

## A Re-evaluation of Methodologies in Literary Adaptation in Light of Shakespeare's Asian Presence

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### Abstract

The focus on edgy and dissident voices outside of the English-speaking world makes way for the complex layers of cultural exchange between Shakespeare and Asia. The performances analyzed to a greater or lesser extent hint at interculturality, and contribute to a different understanding of Shakespeare. This is not to suggest that the Anglocentric view of Shakespeare should be substituted or replaced by an Asian view, but the latter is currently gaining importance in its contribution to the questioning of the hypercanonical presence of the author.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Asia, Performance, Multilingual, Local, Exotica, Adaptation, Appropriation, Text, Interplay, Discourse

### Introduction

In the context of multilingual performance defining the relevance of Shakespeare in the 21st century the process of global expansion of Shakespeare has materialized only by naturalizing, localizing, and even indigenizing Shakespeare to such an extent that some non-English cultures regard him as their home author. English Shakespeare today is now as much a global as a national phenomenon, and both his language and his thematic resources can be exploited in multiple ways, at once from the inside, as for examples; Shakespeare's plays performed in a Scottish or Irish accent and the variety of popular or subcultural Shakespeare videos on YouTube that illustrate intercultural performances in the UK, and from the outside, as directors, performers, and audiences triangulate his plays among the local, global, and personal landscapes of their worlds. It is a well-known fact that multilingualism is connected to a myriad of pros and cons in terms of its ideologies and practices in our postcolonial age. The notion of languages as separate, discrete entities and 'countable institutions', is actually a social construct. A critical historical account of the growth of languages certainly demonstrates through the process of nomenclature that languages were 'invented'. Also, that in direct relation with the invention of languages, "an ideology of languages as separate and enumerable categories was also created". According to Maconi and Pennycook, the naming of languages in the likes of Bengali and Assamese, is the construction of 'new objects' and they contend that languages cannot be viewed as discrete, bounded, impermeable, autonomous systems. But in place of which they propose that 'local knowledge' is crucial to our understanding of the relationships between what people believe about their respective languages, the situated forms of talk they deploy, and the material effects, such as social, economic and environmental.

Roman Retellings

Across a time period that extends from Cicero to the present, the lines of approach to translation or adaptation are not easily locatable in a temporal context. It seems as if the word for word versus sense for sense lines emerge again and again with varied degrees of emphasis in accordance with different degrees of emphasis in accordance with differing concepts of language and communication. A chronological account of the ways of literary adaptation through the evolution of the theories of translation needs now be stated:

The Roman literary system actually sets up a hierarchy of texts and authors that overrides linguistic boundaries and that system in turn reflects the Roman ideal of the hierarchical yet caring central state based on the true law of Reason. Cicero points out that mind dominates the body as a king rules over his subjects or a father controls his children, but warns that where Reason dominates as master prevailing on his slaves, “it keeps them down and crushes them.” With translation, the ideal Source language (S. L.) text is there to be imitated or adapted and never to be weighed down by the too heavy application of Reason. Both Horace and Cicero in their respective remarks on translation, offer an important distinction between ‘word for word’ translation and ‘sense for sense’, or fairly, ‘figure for figure’ translation. The underlying principle of enriching their native language and literature through translation leads to a stress on the aesthetic criteria of the Target Language (T. L.) product rather than on more rigid notions of ‘fidelity’. Horace while advising the would-be writer to avoid the pitfalls that dogs the slavish translator, did also advise the sparing use of new words. Horace compares the process of addition of new words and the gradual vanishing of other words to the changing of leaves in spring and autumn.

