

The Seventeenth-Century Reception of English Renaissance Drama in Europe

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the cultural exchange between the London theatre world commonly associated with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and the Dutch theatre scene during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries. Before discussing this matter in greater detail, it seems appropriate to consider some of the reasons that attracted my attention towards this topic in the first place. It seems no less fitting to outline what I hope to demonstrate beyond the fact that the Dutch theatre scene of the seventeenth-century was an active one, and that it still holds much that might be of interest also to drama scholars internationally.

To begin with, I ought to identify myself as what is commonly known as a Shakespearean, someone whose teaching, research, supervision, and much of his spare time is dedicated to the work and the afterlife of that extraordinary poet and playwright from Stratford. In my capacity as a Shakespearean, and a foreign one at that, I have been in a position to observe a number of vital developments in recent years. They were developments that initially excited my interest, but which, on closer inspection, called for a degree of vigilance as well. After a great deal of soul-searching, I have come to formulate not just my misgivings but also my modest suggestions to modify these tendencies.

One specific development to which I here refer concerns the emergence, with particular force during the 1990s, of a “foreign Shakespeare” school alongside the more traditional, native, Anglocentric Shakespeare industry. This decentring trend, with the focus shifting to Shakespeare as practised beyond the English omphalos, originally evolved rather slowly in translation and theatre studies during the 1970s and 80s, and at an early stage resulted, for example, in the foundation of the Japanese journal *Shakespeare Translation* (of 1974), the journal ambitiously and tellingly renamed *Shakespeare Worldwide: Translation and Adaptation* in the nineties.

A notable landmark in this growing trend towards internationalisation was Dennis Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare*. With the assistance of a team of international theatre historians and critics, Kennedy effectively revealed the world of Shakespeare and Shakespearean production “outside the English language” in its true diversity and splendour for the first time. Devoting attention to foreign productions of Shakespeare, Kennedy succeeded in challenging Anglocentric

standards of Shakespeare interpretation. His book is an undisputed landmark, and its impact has been enormous. It is engaging to see how this is subtly revealed by the title of Peter Holland's 1997 theatre survey entitled *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s*. Either the publisher (Cambridge University Press again), or the author, or both, felt compelled, in a rather unusual manner, prominently to stress the specific, national (English) pedigree of the material discussed. Note the repeated use of the word "English" in the title. If the provocative title of Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare* was determined by centuries of Anglocentric Shakespeare practice, Holland's title was shaped, preventively it would appear, by the assertiveness and popularity of a foreign Shakespeare.

The foreign Shakespeare ticket was not an invention of Kennedy's. What has become known as "foreign Shakespeare" was a sign of the times, of the decentring times, part also of the multicultural venture pursued with unprecedented passion across the academic map in recent decades. This is also borne out by the host of independent initiatives that we may identify in the field. The year 1993, the year of Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare*, also saw the publication of Delabastita and d'Huslt's *European Shakespeares*, followed a year later by Hattaway, Sokolova and Roper's *Shakespeare in the New Europe*. Since then, we have seen a flood of volumes like Fujita and Pronko's *Shakespeare East and West*, Gibinska and Limon's *Hamlet East-West*, Uéno's "*Hamlet*" and *Japan*, Zhang's *Shakespeare in China* or Sasayama, Mulryne and Shewring's *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*. We have also been treated to the International Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries series, general edited for Delaware University Press by Jay Halio, and few would deny that the Shakespeare-in-Performance series published by Manchester University Press is developing an eye for foreign, meaning non-English, productions to enhance their volumes. James Loehlin's recent Manchester volume about that curiously international history play, *Henry the Fifth*, is a case in point.

Finally, in a less conspicuous manner, there have been important initiatives more effectively to co-ordinate the new international and multicultural trend. At the University of Ferrara, Mariangela Tempera has been working on an International Shakespeare project for a number of years, and her round-table session at the appropriately international ESSE conference in Glasgow (8-12 September 1995) has not been without result. Also Balz Engler, at the University of Basle, is currently co-ordinating a promising multicultural initiative, and his labour is feeding directly into the international enterprise developed by Ángel-Luis Pujante, Clara Calvo, and Keith Gregor at the University of Murcia: "400 Years of Shakespeare in Europe" (18-20 November, 1999). And when alluding to the Murcia venture, one should also mention the International Shakespeare Association's Valencia conference on "Shakespeare and the Mediterranean" (2001) as yet another manifestation of what is quickly developing from a foreign trend or movement into a tradition.

As the movement towards "foreign Shakespeare" seems to be accelerating, and as we seem to find ourselves on the eve of a consolidation phase — with ideas being transformed into organisations — it seems worth reflecting on the merits of the movement so far, focusing on the way in which the two fields in Shakespeare studies — "foreign Shakespeare" and "native Shakespeare" — have coexisted so far. Have they acknowledged each other's existence, and, if so, how has this taken place? As it happens, the co-existence of these two fields is not entirely unproblematic: one welcomes the cultural re-programming of which this dual-track Shakespeare is a manifestation, but certain misgivings remain about the interaction between them that

one might reasonably desire. One welcomes initiatives to investigate and share with others foreign Shakespeares, but not without some trepidation, not without an eye for the attendant hazards that are very real indeed, as when either native or foreign Shakespeare becomes a totally autonomous venture. In the introduction to this paper, I shall outline some of the issues that affect the relationship between the two fields of Shakespeare studies, and, in the main body of my paper, modestly suggest, with reference to early modern Dutch theatre materials, several ways in which a productive dialogue might be established, truly to call them *international* Shakespeare, rather than *native* and *foreign* Shakespeare respectively.

