

Trinity University

## Digital Commons @ Trinity

---

English Faculty Research

English Department

---

2014

### Hosting Language: Immigration and Translation in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Kathryn Vomero Santos

Trinity University, [ksantos@trinity.edu](mailto:ksantos@trinity.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/eng\\_faculty](https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/eng_faculty)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

#### Repository Citation

Santos, K. V. (2014). Hosting language: Immigration and translation in *The merry wives of Windsor*. In R. Espinosa & D. Ruiter (Eds.), *Shakespeare and immigration* (pp. 59-72). Ashgate Publishing.

This Contribution to Book is brought to you for free and open access by the English Department at Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact [jcostanz@trinity.edu](mailto:jcostanz@trinity.edu).

# Chapter 3

## Hosting Language: Immigration and Translation in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*<sup>1</sup>

Kathryn Vomero Santos  
*New York University*

How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants ...

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,  
*Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*<sup>2</sup>

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a play often described as Shakespeare's only "English" comedy, Sir Hugh Evans and Doctor Caius live in a language that is not their own.<sup>3</sup> As immigrants from Wales and France, respectively, Evans and Caius must engage in a process of linguistic translation that is both the direct result of their migration and analogous to the physical movement that such migration entails. Shakespeare dramatizes the linguistic predicament that Deleuze and Guattari outline in my epigraph by carving a space within the English language to register Evans's and Caius's differences and difficulties even while recognizing the possibility that English may become strange unto itself in the process of making

---

<sup>1</sup> I owe many thanks to David Ruiter and Ruben Espinosa for their careful and supportive attention to many drafts of this essay. I would also like to thank John Michael Archer, Liza Blake, Jacques Lezra, and Susanne Wofford for their thoughtful comments on drafts. This work has benefitted from conversations with the audience at the Early Modern Migrations conference held at the University of Toronto in April 2012 and the members of the Shakespeare Association of America seminar to whom I presented the earliest version in April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 19). Lawrence Venuti employs a longer version of this quotation as the epigraph to a chapter entitled "Simpatico" in Venuti (2008: 237). I use it here to introduce my analysis of the linguistic effects of migration as they are represented in early modern English drama.

<sup>3</sup> For a survey of such descriptions, see Wall (2003: 387–9). Richard Helgerson notes that in addition to its English setting, the play "also works at its Englishness, insists on it, and makes it fundamental to the definition of a domestic space that court and town can share" (Helgerson 2000: 64).

room for them. The English language, in other words, serves as a host that is as hospitable as it is hostile to its strange guests.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Ricoeur has suggested that “linguistic hospitality,” or “the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one’s own home, one’s own dwelling,” is an ethical model for the processes of bringing what is strange into the space of the domestic language (Kearney 2006: xvi; Ricoeur 2006: 10).<sup>5</sup> This concept of linguistic hospitality, Ricoeur explains, attempts to fulfill what Antoine Berman describes as “the desire to establish a dialogic relation between foreign language and native language” (Berman 1992: 9).<sup>6</sup> In what follows, I will argue that Shakespeare uses the dialogic form of drama to stage such encounters between the languages of guest and host and to demonstrate that hosting the stranger in the English language causes the play’s English characters, along with its audiences and readers, to become “sensitive to the strangeness of [their] own language” and yet resistant to the idea that the immigrant can ever be fully “Englished” (Ricoeur 2006: 29).<sup>7</sup>

As the main plot of *Merry Wives* begins to unfold, Sir John Falstaff uses the metaphor of translation to describe his plan to woo the eponymous wives for financial gain:

---

<sup>4</sup> My use of the term *immigrant* in this essay is anachronistic. The terms most often employed to describe non-English outsiders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were *alien* and *stranger*. Although *foreign* or *foreigner* could be used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to refer to someone from another country outside England, these terms had domestic connotations as well. As John Michael Archer points out, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* hosts outsiders from both within and without England. See Archer (2005: 46–59). *Foreigner*, Archer explains, was used to describe someone natively English but from outside London, a distinction that may have applied similarly to the relationship between insiders and outsiders in a neighboring town such as Windsor (Archer 2005: 47). It could also apply in this sense, as it does when Pistol refers to Evans as a “mountain-foreigner,” to an individual from a principality such as Wales (1.1.133). Lloyd Kermode adds that “[w]ith its separate language and ‘British’ history, however . . . , the Welsh identity proves trickier than this to incorporate into Englishness” (Kermode 2009: 19). On the complicated foreign and alien status of the Welsh in the context of Britain, see Kermode (2009: 19–20 and 85–118) and Tudeau-Clayton (2010: 91–110). For a discussion of “denizens” and “denization,” a “legal process whereby a non-English-born stranger might achieve a status somewhere between English and stranger,” see Stewart (2006: 55–83).

