Aspects of inter-semiotic translation based on the works of W. Shakespeare

Nino Phartenadze (Georgia)
Doctor of Philology, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University
phartenadze.nino@gmail.com

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In the modern world the role of translation has notably changed and it has been firmly stated and pragmatically acknowledged that translation is not only the exchange of thought relating to different types of information, but also the exchange of culture. The exchanging of culture varies greatly and depends on many aspects from each culture that result exceptional types of reproduction, i.e. translation of source texts. In the present article, we aim to illustrate some aspects of intra and inter-semiotic translation of Shakespeare's works. The study includes the screening, cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's plays.

The phenomenon of inter-semiotic translation represents a special creative domain of language procedures and practices. It involves a radical change of habits of interpretation and new forms of sign manipulation. The phenomenon was defined by Roman Jakobson (Jakobson, 1971: 261) as 'transmutation of signs' - 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems'. Despite its theoretical relevance, and in spite of the frequencies in which it is practiced, the phenomenon remains virtually unexplored in terms of conceptual modeling, especially from a semiotic perspective.

For Gorlée, creative sign transmutation involves the 'reconstruction' of an artwork into distinct semiotic system (Gorlée, 2007: 347).The modalities of translation proposed by Jakobson, according to Gorlée, are related to the notion of translation in an 'extra-linguistic horizon' (Gorlée, 1994: 147-168, 1997: 240-244). This leads us to a general acceptance of translations of texts of all kinds, taking away from term its exclusive allusion to linguistic material.

The processes are observed in several systems and include: literature to cinema (Herman Melville > John Huston; William Shakespeare > Orson Welles), literature to comics (Herman Melville > Bill Sienkiewicz), poetry and dance (Theopile Gautier > Michel Fokine).

Many other examples could be mentioned in several sign systems as theater, sculpture, music, painting, video, and so on.

In his classical article James S. Holmes referred to the relations between translation studies and other disciplines. He considered two possibilities: translation studies as a branch of other disciplines using their concepts, models and paradigms, and as an autonomous discipline relying on its own resources. It also considers another possibility: translation studies as discipline that - due to its capacity to encompass inter-semiotic translation as one of the objects- can give a unique perspective on topics which are usually dealt with the frameworks of other disciplines, such as literature, theatre and film studies (Holmes, 1988: 67-80).

The starting point for this line of thought is an argument made by Roman Jakobson. He claimed that the meaning of the sign is its translation into another sign or sequence of signs in the same language, in another language or in another semiotic (e.g. visual) language. Following Jakobson, Itamar-Zohar elaborated a theory of transfer which applies to all variations of the following phenomenon: a text which was created in cultural system A is recreated in cultural system B. Even-Zohar's theory of transfer, rooted in his poly-system theory, has been used in research dealing with transfer within one language and from literature to cinema (Itamar Even- Zohar, 1990: 73-78).

The present article applies to ideas of Jakobson and Even-Zohar to an analysis of the cinematic adaptation of plays originally written for theatre specifically - Shakespeare's plays. The cinema has been interested in Shakespeare since its earliest days. Screen adaptations of his plays have served various purposes: proving the relevance of the Bard to our lives, manifesting the ability of the cinema to cope with works originally written for the Elizabethan theatre. To analyze these adaptations, the following discussion also draws on theories which have been developed out of translation studies and concerns specifically to the relations between cinema and theatre. Rather than indulging in literary, theatrical and cinematic issues as such, the focus is therefore on cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as a case of inter-semiotic translation.

From theatre to cinema, using both historical, modern and partial adaptations need to be discussed while analyzing of cinematic adaptations. In performing a play, either Shakespeare or other, the starting point for both the theatre director and filmmaker is the original written text. One turns it into a stage performance, and the other - into a film. Every performance, theatrical or cinematic, implies an interpretation of the play. The very fact that

living actors read the dialogues, using intonations and body language, involves interpretation - theirs or the director's- even if the script used is very close to the original play (Weissbrod, 2006: 42-50).

While dealing with Shakespeare's plays, it should be taken into consideration that they were originally intended for Elizabethan theatre. This means that theatrical models were very different from contemporary ones. The use of settings and decorations were minimal. The spoken words were supposed to activate the imagination of the audience. All performances took place during the day, and if the enacted events were set at night or in a dark place, the darkness had to be imagined. Women were not allowed to act on stage and their roles were performed by young boys whose voices did not change. The spectators were physically close to the stage, and since they did not sit in the dark as they do today, the actors could communicate with them.

A discussion of cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays must take into account not just the transformation of a play written for the theatre into a film, and often shift from English culture to other culture, but also the time that elapses since creation of the source text. Cinema is young art which began developing in the late 19th century. This means that even a film made in the early days of cinema is quite remote from the play lying at its basis.

According to Holmes, the antiquity of texts written in the past - from a modern reader's point of view – is apparent on three levels: linguistic (what language is used, how ancient it is), the literary or poetic (used beyond language, rhythm or rhyme), and socio-cultural (the reality reflected in the text, beliefs and world views involved) (Holmes, 1988: 35-44).

The translator can try to reconstruct the antiquity of the text on all three levels, modernize it on all of them or compromise: preserve the antiquity of one or more levels and modernize to the other one or two. Holmes assumes, however, that the translators will generally prefer s compromise.

