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On translating Shakespeare in the Balkans

The necessity of translating in general, and in particular of translating Shakespeare we now take for granted. It is not appropriate to theorize here of translation and translating *in extenso*, but for the sake of the matter in question we shall start from a possible definition of translation: that it is a process of individual or collective understanding of a foreign word or work, in oral or written form, and its transposition into one's own or any other language. But, as a matter of fact, transposition of anyone's thoughts and ideas or a written text into our mind or verbal expression may be called translation. Any report of any event is translation of the event into words, into verbal expression. Or, someone's writing into another one's report of it.

Now, in our concern with Shakespeare, we can rightly say that any English reader of Shakespeare is his better or worse translator. Surely, there have been so many mediocre readers of Shakespeare endeavouring to translate his text and his ideas into their own words and critical text – and must have failed. Shrewd minds will grasp essential and wider features of an object of attention while petty minds will be fascinated with its superficial manifestation. The greatest English philosopher of our age, Bertrand Russell, once made a remark that a report of a foolish man about what is said by a wise man is never correct, because he always unconsciously translates all that he hears into what he understands. Therefore, only great minds and wits can understand Shakespeare well and translate him successfully

into a new rational expression and explanation, into a critical text, into a new language. Yet, even they have so often failed.

Another premise of the translator's endeavour is that meaning and form in poetry are closely related and indivisible, and that even the music of poetic diction conveys a certain amount of meaning. In view of this, even the best prose translation of a poetic work is defective at the outset. A piece of literary work is not appealing only due to its subject matter, its contents, but to its form as well, the latter being strikingly responsible for the attribute of beauty to the work in question. However, we shall certainly stumble when we come to the question of the aesthetics of translation. Beauty is relative, and in this case we wonder whether we should translate the beauty of an original offered to an audience who share the tastes of the author (even if it is possible to render it faithfully), or render it so as to satisfy the aesthetic taste of our own audience. Further, since beauty and taste are subject to change and development, we can exhort the view that any poetic form may be carried over into another medium in which it has been unknown, untried and strange, even unnatural, on its first appearance, and subsequently be accepted and adopted, thereby enriching or ennobling the culture and civilization into which it has been introduced. Many a time has T. S. Eliot's remark been quoted that there is no more important invention in a nation's life than the discovery of a new form of verse.

When the Romantic movement in Europe spread Shakespeare's fame as the greatest playwright and poetic genius – at the beginning of the 19th century, all the peoples of the Balkans had been suffering under Turkish oppression for four or five hundred years. This Shakespearean victory exactly coincided with the national liberation movements of the two largest national forces in the Balkans, Serbian and Greek. But because the influence of French culture and literature had been too strong in the first half of the 19th century, spreading all over the Balkans from both the Austrian Empire and Russia, the penetration of Shakespeare into the Balkans was hampered up to the middle of the century. On the western border of the peninsula (the now newly created states of Croatia and Slovenia), the Catholic Church also strengthened this resistance to Shakespeare,¹ which was gradually broken down before the end of the century, again due to the new cultural wave from the Germanic countries.

¹ See *Katolički list* (Zagreb, Croatia), 1854, 51, 403. Much more decisive was the Slovenian Roman Catholic Bishop Luka Jeran, who was also the official censor for literature and theatre in Slovenian ethnic lands of the Austrian Empire. He observed in one of his censorships in 1852 that "Shakespeare kann von kathol. Standpunkte aus der kathol. Jugend nicht als 'slavni' [glorious] angeruhmt werden [etc.]." (Quoted by J. Lokar "Jeranova sodba o Shakespeareju," [in:] *Slovan*, Ljubljana 1909, 32.)

When Balkan intellectuals became acquainted with Shakespeare, they were attracted by several qualities of his poetry. Three of these were most conspicuous: first, the passionate force of his characters and his dramatic art, second, the inspiration for liberty, and, third, his use of language and rhetoric, or, more precisely, the beauty of his language. The first interest was inherited from 18th century European criticism, the second from the Romantics, but the last one, which will be our only concern here, was the result of the self-searching by individual poets for their own poetic expression and for the potential in the languages of their people as well as an emulation of Romantic self-expression. (This was in reaction to the 18th century prevailing rigidity of poetic form and of aesthetics in general, and attitude that acknowledged only the "universal laws"). But the general poetic taste and aesthetics of any Balkan nation had been highly fixed and uniform, founded upon the aesthetic characteristics of the folk poetry of each.

Under the Turkish yoke there were no secular schools and no free secular literature in any of the Balkan peoples except folk poetry. That is the reason for the superior achievements of our folk poetry and its power at the time of the national liberation wars in the first half of the 19th century. This widespread form in the literatures of the Balkans was so powerful and so dominant, in both epic and lyric poetry, that at the beginning of the national Romantic movements, any new form, either original or introduced from the West, appeared to be odd and "unnatural." All Balkan peasants up to this day, a century and a half after the victorious Romantic break-through, still accept folk poetry as something natural and living while individual poetic achievements, if not closely related to folk poetry, are considered to be strange and artificial, something for schools and school declamations only. And it must be pointed out that people of such literary taste still make up at least fifty per cent of the Balkan population. They would never buy a book of poetry of any individual author in such a "strange" style.

That is why almost all early attempts to translate Shakespeare into a Balkan mother tongue were made in the metre of folk poetry, or in prose. Croatian Professor Josip Torbarina made a note in his dealing with this subject that even A. W. Schlegel "was not so much trying to reproduce Shakespeare's versification as to imitate a similar well-established native metre,"² and the reason that German translations of Shakespeare used to be better than most of other translations comes largely from the similarity of the German and English languages. Yet I don't think there is a German

² J. Torbarina, "On Rendering Shakespeare's Blank Verse into Other Languages," *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagradiensia* 1959, p. 8.

Shakespeare scholar who would not wish for a better translation of Shakespeare than those in existence.

If we ignore the first attempts in translating Shakespeare in the Balkans which remained unpublished, and the Greek one having been done in prose, and from French, the first attempts of translating Shakespeare in verse in the Balkans were made about the mid-nineteenth century, except the smallest and most isolated people in the Balkans – the Albanians³ that had a strong resistance to Western European culture as Christian and heathen.

If we remember that, besides Latin, the languages of European culture in the mid-nineteenth century were French and German, then we should not be surprised that there were few intellectuals with much knowledge of English, and that Shakespeare was, consequently, with few exceptions, introduced by way of German or Russian translations.

