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TAH PAGH TAHBE: SHAKESPEAREAN EXPERIMENT IN TRANSLATION

Abstract
This article discusses experimental translation on the example of intralingual translation in the Play On! Translation project accompanying the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and intersemotic/intermedial translation in the OMGShakespeare series and Star Trek-related texts. These are approached as exercises in post-translation as defined by Edwin Gentzler in his volume on the subject.

Keywords: post-translation, Edwin Gentzler, William Shakespeare, experimental translation

> A spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: 'now,' future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time. Furtive and untimely, the apparition of the specter does not belong to that time, it does not give time, not that one: 'Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost' (*Hamlet*).
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xix.

A spectre hovers over Europe. A spectre of Shakespeare

In the scattered constellation of texts, whose intertextual pattern becomes visible when one tracks their connections to the oeuvre of a certain

Stratfordian, there are works that evoke a whole spectrum of reactions: from enthusiasm to indignation or even hostility. This diversity is connected, at least in part, with the long-lasting tradition of literary criticism, which, on the one hand, traces in Shakespeare's works the seeds of individual genius, translating it into formal innovation, and which on the other hand, treats them as a source of a literary tradition that allows one to approach them as a rich repertoire of ready-made solutions, proven scenarios and conventional tricks. As Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons and Brian McHale, editors of *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* affirm, however, the primary task of experimental literature is to ask fundamental questions concerning its nature and boundaries, and its existence is intertwined with a dynamic but lengthy reception process in which these questions lose their focus, while the innovative work is tamed, eventually becoming part of the canon, and fit for 'unreflective consumption' (2012: 1). Literature's experimentality is associated primarily with avant-garde practices and the twentieth century itself, with all its baggage of technological and scientific changes as well as the accompanying linguistic and ideological revolutions. And yet, experimentation has been accompanied by reflections on the nature of literature from at least the early modern era, as Bray, Gibbons and McHale argue; since Montaigne's *Essays* (2012: 2–4) 'the history of experimenting in literature can be considered as old as literature itself' (2012: 17). In this respect, Shakespeare's oeuvre serves an inspiration for many authors now considered as literary icons of modernity (Olsen 2012: 203). This is not only because in the cultural imaginary of the British empire the image of Shakespeare became solidified as that of the 'Swan of Avon,' the master of the English language (a somewhat questionable status), but also because as a formal innovator (here we most often mention his reworking of the sonnet form), Shakespeare is an arch-thief, unashamedly wielding others' words in the culture of the early-modern 'remix and mash-up' (Epstein 2012: 310). The polyphonic nature of his texts and their radical interpretive openness, related to the possibility of the dramatic word being completed by scenic gesture and utterance, is to a large extent based on and furthered by the spectral iterability of language as such: the stubborn presence of a quote, an allusion, a textual residue. To this day, this oeuvre's polyphonic openness effectively hinders its permanent rewriting for the purposes of nationalist propaganda, allowing for appropriation and retranslation as part of the post-colonial subversive powerplay, which has been in place

at least since the Cuban critic Roberto Fernández Retamar used the figure of Shakespeare's Caliban to describe the experiences of minority cultures (Gopal 2012: 182–183).[1]

The eponymous 'Shakespearean experiment' can thus be defined as a ceaseless literary diversion, in more than one sense of the word, and considered in terms of experimental translation, in line with its basic premise as set out by Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, that not only texts created in the sphere of experimental literature par excellence can be considered as experimental translations, but that the term also covers 'experimental translations of "conventional" texts' (2018: 83).[2] Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz assumes that the phenomenon of experimental translation includes 'multifarious artistic statements […] from various fields of cultural activity which, albeit genetically distant from the issues researched by translation scholars – consciously indicate translation proper (interlingual translation) as their primary hermeneutic space' (2018: 84–85). In this case, the essential criterion allowing for the classification of a text as an experiment will be its formal innovativeness, a mimetically irreverent approach to the textual tissue of the source, the challenge it poses for the illusion of intentionality, and the conscious use of the meta-translation discourse (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2018: 83).

