

Review: Michael Saenger and Sergio Costola (Eds.), *Shakespeare in Succession: Translation and Time*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023.

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Drawing together contributions from translators, theatre practitioners and literary historians, *Shakespeare in Succession* provides an interdisciplinary study of Shakespeare and translation. Building on recent presentist approaches to Shakespeare (Grady and Hawkes, 2007; Egan, 2013; DiPietro and Grady, 2012), Saenger and Costola's introduction positions Shakespeare on 'a continuum of transfers' in which the bard himself also actively participates through his adaptations of texts and performances (3).

Divided into two parts, the seven essays and reflections from translators and theatre practitioners in the first part provide a rich variety of approaches to bridging the temporal and cultural distances involved in transferring Shakespeare's texts to new contexts. Interlinked with cultural context, the mode of reception explicitly informs many of the approaches selected. Iolanda Plescia discusses how her Italian translation of *The Taming of the Shrew* for readers prioritised keeping lines a similar length to the source text to which was published on the facing page, enabling readers to compare the two. Combined with detailed notes, Plescia outlines how this created a rich discourse around translation across both time and language. Neils Brunse's discussion of his Danish translations for performance focuses on moments of ambiguity in the source text, finding ways to retain opportunities for actors to access multiple possible interpretations. Without the luxury of readers notes, Brunse argues for an approach where language, punctuation and rhythm must bridge both temporal and cultural gaps to translate reactions to dramatic action in a way that retains a sense of the performative impact contained within the source text.

In the second part of this collection, literary historians explore the complex cultural negotiations around translating Shakespeare. Essays by Zoltán Márkus and Michael Saenger trouble paradigms that frame the relationship between source text and translation. Taking his first encounter with Shakespeare through Hungarian translation and his experience of reverse translation on discovering the English version as a starting point, Márkus argues that rather than being inferior imitations of Shakespeare's work, translations are the result of a

complex 'process of hybridizing' (216). Through analysis of *The Task of the Translator* (Walter Benjamin, 1969), Márkus contends that translators have misinterpreted Benjamin's understanding of the relationship of translations with their source as being a form of afterlife of the text. Rather than the death of the text, Márkus argues that Benjamin's use of *Überleben* points to the continued life of the text after the death of the author. Saenger also explores the anxieties around meetings between old and new, in this case through patrilineal relationships. Drawing on examples from Roman comedy, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Jonson's *Volpone* to interrogate the cultural construction of legitimacy through reference to a stigmatised other, Saenger questions paradigms of fidelity in translation and adaptation studies and their reinforcement of colonialism. Given that Saenger addresses these concerns with paradigms that reinforce colonialism, it is disappointing that the collection as a whole draws so heavily on European, North and South American practitioners and historians with a few notable exceptions. This imbalance points to the scale of the work that is still to be done in decolonising Shakespeare in translation studies.

Despite this, the ambitious breadth of this collection presented the editors with a challenge in terms of how to organise the twelve essays. As Saenger and Costola note in their introduction there were multiple possibilities. However, whilst common themes and concerns emerge, the responses are as varied as the temporal and cultural conditions in which they are made. Translator José Francisco Botelho and Director Marcus Kyd both draw on the power of linguistic rhythms to communicate in a way that goes beyond understanding of individual words. Inspired by Brazilian popular poets use of metre to create emotional impact, Botelho's translations of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* combine ten and twelve syllable lines to add a layer of meaning that is available to both readers and performers. Working in America, Kyd draws on punk music to translate the power of Shakespeare's narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* to the stage in Taffety Punk Theatre Company's production. Embedded in these practitioner accounts are glimpses of the importance of their own reception of both the source texts and other cultural events as a means of inspiring their translation.

Saenger and Costola's choice to manage this variety by splitting the book into two halves separates practitioners from historians in a way that appears counterproductive to their stated aim of challenging disciplinary boundaries. But it proves to be a porous binary, intersected by themes such as the use of literary and cultural allusions in translation that resist both disciplinary boundaries and temporally linear interpretations of translation. Zhiyan Zhang and Carl A. Robertson's essay on creating English subtitles for a kunqu *Romeo and Juliet* encapsulates this resistance, using intertextual references to support an English audience's engagement with and understanding of kunqu opera. Rangping Ji and Wei Feng's literary analysis also engages with this approach to explore how familiar cultural allusions in Shu Lin's (1904) *Yin Bian Yan Yu*, a Chinese translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's (1807) *Tales from Shakespeare*, contributed to its popularity during the Qing dynasty.

In recent years there has been increasing recognition that collaboration between audience studies and translation studies opens the opportunity for deeper engagement with how audiences interact with cultural products (Kuipers, 2015; Veenstra et al., 2016;

Tuominen, 2019). Saenger and Costola's multidisciplinary collection offers the opportunity to engage with how translator's attempt to bridge the cultural and temporal distance between their audience and the source text. What is missing from these accounts is information about the reception of these translations, provoking a range of unanswered questions: What are the gaps between the translator's intended reading and that of the audience? To what extent do cultural and literary allusions inform how the translation is received? How do audience's engage differently with translations for reading and for performance? These questions highlight the rich possibilities that audience studies could bring to readings of translations.

Overall, the value of this collection lies in the porosity between the two parts. The introductory chapter provides crucial framing, bringing together the wide variety of approaches in the essays that are not always immediately clearly linked to the overarching aim. Although many could be read alone, making interesting case studies in translation or contributions to translation theory, the rich discourse created by Saenger and Costola's multidisciplinary presentist focus only becomes fully apparent in reading and re-reading the collection as a whole.

Biographical Note

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