Modern, yet "full of forms, figures, shapes, objects": The Trouble with Translating Shakespeare's English into English

Michael Albright, Southwest Minnesota State University

As part of my duties within my university's concurrent enrollment program—an arrangement that allows qualified teachers to deliver credit-bearing university courses—I encounter sections of introductory literature that are "doing" Shakespeare, as students and their teachers sometimes put it. On one particularly memorable visit I made to a rural Minnesotan high school, a student encapsulated Shakespeare in one word: "gibberish." When approaching Shakespeare—sometimes for the first time—students must grapple with familiar-sounding, but differently-used turns of phrases that mingle with obsolete adverbs, pronouns, or oaths, like "thither" and "hither," "thee" and "though," or "Zounds!" When Shakespeare's Early Modern English is thus absorbed within the space of the twenty-first-century classroom, students understandably may struggle to get, or maintain, their bearings.

As a spokesperson for his peers, the student's assessment of Shakespeare only confirmed what I had witnessed many times before in countless other classroom settings—urban, rural, homogenous, or diverse. Despite the omnipresence of Shakespeare as a curricular mainstay of secondary school literature classrooms, the task of "doing" these Early Modern plays does not come without what seems to be requisite degrees of fear, misunderstanding, or discontent. As Ralph Alan Cohen puts it, "much of the English-speaking world have made his name [Shakespeare] synonymous with daunting academic challenge—an unwanted hurdle that afflicts students and teachers alike…" (ix). Popular lore has cemented Shakespeare as nearly impossible to understand—even though his words, characters, and stories have been prominently featured within everyday culture in the form of various media adaptations like the teen film comedies *Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999) and *She's the Man* (2006). Yet, this cultural proliferation does little to cut through the "gibberish" students may encounter when studying Shakespeare's works in their original form.

There is little doubt that studying or appreciating Shakespeare's works requires a considerable investment that might present significant challenges for students and teachers tasked with "doing" Shakespeare. Understandably, teachers endeavor to make Shakespeare as

painless as possible for their students by attempting to ease the burden. Naturally, many of these efforts are predicated on addressing the complexities of Shakespeare's language, while ensuring understanding of any given play's dramatic situation and its historical conditions. To clear the "hurdle" of understanding that Cohen identifies, some students and their teachers actively seek more expedient pathways to convert the perceived "gibberish" into something more comprehensible via print or online resources that promise to "translate" Shakespeare's English into English.

Such translations run the gamut to appeal multiple popular or academic audiences, and they have assumed numerous forms, ranging from adaptations or sendups on television or in cinema, to full-scale modern language translations of original works, which can include side-by-side or interlinear translations. These materials are joined by various other abridgements, study aids, novelizations, and appropriations that convert Shakespeare's stories to new contexts, such as the LEGO-inspired *Brick Shakespeare* series or Ian Doescher's Shakespearean *Star Wars* retellings. In this article, I explore the history, describe the industry, and evaluate the outcomes of one particular form of translation: the body of helping materials that pair Shakespeare's original words alongside today's English. Either by providing line-by-line translations or including frequent glosses in bite-sized chunks, this segment of the translation market has become a mainstay in many English classrooms over the past few decades, now extending beyond print to find a home on the Internet.

While these translations and resources have provided new ways to understand and appreciate Shakespeare's Early Modern English, I argue that there are attendant losses that must not escape our attention as students, educators, or critics of Shakespeare. Depending on how exclusively or methodologically teachers and students avail themselves of such resources, I propose that we have the potential to become complicit in dismissing Shakespeare and his canon as senseless "gibberish" that needs substantial glossing in order to be understood. To make visible the complications associated with some of today's linear translations of Shakespeare's works, I will turn my attention to his most overtly erudite and linguistically verbose comedy, *Love's Labour's Lost* whose resident pedant, Holofernes, reveals valuable professional and pedagogical lessons for teachers of all eras—particularly, when it comes to language instruction and the construction of knowledge.