In the English-speaking world, Shakespeare's oeuvre seems to be an exception to the accepted rule of experimental text's self-awareness; the assumed common knowledge of canonical works allows for understatements in this regard, and often fashions the intertextual dependence into a puzzle meant to increase the attractiveness of the target text for its recipient. The intermedial endgame concerns the citationality of the emergent text, consisting in locating various quotations and references within; the structural and thematic allusions that Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz highlights as characteristic of translatorial experiments seem to constitute the basic premises of a translation based on a more or less permanent Shakespearean foundation (2018: 85). The 'proximity to the target text' (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2018: 87) assumed in experimental translation seems in this case to take the shape of a cultural code, activated in the spectral circulation of literature,

[1] The scope of the present article does not allow for a discussion on reading as an experiment, but it is worth noting this direction is explored by Deleuze/Guattari in the context of reading Kafka; in their view reading can be seen as a trying experience/ trying out experience (7).

[2] Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own [A.K-P].

in which we still begin with 'the desire to speak to the dead' (Greenblatt 1988: 1). The texts which we reach for are mediumic and dislodge us, in accordance with the etymological logic of an ex-periment, to the margins of life – to literature that works like an ouija board:

> It seems that the afterlife of texts is one of the richest and most extensive kinds of existence that can be imagined or encountered. The never-ending work of interpretation means that every time we read, we simultaneously revive something that ended its life long ago. The free and unfettered play of interpretation is animated in a way by the phenomenon of intertextuality which guarantees new lives: re-incarnations of quotes, ideas and concepts that have been long forgotten and disposed of by new generations. Therefore, literature nowadays seems to us something of a patchwork, a monster that consists of fragments of other bodies, once dead, but brought into a strange life. (Marzec 2012: 260)

This article traces such spectral dependencies of Shakespearean translation in a number of examples, whose main selection criterion was creative resistance to what Harold Bloom referred to as the 'death of poetry' (1997: 10) after the Renaissance – this view treats Shakespeare's poetic language as both a generic pattern and a cultural model. The examples of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation, which are briefly analysed here, are treated as forms of resistance. They can be read as a way of contesting Shakespeare's status as the Bard, whose unique, poetic (swan) song remains untranslatable into other languages, and whose work – despite the presumed untranslatability of his poetry – remains the cornerstone of 'not only the Western canon; he is also the world canon' (Bloom 1997: xv). This hegemony, which is not only cultural but also political in nature (Dobson), deserves critical scrutiny from the perspective offered by translation studies; the colonial instrumentalisation of Shakespeare's poetry and drama may provide an insightful starting point for reflecting on the history of Shakespearean translation.

I am all the subjects that you have: Ghost-writing Shakespeare / Shakespearean translatio studiorum

The 2005 *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (reprint of the 1998 version) devotes a separate entry to Shakespearean translation. The entry is located between Umberto Eco and Siri Nergaard's detailed analysis of

semiotic approaches to translation, and the discussion of translation shifts by Matthijs Bakker, Cees Koster and Kitty van Leuven-Zwart.[3] Written by Dirk Delabastita, the short history of Shakespearean translations indeed reflects, as if in a curved mirror, the theoretical inquiries into the madness of semiosis and the pitfalls of translation shifts, and from the outset offers a significant warning: Shakespeare's presence in the volume devoted to translation studies is not related solely to the technical difficulties of translating his texts, but also (or perhaps above all) to the cultural function they fulfil. This function, as Delabastita emphasizes, is not free from certain 'theoretical assumptions and even value judgments' (2005: 222), among which Delabastita seems to include normative approaches to translation which strive to 'define the boundaries between adaptation and translation' (2005: 222), as well as attempts to reject 'philological orthodoxy in translation' which borders on idiosyncrasy (2005: 223). The issues related to the translation of the poetic are described modestly as 'technicalities' (2005: 223), but the entry also contains information on the contemporary difficulties of understanding Elizabethan English in general, and its poetic language in particular, especially for non-academic English speakers; indeed, the entry mentions the *Shakespeare Made Easy* series as an example of tackling such linguistic obstacles. At the same time, Delabastita puts a discreet question mark over the origin of Shakespeare's 'original:' after all, modern translators tend to refer to existing critical editions such as the Arden Shakespeare, which

