
ERNE, Lukas Christian


Available at:
http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:14567

Disclaimer: layout of this document may differ from the published version.

Susanne Rupp (Berlin)

Nicht allein das ABC bringt den Menschen in die Höh': Übersetzterische Leistungen und Listen


"Arden" has long been short-hand for the leading series of Shakespeare editions, but much else is now about to be published under the same banner: as of 2009, the Arden Early Modern Drama series (gen. eds. Suzanne Gossett, John Jowett, and Gordon McMullan) promises to supersede – or at least compete with – the Revels series of plays by Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Other series have already started appearing: “Critical Texts” (e.g. Simon Palfrey’s remarkable Doing Shakespeare, 2004), the Shakespeare at Stratford series (gen. ed. Robert Smallwood), and a series of Arden Critical Companions (gen. eds. Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond). The most recent addition is the “Shakespeare and Language” series (gen. eds. Lynette Hunter, Lynne Magnusson, and Ann Thompson) of which Shakespeare and the Language of Translation, carefully edited and ably introduced by Ton Hoenselaars, is the first volume to appear.

The main part of the collection consists of fifteen essays, divided into three parts. Part I, "Words and Cultures", is the most general and displays the full scope of the area under investigation. Dirk Delabastita begins by focusing not on translation of but on translation in Shakespeare, offering a survey of relevant passages in the plays. Susan Bassnett distinguishes the primary sense of the word 'translation' (which she labels “interlinguistic translation”) from intertemporal and intercultural translation in order to demonstrate how not only translators but also other times and cultures remake Shakespeare in their own image. Tetsuo Kishi provides an example of how interlinguistic translation, to use Bassnett’s terminology, can be considerably complicated by intercultural translation: the differences between English and Japanese socio-
linguistic forms – such as markers of familiarity – make it difficult if not impossible to translate certain passages into Japanese, like the confusion between the two Antipholuses in *The Comedy of Errors*. Rui Carvalho Homem’s chapter deals with other forms of intercultural friction occasioned by interlinguistic translation. Among the cases he discusses are the various Latinisms in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, which sound pretentious in English but correspond to words in daily usage in Portuguese. Shen Lin also addresses the connotations of words chosen by the translator, but he focuses on their ideological implications, assessing how various renderings of the word ‘nature’ in Chinese translations of *Hamlet* reveal the translators’ ideology. Similarly, Alexander Shurbanov and Boika Sokolova illustrate how central ideology and politics were to the translation of Shakespeare in communist Bulgaria by telling the deeply ironic story of the genesis of the first complete works in Bulgarian: a first attempt, by Lubomir Ognyanov, “of a pronounced communist persuasion” (pp. 86–87), had been state-sponsored but was abandoned less than half-way through, so the project only came to fruition when Valeri Petrov took it on, who had “incurred the displeasure of the totalitarian regime” (p. 91) and therefore been forbidden to publish his original work.

Part II, “The Translator at Work”, is considerably narrower in scope and more practical in orientation. Werner Brönnimann’s chapter on “The Bilingual Studienausgabe of Shakespeare”, an off-spring, like the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, of the German Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, explores some of the decisions that have been shaping the series, such as the adoption of a literal prose translation as opposed to a more poetic style, or the importance given to implied stage directions. What emerges from Brönnimann’s discussion is how scholarship and translation can come to reinforce each other, a view that also underlies the essay by Alessandro Serpieri, who persuasively demonstrates that translators of Shakespeare ignore textual studies at their own peril. His discussion of the three substantive *Hamlet* texts, the First Quarto (1603), the Second Quarto (1604/5), and the Folio (1623), shows how the neglected First Quarto, to which the unfortunate label ‘bad quarto’ has long clung, has much to offer to the modern translator and can occasionally elucidate passages which remain unclear in the Second Quarto and the Folio. In “Translating Shakespeare’s Stagecraft”, Jean-Michel Déprats argues for a stage-oriented translation practice which understands the original as “a text written for mouths, lungs and respiratory systems” (p. 147) and scrupulously respects it in terms of its physical dimension. Interestingly, while the general trend has been to stress the autonomy of the translation, Déprats insists that “we must come back to a certain degree of literalness” (p. 145). Maik Hamburger’s essay on “Translating and Copyright” shows that the translators’ degrees of literalness have not only literary and theatrical but also legal implications: each new translation of a Shakespeare play is legally considered a new text and thus protected by copyright, yet the great number of earlier translations makes a certain amount of plagiarism inevitable, resulting in a legal limbo that does not fail to cause confusion and bad blood. Finally, Peter Llewellyn-Jones draws our attention to another area of Shakespeare translation of which most of us have a dim awareness at best: the translation into (British) sign language, which is now a feature of Shakespeare productions of the RSC, the Royal National Theatre, and Shakespeare’s Globe.