If we completely overlook Shakespeare's original words, freely replacing them with "modern" translations, we risk equating his nuanced use of language to the pedantic and superfluous utterances spoken by someone like Holofernes—an object of mockery. The lessons Holofernes teaches us through his folly are illustrative of what is at stake when we attempt to help students by converting Shakespeare's English into something it is not, instead of appreciating or approaching it for its own merits. I will conclude my analysis by noting how more active approaches to reading and built-in opportunities for performance can mitigate the fear and misunderstanding elicited by textual readings, leading to gains likely precluded by linear translations or glosses alone.

"Be not afeard": Fearing Shakespeare's "Noises"

Today's post-Millennial generation of high school students, the members of Generation Z born in 1995 or later, are not the first to fear or struggle with Shakespeare in their classrooms. However, these students are some of the first to have been born into a world and schools in which the Internet has existed as a dominant, connecting force that has resulted in an abundance of resources, editions, and helping materials dedicated to Shakespeare. Curiously, the compartmentalization of Shakespeare's language into more manageable selections or glosses did not originate on the Internet.

As Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan note, "Shakespeare first entered American education as a rhetorician" (79). As such, students and teachers approached excerpted lines and speeches from Shakespeare's works in the context of public oratory and elocution rather than literary study or appreciation, which are approaches more familiar to students today. The "piecemeal" introduction of Shakespeare to American secondary schools was solidified most notably by the McGuffey Readers, graded primers popularized in the mid-nineteenth century that served as early textbooks for students (Crowl xiv). Only later, did publishers become invested supplying full-text editions of Shakespeare's works to classrooms.

Along with the shift from excerpts to full-text editions were debates on how to democratize Shakespeare's works, while making them "livelier for students" (Frey 544, 547).[1] Shakespeare's language—even for earlier generations of students unfamiliar with texting and the Internet—emerged as a major stumbling block. Full-text editions were sometimes poorly glossed or faultily edited, making the work for classroom teachers in previous centuries that much more

difficult. A major disconnect emerged between Shakespeareans who "declare[d] their subject one of exalted grandeur" and some teachers or students who considered the study of Shakespeare to be "hardly worth the effort" (542). This tension between academics, teachers, and their students is not to be unexpected, and real pedagogical challenges may endure in many secondary or higher education classrooms when it comes to confronting the intricacies and curiosities of Early Modern English.

Accompanying the reality that Shakespeare will appear within their English or literature courses is the perception among many students that his language is indecipherable, arcane, and hopelessly complicated—to the point that certain students will swear that his plays are written in Old English, the Anglo-Saxon period language whose end predated Shakespeare by 500 years. So widespread is this misconception that Wikipedia has placed a redirect link on the "Old English" page that reads, *"For Elizabethan or Shakespearean English, see Early Modern English"* ("Old English"). While the English in which Shakespeare wrote is indeed older relative to the versions of English spoken today, it is not incomprehensible or impossible for modern audiences or readers to understand. Still, it is worth noting that when nineteenth-century schools made the switch from studying ancient languages to Shakespeare's English, even then it was "no everyday language for students" (Robinson 1). Its temporal distance from everyday discourse is not enough to make Shakespeare's English beyond our understanding in today's classrooms.

Fear of the unknown or the unfamiliar is what Phillip Schwadron, a performer and director turned teacher, assigns as "the main reason for turning our backs on Shakespeare" (5). Samuel Crowl attributes this reaction to students who are "raised in an anti-rhetorical culture, a culture in which we are accustomed to a dense succession of rapidly changing visual images…but not verbal ones" (xxii). To combat this collective opposition, teachers may find themselves vainly echoing Caliban when first introducing Shakespeare or one of his plays. However, such promises of "[s]ounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 3.2.131) may not be enough to quell everyday students' fears or undo the struggles encountered in previous classes, thus perpetuating feelings of resistance and encouraging shortcuts for navigating the language in its original state. These shortcuts are what compromise the integrity of both the plays themselves and students' experiences, ultimately leading to more losses than gains.

When it comes to the sound of Shakespeare's language, Rex Gibson asserts: "The vigour of language, its sound and evocative power, mattered as much as its logic" (45). Yet, as I will demonstrate, students and teachers often prize the logic, or "meaning," of Shakespeare's words to the point that it no longer matters if such logic is sourced from the original. There is no denying that "unexpected arrangements of words, familiar words used with unexpected meanings, and omissions of syllables, parts of syllables, and words cause particularly significant difficulties" (Robinson 4). Yet, when omitted or altered, the sonic devices that hinge on Shakespeare's Early Modern language lose their import entirely. Substitutions of today's English words for Shakespeare's language destroys meter, masks *double entendre* and much of the humor that often depends on such wordplay, and obfuscates intentional ambiguities of some words.