It nearly goes without saying that for a proper dialogue, it takes at least two participants. To do full justice to the issues raised here, I should ideally devote attention to both the responsibilities of the native, and of the foreign Shakespeare industry. However, for reasons of space, I shall limit myself to the latter, the foreign Shakespeare industry of which I consider myself an exponent, and leave for another occasion and perhaps another Shakespearean, the issue of an Anglocentric Shakespeare industry. On that occasion, one might discuss at greater length the English inability to heed the advice vis-à-vis the Low Countries as formulated by Richard Clough, the Antwerp representative of English master-merchant, Sir Thomas Gresham. At Antwerp in 1561, Clough witnessed the annual theatre competition of fifteen Chambers of Rhetoric from the Low Countries. About this impressive stage event, involving no less than twelve hundred participants, he wrote:

This was the strangest matter that ever I saw, or think that ever I shall see. [...] I would to God that some of our gentlemen and noblemen of England had seen this (I mean them that think the world is made of oatmeal), and then it would make them to think that there are other as we are, and so provide for the time to come; for they that can do this, can do more. (Quoted in Waterschoot 1996: 124.)

Few representatives of the native Shakespeare industry today —likely to be hampered by the difficult availability of source materials and by various language barriers between Britain and Europe in this case — would be able to heed Richard Clough's call.

But let us return to the “foreign” Shakespeare industry, and concentrate on its occasional drawbacks. The main problem that may be identified is that some of the work produced in this field is of little or no interest to the apparent target group, meaning colleagues from other countries. The problem defined in these terms is bound to occur in nearly every discipline, and for that reason I should perhaps stress the relevance here of the “national” or “foreign” element of the exercise. To formulate the issue in the form of a question: Why would any Shakespearean be interested to know about last year's production of, say, *Titus Andronicus* in Amsterdam, or this year's *Hamlet* in The Hague? Would it be because he or she has an interest in contemporary Dutch culture, or is it a concern with Shakespeare? I guess that the majority would agree that, for reasons of political correctness and to express a sound interest in multicultural Shakespeare, that the Shakespearean ought to be interested in both. I myself would be tempted to concur.

However, to express an interest in either — the foreign culture as well as the Shakespearean element in it — is also precariously to suggest or assume a neat correlation, a neat relation of equivalence between “native” and “foreign” Shakespeare which, on closer inspection, would really prove fictitious. When we

demonstrate an interest in this year's *Hamlet* in The Hague, or last year's *Titus* in Amsterdam, we are in the first place interested in Shakespeare, the native English playwright and poet, and only by some kind of cultural derivation (or, dare I suggest, deviation), are we also interested in foreign manifestations of Shakespeare, with the emphasis here on *foreign*. We are interested, or maintain our interest in both the native and the foreign, if the foreign, non-English practice reveals problems, energies, or meanings not generally recognised by the native industry, or if it engages in a more theoretical discussion that is international in scope and benefits both.

To secure such mutual benefits, the foreign Shakespeare industry should continually initiate and secure a productive dialogue by asking itself how the “foreign” Shakespeare in question may be made meaningful or worthwhile for the so-called “native” industry. It is true that we need not always ask ourselves this question, for example when writing the stage history of Shakespeare in our respective continental European countries, in Asia, Australia, or in Africa, with native audiences as our main target in their own languages. But as soon as we enter the international highway of Shakespeare studies, where English is the shared tongue, we ought to pursue a dialogue, and not be satisfied with merely communicating information about translations or productions in English because such material had never been translated into the English language before. Those Shakespeareans who, like myself, have attended conferences where one sat through an account of seven or eight international *Hamlets* between breakfast and lunch, will know what I mean, and sympathise, perhaps.

Various alternative types of dialogue might be pursued when studying “foreign” Shakespeare from a foreign and, in my case, Dutch perspective. As the title of my paper indicates, I shall not only be suggesting ways in which the Dutch and English Shakespeares might be made to interact; I shall also, and here I part ways with Dennis Kennedy and most other practitioners of foreign Shakespeare, adopt a historical dimension, rolling back the carpet to the early-modern period, when the exchange itself between the English and the Dutch theatre worlds was a vital component of Anglo-Dutch relations. With this historical perspective, I will discuss the earliest reception of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III* in the Low Countries around the middle of the seventeenth century.

My discussion will not be limited just to Shakespeare, if only because this might create the false impression that Dutch bardolatry was a seventeenth-century phenomenon. It is true that by the middle of the seventeenth century, we may already establish, more or less clearly, the influence in the Low Countries of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III*, but also *The Winter's Tale*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, as well as the *Sonnets*. But putting too much emphasis on this particular instance of cultural transfer would blind us to such other London stage products there as *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the English *Pastor Fido* (known as the Dymock version), Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus*, John Mason's *The Turk*, James Shirley's *Love's Cruelty*, Thomas Tomkis' *Lingua*, or Thomas Randolph's *Amyntas*. It seems to me that if we want an international dialogue to be relevant and meaningful, we should also move beyond the Shakespearean canon to consider the work of his fellow dramatists. Later in this paper, I shall illustrate my argument with several features of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, a play that was translated and adapted into Dutch more than once.