<sup>5</sup> The English translation that Kearney cites in his introduction differs from that which appears in Eileen Brennan’s English translation of *Sur la traduction*.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout *Sur la traduction*, Ricoeur engages with Berman (1984) and places the remarks of his first essay “under the aegis” of Berman’s title, *L’épreuve de l’étranger* (The Test of the Foreign) (Ricoeur 2006: 3).

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this essay, I cite from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt et al. (2008). Where necessary, I have consulted the Arden Shakespeare edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Melchiori (2000). I have also consulted the 1602 quarto and the 1623 folio editions of the play. John Michael Archer offers an important account of the relationship between the quarto and folio with respect to issues of citizenship and alienage. See Archer (2005: 48–58). See also, Marcus (1996: 68–100).

- Falstaff I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behaviour, to be Englished rightly, is, 'I am Sir John Falstaff's'.
- Pistol He hath studied her will, and translated her will: out of honesty, into English. (1.3.39–43)

The project of the play's main plot, as Falstaff and Pistol outline it, is to "English" the female will by translating it "out of honesty into English." Pistol employs the verb *translate* to describe an interpretive and transformative practice that allows Falstaff to understand the chaste and honest female will as inconstant, or, in Falstaff's self-descriptive term, "English." Patricia Parker, who has argued that a powerful connection among the many parts of *Merry Wives* can be found in the play's language and acts of translation, notes that Falstaff's plan anticipates the Latin grammar translation scene in the fourth act and that his "play on translation ... combines the grammatical sense with its more obscene double" (Parker 1996: 118–9). Reading these two scenes together, Parker explains that "Falstaff's claim to construe the 'familiar style' of a woman he intends to draw into profitable adultery depends on the contemporary meaning of *construe* as 'translate,' on precisely, that is, the exercise of construing or 'construction' on which the grammar scene itself depends" (ibid.: 119).<sup>8</sup> In ways that go beyond adultery and linguistic instruction, however, Pistol's construction—both the interpretation and the grammatical structure—of Falstaff's actions, also serves to characterize the play's treatment of immigration and translation as mutually informing and often intersecting processes.

Pistol's formulation of Falstaff's translational intentions, figurative and otherwise, is identical with the language used to denote and describe early modern English translations in the paratexts that accompanied them in print. Although printers, publishers, and authors were responsible for labeling many texts as "translated into English" or simply "Englished," a significant number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translations of classical and continental texts were identified by variations on the phrase "translated out of *x* into English" on their title page or in their prefaces and dedications.<sup>9</sup> Apuleius's *The Xi Bookes of the Golden Asse*, a text whose narrator identifies himself as a stranger who speaks the "straunge & forrein" Latin language of his host culture, for example, was printed with the description, "Translated out of Latine into Englishe by William Adlington" on its title page in 1566 (B1v).<sup>10</sup> The title page of the 1597 translation of *The*

<sup>8</sup> Following the publication of Parker's book, Richard Helgerson addressed the Latin grammar scene in *Merry Wives* as part of a larger essay on English linguistic nationalism in colonial and postcolonial contexts. See Helgerson (1998).

<sup>9</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there was a discernible or consistent distinction made among these formulations of translation. Rather, I have chosen to isolate the out-of-into model because it is present in the language of *Merry Wives* and illustrative of my larger argument about the intersection of translation with immigration.

<sup>10</sup> In the preface to *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius's narrator, Lucius, describes his "new alteration of speach" in the following way: "in Athens, when I was yonge, I went first to schoole. Sone after (as a stranger) I arrived at Rome, whereas by great industrie & without instruction of any scholmaster, I atchieued to the full perfection of the Latine tongue: behold,

*Heptameron*, published under the title *The Queene of Nauarres Tales Containing, Verie pleasant Discourses of fortunate Louers*, similarly announces its text as “Now newly translated out of French into English.” And although the title page of Thomas Shelton’s 1612 translation of *Don Quixote* identifies the text as “Translated out of the Spanish,” Shelton boasts in his dedication to the Lord of Walden that he “Translated some fiue or sixe yeares agoe, the Historie of *Don Quixote*, out of the Spanish tongue into the English in the space of forty daies” (Cervantes 1612: 2r).

Not exclusive to the paratextual matter of books, the out-of-into formulation did not always describe printed translations in a positive light, however. Roger Ascham’s *The Scholemaster* (1570), which was noteworthy for promoting the method of double translation that, as we see in the Latin lesson in the fourth act of *Merry Wives*, requires students to “twise translate, out of Latin into English, and out of English into Latin agayne,” also laments the availability and influence of certain translated books in the London marketplace (32v):<sup>11</sup>

These be the inchantementes of *Circes*, brought out of *Italie*, to marre mens maners in England: much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fonde bookes, of late translated out of *Italian* into English, sold in euery shop in London, commended by honest titles the soner to corrupt honest maners. (26v)<sup>12</sup>

Although they undoubtedly enriched English textual culture, translated books marked the immigration or infiltration of strange ideas that were also seen as a potentially powerful threat to England and its values.