Now, although the French and the Italians have long persisted in translating Shakespeare in prose, consensus could be reached among scholars that the only justifiable mould for translation of Shakespeare is the metre of his poetry, or as close to it as possible. Therefore all prose translations, and all attempts in the metrical systems of native folk poetries, together with translations from other translations, may be considered as pre-Olympic qualifying competitions, and must be left out of account of further assessment as we turn towards the true Olympic translators who have endeavoured to translate Shakespeare's original text and to adopt or invent a metre which resembles Shakespeare's blank verse. We shall probably agree here that there is no "good" translation in prose, nor can one be attained by keeping on that track.

However, translating Shakespeare's verse does not simply mean translating his irregular decasyllabic iamb, but a whole range of other features of his poetry which are inseparable from the content of the line, sentence and work as a whole: transposing his diction, imagery and rhetoric, the musical qualities of his line, his allusions and ambiguities, his archaisms and dialect colouring, his adoption of foreign words, or ironic criticism of the use of foreign words, his unique use or coinage of new words, rhyme and puns and their functions in character portrayal or in the presentation of subject matter; brevity of speech, its nobility or solemnity in contrast to vulgar tones – in a word – the beauty of his language and style.

³ The majority of the Albanian tribes was converted to Islam and, in their strong opposition against the surrounding Serbs and Greeks, identified themselves with the ruling Turks, and became Turkish representative local administrators of military and civil rule. They had no common national alphabet as late as 1908, when they were on the threshold of winning national independence from the Turks and of founding their national state. Their first attempt to translate Shakespeare occurred only after World War I.

To this we must add the specific nature of the English language itself, with its historical Germanic and Romanic backgrounds – older and later layers of adopted Latin and French words, its similarity to the French and German languages; then, the instability of the language, grammar, formal and informal speech, the noble and the ignoble. In view of all these features we become fully aware of the burden of a translator approaching this enterprise: he must know Modern English quite well; he must know – more than the English theatre-goer or reader of Shakespeare – Early Modern English, and he must know thoroughly Shakespeare's own English. On top of all this the translator must know his mother tongue far better than its average speaker as well. But, alas, mastery of all these languages still does not guarantee the success of his translation. Shakespeare's poetry is one of extraordinary beauty, and so must be any translation of it. Once I saw a production of *King Lear* in Serbia by a touring English amateur theatre company. They produced the play "faithfully," omitting no word of Shakespeare and adding no other, yet it was not a faithful production, simply because it was not touching and (therefore?) beautiful. They could not arouse pity and fear in the spectator, as Aristotle would say. Their "translation" of the play on the stage was a failure. And so might be any other translation of any of Shakespeare's work, no matter how correct it is, unless it be beautiful at the same time. Therefore, Shakespeare can be successfully translated only by a native speaker who is also a great poet!

Now, although the world news from the Balkans in the last dozen years has probably been the most frequent, the world reporters could not report how many nations and languages there are in the Balkans. – You know, it may not be opportune!⁴ But what the world do know is that before the expulsion of Turkey from our national ethnic territories, at the beginning of this century, there were four distinct races, languages and literatures: Greek, Slavic, Rumanian and Albanian. Further on, it was scientifically quite justified to consider the Serb and Bulgarian languages and literatures as different as Spanish and Portuguese, or Swedish and Norwegian. The Croats also emerged as a new national identity as early as the mid-19th century, but Serb and Croatian ethnic territories overlapped for centuries, especially due to Austrian and Venetian rules and influences in the west of the Balkans. And at least in those provinces (which make now two thirds of the newly established state of Croatia) the Serbs and Croats spoke

⁴ The Great Powers are still interested in further disintegration of the greater part of the Balkans in order to make us too weak to win true independence and freedom after centuries of Turkish oppression and half a century of imposed Communism. Then no wonder if almost any political party leader, if servile to the Great Powers, can declare a new nation, and consequently "represent people's will" and their "national identity and independence."

the same language 99% in all respects as the one spoken by the Serbs in their exclusive ethnic territories to the east.

Such was the ethnic and linguistic map of the Balkans at the beginning of the century, when Shakespeare became world cultural heritage.⁵

There are two reasons for the Greek priority in this presentation, the second one being their coming in touch with Shakespeare before other Balkan peoples and their primacy in the Balkans in publishing a translation of a Shakespeare play.

The first Greek translation of a Shakespeare play took place as early as 1819, about four decades before one in any other Balkan native tongue. It was *Macbeth*, from the well-known French prose translation by Le Tourneur.⁶ The translator was a young high school student Andres Varonos Theotokis from Corfu, the capital of the Greek Ionian Islands that were just a few years earlier seized by the British from Venice, having thus brought these Greek territories in close connection with West European culture and literature, and consequently with Shakespeare, as different from the rest of Greece.⁷

Theotokis was inspired neither by the beauty and richness of Shakespeare's language nor the play's Romantic theme and qualities extolled by 18th century classicists; he simply did not know Shakespeare's original, and the English language probably just a little. He was actually challenged by a public competition by the British authorities for a reward offered for the best Shakespeare translation. According to the detailed consideration of the translation the Greek Shakespeare scholar Panagiotis Karagiorgos, Theotokis'

⁵ See also a chart of the Indo-European Family of Languages enclosed at the end of the paper, established by courtesy of the Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. see also A. C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, New York 1935, p. 34.

⁶ Pierre Le Tourneur (1736–1788) published his translations of Shakespeare from 1776 to 1782 in 20 volumes, and in his introduction he expressed unreserved admiration to Shakespeare and his work, having thus caused Voltaire's wrath in his well-known *Letter to the French Academie* in 1776. Le Tourneur described Shakespeare as a genius who had dared to explore every corner of the human heart. The young Theotokis, just as his father, had a good chance to get excellent primary education in Paris during the Napoleonic French expansion, so that his French was superb.

⁷ A greater part of the main body of the Greek country and the Greek Aegean Islands remained under Turkey continuously from the 14th and 15th centuries up to the Berlin Congress in 1878 or up to 1912, while even then, regrettably, a large part of the undisputable Greek ethnic territory (around the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, formerly the Hellespont Strait, including the Byzantine capital Constantinople on the eastern coast of the Strait) was ceded to Turkey, from which 1.5 million of the Greeks were compelled to flee to the free country, while the case of Cyprus has been a vivid picture of the game of the Great Powers throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the Greek Ionian Islands, the native country of Odysseus (Ulysses), were under Venetian occupation until Napoleon, and after his fall they were occupied by the British until 1864.

translation was done in prose slavishly after Le Tourneur, “with all his mistakes and omissions, and stage directions invented by Le Tourneur.”⁸

Theotokis probably recast his translation in 1842 and presented it flatteringly to king Otto of Greece in Athens, yet it remained unpublished (and the manuscript was preserved in the Public Library in Munich). He did this translation in the archaic literary *Katharevousa* (“pure”) language, not the living *Demotic* speech, spoken by ordinary Greek people.

