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An Analysis of King Claudius in Two
Contemporary Performances of *Hamlet*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of Claudius in *Hamlet* from both a textual and a performative perspective. The intention of this analysis is to offer a view of the character as reflected in two contemporary plays and to show the characteristics that make him a complete character, with evolution and depth. Here, I study the different possibilities for interpretation of the meanings that Shakespeare presents in the text and that appear in these stagings. Claudius is the antagonist in the play. He is important because of his actions and presence. He is a Machiavellian villain, with human aspects and errors. Even when Claudius is not the centre of the director's intentions, the character is central, vital and fundamental. He acts, evolves and suffers. He is a powerful character that has not been, from my point of view, sufficiently studied or not correctly interpreted.

KEYWORDS: Claudius; Eduardo Vasco; *Hamlet*; Tomaz Pandur; Shakespeare

RESUMEN

Este trabajo presenta un análisis de Claudio en *Hamlet* a través de una perspectiva textual y performativa. La intención de este análisis es ofrecer una visión del personaje como se interpreta en el teatro contemporáneo y mostrar las características que lo convierten en un personaje completo, con evolución y profundidad. Aquí estudio diferentes posibilidades de interpretación de los significados que Shakespeare presenta en el texto que aparecen en estas puestas en escena. Claudio es el antagonista de la obra. Él es importante por sus acciones y su presencia. Él es un villano maquiavélico, con aspectos humanos y errores. Incluso cuando Claudio no es el centro de las intenciones del director, el personaje es central, vital y fundamental. Él actúa, evoluciona y sufre. Él es un personaje potente que no ha sido, desde mi punto de vista, suficientemente estudiado o correctamente interpretado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Claudius; Eduardo Vasco; *Hamlet*; Tomaz Pandur; Shakespeare

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study and analyse the character of Claudius in *Hamlet* as he is represented nowadays in contemporary performances. After seeing different versions of *Hamlet*, I realized that, sometimes, Claudius is presented as a (very) secondary character. Despite his relevance, Claudius does not receive the attention that he deserves and neither a proper interpretation in some of the performances. Claudius is a powerful character, with a very interesting evolution, and with very clear objectives, desires and actions that make him a fully developed figure.

To demonstrate his importance, I am going to study two representations of the character but, before that, I am going to study the character in the text, taking into account the analyses of relevant critics. With this base, I will proceed with the performative analyses of two contemporary Spanish versions of the play. With this performative analysis, I want to show that the character of Claudius is absolutely important, with evolution and depth. He offers different possibilities of interpretation which means that he is not a flat character but vivid, interesting and attractive. To do this analysis, I am going to follow a concrete methodology. To study the text I am going to follow Anne Ubersfeld's *Semiótica Teatral* (1989) and Francisca Domingo del Campo's *Una propuesta para el comentario de textos dramáticos* (2002), and for the performative study of the proposals I am going to follow Patrice Pavis's *El análisis de los espectáculos* (2000).

The performative study of a play has much to do with the interpretation of the text. Theatrical texts permit different interpretations: some of these interpretations depart considerably from the text. Shakespeare is one of those authors whose words have been reinterpreted. *Hamlet* is one of the most famous texts, one of the most represented plays in the history of literature, one of the texts that have received more diverse interpretations. Harold Bloom says that "Hamlet is very much the Prince's play" (*The invention...* 429-430); he shows scant interest in the rest of the characters, both male and female. Claudius, the shrewd politician, has no appeal for him. Certainly, the play revolves around Hamlet but this does not imply that the rest of the characters do not have a development or cannot be rich in theatrical terms. Claudius is an example of this. He is an enigma because the author does not offer answers to questions like why he killed his brother or how he feels about it. The text shows the character after his

actions have been developed and the evolution he has undergone after having performed those actions. We can find this problematic when we try to stage this text because these questions must be answered by the artistic team.

Related with that, Harold Jenkins, in the introduction of the Arden edition of *Hamlet*, uses Harry Levin's words to say that the play "is the most problematic ever written by Shakespeare or any other play written" (122). This is because Shakespeare does not give answers for those enigmas I have referred above. He also says: "there is no play that has suffered more than *Hamlet*" (123). This is related with the interpretations and performative versions. As I have said before, some aspects of the characters must be provided by the interpretations of the director, the actor or the reader. This reason makes some directors reinterpret some of these parts or even go over some elements to emphasize others considered more important. In this study, after the analysis of the character in the text, I will examine two different performances of the play, one more classic and then a freer one to see how they solve the problems that the text poses.

First of all, I will carry out a textual analysis of Claudius based on a close reading of his words, his actions, his evolution. The versions of *Hamlet* that I am going to use are the revised edition of *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor in 2016 for the Arden collection, together with the previous Arden version edited by Harold Jenkins and a bilingual text edited by Cátedra and the Shakespearean Institute of Spain directed by Ángel Conejero Dionís-Bayer. The Arden edition makes reference to the Second Quarto as the closest to Shakespeare's text (Jenkins 69). In the second place, I will focus on the stage versions directed by Eduardo Vasco (2004) and Tomaz Pandur (2009). Eduardo Vasco is more classicist in his version, more respectful with the text. Tomaz Pandur's version is freer. Both directors show different points of view about the staging of the play. I will try to show how much they respect and reflect the text, which elements are added in their respective interpretations, and if they are correct or justified from the Shakespearean point of view reflected in the textual analysis.

1. METHODOLOGY

Theatre is a difficult art to analyse. First of all, we have the literary part but also a performative one. The analysis of just one part makes the result incomplete because the text does not answer everything. The performative study is where the textual one can be completed. For the study of the text, I will follow Anne Ubersfeld's *Semiótica Teatral* (1989) and Francisca Domingo del Campo's *Una propuesta para el comentario de textos dramáticos* (2002), and for the performative study of the proposals I am going to follow Patrice Pavis's *El análisis de los espectáculos* (2000).

Ubersfeld says that theatre texts are full of functions in which the poetic one is really important so we have to take into account the performance of the text in every moment (41). After this, Ubersfeld proposes an actantial model based on the fable where we can find a macrostructure from where we must study the text from the surface to its deeper meaning. (42-45). More precisely related with the character, she proposes to study what the character says and what the other characters say, and their relations. Characters can be helpers or opponents, senders or receivers, subjects or objects (48-57). Character analysis implies recognizing underlying meanings and explaining them. To do this, we have to deconstruct it and study the action. Ubersfeld proposes the vertical study of the text, a semiological work based on three elements: the lexeme, the semiotic set and the subject of the discourse. Through these elements, we have to create a scheme based on a net: meanings, metaphors, and relations with other discourses to create the scenic semiotic set. She asks to pay attention to the similarities or oppositions between characters (for example *King – no king*) (85- 107).