In its first years, the cinema simulated theatre since it lacked a repertoire of its own. The first adaptations of Shakespeare were made by a static camera that shot from the angle of spectator sitting in the middle of one of the first rows. Already in 20th century, filmmakers became aware of possibilities inherent in the new medium and realized them in increasingly sophisticated ways. The range of possibilities grew with the move of silent to talking films and from black-and-white to color photography. Despite of these developments, cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare to this day often retain elements of theatrical models.

Kurosawa's Ran (1985), which is based on *King Lear*, is a case in point. The film is considered as great cinematic achievement. It actualizes potential unique to the cinema, such as showing entire armies racing to battle and using natural landscape as a metaphor for the human condition. However, Kurosawa also combined elements pertaining to Noh theatre. Moreover, the use of Hoh model is part of Kurosawa's attempt to relocate the Shakespearean play into Japanese culture. Together with the reference to real figures and events from history of Japan and the merging of Buddhist ideas, they enable the director to show the relevance of Shakespeare to a culture so remote from the original one.

Kurosawa's use of the Noh model serves an additional purpose: it plants the story in the ancient cultural context, though one which is different from Shakespeare's word. However, filmmakers adapting Shakespeare to the screen often choose other options: partial adapting and total modernization. It is reasonable to assume that in this respect the cinema relied on the elder and more highly regarded theatre. In the theatre, norms allowing anachronism and timelessness in performing Shakespeare developed in the first half of 20th century and were vivid in the work of such directors like Harley Granville Barker, Tyrone Guthrie and Peter Brook. The fact that many film directors who adapted Shakespeare to the screen came from the theatre (Lawrence Olivier, Orson Welles and others) supports this assumption.

The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is characterized by creating the impression of antiquity on all levels. The grandiose project of televising the entire Shakespeare canon took place between 1978 and 1985. The producer and fund-raiser was Cedric Messina. Directed by several directors and diverse in their styles, all adaptations nevertheless abided by the same basic norms: "wild" experimentalism was discouraged; the plays were to be set in Shakespeare's own time or in the historical period of events.

One of the major directors working on BBC, who helped to consolidate the norms to the series, was Jonathan Miller. In 1980 he adapted *The Taming of the Shrew*. This early comedy of Shakespeare embarrasses modern producers and audiences because it celebrates the taming of a disobedient woman. Confirming the Elizabethan belief in order and hierarchy, it refrains from altering the original text cope with problem in to ways (described by Thompson 2003). One was is to hint that Katherine, the shrew, only pretends to have change and make her final speech of obedience sound ironic. In 1929 film directed by Sam Taylor, the actress - Mary Pickford- winked when he made a speech. In fact, the possibility that

Kathrin is pretending is inherent in the original play itself. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play within a play, and pretence is the theme of the outer play. The other way of coping with the problem is to turn Shakespeare's comedy into a play about love at first sight: Katherine is so much in love with Petruchio that she is willing to do anything to get him. According to Thompson, this makes the play more tolerable for a modern audience. Miller refrained from irony, but he did not emphasize Katherine's love for Petruchio. When she makes the speech of obedience at the end of the play, she is practically glowing with love. Although the setting and costumes reflect the past, the adaptation is not devoid of a modern touch.

Today Shakespeare's greatness is generally attributed to the sophistication and artistic value of his language. This may explain the production of adaptations which modernize the socio-cultural reality and/or use contemporary cinematic models, but preserve the Shakespearean text (often cut and reorganized).

Adaptations which preserve the Shakespearean dialogue but update the play on other level shatter the illusion of a real world. The latter may be called partial adaptation. This may explain why such adaptations have become normative in the post-modern era, namely in the second half of the twentieth century. One of the characteristics of post-modernism is disbelief in the ability of any art to create realist impression by using well-established models. Post-modernist thinking thus encourages the use of Shakespearean dialogue in a contemporary world filtered through modern models (such as the model of an MTV clip Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet*, 1996). Another consideration in favor of such fusion is that by modernizing Shakespeare's plays it is possible to make them more attractive to the young generation. Giving them main roles to popular stars such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* and Ethan Hawke in Almereyda's *Hamlet* is a means of ensuring the success of the film.

To complete the discussion of modern adaptations, a reference will be made to a film which not only updates a Shakespearean play on all levels, but posits it in the future: *Forbidden Planet* (directed by Fred M. Wilcox, 1956), which is based on *The Tempest*. The cinematic model underlying the film is that of science fiction, and Prospero's island has accordingly been replaced by a planet far away from Earth. In this new context, ideas already present in the original play are further developed. The Tempest is often understood as a play dealing with colonialism. Shakespeare's approach to the subject is ambivalent.

In conclusion we can sum up that cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been an important part of the history of cinema from its earliest days. The number of

researches dealing with these adaptations is immense and still it keeps growing. So therefore this article attempts to approach the subject from a translation studies perspective. The adaptations surveyed on this basis have been found to vary in how they manoeuvre between the cinema and theatre, two distinct media which use different semiotic language and rely on different repertoires; and in how they handle the span of time between 16th century and the present.

Applied literature

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