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SHAKESPEARE IN THE NETHERLANDS

*A STUDY OF DUTCH TRANSLATIONS
AND DUTCH PERFORMANCES
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS*

PART ONE: THE EMERGENCE OF A SHAKESPEARE CULTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS -
A HISTORICAL SURVEY

PART TWO: INTRODUCTION TO A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF DUTCH SHAKESPEARE
TRANSLATORS FROM BURGERSDIJK TO THE PRESENT DAY IN THE LIGHT OF
GENERAL AND SPECIFIC PROBLEMATIC FEATURES OF THEIR TASK

*SUBMISSION FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND*

BY
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INTRODUCTION

subject matter. - The content of the following pages is the result of a research project originally concerned solely with Dutch translations of Shakespeare's plays; but even in its preliminary stages - the collecting of copies and data - it became evident that the field was far too wide to be done justice in one single short-term study.

Between the middle of the seventeenth century and the present day more than fifty Dutch authors have busied themselves with the translation or adaptation of Shakespeare's plays. It might have been feasible to subject the work of one of these to detailed scrutiny, or to devote a less thorough, but still fairly comprehensive analysis to half a dozen of them. But such a study would have taken shape in a vacuum: since, to date, little academic research on this topic has been undertaken by Dutch scholars and, to my knowledge, none whatsoever in the English-speaking world, there would be no way of relating the findings on any one translator or any one limited set of translators to the merits of their many colleagues, to the cultural environment in which his or their work was conceived, and to the historical perspective of these efforts.

Hence, the project developed, firstly, towards the establishment of such a historical and cultural perspective and, secondly, towards viewing the problem of translating Shakespeare into Dutch in general terms, and in a framework that would accommodate, in a cursory way, at least all those translators whose work has been - and in many cases still is - accessible to the Dutch public of this century, either in published versions or in performance on the stage.

the historical and cultural perspective. - The first thirteen chapters, therefore, contain only a limited amount of material on translations. A few pages of Chapter I are devoted to an isolated seventeenth-century version of *The Taming of the Shrew*; Chapters III and IV are concerned, respectively, with a set of eighteenth-century prose translations and with the classicist French and German derivatives of some Shakespearean plays that were translated into Dutch and performed in the Netherlands, in some cases, until less than a century ago; Chapters VII and VIII deal briefly with a dozen nineteenth-century translators whose work, but for that of one of them (L. A. J. Burgersdijk), is of historical inter-

est only. Finally, Chapter XI introduces the efforts of twentieth-century translators, which come under closer scrutiny in the second part of the study.

Had this work been submitted to a university in the Netherlands, a brief reference to texts by scholars such as Dr. R. Pennink, Prof. Dr. B. Hunningher and Prof. Dr. H. H. J. de Leeuwe would have rendered the writing of Chapters II and V, as well as some sections of Chapters VI, IX and XII superfluous. These chapters and sections deal with the earliest reactions to Shakespeare by the world of Dutch letters - between the early eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries -, with the Dutch theatre of the past two centuries and with those who were concerned with, and involved in it as writers, critics and directors. However, this material is only accessible to Dutch readers, and must be assumed to be totally unfamiliar to their English counterparts and, for that reason, had to be summarized and incorporated in this study, even though my limited research period in the Netherlands - a little short of twelve months - left no scope for independent work on my part in these specialized fields. The same applies to the content of Chapter I: the movements of the strolling players from England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and their effect on the dramaturgy and theatre history of The Netherlands and Germany.

dependence on secondary source material. - This circumstance makes it necessary to outline to what extent the first part of this study is original, and to what extent it has been derived from extant scholarly work.

Except for organizing the available data as collected by Cohn, Worp, Moltzer, Kossmann, Riewald, Nienke Begemann and others (indicated in the notes) in a way that suited my format and purpose, no effort on my part has gone into the writing of Chapter I (pp.1-14). Chapter II, devoted to Dutch critical writing on, and familiarization with Shakespeare during the eighteenth century, is - as indicated on p.15 - based entirely on Dr. Pennink's findings in her book *Nederland en Shakespeare*, dating back to 1936; some additional data on French reactions, relevant to the Dutch ones, were gleaned from C. M. Haines's *Shakespeare in France - Criticism from Voltaire to Victor Hugo*.

However, it was not possible to follow Pennink uncritically throughout subsequent chapters. I applied my own judgement to the Borchers translations discussed in Chapter III (pp.25-40), as I did, subsequently, in Chapter VII, to those by Moulin and Roorda van Eysinga, all of which I was able to peruse for myself. Besides, Dr. Pennink's monograph puts little emphasis on the Ducis and Weisse adaptations which,

because of their prominence in the Dutch theatre for the greater part of a century, I considered important enough to devote a brief chapter to (Ch. IV, pp. 41-50).