A brief sketch of the relevant historical and theatrical contexts should facilitate the discussion of the plays below. The major part of the Dutch theatre scene during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was made up of the so-called Chambers of Rhetoric.¹ Nearly every self-respecting town had one of these more or less private clubs of poets and would-be poets who spent their time writing and reciting heavily stylised verse, and occasionally also put on plays which were really allegorical and didactic morality plays. These Chambers of Rhetoric, annually preparing for the contest with the Chambers of other towns (like that described by Sir Thomas Gresham), gradually became more secular and professional during the period. On a number of occasions non-members would be allowed to attend the proceedings in exchange for a fee which initially went to the guardian of the poor, but which later came to benefit the Chambers too.

The professionalization of the theatre scene in the Low Countries was significantly accelerated and shaped by the English strolling players who, between the 1580s and the 1640s, especially when the plague closed the playhouses in London, would pass through the Low Countries on their way to the courts and market places of Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.²

The strolling players, representing a popular theatre, arrived with a typically non-classical range of plays, plays which exerted a great appeal. Despite the obscure English language in which these plays were performed, they drew large audiences in marketplaces, larger audiences in fact than did the native, moralising drama at the Chambers of Rhetoric. The players' acrobatics (and not their verbal skills in a foreign language) have long been taken as the main explanation for their appeal. Nevertheless, as the famous example from Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* suggests, the familiar biblical or mythical nature of the material dramatised would also have aided intelligibility. Heywood reports on a performance by English actors in Amsterdam where, in a situation that recalls Hamlet's *Mousetrap*, a woman in the audience, on seeing a murder performed on stage, was made to reveal her own assassination of her husband. The play, as Heywood also mentions, was on the topic of the four sons of Aymon (See Perkinson 1941: sigs. G2^r-V.). But in addition to acrobatics and plot familiarity, there are also references to the impact of spoken character parts.

The confrontation between the Dutch Chambers and the strolling players was a slow and often difficult process. This may be seen from the contradictory remarks that we find in the work of a single playwright, like G. A. Bredero, who was also a member of The Eglantine chamber. He attacked the Amsterdam population's fascination with the foreign players one day, and praised the Englishmen's superior, natural acting style the next. As Bredero put it in a speech held at The Eglantine chamber:

Young ladies, rich in virtue! We are amazed that some of you have not come to see our play, but have avoided it as if it were an indecent thing, whereas, without any shame and with a passionate zeal, these same young ladies run daily after the light-footed foreigners, to whom all villainies seem to be permitted. [...] Tell me, you supporters of the

¹ For a survey of the theatre scene, see Worp 1904-1908 and Smits-Veldt 1991.

² On the strolling players see Chambers 1923 II: 270-94, Cohn and Creizenach 1889. See also Worp 1887: 266-300 and Worp 1904-1908, Kossmann 1915, Albach 1977 and Limon 1985. For additional information on Dutch theatre history, the reader is referred to Brandt and Hoogendoorn 1993.

foreign vagabonds, what instructive arguments have you ever heard from them? What edifying admonitions have you ever seen in them from which others might benefit? What virtuous morality have you ever discovered in them? What royal dignity have they ever shown? Oh, you bewitched people! I had hoped that your enchanted eyes would have been opened in this happy age of poetry. But what happens? Many of you people stay wilfully blind. You madmen! And must you not admit that you have heard and seen nothing but ridiculous follies, and a farrago of vulgar and indecent gibberish, and many useless wanton frivolities? I will not deny that two or three of them play rather well. But, my dear listeners, what about the rest? For the most part they only rave and rant, presenting only blood and guts, rubbish, nonsense. (Stuiveling 1970: 123, translation from the Dutch is my own)

As the exponent of a didactic tradition, Bredero fiercely attacks the immorality of the foreigners and their plays —with “blood and guts” perhaps referring to cloak-and-dagger revenge drama — but already the admission “that two or three of [the English] play rather well” is indicative of a certain ambivalence. This wavering attitude may be further brought into focus when we look at one of Bredero's 1617 comedies, *The Little Moor* (orig. *Het Moortje*), based on Terence's *Eunuch*. In *The Little Moor*, Bredero has the pleasure-loving character named Reinier elaborate on precisely the different acting styles and skills. Although the playwright conveniently hides behind his characters, it seems apparent that with the arrival of the strolling players not only did new attitudes develop with regard to acting styles, but also that the traditional function of the Dutch theatre as a place for moral instruction was challenged in a creative fashion:

I cannot stand the Rhetoricians any more; they criticise and mock us, but they are blind to their own faults. The Rhetoricians recite their lessons so gravely and stiffly, as if their bodies were lined and with staves! I prefer the English, or some other foreigners whom one hears singing and sees dancing so merrily that they reel and spin like a top. They fill their lines with life; our Rhetoricians speak what they have learnt by heart. [...] The foreigners are frivolous, whereas our people only advise good behaviour. (Bredero 1984: lines 1453-49. See also Bachrach 1970: 71-89)

In response to such foreign competition, the various municipal authorities — but especially those of Amsterdam where Bredero was active — would initially protect their own Chambers of Rhetoric and more often than not refuse the strolling players the right to perform in town. This was not the only response. One alternative was that the various Chambers themselves would collaborate with the English players who might wish to settle in the Low Countries. In the town of Leiden, this led to the foundation of the professional and multinational company known as the Batavian Comedians (See also Hoenselaars 1996: 142-47). Another alternative that may be witnessed is of Dutch actors who joined the English strolling players on their international tours. And yet another type of response in the if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them category was that the Dutch Chambers would adopt, adapt, and put on English plays themselves to secure their own popularity. This is where my current interest lies: in the textual evidence of this early-modern version of international dramatic exchange. Before I continue with that, let me first finish my survey of the

Dutch scene.

