

## **Literature in Translation and Translation in Literature: A Brief Analysis of Shakespeare's Plays Lines**

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**Abstract:** Shakespeare is a distinguished school in literary studies. In addition to his own nearly 40 plays, scholars from British and American literary and historical circles have voluminous studies about his works. For modern people, the great Shakespeare has become a cultural symbol. As the most influential writer of all time worldwide, he becomes one of the three major Western cultural origins alongside Greco-Roman mythology and the Holy Bible. The reason why Shakespeare is still not antiquated outside of literature, and can be reincarnated and reborn generation after generation, is because of his lines.

**Key words:** lines; puns; blank verse; philosophy

## **i. Introduction**

Knowing the classic Shakespeare plays is a shortcut to one's understanding of Western culture. Shakespeare was such a masterful playwright. His writing seemingly without a moral stance, which allows his characters to resist the erosion of the years, allowing many modern people to still see themselves inside the stories of the ancients from four hundred years ago. But according to the current standards of creation, Shakespeare's plot is riddled with errors and indecent delays; on the characterization, often inconsistent, someone is bad for no reason and someone is good for no reason; on the values, often confused. Even if you want to learn English is not practical, Shakespeare was in the Elizabethan era, the language they used is the early New English also called early modern English. This language is different from the English we use now or in customary usage, whether in terms of phonetics, spelling, vocabulary, word meaning, lexis, syntax, idioms, etc. (Duan Huiru: 1999,106).

But Shakespeare was a master of lines. Although our literature and entertainment, in the four hundred years there has been a sea change, but, whether it is Marvel, BBC, or HBO's first-line writers, if they travel to Shakespeare's time, on the merits of the literary language, they still have to worship Shakespeare, worship the language of poetry written out of the drama lines.

Shakespeare's lines are usually written in the blank verse format, and his unrhymed poems span a large number of lines, often from three or four lines to as many as seven or eight lines, this development makes the combination of "poetry" and "drama" more closely, making his blank verse not only lyrical or chanting, but also capable of fulfilling all the requirements of drama (Xu Jia: 2013, 54). Although it has the rhythm of poetry, it does not rhyme; although the lines are written on paper and broken like poetry, when the actors recite the lines on stage, they can be broken according to the semantic meaning rather than the lines of poetry. So such lines have the sense of rhyme of poetry and the freedom of the spoken word. The audience can be touched by those gorgeous and soul-stirring lines and fine poems in the atmosphere of the plot. It is such lines, not the plot or the characters, that have earned Shakespeare's plays their eternal vitality.

## ii. Romeo and Juliet

In 1562, Arthur Brooke wrote an English narrative poem. Entitled *The Tragicall Historie of Remeus and Juliet*. The poem on which Shakespeare based *Romeo and Juliet* (britannica.com). Shakespeare was neither the original author of the story, nor even the first to bring it to the stage. However, none of this affected the popularity of the adaptation at the time.

His plays do not rely on the plot to win, but on the charm of the lines, Shakespeare's line skills are unmatched. Today, we have been spoiled by the fast-paced drama, we may not be able to tolerate the plot of Shakespeare's plays, we may not like the characters of Shakespeare's plays, but the lines of Shakespeare's plays will still touch people's hearts, and today it is difficult for anyone to write lines better than him. Lines connect the audience with the actor, immersing both in the charm of the performance. The most important role of theatrical lines is communication; the essence of the play needs to be more understandable to the audience, and it needs to be expressed in lines that lead the audience (Zhang Yan: 2020, 40).

It is such lines, not plot or character, which are the most central elements that have earned Shakespeare's plays their eternal vitality. Even those characters that have long been classics, such as Hamlet and Falstaff, are essentially appendages to classic lines.

The most iconic lines of *Romeo and Juliet* appear in the balcony meeting scene, beginning with Juliet's inner monologue:

O Romeo, Romeo! 罗密欧啊，罗密欧！

Wherefore art thou Romeo? 为什么你偏偏是罗密欧呢？

Deny thy father and refuse thy name; 否认你的父亲，抛弃你的姓名吧；

Or, if thou wilt not, 也许你不愿意这样做

Be but sworn my love, 那么只要你宣誓做我的爱人，

And I'll no longer be a Capulet. 我也不愿再姓普莱特了。

Romeo was lurking in the garden downstairs at this time, and hearing these words, hesitated to come out and meet Juliet. Juliet is unaware of this and continues to talk to herself.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; 只有你的姓名才是我的仇敌；

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. 你即使不姓蒙太古，仍然是这样的一个人。

What's Montague? 你不姓蒙太古又有什么关系呢?

It is nor hand, nor foot, 它又不是手, 又不是脚

Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part 又不是手臂, 又不是脸, 又不是身体上任何其他的部分。

Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! 啊! 换一个姓名吧!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose 姓名本身是没有意义的; 我们叫做玫瑰的这一种花;

By any other name would smell as sweet (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2). 要是换了个名字, 它的香味还是同样的芬芳 (莎士比亚, 2010,237)。

This line has both literary and philosophical beauty, exploring the grand proposition of "who I am" from the perspective of a young girl in love, which can lead to many wonderful thoughts.

