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The Native Hue of Revolution: Foreign Shakespeare and Foreign Shakespeare Scholars

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What do scholars exactly mean when they write about Shakespeare being “removed from his homeland and his native tongue”? Who is Shakespeare really native to? Finally, are we all supposed to “go native” when we read, watch, study or write about Shakespeare, whatever “Shakespeare” may represent and whatever “native” is intended to describe? It is, fortunately, impossible to “go beyond” these questions if one is concerned with “Shakespeare” as a (supra)national phenomenon and if one is willing to acknowledge cultural and historical difference where it seems to be denied. This discussion is haunted by the shadows of the recent Shakespearean past(s) and worried about the emerging spectres of the Shakespearean future(s). It stubbornly, and obviously unfashionably, laments the lack of awareness of where we stand when we watch, where we sit when we read, and where we are heading when we write or (often quite heedlessly) lecture about that infinite variety of things which, we are still taught, is best termed “Shakespeare”.¹

'Tis heere: but yet confus'd
Iago in *Othello* (1623)

Most of those working in the field of Shakespeare studies will easily recall that in recent years we have been repeatedly invited to engage in “textual materialism”, to consider texts in the light of their material bodies, to pay attention to those aspects of their history which seem somehow always to have been neglected,

¹ A version of this text was delivered as a plenary talk at the Shakespeare Symposium held in April 2004 at the University of Galați in Romania. I wish to thank Eugenia Gavrilu for inviting me and all the participants for showing a great deal of good will. I am especially indebted to Mihaela Irimia and Nicoleta Cinpoș for their comments and suggestions.

due mainly to the idealist thinking that in/forms much of what we usually refer to as literary study, or, more specifically but also more confusingly, literary criticism, or just criticism. This invitation, or rather insistence, is certainly much stronger and more visible in the area of early modern studies than in other fields, although twentieth-century bibliography, or that segment of it that is sometimes described as New Bibliography, knew only too well that the material make-up of nineteenth-century texts, for instance, deserves as much attention as the mediaeval manuscript or the sixteenth-century book and that the signifying potential which the materiality of the object of our interest possesses is not to be overlooked, underestimated or ignored. For this aspect of the textual object is, as has often been noted, inescapable; it cannot be neglected in any inquiry that thinks of itself as responsible and honest. It is, in other words, always at the threshold, welcoming us into what is purportedly “inside”. Rather than accepting or, even worse, taking for granted the simple binary of the outside and the inside, it may sometimes be wiser or more desirable that, instead of rushing in, we linger on the threshold and, for a while at least, wonder where it belongs, where in fact we are standing, what boundary we imagined needed to be crossed, surmounted, left forever behind. It is the intention of this paper to do exactly that, to spend some time inspecting the provisional and often arbitrary boundaries imagined between the inside and the outside, the native and the foreign, the domestic and the strange. It will be preoccupied with “Shakespeare” and “Shakespeare studies” but it may not, perhaps, be too presumptuous to expect that some of its ideas will be applicable to other contexts and some of its arguments similar to those in other, related instances of literary and critical investigation.

In spite of all the revisions and revaluations, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* still seems to attract an extraordinary amount of attention and the problems raised by this play and its history of both reading and performance have exercised the imagination of many and probably tested the patience of even more. I ask to be forgiven therefore for barbarously appropriating a crippled and somewhat deformed line from *Hamlet* for my learned title as much as for the fact that I shall refer to *Hamlet*, or rather *Hamlets*, more than just once. Towards the end of one of Hamlet’s more famous soliloquies the actor usually delivers the following lines:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment

With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. (3.1.83-88)²

We have been made aware that this is as much a Shakespearean creation as it is a creation of Shakespeareans, especially the editors. In this short passage we find a combination of different lexical choices found in the second quarto edition (Q2) and in the Folio text of what we, still rightly in this case I think, call the same play (but with different “scripts”), Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Thus Q2’s “sickled ore” becomes Folio’s “sicklided o’re”, while Folio’s “great pith” becomes Q2’s “great pitch”. In addition, Folio’s “turne away” has been turned into Q2’s “turne awry”. We should perhaps be thankful that the first extant edition of this play, if it is the same “play”, the so-called Quarto 1 (Q1), omits this section of the text, if indeed “omit” is the right word since by using it we project our own rather confident understanding of textual origins onto a rather uncertain past and persist in the belief that the longest text must have been produced first, moulded once and forever into its perfect, authentic form in the smithy of Shakespeare’s creative and, of course, oceanic mind.³

The modification that I would like to introduce in connection with this passage concerns, as might easily be guessed, the word “resolution”. For the purposes of a good title and, let us hope, some useful or at least intriguing insight foreshadowed by it, I wish to play with the idea of orthographic slippage and the nodding modern

² The source of the conflated text is Harold Jenkins’ edition for the Arden Shakespeare Series (1982). *Hamlet* is supposed to be published as three texts in two volumes in the Arden Shakespeare Third Series, edited by Neil Taylor and Ann Thompson (see Thompson 1998). It is an interesting decision in view of the fact that the same Third Series has given us a conflated *Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida* and some other plays. Having lost nothing of its relevance, Paul Werstine’s question (1988: 2) remains important even outside the bounds of revisionist textual criticism: “Why not ask what consequences flow from yoking the texts together, as has been the practice of almost every editor since Rowe, who stands at the foundation of the editorial tradition?”