It is worth remembering that these first exchanges took shape during the early seventeenth century, and in particular during the period known as the Twelve Years' Truce, the armistice period between the Northern Provinces and Spain, lasting from 1609 until 1621. Limiting ourselves to the Amsterdam region, we see how during these years of relative prosperity, two Chambers of Rhetoric flourished, and how, in addition, also a so-called Dutch Academy was founded in 1619.³ The Dutch Academy was really a kind of open university, which would, among other things, put on plays for instruction and delight to fee-paying audiences.

In 1638, the process of professionalization and commercialisation that the strolling players had helped to accelerate, reached a peak as the first Municipal Theatre of Amsterdam was inaugurated. This communal venture also marked the demise of the two Amsterdam Chambers of Rhetoric as well as the Academy. In 1638, the northern Dutch theatre had finally acquired professional status with a large indoor theatre and, until 1654, an all male company — this at a time when, ironically perhaps, the London theatres were about to be closed by the authorities. By the 1640s the exchange between the London and Amsterdam theatre worlds had already left a residue of some significance. And it was to continue, as Dutch theatre makers also carried on touring with English colleagues after the Peace of Münster (or, the Peace of Westphalia) in 1648.

THE MAD WEDDING (1654)

Abraham Sybant's 1654 comedy entitled *De Dolle Bruyloft* (or, *The Mad Wedding*), the first unchallenged translation-and-adaptation for the Dutch market of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, is typical of the early years following the Peace of Münster, and it is neatly positioned between the professional theatre and the strolling player circuit. Little is known about Abraham Sybant (1627-1655), but it is beyond doubt that he was associated with several companies of English and Dutch strolling players in the Low Countries.⁴ Among other things, he was part of a closely knit group of theatre professionals that included Adriaen van den Bergh. Adriaen van den Bergh was the first Dutch translator (in 1621) of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, to which I shall have occasion to return later, but he was also the father of Adriana van den Bergh, the "first" Dutch actress on the stage of the Amsterdam Theatre in 1655, the theatre where *The Mad Wedding* was performed between November 1654 and August 1656.

Sybant's *Mad Wedding* has received considerable attention from theatre historians and translation specialists in the Low Countries, and issues such as the original play's Induction (which is absent from the Dutch version), as well as the translation of its wordplay and imagery have really been exhausted. My reason for taking it up again, however, is the conviction that a fresh reading of this Shakespeare translation, a creative reading with at least some international relevance, may be achieved if the seventeenth century Dutch text be not considered simply in the traditional manner, with an eye to the fidelity of the translation, but as a stage play in its own right, if necessary in comparison with the Shakespearean original. In fact, if

³ On the Chambers of Rhetoric and the Dutch Academy, see Smits-Veldt 1996.

⁴ For biographical information see Albach 1977 and Nassau-Sarolea 1973: 38-59.

The Mad Wedding be read seriously as a play by Abraham Sybant — as indeed it was taken when it first appeared — it becomes possible to position this comedy at the centre of a range of gender concerns in the early years of the Dutch Republic. The issues raised in this context, in turn, as I hope to show, prove capable of illuminating several moments in Shakespeare's original comedy. Of special interest for our purposes is Katherina's final soliloquy. Though an inventive and skilful translator, Sybant robbed Katherina's famous speech of all imagery and ambiguity, and confronted his audience with an utterance that is chilling in its conformity:

I wish my sister well in her affections,
 But to arrive at a desirable peace
 Obedience is a good law for you,
 Following whatever your husband proposes.
 Obedience never degraded a woman,
 But obstinacy has hindered many.
 Heaven dictates our true obedience,
 Not that we sinfully oppose man's will:
 Anger and wrath lead the soul to perdition.
 One must be obedient if one wishes to inherit Heaven.
 Be not surprised to hear me speak thus:
 Until today I was a fool — I now speak what I know.
 It has pleased heaven to grieve my soul
 With the aim, from now on, to please Heaven.
 This then is a way to satisfy Heaven,
 My way of reconciling with my husband and friends.
 My father, please forgive me, and you, my sister, too,
 If sinfully I ever did you wrong.
 And you, my worthy half, whom I with will and heart
 Shall please, whichever way your will be drawn.
 (*De Dolle Bruyloft*, 63, translation from the Dutch is my own.)