The out-of-into formulation of linguistic translation that so often designated early printed books was also omnipresent in the definitions of various equivalents for the verb *to translate* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bilingual and polyglot dictionaries, texts that were as much a form of translation as they were key apparatuses for translational instruction and practice. Thomas Thomas’s *Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (1587) defines the Latin verb *trādūcō* thus:

---

I first craue & begge your pardon, least I should happen to displease or offend any of you by the rude & rustike vtterance of this straunge & forrein language” (B1v). Lucius acknowledges that mastery of the Latin tongue cannot efface the strangeness of his pronunciation.

<sup>11</sup> We see this method in action in the Latin lesson when Evans asks William to translate *lapis* out of Latin into English. Although William correctly translates *lapis* as “a stone,” he responds to Evans’ follow-up question “And what is ‘a stone’?” with the English synonym “a pebble” rather than translating it out of English and back into the Latin *lapis* (4.1.26–31). See Parker (1996: 116–18).

<sup>12</sup> Ascham continues,

when the busie and open Papistes abroad, could not, by their contentious bookes, turne men in England fast enough, from troth and right iudgement in doctrine, than the sutle and secrete Papistes at home, procured bawdie bookes to be translated out of the *Italian* tonge, whereby ouer many yong willes and wittes allured to wantonnes, do now boldly contemne all seuer bookes that sounde to honestie and godlines. (Ascham 1570: 27r)

For Ascham, textual translation in this context is a means of conversion, a process often described as a kind of translation from one set of beliefs and practices to another.

Trāduco, is, xi, ctum, ere. To bring, to turne, to conuert, to conuey from one place to another, to bring ouer, to drawe, to withdraw: also to translate out of one tongue into another: to slaunder, to defame, to bring into infamie and obloquie, to dishonour: to passe ouer as one doth the time: to passe or execute through to the end, to stretch forth. (Thomas 1587: Ooor)<sup>13</sup>

For what it shares with Pistol's description of Falstaff's actions, one definition emerges immediately from the group: "to translate out of one tongue into another." The out-of-into definition, to which I will return below, is situated at the center of a rich collection of meanings, many of which are current in Shakespeare's play and carry important implications for the processes of emigration and immigration, as well as for more broadly conceived notions of movement and transference.

Bringing over, conveying, and stretching forth involve a carrying across or an arrival akin to immigration that is predicated upon the idea of drawing, withdrawing, or emigrating from a prior state or location. Turning and converting, which are often part of both ends of the immigrant experience, have important religious connotations and gesture toward the transformative processes initiated and sometimes necessitated by such movement across thresholds. In its main and minor plots, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* enacts the verbal abuse—the slander, defaming, and bringing into infamy or obloquy—associated with various kinds of border crossings. Falstaff's attempts to draw the two wives out of honesty into adulterous relationships are, as we shall see, mirrored by the Host of the Garter Inn's efforts to shame and ridicule Evans and Caius through the translation and transformation of language.

Nestled within the immensely productive network of meanings in Thomas's entry, the ubiquitous out-of-into formulation of translation is suggestive of a two-part process. In the most literal sense, the pairing of the opposing prepositions "out of" and "into" indicates that the meaning of a text or expression has been extracted or taken *out of* the source language and then subsequently inserted or turned *into* the target, or host, language. If the first part of the formulation represents the emigration "out of" a language, then the "*into* English" or "Englishing" process is what is at stake both in *Merry Wives* and in the condition of the immigrant more generally. The two parts of the out-of-into formulation align with the immigrant figure in his or her experience of a physical emigration *out of* one place

---

<sup>13</sup> Pagination in Thomas's dictionary is somewhat irregular. Some page numbers are missing or duplicated. Thomas's definition is a repetition and expansion of the entry for "conueigh" in John Baret's *An Alvearie or Triple Dictionarie, in Englishe, Latin, and French* (1574), which became a quadruple dictionary when Greek was added to the 1580 edition. Many of the definitions listed in Thomas's dictionary, including the out-of-into definition are reused and repeated in later dictionaries that translate between English, Latin, and the continental vernaculars. See, for example, Florio (1611) and Cotgrave (1611). The relative stability of the "out of one tongue into another" entry in the English language seems to treat the foreign terms of these dictionaries not only as synonyms for terms with the same meanings in English but also as interchangeable among themselves. I have cited Thomas's dictionary for its date and relevance to the Latin grammar scene in *Merry Wives*.

and a movement *into* a host location, but the cultural and specifically linguistic experience of this migration often leaves the immigrant suspended between these two prepositional states.

