Friederike von Schwerin-High. ***Shakespeare, Reception and Translation: Germany and Japan.*** New York: Continuum, 2004. 253p.

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Anyone who has studied the modernization of German and/or Japanese theater is familiar with the roles played by such figures as Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845), Tsubouchi Shôyô (1859-1935) and Fukuda Tsuneari (1912-1994), as well as important practitioners and theorists such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928). One important aspect of literary and theatrical modernization shared by Germany and Japan was the introduction and promotion of Shakespeare to redefine their dramatic canons. *The Tempest*, often assumed to be Shakespeare's last play, is one of the most frequently translated since 1763. This book looks at twelve different translations of *The Tempest*, eight German and four Japanese, as case studies of the various elements that influence and are incorporated into the act of translating literature and theater, and of how those elements may shift over time.

Friederike von Schwerin-High's title, *Shakespeare, Reception and Translation: Germany and Japan*, may bring to mind Jan Kott's *The Bottom Translation* (1987) and the multiple ways that live performance *is* translation. Although the book does address the spectator response to the performance of Shakespeare in the two countries, the main concern of the book is the political and cultural implications of translating Shakespeare as dramatic literature rather than theatrical practice. The book provides an overview of scholarship and the translation process of dramatic literature, the theatrical and historical contexts for each translator, and the evolving challenges and motives for translators in Japan and Germany.

Von Schwerin-High states in her conclusion, "The goal of this book has been to demonstrate, however tentatively, that the strangeness, alterity, and culture clash which is often represented in the magical, religious, wondrous terms in *The Tempest* is heightened in the translation excerpts presented here" (227). Her chapters on translation practice, and historical and theatrical contexts, defend the choice of the play to show the process of translation.

The live dynamic of theatrical art, as opposed to drama as literature, is often a socially subversive act. Von Schwerin-High discusses those aspects in her summary of the performance history of *The Tempest* in England, the United States, Germany, and Japan. However, the specific excerpts from *The Tempest* that she goes on to analyze are considered as literary text, not as received performance. By focusing on theatre as literature rather than performance, von Schwerin-High does not carry

the theatrical concerns to ultimate event that is the playwright's objective, and that of the translators here.

As a theatre scholar and translator of plays, my attention was drawn to the issue of received performance by von Schwerin-High's statement that "if the major features of a *translated play* are that it (a) deals with the other and (b) has to do with theatricality, it should also be realized that…these two features are prominently thematized in *The Tempest*" (19). Von Schwerin-High goes on to argue the need to address performance in translation while also acknowledging that Shakespeare is about words and language, noting that "nowadays German and Japanese translators of Shakespearean texts always translate with the modern stage in mind, [being] singularly alive to the performability and speakability of their texts" (21).

The book has three parts: "Contexts," "Translation in Practice," and "The Results of this Study Reconsidered." The first part concerns translation methodology, the history of Shakespeare translation and performance in Germany and Japan, and the "discourse of magic and alterity" in *The Tempest*. It is here that von Schwerin-High lays out the fundamental difficulties of translating a text that is itself about the supernatural and cultural difference. In other words, a central theme of *The Tempest* is contact with the "Other," both cultural and magical. Von Schwerin-High elucidates how such contact has its own contexts for each individual culture, complicating the task of the translator.

The socio-historic context of those complications is of interest to scholars of practical translation as well as historians. The six periods of modern translational activity in Japan that von Schwerin-High discusses add nuance to sociological, historical, and theatrical knowledge of Japan in general. Of wider historical and literary interest are the sections devoted to comparing and contrasting the history and practice of translation in Japan and Germany.

In terms of theatrical theories, von Schwerin-High considers semiotics at the intersection of performance and literature. She writes of the play that "neither the islanders nor the Italian visitors have a system of recognition in place or the semiotics at their disposal to take their respective others for what they really are" (76). Her case study shows how the signifiers in *The Tempest* are filtered through various temporal, historical, geographical, political, and theatrical constructs particular to the two countries. The differences draw attention to the concept of identity construction, a major theme in theatrical works throughout global history. Von Schwerin-High argues that the act of translation *is* one of national/cultural identity construction, mentioning the nationalist agenda in both Japan and Germany that has, from the earliest translations, been a reason for producing Shakespeare.

Von Schwerin-High's main theoretical concern seems to be "not with the ultimate residing place of meaning…but with patterns of meaning and how they emerge and change, in short with how meaning travels" (168). She does this in the latter half of the book through a close analysis (I.ii.1-120) by demonstrating how language and culture filter and refract reception of the original text. However, she chose a geographical ordering of the discussion throughout, placing all the German authors ahead of the Japanese. This division seems to emphasize the differences in the work the translators did, rather than the similarities, and, completely unintentionally, implies that the Japanese works are of lesser importance.

Von Schwerin-High's statement, "the question of whether or not a translation is faithful can often not be answered with an unambiguous 'yes' or 'no'" (228), is an echo of the difficulties of the task she as set herself in this short book. The very diversity of historical and cultural contexts makes it difficult to do much more than make generalized conclusions about the translations and reception of *The Tempest*. Von Schwerin-High agrees with Fukuda Tsuneari that *The Tempest* should be ideal for this study because "Prospero's enduring world is also a symbol and a proof of the very possibility to move and be moved across temporal, cultural, and linguistic divides" (234). The major difficulty seems to be that if we are considering the production of language and adherence to literary forms, then the value of a Japanese/German comparison needs either more or fewer examples. Despite this drawback, the book is a close study of how contemporary translation theory applied to one particular work and two languages. The project has a built-in logic because *The Tempest* is about alterity. The alternatives of language are explored, but those explorations do not extend fully to the reception of performance, the ultimate objective of any play by Shakespeare. ❊