#### Translation of the Bible

As Christianity began to spread, translation came to acquire a new dimension. And that new dimension was of disseminating the word of God as form of adaptation. A religion as script / text based as Christianity presented the translator with a mission that encompassed both aesthetic and evangelistic criteria the problem of the thin line between what constituted stylistic license and what constituted heretical interpretation was to remain a major stumbling block for centuries. The true secular spirit of ideal translation and hence adaptation was perhaps manifested for the first time when Erasmus summed up the evangelizing spirit of Bible translating as he declared:

I would desire that all women should reade the gospell and Paules epistles and I wold to God they were translated in to the tonges of all men so that they might not only be read and knowne of the scotes and yrishmen But also of the Turkes and the Sarracenes... I wold to God the plowman woldsinge a texte of the scripture at his plow-beme. And that the wever at his lowme with this wold drive away the tediousness of tyme. I wold the wayfaringeman with his pastyme wold expelle the weriness of his iorney. And to be shorte I wold that all the communication of the christen shuld be of the scripture for in a manner such are we oure selves as oure selves as our daylye tales are. (Bassnett 55)

We may, therefore, generalize the aims of the first Bible translators or adaptors as: To clarify errors arising from previous versions, due to inadequate S. L. manuscripts or to linguistic incompetence; to produce an accessible and aesthetically appetizing vernacular

native style; and to clarify points of dogma and cut down the extent to which the scriptures were interpreted and re-presented (to a certain extent adapted) to the laymen as a metatext.

#### Adaptations in the Renaissance and Onwards

In poetic language, likewise, the practice of the art of proper literary adaptation may be said to have begun with the Earl of Surrey, Henry Howard and Thomas Wyatt. A good many a critic keeping their tongue in cheek have upheld the formers' brand of translations as 'adaptations' proper. A careful investigation of Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's, for example, shows faithfulness not to individual words or sentence structures but to a notion of the meaning of the poem in its relationship to its readers. As for an example, Wyatt, chooses Petrarch's famous sonnet concerning the deaths of his lady love, Laura and dear friend, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna that begins: *Rotta è l'alta colonna e'l verde lauro / Che facean ombra al mio stanco pensiero; ( Broken is the tall coloumn and the green laurel tree [ Laura ] / That used to shade my tired thought )* and adapts it to clothe his feelings for his deceased friend, Thomas Cromwell into: " The pillar pearished is whearto I lent; / The strongest staye of myne unquiet mynde:" It is therefore that it remains clear that the translator has opted for a voice that will have immediate impact on contemporary readers as being of their own time.

The trend of translation, therefore, in the sixteenth century was instrumental in evolving the practice of drab mechanical translation into a more metamorphosed form of art, or fairly speaking into a form of adaptation. For, now translation entailed two aspects of literary or artistic transplantation, such as, for addressing the immediate context ( social ); and for addressing or redressing the shaping up of cultural roots. As George Steiner puts it aptly that translation in Renaissance Europe, "established a logic of relation between past and present" (Simon 164). The adaptive impulse trumped over the drab ability to just translate among litterateurs in the seventeenth century with a newfound interest of literary critics in devising rules of aesthetic reproduction, which was enabled momentum by Rene Descartes' formulation of a method of inductive reasoning. Sir John Denham, whose theory of translation, albeit adaptation, his poem "To Sir Richard Fanshawe upon his Translation of Pastor fido" and his Preface to his translation of "The Destruction of Troy" encapsulates, deal with both the formal aspect ( Art ) and the spirit ( Nature ) of the works. However, he warns against applying the principle of literal translation to the translation of poesy thus: "For it is not his business alone to translate Language into Language, but Poesie into Poesie; and poesie is so subtle a spirit, that in pouring out of one language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a Caput mortuum." (Schulte and Biguenet) Abraham Cowley goes a stage further, and in his "Preface" to his *Pindarique Odes*, 1656, he boldly asserts that he has "taken, left out and added what I please". Cowley's preface, hence, was hailed as the manifesto of "libertine translators of the latter seventeenth century".

The problems of translation was taken up by John Dryden in his 'Preface to Ovid's Epistles', in 1680. Dryden postulates here three basic types, namely: "Metaphrase", or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another; "paraphrase", or translation with the Ciceronian "sense for sense" mode of translation; and, "imitation", where the translator is free to abandon the text of the original as he thinks fit. Of

the three types, Dryden observes the second to be the most balanced of the three. It thus becomes necessary here to call upon what Dryden said in his 'Dedication of the Aeneis': "I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age". So to say, Dryden talks of a responsible translator, or more precisely, alludes to a thorough adaptor.