³ The Quarto and Folio variants follow the text of Michael Best’s Internet Shakespeare Editions <URL: <http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/>> throughout this paper, not just because these are very good “old-spelling” editions of early Shakespearean texts (see *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9.3, Special Issue 12 [January, 2004], <PURL: <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/emlshome.html>>>), but because they are the only ones available to someone writing in Croatia. Here are the relevant passages from Q2 and Folio respectively: “And thus the natiue hiew of resolution | Is sickled ore with the pale cast of thought, | And enterprises of great pitch and moment, | With this regard theyr currents turne awry, | And loose the name of action”; “And thus the Natiue hiew of Resolution | Is sicklided o’re, with the pale cast of Thought, | And enterprizes of great pith and moment, | With this regard their Currants turne away, | And loose the name of Action.”

composer of my own text. I want potential readers to be reminded of Hamlet's mention of "resolution" while looking at the "revolution" present in my title. I need the conflation of "revolution" and "resolution" into one ambivalent entity because I intend to look at this quotation as a simple, and no doubt simple-minded, parable of what has recently been happening to Shakespeare studies as a discipline: how it has been "disciplined", scolded for not "holding on to the old, and British, tradition of interest in truth and value and reference, the old ethical-hermeneutical package",⁴ as this tradition has been described by a modern-day "reader after theory". This reader who is, perhaps as I write, travelling across Europe under the aegis of the British Council has been arguing, rather loudly and rather tirelessly, for a move away from what he calls Theory, "with a capital letter, to signify", he says, "the modern kind which took over from the 1960s on" (1). This knight errant, employed in the life-long service of the respectable dame called Post-Theory, praises the conscience-stricken return of the prodigal sons who had been led astray by that temptress Theory but have now come back to their senses and to the comforting bosom of "a rational, proper, moral even, respect for the primacy of text over all theorizing about text, a sensible recognition", he claims, "that though reading always comes after theory [here, interestingly enough, without the capital letter], theory is inevitably the lesser partner in the hermeneutic game" (169). The conversion of a great scholar, his repentant return to the "native" tradition is therefore to be welcomed as a great example, something to be imitated by the rest of the souls still lost in the slimy waters dominated by "New Historicism and Feminism and Postcolonialism and Queer Studies" (168), all creatures that were spawned by that monster called Structuralism [my capitals] when "at the end of the 1960s [...] it came across the English Channel" (168) and led astray so many. The books one writes in the good old tradition are called, we are warned, *Shakespeare's Language* rather than *The Genesis of Secrecy* – it is there, in the language, the native language – English, our native English, not some foreign language – it is there, the faithful are led to suppose, that the Shakespearean difference and greatness lie.

This narrative of theoretical importation across the English Channel – English, of course, not French – will serve to make sense of my initial quotation. The native

⁴ Cunningham 2002: 168. Further references to this book will be given parenthetically. I am not sure whether to bewail more the fact that this book is published in the series of "manifestos" or the fact that these manifestos see Shakespeare, Race and, for instance, Religion as equals: "In this new series major critics make timely interventions to address important concepts and subjects, including topics as diverse as, for example: Culture, Race, Religion, History, Society, Geography, Literature, Literary Theory, Shakespeare, Cinema, and Modernism." I thought (I now realize how silly that must have appeared to many) that Shakespeare was literature. My remarks will be limited to a couple of statements found in this book, but these statements are nothing if they are not representative synecdoches.

hue of resolution, the native, British quality of action, of unsurpassable agility, of, in our terms, reading that is full of tact and purpose and value – almost as much as our – English of course – literature is, has now been, under the influence of the foreign import from the Continent, sicklied o’er by the pale cast of mainly French thought. Having frozen the action of the British, which is just another euphemism for the English, for some thirty years, Father Time has finally reappeared, ready to initiate another glorious revolution of the critical wheel, a return to where we had been, safely in the native, British and no doubt morally, ethically and otherwise healthy tradition. We need go no further than the text of *Hamlet* for confirmation and, possibly, complication. The question of theory, of that melancholy thought dangerously resembling madness or lunacy or raving, is explained by a “Clowne”, as the seventeenth-century texts inform us, during the merry business of grave-digging. The modern Arden editor has once more, in the venerable textual tradition and for the benefit of the innocent general or even scholarly reader, freely combined different texts into one English ideal:

Grave. [...] It was that very day that young Hamlet was born – he that is mad and sent into England.

Ham. Ay, marry. Why was he sent into England?