The study that Francisca Domingo proposes is based on a stylistic, structural and semiotic analysis (111-112). Related to characters, we have to study them as prototypes or individual lives, their roles in the play, if they cooperate or oppose each other or balance or throw the forces off balance. We also have to pay attention to their importance, if they are principal or secondary, their incardination in the plot, and their evolution. We have to study if they are complex and individualized personalities, the actions they develop and the revealing words which other characters say related with the character. She asks to pay special attention to monologues (related with what the character says) and to the space and time (related with stage directions) (114-118).

As to the performance, Patrice Pavis mentions an inventory of instruments to “reconstruct” a performance. We have to pay attention to temporary markers, we need to base our ideas on a chronology. Related with the space and movement, we need spatial organizers. Also we have to have a narrative and evaluative orientation. The description of the actor as a character is basic. He proposes to pay attention to the body and the emotions, the diction and the character’s relation with the space. The physical pragmatics based on gestures and actions are also really important. Then, we have to pay attention to the period of both the text and the performance, then to the meaning that all the elements have related with those periods (69-98). Other aspects that he considers are the voice, the music, and the pace. In the use of the voice, he differentiates two aspects, the objective, the use and properties of the actor’s voice, and the meanings it can project. Music is an interesting vehicle for emotions, meanings, and a creator of atmospheres. The pace is the speed at which things happen on stage. If we pay attention to the pace, we can understand hidden elements or difficult ones to see at first sight (141-156).

The next elements that Pavis mentions are space and time of the action, and the action itself. He relates the three of them because they are connected. At the level of space, we are going to make reference to where the action develops. Related with time, we are going to focus on the chronological time of the play. At the level of actions, we are going to study those that the character does or those which have relation with the character (157-176). Then, Pavis refers to other material elements of the performance: dressing, make up, objects and lighting. We are going to pay attention to how these elements are connected with the character and modify him. Also, he says that we have to pay attention to these elements in connection with the space, the time and the action. The lighting is really important in the creation of spaces and atmospheres, so we have to pay attention to it and see how it interferes with the character (177-200). The last point that we shall take into account is the text and the staged text. We have to compare the staged versions with the original text and analyse the changes introduced in the performance (201-224). The comparison of the staged text with the original text is going to be one of principal objectives in this study. With this comparison I am going to study the different meanings of the text and different possibilities for stage interpretation that this text offers.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. *Textual analysis*

Before starting with the performative analysis, the main nucleus of this paper, I will study Shakespeare's text. I am going to concentrate on Claudius, reflecting the context in which he is set. John Draper says that King Claudius has been "inter-preted" as a mere stage villain, crude and conventional. As he is the King, he was a very significant figure in the Elizabethan period (348). Draper also says that Claudius has two phases in the play: in the first phase, Claudius realises that Hamlet has discovered the murder and he decides to kill him. In the second phase, both Hamlet and Claudius, the protagonist and the antagonist, want each other's death, i.e., Hamlet to take revenge upon his father's death and Claudius to save himself (348). He is a Machiavellian character, not only a diplomat, who acts as the Prince in Machiavelli's work, but in all the spheres of life. The first element that can be studied is the name of this character. Harold Jenkins, in his edition of *Hamlet* says that the name Claudius has not any relation with Baltic names. Saxo and Belleforest (authors of the Shakespearean sources) name the King as Feng(on).

Related with a primary analysis, we can say that Claudius is Hamlet's uncle, the brother of the late King Hamlet, and the new King of Denmark. As a character, he has human aspects and commits errors. He presents three dimensions which convert him in a very interesting character. Even though Claudius is a villain, we like him, understand him, enjoy his presence. Following a classical textual analysis, Claudius is Hamlet's antagonist. Using Ubersfeld's terminology, Claudius is an opponent and most of the time he is a sender because he starts the actions as well as he is the subject of them. In Domingo's words, Claudius throws the forces off balance, he is a secondary character but with the same importance as the protagonist because of his complexity and because of the actions he develops. The elements that move him to act are power, the desire of becoming King and the love of his sister-in-law. The action he commits is "the primal eldest" crime, "a brother's murder" (3.3.38)¹. Claudius sets the plot in motion. Even though his action takes place outside the stage, it is the most important element for the development of the play. Claudius kills his brother, the king, and marries his sister-in-

¹ Textual quotes of *Hamlet* are based on Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor's edition (Shakespeare, 2016)

law. These actions make Claudius one of the most important characters in the play. The presence that he is going to have in the play is as important as Hamlet's (Litvin 198). Related with Claudius's evolution, we are going to see the decadence that he suffers: from being a confident character, recently proclaimed King and recently married with the woman he loved (3.3.55) to his tragic death. We see a character who lies and is ironic at the beginning and who will finish regretting all that he has done and dies as tragically as some other characters in the play.

Now, we are going to analyse the character in the text in a chronological order. The first reference to the character appears on the *Dramatis Personae* list. In Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor's edition, Claudius appears as *KING Claudius of Denmark, brother of the late king* (170). The King appears, for the first time, in the second scene of the first act. The stage direction that accompanies important people when they enter into the stage is *Flourish*. In his first apparition (1.2), he has different actions. The first one consists in remembering the memory of his dead brother,

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe" (1.2.1-7).

We can see irony in the use of "death" as he is his brother's killer. This is going to contrast with the information that he offers in the next words. Here, we can see how Claudius is a murderer who can talk at ease about the person he has killed.

After these few words, he starts to speak about himself and his situation, about the necessity of putting someone in the throne, and himself as the best option. (1.2.7). Then, he talks about his marriage with the Queen. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor say that with these words, he wants to convince his court to accept both himself as King and also his marriage. (196 *n.*). Harold Jenkins says that, with the use of "remembrance of ourselves" (1.2.7), Claudius makes us know that the marriage is important not only to himself but to the whole Denmark (179 *n.*). After this, Claudius starts a series of antitheses which define the situation that he is living:

Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole (1.2.10-14).

Here we can see Claudius's conflict, which creates a very interesting atmosphere. This puts the King in a very difficult position and makes the audience pay more attention to him. Then, he shows gratitude to his court for "the better wisdoms" (1.2.15). Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor say that the King, with his words, thanks his court for the apparent acceptance of his marriage and his position as the new King (196 *n.*). With this intelligent commentary, Claudius reinforces his position in front of Denmark. In these first words, we can perceive the dominion of language that Claudius has, he dominates the art of persuasion. He can lie making people think he is absolutely true. He uses irony perfectly as well as a poetic language with metaphors, alliterations, figures, ellipsis and an elevated vocabulary.

The first political issue he shows concern with is the diplomatic problem with Fortimbras and the war with Norway (1.2.17). Here we have the image of a politician dealing with external affairs. This situation is very important in the play. With the difficult relation with Norway, Shakespeare creates an interesting atmosphere. Denmark is a country at war and this puts Claudius in a difficult position in the throne. After dealing with international issues, Claudius moves into internal and more personal ones.

The next thing he has to do is to give permission to Laertes, Polonius' son, to go back to France (1.2.42-63). He has come back because of the funeral of the previous king and the marriage of the new one, and now he wants to return to France. Here, we have the image of the King close to his people, dealing with less important matters. Claudius is worried about political and also more personal issues, working normally no matter how recently he has got to the throne.

