

GONE BE THE SENSE AND THE BEAUTY!

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with verse translation instead of prose translation. It deals with problems that occur, particularly when translating rhyme, metre, pun, and other poetic devices in Shakespeare's plays. Although the Bard very frequently employs iambic pentametre without rhyme, in certain parts of his plays, rhyme indeed plays a significant role. Rhyme that bears beauty in some passage that is to be translated is unlikely to appear in the translation in any language. Rhythm or better known as metre in poetry, which also enhances the beauty of lines in the English language, in which Shakespeare's plays are written, is bound to disappear in any language. Another significant feature to be found in Shakespeare's plays is his well-known play on words or frequently referred to as pun. Pun, which is virtually based on the pronunciation, spelling, and sense of words, plays a key role in certain scenes. Never can a pun be appropriately translated into any language without losing its sense and beauty. This paper also analyses other features of Shakespeare's plays that may not be properly translated. An adaptation of Shakespeare's poetic plays is, to a certain extent, liable to ruin the sense and beauty of his works.

Key words: translation, Shakespeare's poetic plays, rhyme, metre, pun, foreign accent, exotica

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an interesting but difficult subject. In order to be able to give a proper translation, a translator needs to master not only the original text fully but also the target language completely. Moreover, unless the translator comprehends the text contents thoroughly, he is likely to concoct ludicrously weird piece of translation. For instance, it is really ridiculous to translate 'I ran into her in the ballroom' into 'Saya menabraknya di kamar bola. **To run into**' may mean **'menabrak'** (collide) but according to the context, the phrasal verb implies **'to meet unexpectedly'**. A **'ballroom'** is not a room for playing with balls but a **'large dancing room'**. It is a simple sentence in simple prose but it seems that it is not simple enough to translate since such blunders in translating prose are frequently seen in our film subtitles.

Hurdles in translating poetry are even greater since there are special poetic devices, such as rhyme, metre, diction, as well as imagery which specifically belong to poetry. Some poets go even further by providing their poems with a visual image of what they want to express. Let us pay attention to the shape of the following poem!

Star
If you are
A love compassionate,
You will walk with us this year.
We face a glacial distance, who are here
Huddld
At your feet

In the poem above entitled 'A Christmas Tree', the poet William Burford has managed to create the desired shape with a great endeavour; in the penultimate line, he deliberately misspells the word **huddled** into **huddld** in order to match and link the title and the contents of his utterance to its physical shape.

If we were to translate it into Indonesian, it would be scarcely possible to retain the Christmas-tree shape. There are other examples such as George Herbert's 'The altar' in which the lines are arranged in the shape of an altar. (York Handbooks of English Poetry). However, we are not really concerned with the shape of a poem. We are more concerned with other features of poetry and the problems of translating them from one language into another.

Have you ever recited Samuel Taylor Coleridge's narrative poem entitled 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'? To be exact, have you ever recited or heard a recital of the following lines?

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

In portraying how the wind aids the ancient mariner's sailing-ship move fast, the poet repeats the 'f', 'b', and 's' sounds so remarkably that when the lines are recited, they undoubtedly produce the desired audio effect. Such wonderful verse can never be appropriately translated into any language without diminishing its beauty.

Now what happens when we translate Shakespeare's poetic plays? What will happen to his rhymes, metres, puns, slip of the tongue, and other devices that Shakespeare uses in his poetic plays? Will the sense and the beauty be gone?