The first translation of Shakespeare into Modern Greek could be considered a translation into Demotic Greek, and it was the *Tempest*, done by the Ionian Greek Iakovos Polyas (1826–98), who published it in 1855 in Corfu after five years of hard work. However, Polyas’ translation of *The Tempest* was also in prose, and could not win true praise and approval.

Polyas’ following translation – appeared more than thirty years later, was *Hamlet*, in Athens in 1889, but it did not win admiration of educational authorities, and could not replace the translation of it by Dimitrios Vikelas done in 1882, in spite of the fact that Polyas did it in verse. He applied the 13-syllable iambic metre, which “had been scarcely used in Greek poetry before,” as Professor Karagiorgos remarked.⁹ However, Polyas himself says, in his praiseworthy forty pages long introduction that this verse

[...] of course takes the first place among modern Greek metres and can be named the national metre *par excellence* since from the beginning it was used and glorified above all by our demotic heroic poetry. But this metre ... has not the flexibility and quickness required by dramatic poetry. Preferable to this would be the 11-syllable, but this too, although very rhythmical, in our polysyllabic language, is so short that it can scarcely contain a complete sentence. The 13-syllable metre has not this weakness, of course; this metre we lift from the obscurity in which it has fallen and use it in the following translation as a proper vehicle for dramatic poetry. This metre, on the one hand has sufficient length, and on the other, has the great advantage of allowing variety of rhythms so that it can naturally rise to the most lyrical height as well as descend to the usual conversational tone, as befits the nature of modern drama and especially that of Shakespeare.¹⁰

In my knowledge, this is the most detailed discussion of the aesthetics of translation in the Balkans in the 19th century, the elements of which are generally speaking still relevant in regard of its suitability to a particular language of translation.

However, although Polyas’ translation of *Hamlet* was praised by some critics in Greece and abroad, it did not deserve a second edition nor was it ever used on the stage.

⁸ P. Karagiorgos, *The First Greek Translation of Shakespeare*. (M. A. thesis, ms.) University of Birmingham 1974, p. 38.

⁹ P. Karagiorgos, “Greek translations of Shakespeare’s Plays,” [in:] *Afieroma ston Kathigiti Lino Politi*, Thessaloniki 1978, p. 235.

¹⁰ Quoted from P. Karagiorgos, *Greek translation...*, p. 235.

Another very important step in the history of Greek Shakespeare translation and reception took place in 1858: two of Shakespeare's plays were translated into Greek from the original – *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* by Ioannis Pervanoglou and Nikolaos Ionidis respectively, published in Athens, and in the same year *Othello* was serialized in a periodical in Smyrna (now Turkey), all in verse translation.¹¹ In the 1870s, added Karagiorgos, "at least a dozen of Shakespeare's plays had been published by various translators." We may assume that those were the fruits of the Ionian Greeks.

However, it was neither Theotokis nor Polylas who aroused Greek interest in Shakespeare, but it was Dimitrios Vikelas (1835–1908) with his *Demotic* translations of Shakespeare's three plays published in one volume in Athens in 1876: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, then *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* in 1882, and *The Merchant of Venice* in 1884. Their succeeding re-editions by World War I confirmed his success and the Greek interest in Shakespeare.

This wonderful success of Vikelas was unique in the Balkans of the 19th century. However, it is not a wonder if we point out that Vikelas was the only Shakespeare translator in the Balkans who had not only visited England but settled in London, at the age of seventeen, lived there for the following two dozen years, and received education at University College in London (1853–55). Apart from English his knowledge of French also was superb. He confirmed his literary maturity and scholarship not only having translated Shakespeare's most famous tragedies but with his introduction to his first volume of his translations in which he showed deep knowledge of Shakespeare's art and poetic genius.

Owing to Vikelas' translations Shakespeare also won the Greek theatre in the 1880s and helped later victory of the *Demotic* Greek over *Katharevousa*, the latter being still inseparable from the language of tragedy. His translation of *Macbeth* was extolled for its superiority over his other translations for a whole range of its features:

in faithfulness of meaning, in fluency of demotic phraseology and in its liveliness, in general, of the expression. We found the translation to be fine, vigorous, colourful, full of life, freshness and flavour. ... Mr Vikelas before expressing Shakespeare's great ideas through his mind, felt them in his heart. He ... had been in Shakespeare's mind before he translated *Macbeth*. As far as we know, this is the supreme praise possible to be awarded to the translator."¹²

A great quality of his translation of Shakespeare was acknowledged by several foreign scholars and writers who knew both English and Greek as

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 224.

¹² Vlas Gavrielidis, a leading journalist of the time; quoted from P. Karagiorgos, *Greek translation...*, p. 229.

Professor Wilhelm Wagner and Dr Boltz in Germany and Professor Blackie in England, who had written “favourable and encouraging reviews.”¹³

By the end of the 19th century several other Shakespeare’s works had been translated into Greek: *Antony and Cleopatra* (1881), *Julius Caesar* (1885) and *Hamlet* (1890) by Michael Damiralis (1852–1918), who continued his noble work in the first decade of the 20th century, and published *Macbeth* (1905), *Cymbeline* (1906) and *Richard III* (1909), and till the end of his life he translated 21 plays of Shakespeare, which were all published ten years after his death (in 1928/29). With regard to the number of translated plays he surpassed all other Shakespeare translators in the Balkans in the past and in his time. But, alas, he also chose to translate in prose and in the archaic Katharevousa. Professor Karagiorgos’ remark a hundred years after Damiralis’s first translation that he “impoverished Shakespeare’s plays rather than reproduced them” and that his translations “did injustice to them rather than showed their literary merits” is indisputably quite justified and approved, particularly in view of the fact that the translator was neither a poet nor a scholar.¹⁴

Although these translations must have been far from perfection as well in accuracy of meaning as in adequacy of form, yet for their contemporary literary authorities they marked “one of the most important chapters of Neohellenic literature.”¹⁵ Shakespeare was obviously a challenger for supreme literary minds: there could be no high success if there were no high ideals. Beauty is truth, truth is beauty...

In view of the presented facts and opinions Demotic Greek appeared not to be victorious soon after its introduction into literary translations: Katharevousa did not yield precedence to it at once, and some of Shakespeare translations were done in Katharevousa even in the third decade of the 20th century. These language controversies made Shakespeare-translation endeavours still more aggravating and uncertain, and must have affected first of all poetic qualities of translation. In all languages poetry suffered in their transitional periods.