To make Shakespeare's characters sound like contemporary Americans makes it that much harder for students enter the mindset of people of those times—people who were not so different from themselves as students. While students "may be intimidated by a sacred-scripture approach" to Shakespeare's language, the playwright "did not think of himself as a theologian but as a working dramatist" (Rygiel 2). As such, students and their teachers must avoid equating Shakespeare's language to elitism—a move that prevents students from making connections to their own circumstances and realities

Linda Johnson in her book *Teaching Shakespeare Today* interviews two high school teachers from Northern Kentucky who explain that much of their work with students is indeed about reconfiguring perceptions. Dan Davies speaks of the need "to pull Shakespeare down off the pedestal," while Norman Yonce works to "bring Shakespeare down from that ethereal level on which most people have placed him" (Johnson 161-62). Even so, there is no denying that Shakespeare wrote in "an English which is significantly different not only from other languages but from modern English," which "startles us" (Elsom 4). John Haddon echoes Elsom's affirmation by cautioning against being "too sanguine about the difficulty of Shakespeare's language," which is "in all conscience, very (sometimes astonishingly) difficult" (4). To acknowledge openly the difficulty of Shakespeare's language, however, is not equivalent to dismissing it as inaccessible. Instead, approaching his language in its original form is the first step to preserving the technical, performative, and cultural nuances that are so integral to appreciating the plays.

Easing the Burden? Translating Shakespeare's English into English

In a 2010 opinion piece published in *American Theatre*, John McWhorter, a linguist and senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, boldly called for Shakespeare's works to be *fully* translated and performed in "modern English readily comprehensible to the modern spectator" ("It's time"). His plea, which generated a certain degree of controversy among other critics, also spurred change among enterprising publishers and translators, including Kent Richmond, professor emeritus at California State University Long Beach who has created eight such translations since 2008.[2] McWhorter argues that today's audiences are missing out entirely on understanding Shakespeare's works in their original form, stating that "[t]he tragedy of this is that the foremost writer in the English language, the most precious legacy of the English-speaking world, is little more than a symbol in our actual thinking lives, for the simple reason that we cannot understand what the man is saying." In his appeal for a replacement set of plays to be performed, McWhorter is firm about maintaining quality and fidelity to the original: "The translations ought to be richly considered, executed by artists of the highest caliber well-steeped in the language of Shakespeare's era, thus equipped to channel the Bard to the modern listener with the passion, respect and care which is his due." Yet, not all critics freely submit to this sort of sweeping assessment of Shakespeare's language, nor do they embrace such a full-scale update of the canon. Furthermore, it is even less likely that students will seek these more faithful and invested translation efforts over more accessible, pedestrian aids.

In an effort to push back against popular opinions that Shakespeare's language is too difficult to grasp or enjoy, Ralph Alan Cohen conducted a study of the opening independent clauses in Shakespeare's thirty-eight plays or collaborations and found that of the 624 words in this sample set, only ten—less than two percent—were archaic and difficult to understand (13, 17). If indeed only two in fifty of Shakespeare's words escape the understanding of today's students, how has such widespread fear and reluctance persisted? If as midcentury Shakespearean Alfred Harbage attests, "difficulties can be exaggerated" (qtd. in Frey 548), what can today's teachers do to reverse the order and have students focus on what they come to the stage or text already knowing?

The answers to these questions depend on how teachers and students choose to encounter the perceived language barrier and if they do so by "recommending materials or actions that will relieve students of some or all of the burdens imposed by Shakespeare's language" (Robinson 1).