RHYME

First of all, I'd like to discuss rhyme in Shakespeare's plays. Rhymes vary. We have perfect rhymes or full rhymes or homonyms, namely a word having the same sound as another word, such as '**there**' and '**their**', and '**what**' and '**wot**'. Such rhymes are frequently used in wordplays. We have para-rhymes or half-rhymes or imperfect rhymes in which the initial and the final consonants sound the same but the intervening vowels are pronounced differently, for instance, '**tin**' and '**tan**', and '**ship**' and '**shop**'. We also have pseudo-rhymes or eye-rhymes where two words look alike but do not have the same sounds, for example, in the words '**tough**' and '**cough**', and '**cow**' and '**low**'. Before one reads a Shakespearean play or sees a performance of it, one might expect to see a great number of such rhymes but Shakespeare actually does not use as many rhymes as one expects (except in his earlier plays). He mostly uses blank verse, that is iambic pentametre without rhyme. Some of the greatest scenes in his plays like The Balcony scene in 'Romeo and Juliet', The Dagger scene and The Candle Light scene in 'Macbeth', Jacques' Seven Ages of Life (better known as All

the World's a stage) in 'As You Like It', Mark Antony's funeral oratory in 'Julius Caesar' and Hamlet's soliloquy 'To be or not to be' in 'The Tragic History of Hamlet' barely have rhymes at the end of the lines. In spite of that, he frequently employs a heroic couplet (two rhyming lines next to one another in iambic pentameters, which in many cases form a complete metrical unit). Shakespeare usually employs a heroic couplet at the end of a scene or of a long speech within a scene. Consider Malcom's closing speech at the end of Act II scene iii:

*This murderous shaft that's shot
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way
Is to avoid the aim: therefore, to horse,
And let us not be dainty about leave-taking,
But shift away. There is warrent in that theft,
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left.*

Shakespeare's heroic couplet has a function of its own. In addition to its beauty, it gives a clue to the audience that it is the end of the scene. Act II scene i of 'Macbeth', which ends with a heroic couplet, also has such a function :

*Hear it not Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.*

It is apparently unlikely that such heroic couplets can be appropriately translated, considering that the rhymes must surely be completely different.

More subtle rhymes are found at the end of some of Shakespeare's comedies, such as in 'The Tempest', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Twelfth Night' and 'The Merchant of Venice'. It must be hard for a translator to retain the rhyming lines that Shakespeare has so meticulously embroidered at the end of many of his plays. Look how beautiful the rhymes of the following poetic passages are!

*Let it be so; the first inter'gatory
That my Nerissa shall be sworn on is,
Whether till next night she had rather stay,
Or go to bed now, being two hours to day;
But were the day come, I should wish it dark
Till I were crouching with the doctor's clerk.
Well while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.
(The Merchant of Venice, Act V scene i)*

*When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth everyday.*

*But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came, alas to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.*
(Twelfth Night, Act V scene i)

It is absolutely impossible to use even just similar rhymes to those in the quotations above let alone producing the same rhymes in any other language apart from the English language. I do agree with A.C. Bradley, who states '*...in true poetry it is, in strictness, impossible to express the meaning in any but its own words, or to change the words without changing the meaning. A translation of such poetry is not really the old meaning in a new dress; it is a new product, something like the poem, though, if one chooses to say so, more like it in the aspect of meaning than in the aspect of form.*' (Samson: 188)

When comparing Shakespeare's verse with Trisno Sumarjo's translation of the epilogue in the Tempest, I get the impression that the translator has fabricated an utterly novel painting. Let us peruse the original texts and then compare them with the subsequent Indonesian version.

*Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have 's mine own,
Which is most faint. Now 't is true
I must be here confined by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands.
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.*
(Act V scene i)

*Habislah kekuatan ilmu sihirku.
Yang tinggal hanya tenagaku melulu;
Itu kecil; tuanlah memutus kini:
Mestikah aku tinggal, atau kembali
Ke Napoli? Mahkota kudapat pula,*

*Hianatan kubalas dengan kurnia.
 Jangan tuan paksakan padaku kini
 Untuk terus tinggal di pulau yang sunyi.
 Lepaskan diriku dengan rela hati
 Dari negeri yang tidak Mubarak ini!
 Sorak tuanlah meniup kelayarku;
 Di situpun tergantung bahagiaku,
 Ialah menyenangkan tuan. Tak ada
 Padaku jin-jin dan kata mantra;
 Dan putus asa aku akhirnya, jika
 Tak ada yang membebaskan sukma
 Serta memaafkan segala dosaku
 Sedangkan selalu kumohon restu!
 Jika tuan sendiri mengharap berkah,
 Kesabaran tuan hendaknya bertuah!*

We notice such a conspicuous disparity between Shakespeare's rhymes and those of Trisno Sumarjo. Such a disparity is inevitable in any translation of poetry since different languages have different syntax, diction, and phoneme.