Early modern English playwrights recognized the dramatic and often comic value of this suspension and used the spaces and practices of the stage to represent it. In addition to marking the physical appearance of the stranger with clothing or painted skin, early modern English dramatists imitated or recreated the language of the immigrant or alien with great frequency.<sup>14</sup> As many critics have shown, linguistic strangeness could be conveyed through language in various ways on both the stage and the page.<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare illustrates the two most common methods in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as he uses English orthography to approximate the strangers' native languages and to represent their accented, or "broken," English.<sup>16</sup> Evans and Caius bear the linguistic marks of their Welsh and French origins as they "abus[e]" the "King's English" and make "fritters" of it by speaking in a way that identifies them as nonnative from start to finish (1.4.4–5, 5.5.136).

Like the Welsh Captain Fluellen, who does not "speak English in the native garb" in *Henry V*, Evans is marked by distinctive speech patterns and pronunciations that mark him as "Welsh" (5.1.67–8).<sup>17</sup> The editors of *The Norton Shakespeare* have neatly explained that "Evans, in what is meant to be a stereotypical Welsh accent, often pronounces 't' for 'd,' 'p' for 'b,' and 'f' for 'v' and omits initial 'w'" (Greenblatt et al. 2008: 1266n4). Evans's Welsh accent persists even in Latin when he pronounces "*hic, haec, hoc*" as "*hig, hag, hog*" and "*hinc, hanc, hoc*" as "*hing, hang, hog*" during the lesson he conducts with William at the opening of

---

<sup>14</sup> On the use of soot, oil, ointment, cloth, and other materials to represent racial otherness, see, among others, Hall (1995: 128–40, 160–76); Callaghan (2000: 75–96); Smith (2003); and Iyengar (2005: 80–100, 123–39, 173–99).

<sup>15</sup> The most comprehensive surveys of foreign or strange languages on the early modern English stage are Hoenselaars (1992), Dillon (1998), and Montgomery (2012).

<sup>16</sup> The use of foreign-accented speech in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been widely discussed. On the forms of "broken English" in *Merry Wives* and other early modern English plays, see Blank (1996: 135). On broken English and broken Irish in Shakespeare's histories, see Neill (2000: 339–72). For a discussion of the use of "substandard English" among foreign characters, see Hoenselaars (1992: 58, 257n89, 258n97) and Dillon (1998: 162–87).

<sup>17</sup> Fluellen is not the only character to speak English with a foreign accent in *Henry V*. The Irish Macmorris and Scottish Jamy speak with Irish and Scottish accents, respectively, and the French Princess Katherine and her nurse Alice speak English with a French accent. Shakespeare uses English orthography to mark each of these accents differently. In Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, Owain Glyndŵr (Owen Glendower) is identified as a Welshman but is not marked by an accent in the play text when he speaks English. When Hotspur commands Glyndŵr to "speak it in Welsh" so that Hotspur will not "understand" Glyndŵr's negative response to his actions, Glyndŵr replies, "I can speak English, lord, as well as you; / For I was trained up in the English court" (3.1.117–19). Although the stage directions indicate that Welsh is spoken in the play by Glyndŵr and Lady Mortimer, the lines in Welsh are not included.



the fourth act (4.1.35–40).<sup>18</sup> In this particular instance, Evans's pronunciation of *g* for *c* causes phonetic interference between English and Latin and enables Mistress Quickly to mistranslate "Hang-hog" as "Latin for bacon" (4.1.41).

Caius's speech is marked similarly by the replacement of the *th* phoneme with a *d* and the *w* phoneme with a *v* as well as by the addition of *-a* at the end of some words.<sup>19</sup> Caius speaks an occasional line or phrase in French, but he often acts as his own interpreter by translating the French words immediately into English: "*un boïtier vert*—a box, a green-a box" and "*Dépêche*, quickly!" (1.4.39–40, 47). His phrases "Do intend vat I speak?" and "I cannot tell vat is dat" signal that translation between French and English is in progress and far from smooth (1.4.39–40; 4.5.69). Moreover, Caius's nonnative pronunciation causes him to fall victim to bawdy puns. Following Evans's numerical lead to accept Ford's invitation to dinner in the third act, for example, Caius states that he will be the third to join the group: "If there be one or two, I shall make-a the turd" (3.3.200).<sup>20</sup> Present only in the quarto, Evans's response to the accidental excremental pun confirms the linguistic joke: "In your teeth for shame" (Shakespeare 1602: D4r).<sup>21</sup>

Aside from phonetic differences and unintentional puns, Evans and Caius speak what the audience would have recognized as an ungrammatical or incorrect English. Caius's primary difficulties are with first-person pronouns, verb tenses, and subject-verb agreement: "I pray you bear witness that me have stay six or seven, two, tree hours for him, and he is no come" (2.3.31–2). Evans similarly displays a tendency to use adjectives or adverbs as nouns and vice versa: "Fery goot. I will make a prief of it in my notebook, and we will afterwards 'ork upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can" (1.1.119–21). As both of these examples demonstrate, Shakespeare stages Evans's and Caius's respective nonnative Englishes by combining their grammatical errors with their distinctively strange phonetic patterns.