Naturally, teachers are the ones who students expect to ease these burdens. But, as Gerald M. Berkowitz plainly concedes: "We knock ourselves (and them) out trying to teach students how to read Shakespeare with some understanding of what's in the text and some appreciation of how it's written" (561). While, of course, not every support system or resource is inherently harmful to students' appreciation or understanding of Shakespeare, pedagogical moves or shortcuts become increasingly problematic when they rely on "delaying or minimizing encounters with it" (Haddon 4). Robinson goes a step further to note that "such offerings, at best, condescend to students and, at worse promise much and deliver little" (2). As it will become apparent in the overview and analysis that follow, various efforts to "translate" or "modernize" Shakespeare have sapped his English of its modernity, causing it to be misidentified as a language last spoken over five hundred years ago. Below, I will present a range of popular approaches and resources that exist to help students and teachers navigate Shakespeare's words, while making visible the attendant messages these offerings might convey to students in the process.

While Americans might have adopted Shakespeare as part of its secondary school curriculum well after England, our culture, as Crowl notes, has enjoyed greater latitude to "play with Shakespeare, to experiment with him, to try to adapt him to new landscapes" as compared to the English (xx). In today's multimodal classrooms, it is not surprising to come across various adaptations, translations, resources, and riffs of Shakespeare and his works. In fact, because of his established place in the curriculum of so many schools, these institutions along with their population of teachers and students exist as a "ready-made market" for these products (Lanier 105). Whether in print or online, these sorts of materials—particularly, translations or fully modernized glosses—entice students seeking alternative, expeditious ways of navigating what they might perceive as inordinately old or indecipherable language.

Even before the arrival of modernizations or translations, educators were active in devising strategies for the benefit of their students' comprehension. In his 1930 handbook entitled *Ways to Teach English*, Thomas Blaisdell suggests teachers insert synonyms on the fly for words perceived as difficult when reading Shakespeare. Such an approach, as Blaisdell stresses, "demands a living knowledge of the play" (458). By having teachers generate suitable and extemporaneous replacements for words, Blaisdell essentially advocates for a form of translation. Instead of a full-scale replacement of all of Shakespeare's words, this process involves strategic substitutions, which will ideally position students to "understand that the

familiar word has the meaning of the unfamiliar one" (458). Blaisdell further explains that his approach to easing the burden, which is placed squarely on the teacher, is superior to other types of assignments or aids. He even emphasizes that the process should occur "almost without effort on the part of the pupil" so that "unfamiliar words become a part of his vocabulary" (459). This promise of effortlessness is the selling point of many of the translations and resources available for purchase and consumption today.

Over sixty years after Blaisdell, Norman Yonce and Dan Davies, the two Northern Kentucky teachers from the interview quoted above, stress that the key to students' understanding is for them to "get the language into their own" by "putting it into modern language" (Johnson 162). While these educators unite in their desire to clarify Shakespeare's language, their approach stops short of calling for entire, line-by-line translations. Furthermore, none of them insists on "fixed paraphrases," as Haddon calls them, or rigid assignments of easier words to be substituted for words perceived to be more difficult (49). Instead, this sort of substitution method is meant to complement Shakespeare's words to prevent undue obscurity or confusion. These modifications are "brief, deft and only used to clear up meanings that are obscured by grammatical or lexical obscurity or ellipses" (46-47).[3] And, if we are to apply Cohen's calculations, it would mean that such conversions would interfere with only two percent of the language in place.

Yet, the proliferation of "wholesale approach[es]" in which "almost everything is rephrased, whether it needs it to be or not" would seem to suggest a heightened sense of interference encountered by students and teachers alike (Haddon 47). Time constraints, an overall disinclination to read what is old, or fear, might compel people to turn to these resources when "doing" Shakespeare—even if the potential for understanding has existed all along.[4] Once relegated to bound works in which Shakespeare's English was translated line-by-line on facing pages, these large-scale, comprehensive efforts are now just a click away for students, and they are often available free of charge with little searching required. Editors of these materials can be difficult to acknowledge depending on the source, and there are never guarantees of an editor's training or credentials when it comes to the accuracy of a translation students consult. Even if students are unmoved by these possible gaps in quality, they may be taking away even less clarity or understanding from certain translations than they realize.