Grave. Why, because a was mad. A shall recover his wits there. Or if a do not, ’tis no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

Grave. ’Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.
(5.1.142-150)⁵

The truth of the statement is undermined (or perhaps underlined?) by the response to the next questions that Hamlet puts:

⁵ I provide below the early versions, Q1, then Q2 and finally F: “*Ham.* Where is he now? | *Clowne* Why now they sent him to *England*. | *Ham.* To *England!* wherefore? | *Clowne* Why they say he shall haue his wittes there, | Or if he haue not, t’is no great matter there, | It will not be seene there. | *Ham.* Why not there? | *Clowne* Why there they say the men are as mad as he”; “*Clow.* [...] it was that very day that young Hamlet was borne: hee that is mad and sent into *England*. | *Ham.* I marry, why was he sent into *England*? | *Clow.* Why because a was mad: a shall recouer his wits there, or if a doo not, tis no great matter there. | *Ham.* Why? | *Clow.* Twill not be seene in him there, there the men are as mad as hee”; “*Clo.* [...] It was the very day, that young *Hamlet* was borne, hee that was mad, and sent into England. | *Ham.* I marry, why was he sent into England? | *Clo.* Why, because he was mad; hee shall recouer his | wits there; or if he do not, it’s no great matter there. | *Ham.* Why? | *Clo.* ’Twill not be seene in him, there the men are | mad as he.”

Ham. How came he mad?
Grave. Very strangely, they say.
Ham. How “strangely”?
Grave. Faith, e’en with losing his wits.
Ham. Upon what ground?
Grave. Why, here in Denmark.

After this exchange one cannot really know where to turn in search of wits. If wits are lost in Denmark, and obviously not gained or regained in England, where is one to go? To France? Is there really any difference between Denmark and England? Or, to put this question differently – back in the “fatal” terms of our discipline – is there any significant difference between France and England, if we are looking at them from Romania, or from Croatia? In search of some provisional answer one would, I suppose, go back to the problem of materiality mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

We have been reminded that meaning is constituted on the basis of the textual document too, not just the linguistic text. Our awareness of early modern printing practices as much as the context of early modern performance of plays should constantly lead us back to the historical moment and force us to rethink the present in terms of the past and the past in terms of the present, and never forget that we are posed, foreign and insecure as we must be, on a threshold between worlds, part of both and, at least in a sense, belonging to neither, especially if we are foreign *Shakespeare* scholars. The book, the textual document from the past appears to us as a perishable body upon which history has left its accidental traces and which we can never inspect pretending the traces were not there. It was made at a certain moment of a past necessarily foreign to all of us living in some version of the present. In the case of early editions of Shakespeare, those from the sixteenth as much as those from the seventeenth century, the body itself was made of foreign materials. Standard accounts of the printing practice of the period tell us that because of the absence of linen industry in England, which was due both to the protection of the woollen industry and to climatic problems, “the great majority of paper used in English books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries came from France”.⁶ Thus, ironically, “the Shakespearean text (like the vast majority of other English Renaissance texts) was a ‘foreign’ body” even then (281). And, what is even worse, a French body. With a little too

⁶ De Grazia & Stallybrass 1993: 281, n. 110. Further references in the text. This paper provoked a rather heated debate about what studying literature (especially Shakespeare, if we still see

much ingenuity – yet still advisedly deployed – one could conclude that French theory after all, contrary to what is believed by some, seems not to be so radically foreign to the English literature, the English letters of the Renaissance, at least in the specific sense to which I have briefly alluded.

So, what do we really mean when we use terms like “native” and “foreign”, and terms like “Shakespeare’s language”? When prominent English-speaking advocates of “foreign Shakespeare” write about Shakespeare’s “homeland and his native tongue”,⁷ what do they actually mean? Do they mean the eternal image of England that will forever remain Shakespeare’s “homeland”: we few, we hapless few? Do they refer to any particular language variety when they say “his native tongue”? For if native speakers of English need translations of Shakespeare, and there are such on the book market catering for the needs of at least parts of the English-speaking public, one begins rightly to wonder what exactly scholars mean when they write about native tongues and native hues of resolution.⁸ I would like to offer an interesting example of how the categories of “native” and “foreign” merge in one and the same instance and under the title of one and the same book, revised but “essentially” the same.

that as part of “literature”) means. It is not without its flaws, however, especially in the way it practices “(new) historicism”. I offer a critique of their discussion of gender and grammar elsewhere.

⁷ Kennedy 2001: 251.

⁸ “Translation” as a term operative in any discussion of Shakespeare today was debated during the Open Day at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust on 21 April 2002, the same day on which the Annual Shakespeare Service took place and during which the Bishop of Birmingham – strangely enough – chose a couple of Shakespeare’s sonnets to prop his sermon in Holy Trinity Church. The debate whether Shakespeare ought to be translated into modern English or not involved two opposed positions: the first, that Shakespeare should not be translated since this is not a foreign language that we (the “native-speaking” readers) encounter, was defended by Stanley Wells and David Crystal (Crystal quoted some Welsh to drive this point home), while the other, claiming that Shakespeare should be translated from early modern English into modern English – that this in fact is being done already – was defended by two women (a point not to be overlooked): Susan Bassnett and Carol Rutter. Depressed by the farcical unbelievability of the whole event, I left the building of the Shakespeare Centre and went to the park near the river Avon. There I was approached by a group of young men, obviously not of Anglo-Saxon or “native” hue, who invaded “my” bench in the park, offered me some marijuana and asked me what I was doing there and where I was from. When thanks to my naive truthfulness they realized that I originally came from Bosnia and that – contrary to what they expected – I was not a Muslim (as I suppose they were, though I refrained from asking), they concluded (without bothering to consult me on the matter) that I was naturally prone to dislike Muslims. They suddenly stopped being friendly and for an instant I felt as if I were a foreigner in Shakespeare’s England. And, as I walked away, I reminded myself that I, of course, was.