The next issue is related to his new family (1.2.64-128), the problem with Hamlet, "his cousin and his son" (1.2.64). Claudius wants Hamlet's "clouds" (1.2.66) to disappear. After his father's death, Hamlet seems to be "nighted" (1.2.68) showing an "obsequious sorrow" (1.2.92). The King refers to this behaviour as "sweet and commendable" (1.2.87). He wants to convince the young Prince to change saying that death is something natural, also that his behaviour "shows a will most incorrect to heaven" (1.2.95) and that life "must be so" (1.2.106). In these words, we can see different spheres in Claudius, from that of a cold politician to that of the poet, the perfect courtier.

After this, Claudius wants to convince Hamlet to treat him as his father (1.2.107-108). He, the one who has killed his father, asks Hamlet to be his son. In this

conversation, we can see the Machiavellian and perverse personality of Claudius. Also, Claudius informs Hamlet that he is the heir of the crown of Denmark (1.2.109-112). With this, he wants to dissuade him from his idea of going back to Wittenberg and to encourage him to stay in Elsinore with them (1.2.112-117). Related with these two characters, we have to pay attention to the evolution of the relation between them. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet does not say to Claudius that that he is going to take revenge upon his father's death, but Claudius feels that Hamlet can do something "dangerous"; for example, in the third act, Claudius feels that Hamlet is not crazy but dangerous (3.1.161-174) or after the nunnery scene when Claudius will abandon the idea of maintaining the Prince in Elsinore and will send him to England where the Prince must die. We shall also see how Claudius evolves from a very self-confident person into a suspicious and manipulative one.

When the King leaves, Hamlet starts his first monologue "O that this too too sallied flesh..." (1.2.129). As Ubersfeld points out, what other characters say about one character is really important and something to study in the textual analysis. In this monologue, the Prince makes a comparison between his father and his uncle: "So excellent a king, that was to this / Hyperon to a satyr" (1.2.139-140). Here, Claudius is described as a beast, half human, half animal. He continues saying: "My father's brother (but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules)" (1.2.152-153), underlining their differences. In this scene, Hamlet still does not know that Claudius is his father's murderer.

Hamlet will know it shortly after this, in the monologue of the scene 1.5. ("I am thy father spirit") (1.5.9). Hamlet says that, on that night, the King is drinking and dancing (1.4.8-12), which can cause criticism and dishonour (1.4.17-18). These little comments make the description and the composition of Claudius more complete and diverse, because we have seen that he is a King but also a villain and a drunkard. In the scene between the Ghost and the Prince, Claudius will be mentioned and described. Until this moment, people in Elsinore thought that a serpent had bitten Hamlet's father. The Ghost refers to his brother as "that incestuous, that adulterate beast" (1.5.42) and as a traitor. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor say that when the Ghost refers to incest or adultery, he is assuming that his brother and his wife maintained relations when he lived (244 *n.*) and this fact makes the conflict bigger. After this monologue, the Ghost leaves and Hamlet exclaims: "O villain, villain, smiling damnèd villain!" (1.5.106), "That one may smile and smile and be a villain" (1.5.108), and finishes saying "so, uncle, there

you are” (1.5.110). When Hamlet knows that his uncle is his father’s murderer, he says that the King is a smiling villain, someone that has committed such a crime and continues smiling. This describes very well Claudius as someone that can control himself very well after committing such a terrible crime.

The next time Claudius appears is in the second scene of the second act. The stage direction is *flourish* again. The monarchs have called Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because they are concerned about Hamlet’s transformation. The King asks Hamlet’s friends to discover the cause of his affliction and the remedy (2.2.1-18). In this case we can see that Claudius asks other people to do his actions. He has his objectives but we are going to see that he uses other people for him not to be incriminated. We are going to see that Claudius never develops the action to achieve his objectives, other people do, for example, in this case Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or even Polonius in the Closet scene or Laertes at the end of the play or even “England” when the King sends Hamlet there to be killed. Continuing with the same scene, Polonius informs about Hamlet and Ophelia’s love showing letters that Hamlet sent to his daughter. The King wants to spy them through an arranged encounter. From my point of view, this is not an action that a King could develop, but Claudius is different, he can spy as well he can do some other actions not typical for kings. In this scene (2.2.57-84), the King is also informed that Fortimbras’ uncle accepts what Claudius has offered. This decision is really important because it is going to give strength to Claudius in the Danish throne. Therefore, he is stronger in political terms, but it is in the sphere of the family where his life is becoming problematic.

After this, the players arrive (2.2.358) and Hamlet starts the monologue “Now I am alone” (2.2.484). He offers new information related with the King: “I should ha’fatted the region kites / With this slave’s offal – bloody, bawdy villain, / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain” (2.2.514-516). Hamlet takes the decision that they will interpret a text that he will write to represent in the presence of the King to test Claudius: “The play’s the thing / wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king” (2.2.523-540).

In the first scene of the third act, the monarchs speak with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about their conversation with Hamlet (3.1.1-27). Anne Thompson and Neil Taylor say that the King suspects that something is happening with Hamlet, that his madness is fake and that he is acting rationally (309 *n.*). As we said before, presentiments are really important in the play, they make Claudius and Hamlet act. In

the case of Claudius, this demonstrates security in his character. The next action shows Polonius and the King spying Hamlet and Ophelia, and judging if Ophelia's love is what has changed Hamlet. In this scene, Claudius has his first aside (3.1.49-54). Here, he appeals to his conscience. He does not refer to the murder but he refers to the "ugly" thing (3.1.51), "O heavy burden" (3.1.53). Anne Thomson and Neil Taylor affirm that this is the first direct confession of guilt. Claudius makes this confession in the middle of the play, a decisive moment, the point of no return, this will change the character of the King until his death. After seeing Hamlet's reaction, the King understands that love is not the cause of his madness, but that he hides something (3.1.161-174). Claudius fears that his cousin could do something "dangerous" and wants to prevent it sending him to England. Manuel Ángel Conejero says that this is the first explicit reference to the plot devised by Claudius against Hamlet (362 *n.*).

In the next scene, the pantomime is performed (3.2.128). Claudius asks if the argument is known or if there is something offensive in it (3.2.26-27). Anne Taylor and Neil Thomas admit that here the King is getting suspicious (343 *n.*). When the Player King is poisoned, Claudius interrupts the play screaming: "Give me some light, away" (3.2.262), leaving the place and letting Hamlet and Horatio know that he is guilty. In this scene we can see the temper of the King, he is nervous and shouts. We can notice an evolution of the character that will continue. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern inform Hamlet that "The King is in his retirement marvellous distempered ... with collier" (3.2.293-296). Therefore, they refer to Claudius as a choleric person. The King informs that they will travel to England urgently. We can see in this solution cowardice again. His decisions are very quick, sometimes without taking any thought.

