

TRANSLATING SHAKESPEARE: EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

I have been working as a Librarian at the Trust since 2009 and I am in charge of a collection of approximately 55.000 books including 3000 rare and early printed books relating to Shakespeare's life, works and times. I am responsible for purchasing books, enabling research from national and international researchers and promoting the library collection through social media such as blogs. In 2017 I launched a blog series called *Translating Shakespeare* to promote translated editions of Shakespeare's works held in our library collection.

In 2009 none of our translated editions were catalogued online. Fortunately, this is no longer the case and almost all of our translations are represented on our database. Getting translations catalogued has been very important to me as I believe this part of the collection fulfils the Trust's objective to «promote in every part of the world the appreciation and study of the plays and other works of William Shakespeare and the general advancement of Shakespearian knowledge»¹.

I am naturally drawn to translations – I have always had a passion for foreign languages and they have played an important part in my life. As the daughter of a teacher of English as a foreign language, I spent my teenage years in South-West Germany in a village called Badenweiler, thirty minutes by car from the Swiss border and ten minutes from the French border. Hearing 'foreign' languages and being in a multicultural and multilingual environment have always been natural to me. The multiculturalism of this area is evident in many ways, for example, there is a French/German military base in the nearby town of Müllheim and you can often see German and French soldiers walking side by side on the streets of Müllheim. To me this is a very moving sight considering that

1 THE SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST, *About us*, <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/about-us/> (accessed May, 2019).

over seventy years ago those soldiers would have been enemies. Now they train, learn and work together.

There are about eighty languages represented in our library. From Afrikaans to Yoruba, our collection includes translations into Esperanto, Klingon, Urdu and Welsh and is growing. Recent acquisitions are the opening monologue of *Richard III* in Kyrgyz and a DVD of *Twelfth Night* in American Sign Language. Most of our translations were acquired through donations and presented by the translators themselves.

The Trust's earliest translations are Pierre-Antoine La Place's first translation of the complete works into French and Domenico Valentini's translation of *Julius Caesar* into Italian. According to the Memorial Theatre Library's accession register, a vital source for provenance research, both translations were gifted in the late nineteenth century. Dr Nicole Fayard, Associate Professor of French at the University of Leicester, discusses La Place's translation in her blog published on *Translating Shakespeare*. Nicole discovered that La Place made significant alterations to Shakespeare's works: he cut many plays and summarised scenes instead of translating them².

The Italian translation of *Julius Caesar* has so far not been discussed on *Translating Shakespeare*. It is the first Shakespeare play, which was translated into Italian. A professor of ecclesiastical history at the University of Siena, who didn't know any English, was supposed to have translated this play with help from friends who were native speakers.

Distinguished or notable translators represented in our library include Oxford graduate King Rama IV of Thailand and Julius Nyerere, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who translated *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* into Swahili. Among the writers/translators, we have translations by the Austrian poet Erich Fried and French author Victor Hugo.

The purpose of the *Translating Shakespeare* blog is to introduce visitors to the Trust website to the many translations held in the Trust's library, to enable them to learn about items that are in closed access, to shed light on the translations' provenances and to celebrate the fact that Shakespeare is a truly global author.

2 NICOLE FAYARD, *Shakespeare and Translations into French*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-and-translations-french/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

Readers approach me either in person or by email when they would like to find out something. With *Translating Shakespeare* I wanted to be more proactive and to take the library items to the user rather than the other way round. Most of our books are held in closed access and have to be kept in environmental conditions. But books are not just there to be preserved, they are meant to be used. Rather than waiting for people to approach me, I asked Trust staff, visitors to the Reading Room and linguists I met at library and translation conferences if they might be interested in researching and writing about our translations.

I will introduce you to some of our translations' fascinating provenances, I will shed light on the linguistic challenges translators encountered when transferring Shakespeare into another language and I will also play some filmed readings that contributors submitted to our blog.

1. Custodial histories of translations

Armenian translations of Shakespeare

Many of our books, including translations, contain clues to previous ownership such as inscriptions, deposit letters, armorial stamps and bookplates just to name a few provenance clues. One of our Armenian translations shows an inscription in Russian. Armenian blogger Naneh Hovhannisyan, who speaks several languages including Russian, was able to translate this inscription for me: «A group of Soviet Union students in memory of their visit at [the] great English playwright's house»³. This set of translations was donated at the height of the cold war when only authorised persons travelled outside the USSR and it is not unlikely that agents or informers accompanied the travelling group.