At the very beginning of the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find the arrival of Paul and some other prisoners onto the island of Malta. This escape or rescue was enabled by a violent tempest and the subsequent shipwreck of the boat on which the prisoners were being transported. It was, however, also made possible by the kindness not of weather but a particular person. While the soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners in order to prevent their escape, the officer named Julius (Acts 27: 1), a Roman centurion in “The Emperor’s Regiment”, wanted to save Paul (Acts 27: 43) and therefore commanded that those prisoners on board the ship who “could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land”. The others were supposed to go after them and to hold on the bits and pieces of ship-wrecked wood and in this way get themselves ashore. The unusual aspect of this New Testament book often pointed out in scholarly discussions is the strange “we” that is occasionally found there, the first person plural to which the narrator switches in order to make the narrative more convincing by lending it the authority of a collective testimony, only to return again to the first-person mode and thus remind us that he is, apparently, an eye-witness, someone who was directly involved in the events he describes. This strange we, or strange I, then, gives us the details of Paul’s arrival on the island. Here is the King James Version (of this event, one cannot help adding):

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. (Acts 28: 1-6)

In 1975 Thomas Nelson Publishers commissioned more than a hundred Biblical scholars who “worked for seven years to create a completely new, modern translation of Scripture, yet one that would retain the purity and stylistic beauty of the original King James”.⁹ This translation came to be known as the New

King James Version. I would wish to draw your attention to the choice of words in referring to the people inhabiting the island, the King James “barbarians” or “barbarous people”. The text of the Vulgate takes over the Greek term and translates this as *barbari*. The New King James Bible, however, translates these people into the “natives”:

Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.” But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. (Acts 28: 1-5)

From murderer to God, from barbarian to native: the conceptual categories that seemed so remote have now been substituted one for the other. Some other translations of the same passage alert us to the meaning of the word *barbari* or barbarians, so that this word is sometimes rendered as “the foreigners”.¹⁰ In this particular case on this particular island the foreigner becomes the native: all of a sudden we seem to be worlds away from the simple, clear and self-evident oppositional quality of the terms “foreign” and “native”. One translation looks at the people who inhabit the island from the perspective of the newcomers, the perspective, essentially, of the colonizers, and thus sees them as the barbarians. The revised translation turns the Greek *bárbaroi* into “natives”, those native to the island, born on the island, thus privileging the perspective of those living on the island to the perspective of those who have just come to it, saved – indeed – by its existence on the map. It is curious how Western linguistic history has turned some of these terms on their head. The barbarians, originally those who are

⁹ All quotations from the Bible as well as the information on different versions, for lack of more scholarly and more “material” resources, are taken from the Bible Gateway <URL: <http://www.biblegateway.com>>, last accessed on 20 October 2004.

¹⁰ See for instance Young’s Literal Translation.

not Greek or who do not speak Greek, have become civilized and have invented their own cultural definitions. The modern English idiom, “It’s all Greek to me”, meaning, of course, I do not understand a word of what you are saying, comes to mind. It becomes more than just amusing, however, when we are reminded that Shakespeare uses it in the middle of ancient Rome.¹¹

Yet when we come to Shakespeare, we come to a part of an island, to pursue our metaphor further, whose inhabitants have long been dead. Shakespeare too is dead. There is no one you could speak to, no one to understand your language, to call you a barbarian. To quote another New Testament book, 1 Corinthians 14: 11: “Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.” In this case too the barbarian and the foreigner are substitutable (we also find “stranger”),¹² but there is no possibility for a “native” inscription because there is no one who is native. What we have is the island, connected in some way with other islands, cultivated for centuries. We find earth, the material used and reused, like the Shakespearean text – fashioned and refashioned from season to season, bringing delight and wonder, perhaps, providing sustenance, yet speaking only with our own tongues and through our own mouths. This is not a point to be left behind and forgotten in a hasty return to the mythical “native” tradition – pure, ethical, moral, and uncontaminated by foreign bodies. Put in the syntax of a famous line from another bloody, and Scottish, play, this would roughly mean that “native is foreign and foreign is native”. It would also mean that it is impossible to “go beyond” these questions. The beyond will require us to face the same questions again and to make sense of our profession, if it really can be one and the same profession and if traditions too can be single and one, in a responsible way. One can never go beyond that.

This paradox of foreign or barbarous becoming native is further exemplified by my own barbarous experience. In the course of my study of the early texts of *Hamlet* I came across that passage in the play where Hamlet and Polonius are listening to the player telling the story which Aeneas told Dido, Queen of Carthage. In one of these versions Polonius complains about the length of the recital, to which Hamlet responds: “It shall to the barber’s with your beard” (2.2.495). When one looks at the different textual states that we find in the quartos

¹¹ Consider the following exchange found in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (Folio text): “*Cassi*. Did *Cicero* say any thing? | *Cask*. I, he spoke Greeke. | *Cassi*. To what effect? | *Cask*. Nay, and I tell you that, Ile ne’re looke you | i’t’h’face againe. But those that vnderstood him, smil’d | at one another, and shooke their heads: but for mine | owne part, it was Greeke to me.”