In 3.2.36-72, the King has one of his most powerful monologues. Claudius admits that he has committed the worst crime, to kill a brother: "My offence is rank" (3.2.36). Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor affirm that Claudius refers in this monologue to "the first murder in Judaeo-Christian tradition, Cain's killing of his brother Abel" (359 *n.*) referring to Claudius's words: "it hath the primal eldest curse upon't / A brother's murder" (3.3.37-38). The King affirms that he cannot pray, "My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent" (3.3.40). Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor refer to the incompatibility of the actions, not the possibility or incapability of doing them (360 *n.*). This is a real and powerful conflict that this character has with himself, expressed with wonderful words. Claudius asks, as Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor point out, "what is the function of mercy if it does not confront guilt? Or what is the use of prayer?" (359

n.). He is looking for forgiveness, but he admits that his pardon is impossible because he still owns the benefits for which he killed his brother: the crown, and the Queen.

In the possibility of maintaining the benefits of the crime and being forgiven, Claudius refers the corruption of the world in which the power of money can stop justice. But in relation with Christian morality, there is no place for lies and we have to confront our faults. Stage directions are very limited. Manuel Ángel Conejero notes the action that “he kneels” which appears in Q1 and the Folio but not in Q2. This action is important because it makes Hamlet not to kill him (442 n.). This stage direction implies a physical action but also hidden meanings related with religion, forgiveness or repentance. The monologue is broken by the entrance of Hamlet, who does not kill him because he finds his uncle praying and this would give him the possibility of salvation. Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor say that the King’s last couplet (“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go”) (3.3.97-8) “reveals that his attempt to pray has failed, casting an ironic retrospective light on Hamlet’s stated reasons for sparing him” (363 n.).

In the next scene, in Gertrude’s closet, there takes place the famous comparison by Hamlet of the two pictures, his father’s and his uncle’s. In this comparison, Hamlet’s father is a mountain and Claudius is a swamp (3.4.62-65), a devil who has tricked his mother (3.4.74-75). Comparisons between the brothers are very recurrent in the play. This increases the devilish aspect of the King. In relation with this, we have seen Hamlet’s monologue “O that this too too sallied flesh...” (1.2.129), in which he uses the images of a Hyperon and a satyr, a titan versus a beast. Hamlet’s father is presented as a noble warrior but Claudius appears as astute, ambitious, a drunkard, lascivious and criminal, also “a shrewd and cunning political animal, and a man at the mercy of his sensual impulses” (*Hamlet out of Joint* N.p.). This description will coincide with the descriptions that Hamlet makes repeatedly about his uncle as well as the one that the Ghost does about his brother.

Related with Polonius’ murder, Claudius realizes that Hamlet wants to kill him (4.1) and is also concerned about the repercussion of Polonius’s murder. He feels guilty for that and also for sending Hamlet away. It is remarkable that he anticipates what Hamlet thinks having the feeling that his nephew will perpetrate something negative against him. When Hamlet leaves, he calls his uncle “dear mother” (4.3.47). Claudius corrects him “Thy loving father” (4.3.48). Here, we can see another confrontation between the two characters. These little conflicts stir the flame of the higher conflict.

When they finish, Claudius has a soliloquy in which he addresses England, his friendly country. Here, Claudius informs that he sends Hamlet to England to be killed,

Do it, England!

For like the hectic in my blood he rages

And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,

Howe'er my haps my joys will ne'er begin (4.3.62-65).

We can see in this soliloquy Claudius's cowardice again. As we said before, he is not going to do anything to kill him, he prefers others to do the actions he should do. Here we can see the Machiavellian character of Claudius, he sends Hamlet to England and there someone will kill him.

In the next scene, Ophelia enters with clear symptoms of madness (4.5). Claudius realizes what the death of a father can cause (4.5.76). Here, we can see the human side of Claudius, he starts to feel sorry about all the things he has done. The fact that Claudius shows his human side makes him more complete as a character. Shortly after, Laertes comes to know what has happened with his father (4.5.106). In this scene, we can see that Claudius is a great strategist: he not only persuades Laertes of his innocence but uses him for his interests.

As regards his relationship with Gertrude, here, we can find another example in which the King refers to his real love for her: "I could not live without her" (425). Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor refer this as a reason for the murder of Hamlet's father (424 *n.*). From my point of view, the fact that the King loves Gertrude is an interesting element for the character in the play. First of all, it creates a kind of dependence in Claudius which makes him act in a certain way, for example, not punishing Hamlet publicly.

After this, The King is warned that Hamlet is back. Claudius shows his firm decision of killing his nephew, "and for his death no wind of blame shall breath / But even his mother shall uncharge the practice / And call it accident" (4.7.63 – 66). The fact that Claudius makes the Queen think in the death of Hamlet as an accident reveals again the Machiavellian perspective offered by the King. We can see in these words the acuity in Claudius's mind, he not only wants to kill his nephew but makes the Queen think it is an accident.

After that, the King convinces Laertes not only to help him to kill Hamlet but he proposes himself as the agent of his death, "That I might be the organ" (4.7.68). The King thinks of fencing, an art that Laertes dominates, and Hamlet is jealous of him.

This is one of the best moments to understand the intelligence and quick thinking of Claudius, another characteristic of a Machiavellian mind. This aspect differentiates him from Hamlet. Even Laertes will not win, Claudius will poison the swords to be more easy to kill him, “A sword unbated and in a pass of practice / Requite him for your father” (4.7.136-137). We have to highlight the strong desire of killing the Prince. If this is not enough, Claudius thinks another way to kill Hamlet, poisoning a glass and making Hamlet drink from it. After this, the King bets in Hamlet’s favour to avoid suspicions that relate him to the crime that is going to be committed.

Hamlet will die but Claudius is not going to do any direct action, Laertes is going to kill him. When the fight has started, the Queen drinks from Hamlet’s cup despite the King’s efforts to avoid it. In an aside, he confirms that the cup is poisoned and that she is going to die (5.2.275) but he has not done anything to avoid it or stop the encounter until Hamlet dies. As I said before, it does not matter what happens as far as Claudius achieves his goals. This is another Machiavellian aspect that Claudius shows because he does not avoid the death of the Queen or save Laertes’ life. In a moment, Laertes and Hamlet exchange the swords and both are poisoned. The Queen still has breath to say that the cup is poisoned and Laertes unveils the trap that everything is poisoned, that they are going to die and that “The King is to blame” (5.2.305). Hamlet kills Claudius with the poisoned sword saying “Then venom to thy work!” (5.2.306). After all the terrible things he has done, he can only die, and thus Claudius dies together with all the people that have died because of his actions.

2.2. Performative analysis

Now, I will analyse the character of Claudius chronologically as he appears in two contemporary Spanish performances. The centre of the analysis is this character and the elements that have to do with him (the space, lighting, the costumes, the objects). I will pay attention more clearly to those elements that give a different interpretation from the text. I will reconstruct the performance describing the instruments that the artistic team has used to create the play focusing on Claudius. I will make the analysis as Pavis proposes, chronologically, basing the analysis on temporary markers.

