III Translation of Wordplay

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Playing on Translation in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (Act 5, Scene 2)

Abstract: In the second scene of the last act of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the English King woos Katherine, the French princess. In a dialogue quite unlike any other on the Elizabethan stage, Henry and Katherine speak different languages, English and French, trying to translate their words to each other with the help of Katherine's attendant Alice, whom Henry calls his "interpreter." Critics, over the centuries, have generally disliked the scene and regarded it as inappropriate. Whereas, at first, it was mainly considered unfitting to have a serious, gloriously nationalist history play about war and politics conclude with an "extravagantly silly and unnatural" (Charles Gildon) scene of multilingual wooing, more recently the scene has been considered, at best, as showing the failure of (male) power politics, since Henry "cannot even talk to his intended wife" (Williamson). In my paper, I will suggest an alternative reading of the scene, and of the function of using different languages in *Henry V*, which is triggered by the play on the very word and concept of "translation." From the beginning, the Chorus asks the audience to bring about a spatial and temporal transferal by the action of their minds. Translation is also suggested in a qualitative sense in that the "flat unraised spirits" of the actors are translated into Kings and Queens or even – such at least is the Prologue's wish – into Gods. King Harry, assuming "the port of Mars" with famine, sword and fire at his heels "leashed in like hounds" translates history into the realm of allegory (extended metaphor according to the classical definitions). The context of the (implied) wordplay thus opens up a poetological and meta-theatrical dimension in which the wooing scene makes sense. Seen in this light, it is neither a piece of nationalist idolatry nor does it serve to expose critically the use of power. It rather shows, for a moment, how language creates understanding by means of and as a form of translation; it thus focuses on theatre itself rather than history, on the play of language that culminates in a wordless gesture.

Keywords: audience, Chorus, *Henry V*, imagination, meta-theatre, reader-response, Shakespeare, translation, translation as metaphor, transformation, wordplay

1 Transformation as Translation

The Chorus, acting as prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V*, offers one of the most challenging examples of theatrical self-reflection when it comes up with a listener-response theory *in nuce*. It tells the audience to create, by means of their "imaginary forces" (line 18), the "vasty fields of France" (12) within the "wooden O" (13) of the Globe theatre.[1] Quite cleverly it shifts the responsibility for the mimetic success of the play to us. Shakespeare's theatre works on our minds, as we are to "piece out" the actors' "imperfections" with our "thoughts" (23): "'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings" (28). We are to listen to the play rather than to watch it[2] and transform, mentally, the words we are asked to hear ("Gently to hear", 34) into images. The keynote of the play is transformation or translation: what we are asked to do at the beginning – translate words we hear into something else – will then be presented to us as happening on stage towards the end of the play, in the second scene of the fifth act, when King Henry and Princess Katherine of France communicate without being able to speak each other's language. They both try to understand and translate what the other says. Thus the imaginative translation process at the beginning, also referred to in other appearances of the Chorus,[3] and the linguistic one at the end of the play form a framework that helps us realize the mode in which we are to respond to what we are witnessing in *Henry V*: to politics, war, history, love, and, last but not least, to the theatre itself.[4] Words that are heard will trigger a process which

1 Quotations are from the Arden edition of *Henry V* (Shakespeare 1995). Unless otherwise indicated, all other Shakespeare references are to the Norton edition (Shakespeare 2008). I am grateful to Susanne Riecker and Angelika Zirker for valuable feedback and suggestions.

2 The sense of vision is also employed but it primarily belongs to the eyes of the mind. An example is the repeated use of "behold", especially in the Chorus of the third act, e.g. 3.0.7 ("Play with your fancies, and in them behold / Upon the hempen tackle ship-boys climbing"). In the Chorus of the fifth act, the external sense of vision turns inside: "Yet sit and see / Minding true things by what their mockeries be" (5.0.52–53).

3 E.g. 3.0.1–3 ("Thus with imagined wing our swift scene flies / In motion of no less celerity / Than that of thought"), 3.0.13–14 ("O do but think / You stand upon the ravage and behold"), 3.0.25 ("Work, work your thoughts, and therein see a siege"), 3.0.35 ("And eke out our performance with your mind"), 4.0.1 ("Now entertain conjecture"), 5.0.8 ("Heave him away upon your winged thoughts"), 5.0.16 ("You may imagine him upon Blackheath"), 5.0.22–23 ("But now behold / In the quick forge and working-house of thought").

4 Hammond, for example, points out that "merely by introducing the question of the suspension of disbelief the Chorus ensures that an audience will be aware of the artifice of the theatre" (1987: 148). Pugliatti sees the complexity of the play characterized by "a series of peculiar procedures which are, broadly speaking, linguistic" (1993: 242) and in particular by "linguistic

transforms their speaker in the mind of the listener. This applies to the actors (who are to be transformed by the audience into the characters they impersonate) but also to the characters themselves, and in particular to the protagonist, who is to be transformed by his interlocutors and by the audience. If Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Apology for Poetry*, stresses that nature has never produced "so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus", this is because "the skill of the artificer standeth in that *Idea* or fore-conceit of the work", i.e. in what transcends the works of nature ([1595] 2002: 85). It is as if Shakespeare has his prologue continue this concept and supplement the side of the "artificer" with that of the audience when he asks them to (re-)produce the "fore-conceit of the work" ([1595] 2002: 85) by their thoughts and imaginary forces.