There is also the Act 3, Scene 2 - Juliet is both excited and apprehensive, talking to herself as she waits, and still unaware that Romeo has been exiled. Here is an excerpt from the second half of the line:

Come, night; come, Romeo; 来吧, 黑夜! 来吧, 罗密欧!

Come, thou day in night; 来吧, 你黑夜中的白昼!

For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night 因为你将要睡在黑夜的翼上,

Whiter than new snow on a raven's back. 比乌鸦背上的新雪还要皎白。

Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-browed night, 来吧, 柔和的黑夜! 来吧, 可爱的黑夜,

Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die, 把我的罗密欧给我! 等他死了以后,

Take him and cui him out in little stars, 你再把带出去, 分散成无数的星星。

And he will make the face of heaven so fine 把天空装饰得如此美丽,

That all the world will be in love with night 使全世界都恋爱着黑夜,

And pay no worship to the garish sun. 不再崇拜炫目的太阳。

O, I have bought the mansion of a love, 啊! 我已经买下了一所恋爱的华夏,

But not possessed it, and, though I am sold, 可是它还不曾属我所有；虽然我已经把自己出卖，

Not yet enjoyed: so tedious is this day 可是还没有被买主领去。这日子长得真叫人厌烦，

As is the night before some festival 正像一个做好了新衣服的小孩，

To an impatient child that hath new robes 在节日的前夜

And may not wear them (Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 2.). 焦躁地等着天明一样（莎士比亚，2010，257）。

Compared with Mr. Zhu Shenghao's translation, the English version has a better feeling and can be read with a very beautiful sense of rhythm. This is not to say that Mr. Zhu's translation is not good, but this is due to the characteristics of the language.

This line can particularly reflect one of Shakespeare's creative characteristics, that is, even in such a beautiful, should belong to the heroine of the idol romance lines, but also to use if not a pun to let the audience hear the erotic meaning. In when he shall die, the meaning of "die" is: may play on the sense of 'orgasm'. And in but not possessed, "possessed" means: with sexual connections like enjoyed.

Even if all the lines are the most beautiful poems, the audience will be aesthetically tired. That's why the lines of Shakespearean plays, even the lines of a tragedy with the theme of talent like *Romeo and Juliet*, are mixed with many funny words. Which words are most likely to be funny? The ancient and modern standard is unified, is the erotic jokes. Romeo's friends and Juliet's nanny are very capable of telling erotic jokes.

For example:

To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle 除非咒得他情妇那圈圈钻进去一个小怪物，

Of some strange nature, letting it there stand 直挺挺地竖在那里

Till she had laid it and conjured it down. 不圈够了不低头

.....

Romeo, that she were, O, that she were 啊, 罗密欧, 但愿你的心上人变成一只裂了口的蜜桃,

An open et caetera, thou a poperin pear (Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Scene 1)! 你变成一根青香蕉 (莎士比亚, 2010,236)。

Puns are a kind of wordplay, which is sometimes humorous and sometimes ironic (Wang Chao: 2020, 103). Shakespeare's lines are famous for their good use of puns, and most of these puns are Sexual Puns. Even Juliet can't escape from this, and some of her loving lines are easy for the audience to make erotic associations, which is intentional by Shakespeare. The audience then thought of these words from the mouth of a young girl in love, but the girl herself is still unaware of, it is even more ridiculous. At that time, the British went to see Shakespeare, much like we today go to see some small theater performance, we like in a variety of "vulgar" words in the outbreak of laugh.

The mainstream British playwrights of the time, the so-called "University Wits", who were studied in prestigious schools and trained in classical scholarship, despised Shakespeare, a provincial, poorly educated, rural youth who loved to play "erotic" words.

Shakespeare has its very "vulgar" side, but also has an extremely colorful side, and sometimes the two will be combined into a complete harmony, which is a great example of vulgarity and elegance.

In the 2013 American TV play *"The Blacklist"*, the heroine faked her death, and one of her best friends intercepted the lines of "when he shall die" at the funeral to bid her farewell, just replacing the personal pronouns. In the solemn atmosphere of the funeral, no one could hear any erotic innuendo between the lines, but felt that it was a purely beautiful eulogy that made tears wash their faces.

In Act 2, Scene 5, Father Lawrence has just officiated the secret wedding of Romeo and Juliet, a little distracted, sighed with emotion:

These violet delights have violet ends. 疯狂的欢乐总有疯狂的结局,

And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, 在最得意的一刻突然毁灭，

Which as they kiss consume (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 5)... 就像火和火药的亲吻（莎士比亚，2010,251）。

By capturing this phrase, you actually capture the core part of *Romeo and Juliet*.

