corresponds to a shell exploding. Also, I have not found any translation into Spanish, so we depart from almost no previous references to the poem. Some works are mentioned here in that they give useful additional information, which can help with our understanding of the poem:

it's jolly
odd what pops into
your jolly tête when the
jolly shells begin dropping jolly fast you
hear the rrmp and
then nearerandnearerandNEARER
and before
you can

!

& we're

NOT
(oh—
—i say

that's jolly odd
old thing,jolly
odd,jolly
jolly odd isn´t
it jolly odd.

The stylistic analysis of "it's jolly" reveals some distinctive features. See, for instance, the lexical repetition of the word *jolly*, which appears systematically through the lines of the poem. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED henceforth), *jolly* means "a royal marine" in English slang, but it can also be used as a shorter form for *jolly-boat,* a ship's boat, smaller than a cutter, usually hoisted at the stern of the vessel, and used chiefly as a hack-boat for small work (2018). Other related meanings include "of gay and cheerful disposition or character" (adjectival) or "in a jolly manner" (adverbial). In informal English, it can also mean "very" and act as an intensifier. If one continues reading the lines, though, it may seem reasonable to make a connection to war and the former meanings, as it refers to shells dropping fast further in the poem. Curiously, *jolly* may also refer to *Jolly Roger* (OED, 2018), the traditional pirate flag which usually has a white skull and crossbones on a black background, and which was used by British submarines during World War I (Mackay, 2003: 115), among others. If one understands *jolly* in this war background, every instance of it may represent visually ether a marine on the battlefield, a boat entering the battlefield, or even the pirate flag used by the submarines or ships. The repetition of *jolly* in the first stanza matches that of *jolly odd* in the

last one, which additionally represents a word play with *old*. This can be understood as a form of addressing someone else (the implied reader?) in this scene and contributes in making the stanza sound like a gibberish.

Also in the first stanza, the use of the loanword *tête*, of French origin, is significant in this war context, as it literally means "head". If one reads "what pops into/ your jolly tête", it may refer, thus, to shells popping into the soldiers' heads. Some sound patterns point towards this interpretation, with the onomatopoeia of *rrmp* in the subsequent lines, resembling the sound of bombs exploding in the battlefield. In a sense, this sound resemblance may produce a similar effect to that of the isolated exclamation mark in the second stanza of the poem, which visually echoes a bomb exploding (Levenston, 1992: 82).

Another linguistic feature in this poem is the altering of the spacing, which is produced on two different occasions here. Firstly, there is the *nearerandnearerandNEARER* in the sixth line of the poem; secondly, there is the last stanza, *jolly odd/ old thing,jolly/ odd,jolly/ jolly odd isn´t/ it jolly odd*, where spacing has been removed in two lines right after a comma. In Cummings studies, it has been previously acknowledged that altering the flow of the poem is a common feature in his style, and that it is achieved frequently through punctuation marks (see Baum, 1954: 108; Tartakovsky, 2009: 238; Triem, 1969: 10–11), through the fragmentation of words into different typographic lines (see Munson, 1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 11), or through adjusting spacing (see Munson, 1923; Triem, 1969: 10). In this particular context, it can be argued that this pattern speeds up the poem, especially in the first example, where spacing suggests the increasing proximity of the bombs and/or the jollies. This effect is reinforced by the use of capital letters in *NEARER*, that may suggest physical proximity, versus the lowercase letters just before, in *nearerandnearerand*. For me, there is some sort of visual iconicity in this pattern, as I have argued previously (see Gomez-Jimenez, 2017), with both upper and lowercase letters representing distance and proximity respectively. Additionally, capital letters are frequently used by Cummings with an emphatic effect, as in the third and fourth paragraphs: *& we're/ / NOT/ (oh—/ —i say*. In this context, capital letters highlight the adverbial *not*, which, by negating the preceding copula, can be understood as meaning lack of existence, and implying the idea that the soldier (who is also the poetic voice) is dying at this precise moment. The fourth stanza compresses into a few words the moment in which the solder dies. I say that the soldier is also the poetic voice because the poem uses the first-person pronoun. It includes some direct speech, *oh—/ —i say*, and includes the lowercase *i,* which is so typical in Cummings' poetry in general [11].

[11] Cummings once explained he considered using the capital I was a sign of egoism: "concerning the 'small 'I'": did it never strike you as significant that, of all God's children,only English & Americans apotheosize their egos by capitalizing a pronoun whose equivalent is in French 'je',inGerman 'ich',& in Italian 'io'?" (Cummings, 1955). This feature has been controversial, though, in that it has led to some people referring to

The layout of the poem is also significant, I believe, in that Cummings distributes the lines on the page in a particular way, connected to its content. The poem starts by describing a war scene (1st stanza), continues by isolating an exclamation mark that represents a bomb exploding (2nd stanza) and moves on to a first-person narration in which the poetic voice describes the moment in which he is dying (3rd, 4th and 5th stanzas). Beyond the division of the stanzas, there are two other elements which structure the poem: the ampersand in the 10th line, and the parenthesis in the 12th. The ampersand is used here in a purely grammatical sense, to connect two concepts — life and death. If one tried to simplify the text as much as possible (for instance, by deleting repetitions and adding some punctuation marks), it would come as:

> it's jolly odd what pops into your tête when the shells begin dropping fast, you hear the rrmp and then nearerandnearerandNEARER and before you can !
> &
> we're NOT (oh— —i say that's odd, old thing, odd, odd, isn´t it odd.

