Week: 09. Module: C - Shakespeare Translations

Unit: 20: Shakespeare and Children's Literature

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Introduction

Children's literature refers to the literature written for children. It appears as original, and adaptations. Adaptation of existing stories appears as retelling, reiteration, version, adaptation, reversion or subversion. Versions retain the original as far as possible, adaptations exploit the plot and theme and prefer modern language, retellings and reversions use alternate perspectives and use modern language, and subversions act as counter-discourses challenging established readings and deviate from the original significantly.

It is canonical texts which get retold first. Shakespeare has been an as children's literature as both curtailed retellings and other forms. As a part of the canon, he is an important cultural capital that the society wants children to be familiar with. Like other children's literature, Shakespeare stories also use increasingly complex and sophisticated modes of rewriting at all narrative levels when they are made into children's literature.

Children's literature initiates children to their common social heritage, shared cultural experiences, core values, and cultural assumptions. It is used as a tool to socially engineer and cultural condition children to accept these.

Child

Our concept of childhood itself is a recent one (Cunningham). The European concept of childhood emerged only in the 17th century. The English philosopher John Locke's view of mind as *tabula rasa* (clean slate) influenced the European concept of the child. Rousseau's call to produce works that appeal to a children's natural interests and help children develop naturally and joyously also influenced Europe significantly.

Accordingly, the parameters to define child vary across cultures and affect the definition of children's literature. Adults write children's literature according to what they think is good for children, who they categorize according to age groups. Publishers produce children's literature generally at three levels—primary, secondary and high school levels for the convenience of marketing. However, this excludes very young children and include more normal readers. Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson and Russell categorize child readers as follows:

Years	*Category*	*Requirement*
0-2	Sensorimotor period	Rhymes and interactive books
2-4	Pre-conceptual stage	Simple plot-picture storybooks helping to develop concepts of numbers, letters, colours etc.
4-7	Basic reading	Easy-to-read picture books narrating folktales focusing on progression in story; information books on letter-sound relation and basic vocabulary.

7-9	Transitional reading	Longer picture books with simple and straightforward plots
7-9	Concrete operations	Realistic stories and adventures of young characters than folktales
9-12	Competent reading	Sophisticated storybooks, novels with complex plots, realistic narrations of adventure, mystery and romances, and science fiction; and books with similar topics and patterns

Publishers use few and simple words for kids, plain English for young readers, and the author's lines for older readers. Maria Nikolejeva points out how children's literature progresses through a) adaptations of existing adult literature b) didactic, educational stories written directly for children, c) literary system with its genres and modes, and d) polyphonic children's literature, the complexity in narrative forms becomes very marked *(Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature)*. Rewritings can challenge the established literary, cultural and political assumptions. An example is the increasingly complex works of Neil Gaiman's comic, *Dream Country* which adapts *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, even commanding a literary prize.

Children's literature helps children to imagine, understand, reason, become empathetic and become aware of their cultural heritage. It also helps them to improve language skills and vocabulary, develop artistic skills and appreciation of literature. It revolves around childhood experiences and is narrated in a forthright but suspenseful manner, evoking curiosity. It uses imaginative and creative use language as well as literary and artistic styles. This makes adults also read children's literature, making it difficult to fix the features of children's literature.

Children's Literature

The genre of Children's Literature refers to the works written or adapted for children, and those for child consumers. It could be oral or written works intended to educate, instruct, or entertain children. But they need not necessarily be didactic or moralistic, nor can it be neatly separated from adult literature. The *Harry Potter*, primarily meant for children, is enjoyed by both, and some works originally meant for the adults, like *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Alice in Wonderland* have become part of children's literature. Indian stories like *Panchatantra*, Greek stories like *Aesop's Fables*, Arabian stories like *A Thousand and One Nights* are read equally by adults and children. These define the elements of fantasy and fairy tales even today.

English chapbooks like *Winter-Evenings Entertainments* (1687) and hornbooks collected children's stories. Italian work *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* (the 1550s) and *Pentamerone* (1634), Danish book *Child's Mirror* (1568), French picture book *Orbis Pictus* (1697), *A Little Book for Little Children* (c.1712), Thomas Boreman's *Description of Three Hundred Animals* (1740-43), Mary Cooper's *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* (1744) etc. are some examples of early European children's literature.