[3] *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* exists in three versions: the first, published in 1998, with subsequent reprints; the second, published in 2009; and the most recent, published in 2020. Dirk Delabastita's entry appears in the first edition, and its extended version in the second edition; the third edition no longer contains the entry. However, in the latest edition of the encyclopaedia we do read that the general editors have decided to replace the entry devoted to Shakespeare's translation with issues deemed more pressing for contemporary translators. One can only assume that such an erasure on the part of the encyclopedia's editors or the publishing house (while preserving the history of, say, translations of the Bible or the Koran) may be read as an attempt to decolonize the canon. In my personal opinion, it is a failed attempt, suggestive of *cancel culture*: in order to engage and come to terms with heritage, no matter how difficult it is, one needs to analyse it and write about it without dismissing it. Decolonised Shakespeare should be the focus of translatorial attention, and doubly so, as historically speaking, his works and his person fulfilled the role of a colonial icon, but nowadays his oeuvre is re-read and re-interpreted in the postcolonial vein, becoming a rich source of inspiration for minority literatures that find within it not only the material for subversive work but first and foremost a source of empowerment: in numerous adaptations Shakespeare's characters are used to draw attention to the voice of the oppresessed and marginalized social groups (cf. Desmet, Iyegar, Jacobson 2019).

entails a series of questions about the dependence of such translations on changes within the traditions of Shakespeare literary criticism and editing (2005: 223).[4] Delabastita refers to the history of Shakespearean translation in Europe and openly admits that even in the era when absolute mimesis was a sacrosanct – albeit unattainable – goal, successful translations (their success understood primarily as stage success) were frequently the products of translators who only spoke English to a limited extent; indirect translations from other languages, such as French or German; as well as translations subject to major ideological manipulations due to the inconsistency with the locally prevailing conventions, tastes or customs (2005: 223).[5] On the other hand, a darker chapter in the history of Shakespearean translation has been subtly bracketed: the assumed untranslatability of Shakespeare's poetry can, after all, be read as an expression of the belief in the superiority of the language and culture of the British Empire over languages and cultures considered peripheral to *Rule Britannia*.

In *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Edwin Gentzler uses the term *post-translation*, first coined by Siri Nergaard and Stephano Arduini, to discuss literary translation in the 2011 issue of *Translation*: *A Transdisciplinary Journal*. The term is used by the three researchers to retroactively address the interdisciplinary transformation which has occurred in the Humanities, and which had previously been described as a translation turn in cultural studies (Heydel) or a creative turn in translation studies. Gentzler et consortes underline that the concept of post-translation should be used as a methodological tool, becoming the basis for transdisciplinary research constituting the dawn of a new era founded no longer on polysemy, but rather on the radical openness of acts of translation (2016: 8). Within the post-translational paradigm, translation itself becomes a meta-concept or an umbrella term for adaptation, rewriting and other phenomena of a serial nature. The outcome of such a methodological volte-face is supposed to be the liberation of translation from the burden of its exclusive attachment to the original, the consideration of much more than purely linguistic equivalence, and consequently, freedom from paradigms which narrow down our thinking about how texts thrown into a cultural

[4] See Massai (2007). For a comparative analysis of text-editing in the English-speaking tradition and the work of a translation editor, see Cetera-Włodarczyk 2018.

[5] Such intricate and bungled experiments appeared in the early days of Shakespearean translation in Poland as well. Cetera-Włodarczyk and Kosim (2019) write extensively on English-to-Polish translations; mediated translations still await more extensive study.

vortex are sustained and survive in the intermedial struggle to revive and resuscitate them beyond the 'textocentric' circulatory frameworks set for literature, especially when it comes to 'high' literature.

In his study, Gentzler looks closely at what, for Walter Benjamin, was translation's afterlife (2011): such considerations encompass not only the interlingual translation series (Balcerzan 1997), but also examples of the ghostly existence (or hauntology) of translations in the rhizomatic network of intermedial references which transcends the timid attempts at describing them through intertextuality. Two of the four texts that Gentzler uses to show that translation is 'one of the most important processes that can lead to the revitalization of culture' are *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* (2016: 8). The texts which Gentzler focuses on are subject to constant 'rewriting, relativization and revitalization' (2016: 133), and their 'afterlife' is considered in terms of their continuous and serial functioning in German, Russian and Chinese, but also in various anglophone contexts: in music, ballet and film, in accordance with the basic assumption that 'Post translation studies looks at the complex movements of texts, not just from source target, but to target and beyond, west to east, north to south, linear to non-linear; texts to images and forward, in time and space through numerous languages, cultures and genres' (Gentzler 2016: 112–113).