This is just my attempt to simplify the poem, but it helps in seeing the pivotal function of the ampersand, and how it separates the description of the battlefield and the death of the soldier as two scenes in this poem [12]. The parenthesis in line 12th functions similarly by creating two different layers: what comes outside of it corresponds to action and the description that the poetic voice provides of the battle; what comes inside of it corresponds to death and the last thoughts of the soldier. This matches one of the functional categories already identified by Tartakovsky (2009) in a full, in-depth study of Cummings' use of parentheses.

The last remarkable characteristic of this text comes from the general absence of punctuation, with a few exceptions. This is quite common in Cummings' poetry, and it can be easily observed in the 1st stanza of the poem, which does not include a single punctuation mark. This lack of punctuation marks here may contribute to the swiftness of the lines, as I have mentioned previously, especially if one considers this part of

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him as e. e. cummings and not E. E. Cummings. This controversy was solved by Friedman in two different papers, where he argues that Cummings uses the lowercase i as a poetic license (Friedman, 1992) and that Cummings himself signed his name in capital letters, as shown in personal correspondence, books and paintings. This way, it can be argued that there is a dissociation between the i-poet and the I-person. See Friedman (1992, 1996).

[12] Anecdotically, Cummings' use of the ampersand is strongly linked to his two first poetry collections, *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923) and *& [AND]* (1925). As Kennedy (1994) explains, Cummings chose "Tulips & Chimneys" as the title of his first poetry collection, as an example of the strange pairs he invented together with William Slater Brown (206). Some of these pairs include "lilacs and monkeywrenches", "creeds and syringes" or "hangmen and tea kettles" (Kennedy, 1994: 206). The publishing company deleted this typographical symbol from the final edition of the book (together with many other changes), but Cummings used it as the sole title of his second poetry collection, in which he gathered together all the other poems that the editor had previously rejected for *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923).

the poem describes the battlefield. By contrast, the rest of the poem includes a few signs which deserve attention. The exclamation mark isolated in the second stanza, as I have said before, has already been identified by Levenston (1992) as a case of visual iconicity, resembling a shell exploding. The use of the final dot at the end of the poem is rare in Cummings' poetry. It is not surprising, though, if one considers this mark as pointing towards the death of the soldier. The last stanza in the poem, which is mainly characterized by repetition—*jolly odd*—and a marked sound pattern that resembles a gibberish, includes also a few commas that highlight the slower pace of this last part of the poem.

From all these features, I identify "it's jolly" as an anti-war poem which describes the death of a soldier, who delivers its poetic voice. It uses a satirical tone, as Kennedy (1994: 282) had suggested previously, to critique war and death. This possible interpretation that I propose here matches well with the fact that the poem was published in 1926, some years after WWI, into which Cummings entered in 1917 as a volunteer for the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps, an Anglo-American unit associated with the Red Cross.

11.5. "It´s jolly" into Spanish: My proposal

My stylistic analysis of the poem, and the very few previous approaches to it, together with some contextual background, provide the knowledge of a text which Boase-Beier (2006, 2011) suggests a translator should have before starting to translate. This is thus my starting point, and here is my proposed Spanish version of the poem, incorporating my awareness and understanding of such features:

es jolly [13]
curioso lo que se te pasa por
la jolly tête cuando los
jolly proyectiles empiezan a caer jolly rápido
oyes el rrmp y
entonces máscercamáscercaMÁSCERCA
y antes
de que puedas

!

& ya NO

estamos
(oh—
—digo

que es jolly curioso
viejo,jolly
curioso,jolly
jolly curioso ¿no?
jolly curioso.

The Spanish version I propose makes allowances for different decisions which I have taken during the translation process. *jolly*, for instance, is not translated into Spanish, although it has some equivalents. This enables me to retain the connection to the flag Jolly Roger, which is a name which is carried unchanged into Spanish anyway, and which may also refer to the boats entering the battlefield. This is also a way to contribute to the visual aspect of the poem, every instance of *jolly* corresponding to every flag or boat. The noun is kept in lowercase, although Jolly Roger should be written in capitals, because in this way I can keep the ambiguity originally produced by Cummings, which is so common in his poetry. Because I have kept this noun into English, I have also added a footnote to give additional information to the reader. Similarly, the French *tête* has also been kept in French because Cummings kept it that way. This may help in contextualizing the poem and in facilitating the connection between Cummings, the poetic voice, France and WWI.