Modern children's literature begins with John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly* (1744). Grimm Brothers' *Tales* (1812-58), Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe's *Norwegian Folktales* (1841-52), Danish author Hans Christian Andersen's (1805-75) stories, The Swiss author Johann David Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, (1865), Carlo Collodi's *Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883), Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876), RL Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Rudyard

Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), JM Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911) etc. are some of the major works in children's literature.

The innocuous objective of retelling a text as children's' literature is to make the children who are reluctant or intimidated by letters and literature to read and appreciate them. However, they also carry the assumptions of the canon and reiterate their metanarratives. As it introduces a child to the common cultural capital of the society, it also regulates his understanding of the values the stories pass on. Erica Hateley's *Shakespeare in Children's Literature* (2009) maps Pierre Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital on to Shakespeare. Shakespeare as children's literature shows how it constructs "the juvenile subject as the reader of Shakespeare".

Children's literature grew as a genre worth attention only after the age of Shakespeare. Newbery's compilation of English nursery rhymes *Mother Goose's Melody or, Sonnets for the Cradle* (1785). It contained a few songs "that sweet songster and nurse of wit and humour, Master William Shakespeare". Jean Baptiste Perrin's French textbook *Contes Moraux Amusans et Instructions, à l'usage de la Jeunesse, tirés des Tragédies de Shakespeare* (1778) contained the stories of *Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Henry V, Hamlet, Macbeth, Timon of Athens,* and *Cymbeline* and it aimed "to bring them acquainted with the higher and more poetical style of their language". There was also an anonymous adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* in the 18th century.

Today Shakespeare comes to children in many forms, aural, visual and audiovisual. Diane Davidson's series *Shakespeare for Young People*, Cass Foster's *Shakespeare for Children* and her series of *Sixty-minute Shakespeare Plays*, Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories*, Bruce Coville's illustrated retellings of Shakespeare's works and Bruce Coville and by Jim Weiss's popular cassette, 'Shakespeare for Children', Baz Luhrmann's popular movie *Romeo + Juliet*, and the animation film *Lion King* ar a few Shakespeare adaptations available for children today.

Shakespeare loses a lot in translation and trans-mediation. Emphasis on the didactic potential of Shakespeare slowly gave way to seeing him as a quintessential entertainer. Children's Shakespeare presents the complex and multidimensional character bereft of their complexity and in reductionist terms. Even comic and graphic versions of Shakespeare—Classics Illustrated, Shakespeare Comic Books, Manga Shakespeare, Classical Comics, and No Fear Shakespeare etc. seem to complement the loss of language through the fusion of visual and theatrical images with alphabetic texts. They use techniques such as giving verse passages as prose in speech bubbles.

Women and children's' Shakespeare

Children normally hear stories from mothers and grandmothers and it is women who took the lead in children's Shakespeare. "Mother Goose" is thought to be of French origin. She is thought to be Elizabeth Goose, the mother-in-law of the Boston printer Thomas Fleet who published a collection of 'Melodies' (1719). Perrin's French textbook inspired the English woman publisher Mary Jane Godwin to commission a woman writer Mary Lamb to write *Tales from Shakespear*e (1807) for young boys and girls. The Lambs ask boys to carefully select passages and read them aloud to their sisters.

The way they describe the meeting of Romeo and Juliet show the Lambs' delicacy in dealing with Shakespeare's suggestive passages. This is evident in the way they describe the romantic scene between Romeo and Juliet:

> That night Romeo passed with his dear wife, gaining secret admission to her chamber, from the orchard in which he had heard her confession of love the night before. That had been a

> night of unmixed joy and rapture; but the pleasures of this night, and the delight which these lovers took in each other's society, were sadly allayed with the prospect of parting, and the fatal adventures of the past day.

It became the model for later Shakespeare adaptations. It validated the view that abridged prose renderings introduce Shakespeare to children better.

Following Lamb's *Tales*, another woman Henrietta Maria Bowdler (1750–1830) took the lead in Bowdlerizing Shakespeare, although the work is known after her brother Thomas (1754-1825). Together, they purged many passages and produced *Family Shakespeare* (1807) fit enough to be read aloud in the family without offending and corrupting young minds, especially of women. This catered more to women than to men (Burnett, Streete and Wray 355).