Swedish translations of Shakespeare

Karin de Figueirido, a former Trust employee who researched our Swedish translations, discovered a library stamp in several Swedish translations published 1825. It reads '*Lilla Sällskapet*' and means 'Little Society'. This made her curious about the books' origin. After some research, she discovered that '*Lilla Sällskapet*' was a gentleman's club in

3 NANEH HOVHANNISYAN, *Shakespeare in Armenian, part II*, Translating Shakespeare. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/armenian-translations/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

Stockholm between 1814-1840. Their building included a library, making it likely that it originated from their collection⁴.

German translations of Shakespeare

A set of German translations by Schlegel and Tieck published in 1839 cast a light on modern German history. In 2012, Anke Manuwald donated this set to our library. A woman called Marie Levin used to own the books. She inscribed them with her name, but in some volumes, her name was cut out. Intrigued by this, I asked the donor why the name had been removed. She explained that her parents, who owned the books, lived in the former German Democratic Republic and during the 1950s, when they fled to West Germany, they couldn't take all the books with them. However, friends sent the books to the family in several small packages and removed Marie Levin's name to protect the family's identity⁵.

Afrikaans translation of Hamlet

South African artist Alma Flynn donated an edition of *Hamlet* in Afrikaans in 1947, and it is a very special book for many reasons. The play text was used for the first Afrikaans production of *Hamlet* performed at His Majesty's Theatre in Pretoria. The entire cast autographed the book, with most actors writing their names beside the characters they performed.

Visually, this book is of interest too. It includes plates depicting characters and scenes from *Hamlet* by the South African artist Maud Sumner. Her artistic output largely focused on interiors and still lives so illustrating a Shakespeare play must have been a departure for her, and her sensitive ink and watercolour sketches add poignancy to a book that embodies an important moment in South African theatrical history⁶.

4 KARIN deFIGUEIREDO, *Shakespeare in Swedish*, Translating Shakespeare. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-swedish/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

5 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *Shakespeare in German*, Translating Shakespeare. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-german/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

6 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *Hamlet in Afrikaans*, Translating Shakespeare. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/hamlet-afrikaans/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

Russian translation of Shakespeare

In 2017 I commissioned library volunteer and PhD student Kelsey Ridge to research and write about our Russian translations. Her pieces, which explore the custodial histories of these translations, were published in October 2017 to mark the centenary of the Russian Revolution. One of pre-revolutionary Russia's most important translators of Shakespeare was the Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, grandson of Czar Nicholas I.

The translation comes in a two-volume set. Konstantinovich presented a copy of his bilingual edition to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 1900 and the dedication inside the front of the first volume commemorates this event. Each of the two volumes bears a ribbon: volume one in the colours of the French and Russian flags and volume two in the colours of the German flag. Kelsey interpreted these as visual references to the translator's linguistic abilities. The German may also be a nod to the fact that Czarina Alexandra Feodorovna, Queen Victoria's granddaughter, was born in Germany⁷.

Basque translation of Hamlet

In 1953, Elizabeth II deposited a Basque translation of *Hamlet* to the Memorial Theatre Library. The people of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay gave it to her on the occasion of her coronation. A beautifully handwritten note inside the front of the book reminds of this occasion: «To her Most Gracious Britannic Majestic Queen Elizabeth II, on the occasion of Her Coronation with all best wishes from the lovers of the Basque tongue, of Montevideo, Oriental Republic of Uruguay»⁸.

Also inside the front of the book is a deposit letter by the Queen's private secretary, dated 29th August 1953: «Dear Sir, The Queen has recently been given the accompanying copy of *Hamlet* in the Basque language, which Her Majesty thinks you might care to lodge in your Library. If so, The Queen will very gladly let it stay there on permanent

7 KELSEY RIDGE, *Shakespeare in Russian: Konstantin Konstantinovich's Hamlet*, Translating Shakespeare. <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-russian-konstantin-konstantinovichs-hamlet/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

8 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *A gift from the Queen*, Translating Shakespeare. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/gift-queen/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

loan”⁹. The book resided in the Memorial Theatre Library until 1964, when the theatre’s library collection was merged with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library. Bound in burgundy velveteen and embossed in gilded letters, this precious book combines a special provenance and a historic occasion.

2. Linguistic challenges

Translating Shakespeare into Bengali and Arabic

Contributors to *Translating Shakespeare* include, of course translators. Translators naturally focus on the challenges of translating Shakespeare, for example, Dattatreya Dutt, translator of Shakespeare into Bengali, describes the difficulties in carrying across puns into a different cultural milieu: «European cultures share a common base at a certain level. That does not work here in Bengal»¹⁰. Abdul Sattar Jawad, an Iraqi academic at Duke University in America and translator of Shakespeare’s sonnets into Arabic, also discusses linguistic issues. He argues that a successful translator of Shakespeare needs to be knowledgeable of Elizabethan language, as certain words have changed their meaning, for example, “nice” used to mean “dull”, “fussy” or “trivial” in Shakespeare’s time¹¹.