The element of the question of the moral duty of the translator of clarifying the essential "spirit" of a text to his contemporary reader had had its head raised since Dryden and Pope laid down their concepts of translation. In defense of the right of the individual to be addressed in his own terms, on his own ground as per the ever-changing concepts of originality, Dr. Johnson, in the eighteenth century, in his *Life of Pope*, discussing the question of additions to a text through translation, reaffirms that if elegance is gained, for it certainly is desirable, provided that nothing is taken away, should serve the purpose of a writer to be read.

The eighteenth-century notion of the translator as painter or imitator with a moral duty both to his original subject and to his receiver was widespread. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe argued that every literature must pass through three phases of translation, and although as the phases are recurrent all may be found happening within the same linguistic system at the same time. As Goethe claims, the first epoch familiarizes us with foreign countries on our own terms, for which he cites Luther's German Bible as an example of this tendency. The second epoch, he claims, is that of appropriation through substitution and adaptive reproduction, where the translator absorbs the sense of a foreign work of art but reproduces it in his own terms. And for the third mode, to which he lays utmost importance and emphasis, he aims for perfect identity between the S. L. text and the T. L. text and to achieving this through the creation of a new "manner" which fuses the uniqueness of the original with a fresh form and structure. Such an ingenious endeavour, according to Goethe, is to be found in the work of Voss. For, he claims that Voss in his translation of Homer had actually achieved that valued third mode of literary reproduction, or in other words, he put into use a new concept of "originality" in translation.

#### Metamorphosis of Adaptive Art

In this regard, it is imperative to recall that Alexander Fraser Tyler's *The Principles of Translation*, published in 1791, is the first systematic study in English of the translation processes. The translator, as Tyler points out, must strive to "adopt the very soul of his author, which must speak through his own organs" (Steiner 59). Be that as it may, Tyler clues in one of the roles of a true translator shorn of solipsism. Coleridge aptly sums up this new tendency when he says the previous way of painful copying, would produce masks only, not forms breathing life.

In his *Biographia Literaria*, produced in 1817 in England, Coleridge outlined his theory of the distinction between Fancy and Imagination. He held that Imagination is the supreme creative organic power, which is contrary to the lifeless mechanism of Fancy. Coleridge's position in his theory of Imagination and Fancy is much akin to the standpoint of the German theorist and translator, August Wilhelm Schlegel as we get to see in the latter's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, produced in 1809. Schlegel clearly

conceived of translation as a category of thought rather than as an activity linked to only language or literature.

The idea of such writers at all times being involved in a process of repeating what Blake once called “the divine body in every man” resulted in a vast number of translations, such as the Schlegel-Tieck translations of Shakespeare ( 1797 – 1833 ), Schlegel’s version and Cary’s version of *Divina Commedia* ( 1805 – 14 ). No wonder, therefore, that the stress on the impact of the translation in the target culture resulted in a shift of interest far away from the actual mechanical processes of translation. The translator thus began to be seen as a creative genius in his own right, in consonance with the genius of his original and enriching the literature and language into which he is translating. Or to say in other words, the translator began to be gradually likened to the role of a veritable adaptor.

The pre-eminence of the Imagination as opposed to the Fancy leads implicitly to the assumption that the act of translation must be inspired by the higher creative force if it is to be rendered as something more than a mere everyday activity with the simultaneous loss of the original shaping spirit. But with this assumption a problem raises its head: Namely, the problem of “meaning”! Therefore, the moot point is that if poetry is thought to be an entity that is different from language, how can it be translated unless it is assumed that the translator is able to read between the words of the original and hence reproduce and recreate the text-behind-the-text! This is precisely what has led the French poet, Stéphane Mallarmé to admit later that the text is also the reading of silence and spaces.