¹² As in the New Life Version or in the Worldwide English New Testament.

and the Folio, one immediately notices not just the problem of the mobbled, mobbled or inobled queen – which looks almost like a witty editorial wrangle over the different variants pronounced by some to be good and by others to be bad – but probably also the spelling and capitalization of the Folio: “It shall to’th Barbars, with your beard”. The modern edition, the second Arden for instance, will resolve this difficulty for us and offer the modern equivalent: the barber, the one who cuts your hair or your beard, who, if he was a barber-surgeon, would probably practice surgery and dentistry as well, will trim the speech delivered by the player so that it suits Polonius’ liking. In Hamlet’s scornful terms, Polonius is “for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps” (2.2.496). This taking of the text to the barber’s has been used as an appropriate illustration of what usually happens to this long Shakespearean play, to its conflated version. In order to be performed it is usually cut – unless you happen to be Kenneth Branagh and unless you are absolutely confident that what you are offering is a work of genius, albeit some six hours long – its words, words, words tailored or barbered so that they become acceptable to a moderately patient and always more than averagely interested audience.¹³ Does cutting the play, always necessarily a barbaric act, also mean something inherently barbaric? In other words, is Shakespearean wholeness – or Shakespearean difference – lost when Shakespeare is sent to’th Barbars?

When I say the Barbars, from the Folio version, then I mean, of course, the barbarians, the foreigners. This identification is enabled primarily by my foreignness, by the foreign quality of my eye/I. The word for “barbarian” in Croatian is “barbar[in]”; to me therefore the Barbars, with the capital letter, must somewhere in the back of my “native” mind always suggest barbarians. In this I seem to be closer to the discourses from which Shakespearean early texts emerged than to the discourses from which texts of Shakespeareans emerge today, in a frightening quantity. The line from the First Epistle to the Corinthians to which I have already alluded is, in what is probably the first translation of this Epistle into English, that made by Wycliffe in the early 1380s, rendered as follows: “I schal be to him, to whom I schal speke, a barbar.”¹⁴ This is as much as *Oxford English Dictionary*’s second edition gives us for the word “barbar”, but we could freely add “and he will be a barbar to me”. How convenient. No need to go to the

¹³ See for example Paul Prescott’s recent discussion of *Hamlet* in performance due to be published as part of the new Penguin Shakespeare edition of the play. I am grateful for a couple of comments he offered in connection with this paper.

¹⁴ See *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, under “barbar”. Sadly, Wycliffe’s translation is not available to me in its entirety so that I depend on the bits found in the *OED*. This is the predicament of foreign Shakespeare scholars that needs no lengthy explanations.

barber's since I shall be a barber to you and you a barber to me. But all phonetic quips aside, what this translation demonstrates is that Hamlet's barbarians have an important historical precedent and that my foreign linguistic fantasizing is not, after all, mere fantasy.

This is further confirmed by an important recent discussion of barbers and Barbary in the context of early modern cultural semantics.¹⁵ In it Patricia Parker investigates "multiple contemporary connections between barbering, Barbary, barbarisms, and the barbarian or barbarous" (6) by taking into account "the variant early modern spelling that enabled the easy conflation of barbering with Barbary" (7). This attempt belongs among those which pay close attention to Shakespeare's language, and its material embodiments, as a foreign language, "an earlier system that was defined by phonetic, orthographic, and semantic plasticity", those attempts which strive to look at "the mutable Renaissance signifier" with eyes that are foreign to the present and sympathetic to the past.¹⁶ What is disclosed in such inquiries is that sort of cultural anxiety that has formed the subject of this discussion, the cultural anxiety of early modern England as much as that of modern England, or some of its spokesmen. It constructs the foreign in terms that collapse the discourses of barbering and of the barbarous into one; that which is different and hence threatening, that which is non-native and will therefore thwart action and replace it with corrupting foreign thought, that which will call mortal men gods.¹⁷ The absence of facial hair – be it as a result of a barbaric act or as a fact of "nature" – signifies thus, in early modern discourses, the lack of masculinity, of that vital force necessary for powerful action. To accept barbaric fashions, to go barbarian, to go Turk, or simply to go foreign, is to run the risk of becoming effeminate.¹⁸ What more terrible offence could "our" cultures of action and resolution imagine? In the nineteenth century, as we all know, the term

¹⁵ Patricia Parker, "Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics", a lecture delivered at the conference "Shakespeare and Philosophy in a Multicultural World", held in Budapest in March 2004. I am grateful to Professor Parker for making the script available to me before its publication. The revised form of her discussion is scheduled for publication in *Renaissance Drama* later this year (2004).