Of importance for the task of decentring (post)colonial approaches to reading, Gentzler highlights that what matters in this diffused cultural existence is not the reproduction of the hegemonic Anglocentric order but rather the struggle to overcome it. Such unyielding, incessant acts of resistance are the *sine qua non* of minority cultures' survival and their ability to thrive. Gentzler asks: 'What if indigenous and immigrant struggles with adaptation, assimilation, and resistance were viewed not as the exception, but as central to cultural production?' (2016: 8) In order to answer that question he turns to Shakespeare as 'one of the first authors [in the Euro-centric canon] who began to break the boundaries between translation and rewriting' (2016: 63). Gentzler's focus on the German and Chinese reception of Shakespeare is not new within global Shakespeare studies, but what merits attention is his focus on local productions of Shakespeare's plays as a way of shaping not only the relevant cultural sphere, but also as a mode of transformation of the intercultural space in which cultural exchange takes place: it is the space within which *glocal* cultural practices emerge.

It is translation, then – whose cultural existence goes beyond the boundaries of one language, as it is absorbed and disseminated through a series

of repetitions, reiterations, and refractions in the crucible of international cultures – which can be understood as a risky *experiment* rooted in the Proto-Indo-European *per-; its experimental nature concerns not only any movement in the *per*iphery or outside the centre, but also contains an element of *per*nicious risk which is somewhat more visible in the Latin *periculum*, 'threat.' By venturing outside, beyond the boundaries of the *ver*nacular (*verba vernacula*; the pure language of the fathers that binds us to home), we run the risk of coming into contact with the foraneus: the *dis*similar, the *im*-pure, the *un*canny.

Ano*mal*ies or imPOPrieties: Shakespeare in *con*course

The claim regarding Shakespeare's local universality functions as a given in the English-speaking world, to such an extent that it has until recently been thought of as universal even within the margins of 'high' culture: in science fiction. Thematic and structural allusions are surprisingly often used in SF to justify the cultural endurance of Shakespeare's oeuvre, well beyond the compasses of the Earth, and even the galaxy. 'To be or not to be' has made it into the annals of popular culture as 'taH pagh taHbe,' famously uttered in *Star Trek* at the Klingon table, just as much as the sum of the Klingon obsession with Shakespeare, as exemplified in the bold statement 'You haven't understood Shakespeare until you've heard him in the original Klingon' (*Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*). This particular presupposition has found its intermedial echo as *Hamlet* rendered in the language of the valiant warriors from the planet Kronos.[6] The preface to the Klingon *Hamlet* contains the bold assurance that the ethnicity of the author of the play is unquestionable, because Wil'yam Sheq'spir belongs with the eulogists of the wars fought by the brave race, whose ruthless struggle for honour and extraterrestrial power earned *Star Trek* countless fans in the most remote corners of the habitable universe (Dionne 2002).

It is worth emphasising here that the Klingon language created during work on the first film in the *Star Trek* multiverse (*Star Trek: The Motion*

[6] On the other hand, in Dan Simmons's novel *Ilium*, the characters from *The Tempest* begin to live their own independent lives, and the memory of their author lives on; even when the hedonistically-minded humanity has forgotten about literature, the passion for Shakespeare's sonnets consumes the intelligent machines traversing the cosmic outback.

Picture, dir. R. Wise, 1979) was initially meant to sound as barbaric as possible, with 'simple gibberish' evoking 'alien and brutal' connotations (Thibault 2020: 100). Of significance for a postcolonial reading of the *Star Trek* series, the invitation to work on a more rounded version of the speech used by the race of cruel warriors was issued to the American First Nations linguist Marc Okrand, who, in 1995, developed the Klingon dictionary. The growing interest in learning the language of the inhabitants of the planet Kronos led to the establishment of the Klingon Language Institute, and although Shakespeare remains the only playwright whose works have been published in Klingon so far, literary production in this regard continues (Thibault 2020: 100).[7]

The initial impulse behind the creation of other-worldly versions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* was the aforementioned remark of one of the characters in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (dir. N. Meyer, 1991); the quotation from Hamlet's monologue in the film title seems to be a thematic allusion that returns in subsequent versions of the script, intended first as a farewell from the actors of the series, then as a political variation on the theatre of the Cold War, in which the role of the Russians is assumed by Klingons, and in the final variant as strongly resonant Shakespearean themes of guilt, punishment, vengeance and forgiveness, and an undefined peaceful future the former enemies are about to embark upon (Drakakis 2003; Cantor 2000). In this scenario, the character of Gorkon, who appreciates Shakespeare's genius, becomes a transcreational equivalent of Gorbachev; the comment on Shakespeare's ethnic origin has also been read, however, as an ironic reference to the German myth about the Germanic origin of Shakespeare (Meyer), which, as Barbara Hodgon argues, appears juxtaposed with the 'to be or not to be' quote in the anti-Nazi British cinema (2008: 443).