Taking the Shakespeare out of Shakespeare

On the website for the series, *Shakespeare Made Easy*, the headline, "Taking the fear out of Shakespeare" directs readers to numerous appeals of and testimonials for the product (*Made Easy*). Dame Judy Dench, Anthony Sher, Julie Walters, and John Cleese offer their endorsements for this resource's utility, while students and teachers are urged to visit their country's publisher for purchase options. *Shakespeare Made Easy* has been published for over thirty years and has secured a place in numerous schools, colleges, and universities. As if to declare victory over a centuries' long war over Shakespeare's English, the website celebrates the beauty of its ten available play editions with the words: "At last – Shakespeare really is made easy!" (*Made Easy*). This series' more popular online counterparts make similar promises to transform Shakespeare's language into something modern, easy, and quick, while emphasizing the vast difficulties of having to comprehend Shakespeare's English in its Early Modern form.

The website Shmoop, a clearinghouse of courses and academic resources for students and teachers, offers free and paid content to its users.[5] One of its features is known as "Shakespeare in Modern English," which invites visitors to "[f]ind out what those plays are actually saying" because, per the site's introduction, "uh, not understanding what on earth he's [Shakespeare's] saying isn't so great either" (Shmoop.com). SparkNotes' product, *No Fear Shakespeare*, offers its translations online and in print form, and it promises "Shakespeare's works translated into today's English" (*No Fear*). A less developed and corporatized site called *No Sweat Shakespeare* invites students to "[r]ead Shakespeare's plays as modern translations…as an easy to read, exciting teenage novel" (*No Sweat).* Not only do these products unite in their promises, they also deploy similar messaging to appeal to their customer base, or market share. *No Sweat Shakespeare* even goes so far as to reconfigure drama into teen fiction, enacting a transformation that would be unrecognizable to Shakespeare or his contemporaries. One of the most explicit messages these options convey to potential users is that Shakespeare's works are, in their natural state, inordinately difficult. Implicit in this claim is that literary analysis, reading, taking in, or appreciating a play is hard and not worth the effort. Because many students are not opposed to saving time and completing tasks as painlessly as possible, these types of messages tend to resonate. In addition to accentuating their ease, these resources purport to "make" something new and better of Shakespeare. "Modern" English of "today" is touted as replacing what cannot otherwise be understood without such helping materials.

The rhetoric of Shmoop's description is even more telling, as it suggests that only via today's twenty-first-century, youthful idiom can we access the veracity of what Shakespeare is "actually" saying. It is as if to suggest that reading or auditing Shakespeare in its original form would result in a misrepresentation of meaning. To understand Shakespeare, then, is to effectively divest him from his language. By celebrating what they are able to offer in the negative—no fear, no work, no misunderstandings—these resources emerge as saviors for students who would otherwise fail to appreciate Shakespeare's words without another's translation of their "actual" meaning.

Despite its allure for students, the emptiness of these selling points is troubling, and the promised gains lead to unaccounted for losses. Not only do students have the option to circumvent the original material entirely, but also they are potentially presented with the message that Shakespeare's words are somehow superfluous or even unreliable in terms of their meaning. What is ironic about this more implicit and damaging message is that Shakespeare ridicules empty and grandiose displays of language via his clowns, courtiers, and schoolmasters— something that these translation aids accomplish by redirecting students from Shakespeare's English to what is perceived as easier and truer. Holofernes, a tertiary figure in *Love's Labour's Lost*, makes particularly visible just what is at stake in terms of dismissing another's language as nonessential, laughable, or meaningless. The audiences' and fellow characters' reactions to Holofernes mirror the sorts of readings students and teachers run the risk of achieving should we promote translations of Shakespeare's words in place of their original form.

Holofernes' Language Lessons

Of all of Shakespeare's plays, *Love's Labour's Lost* will "confirm the worst fears" students possess when delving into one of his works (Cohen 221). This late 1590s comedy is regarded as one of Shakespeare's most ostensibly intellectual plays for both its focus on scholarship and its witty, allusive language. The play is "full of people who abuse language: they speak too much, they reach for obscure words and syntax, and they value the form of what they say more than the content" (Cohen 221). Chief among these language abusers is the play's resident pedant, Holofernes who is staged as one of Shakespeare's "figures of fun" (Winson par. 6). Per Cohen, Holofernes emerges as one of the comedy's "word-clowns" (211). His missteps and foolishness would have been immediately recognizable to an early modern audience that could associate the

character type with actual members of their communities. Yet, despite his enacted ridiculousness, a schoolmaster like Holofernes serves a didactic role for audiences, offering some of their respective plays' best lessons on what not to do—professionally or linguistically.