The Chorus does not mention "translation" but plays on the word and concept nevertheless. It thus provides a hint to a unifying concept of the play without quite giving it away.[5] According to Randall Cotgrave's *Dictionary of the French and English Tongues* (1611), *translater*, English *to translate*, means "to turne out of one language into another; also to reduce, or remove from one place to another." At least the second part of the definition covers exactly what we are asked to do by the Chorus as prologue when he tells us to take the kings and "Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times, / Turning th'accomplishment of many years / Into an hour-glass" (29–31). This is a reduction in the sense of a contraction or concentration, as well as a removal from one place to another.[6] Translation (from Lat. *transferre*, 'carry over') will come into play, the Chorus says, both spatially and temporally. We will, as the Chorus at the beginning of Act 2 has it, ourselves be translated as we translate: "And thence to France shall we convey you safe / And bring you back" (2.0.37–38).

Language is always involved in this; thus the "jumping o'er times" is realized by a grammatical *translatio temporum* when the Chorus tells us, for example, that "The King *is* set from London, and the scene / *Is now* transported" (2.0.34–35), or when, at the beginning of Act 4, the Chorus points out that "Now

conflicts" (Pugliatti 1993: 243). I hope to show that the "endemic [...] plurilingualism" (1993: 242) of the play does not only result in conflict.

5 For a general discussion of unobvious and secret wordplay, see Bauer (2015); see also e.g. Womack for "unharnessed meanings" (2002: e.g. 147) in wordplay, Bauer (1995) for hidden paronomasia in Donne, and Mahood for the "unconscious wordplay" (1988: 13) of dramatic characters. In the case of "translation" in *Henry V*, however, the audience has to wait until translation in the linguistic sense takes place in order to notice the wordplay. On the polysemous qualities of the Prologue, see Williams (2012).

6 *OED* (2014): "reduce, *v.*" I. "To contract, condense; to make smaller, diminish." II. *trans.* "To bring back; to bring."

we bear the King / Toward Calais" (6–7). Similarly, "Now" (22) the citizens "Go forth and fetch the conquering Caesar in.[7]" There is so much carrying and conveying and bringing and transporting and bearing and fetching going on in the Chorus speeches that the subject of *translatio* is virtually hammered in.

This is not confined, however, to the spatial and temporal transposition taking place within our minds. Translation is also suggested in a qualitative sense in that the "flat unraised spirits" of the actors are translated into Kings and Queens or even – such at least is the Prologue's wish – into Gods. King Harry, assuming "the port of Mars" with famine, sword and fire at his heels "leashed in like hounds", serves to translate history into the realm of allegory, i.e. into extended metaphor (according to the classical definition).[8] *Translatio* is the Latin term for metaphor ("the Figure of transporte" as Puttenham 2007: 262 renders it),[9] and modern theorists have tapped the potential of this meaning in order to come to terms with *translation* in what is now its most common (albeit metaphorical) sense: of turning speech or text from one language to another.[10] In *Henry V*, the reference to translation in its various meanings makes us aware of the metaphorical nature of the theatrical performance; it makes us realize (as well as forget) that the transformation of persons and things on stage is a translation of words.[11] Accordingly, the Prologue to *Henry V* emphasizes that theatrical

7 The times are expressly equated in another "now" a few lines later, which refers to the Earl of Essex returning from Ireland.

8 Quintilian (1966: 9.2.46).

9 See also the editors' explanatory note 4 in Puttenham (2007: 262–263). For Wilson, metaphor means the same as translation: "A Metaphore or translation of wordes" (1909: 172); in a more general sense, Wilson equates translation and tropes (165: "words translated from one signification to an other").

10 Thus Guldin considers in detail the implications of the fact that "[t]ranslation can be a metaphor for metaphor, and conversely, metaphor a metaphor for translation" (2016: 2). His study shows that considering the implications of translation as metaphor, and of metaphors for translation, contributes to transcending a concept of translation that "relies on a dualistic agenda of clear-cut oppositions and stable borders" (2016: 46). I am not so sure, however, whether the "predominance of the spatial metaphor of translation in Western culture endorsed the irreconcilable difference between original and translation" (46). As *Henry V* shows, the spatial concept of translation (metaphorical only from a modern point of view) need not be delimiting in this way, especially since imaginative space is involved. For the broader sense of *translation* in pre-modern times, see Evans (2001). Gregory Rabassa points out that "translation is really what we might call transformation. It is a form of adaptation, making the new metaphor fit the original metaphor [...]" (1989: 2). See also Guldin (2010).

11 When Quince, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, exclaims "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated" (3.1.105), this is a prime example of the theatrical self-awareness so ubiquitous in Shakespeare's plays.

translation is the product of language: "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them".