Another Greek translator of Shakespeare in the early 20th century is a Corfu nobleman Konstantinos Theotokis (1872–1923), who translated *Macbeth* and *Othello* and some scenes from *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. His high place in the history of Greek Shakespeare translation is “a remarkable accuracy and a versification which of all Greek translations comes closest to the original.”¹⁶

¹³ P. Karagiorgos, *Greek translation...*, p. 231.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 232 and 233.

¹⁵ V. Damianakou, *Ouilliam Saixpir: Korifaia Ekfrasi toi Neoelelenikoi Dramatikoi Logoi*, vol. 6, Epikairoitita, Atina 1994, p. 152.

¹⁶ P. Karagiorgos, *Greek translation...*, p. 238.

The first Greek who ventured in translating Shakespeare's comedies was Nikolaos Poriotis (1870–1945), also in the early 20th century. He translated five comedies (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *All's Well That Ends Well*) and the sonnets. For his translation of Shakespeare's sonnets Professor Karagiorgos says that they "are considered the best renderings in the Greek language."¹⁷

Demotic finally won the field only after World War I, and it marked the beginning of the latest period in Greek translations of Shakespeare.

At the very start of this period there appeared two talented enthusiasts and scholars: Klearchos Karthaios (1878–1955) and Vasilis Rotas (1889–1977). Karthaios translated nine plays choosing from each genre, including the romances, and they were published between 1932 and 1955, while the last one, *Cymbeline*, was published four years after his death (1959).

"But the man who is considered the translator *par excellence* of Shakespeare into Greek is Vasilis Rotas," says Professor Karagiorgos. Rotas, a poet, playwright, critic and a scholar, would have been brooding over Shakespeare's work for the following fifty years. He had successfully accomplished translation of Shakespeare's complete works by 1974, three years before his death.

Rotas' translations are now mostly accepted in Greek theatre productions and are considered in general as the best, although there have constantly been some emulating attempts.¹⁸ He began with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was published in 1927, and the last play was *Othello* in 1974, but some of his translations were first published only during the following ten years.

Rotas managed to render Shakespeare's plays into Demotic Greek in the number of lines only about ten per cent more than Shakespeare's originals, but they are far from Shakespeare's blank iambic pentametre: Rotas' lines regularly vary from eleven up to nineteen syllables, mostly with vowel endings few of which being stressed, quite opposite to the music and spirit of Shakespeare's prosody and style.

Taking *Macbeth* (as one of the shortest plays in Shakespeare canon) for exemplification of all Balkan translations, its statistical table shows that Rotas translated it in 2,325 lines¹⁹ (against Shakespeare's 2097 lines); he

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 239.

¹⁸ For the latest translator of *Hamlet* (1985), Mihailis Kakoyannis, Damianakou (*Ouilliam Saixpir...*, p. 286) says that he simply "does not know Greek."

¹⁹ In the edition of the translation I have used (Epikairotita, Athens 1993) all half lines and smaller fractions are printed as separate, new lines (left hand justified). So in the Cambridge edition of Shakespeare's original (text established by John Dover Wilson) Act I, sc. vii has 19 half-lines that make 9 verses, and they are counted as 9 lines, whereas in the Greek edition all those 19 half lines are printed as 19 verses.

rendered Scene vii of Act I in 87 lines, its Macbeth's monologue in 29 lines, against Shakespeare's 82 lines of the scene, and Macbeth's monologue 28 lines. But Shakespeare's iambic pentametre varies in Rotas' translation from 11 to 19 syllables long line so that Macbeth's monologue counts 423 syllables against 287 syllables of its original. This shows that Rotas' Macbeth's monologue consists of over 25% syllables more than Shakespeare's original. Therefore, it is only seemingly almost of the same length as Shakespeare's original.

As I am told by those who have a good knowledge of Modern Greek, many of these lines are iambic, but, obviously, neither regular nor pentametres, and most of the lines, unlike Shakespeare's, end in a vowel (only nine lines end in a closed syllable). Yet with their iambic colouring, they are probably pleasing to the Greek taste, since the natural rhythm of Modern Greek folk poetry is basically iambic.

Rotas' translations of Shakespeare meant a triumph of Demotic Greek in the Modern Greek language and literature, because Rotas was certainly a powerful personality and writer who had had a strong sense of language and rhythm and had learnt much from Shakespeare in a new Greek language workshop without forerunners to imitate or to learn from. He was the first poet in the Balkans who had accomplished this gigantic Shakespearean deed, under linguistic and general cultural circumstances much more difficult than in other Balkan countries and literatures.

Shakespeare was well-known and praised among Serb intellectuals at least from the 1820s, but the beginning of the history of Serbian Shakespeare translation falls in the mid-19th century, and then almost by storm – immediately from English, second to the Greeks only.

After a couple of passages in verse translation in 1846 and in 1858, the first verse translation of a passage from Shakespeare's original was the famous "balcony scene" from *Romeo and Juliet* II, ii, by the eighteen-year old Serbian Romantic poet Laza Kostich: it appeared in the leading Serbian literary herald, in 1859 in the traditional trochaic metre, the metre of well-known Serbian folk poetry. By that time, apart from his mother tongue, the young poet Kostich had mastered Hungarian, German, Latin, and had a very good knowledge of French and English.

In the following year, 1860, another passage appeared, translated from the original text, in the same magazine and in the same metre, this time from *Richard III* (I, iii, iv, 1–97), done by another young Romantic poet John Andrejevich, who unfortunately died soon afterwards.

Then the young Laza Kostich published another passage translated from English in a newly founded magazine *Danica*, again from *Romeo and Juliet*, this time the lovers' parting scene, (III, v, 1–59), but this time in Shakespeare's metre and line for line! These were the first adopted iambic

pentametres in any new Balkan literature. Kostich's fellow poet Andreyevich also translated another scene from *Richard III*, again one of the most beautiful of Shakespeare's scenes – the wooing scene (I, ii), but still in the traditional trochee. Three years later Kostich finished his translation of the whole tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* in Shakespeare's metre and line for line, and gave it to the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad town. It was played there in the 70's but the manuscript was lost, so the author did another translation a long time later.

These scenes were evidently chosen not to inspire a national liberating spirit but, firstly, because of Shakespeare's use of language and his contribution to its beauty and poetic power, and, secondly, as a challenge to young and ambitious minds to ascertain the power of their mother tongue and of their own language mastery.