¹⁶ The last two references are to de Grazia & Stallybrass 1993: 266. Patricia Parker repeats the need to link literary criticism "to a more historically grounded study of language and culture, one that takes seriously the 'matter' of language as part of the 'material Shakespeare'", in the opening chapter of her book *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 1.

¹⁷ The last claim, I have been warned, is believed by some to be a fit description of the "natives" rather than the "barbarians", as far as Shakespeare is concerned.

¹⁸ I find it deliciously ironic that the word for men in Romania, where this paper was originally delivered, is *barbati*, those who have a *barba*, i.e. a "beard". See also Fisher 2001.

“barbarian” was adopted by the enormously influential cultural critic Matthew Arnold to describe “those who have no great turn for reading and thinking”. In what he refers to as his incomplete and incoherent philosophy, Arnold effects a similar kind of shift as regards the native and the barbarian:

Keeping this in view, I have in my own mind often indulged myself with the fancy of employing, in order to designate our aristocratic class, the name of *the Barbarians*. The Barbarians, to whom we all owe so much, and who reinvigorated and renewed our worn-out Europe, had, as is well known, eminent merits; and in this country, where we are for the most part sprung from the Barbarians, we have never had the prejudice against them which prevails among the races of Latin origin.¹⁹

One is never sure, however, when Arnold is trying to be facetious and when he is deadly serious.

What, then, does it mean to be a foreign Shakespeare scholar? Does it mean to be a barbaric, foreign creature that has no great turn for reading and thinking, and is, what is more, usually not supported by the solid material structures that we used to associate with the term “aristocracy”? Does it mean someone who, like Arnold’s Barbarians, is concerned with her or his body rather than the soul, with the external rather than internal qualities? The very term, “foreign Shakespeare scholars”, especially when we pronounce it trippingly on the tongue, is ambiguous. I do not intend to dwell on the implications of the word “scholar” in England as opposed to its use in the United States nor shall I pay any attention to the reverential attitude that it is supposed to inspire in many, although these meanings can certainly be read into the term and then inevitably questioned. When I mention its ambiguity, I simply want to point out that it can mean Shakespeare scholars who are foreign, whose native language is not English. This meaning posits an unproblematic unity in Shakespeare and takes “Shakespeare scholars” to be a straightforward, commonsensical term that denotes someone who is native to a certain past to which s/he belongs through language and all that goes with language. The other possibility is that we take “foreign Shakespeare” as the object of our interest and then call those who try to come to terms with it “foreign-Shakespeare scholars”, possibly with a hyphen between “foreign” and “Shakespeare”. This way of looking at it makes the whole syntagm more problematic since it invites us to consider

¹⁹ Arnold 1993: 105.

once again what we mean when we say “foreign Shakespeare”. If we accept that Shakespeare comes from a different age and, let us hope, a different culture, then it stands to reason that Shakespeare is always foreign Shakespeare, thus making the very term “foreign Shakespeare” pleonastic. Regretfully, it has come to mean, to borrow a title of a well-known Shakespearean piece, “Shakespeare without his language”, meaning Shakespeare outside anglophone countries. The welcome turn towards non-anglophone countries and their Shakespeares may therefore sadly prove to be just another way back to the native tradition, to Shakespeare played “in his own land” and “in his own tongue”.²⁰ For the question “What is it that endures when he [i.e. Shakespeare] is deprived of his tongue?” can occur only to someone who is thinking from the context of a culture which believes that it is in an important way native to Shakespeare. Why would the foreign situation suggest deprivation rather than fullness? This is, basically, my question. It leads to another, perhaps more urgent question: “What is it that endures when our tongue is deprived of its Shakespeare?”

Are we to assume, as some have claimed, that Shakespeare in translated circumstances – those of a different culture and a different language – is “grossly impoverished” and that what we ought to admire is the ability which Shakespeare’s plays (it is always the plays) possess, the ability, that is, to transcend national, cultural and linguistic boundaries with apparent ease, “their demonstrated ability to survive and prosper in these impoverished [meaning, of course, foreign] circumstances”?²¹ A curious paradox is at work here, a cultural prejudice that resists rational explanation. Simply put, the claim as we often find it expressed in anglophone contexts is that Shakespeare fully means and essentially “is” Shakespeare only within the cultural framework of a supposedly “native” tradition, while this very tradition at the same time insists on Shakespeare’s worldwide relevance and applicability thus leaving us with only one explanation, which is no explanation at all. We are urged (I am trying to avoid the word “forced”) to make a crucial leap of faith and finally start believing in a cultural miracle, a miraculous transformation of the genius whose defining characteristics and essential value will be preserved only in the house of those who materially, immediately possess *him*, or rather *it*. I certainly cannot resolve the contradiction inherent in the claim that Shakespeare’s plays prosper in “these impoverished circumstances”, especially

²⁰ Kennedy 1996: 134. See also the conclusion of his discussion.