The dilemma of the Lambs' and the Bowdlers' continues in Bernard Miles's *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare* (1976) as it describes the marriage night Romeo and Juliet:

> Swiftly Romeo climbed to the balcony, pulling the rope up behind him and coiling it beside the rails. Then the window opened and Juliet flew into his arms and they were both laughing and crying at the same time and running their hands through each other's hair and kissing each other wildly, knowing that this might well be the only night they would spend together for a long, long time, perhaps forever.
>
> Juliet led him into her room and as they embraced they lost all thought of being two separate people. Their bodies grew into one another and they became a single being, worshipping each other as the marriage words had commanded that they should, then sinking to sleep, cradled in each other's arms.
>
> At last, it was morning and time for Romeo to be up and away...

Victorian school textbook editors like Henry Norman Hudson (1814–1886) and William Rolfe emphasised character analysis, moral truths, and aesthetic appreciation rather than Shakespeare's language. It was this version that got popularized by 'bowdlerized' school Shakespeare during the Victorian age. A few Children's works are around Shakespeare's female characters. An example is Mary Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1851), even trace the childhood of heroines to appeal to young readers.

Much more is 'lost' in these adaptations. The Lambs turned plays into stories to be read, turns action into the narrative, evokes foreign contexts, and narrates instead of quoting. The following explains the contrast:

Shakespeare	Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*
Act I. Scene I. On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a Master and a Boatswain Master: Boatswain! Boatswain: Here, master: what cheer?	There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady. She came to this island so young, that she had no memory of having seen any other human face than her father's.

Master: Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely, or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir. (Exit) Enter Mariners Boatswain: Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind if room enough! (Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and others)	

The Lambs simplify plots and overlook many subplots like Malvolio-Toby Belch and company (TN), Trinculo-Stephano-Caliban (Tmp.), Jacques and Touchstone (AYLI), the mechanicals (MND), and the mousetrap (Ham.); censor indecent passages to the extent that they even by change the mole on Imogen's breast to "a mole … upon Imogen's neck". Cloten's beheading (Cym), Ophelia's suicide becomes accidental drowning (Ham.). Lambs' version omitted expressions which could not be read out aloud in family readings. Charles Lamb, who wrote controversially that Shakespeare's plays "are less calculated for performance on a stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever" (On Tragedies of Shakespeare). They regard children as readers and not as theatre-goers, and used prose instead of verse in their translation of Shakespeare for children.

Children's Shakespeare in Performance

Children's Shakespeare gets manifested in many forms: full and abridged plays, movies, animated tales, graphic novels, picture books, and prose narratives. Increasingly, young audiences' preference gravitates towards watching than reading Shakespeare. Apart from the spectacles of regular plays and movies, the young audience finds Shakespeare as animated films, and abridged stage versions.

Channel Four Wales, BBC Wales and Russia's *Soyuzmultfilm* collaborated to produce 30-minute animated Shakespeare films as part of *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales* (1992-1994). They used Shakespeare's language although they added narrations. Between 1992 and 1994, it produced twelve animated Tales: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, The Tempest, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet,* and *Twelfth Night*; and later *Richard III, Julius Caesar, A You Like It, The Winter's Tale, The Taming of the Shrew,* and *Othello*. Disney's *The Lion King* (1994) adapts *Hamlet* while *Lion King 2: Simba's Pride* (2006) adapts *Romeo and Juliet* set in the animal world.

Abridged plays like *Shocking Shakespeare* (1934), *Lad of Stratford* (1935), Marchette Chute's *Shakespeare of London* (1949), John Updike's *Bottom's Dream* (1969), Royal Shakespeare Company's *Comedy of Errors* (2009), National Theatre's *Pericles* (2006), *Romeo and Juliet* (2007), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2008), *Macbeth* (2009), *The Tempest* (2009), *Twelfth Night* (2010) and professional groups like Young Shakespeare Company, Young People's Shakespeare, Shakespeare 4 Kidz, schools, colleges, and universities present Shakespeare to young adults. Full-scale productions like Globe Theatre's 'Playing Shakespeare' series presented several plays lasting more than 100 minutes: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2008), *Romeo and Juliet* (2009), and *Macbeth* (2010).