Old in the last stanza has been kept as a form of address in my version, because one possible interpretation of the poem is that the poetic voice (and thus, the soldier) might be addressing someone else through the lines. A reader who is familiar with Cummings' work, would know that he wrote many letters to his family while abroad, and that he addressed his father on most of the occasions. *old* as a form of address is now rare (OED, 2018), but it was not rare in Cummings' time. Similarly, I have kept the typographic

[13] *jolly* refers here to *Jolly Roger,* the traditional pirate flag that usually has a white skull and cross-bones on a black background, and that was especially used by the British submarines during the WWI. See MACKAY (2003).

features of the source text in my translation. This is easy to do, and Cummings' typography is such an essential element of his style. I would like to respect this hallmark, and to help readers of the Spanish versions enjoy Cummings' linguistic choices as much as possible. I have added, though, an interrogation mark to *jolly odd isn´t/ it jolly odd,* to disambiguate the meaning of *isn´t/ it*, as the Spanish equivalent would not intrinsically reflect the interrogation.

There are some other features which are not difficult to translate, such as lexical repetition, the removal of spacing or the division of stanzas. Particularly expressions like *rrmp* and *!* have been kept exactly the same, as they are very iconic and can be understood in exactly the same way in Spanish. There is, though, a sound pattern which I have not been able to translate into Spanish, in the last stanza. The word play between *old* and *odd,* plus the gibberish of it, is a little diluted in my Spanish version.

11.6. Discussion and conclusions

By going back to the research questions which I posed at the beginning of this chapter, I believe that the project I have in mind here could be viable as designed. In terms of time, I have previously analysed most of the poems and inspected related literature for some of my earlier work (Gomez-Jimenez, 2015; 2017a, 2017b), so the task would consist basically of translating the poems. This would ease the project considerably, at least in terms of time. I think, though, that some funding could help to improve the quality of the material produced, as it would enable some tailored training on poetry translation, and would also enable attending some conferences about literary translation to disseminate the work.

There are some possible risks (or challenges) that this translation may entail. The most important one is the particular difficulties implied by this experimental poem — and other similar poems. This is clearly evident in the almost complete absence of related critical studies. However, it can be solved (at least partially) by undertaking an extensive literature research on every poem to be translated, and by including additional footnotes, as I have done with "it's jolly". This may help the reader to understand the poem, but may also help the translator to accomplish the task. Another possible difficulty is the historical variation of meaning. The meaning of a word may vary with the passing of time. In the poem I have analysed here, this happens to *jolly,* which has some associated meanings which no longer apply today, or perhaps even in Cummings' time. This is a common challenge in translating any non-contemporary writer, and should be kept in mind at all times to avoid possible mistakes in reading the poems. Similarly, there are words like *jolly* which may carry multiple meanings, and which may even relate to quite different contexts. As we have seen with this term, it may refer to a marine, a boat or a pirate flag in a war context, but it may also imply cheerfulness. Cotext and extratextual references should be considered as much as possible, so that nuances of meaning are detected and so that decisions made by the translator are firmly sustained. More impor-

tantly, the translation has to be informed by very different backgrounds, relying not just on linguistics and literature, but also history and other fields of study.

These difficulties and their possible solutions fit well with Boase-Beier (2006, 2011) theoretical model, which highlights the importance of knowing the features of the source text as an essential prerequisite for the translator (Boase-Beier, 2011: 14). Boase-Beier (2006, 2011) proposes a stylistic approach to translation, and particularly suggests cognitive stylistics as a way of doing so, but there are some other areas within Stylistics which could be used as well. With this in mind, I have taken a more formal approach, paying attention to the foregrounding of the poem in terms of lexical, syntactic, discoursal, or graphological features. Also, I have paid a close attention to typography and punctuation, as these seem to be key features in Cummings' poetic style. My analysis could then be complemented by undertaking a cognitive approach to the poems, so as to give additional insight into them. Whether this would be worthwhile and doable in terms of time, remains to be seen. The project I am presenting here aims to translate more than 150 poems. Complementing my analyses with a cognitive approach would therefore necessarily imply much more time.

All the challenges and the decisions I have made when translating "it's jolly" have helped to improve the design of the work before implementing it in the future, while there is still space to consider additional suggestions. Whether further work is possible or not, I believe that this chapter has provided a suitable reading of the poem, which in turn can assist the reader in either language, not just to understand it (which is something fully meaning-related), but also to approach poetry (at least Cummings') as something to interact with. As van Peer suggests, "[…] poetic language is not defined in terms of its properties, but in terms of its function, which lies in its aesthetic effect. […] A tension arises from the structure of the literary work of art, which is seen as a complex yet unified aesthetic structure, defined by the interrelationships between those items that are foregrounded and those elements in the work that remain in the background". (1986: 7). This poem, and the ones selected in this project, are clear examples of this interaction.

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