It has been suggested, and one understands why, that Katherina's final monologue reads like a sermon. The unmistakable patriarchal tenor, as well as the obvious references to Heaven, obedience, sin, and forgiveness place the monologue firmly within a Christian, perhaps also Calvinist framework. However, stopping at the sermon analogy, we would ignore a more specific tradition to which the speech of Shakespeare's Katherina, and certainly that of the Dutch Katherina belongs, namely the marriage counselling tradition since Erasmus.⁵

The marriage counselling tradition explains why Katherina's speech echoes the most widely read author on the subject in the Low Countries, Jacob Cats (some of whose writings, like the much esteemed emblem interpretations, were actually translated into English by Thomas Heywood [See Heywood 1874: VI. 308-37]). Cats's most famous marriage counselling work is his long didactic poem *Houwelick* (or *Marriage*). It was first published in 1625, and had sold no less than fifty-thousand copies when his *Complete Works* appeared in 1655. It is within the context of Jacob Cats's poetry, and of his *Marriage* poem in particular, that one had best re-appraise Katherina's monologue in Dutch, and by extension, perhaps also, the English original.

⁵ See Carter 1974. For a broader sketch of the situation, see Deursen 1992. But compare Schama 1987.

In *Cats*, the woman speaks to the reader on behalf of her sex as follows, making obedience prevail over an independent stance:

I know how God has elevated man above us,
How he has given his noble mind a higher nature.
I know my shortcomings, but nevertheless
A weak woman, too, is serviceable to man.

[Ick weet, hoe God den man heeft boven ons verheven,
Heeft aen sijn edel breyn een hooger aert gegeven;
Ick kenne mijn gebreck, en evenwel nochtans
Soo is een swacke vrou oock dienstigh aen de mans.]
(*Cats* n.d.: “Vrouwe,” 179. col. 2. Translation from the Dutch is my own)

These lines from *Cats*'s didactic and influential *Marriage* poem suggest a likely subtext to Katherine's final monologue in the Dutch version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. *Cats*'s views of marriage, however, serve to gloss not only the Dutch play rather closely, but also Shakespeare's original. A case in point is the Dutch poet's flexible and tolerant view of newly weds who publicly enjoy each other's company:

It would appear that even God finds some delight
When from a pure desire married folk will frolic.
What is not fit in others, and cannot be approved,
Is accepted of the married couple, without blame.

[Het schijnt, dat even God vint eenigh welgevallen,
Wanneer uyt reyne sucht getroude lieden mallen;
Dat elders qualick past, en niet en dient gedult,
Wort in het echte paer geleden sonder schult.]
(*Cats* n.d.: “Vrouwe,” 176. col. 2. Translation from the Dutch is my own)

Against the background of this marriage counselling verse, one may significantly reconsider the famous “Kiss me Kate” episodes spread across Shakespeare's play, in particular those in the final act of the comedy. On the one hand, limiting ourselves to the translation, the verse creatively interacts with Dutch Katherina's embarrassment when she is asked to kiss in the street:

Petruchio: Are you ashamed of me?
Katherina: No, far from it. But kissing here is not appropriate.

[Petrutio: Zyt gy voor my beschaamt?
Katrijn: Neen, ver van daar; maar hier het kussen niet betaamt.]
(*De Dolle Bruyloft*, 62. Translation from the Dutch is my own)

On the other hand, the *Cats* verse raises the kiss, when it is actually given, to a symbolic level. Katherine acknowledges the marital bond in public, which she then enjoys with decency. Since the Dutch translation here is close to the original — Shakespeare's Katherine, too, argues that she is not ashamed of Petruchio but “ashamed to kiss” (*The Taming of the Shrew* 5.1.134)— one may wonder if the kissing-and-frolicking motif also occurred in the English marriage counselling tradition to provide an intertextual frame of reference. I have been unable to find any explicit allusions to such proceedings in the predominantly English marriage counselling material anthologized in recent years, nor in William Gouge's *Of*

Domesticall Duties (1622), a prose work based on original Blackfriars sermons, which Jacob Cats himself mentions as a source of his *Marriage* poem (Carter 1974: 97 n 9). Further comparative research into the combined fields of drama, gender, and the markedly international phenomenon of early-modern marriage counselling should prove an enterprise that will eventually illuminate Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, as well as the other versions in which we meet this comedy on the continent of Europe during the seventeenth century.

The Taming of the Shrew was not the only Shakespeare play to cross the Channel during the mid-seventeenth century. So did *Richard III*, a play which rather than generating a discussion of gender issues and morality, addresses European matters political. *Richard III*, together with Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Thomas More's Tudor history of the king, and Thomas Legge's Latin *Ricardus Tertius* fed into the 1651 chronicle play by Lambert van den Bosch, entitled *The Red and the White Rose. Or, Lancaster and York: A Tragicomedy* (orig. *De Roode en Witte Roos of Lankaster en Jork. Blyeindent trevrspel*).

It is curious that critics of the play, in a zealous attempt to establish the much-cherished genealogy with Shakespeare, have ignored the contemporary politico-historical relevance of the play as an autonomous history play during the early 1650s. Closer analysis reveals that Shakespeare's *Richard III* was mobilised to comment on matters of some weight when Lambert van den Bosch translated and reworked the play. These matters of state appropriately included the relations between the predominantly Protestant northern provinces and Cromwellian England, as well as the strained relations between the urban oligarchy in the northern provinces (like that of Amsterdam), and the monarchist stadholder of Orange who fitted uneasily into the young Republic.