Translating Shakespeare into Danish

Award-winning writer and translator Niels Brunse, who has translated nearly all of Shakespeare’s works into Danish, lists the many challenges of rendering Shakespeare into Danish: “How do you accommodate the meaning of Shakespeare’s words, so often monosyllabic, in a language which simply needs more syllables to convey the same seman-

9 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *A gift from the Queen*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/gift-queen/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

10 DATTATREYA DUTT, *Woing Shakespeare across cultures: Shakespeare in Bengali*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/woing-shakespeare-across-cultures-shakespeare-bengali/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

11 ABDUL SATTAR JAWAD, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets in Arabic*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeares-sonnets-arabic/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

tic contents? How do you recreate the banter and all the delightful innuendos of Romeo's young friends? How do you give Shylock's words their slight tinge of otherness without betraying the pain that makes him a fellow human being? How do you give the ugly monster Caliban his unique moment of beauty when he celebrates the noises that his isle is full of¹²? Brunse also explains the need to re-translate Shakespeare. He argues that a new translation helps us discover differences, and characters can appear in a fresh light. He particularly enjoyed presenting female Shakespearean characters in a modern way by «pulling heroines out of the docile femininity of the 19th Century Danish translations»¹³.

Translating Shakespeare into Maori

Transferring text from one language into another can be challenging when cultural differences are a barrier but translators also point out the commonality between their own cultures and Shakespeare's works. Merimeri Penfold, translator of Shakespeare's love poems into Māori, discovered similarities between Shakespeare and Māori culture. «I recognised among the many alien elements some striking similarities: especially the poet's fascination with highly wrought intricacies of language, in his feeling for the rhythmic energies of the spoken word»¹⁴. Although English and Te Reo Māori are completely different languages, translation is still possible thanks to the enduring and universal themes that Shakespeare dealt with, that apply to cultures and peoples everywhere. The cover of this slim volume shows a transformed Droushout portrait of Shakespeare: his face is partially covered in Māori face paint, he wears a spear-like earring and around his neck, he seems to wear a necklace made of shells. It is a great visual introduction to the linguistic journey the book contains.

12 NIELS BRUNSE, *Almost there: Shakespeare in Danish*, Translating Shakespeare. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/almost-there-shakespeare-danish/> (accessed 29th January 2020)

13 NIELS BRUNSE, *Almost there: Shakespeare in Danish*, Translating Shakespeare. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/almost-there-shakespeare-danish/> (accessed 29th January 2020)

14 MERIMERI PENFOLD, *Nga waiata aroha a hekepia: love sonnets*, Holloway Press, Auckland, 2000.

3. Performing and reading Shakespeare in translation

A unique feature of *Translating Shakespeare* is the inclusion of filmed readings of Shakespeare in foreign languages.

Shakespeare in Yoruba

In November 2017 Nigerian poet, translator and performing artist Adeyinka Akinwande sent me a filmed reading of Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' speech that he translated into Yoruba. Yoruba is one of the four official languages of Nigeria along with English, Hausa and Igbo. It is spoken by 28 million people in Nigeria and Benin, and in the Americas, Europe and other parts of Africa. Adeyinka spent many hours translating this iconic speech. He first tried a direct translation, but this altered the meaning. After consulting the works of Yoruba scholars he felt he had achieved a translation that doesn't lose the meaning and flow of the monologue and also reads well in Yoruba.¹⁵

Shakespeare in Arabic

The next filmed reading is also Hamlet's iconic speech, but read in Arabic. Unlike most European languages, Arabic doesn't have a dramatic tradition and plays weren't written in Arabic until the early twentieth century. Early twentieth century translations of *Hamlet* contained many departures from Shakespeare, including changes to characters. However, it didn't take long until more faithful translations appeared: in 1922 a journalist called Sami al-Jrudyadini was the first who translated *Hamlet* directly from English into Arabic, breaking with the tradition of previous translators who translated *Hamlet* from French¹⁶.

Sonnet 116 in Irish

In 2018 I produced a brief film featuring one of our Collections volunteers, Ann McDermott, reading sonnet 116 in Irish. I published the

15 ADEYINKA AKINWANDE, *Shakespeare in Yoruba*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/?tag=translating-shakespeare&page=3> (accessed 29th January 2020).