The immigrant characters are not the only ones who misuse the "King's English," however. As Lynne Magnusson has argued, the play's native speakers of English form a heterogeneous linguistic community whose individual members

<sup>18</sup> In the folio text of the play, William initiates his recitation of the accusative case with "hinc," but Evans completes the list when William cannot remember. If they were grammatically correct, William's "hinc" and Evans's "hing" would be "hunc" and "hung," respectively.

<sup>19</sup> The orthographical representation of francophone pronunciations of English words was employed earlier by James Bellot in his *Familiar Dialogues* (1586), a phrase book designed to help native French speakers, most notably exiled Huguenots, understand and be understood in an English linguistic environment. Bellot's book features dialogues in three columns: English, French, and a French pronunciation of English that uses French orthography to reproduce the sounds of English words. See Newman (2009: 173–4n28).

<sup>20</sup> In the 1602 quarto edition, this line reads, "And dere be ven to, I sall make de tird" (Shakespeare 1602: D4r). On Shakespeare's use of polyglot puns, see Delabastita (2005: 168–83).

<sup>21</sup> This line does not usually appear in modern editions of the play. In the quarto text, it follows Caius's previous line.



produce a series of “micro-languages” that collide during a moment when the English language was simultaneously expanding by borrowing words from other languages and just beginning to be standardized (Magnusson 2011: 244). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that when Slender speaks in malapropisms in this dynamic linguistic environment, it is Evans, a fellow “abuser” of the King’s English, who serves as his translator:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Slender | But if you say ‘marry her’, I will marry her. That I am freely dissolved and dissolutely.  |
| Evans   | It is a fery discretion answer, save the faul’ is in the ’ord dissolutely’. The ’ort is, according to our meaning, ‘resolutely’. His meaning is good. (1.1.210–14) |

Here, Evans’s speech remains characteristically strange and “Welsh,” but he finds himself in the position of an interpreter who can translate and communicate Slender’s intended meaning with a word that other listeners will understand.<sup>22</sup> The linguistic self-inclusion indicated by his use of the collective possessive pronoun “our,” however, is deployed at the comic expense and exclusion of Caius in the following act when the Host of the Garter Inn addresses him by a less-than-complimentary name:

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| Host  | A word, Monsieur Mockwater.   |
| Caius | Mockwater? Vat is dat?  |
| Host  | Mockwater, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.                 |
| Caius | By Gar, then I have as much mockwater as de Englishman. (2.3.49–54) |

The Host, whose own speech is characterized by the use of Latinate words and neologisms, takes advantage of the fact that the term “mockwater” is strange to Caius by providing an intentionally contradictory translation, at once shutting Caius out from “our English tongue” and making him victim to it. In his attempt to manipulate the relationship between the word and its meaning, however, the Host relinquishes control over the word once it enters Caius’s lexicon. As soon as the Host tricks Caius into believing that “mockwater” means valour, Caius unwittingly quantifies his own “mockwater,” or urine, in relationship to that of the Englishman and thus turns the joke back on the Host and the English more broadly.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, when the Host attempts to mediate the “fray” between Evans and Caius in the next act, he diverts their physical violence by allowing them to

<sup>22</sup> For a reading of these exchanges and the different forms they take in the folio and quarto texts, see Zucker (2011: 43–7).

<sup>23</sup> The phrase “an Englishman” can be read in a few different ways. Giorgio Melchiori glosses the phrase as “any Englishman” (Melchiori 2000: 2.3.57n). James Siemon suggests that Caius mistakenly assumes that his opponent is English in this comparison (Siemon 2002: 265n40). Caius tests his levels of “mockwater” in the scuffle with the Welsh Evans in the following act, but his true opponent for the affections of Anne Page is, in fact, Slender, an Englishman.

debate in English, a common linguistic ground. Rather than inflict violence upon each other, Evans and Caius are allowed to do violence unto the language the Host calls “our[s]” at their exclusion: “Disarm them and let them question. Let them keep their limbs whole, and hack our English” (3.1.66–7). Evans and Caius are brought into the fold of the English language only to demonstrate that they are not part of the “our” that circumscribes it. The English language becomes the arena in which the immigrants will amuse the linguistic community of the play and its audience, but by encouraging the displacement of physical violence onto “our English,” the Host acknowledges that the host language is vulnerable to violation even as he welcomes linguistic hacking as an alternative to bodily harm.