2.2.1. Tomaz Pandur

The first performance that I will analyse was directed by Tomaz Pandur, who used José Ramón Fernández's translation of the text². It was presented in *Naves Matadero, Centro Internacional de Artes Vivas*, in Madrid, in 2009. The main actors are Blanca Portillo (Hamlet), Asier Etxeandía (Ghost), Hugo Silva (Claudius) and Susi Sánchez (Gertrud)³.

In this performance, the director wants to reflect the sexuality of the prince and the role of the Ghost, instead of reflecting about the King and his conflicts. But even in this case, we can perceive the importance of this character, his vital role in the play. Even though the actor is not suitable, the power of the character makes him essential in the play. The version of this performance differs slightly from the original text. They change the order of elements, for example some passages are placed in a different order, such as some Hamlet's monologues. We can perceive the omission of important elements, like the war with Norway, for example. They add sexual content and violence, and thus Claudius has a relationship with Ophelia. The play represented by the comics in which Hamlet adds the poisoning of his father is recreated in an intermission as a concert in which Asier Etxeandía (the Ghost) is the singer.

The first time Claudius appears is after a monologue by Hamlet. A piano music sounds creating a melancholic atmosphere. The actors appear dressing themselves up as characters (7'57''). Hugo Silva, the actor who interprets Claudius, is in the middle of all of them, occupying a privileged place. Continuing with the action of the play, Hamlet greets everybody and Claudius is the last one. The Prince kisses him in the mouth (10'20''), Claudius tries to separate him and spits. In this version, we are going to see close relationships, in which sexual passions are very much present, something that the text does not reflect. Gertrude (Susi Sánchez) helps Claudius or Hugo Silva to dress up, they kiss. Gertrude is presented at the service of Claudius. From my point of view, in the text, the Queen is more independent and free. In relation with the actor playing Claudius, Hugo Silva, he is not very suitable for this character because he is too young to interpret Claudius. To the point that the difference in age with Gertrude is visible. Moreover, he has not the voice the character needs or the corporal presence Claudius requires. Díaz Sande, in his review says: "en sus momentos más agresivos

² Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. José Ramón Díaz Fernández, translation. London. N.p. N.d.

³ Complete artistic and technical team information in the appendix.

acude al desaforado grito, y el grito no es fácil en teatro. [...] tal explosión oral externa se entiende menos en el personaje de Claudio, en el cual, prácticamente, casi todas sus intervenciones son gritadas.” (N.p.)

The piano music continues in the background. Stage directions are very limited in the text, but we have seen that music has already sounded twice in relation with Claudius. The space is created by a wooden floor, carpets and false shallow channels of water. There is a corridor and two different spaces, a first and bigger square and a smaller one. From my point of view, the space recreates really well a castle in Denmark, dark and wet, and functions well for the indoors and outdoors scenes. The light is very well used to delineate spaces and create atmospheres. The characters prepare a line with chairs for Claudius’s discourse. This action continues the idea of showing the great importance of Claudius, to give him a capital role in the play. All characters are dressed the same way. Men wear a black suit and white shirt, black shoes, a red carnation and a white bracelet. We can highlight the make-up, which consists in a shade on the eyes; for example; in Claudius this is really evident.

Claudius starts his first monologue in which there is no reference to the conflict with Norway and Fortimbras, or to Denmark as a “warlike state”. From my point of view, this was an important element for the atmosphere of the play and also for Claudius’s character because it gives him an additional tension. In this version, the King speaks to the audience having his court behind him. He screams as if he had to speak in a big space or to a high quantity of people. Here, the King is involving the audience, something that the text cannot do. But, from my point of view, his voice is not correct, and neither is his diction. He speaks fast and screaming, which creates discomfort in the audience. Related with the pace, we are going to see different characters speaking really fast. Their actions, as well as the rhythm of the music, are also develop at a fast pace. But although the pace is fast, it is not out of tune or interferes in the understanding of the play. To treat Laertes’ issue (1.2.45) (19’40’’), the King changes the space. Light and movement delimit different spaces on stage, from an open and big space to an intimate one. Claudius is playing with a punching bag as he waits for Laertes (Quim Gutiérrez). Through these elements, and also through the actions, we see that this dramatic version is very violent and passionate. In this scene, the King is close to the people but he is also arrogant. Laertes addresses him respectfully as “honourable lord” (1.2.50), but Claudius answers with a gesture as if he knew he is not.

When Claudius moves on to his conversation with Hamlet (1.2.65), the Prince seems to be going to give him a hug, but the Prince grabs his testicles. This action reinforces the violence that this version tries to highlight. They are sitting in chairs playing with the water of the floor. In the text, we can see Claudius trying to convince Hamlet but here Claudius forces Hamlet to accept his commands. With a belt in his hands, as if he is going to strike him with it, he covers his eyes, then his mouth and puts it on his neck. With this, the Prince does not have any chances. When they finish their conversation, the King calls the Queen (24'41''), takes and throws her over his shoulder as he kicks her buttocks with his hands and stares at Hamlet. In the text, we do not have any reference to this kind of actions, but, as I have said, this is the line of violence of this version. Here, we can see the King as a controlling person, he mistreats Hamlet and he is not very sensitive with the Queen. As they leave, the music starts (chords and then percussion) (25'23'') with a quick pace, changing the atmosphere of the previous scene.

After this, a lot of actors appear playing and eating apples, which represent sin, and they kiss one another. The King arrives (26'50) with his shirt off and starts kissing Ophelia. The text refers to the lascivious character of Claudius but here we are going to see this constantly also in the actions. The King is drunk, something that the text also refers to but here it is very much highlighted. We can see a very complex composition of Claudius, very excessive in every one of his features. He is presented as a drunk, violent and lascivious person. From my point of view, these added meanings are not necessary. The character is interesting and strong enough to operate by himself because Shakespeare created a very good character in the text. In relation with the epoch, there are no references that inform about the time in which the action of the play takes place. The clothes and the props (the few that appear in the play) are contemporary, also the music. The space does not give information related with the epoch either. It is true that the text does not give information related with the time of the actions developed, but we can contextualize it in the late Middle Ages or even in the Renaissance (Shakespeare's time) something that in this version is not done. All the elements are closer to contemporary times than to the Renaissance or the Middle Ages.

After the coral scene, Claudius speaks with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are represented by four actors (56'40'') (2.2). This scene is shown as a press conference in which all the characters are serving the King. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern take note of everything that Claudius says. They have come to help the monarchs with Hamlet's "transformation" (2.2.5). Claudius moves through the stage and the four

actors follow him. One of them steps on him and he gets a little angry. They try to answer but Claudius interrupts them. As they leave, Claudius throws money for them. All along the scene and also with this last action, we can see the way Claudius treats Hamlet's friends. He does not listen to them but rather he orders them. This is not in the text and makes Claudius a more haughty and unpleasant person. In the new scene, there is a piano music creating tension and intrigue. They exchange glasses of wine and drink. Alcohol and drunkenness are important elements in this version because they are highlighted in words and in action. In this scene, but also in previous ones, the Queen has more presence in the text. However, in this performance, all the importance is passed on to Claudius.