Shakespeare movies for teenagers and children have increased in number in the new millennium. It was inspired by the success of Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996). What

followed were Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), and Christine Edzard's *The Children's Midsummer Night's Dream* (2001), *10 Things I hate About You* (1999), *Never Been Kissed* (1999), *Hamlet* (2000), *Romeo Must Die* (2000), '*O'* (2001), *Get Over It* (2001), *Motocrossed* (2001), *The Glass House* (2001), *Rave Macbeth* (2001), *A Midsummer Night's Rave*, *Street King* (2002), *Deliver Us From Eva* (2006) *Romeo & Jewel* (2006), *She's the Man* (2006), *Hamlet 2* (2008), *Were the World Mine* (2008) a gay take on *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Warm Bodies* (2013) a zombie take on Romeo and Juliet etc.

The genre caters to the visual orientation of the new generation. Digitally enhanced stage productions, movies and video games deprive young readers of the traditional aesthetic processing pleasure of reading. The visually rich take on Shakespeare replaces his literary discourses, which themselves are increasingly getting shorter. There is also the tendency to transact Shakespeare through merchandising of games related to his works, craft kits, and dolls. In the whole process, the language which distinguishes Shakespeare gets affected. It is the first to get lost when he is adapted as a children's work, especially when he is abridged, modernised, and visualised. It foregrounds stories and characters while adding and deleting passages and supplement original social and technical details.

Children's Shakespeare on Page

The popularity of Lamb's *Tales* (1807) continued well into the period of World War I. The major works in Shakespeare as Children's Literature in the nineteenth century were Elizabeth Wright Macauley's *Tales of the Drama* (1822), Caroline Maxwell's *Juvenile Shakespeare* (1828), Mary Seymore's *Shakespeare Stories Simply Retold* (1880), Adelide CG Sim's *Phoebe's Shakespeare* (1894), E Nesbit's *The Children's Shakespeare* (1897), and Arthur Quiller Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare* (1899). Most of these writers were women again.

The major works in the field in the twentieth century were Mary MacLeo'd *Shakespeare Storybook* (1902), Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), Thomas Carter's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1910), Alice Spencer Hoffman's *The Children's Shakespeare* (1911), Thomas Carter's *Shakespeare Stories of the English Kings* (1912), Jeanie Lang's *More Stories from Shakespeare* (1919), Taylor Slaughter's *Shakespeare and the Heart of a Child* (1922), *Shakespeare Tales for Boys and Girls* (1930), John Buchan and Winston Churchill's *Six Stories from Shakespeare* (1934), BG Harrison's *New Tales* (1938), Geoffrey Trease's *Cue for Treason* (1940), Marchette Chute's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1960), Elizabeth Gray's illustrated work *Will Adventure* (1962) in which Shakespeare is a character, Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), Roger Lancelyn Green's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1964), Ian *Serraillier's The Enchanted Island: Stories from Shakespeare* (1964), John Updike's *Bottom's Dream* (1969), Bernard Miles's *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare* (1976), Rosemary Sisson's biographical fantasy *Will in Love* (1977), Marilyn Singer's *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* (1983), Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* (1985), Zibby Oneal's *In Summer Light* (1985), Bernard Miles's *Well-Loved Tales from Shakespeare* (1986), Kate Gilmore's *Enter Three Witches* (1990), Lisa Klein's *Ophelia* narrated by Ophelia, Dennis Covington's *Lizard* (1991), Caroline Cooney's *Forbidden* (1993) and *Enter Three Witches* which presents *Macbeth* from the perspective Lady Mary, Welwyn Winton Katz's *Come Like Shadows* (1993), Julius Lester's *Othello* (1993), Tad William's *Caliban's Hour* (1994), Gary Blackwood's *The Shakespeare Stealer* (1995), Beverly Birch's *Shakespeare Stories* (1997), and Marcia William's *Mr. William Shakespeare's Plays* (1998), Sharman McDonald's *After Shakespeare* (1999), based on *Romeo and Juliet*, and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* (1999).