In this context, Percy Bysshe Shelley stance in the art of literary translation becomes important. For Shelley views the activity of mere translation to be of a lower status. And as per his biographer, Timonthy Webb, Shelley appears to shift from translating works admired for their ideas to translating works admired for their literary graces. Shelley in his *The Defense of Poesy* thus cautions: “It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as to seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower – and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel.” (Reynolds)

#### Victorian Mode of Literary Adaptation

There were in vogue, two opposing theories of translation in the Victorian times. Quite conceivably, the notion of translation in the Carlyle-Pre-Raphaelite days verged on an interesting paradox. On the one hand there is an intense adulation for the original although that adulation is based on the individual writer’s certainty of its worth. And also is the fact that the original text is looked upon as a property or an item of winsomeness to be improved upon a creative reserve, sans any concessions to the palates of contemporary life. While on the other hand, in the process, the translators implicitly reject the idea of universal literacy by producing consciously archaic translations. Hence, the foundations were laid for the notion of translation as a minority interest. By its natural course, Victorian nationalism contributed to all but the art of translation. For the hardening of nationalistic lines and the growth of pride in a national culture, French, English or German translators, for example, no more saw translation as means to enriching their own culture. The elitist notion of culture and education entailed by this typical attitude was, ironically, to assist in the devaluation of translation.

Because, if translation were thought of as a mechanism, as a prime means of bringing the T. L. reader close to the S. L. text in the original, then quite clearly perfection of style and the translator's own ability to write creatively were always going to be of lesser importance.

In a fresh turn of the proceedings, it was Edward Fitzgerald ( 1809 – 63 ), famous for his version of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* ( 1858 ), who passionately declared that a text must live at all costs with a transfusion of one's own worst life if one cannot retain the original's better. Fitzgerald made a famous declaration that it were better to have a live sparrow than a stuffed eagle. To speak in other words, far from attempting to lead the T. L. reader to the original, Fitzgerald's work intends to bring a version of the S. L. text into the T. L. culture as an organically living entity, even though, his somewhat extreme views on the lowliness of the S. L. text, point to another facet of elitism.

If we thus recall the main currents of the typology of translation studies in this great age of industrial capitalism and colonial advancements till the First World War, we shall chiefly see the following diverse concepts about it: That translation is a means of assisting the T. L. reader to become the equal of what Friedrich Schleiermacher called the better reader of the original, through a deliberately planned unfamiliarity in the T. L. text; that translation is a means by which the individual translator who begins to see his own self much in the fashion of Rossetti's creative image of Aladdin in the magic vaults gives to the T. L. reader his personal pragmatic choice; that translation is a means by which the translator strives to improve upon the status of the S. L. text, which is thought of as being on a lower cultural plane.

#### Adaptation since the Fin de siecle

In the first half of the twentieth century, our discussions in English on translation in theory and practice overlaps many of the Victorian concepts of translation, namely; literalness, archaizing, pedantry and the production of a text of lower literary merit for an elite minority. However, off and on great individual translators and theorists have successfully managed to make inroads to the conflicting and disparate issues of the art of translation pragmatically. As for example, Ezra Pound's position in the history of translation is of immense importance, for his aptitude as an artist of translation lay in his perceptiveness as critic and theorist. The lecture, 'On Translation', delivered at the Taylor Institution in the University of Oxford in 1931, is a bright example of a highly intelligent and systematic approach to the practical problems of translation and also to the moot question of the status of a translated vis-à-vis adapted text. Side by side, to speak of the problems of the translators in the modern period, Carlo Emilio Gadda defines translation as a diachronic system that always puts forth illustrations of the size and complexity: "We therefore think of every system as an infinite entwining, an inextricable knot or mesh of relations: The summit can be seen from many altitudes; and every system is referable to infinite coordinated axes: it presents itself in infinite ways." (Bassnett 78)