2 The Play of Languages in the Wooing Scene

The play on translation as metaphor comes to the fore in the scene in which King Henry woos Katherine, the French princess. In a dialogue quite unlike any other on the Elizabethan stage, Henry and Katherine speak different languages, English and French, trying to translate their words to each other with the help of Katherine's attendant Alice, whom Henry calls his "interpreter" (5.2.258). I would like to suggest that this actual presence of verbal translation provides the other forms of translation referred to in the play with an additional dimension of meaning and vice versa. In this play, which deals with political and military power struggles, with Henry's claim to the French throne, the siege of Harfleur and the battle of Agincourt, the wooing scene has a special function: the speaking of different languages and their translation, expressive of the mutual understanding achieved by the royal couple, becomes an example of the transformation to be desired for a world of hubris, confusion, and strife.

Henry claims Katherine's hand in marriage as a condition for signing a peace treaty with France; she is, as he says, "our capital demand, comprised / Within the fore-rank of our articles" (5.2.96–97). Katherine seems to be simply part of the spoils or an article of the agreement, treated as a commodity, as she had already been treated at an earlier stage when she had been offered by the French in order to prevent the impending war.[12] Shakespeare here reminds us of the status of royal alliances in political reality, both in the past and his own time; to both applies, as Stephen Orgel puts it, that "the *politique* marriage seemed the likeliest means of resolving the European power struggles" (1988: 30).[13]

Against this background the question arises why Shakespeare concludes his drama of war and power with a scene in which Henry tries to win Katherine's love. The scene is surprising in its context, and this surprise is further enhanced by the bilingual nature of the dialogue. Both speak their own language but also, most entertainingly, try to make themselves understood in each

12 See the Chorus at the beginning of Act 3: "Suppose th'ambassador from the French comes back, / Tells Harry that the King doth offer him / Katherine his daughter and with her, to dowry, / Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms. / The offer likes not [...]" (3.0.28–32).

13 Cf. Shakespeare's *Richard III* 4.4: Richard asks Elizabeth, whose brothers and sons he has killed, for the hand of her daughter; see also Suffolk in *1 Henry VI*.

other's tongue. Thus Henry's question, "Do you like me, Kate?" (106–107), is answered by Katherine's evasive "Pardonnez-moi, I cannot tell vat is 'like me'" (108–109), which is deliberately misunderstood by Henry in an act of transposition: "An angel is like you Kate, and you are like an angel." Henry's response is a case of strategic ambiguity produced on the hearer's part[14] in that he exchanges Katherine's meta-communicative question (she refers to the signifier) with the meaning of the expression she uses (i.e. the signified); in the same process, he changes the word class of "like" from verb to preposition. To put it differently, he exchanges the general meaning of the expression with the specific meaning of its homonym, as he makes it refer to his interlocutor. There are good reasons to assume that all this is foreseen by Katherine,[15] who does not mind teasing Henry into being a bit more elaborate in his wooing: it is her strategy as a speaker to make the hearer strategically introduce this ambiguity, to provide him with the chance for a witty response and thus allow him to play his role as an eloquent wooer to his own satisfaction. One might call this a case of meta-strategic ambiguity.[16]

Katherine, having had the meaning of the King's reply confirmed by Alice, parries in French by speaking about the *tromperies* of language,[17] which Henry tries to understand: "What says she, fair one? That the tongues of men are full of deceits?" This is not too difficult for him, for at least up to the seventeenth century the English word *trumpery* could still mean deceit.[18] Alice confirms, "*Oui*, dat de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits: dat is de princess" (121–122), which in turn provokes Henry's not entirely unambiguous answer "The princess is the better Englishwoman." We can take this to mean, with the Arden editor, "the more an Englishwoman (i.e. for distrusting flattery)[19]", even though there might be an alternative meaning: she is (will be) better than (other) Englishwomen for distrusting flattery. In any case, the joke is primarily for the benefit of the external (English) audience. The internal level of communication is not entirely left behind, however, as Henry, whatever the meaning of his utterance, translates Katherine approvingly into her future state as an Englishwoman.

14 On this concept see Winkler (2015), and Winter-Froemel and Zirker (2015).

15 Accordingly, I do not think that the ladies in *Henry V* simply "display a combination of compliance and ineptitude" (Delabastita 2002: 316).

16 I.e., it is her strategy to offer verbal cues that can be used by her interlocutor as material for a strategic utterance playing with its ambiguity.

17 "O bon Dieu, les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies" (5.2.116–117).

18 *OED* (2014): "trumpery, *n.*" †1. "Deceit, fraud, imposture, trickery. *Obs.*"

19 Craik's explanatory note on 5.2.122.

The realism of having characters from different countries speak in different languages is all the more remarkable since before and after the wooing scene Shakespeare has his French characters, even among themselves, speak English as a matter of course. This agrees with contemporary stage conventions and was necessary with a view to a wider audience. Why then this exceptional scene? In the history of Shakespeare criticism, disapproval prevails. It begins in the early 18th century with Charles Gildon, to whom "The Scene of Love betwixt *Henry V* and *Catherine* is extravagantly silly and unnatural; for why [Shakespeare] should not allow her to speak in *English* as well as the other *French*, I cannot imagine" ([1714] 1969: 32). This is endorsed by Samuel Johnson's frequently quoted judgment: "The truth is, that the poet's matter failed him in the fifth act, and he was glad to fill it up with whatever he could get" ([1765] 1969: 33). Since then, the aesthetic criteria of the neoclassicists have been replaced by political and emancipatory ones but the conclusions are similar. The comic nature of the scene is still felt to be inappropriate ("charming but shallow"; Wilcox 1985: 74). Those who try and regard the scene as an integral part of the whole play, such as Marilyn Williamson, tend to see it even more critically; Henry's wooing appears as an example of his attempts to legitimize his own power politics by the assent of others, but it shows him incapable of human contact: "The inability of Henry and Kate to speak one another's language becomes a kind of figure, a paradigm, for his predicament as he is now so separated from the rest of humanity that he cannot even talk to his intended wife" (1975: 334).[20]