After this transition (59'20''), Polonius comes to say that he has discovered the cause of Hamlet's madness (1.2.49). During this scene, Ophelia is lying on the floor covered with a blanket. The King gets under the blanket and rapes her (59'27''). As a matter of fact, the King is presented as having an affair with Ophelia, something that is not present in Shakespeare's text. With this affair with Ophelia, they highlight the lascivious character of Claudius and this increases the tension in the conflicts between the King and Hamlet. In the scene, Polonius shows the monarchs the letters Hamlet wrote to Ophelia (1h01'). Polonius reads and passes the letters to the Queen, and the Queen to Claudius, who breaks them. We can perceive jealousy in Claudius (1h04'), but I do not think that the play needs something like this to make it more interesting. After the nunnery scene, Claudius speaks the monologue in which he takes the decision to send Hamlet to England (3.1.161) (1h'27'). The actor shows here the evolution of the character. He is very nervous and mad. We do not see here the confident Claudius that appears in the first scene.

The representation scene is presented as a concert in the intermission of the play. Asier Etxeandía, who represents the Ghost sings different songs in which he tells that he was murdered by Claudius (1h57'). Claudius's reaction shows him very nervous, the rest of the actors try to stop and calm him. An alarm sounds and the audience go back to the seats and the second part starts. This is a big change from the text but it is original and agrees with the overall aim of this version.

Claudius's monologue "My offence is rank" (3.3.36-72) is presented in a powerful manner. Claudius enters with a carpet rolled over his shoulders as if he were carrying a cross (2h15'17''). He is without his shirt and wears a rosary as a necklace and a black bracelet. The carpet is for him to pray. There is an intriguing music in the

background and a single spotlight incises in the actor. The actor's work represents very well the agony of the character with the modulation of his voice, with his gestures and body postures. During the monologue, Hamlet enters to kill him and the Ghost is also present. The presence of the Ghost is not referred in the text but it increases the tension of the scene. Hamlet points at Claudius with a gun. Claudius realises what Hamlet is doing. Claudius and his brother lay in the floor trembling (2h19'), then, they drink from the water on the floor like beasts. The presentation of Claudius as an animal does not match with my idea of the character, and so does the presence of the Ghost, which makes Claudius's words lose importance

The play continues with Hamlet's monologue and then the Queen closet scene. Here, Hamlet does not compare the pictures of his father and his uncle, an action that is really important. After Polonius's murder, Claudius prepares the trip for Hamlet and his friends to England (2h36') (4.1). He is very nervous, thinking about what to do and very fast. In these actions, in the actor's work we can perceive the character's evolution which is important for us to understand his vital role. If we compare the initial Claudius, who is a self-confident character, with this nervous character incapable of controlling himself, we can design a very complete psychological arch which reflects how complete Claudius is.

Immediately afterwards, Ophelia comes to see the Queen (2h46') (4.5.15). Claudius is present and feels horrified. Ophelia is the one who makes Claudius show his human side: he feels sad because of her and this element makes the character more complete. Claudius says that he has received strokes from all parties. This scene is capital to see the complexity of Claudius and the way the character is rounded up in this version.

After this scene, Laertes speaks with the King. (4.7) (2h56'). They fight and scream, something that the text does not seem to reflect but, as I have said, this performance presents very violent scenes. From my point of view, the fight makes the scene difficult to follow because of the violence. The next event is the death of Ophelia (2:59:36). Claudius is on the floor, without his shirt, devouring an apple and interrupting Laertes who wants to speak with Hamlet. Here we can see a destroyed Claudius, desperate and humiliated. The text does not reflect this level of desperation, but it is appropriate for the performance.

As in the text, the play comes to an end with the duel between Hamlet and Laertes (3h07'). They fight with swords but the fight finishes with a gun. Everything

happens very fast, they overlook elements and this can make the audience gets lost in the actions. The fight and the poison, which are key elements in the text, lose importance and the death of Gertrude does not receive the attention that it deserves. Claudius is killed by Hamlet with the gun instantly, as if it were not the biggest objective in the play.

We have seen that this performance is really violent and passionate, set in contemporary times. Claudius occupies a privileged position, the centre, everybody works for him (Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, even the Queen is at his service), even though the director focuses on other elements of the play. Hugo Silva, the actor, is really young for Claudius, he screams all the time and speaks really fast. In the play, they do not speak about the war, so the position of the King on the throne seems to be safe. Kisses, sexual attraction, and orgies are all the time present during the performance. Claudius is lascivious as the text refers, but even with Ophelia, which is not in the text at all. Moreover, it is only with her that Claudius shows his human side. Violence is also a characteristic of Claudius in several occasions as we have shown. He shows that he is a controlling person. Music and lighting are really effective in the creation of atmospheres. The space is interesting too with the wood platforms and water. In relation to the character and the actor, we have to highlight Claudius's reaction in the representation of the play within the play. That moment is going to mark a very big change in the character, since from here onwards we can perceive the evolution of the character, from a very self-confident character, to a destroyed, desperate and humiliated figure.

2.2.2. *Eduardo Vasco*

The second performance to be analysed is more classic and respectful with the text. Eduardo Vasco is its director and he used Leonardo Fernández de Moratín's translation and Yolanda Pallín's version of the text. The play was presented in the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro of 2005 in the Dominicos' cloister, a very favourable and convenient place to perform this text. The main actors are Arturo Querejeta (Claudio, Ghost), Daniel Albadalejo (Laertes, comedian), Walter Vidarte (Polonio), Ginés García Millán (Hamlet) or Alicia Sánchez (Gertrudis) among others⁴.

⁴ Complete artistic and technical team information in the appendix.

The play starts with bells and viola da gamba melody. The viola da gamba is an instrument from the Baroque that produces a characteristic metallic sound and accompanies many classic performances. The atmospheres that this instrument creates are really distinctive and effective because of its sonority that helps to create intrigue and produces an effect of sadness and tension.

An actor announces that terrible things will happen, a music sounds again and the light permits to see the space, which consists of a wooden platform, imitating old stages, with an inclination, a pentagonal shape and a protruding angle. Characters enter into the stage, there are sounds of bells and people celebrating. Claudius (Arturo Querejeta) speaks with his people (1.2.) from the balcony, with his back turned to the audience, with a loud voice, with firmness, showing a powerful and self-confident king. (7'10''). From my point of view, to start the play with Claudius and his speech reinforces the importance of this character. The atmosphere in which they situate this scene is festive, they are celebrating Claudius's ascension to the throne. The festive atmosphere is not present in the text, but it helps the audience to situate the starting point of the play and to make a bigger break with the conflict the play will present. What is reflected in the text but not in this performance is the war against Norway. As we said in the textual analysis, the war is important for the conflict.

