

INTRODUCTION

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS IN TRANSLATION

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Shakespeare plays, written more than 400 years ago, are still very much alive in every country, as one can easily see from their countless stage performances and adaptations to other media. The plays that comprise Shakespeare's canonical dramaturgy have been constantly reread and reinterpreted in the light of new theories and academic approaches, and these different visions are reflected in their more recent translations, produced in an ever faster pace.

An apotheosis of Shakespeare sweeps the world off its feet today, with a large variety of stage productions of all the plays of the canon, even those that had been left in ostracism for centuries. There have been many rewritings and adaptations of the plays to other media: Shakespeare can be seen in motion pictures, operas, ballets, and more recently in comic books (graphic novels) and videogames. His 154 sonnets, 4 poems, and now 39 plays have elevated him to a place of great prominence among the classics of Western literature. And then it goes without saying that his themes, his characters, the words he invented and the phrases he coined are pervasive in our thoughts, our imagination and our daily life.

Even though the whole set of his work is deemed admirable, it is undoubtedly the plays that gain special attention from critics and scholars. Shakespeare's theatrical work has been studied from several and varied academic approaches: Marxist theories, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, New Historicism, and so forth, in their different manifestations and different lines of study. Nevertheless, this central role that William Shakespeare's work plays in the Western canon was in fact consolidated only in the 18th century. It was then, with the beginning of the Romantic movement, in the wake of a reaction to the French neoclassic tradition, that the Elizabethan Shakespeare was first translated, disseminated and staged, and eventually inspired national literary works in different countries, even contributing to the birth of other Western literatures, as was the

case in Germany. The role of translation in the dissemination of the Shakespearean dramatic poetry was crucial, for until the 19th century the English language did not have the prestige and the status it has today.

Shakespeare translations have been the object of relevant and interesting studies, such as those collected in *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, organized by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D'Hulst (John Benjamins, 1993), *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, organized by Ángel-Luis Pujante and Ton Hoenselaars (University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 2003), and *Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century*, organized by Rui Carvalho Homem and Ton Hoenselaars (Rodopi, 2004), as well as those studies carried out by Dirk Delabastita (*There's a Double Tongue: An Investigation into the Translation of Shakespeare's Wordplay with Special Reference to Hamlet*; Rodopi, 1993) and by Romy Heylen (*Translation, Poetics, and the Stage: Six French Hamlets*; Routledge, 1993).

During the last World Shakespeare Congress, held in Prague, the Czech Republic, from the 17th to the 22nd of July, 2011, and organized by the International Shakespeare Association, one of the Seminars was dedicated to the study of published translations of Shakespeare's plays. The seminar was called "Shakespeare's Plays in Print Outside Britain" and its leaders were Marta Straznicky (Queens's University, Canada) and Lukas Erne (University of Geneva, Switzerland), who presented their objective as follows:

"This seminar investigates the history of Shakespeare's plays in print outside Britain. Recent work on Shakespeare's plays in relation to early modern print culture has produced a wealth of new findings, but there has been little research on Shakespeare and print cultures outside Britain. Major work on global Shakespeare tends to examine appropriations and adaptations in performance, while studies that focus on translation are chiefly concerned with philology, linguistics, and semiotics.

This seminar draws together scholars interested in Shakespeare's plays as books in any number of national or international settings. Possible topics include how translations negotiate the early printed texts, the international traffic in printed editions, or readership communities for Shakespeare's plays in various historical and geographical contexts. Scholars interested in the cultural and political facets of Shakespearean appropriations might look into the variety of institutions (universities,



libraries, courts, academies, theatres, etc.) in which Shakespeare's cultural authority was constituted as a specifically textual property. Other topics might include the impact of Shakespeare translations on native literary cultures and vice versa, the relationship between reading and theatrical audiences for Shakespeare's plays outside Britain, or the relationship of print culture to the history of theatrical adaptations in a given setting."

This issue of *Tradução em Revista* features some of the papers presented and discussed in that Seminar (those by Agnieszka Swach, Iulia Milica, Nurul Abdullah, Paula Baldwin, and Marcia Martins), besides two other articles by Beatriz Viégas-Faria, who attended the Seminar and is a Shakespearean translator and researcher.

In the European context, Agnieszka Szwach traces and analyses the situations in which Shakespeare's name appeared in print in eighteenth-century Poland, something which eventually introduced the Bard into the Polish cultural consciousness. At that period, Shakespeare's plays were read and discussed by members of the enlightened elite; thanks to their interest in English literature, Shakespeare was ushered into Polish literary criticism and theatre, what subsequently induced the first attempts at translating his plays. In her article, Iulia Milică discusses the importance of Shakespeare in print in Communist Romania (1947-1989), mainly from the viewpoint of the accompanying introductions, prefaces and notes (the *paratexts*). Her aim is to point out the way in which these paratextual productions were able to convey to the reading public important information about the author and about the text by adjusting to the political requirements of the regime.

In Asia, the earliest Malay translations of Shakespeare texts for performance were published by the Translation Bureau of the Sultan Idris Training College soon after its founding, in 1922. Nurul Abdullah examines these early Shakespeare translations, situating them within the socio-historical context of the traditional Malay worldview. In so doing, she adds a political dimension to the publication and dissemination of Shakespeare in colonial Malaya.

Below the Equator, in South America, Shakespeare is equally vivid in the accounts of Paula Baldwin Lind, Marcia A. P. Martins, and Beatriz Viégas-Faria. Both Baldwin Lind and Martins provide a brief review of Shakespeare translations in their countries — Chile and Brazil, respectively, — identifying the most prolific translators and the most common translation strategies. A Shakespearean translator herself, Baldwin Lind discusses the translation methodology that she and her co-translator

employed in their rendering of *The Tempest*, and she also reveals, in a different section of her article, the stroke of luck that led her to get hold of unpublished translations of Shakespeare's plays such as *The Tempest*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and at least 46 of the playwright's *Sonnets* by one of the leading Chilean translators, Juan Cariola Larraín, whose *Hamlet* was considered by Nicanor Parra the best translation of the tragedy he had ever read. The importance of the finding is even greater when Baldwin Lind tells us that very little is known about Cariola, considered by Parra an erudite anonymous hero.

Martins, in her turn, provides a brief account of Shakespeare translations in print in Brazil starting from the year 1933, when the first translation of a whole play of the Shakespearean canon into Brazilian Portuguese from an English language source text was published. The review of almost 80 years of Brazilian Shakespeares is presented against a backdrop of literary and political factors.

Viégas-Faria contributes with two articles: one investigates two translations into Portuguese of *Love's Labour's Lost* in order to verify, in the light of Discourse Analysis, how and to what degree the two translators have managed to make 'visible' their translation process when they are the authors of their Introductions to the translated plays and of their translator's notes. The other article examines once again the same two translations, now to find out how the Brazilian and Portuguese translators of *LLL* solved nine of the more than forty puns in the play and to check how their translation solutions 'speak' of the translation process and of their creative (re)writing.

The organizers of this volume hope this collection of essays will help create scholarly interest and advance knowledge in the multi- and transdisciplinary study of Shakespeare translation, an area that is fascinating for the three of us and can easily be tackled from many points of view: linguistic, literary, translational, theatrical, historical, cultural, discursive, educational...