A key to the political relevance of *The Red and the White Rose* is that, unlike Shakespeare in *Richard III*, Lambert van den Bosch begins his play not where Shakespeare does with the cessation of hostilities between the houses of Lancaster and York, but with the death of Edward the Fourth and the succession of his young son as Edward the Fifth. Shakespeare begins the play with the peacetime scheming of Richard of Gloucester, whereas the Dutch play begins with a political crisis.

One of the obvious questions that arises is why this particular moment in the history of the Wars of the Roses — the transition from the reign of Edward the Fourth to that of Edward the Fifth — should be made so much more prominent than it is in Shakespeare. As it happens, the monarch's decease as well as the succession issue in the English history play confronted a rather grave situation in the Republic in 1651. 6 November 1650 had witnessed the untimely death of stadholder William II, prince of Orange (incidentally a year after the beheading of Charles the First). At the moment of William the Second's death, his heir — the future William III of England — was still an infant of two years old, thus requiring the appointment of a regent. This temporary and alternative form of leadership was a cause of considerable concern in the Low Countries, as was the situation in England after the death of Edward the Fourth, when the future Richard the Third was granted the temporary office of protector. The anxiety in the Low Countries was certainly reasonable given what has been identified as the persistent tug-of-war between the Amsterdam nobility and gentry on the one hand, and, on the other, the weakened house of Orange, a struggle that also informs the central conflict in Joost van den Vondel's *Lucifer* of 1654 (where William the Second, with his attempt to besiege the

citizens of Amsterdam, is the obvious analogy to the eponymous archangel Lucifer).

Political misgivings do not stop here in *The Red and the White Rose*. England, as it is presented in the Dutch play, is a source of embarrassment in people's eyes, even in the eyes of the English characters. As Lord Stanley puts it at the end of a sixty-line monologue trying to account for the chaos that wrecks the nation:

although the kingdom has found again its Lord in Edward, our heads are bowed under the burden of great sins. At that time, I say, we became guilty of a crime, one which forever will remain the shame and disgrace of our State, because King Richard, the lawful prince, was destroyed by the hand of a murderer — a crime which Pomfret must still lament — and such noble blood was spilled so wantonly. *Everyone considers it a disgrace to England, that she so easily lays hands upon her legitimate Lord.*

[Maar schoon in Ed'ward't Rijk zijn Heer heeft weêr gevonden
Blijft echter op ons hals de last van groote zonden:
Toen, zeg ik, maakten wy ons schuldig aan een quaat,
't Geen eeuwig dijd tot schand en smaad van onzen staat,
Mits Koning Richard, 't geen noch Pomfret moet beklagen,
Den wettelijken Vorst door moorders hand verslagen,
En zulk een edel bloed zo reuk'loos wierd verplengt,
't Geen ieder tot een blaam van Engeland gedenkt,
Als 't een zich zelf zo licht vertast aan wettige Heeren.]
(Campbell 1919: 103-4 italics added)

This speech, of the kind we know from the Shakespeare history plays, expresses an obvious sense of national shame over the regicide committed by the English to have Bolingbroke (as Henry the Fourth) succeed Richard the Second as king. Another look at the play in the original Dutch version of 1651, however, shows us that the phrase “legitimate Lord” in the translation by O. J. Campbell, should read “legitimate *Lords*” (for “wettige Heeren”). In this way, the final sentence comes to read: “Everyone considers it a disgrace to England, that she so easily lays hands upon her legitimate lords.” With a minor change from singular to plural, the situation in the play no longer refers to Richard the Second only; it also directly interrelates with the then very recent and traumatic puritan regicide on Charles the First in 1649, also commemorated in Vondel's *Lucifer* where it is feared that the Legions of Hell may be building a power base on English soil.

Read in its immediate political and historical contexts, *The Red and the White Rose*, on the domestic level, brings into focus how Shakespeare was mobilised to voice the young Dutch Republic's misgivings about the successor to the ambitious, monarchic stadholder, as well as the related anxiety over the threat posed by the anti-monarchic, Protestant faction in the cities. On the international level, the new Shakespearean play expresses its misgivings about the Republic's English neighbours, two years after the death of Charles the First, two years also into the puritan reign of Oliver Cromwell, which severely complicated the Republic's foreign diplomatic relations. As the plot of *The Red and the White Rose* suggests, with the familiar coronation of Henry Richmond as Henry VII of Tudor at the end of the play, Lambert van den Bosch was a supporter of the monarchist idea. Behind the united colours of the red and white roses of the play's title, one may begin to discern the famous family colour of Orange.

Just as Shakespeare set about cutting, pasting, and inventing medieval history with an eye to Tudor concerns, then, Lambert van den Bosch routinely recycled the English playwright's history including *Richard III* for *The Red and the White Rose* to comment not just on domestic politics, but also to address the issue of foreign politics vis-à-vis England, subtly using that nation's own history, its historians, and its most dazzling practitioner of the history play. A deft combination of irony and confirmation.

It is fascinating to witness how Shakespeare's *Richard III* first becomes part of European culture in the context of Anglo-Dutch politics. Among other things, it makes one aware of the curious phenomenon that the history plays dealing with the Wars of the Roses never featured so prominently in the Cavalier party when it really mattered. As a matter of fact, the Cavaliers' first full appropriation of the English history plays dates from the early 1680s, when John Crowne produced his *Henry the Sixth* (pt. 1) and *The Misery of Civil-War* (pt. 2, without the Jack Cade rebellion) for the Duke's Theatre. Ironically, of course, before the decade was out, the same stadholder who was a so-called problem child in Lambert van den Bosch's *Red and White Rose*, would succeed to the throne of England as William of Orange.