I should like to plead for a more discriminating stance.[21] To me, the scene is not simply an appendage, neither is it an exclusively negative foil, pointing to the questionable nature of Henry's character, nor just an example of strategies of hegemony (or male sexual aggression) to be covered by a varnish of courtly wooing. To a certain degree, the scene is all this but it is something else besides,

20 Sinfield, while admitting that it is possible "always to glimpse alternative understandings", claims that his "story of Katherine's recalcitrance gains support from Henry's complaint when the others return: 'I cannot so conjure up the spirit of love in her, that he will appear in his true likeness'. She has not performed properly to his script, so he threatens to demand more French cities [...]" (1992: 139). The quoted passage supports a very different understanding: that Henry doubts his own power of conjuring up love in her.

21 Actresses playing Katherine have stressed that she is not just the weak and willingness object of power politics. Ludmilla Mikaël, for examples, points out: "It is not just a political match. I think Katherine is a match for Henry, in both senses – she is as strong a woman as he is a man, although she is young and very inexperienced" (Beauman 1976: 95).

and this is suggested by the fact that language itself becomes its subject.[22] The witty play with strategic ambiguity is just one indication of this. From the beginning of their dialogue, the reciprocity of translation is emphasized when Henry asks Katherine to "teach a soldier terms" (5.2.99). The theme of language and translation itself shows that the dialogue is an integral part of the play. For the juxtaposition of languages is anticipated in other scenes: The French noblemen, for example, speak English among themselves but occasionally let drop a French phrase – which has the remarkable effect of suggesting affectation. They sound like Englishmen who are "Frenchified[23]", as Shakespeare's contemporaries Robert Greene and, a little later, Ben Jonson have it, or who, as Thomas Wilson puts it in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, "pouder their talke with ouersea language" (1909: 162).[24] Paradoxically, the fact that we get a few snippets of their own language makes their speech appear unnatural; this impression is particularly strong in the case of the Dauphin, who, for example, compares this horse with "*le cheval volant*, the Pegasus, *qui a les narines de feu!*" (3.7.14–15).[25] At the other end of the social ladder is Falstaff's companion Pistol, who finds himself confronted with a similar language problem as Henry does with Katherine, even though in his case the issue is not wooing a lady but winning the substantial sum of 200 Ecus as ransom money from a French prisoner. Monsieur le Fer does not speak English, and when he considers the strength of Pistol's arm (Fr. "bras"), the latter thinks the Frenchman wants to offer only brass to him (4.4.18).[26] In a mockery of the general theme, even Pistol is (momentarily, before his rather ignominious ending) translated into something better in this exchange, as he

22 The importance of language for the scene and the play as a whole is stressed by Steinsaltz (2002), even though he comes to different conclusions when noting that the issue is the supremacy of the English language, even in the wooing scene.

23 According to the *OED* (2014), "Frenchified" as a participle was first used by Robert Greene in 1592 ("Frenchify, *v*."); the adjective "Frenchified" was first used in Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* (first printed 1600), where Monsieur Fastidious Brisk is called "the fresh Frenchified courtier" (2.1.6).

24 A particularly ridiculous example is the courtier Amorphus in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1601). On wordplay in this play, see Kullmann (2015).

25 His sounding foreign even among his compatriots is also suggested by the mannered style of utterances like "Me well, which is the prescript praise and perfection of a good and particular mistress" (3.76.46–47).

26 The French soldier's question "Est-il impossible d'échapper la force de ton bras" is answered by Pistol's "Bras, cur? / Thou damned and luxurious mountain goat, / Offer'st me brass?" (4.4.16–20). The transition from fighting to money is an example of conceptual blending in bilingual puns described by Knospe (2015: 180–185).

becomes, in the French soldier's words, "*le plus brave, vaillant et très distingué seigneur d'Angleterre*" (4.4.57–58).

The two languages are presented quite differently in Act 3 Scene 4,[27] when Katherine has Alice teach her a number of English words. They all concern the body,[28] beginning with "de hand" and ending with the "gown", obviously pronounced as a paronomasia of the female sexual organ. Language, this selection suggests, is primarily or originally identified with one's own corporality. The sequence from the hand to the sexual organ anticipates Henry's wooing (he will ask for her *hand* in marriage) and reminds us of the origins of language as a prototypically human means of communication. The fact that French was traditionally regarded as a courtly and sophisticated language[29] as distinct from "plain" English agrees with Katherine's choice of words: her learning of English and the process of translation shown here and in the wooing scene point to a union of cultures or different strata of human life. Together, they form a whole, just as the English language itself, by incorporating foreign words, achieves, as Richard Carew expresses it around 1600, "a perfitt harmonye" (1904: 293).[30]

3 Language as the Subject of the Play

This background helps us see more clearly that in Act 5, Scene 2 language itself is transmuted from the medium of dramatic action into its own subject. As a result, the audience listen even more attentively to the way in which Henry uses language to reach his aim. He transforms the difficulty of communication into a device by regarding it as an opportunity to emphasize his own simplicity. "That

27 Cf. Hunt who pursues, in his discussion of "breaches" in *Henry V*, an argument not unlike my own, especially since he includes linguistic breeches and the difference between historical and ideal truth: "The discrepancy between the ideal and the real man amounts to a breach in the midst of the dilation of Henry's character" (2014: 16). It seems to me, however, that the point about the various breaches in *Henry V* is that they may be overcome by means of the imagination.