Since Laza Kostich has remained the only translator of Shakespeare in the Balkans who translated at least one of Shakespeare's plays into the regular iambic pentametre, and line for line, rendering all other features of Shakespeare's style into the Serbian language, he deserves more attention than any other translator. However, by the end of the 19th century he had translated only four plays. The reason he did not do all, or at least more, lies as much in the generally bleak political and social climate in the two independent Serbian states and in the Serbian provinces under foreign rule in the second half of the 19th century, as in his own personality: he was an enthusiastic national agitator, a great lyric poet (whose poems may be found in all anthologies of Serb poetry) and one of the best Serb playwrights; a philosopher, a literary critic, and, unfortunately, unhappy in his bachelor's life and official career. However, his translations, even for his own time, were far from being quite satisfactory, firstly because of his numerous elisions and unacceptable compounds, in addition to some errors in translation, a common fault in translations of Shakespeare into other languages a hundred years ago. But I must point out that it is probably more difficult to translate Shakespeare, or any English poem, into Serbian in the same metre than into any other Balkan language, because Serbian has relatively few monosyllabic words, and even those few become disyllabic or trisyllabic in all six oblique cases, both singular and plural. The greatest poem in Modern Serbian, *The Mountain Wreath* (1847), by Petar Petrovich Nyegosh, over 2,800 lines long, has only some dozen monosyllabic words at the end of the line and very few lines with a closed last syllable! A good English translator, eighty years later, could easily manage to translate the poem in the same number of decasyllabic lines, but he could not translate it into trochees; he had to satisfy himself with iambic pentametre, eighty per cent of which end in monosyllables; the remaining fifth are mainly personal nouns, none of which has a stress on the last syllable.

There is approximately the same number of monosyllabic words in Bulgarian as in Serbian, but Bulgarian has lost almost all case inflexions and, apart from that, there are many disyllabic words which bear the stress on the second syllable, whereas Serbian, spoken by the Croats too, has no single disyllabic word with the stress on the second syllable. This is practically insurpassable difficulty in making an iambic pentametre in this language. It was pointed out as early as the beginning of the 20th century, in a severe attack stormed on Kostich's translation of *Hamlet*, by a famous professor of literature at the University of Belgrade Bogdan Popovich, who had been supreme judge of Serbian literature for the whole first half of this century. As an illustration the Professor chose two and a half lines from Ben Jonson in which all but two words were monosyllabic, totalling 24 syllables. He translated them into Serbian prose, which totalled 54 syllables – more than double. The poet Kostich, however, in his retort to the Professor's attack, translated them line for line, using only two syllables more than the original while observing all its other qualities! – Languages have been created and developed by poets only!

Kostich's translations of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III* may stand equally with the best translations of Shakespeare in Europe of the second half of the 19th century. But he is probably a greater poet in his language and literature than any other Shakespearean translator in his respective national literature.

In the later 1920s a young Serb Shakespeare scholar, the first Serb with a Ph. D. in Shakespeare scholarship, and the first in the Balkans who earned his Ph. D. in Shakespeare scholarship in England (University of London), Vladeta Popovich, asserted in his apology of Kostich as a translator of Shakespeare that the best lines of Kostich's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* were better than any later Serbo-Croatian translation and certainly equal to the best translations in any European language. Had Kostich had the advantage of Shakespearean scholarship's more recent discoveries, and had he devoted himself entirely to translating Shakespeare, his translations would certainly have been the best in the Balkans and among the best in Europe.²⁰

So far no other Balkan poet of Kostich's stature and command of English has devoted himself to translating Shakespeare. Therefore, it is evident that the translator's talent as a poet is the primary requirement of and premise for the successful translation of Shakespeare. A poet can acquire English and the other resources of Shakespeare scholarship

²⁰ See V. Popovi, "Laza Kosti prevodilac Šekspira," *Strani pregled* 1927, no. 1, pp. 59–69, and V. Milanovi, *Laza Kostić prevodilac i kritičar Šekspira*, Književni atelje, Banja Luka 1999, Part I, pp. 17–75.

– the scholar can not acquire the imagination and language inventiveness of the poet.

Apart from Kostich many other translators (13), all of lower literary stature and of lesser knowledge of languages, translated another ten of Shakespeare's plays and the narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*, before the end of the 19th century so that, with Kostich's translations, the number of translated plays was thirteen, but several plays were translated two or three times, and the total number of translations reached twenty. All other translators translated from other languages than English, mostly from German. Until World War I there appeared translations of another two plays, altogether only fifteen.

There have been Serb poets in the 20th century who have translated some of Shakespeare's plays, but none of them has done at least one third of the plays, and none has been Kostich's equal as a poet. The only one deserving of mention here is a well-known Serb poet, critic and scholar, Svetislav Stefanovich, who translated thirteen of Shakespeare's plays and may have done more had it not been for the Second World War and his murder at the hands of Tito's communists in 1944.

The first edition of Shakespeare's complete works in Serb literature (in which the sonnets and other poems were translated by a Croat) appeared in 1963, in eighteen volumes; the second edition, in ten volumes (1966), the third in six volumes (1978), and the most recent edition in one volume (1995). None of the translators of the second half of the century who contributed to these editions of translations is known as a well-known poet.

In our time there is a Serb translator of an older generation who intends to translate the complete works of Shakespeare and who has been publishing each play in a separate volume. His leading principles of translation are clarity and accuracy of meaning, consciously sacrificing to them condensation of expression (which has always been, however – we must admit – the main quality of poetic speech) so that his translations are longer than the original by about 30% in the number of lines; but since his basic line is of eleven syllables and he uses many twelve-syllable lines, his translations are almost 40% longer than Shakespeare's texts. Such translations of Shakespeare are like the very best wine diluted with 50% water. Unfortunately, I know of no young enthusiastic Serbian poet who is enamoured of Shakespeare and eager to translate him into Serbian.

The stagnation of the Serb contribution since the First Balkan War (in which Turkey was reduced to its present Balkan territory) has been, as in all other fields, a consequence of their Pyrrhic victories in this century in which they have lost about half of their population (and in number more than all other Balkan nations together; and in percentage more than any other nation in this century).

Of true-born Croatian translators, there was none before the end of the 19th century who translated Shakespeare from English, if we exclude a strange case of a Ragusan, Antun Pashko Kazali, of an Italian stock, who learned Serbo-Croatian in his late 20s.²¹

Croatian interest in Shakespeare began after 1860, under the exclusive influence of the current Shakespearean cult in the Germanic countries. Before 1860 the Croatian capital Zagreb could see Shakespeare's plays in German adaptations and in German by German travelling companies, for German-speaking population in Zagreb. The first Shakespeare performances in Serbo-Croatian were translations of German adaptations, not Shakespeare's originals. The first published translation was *Julius Caesar* (Zagreb 1860) by Shpiro Dimitrovich Kotaranin, from German, done in the trochaic pentametre, and the first Shakespeare performance was *The Merchant of Venice* (Zagreb 1867) in Schlegel's adaptation, translated by a Serb, Jovan Petrovich. (Many leading roles in the Croatian Shakespeare repertoire in the second half of the 19th century were Serbian local or visiting actors and actresses, some of whom later permanently settled in Zagreb).