In *The Undiscovered Country*, the allusion to Hamlet's monologue requires an erudite audience: Gorkon's toast to 'the undiscovered country – the future' is not understood among his Klingon peers (he speaks English after all), but it is immediately recognized by the half-Vulcan Spock, who eruditely points to the exact Act and Scene, as customary (horror of horrors, however, he does not mention any critical edition in particular). Gorkon is not only fluent in the Shakespearean idiom but he also creatively transforms it: he uses the quote to address a context quite contrary to that

[7] Other classics of world literature include *Gilgamesh*, Sun Tsu's *The Art of War*, and *The Little Prince*; there were also attempts to translate the *Bible*.

present in the overarching metaphor appearing in Hamlet's monologue (Smith 2004: 140). The source domain of death as 'undiscovered country' refers to the colonial expansion – the time of the *Conquista* – the conquest of new lands and peoples. The Klingons, after all, are humanoid aliens who appear in the film series as the antagonists of the human-centric Federation. At the series onset they were modelled on the Japanese, with orientalised costumes, a brownface appearance, and prosthetic skull combs and slanted bushy eyebrows. As Karolina Kazimierczak emphasises, the very decision to cast in *The Undiscovered Country* the outstanding Shakespearean actors Christopher Plummer and David Warner as the former Klingon antagonists, introduced some confusion into the multiverse that had so far been functioning on the strength of the most basic racial stereotypes. Putting quotations from Shakespeare into the mouths of the hitherto orientialised Klingon warriors in the film, which symbolically bids farewell to the Cold War, indicates the political nature of the cultural experiment which seems to be inscribed into every gesture of translation. What takes place here is a symbolic reversal of the colonial scenario: the 'undiscovered land' is to become a future founded on peace and life, not conquest and death. Incidentally, however, this gesture reveals the deeply Anglocentric structures of thought which assume that the measure of true humanity (understood as the ability to comprehend the principles of peaceful co-existence within the framework of intercultural dialogue) is concomitant with – if not tantamount to – the knowledge of Shakespeare, and even more so, the knowledge of Shakespeare in English (even if in this case it were to be merely a translation from Klingon).

The Klingon *Hamlet*, translated by Nick Nicholas and Andrew Strader, was the outcome of the Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project (Kazimierczak 2010: 40), with its aim of creating a fully functional Klingon language. The translation is presented in this context as the project's crowning achievement: 'the translations […] become originals,' as Susan Bassnett (2017: xxiv) would have it. Thus, the subversive nature of the whole project, reversing the relationship between the original and the copy, becomes blurred, since, in accordance with the auctorial intention, a successful Shakespearean translation is seen as a fulfilment of the postulate regarding the maturity of Klingon as a language, serving not only as a cinematic prop but as a fully-fledged medium which allows for artistic expression (Kazimierczak 2010: 40). The Klingon *Hamlet* was published in 1996 in a bilingual version, allowing for a simultaneous reading of both the Klingon and English versions. Its stage

adaptation was premiered on 25 September 2010, thus completing the life cycle of Sheq'spirian drama (Marks 2010: online).

The term *experiment* includes not only the etymological seeds of risk and threat, but also contains a root referring to a trial, testing, or learning – understood as a causal process rooted in effects of experience gained through exposure to regularities (and irregularities) in the environment.[8] An experimental task of this kind has been undertaken by Bill Rauch and Lue Morgan Douthit, directors of the *Play On Shakespeare* project which started as the *Play on! Project* in 2012, as part of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The project led to the appearance of 39 intra-language translations, presented in 2019 in a series of performative readings during the 33-day-long New York translation festival (The Play On Shakespeare Translation Festival, www.playonfestival.org). The project involved 33 playwrights and 23 dramaturges, selected with a view to breaking with the tradition of gatekeeping, which restricts access to prestigious cultural goods and projects for those who are deprived of the white male privilege. The project started with *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and ended with the translation and 'staging' of *Two Noble Kinsmen*, translated by Tim Slover (Douthit 2019: online). The resulting translation samples were discussed with the audience before the festival, with the aim of discovering whether the texts developed in cooperation with actors could also be staged in groups consisting of nine to twelve actors. Lue Morgan Douthit, director of the festival, notes how