²¹ The reference is to the recent responses to my post on SHAKSPER (The Global Shakespeare Discussion List) in connection with No Fear Shakespeare editions; see SHK 15.0693 <URL: <http://www.shaksper.net>>, 16 March 2004.

when that claim is coupled with another, more notorious one, that “poetry is lost in translation”. For if immortal “poetry” is the essence or the defining characteristic of “Shakespeare” – usually, the “natives” on both sides of the Atlantic believe, inherent in the language through which “original” Shakespearean texts communicate – then I would be very wary of claiming that “loss of poetry” still somehow means “Shakespeare”. Perhaps translated Shakespeare should not be called by the name Shakespeare but by some other sweet word, “impoverished Shakespeare” for example, or Parashakespeare. Parashakespeareans then would be those caught at one and the same time in “proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something inside a domestic economy and at the same time outside it, something simultaneously this side of a boundary line, threshold, or margin, and also beyond it, equivalent in status and also secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master”.²² The name offers so many apt and wonderful analogies. It strikes me as odd, in other words, that what people construct on the basis of some textual document of the past can claim for itself a dimension of richness which is apparently absent from other constructions or inscriptions. Translations certainly belong in the same category and they invite us to reconsider where we see richness, what we mean by richness and, perhaps most importantly, who are “we”.²³

It should not be forgotten, however, that there are in the same house also those who have decided to scrutinize the surface, the threshold of Shakespearean texts and their different historical and cultural constitutions, those who have decided to use the term “impoverished” in a significantly different context:

This genius [meaning Shakespeare] is, after all, an impoverished, ghostly thing compared to the complex social [and I would add “cultural”]

²² Miller 1979: 219.

²³ Commenting on the words of an American university professor who claimed that “Shakespeare without language is like a movie without sound”, I wrote in my post that if this is so, then the superior quality of many a silent film (standing for translation, of course) gives me some comfort. It is easy to imagine how such a response was greeted by the believers in the authentic value of “Shakespeare’s English”. It always turns out, however, that “Shakespeare’s English” becomes some variety of contemporary English spoken in Britain or the United States. One post thus claimed that silent films offer a false analogy and that the “accurate comparison should be to a modern film with the soundtrack re-dubbed in another language”. The assumption behind such a statement is that modern English-speaking performances of Shakespeare are (or sound) natural, i.e. authentically Shakespearean. They do so as much as modern Croatian performances of 16th-century Dubrovnik playwrights do.

practices that shaped, and still shape, the absorbent surface of the Shakespearean text.²⁴

Or, from the perspective of modern productions and their authority rather than from the perspective of historicist investigation:

Allowing Shakespeare such authority, we reify Shakespearean drama – and the past, the tradition it represents – as sacred text, as silent hieroglyphics we can only scan, interpret, struggle to decode. We impoverish, in other words, the work of our own performances, and the work of the plays in our making of the world.²⁵

What Worthen’s words gesture towards when we translate them into a historicist framework is the need to seek some kind of balance between the attention claimed by the material document, by the past, and the attention claimed by specific communities of readers (or viewers) and performers and their present as well as past histories. If so much attention is being claimed for the materiality of the early modern text and its successive inscriptions (but what kind of inscriptions and inscriptions where?), as well as for the “less luxurious ‘foreign’ bodies” participating in the collaborative effort of textual production, for “the symbolic and signifying dimensions of the physical medium through which (or rather *as* which) the linguistic text is embodied”,²⁶ then it may perhaps not be too much to ask that the specificity of the reader be similarly taken into account. A volume of essays on “Shakespeare in the New Europe”, for example, is very optimistic about “foreign bodies” in all respects.²⁷ The editors give an account of the recognition they arrived at during the conference where the volume originated:

One of the first truths of which we all became aware is that there is not a categorical difference between native-speaking Shakespearians and those who work in non-English speaking cultures [as if the latter could not be “native-speaking”; I. L.]. The process of translation, we learned, need not create “inauthenticity” but can give new life to a text. [...] The realization of a Shakespearean text within cultural forms and

²⁴ De Grazia & Stallybrass 1993: 283.

²⁵ Worthen 1997: 191.

²⁶ McGann 1991: 56.

²⁷ See “Introduction”, pp. 15-21, in Hattaway *et al.* 1994.

intertextual matrices of the present, a text that had been written in the early modern period, changes the “original” in ways often as radical as when a text is translated from one language to another. All acts of reading, of “history” or of “culture”, in the study or in a playhouse where texts are materially re-produced, are acts of interpretation, a kind of translation [...]. (18)

Though it is not quite clear what “categorical” difference they expected to find, a couple of years later a “native-speaking Shakespearean” offered a guess. In a book devoted to “Shakespeare and National Culture”²⁸ Thomas Healy, in a contribution on “Past and Present Shakespeares: Shakespearian Appropriations in Europe”, argues for “firm historicism which is suspicious of easy dialogues between past and present” (221). This seems to suggest, as I have indicated above, that “Shakespeare” is foreign to everybody, so one would expect Healy – if he wanted to have this point highlighted all the time – to use the term “foreign” whenever speaking of early modern Shakespeare. He does this only occasionally, as for instance when he refers to “a Shakespeare of the past as alien, a foreign other from a foreign place” (220). The currency of the term “foreign Shakespeare” with quite a different meaning suggests that we might be dealing with at least two kinds of “foreign Shakespeare” and that very often the students of one foreign Shakespeare are blissfully (or intentionally) ignorant of the “foreign Shakespeareans” on the other side.²⁹ Healy does not seem to be troubled by the fact that only a couple of pages later he himself refers to “the original English texts” and “Shakespeare in the original” (222; what happened, one might ask, to all the debates about “authentick copies” and the kind of Shakespeare most “native-speaking Shakespeareans” have been and still are reading?) in order to take to task a “foreign” Shakespearean who contributed to the collection of essays I referred to above.³⁰ The Shakespearean in question, it could have been guessed by now, comes from Croatia and her contribution is concerned with the war-time productions of Shakespeare in Croatia. After establishing that “few

²⁸ Joughin 1997.