By the end of the 19th century the Croats got 17 Shakespeare's plays translated and performed, but several of them in German adaptations, mostly Dingelstedt's. All translations were from German till the very end of the century when *1, 2 Henry IV* were, reportedly, translated from English. Two plays were translated three times (*Julius Caesar*) and two twice (*Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice*). All Croatian theatre scholars and critics of the age were dissatisfied with these translations, and for some used the word "a shame". However, the Croats were the first in the Balkans to get a professional Shakespeare scholar and manager – Stiepan Miletich (1868–1908) who earned his doctorate in Shakespeare scholarship (done in German and obtained at Vienna University 1893 – exactly 300 years after Shakespeare had made name in the London theatre world – "Die aesthetische Form des abschliessen den Ausgleiches in den Shakespeare'schen Dramen").

In the first half of the 20th century the Croats had only one translator worth mentioning, Milan Bogdanovich, who translated fourteen Shakespeare's plays reportedly from English, but our contemporary Croatian Shakespeare scholar Mladen Engelsfeld and his predecessor in the University of Zagreb

²¹ The case of the Ragusan poet Antun Pashko Kazali (1815–1894), by vocation a liberal ecclesiast, but more devoted to secular literature, whose mother tongue was Italian, and who published his translation of *Julius Caesar* in Dubrovnik in 1883, and left a translation of *King Lear*, in manuscript form, buried in the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences – is neither Serb nor Croat. His translations of these two plays did not mark any step in Serbo-Croatian Shakespeare reception, nor could be of any use for the translators of his or later generation, and consequently ought not to be a matter of consideration here.

late Professor Josip Torbarina, had grave critical remarks on his work, and both of them tried to revise and improve his translations. They argue that he was not a poet by vocation, and his knowledge of English was only passive, not living, he could not feel the music of Shakespeare's language. Apart from these limitations, he was under the strong influence of German translations and was, stylistically, closer to A. W. Schlegel than to Shakespeare. His irregular iambic lines of eleven and sometimes twelve syllables sound dry, but apart from it there are various other weaknesses that cannot be expostulated here.²²

In the second half of our century Professor Josip Torbarina translated five plays (*Troilus*, *Merry Wives*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*) and, although he was not known as a poet, his *Macbeth* is, according to Mladen Engelsfeld, the most successful Croatian translation of any translator and of any of Shakespeare's plays.²³ However, it is evident from his translations that he did not translate line for line strictly, and that he used an irregular iambic thirteen or fourteen syllable line as the basic pattern, varying from ten to fifteen syllables with different metric endings. Therefore we can conclude that his translations – having more lines than the original text, and approximately two and a half syllables more per line – are about 30% longer than Shakespeare's originals, not to mention other metric characteristics and poetic qualities that would, of course, require a special treatise.

The Croats have not published Shakespeare's complete works in their translation so far.

The greatest achievement in Shakespeare translations in the Balkans so far has been that of the Bulgarians, although they commenced the labour some twenty years later than their Slavic brethren to the west. Having been under Turkish rule as late as 1878 and having had no opportunity before their liberation to build direct cultural relations with the West, their only contact with Western civilization was through the American College in Constantinople (Istanbul) or through Russia, where their youth could receive higher education. Because of the French and German cultural domination in Russia, Shakespeare had had a long and thorny way around to reach Bulgaria, yet it was just a couple of years from the liberation to the first publication of a play of Shakespeare translated from English into Bulgarian. It was *Julius Caesar*. The translation was in prose, and more literal than literary. By the end of the century, 19 plays had been translated,

²² See M. Engelsfeld, *Hrvatski prevoditelji Shakespearea*, Hrvatsko društvo kazališnih kritičara i teatrologa, Zagreb 1989, pp. 90–94, and in other chapters of the book too.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 95 and 164–167.

several of them two or three times, but only two or three from English, with the help of Russian and German translations.

The first verse translation, *Coriolanus*, was done from Russian in 1888 by T. C. Trifonov, who subsequently translated *King Lear* (1890), *Hamlet* (1891), *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* (1907). All were from Russian. By the end of the First World War, another five plays and *Venus and Adonis* (in prose) had been translated.

It used to be said in Bulgaria that their translations up to 1891 hardly deserved to bear the name of Shakespeare but, in fact, even all those done up to the end of the First World War had been endeavours of historical significance only, because they were either in prose or in verse from foreign translations.

The first verse translation from *English* was *Hamlet* by the young poet Geo Milev in 1919. This is now considered by Bulgars to be the true beginning of their Shakespeare translation and their first true poetic success. It is said to have revealed, as I understand, the potential and the beauty of the Bulgarian language. The young Milev (1895–1925) – like, some half a century earlier, Laza Kostich among the Serbs – was the first Bulgarian true poet who had decided to translate a play of Shakespeare in his original metre, and his translation ran through a dozen editions in the following half a century. The late Professor Marko Minkov, the most outstanding Bulgarian Shakespeare scholar, remarked on the occasion of Shakespeare's 400th jubilee that Milev's translation of *Hamlet* was "relatively free, [and] often departs somewhat widely from the precise meaning of Shakespeare's text, and not infrequently replaces its poetic features with others," yet it was, unlike numerous other attempts to transpose *Hamlet* into Bulgarian, "the most truthful to the spirit of Shakespeare's poetry and gives the best impression of it."²⁴

Milev, in fact, chose an eleven syllable basic line with free variations on ten to twelve syllables, but he was almost faithful to Shakespeare's iamb, because his eleventh syllable is regularly unstressed and the line gives the impression of a decasyllabic iamb. If we also note that his translation has only about 15% more lines than Shakespeare's text, he may be considered the best or at least among the best, of Shakespeare's translators in the Balkans.

Unfortunately, Milev's fate was to be murdered in his thirtieth year by the State Police, just six years after the publication of the first edition of his translation of *Hamlet*.

Bulgarians however have the greatest number of Shakespeare's translators and translations in the Balkans. Professor Vladimir Filipov mentions about

²⁴ M. Minkov, "Posleslov" [in:] Šekspir, *Hamlet princ datski*, prev. Geo Milev, Narodna kultura, Sofia 1964, p. 239.

thirty names of Shakespeare translators in his country (we may note, almost twice as many as Croats) and he points out that many plays have been translated from five to twenty five times. *Macbeth*, for example, has appeared in about twenty five different translations (but only seven in verse), *Hamlet* in fifteen, *King Lear* in ten and so on.