For the sake of conciseness and coherence, it became necessary, in Chapter V (dealing with the literary background to Dutch Shakespeare appreciation in the early nineteenth century), to combine and condense data from Pennink and Hunningher's work on Schimmel (see p. 51, note¹) - a factor which made it impossible to indicate the exact provenance of every detail: one sentence may contain information derived from different *loci* in the two works, since authors such as Bilderdijk, Wiselius, Van Kampen, Van der Hoop, Warnsinck, Van Halmael and Van Lennep are discussed in both. At the same time, it should be noted that I took the liberty of interpreting the data from these sources in my own way, where the Dutch concept of romanticism is concerned: Bilderdijk, and even Van Alphen and Feith (see pp. 21-24) have traditionally been labelled as romantic writers by Dutch literary historians, - a categorization followed faithfully by Pennink, while it is obvious from their critical writing that their ideas were at variance with the German and English concept of romanticism. For this reason, I have followed Hunningher rather than Pennink in relating the writers discussed to one another; and the conclusions arrived at in this chapter about the belated shift from a classicist to a romantic-oriented literary framework, and the bearing this has on the delayed assimilation of Shakespeare into Dutch cultural life, are my own.

For Chapter VI, the background information on the state of the Dutch theatre in the early and mid-nineteenth century was based on Hunningher's *Een Eeuw Nederlands Toneel*; this standard text also provided a number of vital data for Chapters IX and XII. Besides this, H. H. J. de Leeuwe's brochure *Perioden en Stijlen in de geschiedenis van het toneel in Amsterdam in de negentiende eeuw* (see p. 70, note¹), his monograph *Meeningen en Nederland* (see p. 149, note¹) and a number of other, minor sources supplied additional information for Chapters VI and IX; all of these have been cited in the notes or in the text itself. To annotate these more precisely than I have would have been not only very difficult, because of the way the material has been condensed, but also pointless, as none of it is accessible to English readers. - For the tracing and analysing of data on Shakespeare performances, their nature and quality, for use in these chapters as well as Chapters XII and XIII, I had to rely on my own research.

Shakespeare in the Dutch theatre. - At this juncture, an English-speaking reader must be forewarned against certain easily-made assumptions.

In the first place, it must not be thought that there is a highly-organized body of theatre history from which a survey of Dutch Shakespeare performances can readily be extracted. Unlike England, France and Germany, the Netherlands cannot boast of a long-standing indigenous dramaturgy, nor of a theatrical tradition rich enough to have inspired historians and men of letters to keep close track of its development over the past four centuries and to pass on a bequest of coherent and well-documented scholarly information about this province of culture. Since the mid-eighteenth century, there has been a smattering of - usually short-lived - periodicals devoted to the art of the theatre which, along with data preserved in a few monographs such as Van Halmael's (see p.55, note¹), private papers and whatever records have survived theatre fires and other mishaps, may in due course give the country a more or less comprehensive theatre history. But systematic research in this field ("dramatology") is a very young discipline in the Netherlands and, so far, has been limited to the efforts of a few qualified scholars, who have been publishing their findings in the course of the last twenty-five years. F. W. S. van Thienen, B. Hunningher and H. H. J. de Leeuwe are the most prominent of these, and - particularly the latter two - the only ones whose work contains material germane to our subject.

On account of this, the basis for a history of Shakespeare productions had to be provided almost exclusively by the scrap-book information that can be gleaned from programmes, playbills, photographs, newspaper and periodical reviews;- and, once again, the limitations of time forced me to confine my research to what material of this order has been collected, to date, by the diligent librarians of the Toneelmuseum (Theatre Museum) in Amsterdam, an institution that was founded in 1925, but whose library facilities did not become operative until after World War II; so its collection, though extensive, cannot be expected to be complete nor - because of its nature - wholly reliable: the provenance of many an old newspaper clipping and its dates are subject to conjecture, or simply cannot be established.

From an academic point of view, objections may be raised against such heavy reliance on ephemeral impressions; but, unfortunately, one cannot create information of a more substantial kind where none exists. Besides, it should be remembered that the art of the theatre itself is of a peculiarly ephemeral nature, and that too academic an approach to it contains serious dangers: the fossilization of eighteenth-century French classicist drama, and the seemingly irreparable rift between the world of letters and that of the theatre throughout Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, bear witness to this. Contemporary first-night reviews in the daily and weekly press have, despite all their shortcomings, the advantage of im-

mediacy over any retrospective account, no matter how judicious that may be: for not only are the former comments less likely to be subject to errors of memory on matters of factual details, but their inherent shortcomings - lack of understanding, misguided admiration, prejudices of various kinds with regard to the play at hand or its presentation - may constitute in themselves a truer gauge of the public response to a production (and therefore, of its cultural significance) than a scholarly *post factum* reconstruction.