As the linguistically themed exchanges between Evans, Caius, and the Host of the Garter Inn illustrate, the guest-host construction often attributed to the relationship between immigrants and their host location is literalized in the structure of the play when the two immigrant characters are triangulated by their interaction with the figure of the Host. Quite literally a host by profession and, in this play, by name, the Host emphatically declares his possession of the English language at the expense of Evans and Caius and becomes a figure for English as a host language that both makes room and denies entry at the proverbial inn. The complex triangular relationship that develops between Evans, Caius, and the Host is governed by a series of movements that define the embodied host culture in relation to its immigrant guests. The Host takes on a position between and in opposition to the two strangers. As he invites them to “hack our English” rather than each other, the Host not only provides a common ground for the meeting of immigrants from different locations, but he also serves as a reminder that they are more like each other in their strangeness than they are like the host culture that receives them. In addition to connecting and opposing the Welsh and French immigrant guests, the Host reveals that the roles he so emphatically tries to maintain are vulnerable to transposition. Throughout the Host’s movements between, against, and even across the lines that define his relationship with the play’s immigrant guests, questions and concerns about language persist.

Although the Host is by no means the only character to interact with Evans and Caius, his sustained encounter with them becomes a model for the play’s broader attitudes toward strangers, which—in the case of the Host—reveal the fine line between hospitable and hostile. The Host’s general hostility toward strangers finds its most overt expression in his use of terms such as “Ethiopian,” “Francisco,” “Castilian King Urinal,” “Anthrophaginian,” and “Bohemian Tartar” to address and insult other characters throughout the play.<sup>24</sup> In his interaction with Evans and Caius, the Host consistently finds parallel descriptors for both men as he attempts to mediate between the characters John Michael Archer describes as “symmetrically outlandish neighbors” (Archer 2005: 56). The Host refers to them as “Gallia and Gaul, French and Welsh, soul-curer and body-curer” (3.1.81–2). If Doctor Caius is “terrestrial,” then Evans the Parson is “celestial” (3.1.88–9).

---

<sup>24</sup> For a more complete list of terms used by other characters in the play, see Walter Cohen’s introduction to *Merry Wives* in Greenblatt et al. (2008: 1258).

Though they serve to differentiate on one level, these parallel descriptors of origin, identity, and profession effectively collapse the identities of Caius and Evans into a single category: stranger.

The roles of strange guest and host in *Merry Wives* prove to be easily confused when the immigrants attempt to avenge the ridicule they have suffered throughout the play.<sup>25</sup> In the fourth act, a trio of Germans appears mysteriously offstage, and our only knowledge of them is delivered by report.<sup>26</sup> Whether Evans and Caius physically disguise themselves as Germans or fabricate the idea of a German presence behind the scenes, the play's immigrants make calculated use of another alien identity in order to undo the Host's treatment of strangers, which remains predictably consistent in his interaction with the offstage Germans. When presented with the opportunity to exchange his horses for money, the Host states the initial condition of his communication with these new arrivals as a linguistic one: "Let me speak with the gentlemen. They speak English?" (4.3.5–6). This proposed linguistic exchange never takes place in the text of the play, but it indicates the Host's ability and desire to communicate exclusively in the host language he attempts to define and defend throughout. The Host vows that he will "sauce" the Germans in order to "make them pay" for his horses (4.3.8–9), but, as A. J. Hoenselaars suggests, the Host's undoing follows the same patterns he has established for his treatment of strange guests: "Shakespeare thus suggests that the successful outcome of the practical joke is partly due to the Host's belief that he can gull or exploit foreigners" (Hoenselaars 1992: 59). Translated into or through the Germans, Evans and Caius reverse the Host's exploitation and extend their translational experience into the realm of theft, a form of translation in and of itself that involves the conveyance of goods or ideas out of one person's possession into that of another.<sup>27</sup> Evans enacts the news he delivers as he communicates their successful cozening:

<sup>25</sup> Much has been made of the fact that the words "guest" and "host" share a common linguistic root and are interlaced in their meaning. As Émile Benveniste explains in his detailed etymological analysis of "hospitality," the Latin term *hospes* "is a compound term that literally means 'guest-master' and goes back to *hosti-pet-s*, whose two elements are 'potis' and 'hostis.'" Though the Latin *hostis* means "enemy," it corresponds to Gothic and Old Slavonic terms for *stranger*, which developed into notions of "guest" and "enemy." The "primitive notion conveyed by 'hostis,'" according to Benveniste, is one who is engaged in a reciprocal exchange within a gift-giving social context (Benveniste 1973: 71–83). Following Benveniste's etymological lead, J. Hillis Miller concludes, "A host is a guest, and a guest is a host. A host is a host. The relation of household master offering hospitality to a guest and the guest receiving it, of host and parasite in the original sense of 'fellow guest,' is inclosed within the word 'host' itself" (Miller 1991: 146). See also Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000: 43–5).