> the overwhelming sense we received from audiences is that this is an experiment worth pursuing. And there were many people who expressed interest in reading them. So our next step is getting them published. (Douthit 2019: online)

Nonetheless, the task of modernisation was perceived as scandalous, despite the fact that the *Play On Shakespeare* team embraced the customary translatorial postulate of faithfulness to the original, and their goal was in essence educational: offering content that had previously been incomprehensible to

[8] Let's stress here the significance of the very notions of regularity and causality in the history and development of mechanistic, functional and cognitive definitions of learning as well as the significance of qualitative assessment of the behavioural change that occurs during learning. Yet, even the most desirable change in behaviour is a disruption of a previous pattern; thus adaptive value of learning is in its core of cores based on the introduction of an anomaly. To predict the end-result of such a disruption has been the endgame for generations of scholars: hence the incessant striving for control over experiment.

many recipients, while at the same time expressing a desire to emulate the intertextual nature of such work. As Douthit claims:

> I wanted the writers to create a linguistic world that could contain 400 years of references because I didn't want the language use to be reduced to our current Twitterese. The concern most often expressed was that this would 'dumb down' the language, but the translators must match the poetic language as best as they can. And I encourage the translators to keep references to the gods. Comic bits that are based on contemporary Elizabethan references are another matter. I don't know what to do with those. (Douthit 2018: online)

The translation process described by Douthit on the example of *Timon of Athens* included working on the text line by line, ongoing interpretation, as well as polishing the verse, without introducing editorial changes or alterations at plot-level, and with no text cuts. The creators seem to have been guided by the *primo non nocere* principle (Douthit writes *verbatim*: 'We decided that the first rule was "do no harm"', 2018: online), resulting in a conservative decision to set the plays in the early modern era; nevertheless, they clearly emphasize that the effect of their efforts was to be a carefully controlled '*laboratory experiment* – if everything else remained the same, what might we learn about how the language is used by concentrating only on it' (Douthit 2018: online; emphasis mine). These translations were meant to be 'companion pieces (*not* replacements) to the original texts' (Rauch 2015: online; emphasis original).

The pragmatic and, at the same time, cautious approach of the Oregon project team was met with criticism from the circles defending the linguistic and historical purity of the Elizabethan 'original.' In the article presenting a defence of Tim Slover's translation of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* produced within the project, Martine Kei Green-Rogers and Alex Vermillion commend this attempt as Shakespearean 'in spirit,' as it assumes a level of text comprehensibility analogous with its accessibility for the Elizabethan audience, while 'put[ing] the same kind of pressure on the language as Shakespeare put on his' (2017:232). Both Shakespeare (and Fletcher) and Slover seem to share 'the same sense of difference' […] 'of the past,' whereby their writing offers a new 'reimagining' of Chaucer's story achievable via 'the same feeling of "newness"' of language (Green-Rogers, Vermillion 2017: 237). While '*Two Noble Kinsmen* is a modernization and dramatization of another old text: Chaucer's "the Knight's Tale"' (2017: 233), Slover's work revives the very idea that 'Shakespeare himself' had for positioning the new play 'as

a dramatic metanarrative that continues the bold statement foregrounded by Shakespeare and Fletcher's original version' (2017: 231–232). At the same time, however, at the very beginning of their argument, Green-Rogers and Vermillion use quotation marks when discussing Slover's 'translation' and debate the boundaries between adaptation and translation (2017: 231), pointing to Douthit's liking for the 'rigour' of the term 'translation' even though, admittedly, she was 'going for something much more subtle' than translation (2017: 234).

In the dramatic battle of counter-arguments for and against intralingual translations of Shakespeare, which, has been waged primarily on the social media front, the heavy rhetorical cannons have been used to inquire as follows: if the modernization of Shakespeare's drama is in the audience's best interest, why stop midway, when you can simply rewrite Shakespeare in emojis and texts? (Pollack-Pelzner 2015: online) The irony of such a question lost some of its initial momentum as the first 'remakes' of Shakespeare's texts in the visual language of a new generation appeared at the same time.[9] Based on conventions specific to the language of social media, such emotionally-invested translations are intended for a young audience, and are dominated by emojis, keyboard shortcuts and the language of contemporary American teenagers in a format known, for example, from WhatsApp.