Secondly, Shakespeare - because of the position he holds in English letters and drama - must not too readily be assumed to be of self-evident importance in the theatre culture of another country, unless it be that of Germany. So one must not expect to find a few clear trends, let alone a general development of Shakespeare interpretation in Dutch theatrical practice; looking for it would be as hazardous and, indeed, fatuous an academic exercise as trying to pinpoint specific lines in the interpretation of Sophocles, Molière, Schiller, Ibsen or Chekhov on the British or American stage.

Live theatre anywhere depends, for its existence, not on unilinear theorizing, but on haphazardly shifting trends that have more to do with fashion than with scholarship, and in that respect Shakespeare is, in the Netherlands, subject to the same treatment (and maltreatment) as any other highly-favoured foreign dramatist: if any lines of interpretation-in-performance are to be discerned with regard to his works, they are part of a general theatrical movement or of a particular director's approach to his task; and if Shakespeare has played a significant rôle in a director's, a company's or an actor's career, this reflects more clearly on the character of that director, company or actor than on the author, or even the particular plays of their choice - although that choice, of course, may be significant in itself.

Nevertheless, I have attempted to stream the jumble of data into various recognizable approaches to Shakespeare, which could only be done by analysing the approaches to drama in general by the directors and actors involved. Where background information on Verkade, Royaards and Van Dalsum was concerned, I relied again on Hunningher's *Een Eeuw Nederlands Toneel* (see p.190, note¹), but the labelling of their approaches, as well as the alignment of the work of subsequent directors (Saalborn, De Meester) with these, is my own; and it should be noted that the emphasis throughout lies on the practical-theatrical *approach* rather than on trends of *interpretation*. The latter factor could only be taken into account for particular, frequently-performed works: *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for a few isolated productions that were remarkable or controversial at an interpretative level: Defresne's *Richard III*

(1947, see pp.234-235), De Meester's *Troilus and Cressida* (1959, see pp.252-253), Bentz van den Berg's *Tempest* (1969, see pp.259-260) and the various post-war attempts at reviving *The Merchant of Venice* (see pp.242, 250 and 272); and, of course, for certain individual actors' renderings of particular parts: Bouwmeester's Shylock; Verkade's Hamlet; Van Dalsum's Claudius, Othello, Macbeth, Lear and Caesar; Jan Musch's Iago; Frits van Dijk's Puck and Iago; Johan Schmitz's Brutus; Paul Steenbergen's, Coen Flink's and Eric Schneider's Hamlets. But it will be obvious that these interpretations were far too specific, individual and incidental to be seen as manifestations of a homogeneous, general understanding of Shakespeare's work that is in any way typical of the Netherlands.

objectives of the historical survey. - These forewarnings, I trust, have effectively allayed any anticipation of a profound historical analysis of Shakespeare's position in the cultural life of the Netherlands, and of some possibly unique interpretative approach to his work in the Dutch theatre.

As has been pointed out at the beginning: the primary objective of this chronological survey was to provide a background - and of necessity a rather sketchy and, at points, derivative one - that would lend a meaningful perspective to the efforts of Dutch Shakespeare translators.

This does not mean, however, that the history is of no importance in itself; in its composition, I have attempted to map out the gradual development from a narrow, exclusively literary preoccupation with Shakespeare towards a broadening range of appreciation and acceptance, and to the final assimilation of his work into the country's cultural pattern; and I have endeavoured to demonstrate the close correlation between this development and the late and reluctant surrender of Dutch letters to international romanticism. The first, tentative stage of this process did not merge into the second until the mid-nineteenth century, by which time the first direct verse translations had appeared in print, Shakespeare had become prescribed reading in secondary schools, and the first attempt had been made to present a direct translation - instead of a translated French derivative - in the Dutch theatre. The final relinquishing of classicist prejudices and reservations on the part of a handful of scholars and literati, the publication of a few unsaleable translations, an isolated (and apparently not very popular) theatre production and the introduction of set Shakespeare texts in the school system, however, are still a far cry from cultural assimilation: Homer and Virgil have been on the Dutch Grammar School curriculum for centuries, and many classics of world literature, from Dante's *Divina Commedia* to Goethe's *Faust*, have been admired and dis-

cussed by generations of Dutch students and scholars - but they can hardly be said to belong to the country's cultural life, the way Shakespeare does.