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the wordplay surrounding the word "*German*" in the cozening scenes, see Parker (1996: 129–30). See also, Archer (2005: 56–8).

<sup>27</sup> For an extended reading of the relationship between translation and stealing, see Parker (1996: 121–31). See also, Neill (2000: 416–17). As both Parker and Neill have pointed out, Ben Jonson makes a connection between translation and theft in his 1602 play *Poetaster*, where he equates literary translation with stealing. See Jonson (2001: 5.3.279–80).

Have a care of your entertainments. There is a friend of mine come to town tells me there is three cozen Garmombles that has cozened all the hosts of Reading, of Maidenhead, of Colnbrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you. You are wise, and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well. (4.5.61–6)

By informing the Host of the Garter Inn that other neighboring hosts have been cheated of horses and money by this group of Germans, or “Garmombles,” Evans confirms the Host’s fear that to be a host is to be cozened by the strange guest.

The role reversal of guests and host is only temporary, however, as the play ultimately restores Caius to the role of the gull, who, along with Slender, is tricked into marrying a boy at the play’s end. Although Evans is involved only indirectly in the wooing plot, his linguistic identity plays a crucial role in the dramatic resolution as well. Falstaff’s original plan to translate the will of Mistress Ford out of honesty into English ultimately fails as he falls victim to the trickery of the comic machine, and Ford, the once jealous husband now convinced of his wife’s trustworthiness, is encouraged by Evans to leave his “jealousies” behind (5.5.127). When Ford replies to this command by stating, “I will never mistrust my wife again till thou art able to woo her in good English,” Evans’s perpetual inability to speak “good” English by virtue of his not being a native speaker becomes a condition, if not *the* condition, of the play’s satisfactory conclusion (5.5.128–9). While Falstaff resents the fact that he is “ridden with a Welsh goat,” Ford rests his newly restored trust and the play’s resolution on Evans’s incomplete domestication (5.5.132). As long as the immigrant character remains sufficiently strange, the domestic scene can maintain proper order.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of a play in which English linguistic identity is defined against and at the expense of immigrants, we might ask, as Sir Philip Sidney does in *The Defense of Poesy* (1580), “What is it ... against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers, because they speak not English so well as we do? What do we learn?” (lines 1363–6).<sup>29</sup> As I have argued throughout this essay, the response to linguistic difference is indeed a matter of hospitality. What the characters, audiences, and readers of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* ultimately learn from the experience of hosting the stranger within the English language is that the linguistic self is unstable. Acts of translation, Ricoeur suggests, invite the mother tongue “to think of itself as one language amongst others, ultimately to see itself as foreign” (Ricoeur 2006: 9). By bringing the languages of guest and host into contact with one another and attempting to translate what is strange into English, Shakespeare takes on what Friedrich Schleiermacher describes as “the difficult task of representing the foreign in [his] own mother tongue” and succeeds in demonstrating the flexibility and mutability of the English into which the

<sup>28</sup> Not unrelatedly, wooing in good English is also a condition of the resolution of the Anne Page plot. At the moment of the play’s conclusion, both suitors have been tricked into marrying boys, and it is no coincidence that neither Caius nor Slender is capable of speaking “good” English.

<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to Eric Griffin and Marjorie Rubright for this reference.

immigrant is translated (Schleiermacher 2004: 54).<sup>30</sup> The stranger on the stage embodies and performs the linguistic encounters that make such translation both necessary and always incomplete. Incomplete translation becomes, then, the condition of immigrants, for even as people move across geographical boundaries, the circumstance that cannot change is their nativity and its enduring effects on their own language as well as that in which they live.

## Bibliography

- Apuleius. (1566). *The Xi Bookes of the Golden Asse Conteyninge the Metamorphosie of Lucius Apuleius, enterlaced with sondrie pleasaunt and delectable Tales*. W. Adlington, trans. London.
- Archer, J. M. (2005). *Citizen Shakespeare: Freeman and Aliens in the Language of the Plays*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ascham, R. (1570). *The Scholemaster or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong*. London.
- Baret, J. (1574). *An Alvearie or Triple Dictionarie, in Englishe, Latin, and French*. London.
- Bellot, J. (1586). *Familiar Dialogues for the Instruction of the[m] that be desirous to learne to speake English and perfectlye to pronounce the same*. London.
- Benveniste, É. (1973). "Hospitality." In *Indo-european Language and Society*. E. Palmer, trans. London: Faber and Faber, 71–83.
- Berman, A. (1992). *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. S. Heyvaert, trans. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . (1984). *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Blank, P. (1996). *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language and Renaissance Writings*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Callaghan, D. (2000). *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cervantes, M. de. (1612). *The history of the valorous and vvvittie knight-errant, Don-Quixote of the Mancha Translated out of the Spanish*. T. Shelton, trans. London.
- Cotgrave, R. (1611). *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongves*. London.