28 Simonini points out that Katherine's "language lesson proceeds exactly along the lines advocated by the manual writers [such as John Florio's *Firste Fruites* (1578)], in that the parts of the body were a familiar and everyday thing around which to construct a dialogue" (1951: 322).

29 Cf. Eckhardt (1911: 91) with a slightly different emphasis.

30 Roberts comes to the opposite conclusion when he claims that her rendition of the English words *foot* and *gown* underscore "the base quality of [her] forthcoming relationship with Henry" (2002: 58–59). Even though Katherine regards the words as "gros, et impudique" (3.4.48), she nevertheless repeats them several times with relish.

the tongues of men are full of deceits" becomes, so to speak, the premise of Henry's other statements. If there is reason to distrust language, he says, it will be an advantage to be such a poor speaker as I am. Henry's insisting on his own rhetorical plainness remains the tenor of his long speeches: "I have neither words nor measure" (5.2.135), "I cannot look greenly or gasp out my eloquence" (144), "I speak to thee plain soldier" (150) – and of course this is an advantage, since it indicates honesty and faithfulness, "for these fellows of infinite tongue that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again" (156–158). Twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism sometimes seemed to be proud of its discovery that Henry is not quite honest here. P. K. Ayers even concluded from Henry's pretence that this is by no means a love scene: "He is not wooing Catherine [sic], either with the conventional language of love or any other; he is telling her that her submission is required" (1994: 254).

Of course, power is one of the issues here but is love really not involved at all? Ayers's judgment is one-sided since it treats as the result of the hermeneutic process what to Shakespeare's contemporaries was its starting point: the fact that Henry only *plays* the role of a rhetorically untalented soldier. To use words skilfully in order to pretend not to be a skilled rhetorician is by no means a sign of particular craftiness but a commonplace of rhetorical strategy; it is familiar, for example, from Mark Antony's speech in Act 3 of *Julius Caesar*, in which the masterful orator claims "I am no orator" (3.2.208; see Knape and Winkler 2015). The message of Henry's advocating rhetorical plainness is neither his actual inability to speak nor his cynically demonstrating to Katherine that he need not exert himself since she has no choice anyway. It is rather that he knows and shows that plainness is the right message here. The high goal, the bride and queen and mother of princes, requires absolute veracity of expression; he is to convince Katherine of his best quality, his "plain and uncoined constancy" (5.2.154)[31] and his constant "good heart" (5.2.162). Language is thus to embody, by means of the greatest simplicity, a value beyond the merely referential, which is always subject to deceit ("that the tongues of men are full of deceits").

Similarly, Henry invalidates the political calculation to which his wooing belongs by openly confessing to it. Answering Katherine's question whether she could possibly love the enemy of France, he openly declares: "I love France so

31 The expression "uncoined" here means, according to Craik, "in its natural state" (note on 5.2.154): "The implied contrast is between bullion and minted coin." Especially since Henry's phrase is the only example listed by the *OED* (2014) for the figurative use of "uncoined", the figurative coinage is evidence of Henry's linguistic inventiveness.

well that I will not part with a village of it" (173–174).[32] This is either blatantly cynical or a serio-comic game in which power struggles are put in perspective by a personal give-and-take: "I will have it all mine: and, Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine." Henry 'owns' France only if and when Katherine wants to own him too, and in this way personal love becomes an image of the inner agreement required for political power to be legitimate. The conclusion "you are mine" is not achieved by articles of a treaty but by fulfilling the condition that "I am yours." If political power struggles are to be resolved by *politique* marriages, Henry and Katherine show us that this can only happen if the marriage is worth its name.

At this stage, from line 178 onwards, Henry actually tries to speak Katherine's language: "No, Kate? I will tell thee in French [...]." The image of mutual exchange is realized by a translation into the language of the other. Characteristically language itself now appears as the married partner: French, says Henry, "will hang upon my tongue like a new-married wife about her husband's neck" (178–180). This image evokes metaphors for the quality of a translation, like being "faithful", which also belong to this sphere.[33] Katherine has skilfully made Henry try out his French so that he now *actually* demonstrates his verbal inadequacy. She playfully gains power over him by pretending not to understand ("I cannot tell vat is dat"; 5.2.177). The context makes it clear that she follows Henry's English speeches quite well. "Me understand vell" she says as early as in line 132,[34] and when she replies "I cannot tell" to Henry's question "canst thou love me?" (192), this does not mean that she fails to get his meaning. Her English is much better than critics (and Henry) tend to think (e.g. Steinsaltz 2002: 330), as she even knows how to use an English subjunctive.[35] She does not use many words but she employs them in skilfully ambiguous ways and thus steers her wooer. "I cannot tell" may mean "I cannot express it in English" but also "I don't know" or both ("I don't quite get you yet, please go on"). It may also mean, well-bred princess that she is, "I must not tell" – e.g. because she must

32 This seems to be the source of François Mauriac's famous saying, "J'aime tellement l'Allemagne que je suis heureux qu'il y en ait deux." [I love Germany so much that I am glad there are two of them.] (https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fran%C3% A7ois_Mauriac).