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES

By presenting *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard the Third* in this way, I might be creating the false impression that Shakespeare was the period's most popular playwright in the Low Countries. Of course, he was not. For this reason I pointed out above that for an international dialogue to be relevant and meaningful, we should not limit ourselves to the Shakespearean canon, but also consider the work of his fellow dramatists. Having discussed two Shakespearean products at some length, I will briefly present one or two other examples of what the Dutch theatre scene has to offer to the English Renaissance drama specialist, if he is prepared to look for a dialogue also beyond the canon.

The Spanish Tragedy, Thomas Kyd's popular revenge tragedy of the early 1590s, was performed and reprinted many times, and there are multiple references to it in other works. *The Spanish Tragedy* was popular also on the Continent of Europe. One measure of the play's success is that it occurred in the German strolling-player circuit, with performances listed, for example, in Dresden in 1626. The play was also translated at a very early stage, not once, but twice within two decades, namely in 1621 and 1638. It is very likely that the subject matter of Spain and Portugal held a special appeal in Protestant countries — a topic dealt with exhaustively by Frank Ardolino (See Ardolino 1984, 1985 and 1990)— but it is no less likely that the central “revenge” theme met with continental fascination, since a number of stage plays taken over from the English belonged precisely to the revenge tradition. In addition to two versions of *The Spanish Tragedy*, there was a Dutch version of Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1617), an anonymous *Andronicus* (1621; now lost), as well as Jan Vos's Dutch rendering of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1638).

The first person in Holland to rework *The Spanish Tragedy* was Adriaen van den Bergh, the charismatic Utrecht theatre enthusiast, and the father of the “first” Dutch actress, Ariana van den Bergh. Adrian van den Bergh was also closely involved with the strolling players at Utrecht, and it is likely that they provided him

with a copy of the play by Thomas Kyd. His version of the play was a free adaptation of the English original, but it was to be used for the second version of 1638 (For a thorough comparison of the relevant texts, see Plard 1968). What has not yet been established with certainty, however, and this is merely a preliminary before discussing the larger issue, is the identity of the ultimate English source text for the 1638 version of *The Spanish Tragedy* as *Don Ieronimo*. Was it a manuscript version of the play brought to the Low Countries by the strolling players? Did the Dutch translator(s) use one of the quarto texts? It has been suggested that it concerned the 1594 and 1605 editions of *The Spanish Tragedy* (See Schoneveld 1983: Item 370). This view is untenable for several reasons that relate not to matters involving cultural or political history, but to purely bibliographical issues of several kinds.

A close reading of the 1638 quarto provides a likely answer. The Dutch text of 1638 contains the following stage direction:

Jeronimo ontkleedt, met eene toorts ende deggen in sijn handt. (1638. Don Jeronimo, Marschalck van Spanjens Trevr-spel. Vertoont Op d'Amsterdamsche Schouwburgh, Den 12. October, 1638. Amsterdam, Ioost Hartgersz, sig. B2^r.)

This recalls the original English edition, where a comparable stage direction reads:

Enter Hieronimo in his shirt, etc. (Kyd. The Spanish Tragedy)

One might wonder where the anonymous Dutch translator or adapter got the additional information. Was it suggested to him by the strolling players, or by colleagues in the theatre who had contacts with them, like Adriaen van den Bergh? We cannot be certain. We can ascertain, however, that the information provided in the Dutch stage direction rather carefully reproduces the woodcut of the scene in question used for the cover of the first “illustrated” edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* in the quarto of 1615. This is likely to have been the copy of the text that travelled to the Low Countries [Plate 1].

Reading the extant Dutch play-texts against the English originals may raise questions which could even challenge the status and validity of the English text that is considered sacrosanct by most critics. To illustrate this point, I am staying with *The Spanish Tragedy* and its 1638 translation-cum-adaptation entitled *Don Jeronimo*. In particular, I would like to look at the dialogue between Lorenzo and Pedringano in Act 2, scene 1 — which in the Dutch version is a dialogue between one Don Pedro and Pedrongano.

In this particular dialogue, Lorenzo is trying to get the stupid servant and criminal Pedringano to work for him. In order to threaten him, the original 1602 English stage direction, in the margin across from Lorenzo's speech, reads:

Draw his Sword,

just as it reads, several lines later,

Offer to kill him. (Kyd. *The Spanish Tragedy*: 2.1.67-77. For an identical representation, see Cairncross 1967: 2.1.67-77)

Lorenzo threatens to kill Pedringano and achieves his goal.

This all looks simple and straightforward, but it is not. Looking at the stage

direction, a theatre director, it seems to me, is certainly entitled to ask the question: Whose sword must be drawn with which Pedringano is to be threatened? As a random check reveals, most English editors of the play recognise a problem here, and they silently produce the following emendations: “Draw his sword” of the 1602 quarto is changed into “Draws his sword,” and “Offer to kill him” of the 1602 quarto is changed into “Offers to kill him.” (See Neilson 1939: 2.1.67-77, Mulryne 1970: 2.1.67-78, Maus 1995: 2.1) No one seems to object to this silent emendation of the stage directions from what is really one from *prescriptive* stage directions into *descriptive* stage directions. By *prescriptive* stage directions, I mean those stage directions that are addressed to the player stating what is to be done at a particular moment. By *descriptive* stage directions, I mean those which describe to the reader, or to an imagined audience, what may be seen on stage in a production at a particular moment.