       Love's Labour's Lost creates a world in which a schoolmaster's presence would seem fitting—if not requisite. The principal plot of the play focuses on the King of Navarre's men as they, under his direction, reconfigure their court as a "little academe" (Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost* 1.1.13) in which they vow to forswear women in order to engage in three years of study. Navarre and his men, however, plan to study without the aid of an outside teacher. Instead, the King himself "will serve as their schoolmaster" to form a "single-sex enclave" devoted to learning (Moncrief, "'Teach us'" 118). The integrity of their masculine "enclave" and the vow upon which it was founded, however, is almost immediately disrupted by the Princess of France's arrival with her own retinue of ladies who come to instruct the men in various ways.[6] The scholarly activities that have come to define Navarre in the play's opening scenes are closed to a wider world, not only making it difficult for outsiders to enter, but also making it that much more conspicuous when they do come on scene.

       Holofernes and others like him are "mocked because of the way they talk," since "[w]here one would expect wisdom from these learned figures, one paradoxically finds the opposite" (Winson par. 6). Winson bases her conclusion these schoolmasters' use of language, and she situates these schoolmasters as part of the contemporary debates concerning Latin and the vernacular. Shakespeare thrusts his schoolmaster into a world in which his expected professional skills appear to lack purpose or utility beyond the schoolhouse. In his time on stage, Holofernes engages in extraneous festive performances that only succeed in reinforcing his lack of necessity as a community member. His time on stage—for parts of only two acts—is dominated by pretentiousness and pedantry as he takes on the role of directing and performing in a play of the Nine Worthies put on for the nobles' entertainment.

       Much of the play's enduring popularity as a comedy lies in its satirical treatment of learning, its place in the world, and those who are charged with its practice or preservation. As Daryll Grantley argues: "The satire here is not on education itself, but rather its social misuse by those who are propelled, through their own eccentricity or the uncertainty of their social background, into an overly zealous embrace of it" (188). Edward Dowden explains that modern educators would be interested in the play because "[i]t exhibits and satirizes the pedantry,

puerility, affectation, and conceit of teachers" (47). As a teacher, Holofernes is guilty of all charges levied by Grantley and Dowden, as his eccentricity and verbosity mark him as a zealous pedant who is socially damned by his language. What is all the more ridiculous is that Holofernes is likely a teacher in a lower school based on his reported use of a hornbook.[7] As such, his pretensions to knowledge and his "gift" for language are rendered all the more absurd and useless.

Holofernes' first appearance on stage occurs in the second scene of Act IV where he and his loyal companion, the curate Nathaniel, discuss the hunt conducted by the Princess and her ladies. Dull, a constable whose name reflects his intellect, appears to be unable to keep pace with the schoolmaster, and the curate's Latin-infused dialogue and becomes the unwitting auditor of Holofernes' immodest claims to knowledge along with Nathaniel's unwavering corroboration. After having delivered an epitaph for the deer slain by the Princess, Holofernes shamelessly expounds on his talent, and Nathaniel responds by celebrating his friend's purported stature in the community:

| HOLOFERNES. | This is a gift that I have, simple, simple—a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas; apprehensions, motions, revolutions. These are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. But the gift is good in those in whom it is acute, and I am thankful for it. |
| NATHANIEL. | Sir, I praise the Lord for you, and so may my parishioners; for their sons are well tutored by you, and their daughters profit very greatly under you. You are a good member of the commonwealth. (*Love's Labour's* 5.2.61-70) |

The above exchange between the schoolmaster and curate establishes for the audience Holofernes' individual reputation—morally, socially, and linguistically. The "gift" that Holofernes touts is ultimately lost on Dull or dismissed by others in the community as useless Latinate rhetoric. In fact, the use value of Holofernes' "gift" becomes one of the play's objects of satire and leads to is downfall when his performance of the Nine Worthies falls apart.