33 See *OED* (2014): "faithfulm *adj.*" 5.; the first example is from 1529 (Thomas More).

34 Accordingly, I believe the Folio text of the play to be correct, which does not have a negation here; critics, including the Arden editor, have thought otherwise: "Keightly's conjecture that a negative is omitted in F is attractive and probably right" (Craik's note on 5.2.132).

35 "Is it possible dat I sould love de enemy of France?" (5.2.169–170). The use of the modal auxiliary is not analogous to French; Katherine must have learnt it.

ask her father first – or, last but not least, "It's impossible for me to tell" for I have no words for it; she might have recourse to the *topos* of inexpressibility.

It becomes more and more obvious that the scene is a game of and about language. Henry's emphasis on the soldier-like plainness of his style is part of this game. He is the actor of his love, just as every good orator (as is known from Cicero and Quintilian)[36] has to be an actor, as Shakespeare himself points out in his Sonnet 23, in which the lover presents himself "As an unperfect actor on the stage" – a man who, like Henry, has too much strength for words.[37] In this context of speaking as role-playing the surprisingly realistic juxtaposition of English and French becomes a sign of the enormous gulf that has to be bridged. But since understanding is shown to be possible in the midst of incomprehension, the antagonism is, ideally, to be overcome: "thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one" (190). Shakespeare's recurrent theme of a historical, political, social, or racial antagonism that forms the background for the uniting power of personal love to become visible (we think of Montague and Capulet, of black and white and old and young in *Othello*, of Imogen and Posthumus in *Cymbeline*, who must not love each other) – this recurrent theme is realized in *Henry V* by foregrounding translation. The oxymoronic expression "truly-falsely" shows how this union is brought about: if both speak each other's language poorly (i.e. not without mistakes)[38] but truly (with regard to content), a common ground is established between them, which consists in the desire to understand each other's language and trusting each other's words.[39]

36 *De oratore* II.46.193–194 and *Institutio oratoria* VI.2. On King Henry as an actor, see Calderwood (1979: 170–171).

37 Vickers maintains that Henry's employing *antimetabole*, the artful concealing of artifice, "is not a sign of insincerity but rather one of excellence in the proper sphere" (1968: 166). On Henry as an actor, see also Hart (1992: 181). Manheim stresses that Katherine "like Henry [...] seems to enjoy the role she is playing" (1973: 181). Danson links the King as an actor back to the Chorus: "that special actor, Shakespeare's Chorus, is like the King. [...] If the Chorus can take pride in the theatre's limited resources [...], he can do so only if he has a responsive audience" (1983: 30).

38 Cf. also Katherine's reference to Henry's "*fausse* French" (5.2.216) and his own reference to his "true English" (5.2.219).

39 Kastan (1982: 74) cites Waith, who stresses that, in the final scene "[t]he pattern of romance asserts itself powerfully [...] in preparations for a marriage [...] to symbolize the attainment of harmony" (1971: 103). Kastan adds: "Yet clearly this is less Shakespeare's vision than Henry's own. The greatest English king sees his reign as a romance, but the greatest English playwright makes us see it as a history" (1982: 74). I would like to suggest that it is not so much the (political) marriage as such (or "romance") that serves to bring up the notion of harmony but the

4 Translation in and of the Wooing Scene

Translation plays an essential part when (to use George Steiner's words) the arc of communication is thus being closed.[40] For it not only bridges the gap between the two protagonists of the scene but also between the stage and the audience. Henry, on the one hand, translates his own words into French, for the benefit of Katherine (181), and, on the other hand, he translates Katherine's words into English, for the benefit of the audience. Even though he politely calls Alice his "interpreter", he himself is the one who translates. In the Quarto version of the scene (which is in most other respects inferior to the Folio) this is complemented by the astonishing fact that Katherine, too, translates from French into English when Henry speaks French.

KING HENRY No, Kate? Why I'll tell it you in French, which will hang upon my tongue like a bride on her new-married husband. Let me see – Saint Denis be my speed! – Quand France est mon, –
CATHERINE Dat is, when France is yours.
KING HENRY – et vous êtes à moi, –
CATHERINE And I am to you.
KING HENRY – donc France êtes à vous, –
CATHERINE Den France sall be mine.
KING HENRY – et je suis à vous.
CATHERINE And you will be to me.
(Shakespeare 1600: 3167–3172.3)

This is part of her language learning, of course, since she retranslates what Henry first said to her in English but her translation also helps the audience participate in the exchange.

combination of dissonance and consonance ("truly-falsely") in Katherine's and Henry's communication. History is never forgotten but the audience are encouraged to see ways of transforming it.