The final part of *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation* is devoted to “Post-Colonial Tradaptation and Adaptation.” “Tradaptation” is the term coined by the Quebecois writer Michel Garneau to designate a translation which is independent enough to qualify as an
adaptation. Leanore Lieblein draws on Garneau in her investigation of Shakespeare in Quebec in the 1960s and 70s, arguing that translating and adapting Shakespeare were “both desired and problematic because of the ambiguous position occupied by the Quebec language” (p. 255). Martin Orkin’s and Alfredo Michel Modenessi’s essays deal with Shakespeare in countries where the post-colonial legacy is similarly complex and problematic: the former discusses adaptations of Macbeth, Titus Andronicus and Julius Caesar in South Africa, while the latter examines translations of Shakespeare for the modern Mexican stage, where one of the chief challenges is to adopt a recognizably Latin American variety of Spanish rather than the language of the European colonizer. Finally, J. Derrick McClure discusses “the tiny set of Scots translations from Shakespeare” (p. 233), focussing, logically enough, on Macbeth. The collection ends with a useful “guide to further reading”, compiled by Dirk Delabastita.

The essays published in Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century, edited by Rui Carvalho Homem and Ton Hoenselaars, are based on papers presented at a conference at the University of Oporto, Portugal, in 2000. The collection opens with an introduction and six essays by authors who also contribute to Shakespeare and the Language of Translation – Carvalho Homem, Serpieri, Shurbanov, Déprats, Hoenselaars, Delabastita, and Hamburger – so the two collections may rightly be considered as companion volumes both in terms of subject and contributors.

The introduction by Rui Carvalho Homem provides a full survey of the territory covered, though it seems unnecessary to evaluate the essays while introducing them: one contributor is praised for his “keen theoretical awareness”, another one writes with “characteristic rigour”, while a later chapter gets top marks for being “brief but trenchant” (pp. 15–21), judgements which are best left to the reader. The essays are divided into two main parts. Part two reflects the place where the conference on which the collection is based took place: “Portuguese Shakespeares – A Casebook.” Part one, by contrast, is broader in scope – “Old and New World Shakespeares” – and it contains a number of essays in which readers of the Jahrbuch will be interested.

In a wide-ranging essay, Alessandro Serpieri’s survey of practical problems encountered in the work of translation goes some way towards suggesting what range of skills a translator needs to possess. Maik Hamburger displays his mastery of these skills in an article on “Reading Shakespeare for Translation”, which shows him to be a wonderfully sensitive reader of Shakespeare’s verse, allowing him to render rhythm, sound, or tone (in Brecht’s term: the gestus) of the Shakespearean original over and above its linguistic content. Jean-Michel Déprats investigates “Translation at the Crossroads of the Past and Present” and argues that a modernized translation of Shakespeare seems indispensable to establish a natural contact with the audience, although that means that translations for the stage are bound to be ephemeral, a product of their own historical context. Focusing on translation into Bulgarian, Alexander Shurbanov also deals with practical problems beleaguering the translator of Shakespeare, in particular with the difficulties arising from the distinctiveness of Bulgaria’s historical legacy after a millennium that exposed the country mostly to Greek and Byzantine culture rather than to an influence shared by Western Europe. Moving the subject to Holland, Dirk Delabastita and Ton Hoenselaars also examine translations of Shakespeare from a historical perspective, the latter seeing current academic and theatrical translation practice in the light of the past, the “liberal translations,
adaptations, and spin-offs” (p. 79) of Shakespeare plays as practiced by itinerant players from the late sixteenth century in the Low Countries and elsewhere anticipating similar products in our own time.