This final assimilation has come about since Shakespeare has been unconditionally accepted where he belongs: in the theatre. Since the 1880's, Shakespeare has been the most regularly performed foreign playwright in the Dutch repertoire, and this has been made possible by the diligence of our numerous translators. For that reason, this survey has concentrated on the growth and development of Shakespeare's place in the Dutch theatre and has, in its final stages, disregarded the continued activity of scholars and writers: once the rare phenomenon has come about that a foreign author has not only become accessible to a whole nation, but actually assumed a niche of his own in its cultural awareness, purely academic approaches to his work become of decidedly minor importance.

translators and translations. - The Shakespeare translators dealt with in the course of this study have been handled in two different ways.

Those who were active prior to 1880 take their places in the chronology of the historical survey: their importance is relevant only to the historical perspective and - particularly if it is conceded that prose translations (the Borchers collection, Van Loon's and Kok's) are of value only as a means towards conceptual familiarization - their number and output is small enough to allow for an assessment of their relative merits within this framework.

The second half of the study is devoted to an introductory critical analysis of translators and adapters from Burgersdijk to the present day; but rather than look at the work of these people individually, I have focused on various problematic aspects of, and different approaches to the task of translating Shakespeare in general, and illustrated these with examples selected from as wide as possible a range of Dutch versions.

There is no established procedure for such an analysis: what academic attention has been paid to translation so far has been too general or - as, for instance, in the case of J. C. Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London, O.U.P., 1965) - too elementary to apply to the specific situation of translating Shakespeare's dramatic poetry into modern Dutch. Besides, there does not exist a comparative English-Dutch grammar of sufficient delicacy to point up the structural differences between the two languages that get in the way of metrical translation; nor has, to my knowledge, any phonological study

been made that could serve as a basis for analysing the relationship between the Shakespearean iambic pentameter and its Dutch counterpart, or for establishing norms of poetic and dramatic equivalence of sound and rhythm in the two languages. Finally it goes without saying that not even the best English-Dutch dictionary can be expected to cover the complexity of meaning that is to be found in Shakespeare's vocabulary.

These three aspects: structure, sound and meaning, form the points of departure for the analysis, and their discussion may be applied retrospectively to the translators dealt with in the historical survey. In Chapter XIV (p.283 ff.), my purpose was best served by the use of modern linguistic categories, and of the nomenclature that has become common currency in the course of the last decade; the terminology is based particularly on that used by M. A. K. Halliday in his article 'Categories of the theory of grammar' (*Word*, 17.3, 1961, pp.241-292), augmented by a few variants of my own (Pf and Pnf, for: finite and non-finite (part of a) predicator), although, in a few instances, it was necessary to revert to traditional terms (direct object, infinitive, past and present participle).

In Chapter XV (p.311 ff.) I followed my own ear in the choice of phonetic symbols for the transcribed passages of translation and found to my satisfaction, when subsequently checking them against those prescribed in *The Principles of the International Phonetic Association* (London, 1963), that they tallied almost to perfection; in the case of one Dutch diphthong (see p.312, note²) I felt justified in retaining my own symbol in preference to that used in *The Principles*. On the matter of the characteristic (syllable-timed) Dutch speech rhythm I relied entirely on my own observations, and may well have ventured on controversial ground; to my knowledge, no comparative study of this phonological phenomenon in relation to other European languages has ever been undertaken, and it would seem to be of vital importance to the translation of poetry in general, and of Shakespeare's plays in particular.

I have been careful to call this part of the study an introduction only: it will be self-evident that in this, so far, untrodden field, encompassing some thirty translators and adapters - most of whom are responsible for several versions, while three of them have translated the entire canon - no final verdict on the efforts of any one of them could be arrived at. The final discussion of their various merits in Chapter XXI, therefore, must be seen as no more than a provisional assessment.

base texts; presentation; bibliography; annotation. - An important facet of a more detailed analysis,

which lay beyond the scope of this study, would be the establishing of the base texts used by the various translators. For the sake of uniformity and easy reference, only two editions have been used for all the quoted passages: the Furness *Variorium* texts for those occurring in the historical survey, and John Munro's edition for *The London Shakespeare* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958) throughout the second part of the study. Where these standard texts have been departed from for some reason or other, this has been indicated in the notes or in the body of the text.

In the presentation of Shakespeare passages and their translations my procedure has been flexible: where a single translator's version is being considered, it has been placed alongside the English passage, and is followed by its re-translation (metaphrase) into English; where the versions of two translators are compared, they are placed alongside one another below the English text; where more than two versions are being presented, they follow one another (in chronological order) on the left-hand side of the page, while their metaphrases are placed alongside them on the right-hand side.

In order to avoid unnecessary duplication of data, the appended bibliography does not contain any details of reference works: these are covered in the footnotes or in the body of the text. For the same reason, no footnotes have been given (but for in two or three instances) on the publication details of the Dutch versions quoted, cited or discussed in the course of the study; these, in turn, can be found, in full, in the bibliography.

As has already been indicated, for the annotation the convention of footnotes has been followed; these have been made as comprehensive as circumstances and the readability of the text allowed. In the chapters dealing with the theatre history, references to relevant newspaper and periodical reviews have been contained in the body of the text and, for practical reasons, often been confined to the name of the publication, that of the reviewer (if known), and the month and year of publication which, if not explicitly stated, will be clear from the dates of the production they refer to. All these reviews can be found, under the heading of the relevant productions, in the well-ordered files of the Toneelmuseum in Amsterdam. Some additional annotation has been appended; its occurrence is signalled by the use of the symbol © at the end of the passages concerned.

abbreviations. - A limited number of abbreviations and abridgements has been used. Most of these relate to regularly quoted publications, and are elucidated in the footnotes on pp.162 and 233. Apart from the

standard abridgements for the titles of Shakespeare's plays (*The (A Midsummer Night's) Dream, Much Ado (About Nothing), The Merchant (of Venice), (The) Merry Wives (of Windsor) and The (Taming of the) Shrew*) and their abbreviations in the index (*MND, MAAN, MoV, MWow, TotS, etc.*), only one has been used, in Chapter I (pp.4 and 5), that requires explanation for English readers: "c.s." - *cum suis*, meaning: "with his companions" or "company". -

Acknowledgements. - This study could not have been accomplished without the valued assistance of a number of people and institutions. In the first place, I owe a debt of gratitude to the Universities Grants Committee of my new home country, New Zealand, which supplied me with the required finance to travel back to the country of my birth to collect the necessary data; besides, I am indebted to my supervisors, Ass. Prof. Dr. F. C. de Vries in Auckland and Prof. Dr. J. Swart, head of the Department of English of the University of Amsterdam, for their judicious and knowledgeable guidance; to my colleague, C. C. Bowley, and to Prof. Dr. S. Musgrove, head of the Department of English of the University of Auckland, for their critical advice; to my former teachers in the Netherlands, H. J. M. F. Lodewick and E. G. Courrech Staal, and to the Rev. A. Jaarsma, for their assistance in the finding of data on the Dutch literary background, and the collecting of old translations that I might not otherwise have been able to obtain and peruse; and, last but not least, to the well-informed and uncommonly obliging staff of the Toneelmuseum Library, with whom I spent many months of fruitful labour in the most congenial environment and atmosphere any Ph. D. aspirant could ever hope to work in.

I am conscious of the fact that this twofold study in an academically new field leaves many questions unanswered, and can but hope that it may arouse sufficient interest to inspire the more detailed and conclusive research into this absorbing subject matter, which it undoubtedly deserves.

Auckland, October 1972

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- 14 Louis Saalborn's production of *De Getemde Feeks*, 1929. Bart Kreeft (GRUMIO), Magda Janssens (KATHARINA), Louis Saalborn (PETRUCHIO), Johan Fiolet (BAPTISTA) and ensemble. Translation: L. A. J. Burgersdijk. p.367
- 15 Johan de Meester's production of *Troilus en Cressida*, 1959. Femke Boersma (CRESSIDA) and Cees Laseur (PANDARUS). Translation: Bert Voeten. p.382
- 16 Johan de Meester's production of *Storm*, 1941. Caro van Eyck as ARIEL. Translation: Martinus Nijhoff. p.412
- 17 Joris Diels' production of *Koning Lear*, 1964. Albert van Dalsum as LEAR. Translation: Adriaan Roland Holst. p.433
- 18 Han Bentz van den Berg's production of *Droom van een Midzomernacht*, 1961. Ellen Vogel (TITANIA) and ensemble. Translation: Dolf Verspoor. p.464
- 19 Johan de Meester's production of *Leer om Leer*, 1950. Jos Liesting (ISEGRIM) and Ton Lutz (BERNARDIJN). Adaptation: Gerard den Brabander. p.509
- 20 Douglas Seale's production of *Richard II*, 1958. Paul Huf (JOHN OF GAUNT), Johan Schmitz (BOLINGBROKE), Han Bentz van den Berg (RICHARD) and André van den Heuvel (MOWBRAY). Translation: C. Buddingh'. p.513

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