40 "'Translation', properly understood, is a special case of the arc of communication which every successful speech-act closes within a given language. [...] The model 'sender to receiver' which represents any semiological and semantic process is ontologically equivalent to the model 'source-language to receptor-language' used in the theory of translation. [...] In short: *inside or between languages, human communication equals translation*. A study of translation is a study of language" (Steiner 1998: 49).

The fact that translation is essential to the scene's message becomes abundantly clear when we step, for a moment, beyond the original words of Shakespeare's play and look at the way it has been translated – into French. Of course it must be rather tricky for a translator to turn the linguistic tables, as it were, and have, instead of the French speaking English, all the English speak French. And when it comes to the scene in which English and French are juxtaposed, the task is an especially challenging one. As Delabastita (2002) in his discussion of ten translations (between 1776 and 1999) shows, various strategies have been chosen but, perhaps inevitably so, none is fully satisfactory. Frequently, e.g. in the translations by Pierre Le Tourneur (1781), Le Tourneur and François Guizot (1822), and François-Victor Hugo ([1859–66] 1959) the very contrast of languages and their mutual translation disappears. In those versions, the listener must recognize that Katherine, when speaking faulty French, is supposed to speak faulty English and when Henry, who all the time speaks French fluently and idiomatically, begins to stumble and make mistakes, he is supposed to speak – French. An example of the difficulties are lines 5.2.104–121.

KING O fair Katherine, if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue. Do you like me, Kate?
KATHERINE *Pardonnez-moi*, I cannot tell wat is 'like me'.
KING An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel.
KATHERINE *Que dit-il? Que je suis semblable à les anges?*
ALICE *Oui, vraiment, sauf votre grâce, ainsi dit-il.*
KING I said so, dear Katherine, and I must not blush to affirm it.
KATHERINE *O bon Dieu, les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies!*
KING What says she, fair one? That the tongues of men are full of deceits?
ALICE *Oui*, dat de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits: dat is de Princess.
(Shakespeare [c. 1599] 1995: 5.2.104–121)

In the 1781 version by Le Tourneur much of it is simply left out and drama is, to a certain extent, replaced by narrative (it looks like a stage direction but is not).[41] In the revised translation by Le Tourneur und Guizot (1822), which renders the scene in its entirety, Henry's fluent French (apparently supposed to be English) is answered by Katherine's similarly correct French (corresponding to a

41 "La DAME d'honneur rend cette phrase en mauvais Anglois au Roi." (Le Tourneur 1781: 188).

mixed French-English phrase in the original) but suddenly followed by her asking for the meaning of an English expression Henry has never uttered in this version, "like me." The exchange becomes stranger and stranger, for when Henry tactfully ignores Katherine's irrelevant remark and compares her, in French, to an angel, "C'est un ange qui vous ressemble", we begin to pity Katherine for her being so sadly hard of hearing, for she asks Alice "*Que dit-il? que je suis semblable à les anges?*" Even worse, the ailment seems to be catching, for when Katherine answers, "*les langues des hommes sont pleines des tromperies*", Henry similarly asks Alice, "Que dit-elle [...] que *les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies*?" (Le Tourneur and Guizot 1822: 184). In Le Tourneur, Alice simply confirms this, whereas in François-Victor Hugo's translation (1859–66) everyone must surely be supposed stone deaf, for the same French sentence is repeated for the third time. Hugo fares somewhat better on "like me"[42] but the fundamental problem is as evident in his translation as in the others: if you give up the original interchange of languages, the point of the scene will be lost.[43]

5 Translation as Transformation

The literal presence of translation in the wooing scene is essential, as it helps establish translation as a metaphorical and symbolic process in the play as a whole. This becomes plainly evident when we look at the development of Henry's language in the scene that changes from his pointing out the simplicity of

42 He has Henry ask "Que vous semble de moi, Kate?" and Katherine answer "*Pardonnez-moi*, je ne sais ce que vous entendez par ces mots: « Que vous semble »?" (Hugo [1859–66] 1959: 824). The wordplay is of course lost.

43 For this reason, other translators have sought to keep some of the original English within the French version. Delabastita (2002: 327) cites Lavelle (1947: 243), who has Henry switch from (correct) French into English when he asks Katherine if she likes him. Accordingly, Henry answers her question about "like me" by the macaronic sentence "Un ange est *like you*, Kate, et vous êtes *like* un ange". The "policy of non-translation for a selection of English phrases" (Delabastita 2002: 331) is more extensively pursued by Messiaen (1944) and Déprats (1999). This is more adequate to the function of the scene, even though the willing suspension of the audience's disbelief might be overtaxed by Henry's simultaneously speaking correct French, incorrect French, and English. Déprats (2000) is particularly concerned with the problem of Katherine, in versions that keep Shakespeare's French for her, speaking imperfect (and archaic) French in the context of Henry's and the other characters correct French. He points out another solution of keeping the linguistic difference: Bournet and Bournet (1992) translate Katherine's Shakespearean French into medieval French.