As Robert Scholes says, a translator must carry out the study of the act of translation with a view to identifying or giving identity to each individual structure, whether that be prose or verse, since each structure stands for and stresses particular linguistic features. He says: "Every literary unit from the individual sentence to the whole order of words can be

seen in relation to the concept of system. In particular, we can look at individual works, literary genres, and the whole of literature as related systems, and at literature as a system within the larger system of human culture.” (Berger 74)

The challenge to a researcher of translation studies and hence adaptation of literary texts is to enter into a complex set of existing systems that a literary text involves in a dialectical relationship with other sets outside its boundaries. As per Jurí Lotman the pragmatic impression of a translated or adapted text that the latter can have on the researcher is to be found in the following positions: Where the translated or adapted text offers a justification of either a prose argument or a poetic paraphrase; where the text shows up the interactions among various levels of the complex structure of the work; where the certain levels of the text promises extrapolations for a specific purpose; and also where the text proffers new elements that are not basic to the birth of it so as to be determined as one wishes. Anyways, as is the researcher, so is also a translator or an adapter who, after all, is first a reader and then a writer. And in fact, in the process of reading one needs to assume a position.

As has already been summed up in general the theories of translation, it becomes imperative now to briefly discourse on one of its ramifications, and also which chiefly deals with in general in adaptations of Shakespeare. Unlike the process of literary translation, the process of literary adaptation by its own nature postulates both a structuralist interplay and a post-structuralist play. And as Maria Corti sums up her assessment of the evolution of cultural topography in so far it brings forth the literary adaptation: “Every era produces its own type of signedness, which is made to manifest in social and literary models. As soon as these models are consumed and reality seems to vanish, new signs become needed to recapture reality, and this allows us to assign an information-value to the dynamic structures of literature”(GCWK e-learning portal). And this “dynamic structures of literature” is precisely what the adaptation entails.

As this article primarily enquires about the modes of adaptation in drama, it becomes important that at first the variations in translational theories and methodologies with regard to their respective literary genres be introduced, stated and made plain.

In this context, Anton Popovič rejoins with his view that the translator has the right to differ organically, to be independent, provided that independence is pursued for the sake of and in subservience to the original in order to reproduce it as a living work. It must, however, be acknowledged that the biggest problem when translating a text from a period remote in time is not because of the poet and his peers being not alive, but because the significance of the poem in its context is finished. Therefore, taking the cue off Popovič let us point up how a new line of communication or an adaptation from a mere act of translation is given birth.

In support of this foregoing view, if we cite comparative instances, we find that the translations of Wyatt and Surrey are products of a socio-cultural system, and also which are way too different from the one of Petrarch’s age. Likewise, the marked structural pattern in Surrey’s adaptation, heightened by the disapproval of an imperishable hierarchy that has always kept the Lover at its bottom before, places the Lover at a more promisingly humanistic level which complements an essentially upward social movement.

In discussing the methodologies associated with the translation or adaptation of the genre of prose or, generally speaking, prose passage, it will be a major lapse to not acknowledge Hilaire Belloc, as per whom the translator or the adaptor has the right to significantly alter the text in the process of translation such that the translated or adapted text conform to the stylistic and as well as the idiomatic norms contextually.

The generally concrete ways in which the prose text needs to be translated, and in the line of Belloc we find that; first, the translator or adaptor needs to take the whole of the work as an integral entity and then render it in parts, while seeing to it at the same time that the renderings of all parts are subservient to the whole sense. Second, the translator or adaptor needs to render idiom by idiom, as idioms are by their very nature transferable into another contextual form. Third, the translator or adaptor needs to take into account in his rendering the original overall balance among the emphases of phrases that may be quite disparate. Fourth, the translator or adaptor needs to be sure that he / she does not use those words that may apparently seem to correspond in both S. L. and T. L. but in reality do not; as for e.g. ‘demander’, which is at times wrongly made to correspond in T. L. as to ‘demand’. Fifth, the translator or adaptor needs to adapt with confidence, as because, the essence of transmutation is but a resurrection of an alien spirit in a native body. And sixth, it becomes a duty of the translator or adaptor keep away from merely drab acts of embellishments.