METRE

Again, we have to emphasize the uniqueness of poetry. A poet writing in the English language frequently uses various kinds of metres to compose a musical effect. In fact, metre or rhythm plays a significant role in the English spoken language. Some words are strongly stressed, but some are slightly stressed. Imagine reciting the translated version of Shakespeare's lines in the standard Chinese. We can hardly talk about the metres (whether they are iambi, trochee, dactyl, anapaest, or spondee) in this tonic language in which each word has its own tone. Similarly, when translated into Bahasa Indonesia, Shakespeare's blank verse may really become blank; it is subject to losing its metrical functions due to the fact that the Bahasa does not really emphasize so much on word stresses as the English language does. Even if it did, the metres in the original language would not fit in those of the target language since each language has a distinct type of diction and stress. Remember that an iambic pentametre consists of five groups of two syllables each, in which the second syllable is given a stronger stress than the first. We must also remember that metres in Shakespeare's plays have other significant functions, as Bernard Lott expounds in his Introduction to 'Othello': '*Metrical form also helps to make lines memorable, and to give added emotional power to the words by playing off the natural pause of the speaking voice according to the sense of the words against the pause demanded by the metrical pattern.*' (Lott: xxv) Considering that approximately two-thirds of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', for instance, has ornate blank verse, I believe no translators are likely to be capable of rendering the beauty and the functions of the metres that Shakespeare has ornamented so meticulously in his unrhymed verse. Pay attention to the following citation taken from the last ten lines of Jacques' soliloquy in 'As You like it', and then compare it with Trisno Sumarjo's translation of the metres.

*And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
 His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes*

*And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
(Act II scene vii)*

*Demikian ia main. Tingkat keenam ialah
Orang kering-mering, berkasut dan bercelana panjang,
Berkacamata, dengan tas di pinggangnya.
Celana dari waktu mudanya yang disimpan itu
Landung pada kakinya yang kurus, dan suaranya
Menjadi lebih kecil lagi dari suara anak,
Nyaring dan janggal. Dan tontonan terakhir
Yang menutup hikayat ramai dan aneh ini,
Ialah si tua mamai; lalu kealpaan:
Gigi, mata, rasa, semuanya hilang.
(Sumardjo: 60)*

When reciting Shakespeare's version and calculating the syllables in each line, we will find that there are precisely ten syllables, and as the name Iambic Pentametre without rhyme suggests, each line consists of five iambs (an iamb is a metrical foot consisting of two syllables, the second carrying a stronger stress.) We can also easily notice that there are always more than ten syllables in the translation. It is obvious that from the number of the syllables and metres alone, Shakespeare's *trademark* (his well-known use of iambic pentametre without rhyme) cannot be preserved in the translation; what concerns us more is the absence of Shakespeare's conspicuously deliberate verbiage of the reiteration of the word 'sans' (a French loan-word meaning 'without') to emphasize the poor condition of the last stage of a person's life.

Once poetry is translated, it is denuded of its melody. Unlike plants, metres cannot be transplanted from one language into another. Furthermore, they should not be paraphrased even into the same language. The deprivation of the tuneful music in the paraphrase is inevitable, as is evident from the discordant note of the subsequent paraphrase of parts of 'To be, or not to be':

*To be, or not to be – that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? – To die – to sleep –
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die – to sleep –
To sleep! perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub;...
(Act II scene i)*

The question that perplexes me is whether I should go on living or put an end to my life. Is it nobler to submit to the oppression of fortune, or to resist the troubles of life, and to get rid of them by such resistance? To die; to sleep! Perhaps it is no more than a sleep; and then to say by such a sleep we terminate the heart-sickness and the countless suffering to which we are subjects as mortals -it is certainly an end

earnestly to be longed for. To die, to sleep; to sleep! But we may dream when we sleep; ah, there is the trouble!