In this first scene, we can perceive the epoch in which they situate the action. We can say that it is recreated around the nineteenth century. Claudius's costume consists of a black suit, with white shirt, golden vest, a collar with a medal around his neck and a bow tie. Bells sound again. When the King receives Laertes (Daniel Albadalejo) (8'28'') because he wants permission to go back to France (1.2.41), we can see a King close to his people who speaks with affection to Laertes. After speaking with Laertes, Claudius speaks with Hamlet (Ginés García Millán) (9'50'') (1.2.64). Hamlet is sitting and Claudius is standing, dominating the scene. Related to the evolution of these two characters, we are going to see that Claudius will finish the play sitting. This action of sitting will be crucial regarding the body language, meaning destruction, desperation, despair. In the textual analysis, I have referred to the effectiveness of Claudius's art of persuasion and dominion of language, which Arturo Querejeta also dominates but he adds emotions, a strategy that the actor uses as a vehicle to guide the audience. When he finishes the monologue, there are sounds of bells and people screaming, celebrating, and Claudius is happy. The work of the actor reinforces the idea that appears in the text that there is not any sign of his crime in his attitudes or actions.

Arturo Querejeta is one of the best actors in Spain. Zabala, in his review of this performance, affirms: “siempre alcanza la brillantez” (N.p.) With the control of his body and voice, his movements and his inflections, he creates stunning characters, and, in this case, in the creation of Claudius, his work is absolutely perfect. The character’s evolution that he presents with his interpretation makes us aware of Claudius’s evolution and his importance in the play. The text that they work with is very difficult, a difficult translation, “un tanto polvorienta y almibarada” (Zabala, N.p.), well adapted but hard for the actors to be spoken. Querejeta develops a wonderful work related with the oral expression, based on words very well interpreted.

Arturo Querejeta represents both kings. When he represents the Ghost, he is dressed in white (32’17’’). In the scene when Claudius meets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (Guillermo y Ricardo) (45’47’’) to know about Hamlet’s transformation (2.2), Claudius is represented as a strong and inflexible person, as someone that orders and does not hear. In the same scene, Polonius comes to inform that Hamlet is crazy (47’33’’) (2.2.40). Claudius does not speak but his gestures let the audience know that he does not like Polonius or at least the way that Polonius speaks, so he blows and laughs at him. In the moment in which the King decides to know more and spy Hamlet to see how he behaves, Arturo Querejeta shows subtle elements in his actions and his voice by which we can see hidden intentions, some perversity in the way he pretends to spy his nephew, thus reinforcing the Machiavellian idea that I have highlighted in the textual analysis. Related with these little actions, the text refers that Claudius smiles a lot. Arturo Querejeta does not present that gesture often and it could be interesting to present a more perverse and ironic Claudius.

After this, the King speaks with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to know what they have discovered (3.1). They inform that a group of players are coming. The King is happy because the Prince has received them happily (1h3’). Arturo Querejeta plays with the emotions really well, each scene is different, he shows different emotions in every single moment. From my point of view, this aspect is fundamental to show the real importance that Claudius has and the possibilities he presents.

After Claudius and Polonius have spied the Prince, the King knows that Ophelia is not the cause of Hamlet’s madness (1h14’) (3.1.161). He refers to the danger that Hamlet can cause and decides to send him to England (3.1.168). During the scene, Ophelia lies on the floor and Claudius makes an attempt to go to help her but he gives up in the end. Claudius presents here a little humanity, but loses it when he leaves poor

Ophelia unattended. Here we continue watching the complexity of Claudius and how Querejeta resolves all difficulties brilliantly. Before the representation by the players (1h17') (3.2), the King tries to speak with Hamlet but he does not understand him, something that annoys Claudius. This is not in the text, but here we can see a fight within Claudius, who is angry but controls himself. The actors represent the murder of Hamlet's father in a pantomime. When the king stands up screaming "lights" (2.2.261), he is very angry, screaming, and running away quickly. The voice of Arturo Querejeta is really powerful. A character like Claudius needs a powerful actor and Querejeta is perfect for it. His interpretation of this difficult part of the text is really impressive, making a powerful impact on the audience.

The next time that we can see Claudius is in the scene in which he prays (3.3). Arturo Querejeta performs one of the most intense moments in theatre. He represents Claudius's monologue, a wonderful opportunity to watch it perfectly performed. To this wonderful interpretation, they add a viola's melody. Here, we are going to see a big change in Claudius, showing true despair, repentance, pain, but at the same time anger and impotence. The actor shows this through a magnificent and detailed work. Here Claudius starts his monologue "My fault is atrocious" (1h28'17'') (3.3.36). The scene is performed over a prie-dieu. The use of this object is really convenient because it is normally used to pray. We can also say that it is red, a colour that stands out among the rest of the elements. Claudius is confessing the murder. During this confession, he throws the prie-dieu down saying that he cannot pray, he also uses the object to help himself to stand up, but he rarely adopts the praying position, thus showing the impossibility of the action. The actor shows a shattered Claudius, he cries and sweats, his gesture is really emotional. In this scene, Claudius wears a trouser, a big shirt and a handkerchief. These clothes let us know that he is in his chamber, alone, more comfortable than in a public situation.

The next scene is in the Queen's closet-(1h34') (3.4). After Hamlet kills Polonius, and hiding his body, Claudius takes a gun from him and kisses it (1h42'). Claudius's anger is enormous, making the audience feel real fear. The King asks Hamlet where Polonius's body is (4.3.16) pointing at him with the gun. The text does not have this action, which shows the tension in Claudius very well. When Hamlet confesses, Claudius stops pointing at him, showing his anxiety and desperation. When Hamlet names Claudius "mother", Claudius gets really angry. As the time passes, we can see

an angrier Claudius, as well as nervous and hurt. When Hamlet kisses him, the King orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to kick him.

After this, Ophelia enters with signs of madness (1h50') (4.5.16). Claudius is sitting in an extreme of the stage, tired. I have commented before the importance of this action. Claudius shows his despair and falls in the action of sitting. He speaks slowly, with real pain, showing that he is the cause of all of this. There is a big difference with the Claudius in the previous scene. We have only seen some kind of humanity in Claudius when he is with Ophelia. Later, Laertes enters looking for the King (1h53'13'') (4.5.111). Claudius is still sitting on the floor trying to calm Laertes and asking him to let him share his affliction (4.5.194). Here, we can see real feelings in Claudius, something that is not so clear in the text. Then, Horatio reads Hamlet's letters, which inform that he is back (1h58'59'') (4.6). Here Claudius is calmer, thinking about the possibilities that he has, even to kill Hamlet (4.7.57). The way Arturo Querejeta interprets this part is really impressive, dominating his emotions and dominating Laertes as he wants. Arturo Querejeta shows a calm King, someone that has found the solution to his problems. In that calm is where we find that perversity.