Like Translating Shakespeare, Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe, edited by A. Luis Pujante and Ton Hoenselaars, is based on papers presented at a conference, in Murcia (Spain) in 1999, whose aim it was “to assess the cultural impact of Shakespeare on European culture from the Elizabethan period to the present” (p. 15). The introduction, by Hoenselaars and Pujante, places the Murcia conference in the context of “the newly established network for research into European-Shakespeares” (p. 25), a network which has led to a series of conferences in Continental Europe.

The collection is divided into three main parts, “Appropriations”, “Translations”, and “Productions.” In the first of these, Keith Gregor’s entertaining article shows that Shakespeare, in early nineteenth-century Spain, became a stage character (Shakespeare enamorado, 1828) long before his plays were first performed, while Marta Gibinska looks at the early reception of Shakespeare in a different country, Poland, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Boika Sokolova moves the Shakespeare reception to the twentieth century and to Eastern Europe more generally, showing how Hamlet, in particular, offered a potential for dissent in an oppressive political climate. It is followed by one of the collection’s highlights, Manfred Pfister’s “Route 66: The Political Performance of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 66 in Germany and Elsewhere”, a vastly entertaining account of adaptations and appropriations of Sonnet 66 in Germany and Eastern Europe which, however, will already be familiar to readers of the Shakespeare Jahrbuch (137, 2001: 115–131).

In the second part, on Shakespeare and translation, Dirk Delabastita’s article draws on Roman Jakobson’s distinction between intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation to theorize translation in all its various guises, summarized in a detailed “grid of intertextual and metatextual operations” (p. 119). Whereas Delabastita theorizes translation studies in all their breadth, Filomena Mesquita turns to a specific case study, a telling instance of the political and ideological inflections translators can give to their texts: a distinctly royalist translation of The Merchant of Venice of 1879, by King D. Luís of Portugal, which was followed up, indeed answered, by a republican translation of the same play two years later, by Bulhão Pato. Whereas Mesquita examines two Portuguese translations of The Merchant of Venice, the starting point for Martin Hilský’s essay are no fewer than four translations of Shakespeare’s sonnets into Czech published within five years in the course of the 1990s, which lead Hilský to explore how the multiplicity of translations ends up affecting our understanding of the source text.

The collection’s final part, “Productions”, can be divided into specific case studies – Sylvia Zysset on Stefan Bachmann’s 1998 production of Troilus and Cressida in Salzburg and Basel; Jozef de Vos on Ten Oorlog, Luk Perceval’s 1997–98 full-day production of the two tetralogies in Belgium (“Schlachten!” in the German translation) – and essays that cover a certain period: Dennis Kennedy on European Shakespeare productions during the Cold War, Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine on French Shakespeare productions from the eighteenth century to the present, and Rafael Portillo and Mercedes Salvador on Spanish Hamlet productions in the twentieth century.
A short review naturally cannot do justice to three collections with more than forty essays, but it can convey, I hope, a sense of the range of subjects covered. What may be a virtue in one sense is clearly a danger in another: ‘breadth’ and ‘eclecticism’ would be kind words to describe it, but ‘arbitrariness’ and ‘mixed bag,’ while less kind, may occasionally be more to the point. In one of the most lucid essays in the three collections, Delabastita is keenly aware of this danger when mentioning “the polyphony of the different ‘voices’ we hear talking about Shakespearean translation” before concluding that the “differences in scope, aim, method, concepts, and the like may be too profound for an effective dialogue to be possible at all” (Four Hundred Years, pp. 114–115). The conceptual difference is arguably the most problematic of all, as vastly different understandings of what constitutes ‘translation’ inform the contributions. If comparative literature is “an important branch” of translation studies and if “cross-cultural relations” are all “modes of translation” (Translating Shakespeare, p. 4), then it becomes more difficult to tell what does not belong to translation studies than what does, and it may be wondered to what extent ‘translation’ remains a meaningful word. It may then not be accidental that among the most incisive contributions to these three collections are those — e.g. Déprats, Hamburger, Serpieri — which, despite the pressures of recent academic fashion, show their authors’ sensitivity not only to the cultural effect of translations and productions but also to the linguistic intricacies of the Shakespearean texts in both translation and original.

Lukas Erne (Genève)