(Turner: 123,125)

The futility of paraphrasing poetry is as sure as eggs are eggs, as A.C. Bradley states in *The World of Poetry*:

'That is why paraphrase is impossible. The better the poetry, the more futile the attempt, the more obvious the failure. Poetry is not prose in fancy dress....It is the total effect on the ear and mind and emotions of all the words, in the order in which they have been arranged, with all their sounds, rhythms, associations and overtones. That is to say, the one meaning possible to extract from a poem is the poem itself.'

When a Shakespearean play is translated, what else may be missing from the original text?

PUN

Shakespeare is an expert in creating puns. A pun is a play on words with ambiguous meanings. Puns are inserted in his tragedies to lessen the tension. Very often clowns, jesters, plebeians are 'allowed to play their comic parts' but it does not mean that the nobles are not. The protagonists and major characters who belong to the aristocratic blood in 'Macbeth', 'Hamlet', 'King Lear', 'Julius Caesar', 'Othello', to mention but a few, are also involved in both humorous and serious puns.

Macbeth: page 109

*Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling Night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond
Which keeps me pale!..... (Act III scene ii)*

'Till thou applaud the deed' implies 'Till you praise the action'. Macbeth's remark here, however, may also be interpreted as 'Till you set a seal to the legal document.' The **deed** here is very closely related to the word **bond** which means a legal document. Macbeth prays to Night to cancel and tear Banquo's bond of life to pieces. The quibble on **deed** in the sense of an action and of a legal document can never be properly translated. The two meanings of the word 'deed' in English can never be expressed with one word in the Bahasa. Here is another example taken from 'Julius Caesar'. The cobbler says:

'Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl. I meddle with no tradesman's matters, nor women's matters, but with all. I am indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover them. As proper men as ever trod upon neat's leather have gone upon my handy work.'

Shakespeare plays on the words '**awl**' and '**all**'. They have different meanings and spellings but the same pronunciation. When the homonyms '**awl**' and '**all**' are translated into '**penusuk**' and '**semua**' respectively, the translator has disrespectfully disregarded the pun that Shakespeare has elaborated intentionally. Similarly, when Othello's speech in the excerpt below is translated, the function of the wordplay will be absent:

*Lie with her? Lie on her? – We say lie on her when they
believe her. Lie with her! – Zounds, that fulsome. –*

When translated into Indonesian, the word '**lie**', which in the context connotes either 'to tell a lie' or 'to sleep with the lover', can never have the same function.

SLIP OF THE TONGUE!

Slip of the tongue is an unintentional mistake that we utter when we meant to say something else. In reality that must be an unpleasant experience. In most of Shakespeare's plays, however, comical situations occur. Shakespeare's intention is to provide the audience with humorous scenes when the characters, particularly low class people who are uneducated, are involved in slips of the tongue. The upper-class may also be involved in Freudian slips, thus revealing their true thoughts unintentionally. Here are some comic scenes resulting from Shakespeare's characters' slips of the tongue in Act II scene ii of 'The Merchant of Venice'. Gobbo actually wants to tell Bassanio that his son has 'a great **affection**' or wish to be his servant but what he says is 'a great **infection**': 'He hath a great **infection**, sir (as one would say) to serve – ' Later Launcelot says 'In very brief, the suit is '**impertinent**' to myself,...' instead of saying '**pertinent**' which means 'concerning', he utters the word '**impertinent**' which means 'impudent'. There is another slip of the tongue when Gobbo tells his would-be master Bassanio: 'That is the very **defect** of the matter, sir.' What Gobbo means is '**effect**' or 'conclusion' instead of '**defect**' or flaw. In Act II scene v, there is a comic mistake when Launcelot says: 'I beseech you, sir, go; my young master doth expect your **reproach**'.. The word '**reproach**' (rebuke) is Launcelot mistake for '**approach**' or coming. Shylock takes Launcelot's word literally, replying in the next line: 'So do I his'. Shylock expects rebuke from Bassanio probably because of Antonio's present trouble. In my opinion, the literary aspects of slips of the tongue can never be appropriately translated. However hard we attempt to translate such words, the result may be disappointing.