Published as part of the *OMG Shakespeare* series by Penguin Random House for Young Readers, the booklets offer parodic versions of Shakespearean works: *srsly Hamlet* (Shakespeare, Carbone 2015), *YOLO Juliet* (Shakespeare, Wright 2015), *Macbeth #killingit* (Shakespeare, Carbone 2016), or *A Midsummer Night #nofilter* (Shakespeare, Wright 2016) are intended as an attractive alternative to revision in English literature classes: the recommendations on the publisher's website even include a warning to teachers to use them together with the original text to attract students' attention and help them understand that 'Shakespeare's works still matter' (*OMG Shakespeare!*, Random House, online; see also Martins, Sagres 2020: online; Mišterová 2019: 44–52; Mišterová 2021: 205–222). The verse is modernized and transformed, appearing in the form of radically

[9] The mere appearance of the emoji with a concrete LOL smiley face named 2015 Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionaries, drew criticism that the emergence of digital pictographs would lead to a catastrophic ending: 'After millennia of painful improvement, from illiteracy to Shakespeare and beyond, humanity is rushing to throw it all away. We're heading back to ancient Egyptian times, next stop the stone age, with a big yellow smiley grin on our faces' (Jones 2015: online).

simplified text messages that include emojis and familiar social media abbreviations such as srsly, YOLO, LOL, etc. The language of the messages is simple, with few complex sentences and a limited use of elaborate grammar and vocabulary; this makes the series applicable both in teaching English as a first and a foreign language (Falter, Beach 2018). In teaching English as a foreign language the *emoji Shakespeare* is considered a tool diversifying the learning process and rendering it more attractive. The underlying assumption is, however, that emoji is a language of a universally expressive visual code – which is contradicted by the list of emoticons and keyboard shortcuts provided in the booklets in the form of an attachment, as a key to deciphering the entire text (e.g. Shakespeare, Carbone 2015: 102– 105).

Ivona Mišterová writes about Carbone's *srly Hamlet* that it is 'not only a new form of adaptation but, in fact, a new form of cultural artefact, brought forth in a world dominated by ubiquitous smartphones and social networks' (2019: 51). What is of particular significance from the perspective of post-translation reflection is the fact that the essentially hypertextual, digital medium undergoes the process of analogization within the series. WhatsApp entries, hyperlinks and emoticons are printed on paper and in this form create the illusion of digitalness, thus paradoxically contradicting the importance of translating Shakespeare's works into a medium that fosters the development of digital competences, considered of primary importance for modern audiences. The digital medium is analogized (which ostensibly depends on the conservative publishing practice resulting from a pragmatic approach to the reception of texts made primarily for schools), and yet the Shakespearean playtext undergoes a transformation into a digital code which, despite its assumed almost-universal comprehensibility, remains legible only for the generation of digital natives fluent in digital communication conventions created around the time of the series publication. Mišterová and Milică justly see in these forms of adaptation or 'remediation' (Mišterová 2019; Milică 2020) a potential for reaching new recipients, but digital translation – heavily intersubjective and dependent on technological trends and fashions – is marked by the risk of accelerated meaning-loss**.** Although the aforementioned titles have not received much recognition from Shakespeare critics (e.g. Peter Holland quite rightly argues that the idea of exchanging text messages is based on the notion that there might be physical distance between those partaking in the communication process, while in a drama the characters talk to each other in relative proximity to one another), the emergence of new ways of circulating Shakespeare's works has become

a fact, once presupposed by Douglas Lanier, and the *emoji Shakespeare* remains one of the latest avenues of translation within the radically open Shakespeare experiment: an experiment that increasingly assumes the reception of the text based on the immersion of its recipient in its world and partaking in its creation.