---

<sup>30</sup> In his formative lecture "On the Different Methods of Translating," Schleiermacher outlined a provocative model that presents the translator with two choices: to import the text into the domestic space and language of the host culture and efface cultural and linguistic difference or to bring the reader to the original text by retaining a "feeling of the foreign," or the characteristic features that define it as such (Schleiermacher 2004: 53). The domesticating method that Schleiermacher advocates against "insists that no violence be done to" the receiving language. His preferred foreignizing method, on the other hand, demands "that a certain flexibility be granted to our native tongue" (Schleiermacher 2004: 55).

- Delabastita, D. (2005). "Cross-language comedy in Shakespeare." *Humor* 18:2: 161–84.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1986). *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. D. Polan, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J., and Dufourmantelle, A. (2000). *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmontelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*. R. Bowlby, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dillon, J. (1998). *Language and Stage in Medieval and Renaissance England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Florio, J. (1611). *Qveen Anna's New World of Words, Or Dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues*. London.
- Greenblatt, S., et al., eds. (2008). *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Hall, K. F. (1995). *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Helgerson, R. (2000). *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . (1998). "Language Lessons: Linguistic Colonialism, Linguistic Postcolonialism, and the Early Modern English Nation." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 11:1: 289–99.
- Hoenselaars, A. J. (1992). *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: A Study of Stage Characters and National Identity in English Renaissance Drama, 1558–1642*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses.
- Iyengar, S. (2005). *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Jonson, B. (2001). "Poetaster." In *Ben Jonson: The Devil is an Ass and Other Plays*. M. J. Kidney, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–101.
- Kearney, R. (2006). "Introduction: Ricoeur's Philosophy of Translation." In *On Translation*. E. Brennan, trans. New York: Routledge, vii–xx.
- Kermode, L. E. (2009). *Aliens and Englishness in Elizabethan Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Magnusson, L. (2011). "Language." In *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*. A. Kinney, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 239–57.
- Marcus, L. (1996). *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Miller, J. H. (1991). "The Critic as Host." In *Theory Now and Then*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 143–70.
- Montgomery, M. (2012). *Europe's Languages on England's Stages, 1590–1620*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate.
- Morini, M. (2006). *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate.
- Navarre, M., Queen of. (1597). *The Queene of Nauarres Tales Containing, Verie pleasant Discourses of fortunate Louers. Now newly translated out of French into English*. London.



- Neill, M. (2002). *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Newman, K. (2009). "Englishing the Other: 'Le tiers exclu' and Shakespeare's *Henry V*." In *Essaying Shakespeare*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 85–95.
- Parker, P. (1996). "'Illegitimate Construction': Translation, Adultery, and Mechanical Reproduction in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*." In *Shakespeare from the Margins*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 116–48.
- Ricoeur, P. (2006). *On Translation*. E. Brennan, trans. London and New York: Routledge.
- . (2004). *Sur la traduction*. Paris: Bayard.
- Schleiermacher, F. (2004). "On the Different Methods of Translating." In *The Translation Studies Reader*. L. Venuti, ed. S. Bernofsky, trans. London and New York: Routledge, 43–63.
- Shakespeare, W. (2008a). *The History of Henry the Fourth (1 Henry IV)*. S. Greenblatt et al., eds. New York: W. W. Norton, 1177–254.
- . (2008b). *The Life of Henry the Fifth*. S. Greenblatt, et al., eds. New York: W. W. Norton, 1471–548.
- . (2008c). *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. S. Greenblatt, et al., eds. New York: W. W. Norton, 1255–320.
- . (2000). *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Giorgio Melchiori, ed. London: Methuen.
- . (1602). *A Most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie, of Syr Iohn Falstaffe, and the merrie Wiues of Windsor*. London.
- Sidney, P. (1989). "The Defence of Poesy." In *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*. K. Duncan-Jones, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 212–50.
- Siemon, J. (2002). *Word against Word: Shakespearean Utterance*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Smith, I. (2003). "White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage." *Renaissance Drama* 32: 33–67.
- Thomas, T. (1587). *Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae*. London.
- Tudeau-Clayton, M. (2010). "Shakespeare's 'welsch men' and the 'King's English'." In *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly*. W. Maley and P. Schwyzer, eds. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 91–110.
- Venuti, L. (2008). *The Invisibility of the Translator: A History of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wall, W. (2003). "*The Merry Wives of Windsor*: Unhusbanding Desires in Windsor." In *A Companion to Shakespeare's Words*. R. Dutton and J. Howard, eds. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 376–92.
- Zucker, A. (2011). *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.