Although Bulgarians achieved their first successful translation of a play of Shakespeare relatively late, they are just the second in the Balkans to have printed Shakespeare's complete plays in translation by *one* author who at the same time is a born poet and whose mastery of English is such that he did not need an expert mediator in his tremendous undertaking. He is the poet Valery Petrov (b. 1928), who published his translations between 1970 and 1981 in seven volumes, and in the meantime, several plays in separate volumes.

His translations are said to be faithful to the original not only in meaning and understanding of the text, historical facts and linguistic and stylistic peculiarities, but they are faithful "first of all because they succeed in conveying specific cohesion of different sides of Shakespeare's art required by his artistic realism."²⁵ Petrov does not "polish out" Shakespeare, and rarely does he concede to compromise in translating Shakespeare's most difficult idioms and passages. Outstanding Bulgarian English scholars today consider Petrov's translations to be the supreme Bulgarian achievements of all translations from English literature²⁶ and no less impressed are wider theatre audiences and intellectuals, as I observed during my visit to Sofia University and the Bulgarian National Theatre in the winter of 1996. But our metric statistics on the chosen sample from *Macbeth* at the end of this exploration may a little moderate this enchantment.

The Albanians, the smallest of the Balkan nations by population, but with deep roots in the Balkans, are mostly Moslem and, consequently, culturally were strongly alienated from Europe until the First World War. They achieved their own unified alphabet, their independence and their state organization only a couple of years before that War. Therefore, it is natural that their first Shakespeare translations appeared only after that War. Yet one could be greatly surprised by those first achievements. However, it is necessary to note that the Albanians, although numbering less than a million at the beginning of this century, have not been culturally and religiously united and unified. The fact is that Moslems make about three quarters of the population, while the remainder consists of the

²⁵ V. Filipov, "Angliskata i amerikanskata literatura na b'lgarski," *Prevodot i B'lgarskata kultura: K'm istoriata na prevoda v B'lgaria*, Narodna kultura, Sofia 1981, p. 206.

²⁶ See A. Shurbanov, "S'prezhiveniat Shekspir: V'prosi na hudozhestvenia prevod," *Literaturna mis'l* 1994, kn. 5, pp. 144-154.

Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians. And it is from within a thin layer of Albanian Orthodox intellectuals that their first Shakespeare translator arose. His name is Fan (Teofan) Nolli, the most outstanding Albanian personality between the two World Wars.²⁷

Nolli's appearance in Albanian culture was exceptional in many respects. First of all, he managed to emigrate to Boston (USA) in 1906, where not only did he learn English well, absorbing Western culture and strengthening his Christianity, but also acquired a formal education at Harvard University (1912). He broadened his knowledge by travelling throughout Europe. After World War I, having returned home, he immersed himself in Albanian political affairs, so that he eventually became the president of the first Albanian Democratic Government, chosen by the National Parliament in 1924. 'Unfortunately,' he was too far ahead of his still barbarous Albanian population to maintain rule in the country, and he was forced to cede the presidency to the rival Moslem party in the same year and to emigrate again to Western Europe and finally to the USA again, never to return home. It was in Berlin where he began translating Shakespeare, in 1925. In the subsequent years he translated ten of Shakespeare's plays: *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Albanian language is, of course, still poorer in vocabulary than the languages of other European nations, but with Nolli's Christianity and general ideas which, with the beginning of the twentieth century, eventually penetrated into that previously impenetrable corner of Europe, we may presume that Nolli's Albanian was fairly appropriate to the world which Shakespeare's England had barely left behind. Albanian must have developed a rich vocabulary in rural husbandry and rustic life, in folklore, in family life, in animal imagery, and some areas of abstract ideas. Its latest collection of proverbs, to witness, numbers about 13,000.²⁸ It is also worth observing that it was at that time in a transitional phase, opening its gates to floods of foreign words and other features of language explosion, like that which characterises the English language of the 16th century or the

²⁷ Fan (Teofan) Nolli (1882–1965) was in fact an Albanian ethnic Greek, from a large Greek population of present-day Albania, but his native district had been an undivided country with present-day Greece for centuries under Turkish rule. Nolli was brought up as a Turkish citizen as well as his fellow neighbours Albanians. Northern Greek territories (Epirus, Thesaly and a greater part of Macedonia) were liberated and united with the Kingdom of Greece only six years after Nolli had gone to the USA, while his native district (a part of Epirus) was ceded to the newly created state of Albania.

²⁸ They have been collected by the head of the Albanian Department in the University of Belgrade Professor Halit Trnavci, but too expensive to be published, he told me.

Serbian of the 19th. Also, the influence of Turkish upon Albanian, and the cultural and political relations of Albanians (except Albanian Christians) and Turks are in some aspects similar to the relations of the English with the French in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Nolli's translations of Shakespeare have been welcomed with applause by a thin layer of educated Albanians, which is taken as evidence of the suitability of his translations to the music of Albanian folk poetry. During my long contact with Albanians at the University of Prishtina I always heard praises of Nolli's translations as "the best in all the world". In fact, Nolli applied or adapted Albanian traditional versification to Shakespeare's poetry, using unfixed metre and feet, from nine to fifteen syllables and neither the regular iamb nor a trochee. So, the chosen example from all the languages under consideration in this paper (Macbeth's monologue in Act I, sc. vii) in Nolli's translation is 35 lines long, against 28 of Shakespeare's text, and the whole scene 99 lines against 82! Now if we again take the length of his line, being approximately eleven syllables, it is about 30% longer than Shakespeare's text. However, many Albanian syllable carriers are mute vocals, and such pronunciation probably gives the impression of a shorter line. Some contemporary scholars of Albanology argue that the mutation of vocals has become quite complete, so that even the retention of the ë letter is unnecessary.²⁹

Regretfully, the long Albanian isolation from Western civilization in this century (first under Turkish rule, and under Communism from 1945 to 1990) has had a negative effect upon Shakespeare scholarship and the learning of English, so that there have been only a few later attempts in translating Shakespeare, which do not fully deserve to be the subject of our attention on this occasion.

A semi-Balkan state and nation – Rumania, in the north-east corner of the Peninsula, also deserves its place in this survey, although it had a cultural and linguistic development somewhat different from other Balkan nations and languages. While other Balkan languages had their autogenous linguistic origin, the Rumanian language is basically a Latin hybrid on the prehistorical stratum language of the Dacian aboriginals conquered by the Romans at the turn of the second century A. D. In this respect their history and language development is somewhat similar to that of the English language after the Norman Conquest a thousand years later, but the outcome was quite opposite to the latter. Although the Norman ruler imposed his higher French culture and civilization upon the domestic Anglo-Saxons, the Anglo-Saxon rural majority gradually penetrated urban

²⁹ All these considerations concerning the Albanian language are given after consultations with Professor Trnavci.

communities and noble courts where the French language had been prevalent for longer than two centuries, and the language of the Anglo-Saxons suffered enormous changes, yet it preserved its Anglo-Saxon stem. The Romans, however, having been culturally far more superior to the subjected Dacian tribes in the Carpathians, managed to impose their language so effectively that after the Roman withdrawal from those territories about two centuries later the remaining people seem to have been radically Romanized. In their modern language today, as I was told by my Rumanian colleague at the University of Belgrade Lucian Pavel, there are less than a hundred words from the pre-Latin stratum.