16 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, *Translating Shakespeare*. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/hamlets-arab-journey/> (accessed 29th January 2020).

video on the occasion of St. Patrick's Day and it includes several items from our collections that have an Irish connection¹⁷. These are:

1. An album showing paintings and sketches of Ireland in the nineteenth century.
2. Shakespeare's sonnets translated into Irish by Muiris Sionoid.
3. Also featured are early editions of Shakespeare's plays, which were published in Dublin and are now housed in the Trust's rare book stack.
4. You will also see posters of the Irish-American actress Ada Rehan.

Born in Ireland in the nineteenth century, she immigrated to America as a child. Rehan was mainly known for her portrayal of comic heroines, in particular, Katherine in *The taming of the shrew*.

Hamlet in 23 languages

To mark the occasion of the European Day of Languages and to promote our foreign language editions, I asked Trust staff and European librarian colleagues if they might be interested in doing filmed readings of Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' monologue in a range of European languages. The European Day of Languages aims to increase intercultural understanding, to encourage language learning and to promote the rich linguistic diversity of Europe. One of the highlights of this project was the trailer, featuring the first line from Hamlet's famous speech in twenty-three languages¹⁸.

4. Outcomes

Apart from promoting a part of our collection that is in closed access, one of the outcomes of this blog has been the donation of more recent translations of Shakespeare's works to our library. Feedback re-

17 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *Shakespeare in Irish*, Translating Shakespeare. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-irish/> (accessed 29th January 2020)

18 MAREIKE DOLESCHAL, *'To be or not to be' in 23 languages*, Translating Shakespeare. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/be-or-not-be-23-languages/> (accessed 29th January 2020)

ceived from participants to the blog shows how much they enjoyed being involved in this project. Here is a slide with some of their comments:

«This looks fabulous! You've done a great job, and the editing is seamless :-) it's also very compelling to watch how different readers 'act' the lines and to listen to the various inflexions. I'll certainly share it straight away!»

«I congratulate the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and you in particular, for the marvellous initiative, allowing the public to know more about Shakespeare's translations around the world»

«I think the Arabic videos by Mr Yasen Alkinani were great, I really enjoyed listening and watching them. In addition to his very pleasant voice, I loved the contrast between the texts and the Arabic setting he creates while wearing the abaya and the traditional Jordanian costume»¹⁹.

This blog is an ongoing project. There are still many languages that need to be covered, for example, Japanese, Basque, Norwegian, Lithuanian, Hebrew, Korean, Turkish, Spanish, and sign languages. I continue to invite translators, actors, scholars, linguists and anyone who loves Shakespeare and languages to contribute to this blog.

The Translating Shakespeare project is a good example of the proactive steps that I have undertaken to engage personal voices from a range of nationalities, races and perspectives with the works of William Shakespeare. This project has also shown that it advances the knowledge of translated editions and promotes the appreciation of Shakespeare's works in other parts of the world.

MAREIKE DOLESCHAL
The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

¹⁹ Feedback relating to the *Translating Shakespeare* blog emailed to Collections Librarian Mareike Doleschal in October and November 2017.

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ՄԱՐԷՅԱԿ ԴՈԼԵՇԱԼ

Յօդուածին հեղինակը՝ 2009էն ի վեր, Շէյքսպիրի Ծննդավայրի խնամակալութեան Գրադարանապահն է, վերհսկելով 55.000 գիրքերու հաւաքածոյ մը, որոնցմէ մօտաւորապէս երեք հազարը Շէյքսպիրի կեանքին, երկերուն եւ ժամանակաշրջանին մասին հնատիպ գիրքեր են:

Տիկ. Դոլեշալ պատասխանատուն է գիրքերու գնումին, ինչպէս նաեւ բրիտանացի եւ միջազգային հետազօտողներու աշխատանքին սատարելու եւ գրադարանին հաւաքածոյին քարոզչութիւնը ընելու ընկերային ցանցերու միջոցաւ: Իր նախաձեռնութեամբ 2017ին խնամակալութեան գրադարանը սկիզբ տուաւ թուային տոմարի մը (բլոգ)՝ *Translating Shakespeare*, որու նպատակն է տարածել հաւաքածոյին թարգմանչական գործերը:

Շէյքսպիրի Ծննդավայրին խնամակալութեան Գրադարանին մէջ, մօտաւորապէս ութսուն լեզու ներկայացուած է՝ ափրիկաանսէ մինչեւ եորուբայ, էսպերանտոյ, կլինգոն, ուրդու, եւ կալլէսերէն: Թարգմանութիւններուն թիւը յարաճուն է: Վերջերս գրադարանի հաւաքածոյին աւելցաւ Ռիչըրտ Երրորդի բացման մենախօսութիւնը ղրղզերէն եւ Տասներկորդ Գիշեր ամերիկեան նշաններու լեզուով թուային բազմանպատակային սկաւառակ (ԹԲՄ, DVD) մը: