

way the individual contributions illuminate, from different perspectives, the way academic, theatrical and literary practices were affected by difficult and changing political conditions, and how these were dealt with in a productive manner.” (vol. III, pp. 7-8)

William Shakespeare's Sonnets. For the First Time Globally Reprinted. A Quatercentenary Anthology (1609-2009). Pfister, Manfred and Jürgen Gutsch (eds.). Dozwil TG Schweiz: Edition SIGNATHUR. 2009. 752 pp. + 1 DVD. ISBN 978-3-908141-54-9. 100 sfr or € 63.

Reviewed by VERONICA POPESCU

One of the most important editorial events in the field of Shakespeare studies in 2009, the present volume marks the cultural venture and worldwide appreciation of Shakespeare's most controversial and intriguing work, the *Sonnets* (1609). And it does that by mapping out the four hundred years of translation, interpretation, imitation, influence, and transposition in other media that these 154 sonnets have known in cultures as remote from England as the Chinese, Indian, South African, Maori or Georgian, or in languages that are entirely experimental and unnatural such as Esperanto or Klingon.

With this surprising book, editors Manfred Pfister and Jürgen Gutsch practically reformed the common practice of anthologizing translations by deconstructing *Shakespeare's Sonnets* culturally and translingually and turning it into a collection of sonnets in no less than 70 languages (not counting the twelve Italian dialects represented here virtually for the first time as translating idioms of the *Sonnets*), only a part of the translations being what most specialists would call faithful or correct translations of the original ones. That, as Manfred Pfister plainly states in the Introduction (p. 13), reflects the editors' choice to include the minor and the marginal – a deconstructive twist to anthology-making which demonstrates quite convincingly that meanings are always irreducibly complex and unstable, and that the mysteries of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are far from having been completely solved.

This is a book that refuses a complete reading, from the first page to the last, inviting instead a random perusal of national histories of translation, adaptation, emulation, rewriting of these poems across temporal and national boundaries. The introductory notes written by scholars and/or professional translators are followed by a selection of at least twelve versions of one or several sonnets according to such criteria as representativeness, historical relevance, quality of translation or, on the contrary, degree of liberty taken from the original in creative rewritings of the Shakespearean sonnets, the result being an approximation of the trajectory of the sonnets within a particular culture rather than an evaluative comment on the philological quality of the translations,

though such comments do appear in most introductory notes. Setting out to reflect rather than hierarchize, to include and draw attention to “what is marginal and non canonical” (Introduction, p.13) rather than select only the greatest achievements by cultures with an old and well-known tradition of translating Shakespeare, the book is interesting for scholars, students and the general public alike, though few could claim to be able to read most of the translations included here.

With a Contents page recalling that of dictionaries and encyclopaedias, the book invites the reader to choose from a long list of alphabetically (and democratically) arranged minor and major languages into which the sonnets have been translated to this day,¹ beginning with Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, continuing with Estonian, Farsi (Persia), Finnish and French, Northern and Western Frisian (spoken along the Danish-German-Dutch borders), German - a major translating language of Shakespeare’s work - Greek, Hebrew, Bengali and Malayalam (India), Italian (and twelve of its dialects), then further down the list, Korean, Latin, Malay, Maltese, Maori (New Zealand), then Portuguese (Portugal and Brazil), Rhaeto-Romanic (with its three variants in the Alpine valleys), Romani (Russia), Romanian and Russian, Spanish (with four geographical variants on the two sides of the Atlantic), Swedish, Swiss German and, last but not least, Ukrainian and Yiddish. The enumeration above, incomplete as it is, aims to reveal the global scope of the present anthology, pointing out as well the willingness of the editors to include in the book minority languages with little or no tradition of translating Shakespeare.

It is with great interest that one finds here Viktor Shapoval’s translation of twelve sonnets into North Russian Romani, this being the first time ever that Shakespeare’s poems were translated into a Roma idiom and adapted to the Roma sensibility and cultural values (p. 547), or the twelve sonnets translated in as many Italian dialects - for virtually the first time and especially for this project - hoping that “the time-honoured voice of the dialect, inflected in a gesture that is decisively modern, will let flourish again in our minds a poetry that was, as Ben Jonson wrote, ‘not for an age but for all times.’” (p. 380) Equally interesting for its experimental value is Remigius Geiser’s translation of sonnet 151 into Cimbrian - the oldest Germanic language, still spoken in northern Italy - a translation proudly presented as being “fully in line with the rich and varied Cimbrian tradition of sonnet writing” (p. 136), or Walter Sauer’s rendition of sonnet 18 into Pennsylvania German (or Pennsylvania Dutch, Pennsylvfaanisch Deitsch), a German dialect spoken by the Old Order Amish people in the United States.

¹ Unfortunately, a significant number of African and Asian languages are not represented here for reasons that have to do, according to the editors, with the impossibility of contacting the contributors or with their unexplainable silence.

At the opposite pole, the German, French and Italian cultures take pride in a long tradition of translating Shakespearean poetry, unfortunately only sketched in the introductory notes due to space limitations imposed on all contributions in this anthology. Of the three, the German history of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* stands out with no less than sixty translations of the entire cycle and around one hundred and forty translators who have produced translations of series or of individual sonnets (p. 277), to which one should add the various German parodies of the sonnets, presented at length by Sebastian Donat in a separate entry. What the reader will enjoy the most, however, is not the historical information or the details concerning the stylistic or formal features of the translations (interesting as these may be in the case of translations into Chinese, Japanese or Arabic for instance), but the less known or previously ignored aspects of the sonnets themselves that the unconventional translations and creative rewritings bring forth, filtered through national artistic sensibilities and world visions.

A special place within the anthology is occupied by Erika Greber's discussion of the visual sonnet as a form of intersemiotic translation or intermedial transposition, a very interesting presentation of the ways in which the sonnet has been rendered visually from the fourteenth century to the present day, making it possible for several Shakespearean sonnets to take surprising vispo (visual poetry) forms since 2001. Pencils, matches, sushi, sausages and other foods¹ attempt to capture the graphic representation of the Shakespearean sonnet form, the plot structure of the sonnets and other noticeable twists and turns of poetic expression that can be marked visually with changes in the length, colour, size or texture of the objects used as stand-ins for poetic lines.

With the Shakespearean vispos at the end of the book, the editors make a smooth transition to the multimedial archive on the accompanying DVD, including the electronic version of the printed book, intermedial transpositions such as the vispos, sonnet-inspired paintings or graphic work² book covers from around the world, readings of the anthologized translated sonnets by native professional actors or the contributors themselves, as well as a reading of the sonnets in English to accompany the 1609 and the 1966 (John Dover Wilson) editions of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, a very helpful record of Shakespeare-related websites to date (February 2009), and the sonnets set to music in various styles and languages. Standing out among such musical projects is that of the

¹ See, for instance, the "Fish'n'Chips Sonnet" or the "Hot Dog Sonnet" by Stefan Schukowski and Alexander Zimbulov, 2009 (pp. 716-17).

² The Romanian contribution is particularly noteworthy. Florin Stoiciu's "Sonete Shakespeare" (1992) is a composition of nine engravings, capturing the essence of the sequence rather than focusing on individual sonnets and offering the viewer a thought-provoking, emotionally-charged comment on the poet's commitment to love's highs and lows as the fabric of poetry and of life.

Romanian composer Florian Chelu, whose first 25 (out of the projected 154) sonnets rendered in a special musical form, the *musical sonnet*, are included in the audio section of the DVD.

An impressive homage to the *Sonnets* and a much needed recognition of their added value through translations and interpretations across the world, Manfred Pfister and Jürgen Gutsch's book is an impressive work of around 752 pages and 1.82 GB which, far from being exhaustive, is the kind of editorial project which reminds one of the huge international impact of canonical works, which continue to live and exert their influence on national literatures long after they were penned. *William Shakespeare's Sonnets. For the First Time Globally Reprinted. A Quatercentenary Anthology (1609-2009)* revisits some of the most beautiful translations in each culture and reminds us all why we fell in love with Shakespeare the Poet: his universal appeal, his insightfulness into the human soul, his love for poetry; this is what made the present anthology possible and what gives it coherence in spite of all apparent disparities, differences, discords, imbalances, Babel-like heterogeneity. Incomplete as it may be, this volume is a real intellectual treat for scholars, teachers, translators and inquisitive minds of all professions, deserving the critical attention that any book of such global scope should have.