During the Early and Later Middle Ages the Rumanian language underwent a high inflation of the Slavic element owing to permanent mingling with their Slav neighbours. It is worth pointing that the Rumanians received Christianity from Slavic missionaries and their medieval Slavic rulers in the 11th century, and with the new religion there came quite a number of Greek words. The Slavic languages did not shatter the Latin structure of the Rumanian language but it did evidently depart from its original character. Therefore, the Rumanian language succeeded to maintain its basically Romanic nature and is nowadays a member of that family of the Indo-European languages. It means that it is basically difficult to translate Shakespeare into that language as much as into Italian or Spanish from which it has been cut ever since the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Rumanians first got acquainted with Shakespeare owing to the German troupes of strolling players. The earliest records go back to the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century with their repertoire borrowed from the Viennese stage. Of course those performances were far from the true Shakespeare, but such adaptations of *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* were translated into Rumanian already in the first quarter of the 19th century, and a complete version of one of Shakespeare's plays printed in Rumanian was *Julius Caesar* in 1844, done after Le Tourneur's prose translation, while the first published translation from the original was *Macbeth* in 1864.³⁰

Yet, true Shakespearean enthusiasm began with the winning of national independence after the War of Independence (1877–1879) and the Berlin Congress of 1878.

By World War I twelve Shakespeare's plays had been translated into Rumanian but a good Rumanian scholar of the age complained that "Shakespeare had been rather unlucky" in their language; nor do they seem to have satisfied expectation of the learned between the two World Wars.³¹

³⁰ See A. Dutu, *Shakespeare in Rumania*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest 1964, pp. 7, 13 and 21.

³¹ Quotation and assertion of M. Gheorgiu in the "Introduction" to Dutu's book, pp. xvii–xviii.

Statistical table of a translated sample from Macbeth into the Balkan languages

Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i>		Alban.	Bulgar.	Croatian	Greek	Ruman.	Serbian
The Cambridge Text <i>Establ. by J. D. Wilson</i>		(Fan Nolli)	(Valeri Petrov)	(Josip Torbarina)	(Vasilis Rotas)	(Ion Vinea)	(Stefan./Živojin.)
Total number of lines		2 098	2 485	2 111	2 326	2 239	2 614 2 779
Act I, sc. vii		82	109	85	86	93	106 132
Macbeth's monologue in Act I scene vii	No. of lines	28	38,5	29	28	31,5	36 45,5
	No. of syllables	287	408	362	423	333	381 484
	Line syllables	9-10-11	10-11-15	11-13-15	11-19	10-11	10-13 10-11
	Stressed last syllables	21	5	5	7	8	9 8
	Closed last syllables	21	14	7	9	10	13 19

Therefore, more faithful verse translations from the original were not acknowledged by recognized critics and scholars until the end of World War II. After the war a group of translators made a joint endeavour to publish Shakespeare's complete works in eleven volumes, and it took eight years to accomplish this praiseworthy undertaking (1955–1963). A new edition of Shakespeare's complete works appeared again in the 1980s.

Some of these translations are done by outstanding Rumanian poets and they are considered highly successful, but their value ought to be assessed by impartial specialists who will judge their formal faithfulness to the original as well as their poetic and musical appeal to the reader and theatre spectator.

It is well known that critics and the wider public are seldom reliable in their judgements about contemporary literary and other artistic achievements, but I think it was useful at least to mention them here. Yet if we may offer some empirical, in this case statistical, information, it can cast a clear light at least on the degree of formal fidelity in the best translating achievements from each literature. Verses from *Macbeth* (Act I, sc. vii, 1–28) in the best, or one of the best, translations in each language, will serve this purpose.

Conclusion

Our fundamental approach to Shakespeare translation is that it must strive for the beauty of Shakespeare's original work as well as for correct transposition of its contents, but we may admit that the ideal will never be reached. However, if it is not longed for, an achievement will never be good enough.

Another starting point is that our expectations can be more or less satisfied only if a translator, well equipped with expert knowledge in Shakespeare scholarship, is a true poet.

If I remind you now that the Croatian translator was well-known as a Shakespeare scholar, but not as a poet, and that even the most recent Serb translator, also not well-known as a poet, makes some material mistakes, apart from numerous other points of stylistic and poetic departures, as shown in a good scholarly analysis by Professor Veselin Kostich³² from

³² V. Kostić, "Na početku značajnog poduhvata: Šekspir u prevodu Branimira Živojinovića," *Mostovi* 1994, no. 10, pp. 652–662. There is not such detailed criticism of the other above mentioned translations; Professor Shurbanov's paper on Valeri Petrov's translations is second best.

the University of Belgrade, we may note that they are, despite their alleged popularity, far from being adequate to Shakespearean poetry, as it is shown in the *Macbeth* statistical table above.

Yet all the latest Balkan translators of Shakespeare have made new contributions to their respective languages with regard to new imaginative and rhetorical expressions, coinage of new words, puns, the creation of ambiguities, allusions, undertones, that is, in discovering their language abilities and beauties. Many rhetorical tropes and figures were never used in modern Balkan languages before these endeavours in translating Shakespeare.

There is almost a common characteristic of all Balkan languages in reference to translating Shakespeare: popular speech had just won the battle against its archaic literary rival; or language reformers managed to impose one out of several popular dialects when Shakespeare knocked at the door, and he couldn't help being welcomed to contribute to richness or embellishment to the new literary language, just as Shakespeare himself had been doing to the early Modern English.

In conclusion, we can say that all these observations may suggest that Shakespeare translators have been striving not only for importing the contents of his work into their national spiritual treasury but also, striving to find adequate forms in their native language, they have been creating new beauties and have been discovering new potentials of each language; and that these undertakings have not been futile, and have not ceased.

This most noble, responsible and fruitful deed ought to be the concern of each state, as was once the translating of the Bible, and it is only the devotion of the best poetic Shakespeare enthusiasts who may be expected to achieve satisfactory results in translating Shakespeare and who, in doing so, may contribute, through Shakespeare, to further enrichment of the poetic power and beauty of each language.

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