²⁹ Dennis Kennedy, already mentioned in this paper, discusses “foreign Shakespeare” with a very different idea in mind: “My subject is ‘foreign’ Shakespeare: how Shakespeare has operated on the stage and in the mind outside English-speaking environments”; Kennedy 1996: 133. See also the volume entitled *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, edited by Dennis Kennedy, dealing exclusively with “a subject much ignored by Anglo-centered Shakespearean commentators” (xvii), i.e. “Shakespeare performance outside of the English-speaking theatre”.

³⁰ Ciglar-Žanić 1994.

in these Slavic cultures had opportunities to learn English” (222), that “there was seldom a question of reading Shakespeare in the original and the German translation of Schlegel and Tieck became the shaping version of Shakespeare for Eastern Europe” (222) – which is a gross simplification – Healy is happy to move on to “[a] current example of this long-standing trend of naturalising Shakespeare to individual national concerns” (223), provided, in his opinion, by Janja Ciglar-Žanić’s discussion. Is one to infer that the same linguistic prejudice is true of Shakespearians in “these Slavic cultures”? The kinds of objections Healy advances seem to confirm the inference. Her discussion is qualified as a “naturalization” of Shakespeare, while the objector apparently feels unbothered by the fact that Janja Ciglar-Žanić is naturalized into his own spelling, tamed into his discourse, the specific marks of difference (in alphabet, phonology, language and therefore culture) being conveniently erased. She becomes Janja Ciglar-Zanic. For Healy there is probably nothing “particularly disturbing” (223) about this. Resisting naturalization of Shakespeare while undertaking a blatant naturalization of Shakespearians seems to me to be a project that ought thoroughly to rethink its own theoretical assumptions.³¹

I am aware that someone at this point might join in with Polonius and say: “Enough my friend, t’is too long”, to take the phrasing found in Quarto 1. I feel I should apologize for the barbarous thrust so prominent in “these my exhortations”, but, for reasons that hopefully have become obvious, it could only be so. I would only ask to be allowed a final barbaric act: to barber, as it were, the whole thing off with a couple of puzzling thoughts from the concluding pages of J. M. Coetzee’s novel appropriately entitled *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Towards the end, the narrator, a servant of the Empire in a tiny frontier settlement, has the following to say:

I wanted to live outside history. I wanted to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects. I never wished it for the barbarians that they should have the history of Empire laid upon them.

But the thoughts are futile, the desire frustrated. The history that Empire imposes on its subjects, and on us, is and will be there. Instead of trying to live outside it we may well start thinking how to devise a dignified way of living inside. Or

³¹ The interested reader is referred to Janja Ciglar-Žanić’s response (1998), esp. pp. 47-50.

at least on that threshold that keeps recurring in this protracted and possibly a little irritating monologue. To keep our awareness that the boundaries between the inside and the outside may shift but that the position we have been granted is most of the time the uneasy one on the threshold. I do not think we shall enter into the supposed plenitude of the interior, if there is such plenitude, yet I also believe it is too late to turn our back to it now, to turn away or awry. This is why I wish to go on wondering whether the last sentences of Coetzee's novel prove true for you, for me, for us:

This is not the scene I dreamed of. Like much else nowadays I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere.³²

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³² J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Vintage, 1998; first published in 1980), pp. 169-170.

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TUŽNO MOZGANJE: STRANI SHAKESPEARE I STRANI ŠEKSPIROLOZI

Što šekspirolozi zapravo misle kada pišu o Shakespeareu kao "udaljenom od svoje domovine i svog izvornog jezika"? Kome je Shakespeare doista blizak i gdje, ako igdje, doista svoj? Konačno, očekuje li se od svih nas da kad čitamo, gledamo, proučavamo Shakespearea, ili pak kada o njemu pišemo, u svemu koračamo stopama "izvornih" šekspirologa, što god pridjev "izvorni" značio i što god sve "Shakespeare" značio? Ova rasprava pritisnuta je sjenama bliske šekspirološke prošlosti i zabrinuta zbog sjena što se nadvijaju nad šekspirijanskom budućnosti. Tvrdoglavo i potpuno izvan trenda ona

oplakuje manjak osviještenosti o konkretnim situacijama gledanja, čitanja ili pisanja o cijelom tom mnoštvu pojava koje je, uče nas, još uvijek najbolje zvati "Shakespeare".

Key words: Shakespeare, foreign Shakespeare, textual criticism, historicism, translation

Ključne riječi: Shakespeare, strani Shakespeare, tekstologija, historicizam, prijevod

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