According to Wolfgang Iser, the sentence does not merely mean to be a statement but endeavours to be something beyond itself and therefore will result to a loss of dimension as an outcome of a translation, it is thus obligatory for the translator to apprehend every determinable function in relation to the whole of the text. And since the theatre text is also read as something incomplete, the challenge then of studying or translating or adapting it lies in the text’s involvement in a loss of dimension in the process. It is to be seen that it is only through the text’s performance that the text can realize its full potential.

The theatre semiotics holds the linguistic system only as one optional component in a set of interlocking systems that makes up the spectacle. Also, since the theatre consists of a dialectical relationship between text and performance, the performance can be perceived as a mere translation. And hence, with regard to theatre, this is what has led Anne Ubersfeld to say:

The task of the director, therefore, is to ‘translate into another language’ a text to which he has a prime duty to remain ‘faithful’. This position is based on the concept of semantic equivalence between the written text and its performance; only the ‘mode of expression’ in the Hjelmslevian sense of the term will be altered, the form and content of the expression will remain identical when transferred from a system of test-signs to a system of performance-signs” (Das 49).

It is no surprise therefore, that any translation of a dramatic or theatrical text involves deviation to the highest degree. For, there is not a single right way of reading and hence performing the text.

In a stage performance or adaptation of a theatre text as that of Shakespeare’s, it is always the situation that injects the textual dialogues with a new spirit and soul. The textual

dialogues are made to coexist with the extra-linguistic situations in a relationship that is purely reciprocal. So, the textual dialogues also, simultaneously, on their part go on illuminating the situation thereby modifying and hence transforming it. Thus, in the study of theatrical adaptation, the actual sense of the discrete units, and also of the whole, of meaning rests as much on the extra-linguistic situation as on the text or script.

Also in this regard it is needless to say that particularly in theatre, the linguistic articulations comprise more than mere signs of discourse. As far as the articulations with regard to theatre are concerned, the sign of a character's position in society, the character's gestures with due display of costumes, the backdrop, etc. becomes an essential supplementary. Therefore, the student or researcher of the study of translation and hence adaptation of play or drama or theatre has to tend to the aspect of playability as a prerequisite, an extra dimension to the written S. L. text is always called for in the process. To bridge the idea or the written with the performance or the physical experience, that extra dimension always needs to be added. It is, therefore, taken for granted that a theatre text contains discretely distinguishable structural features besides that of the stage directions themselves. Hence, as an objective of this article, what needs to be highlighted is the possibility of ways in which contemporary performances or productions of Shakespeare's plays are being reshaped and even transmuted through wide-ranging headways in styles in acting, play-space, the audience's role and the revised and latest notions of tragedy and comedy since the time of Shakespeare. Most importantly, the catch that the contemporary dramatic adaptation poses is the relation of concepts of theatre and acting to the varying national contexts.

## Conclusion

To Asia, for instance, there has been a very recent explosion of critical interest in the ways Shakespeare has been accommodated. One of the most intriguing questions in the dialogue between Shakespeare and Asia is the absence of Shakespeare's language in favour of a stronger, visual and corporeal presence. The performances of Shakespearean works in different Asian dramatic modes, such as 'kabuki', 'Kyogen', 'kathakali' or 'jatra' have drawn the attention of scholars like Alexander Huang and Charles S. Ross (*Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*), Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan (*Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*) or Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (*Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*). These volumes look closely at how localities contribute to the performance of Shakespearean works and question the loss or gain of Shakespearean language in translation. It is implied from these collections that the presence of Shakespeare in Asia is characterized by the artistic 'exotica' of the performances in the different Asian theatrical modes, and the recent movement towards interculturality. Instead of having Westernized performances or enactments of Shakespeare's plays prioritizing local aesthetic practices as if to prove their 'authenticity', the representations now move a step forwards, attempting to reach 'universality'.

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