FOREIGN ACCENT OR PRONUNCIATION

Shakespeare's plays were intended to be performed. However, when we analyse the elements of Shakespeare's plays that are impossible to translate, we cannot help discussing the printed words that do not exist in the English lexis. In 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', for instance, there are two characters who speak with queer pronunciation. One of them is Doctor Caius, a French doctor who speaks English with a very strong French accent. The other is Sir Hugh Evans, who is very Welsh. It is quite a feat particularly for a non native speaker of English to grasp their remarks which contain speech defects. Let us skim the following lines but pay a close attention to the underlined words.

1. Evans: God pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!
2. Caius : I will knog your urinal about your knave's cogcomb.
3. Caius : Ay, dat is very good, excellent.
4. Caius : Have you make-a de sot of us, ha, ha?
5. Evans: He has made us his vlouting-stog.
6. Evans: I desire you that we may be friends, and let us knog our prain together....
7. Caius : If there be one or two, I shall make-a the turd.
8. Evans: I most fehemently desire you you will also look that way.
9. Evans: Pless my soul, how full of cholers I am, and trempling of mind.
10. Caius : Vat is you sing? I do not like dese toys. Pray you go and vetch me....

Shakespeare's intention of making the speakers speak with a certain accent or pronunciation is clear, namely to give an illustration to the audience that they are not English or they are not native speakers of English. This poses an enormous problem for translators to convey the 'message' to the audience in the target language.

EXOTICA

Exotica in Shakespeare's plays are exotic indeed. There are names of flowers and plants that do not have their equivalent in Indonesian. Even if they did, would the audience understand

the symbol? When Desdemona in 'Othello' sings 'willow, willow, willow', is she expressing her wedded bliss or an unrequited love? When the evil Iago speaks of poppy and mandragora, will they be used to make the jealous general drowsy or insomniac? Is a goat's horn one of the hard objects growing on the head of a goat or the name of a tree, from which pour fruits, flowers and corn symbolizing plenty? What about if a male character is rumoured that he is wearing horns on his head? Is he extremely potent or is he a cuckold? Exotica related to animals, terms in miscellaneous branches of studies are knitted and weaved into exquisite verse, including Greek myths. Although he presents his poetic plays in English, he speaks Greek to us. It would be too toilsome a task for us even if his works could be translated.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, it is obvious that there are many obstacles in translating poetry, particularly in translating Shakespeare's poetic plays. Although there are not so many rhymes in his plays as many people may expect, his rhymes, like rhymes in general, are difficult to translate due to the fact that different languages have different diction and different phonemes. So far as metres are concerned, the same case is true. We can even say that Iambic Pentametre without rhyme is more difficult to translate because of the rigid pattern of the number of stressed and unstressed syllables. Besides, it is hardly possible to retain the metres since in the Indonesian language we do not pay very much attention to stressed and unstressed syllables. Pun which plays a significant role in Shakespeare's plays can never be present in the target language. Moreover, as we have previously discussed, deliberate slips of the tongue, which elicit comical situations, will also disappear. In additions to the obstacles that have been summed up, there are exotica which hinder translators from rendering Shakespeare's works into another language. Even if they can be translated, linguistic, literary, and cultural barriers make it very hard for the audience to digest the sense and the beauty.

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