his speech into a genuine *celare artem*, the hiding of art by a language of utmost plainness. Take, for example, lines 229–231: "thou hast me, if thou hast me, at the worst; and thou shalt wear me, if thou wear me, better and better: and therefore tell me, most fair Katherine, will you have me?" Apart from Katherine's name all the words except for "better" and "therefore" are monosyllables (and *therefore* is but a compound of two monosyllables). Henry now speaks the language of the most simple love poetry, to be found in collections such as *England's Helicon* or *Love's Garland*. In a three-step movement this part of the scene develops from the juxtaposition of languages to the speaking of each other's language to, finally, a masterly simplified language of agreement. On this English stage this is English but in the language symbolism of the scene as a whole it represents a kind of original language of love to which Shakespeare has his king advance. In the translation process the King himself gets translated. This is not just an impression but a judgment based on the high value attached to monosyllables in language theories of Shakespeare's time. Beatus Rhenanus, for example, regarded monosyllables as the "voces primogeniae" of a language (Schäfer 1973: 6). A language that was rich of them thus evinced its proximity to the pre-Babylonic original tongue. Even though monosyllables mostly belong to the Germanic component of English, their use here does not serve to emphasize the contrast to French (as Steinsaltz 2002 claims) but rather shows a concentration on words making possible an original, unequivocal communication: "will you have me."

The development marked by these lines leads on to two further stages: the translation of language into music and finally its transformation into a bodily sign. Henry speaks of language turning music when he says "Come, your answer in broken music, for thy voice is music and thy English broken" (241–242). The point of the jest is that Henry and his audience know that *broken* in a musical context is a technical term and by no means denotes rupture or fragmentation. *Broken music* is another word for *consort music*,[44] the harmonious agreement of several parts or instruments. What Henry has in mind when he speaks of the union of Katherine's tongue and his own is a kind of musical harmony,[45] and this is underscored by the fact that the word *consort*, which is implied in

44 *OED* (2014): "broken, *adj*." †15., where the line from *Henry V* is cited. The first reference is from 1597, which shows that the musical meaning was a rather new one when *Henry V* was written. George Herbert plays on the double meaning of "broken" at the end of his poem "Dooms-day": "Lord, thy broken consort raise / And the musick shall be praise" (2007: 177).

45 Hunt (2014: 19) discusses McAlindon (2003), who points to the harmony of *discordia concors* at the end of the play, represented by the rhetorical figure of antimetabole.

"broken music", refers to both music and marriage. Beyond music there is the translation into a bodily sign, which means that we have returned to where Katherine's language lesson began – first to the hand ("Upon that I kiss your hand"; 249) and then to the mouth that speaks in kissing — an implicit play on the etymology of *lingua* ('tongue'): "you have witchcraft in your lips, Kate: there is more eloquence in a sugar touch of them than in the tongues of the French council" (273–275). The kiss has been interpreted as Henry's means of silencing Katherine (Leggatt 1988: 129; Neill 1994: 23).[46] Another reading would be to regard it as an integral part of the reflection on language in this scene, or rather on the human understanding which is impossible without language but eventually transcends it. Shakespeare himself has considered the alternative between love as political calculation and as a transpolitical constant in his Sonnet 124 ("If my dear love were but the love of state"). Genuine love is not afraid of politics ("It fears not policy, that heretic") because it is political in a much more elemental or radical sense: "But all alone stands hugely politic", as line 11 has it. In this perspective, the wooing scene of *Henry V* is a translation from the sphere of political power struggles to the "conversation" which is in heaven (as the Authorized Version translates the Greek *politeuma* in Philippians 3:20); without mutual love their marriage (and all else Henry has achieved) would be worth nothing, it would not be, to quote Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* again, the sacrament "ordained in Paradise" and "appointed for the felowship of felicitie" (41).

However, this metaphysical level of translation is only to be achieved, on the stage, by yet another translation: a change of genres from history (or tragical history) to comedy. For such a *consort*, such a basically political understanding between two persons is, seen against the background of historical reality, blatantly utopian. Shakespeare's audience knew this – and the Epilogue once more points it out: the story of the child with whom Henry wants to seal forever the union of England and France, and its sad outcome "Which oft our stage hath shown" (13) – in Shakespeare's earlier plays on King Henry VI. Seen in this light, the wooing scene is neither a piece of nationalist idolatry nor does it serve to expose critically the use of power. It rather shows, for a moment, how language creates understanding by means of and as a form of translation; it thus shows theatre itself rather than history, the play of language that culminates in

46 Howard and Rackin even go further: "Katherine is then subjected to a symbolic rape when Henry forces her to endure his kiss" (1997: 214–215). For a similar argument, see Walls (2013: 124). Regrettably, the authors remain silent about the textual basis of their statement. In Shakespeare's play, Henry is impressed by the "eloquence" of her lips (5.2.274), which is not very likely the case in a (symbolic) rape.

a wordless gesture. It is for the audience to "sit and see / Minding true things by what their mockeries be" (4.0.53).

This vision of language permeates the whole play. It applies to one of Shakespeare's foremost lovers of words who becomes silent in *Henry V* without our taking another glimpse of him: Sir John Falstaff, whose last words on his deathbed are reported by Mistress Quickly. In Theobald's famous emendation we hear that he "babbled of green fields" (2.3.16–17). These are, of course, the green pastures of the 23rd Psalm, to which this sinful man hopes to be translated. Mistress Quickly, in using the word *babbling* or *babling* for Falstaff's final act of prayer, serves to remind the audience of the mockery that must to be changed into a true thing by an ultimately graceful listener. To overcome the curse of Babel by means of translation is one of the visions of Shakespeare's play.

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