The twenty-first century saw Marcia William's *Bravo Mr Shakespeare* (2000), Andrew Mathew's *Orchard Book of Shakespeare Stories* (2001) Beverly Birch's *Shakespeare Tales* (2002), Charlotte Calder's *Cupid Painted Blind* (2002), Grace Tiffany's *My Father Had a Daughter* (2003), Peter Hassinger's *Shakespeare's Daughter*

(2004), *Usborne Stories from Shakespeare* (2004), Leo Butler's *I'll be the Devil* (2008) which adapts *The Tempest*, Roy Williams's *Days of Significance* (2007) based on *Much Ado*, Lucinda Coxon's *The Eternal Not* (2009), Marina Carr's *The Cordelia Dream* (2008) based on *King Lear*, Michael Lesslie's *Prince of Denmark* (2010) based on *Hamlet*, and David Greg's *Dunsinane* (2010) based on *Macbeth*.

Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* shows how an actor playing puck finds himself up in 1599 and playing Puck at the Globe. Gary Blackwood's *The Shakespeare Stealer* portrays a young orphan copying down Shakespeare's lines at the theatre. Celia Rees's *The Fool's Girl* retells *The Twelfth Night* with Violetta of Illyria travelling to London to find a stolen relic and working with Shakespeare to save Queen Elizabeth from assassination. Carolyn Meyer's *Loving Will Shakespeare* retells the relationship between Shakespeare and his wife. Henry Herz's picture book *Mabel and the Queen of Dreams*; Nina Laden's *Romeow and Drooliet* is about the love between Romeow the cat and Drooliet the dog; Rachel Caine's *Prince of Shadows* retold by Benvolio, Romeo's cousin and thief; and Suzanne Selfors's *Saving Juliet* is the story of a 17-year-old Broadway actress who playing Juliet finds herself transported to Verona, and is trying to save the life of the real Juliet.

Prose narratives use abridgement, pictures, and colour. The most liked Shakespeare story in children's literature are *Hamlet, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Rome and Juliet, The Tempest,* and *Twelfth Night*. The least favoured is *Pericles, Measure for Measure, and All's Well that Ends Well*.

Shakespeare also appeared in graphic novels like Albert Kanter's Classic Illustrated series on *Julius Caesa*r, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet* (1941). Later, Cartoon Shakespeare or Graphic Shakespeare (1980), Shakespeare Comic Books, Manga Shakespeare, Classical Comics, Wiley Manga Edition, No Fear Graphic Novels Shakespeare etc. brought out Shakespeare graphic novels.

Some serious books on this subject include Alphonso Smith's *Why Young Men Should Study Shakespeare* (1902) is an early study on the topic. Some of the recent scholarly works on Shakespeare as Children's literature include John Stephens, and Robyn McCallum's *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture* (1998) Megan Isaac's *Heirs to Shakespeare* (2000), Charles Frey's "A Brief History of Shakespeare as Children's Literature," (2001), Naomi Miller's *Reimagining Shakespeare for Children and Young Adults* (2003), Jennifer Hulbert and others' *Shakespeare and Youth Culture* (2006), Kate Chedgzoy et. al.'s *Shakespeare and Childhood* (2007), Velma Richmond's *Shakespeare as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (2008), Erica Hateley's *Shakespeare in Children's Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital* (2009), Anja Müller's *Adapting Canonical Texts in Children's Literature* (2013), and Abigail Rokison's *Shakespeare for Young People* (2013).

Avoiding Shakespeare's bawdy puns and double entendre from children's literature could be justified on the grounds of propriety as the Bowdlers and the Lambs have done. But his allusions, blank verse, poetry, and wordplay are also lost in children's literature. The beauty and impact of the brilliant soliloquies of Hamlet or Macbeth, the powerful speeches of Mark Antony or Ulysses, the long passages like those of Prospero are often lost in children's literature.

Conclusion

Children's literature attempts to retain the essence of Shakespeare, although it generally retains only the story and the characters at the cost of his language, discourse, and genre. Of these, the story often gets privileged. Shakespeare's language becomes the first causality in the adaptations.

As stories are told in context, what a modern young reader finds in Shakespeare is not the Elizabethan stories. A modern child is likely to encounter in children's literature a Shakespeare who is ideologically conditioned. It is this cultural capital that society wants the child to inherit. This is why he is made to meet his cultural capital at a very early age. The preoccupation of the stakeholders of the high culture represented by Shakespeare ensures that the next generation meets him at an early age itself through children's literature.