However, the 1638 version of the play in Dutch — with the strolling players around Adriaen van den Bergh in its line of transmission — makes us realise that the stage directions that appeared from 1602 onwards, may well be interpreted differently, but also more consistently than is generally done by editors these days. The anonymous 1638 version of *The Spanish Tragedy* (with Lorenzo's name replaced by Don Pedro), has:

Don Pedro pulls Pedrongano's dagger.

[D. Pedro trect Pedron ganos Deghen uyt (sig. A4^v)].

It further translates the stage direction “Offer to kill him” into a graphic line of verse — “Speak the truth or I will chop off your head” [“En spreekte de waerheydt / of ick schend dy voort den kop” (sig. A4^r)] — and then interestingly rounds off the sequence with a new stage direction later in the text:

He returns the dagger to him.

[Hy geeft hem sijn degen weer (sig. B1^r)].

This detailed information changes the situation. Lorenzo (or, rather, the Dutch Don Pedro), draws not his own sword, but the sword of the stupid servant, in a gesture, it would seem, of humiliation. Moreover, Pedringano is even threatened with his own sword before receiving it back after swearing full allegiance to Don Pedro.

Given the rather stark difference in the reading of the text, one may ask the question: “Who is right”? Is it the 1638 Dutch adaptor of the play who has Don Pedro draw Pedringano's sword, or is it the modern English editor who decides to have Don Pedro—alias Lorenzo draw his own? Arguably, the question “Who is right” is unanswerable, but we must recognise that the 1638 Dutch translator-*cum*-editor — using the Van den Bergh text and the 1615 quarto — is the only consistent mediator.⁶

I am aware that the next step to take would be to study the other stage

⁶ Philip Edwards in the Revels edition, and Andrew Cairncross in the Regents Renaissance Drama Series are consistent in a different way by simply conveying the quarto's change here from descriptive stage directions to prescriptive stage directions, without any further editorial intervention, but also without remarking on the unusual quality in any way.

directions in the editions of the English play and the Dutch play. Although I do not want to go into this matter in too much detail here, it is perhaps of interest to note already that descriptive and prescriptive stage directions occur side by side throughout the two versions of *The Spanish Tragedy*, although in the modern English editions, the editorial changes tend to favour descriptive stage directions. It is too early for a solid conclusion on this matter, but it seems to me that with our recognition of the interesting contemporary interpretation of the problem in the Dutch text, no new English edition can remain silent about it any longer (like Edwards and Cairncross), or silently emend the problem (like the other editors). The matter is slight, but not without interest, and goes some way to show how the extant material by early-seventeenth-century Dutch translators may still, on occasion, break the silence, and initiate a dialogue with contemporary practitioners in the English-speaking world.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to raise what I consider a crucial issue in contemporary Shakespeare studies. Identifying the emergence of a “foreign” Shakespeare alongside the more traditional, “native” Shakespeare, I argued that perhaps we ought to think hard about the various ways in which these two fields might interact in a more productive manner. My main suggestion, as one representing the “foreign” Shakespeare field, was continually to seek for an explicit dialogue with the “native” industry, on the grounds that the latter will forever represent the source, and because we are interested in Shakespeare before anything else. Assuming also, less controversially, that the approach to Shakespeare should be more historically oriented, and allow more space for his immediate contemporaries, I have tried to illustrate my argument about the interaction between these two fields with reference to a number of English Renaissance plays by Shakespeare and the others, that were translated, adapted, performed, and printed in The Low Countries during the seventeenth century. I hope that my discussion of the seventeenth-century field of Dutch drama may have opened new avenues, however narrow, to the native field of English Renaissance drama, be it in terms of matters editorial or intertextual, matters of theatre history, cultural history, or political history.

Let me conclude with the following: I am well aware that representing matters in this way, that in assigning the “native” English Shakespeare industry a status markedly different from and ultimately more governing than any foreign practice, I may *seem* to be re-centring the English Shakespeare industry after years of radical, critical practice allowing the “other” and the “foreign” Shakespeare to speak as well. However, it is not my aim to turn back the clock. Instead mine is an attempt to fine-tune the various instruments with which we have come to practise Shakespeare and early-modern drama, in order to make them *truly* international. It is an attempt undertaken to guarantee the continuing success of the industry, and out of a conviction that for “foreign” Shakespeare to continue to engage in a multicultural, worldwide debate, it should, by its very nature, be searching for a form of discourse with the native English industry.

It has been my contention that — certainly as the practice of the “foreign” Shakespeare industry is developing at an unprecedented pace — we ought to beware of engendering a tendency that is perhaps best described in terms of W. B. Yeats' *widening gyre*, in terms, that is, of a widening of the distance between the falconer

(meaning here: traditional Anglocentric Shakespeare studies) and the falcon (meaning: the “foreign Shakespeares”). That process might ultimately lead to a sad situation in which we found that the centre indeed could not hold. That situation would leave us all the poorer.

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