Performative impurity: theatricality of experiments

Writing about experimental translation, Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz emphasizes the significance of reception when it comes to an experimental text that questions existing divisions and categories:

> Understanding the basic meanings of these multifarious and multi-format artistic utterances requires the activation of translation semantics, and thus also asking appropriate translation questions about the nature of interlinguistic/intersemiotic/intercultural transfer, the type of translation transformation we are dealing with, and the way the equivalence of the source and target texts is understood. (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2018: 88)

Lezlie Cross (2017) explains the concerns regarding intralingual translations of Shakespeare as both anxiety over the potential destruction of the long tradition of literary worship started by David Garrick, as well as the class-related fear of wrestling Shakespeare's oeuvre from the clutches of literary elites. It seems that the extreme reactions engendered by the examples analyzed above are indeed related to the fear of losing the complexity of language or even cultural identity. The desire to *supplement* or *complement* the original text invoked by the supporters of these experimental translation gestures is not so much caused by overscrupulousness but rather an imbalance concerning 'the way the equivalence of the source and target texts is understood' (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2018: 88). Each of the cases described above seems to function on the basis of a spectral relationship with the Shakespearean intertext, and it is this relationship, itself based on complementarity, that seems to condition their reception. Each of these experiments assumes a radical openness not only of the translation act as such, but also of its reception. As such, this can engender reactions that may lead to a reflection on the nature of the relationship between the source and target text, since they elicit questions about the status of Shakespeare's translation and the transfers taking place in such a constellation of translations.

In his seminal volume *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin divides performatives, i.e. the actions one undertakes with recourse to words, into successful and unsuccessful performatives. From these he excludes the 'parasitic' use of language, such as in theatrical performances, as devoid of an authentic character (understood as its truthful character). Derrida, in turn, points out that Austin's model is based on the erroneous belief that there are speech acts that do not refer to other speech acts. According to Derrida, understanding the paradoxical nature of language means acknowledging that performatives always remain 'impure,' contaminated by the difference resulting from a change in their context (cf. Garber 2010: 23–25). Language, therefore, is founded not on immutability, but on incessant change, which takes the form of a palimpsestic quote. In her critical discussion of Austin's analysis of pure performatives, Marjorie Garber emphasizes that where Austin writes about the impossibility of pure performatives, he is in fact referring to the theatricality of linguistic repetition, and bases his reasoning on a quote from *Hamlet* on suiting the action to the word and the word to the action.[10] Although Hamlet does indeed advise the actors in this respect, formulating in the process what sounds like tenets of neoclassical representational theory, one of the axes pushing the drama towards its tragic finale is the modification, if not the breakdown, of this relationship.[11] The

[10] '[…] in *How To Do Things With Words* where Austin invokes the notion of the "pure performative," his own ordinary language, devoid of quotation marks or any other identifying reference, cites Hamlet's advice to the players. "[T]here are many transitional stages between suiting the action to the word and the pure performative," Austin says […] In such cases, Austin suggests—repeating his unmarked quotation of Hamlet – "the action suited to the word is itself a verbal performance." To add to this vortex of references at once prescient and belated we might recall that Hamlet's admonition to the traveling troupe of actors is itself a kind of "how to do things with words": ("Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observation, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing …" [Ham.3.2.17–20]) […] In fact these "impure" performatives are, we might say, pure theater. The essence of theater and of the theatrical is that it does transgress the boundary of the stage, does cross over, in ways both magical and disconcerting, premature and belated—just like a ghost.' (Garber 2010: 24)

[11] See e.g. David Hillman who quite characteristically concludes that Hamlet 'demands an adherence to a Sidneian conception of mimesis […] to "suit"—to create a hard-to-define correspondence-between language and action' while seemingly abandoning it in the course of the drama; significantly for my conclusion and the theoretical echoes it repeats, in his discussion of 'discretion' Hillman quotes from both Ernst Cassirer's and Michel Foucault's works which address the emergence of discerning, differentiating, categorising and individuating as forms of knowledge (Hillman 1996: 86; Cassirer qtd. in Hillman, Foucault qtd. in Hillman 1996: 73).

impossibility of putting words and actions (or things in general) together is, after all, the almost insurmountable difference between vengeance-inspired rumination and vengeful deed. In view of the impossibility – or even nonsensicality of believing in the accord between words and actions (things) – the one-to-oneness of originals and their translations – the only action possible is to toss words (words, words) at the wind, hoping that they will be heard, if only as an iterable, spectral echo. Both Derrida and Garber emphasize that what Austin considers to be an anomaly, i.e. a quote, whose source may become obliterated in the act of repetition, is in fact 'the defining aspect of language, the feature that makes language function' (Garber 2010: 24). The post-translation desire to 'revitalize' (resurrect) texts can, therefore, be read as an amazing experiment in which the translator acts as a medium aware of the fact that they are haunted by spectres – literary ghosts of the past.

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