The evolution of Claudius will finish in his destruction in the final fight. We have to highlight the face gestures of Claudius when poisoning the cup. He is smiling but at the same time he is tired, destroyed. He shows no emotions when the queen drinks. When Laertes confesses that the King has killed the Queen, Claudius is in the centre of the stage, where he receives the stab and the light goes out.

To finish with this analysis, we can summarize different elements. The play is presented in an unbeatable context, the International Festival of Almagro, in the Dominicos' Cloister. The space they recreate is based on a platform. When Claudius is in the centre of the space standing, he shows self-confidence, but when he is on the sides, he is sitting showing desperation. They work with a very difficult version of the text, but Arturo Querejeta dominates it presenting a King expert in the art of persuasion, playing with the language in such a way that only by speaking he achieves his objectives. Sounds and music are simple but effective. The bells are present in different moments of the play and the melody of the viola da gamba creates powerful atmospheres.

The play is set in the nineteenth century. The fact that they start the play with Claudius's monologue makes the character more powerful than the text shows. The evolution of the play is the same evolution of the character, from festivity to tragedy.

In his relations with other characters, he shows versatility and a complex humanity; for example, he is close to Laertes; he shows rejection to Polonius; and he shows his humanity with Ophelia. In this version, the same actor interprets both brothers, Hamlet and Claudius. Claudius is characterized by his inflexibility and perversity, reinforcing that Machiavellian idea that we talked in the textual analysis but through very subtle elements.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of a play through a performative perspective can show aspects that the analysis of the text cannot. Through the textual analysis we have seen that Claudius, as he is the antagonist, is one of the most important characters of the play, not to say the most important. But also, he is important because of his actions, his presence in the play, the amount of text he speaks and his fundamental role during the most important events of the play. Both performances reflect this, Claudius is the centre of the scene most of the times. The performative analysis also reveals that Claudius is an individual character. He opposes to other characters (Hamlet, for example) and throws off balance the forces. He has a really important incardination in the plot and has the biggest evolution in the play. Because of all these reasons, even though he is a secondary character, we can equate him with the protagonist. His most important traits are those of king and Machiavellian villain. He has human aspects and commits errors, he assassins and evolves to decadence. He lies, he is ironic and controls language. He is drunk and lascivious. All these characteristics among others make him a complex character.

Regarding the performative analysis more in particular, we have seen that although Claudius is not the centre of Tomaz Padur's intentions, or the actor who represents him is not suitable, the character is very important in the play. Eduardo Vasco, however, opens the play with Claudius's monologue, giving him more importance still. We can say that, in both performances, Claudius is the centre, everything evolves around him and every character works for him and serves him.

As to the relation between the text and the staged text, we have seen that, in the performance, the text can offer different options and meanings. In Tomaz Padur's performance, we have seen violence, but it is an added meaning that does not change the important elements of the text. The performances do not include the conflict with Norway, something that is important for the atmosphere of the play as well as for Claudius's position in the throne.

Both performances are set in a different epoch than the text but the meanings of the text do not change. The props that they use do not match either with the epoch of the text. We can highlight that both directors use only a few props but they are full of meaning, like apples which represent sin, the prieu-dieu, or the gun. Music is present in both performances creating atmospheres and accompanying important moments of

the play. The text only refers to music with the *flourish* stage direction, but both directors use this element very frequently. The scenography is different. One is based on a very big space organized by wooden platforms and water, the other one is simpler but also effective, based on a single wooden platform.

The actor's work is really important in the performative analysis, even more when we are focusing on a character. The composition of the character reveals significant elements of the text. Little details make the character complete. This can only happen in the performance and its study is the only place where we can find those elements. I have highlighted Arturo Querejeta's work, completing and complementing the meanings of the text, giving much importance to Claudius's character. The complexity of the character appears in both plays. Claudius is represented from a smiling, happy character, celebrating his ascent to the throne, to a destroyed, desperate human. In the textual analysis I highlighted as cowardice the fact that Claudius does not develop his actions but someone does for him and the performances do not reflect this. Another aspect to highlight is the relation between Claudius and Ophelia. In Tomaz Pandur, we can see more clearly a sexual attraction between Claudius and Ophelia but also that Claudius only shows humanity with her. I do not agree with this added meaning. In both performances they show violence when Claudius speaks to Hamlet which is not present in the text either. In Eduardo Vasco's version we can see this in one single moment but in Tomaz Pandur's this is more recurrent.

After studying two different performances, we can understand the importance and the power of the character. He acts, evolves, suffers and makes the audience and the reader suffer too. He is a powerful character that has not been, from my point of view, sufficiently studied and, quite often, in many different performative versions, not correctly interpreted.

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APPENDIX

1. ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL TEAM: Tomaz Pandur

Title: *Hamlet*

Author: William Shakespeare

Translation: José Ramón Fernández

Version: Tomaž Pandur

Music composition: SILENCE (Boris Benko, Primoz Hladnik)

Scenography: Numen

Lighting: Juan Gómez Cornejo (AAI)

Costumes: David Delfín

Sound: Mariano García

Production: Teatro Español de Madrid, 2009

Rehearsal Pictures: Javier Naval

Stage Pictures: Aljosa Rebolj

Direction assistant: Pablo Viar

Direction and dramaturgy assistant: Livija Pandur

Actors: Blanca Portillo (Hamlet), Hugo Silva (Claudio), Susi Sánchez (Gertrudis), Asier Exteandía (Espectro), Manuel Morón (Polonio), Félix Gómez (Horacio), Nur Al Levi (Ofelia), Quim Gutiérrez (Laertes), Eduardo Mayo (Rosencratz), Santi Marín (Guildenstern), Damià Plensa (Rosencrantz), Aitor Luna (Guildenstern), Manuel Moya (Marcelo)

Duration: 3h 45m (incluido el descanso)

First night en Madrid: Matadero, Naves del Español, 12 – 2 – 2009

2. ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL TEAM: Eduardo Vasco

Author: William Shakespeare.

Translation: Leandro Fernández de Moratín.

Version: Yolanda Pallín.

Scenography: Richard Cenier.

Costumes: Rosa García Andújar.

Lighting: Miguel Ángel Camacho (A.A.I.).

Direction assistant and Weapon Master: José Luis Massó.

Direction, music composition and addaptation : Eduardo Vasco.

Viola de gamba: Alba Fresno.

Company: Noviembre Teatro.

Actors: Francisco Rojas (Horacio), Arturo Querejeta (Claudio, Ghost), Daniel Albadalejo (Laertes, comidian), Walter Vidarte (Polonio), Ginés García Millán (Hamlet), Alicia Sánchez (Gertrudis), Nuria Mencía (Ofelia), José Vicente Ramos (Marcelo, comidian, gravedigger), Fernando Sendino (Ricardo, comedian, priest), José Ramón Iglesias (Guillermo, gravedigger).

First night in Madrid: Teatro de la Abadía: 26 – 2 – 2005.