



A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation

Presentation Details	
Title of Paper:	Translation and Genre: the Mode of Translation in Shakespeare’s Dramatic Works
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Abstract:	<p>In “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin wrote, “Translation is a mode.” How can we understand this mode of translation if it is fused with the issue of genre? This paper argues that genre represents a space (in Shakespeare’s work) in which translation is conceptualized in specific ways, suggesting that translation can be understood through the concept of genre. It focuses on the use of translation in the works of Shakespeare, who is well known for his uses of, for instance, Seneca in <i>King Richard III</i>, <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>, <i>King John</i> and <i>Macbeth</i>. This paper discusses how the concept of translation is portrayed in Shakespeare’s dramatic works. For instance, in <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>, Quince says to Bottom, “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated” (3.1.105); and in Act 3 scene 2, Robin says, “I led them on in this distracted fear, / And left sweet Pyramus translated there” (3.2.31-32). In the play, the word is linked with the concept of transformation. However, when comparing with comedy, the word “translation” was used in a more sceptical manner in <i>Hamlet</i>, which can be seen, for instance, from his word to Ophelia, “Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once” (3.1.113-116). Examining how Shakespeare portrays the concept of translation in his comedy and tragedy, this paper discusses if our understanding of the notion of translation could be enriched through the textual space of different genres.</p>

Author's Biography

Isaac HUI is Assistant Professor in the Department of Translation at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. He received his PhD in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong. He has published a range of articles on Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, comedy, and on studies of English translation of Chinese literature, and is the author of *Volpone's Bastards: Theorising Jonson's City Comedy* (Edinburgh, 2018). His current research project examines the use and translation of classical literature (such as Horace, Juvenal and Seneca) in early modern English literature.