### iii. The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is a showcase for Shakespeare's line work.

How big is the impact of Hamlet's classic lines? Even so big that it exists in ways we won't notice. One example: guokr.com. Guokr is a website that does tech content. And also, Stephen Hawking's best-selling book *The Universe in the Nutshell* is quote from Shakespeare. But we should know that the title of Hawking's book is not original either; it has its origins in a line from Hamlet:

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams (Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2). 上帝啊！倘不是因为我有噩梦，那么即使把我关在一个果壳里，我也会把自己当做一个拥有无限空间的君王的（莎士比亚，2010,328）

This sentence uses one of Shakespeare's favorite rhetorical devices: antithesis. In Shakespeare's time, nightmares were usually considered a sign of depression, and depressed people were most likely to have nightmares. To understand this sentence correctly, it is important to get the context right first.

At the beginning of the dialogue, when confronted by two childhood friends with ulterior motives, Hamlet makes a crazy and true statement: "Denmark's a prison (Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2)" 丹麦是一所牢狱(莎士比亚, 2010, 328)。Call it crazy, because Denmark is not a prison; call it real, because in Hamlet's current feelings, Denmark is indeed a prison. He was trapped inside this prison, forced to hold back, forced to pretend to be crazy, forced to use a false face to deal with the two guys in front of him named partners, but actually spies. Rosencrantz mistakenly thought that Hamlet considered Denmark was too small to show his ambition, and only then he said the famous "nutshell". In Hamlet's view, political ambition is meaningless, and ruling a vast territory does not

bring spiritual satisfaction, because a noble man is spiritually self-sufficient and does not depend on the seemingly important external conditions such as wealth and privilege.

This notion, on the contrary, is easier for the Chinese to understand because it is the most central proposition of *Zhuangzi*: nondepend-on (无待). All conditions need not depend, all restrictions are absent, and one moves freely between the infinite heavens and earth, which is nondepend-on. (Duan Xianrui: 2021, 27). Happiness that is depend-on, or happiness that depends on external conditions, is unreliable. If health is the only way to be happy, then injuries and illnesses will come to bring misfortune, and no one can keep such things as injuries and illnesses from happening. Only pure spiritual fulfillment is truly self-sufficient and completely reliable, without fear of loss. Since there is no loss for the rest of your life, of course, you will never have to worry about loss or gain. Such a sense of steadiness brought by "nondepend-on" is the only source of happiness.

Therefore, a person who has reached the state of nondepend-on feels the same whether he is a king or a prisoner, whether he is trapped in a nutshell or has the whole universe, it does not matter. Hamlet, of course, has not read *Zhuangzi* philosophy, but the so-called higher wisdom are interchangeable, the ancient Greek cynic philosophy and *Zhuangzi* philosophy echoes, this is the philosophical origin of the word "nutshell". Hamlet believes that he could have reached this state, but was hindered by nightmares. This line expresses Hamlet's inner turmoil. But, the author is dead and the line has taken on a life of its own, growing freely.

Hamlet's most famous line, and the most famous line in all of Shakespeare's plays, is the inner monologue at the beginning of "To be, or not to be" (Hamlet, Act3, Scene 1) 生存还是毁灭 (莎士比亚, 2010, 339). It is the first scene of the third act, when Hamlet is just pretending to be mad. This phrase has a broader meaning. "Be", both the simplest word, but also a highly philosophical, difficult to precisely define this word, and it is totally up to the audience to understand. After all, there are a thousand Hamlet's in a thousand people's eyes. It is the breadth of meaning that allows the phrase to be used in many places.

For example, the opening monologue of director Jiang Wen's *Gone With The Bullets* (一步之遥) film:



To be or not to be

这么着还是那么着 This way or that way

这是莎士比亚的问题呀 This is Shakespeare's problem

等我们离开北京，到了上海 When we leave and arrive in Shanghai

To be or not to be

又变成了大家伙儿的问题了 It's becoming a problem for everyone again

冒险家的乐园嘛 The adventurer's playground

您像我这么个好人 The good man like me

可以这么着，也可以那么着 You can do this way or that way

这“To be or not to be This“To be or not to be”

什么时候儿 When

它又变成我自个儿的问题了呢？ It's becoming my own problem again?

The monologue "To be or not to be" can have many meanings, depending on the viewer's own interpretation. The Chinese translation we have seen hardly reproduces the complexity of the original text, so it is difficult for some Chinese readers to understand how the simple phrase "To be or not to be" has become the most famous and quoted line in the world. The entire monologue has a Latin accent with a compound rhythm that is difficult to reproduce in other languages. Through Hamlet in the soliloquy, we can imagine the ancient Roman orator showing his eloquence in the square.

#### **iv. Conclusion**

Shakespeare, as one of the three great origins of Western culture alongside Greco-Roman mythology and The Holy Bible, has not been lost to history through the ages. On the contrary, through different ways, they reappear to us generation after generation. Shakespeare's plays do not rely on the plot to win, but on the charm of the lines. It is best to enjoy Shakespeare's plays in a theater, not a cinema. Because it is a masterpiece of elegance and vulgarity. Many actors have always wanted to play Hamlet once in their lives, from the extraordinary and wonderful lines in this play. The lines "nutshell or prison" and "To be or not to be" have become widely used literary allusions because of their wonderful rhythm and philosophical meaning.

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