In their original form, Holofernes' exaggerations and boastful claims to fame provide audiences with a clear view of how language can be abused or misappropriated in a way that makes it empty or devoid of meaning as a result of his manner of speech. His anatomizing of his thought process is laughable for its pedantry, and the didactic effect of this comedy is potentially lost on the audience when certain line-by-line translations resort to overly literal interpretations of his words, which mask his flagrant ignorance of applied elocution. A prime example of this deadening the effect of Holofernes' bombast appears in the transcribed modern English translation that is provided for the same speech above in the 2011 BookCaps study guide called *Love's Labour's Lost in Plain and Simple English*.

The unnamed editor(s) of this edition maintain(s) the first three lines of Holofernes' declaration above but take liberties in their word-for-word parsing of the rest of his speech. When it comes to his gift, the Holofernes of this edition expounds that the activities within "come from the part of the brain used for/ Memory, nourished in the womb of the membrane surrounding the brain, and/ Is delivered when the moment is ripe. But the/ Gift is good for those people that have it acutely…" (Shakespeare *Plain and Simple* 92). The *BookCaps* version of this speech provides a technical and seemingly transparent gloss of Holofernes explanation for his gift. Yet, it ultimately obscures the inherent absurdity of Holofernes' claims to authority, as it is reduced to something more objective than objectionable for audiences.

As a whole, *Love's Labour's Lost* "is a dramatic plea on behalf of nature and of common sense against all that is unreal and affected" (Dowden 48). One of these affectations spotlighted within the play is Holofernes' empty language, which, for both auditors and readers, is easily dismissed.

But, what if in replacing Shakespeare's words with those that are somehow more understandable, complete, and more authentic, publishers, students, and teachers become complicit in regarding Shakespeare as just another Holofernes? What are the implications of bypassing or replacing what some may regard as an entire canon of "forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas; apprehensions, motions, revolutions" that are meant to be replaced? As I would argue, those who indiscriminately avail themselves of such resources with the expectation that these aids will result in something at long-last clear, understandable, and "true" are relegating Shakespeare to the same ridiculed position as Holofernes and other staged schoolmasters who used learning and language for self-promotion.

Taking Action: Where Do We Go from Here?

If, as Cohen insists, "students already have the tools to unpack most of the sentences in Shakespeare," why are his works so misunderstood and feared among students (53)? What can educators do to assuage students of their fears without assuming all of the burden as translator and taskmaster? For many instructors, the answers to these questions lie in taking action by opting for, whenever possible, performance approaches that go beyond "desk-bound" readings, which, in 2013, still accounted for the approach adopted most frequently by participants in 19 out of 45 countries according to a self-reported study compiled on the Royal Shakespeare Company's wiki (Whyman 5). Perhaps not surprisingly, the primary antidote to such passive readings in which the fear of language can paralyze students is performance. As Cohen argues, "[g]ood performances destroy the 'language barrier' by short-cutting the useless translation channel that, in a reading, jams all other receiving channels" (17). Gibson concurs by affirming that, for Shakespeare and students, "[l]anguage is action" and that teachers should be the ones "helping them to enact the language" (5, 86). While he calls for full-length, high-quality translations to replace the Shakespeare's Early Modern English, McWhorter recognizes that performance is the key to "shed our fear of language change and give Shakespeare his due— restoration to the English-speaking world" ("It's Time"). If full-scale or full-length performances are an impossibility for teachers, providing opportunities for students to give life to Shakespeare's words as written will endow his language with power. Even a small-group interpretation of a scene or speech succeeds in creating an audience and infuses a classroom with the richness of Shakespeare's original language.

Teachers who automatically graft or subordinate Shakespeare's English to external translations aids that purport to ease students' burden as readers do little to elicit or preserve the ground of truth Shakespeare sought to establish via his language. Based on the availability of one-click translations and the pressures placed on today's generation of students to achieve, passivity is incentivized—especially given the promises these resources make at the outset. Feelings of fear and confusion are potentially self-fulfilling for students who defer to translations of English that they could otherwise understand with appropriate levels of support, effort, and activity. Instead of being "enfranchised as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and actors," students become complacent and are complicit in relegating Shakespeare's words to a place of

lesser value—one that is potentially out of sight and mind if the translation supplants his language entirely (Gibson 6).

Despite their designs as support systems for what is admittedly a challenging subset of English literature, these translations can discourage activity among students and their teachers if used "wholesale" as replacements or supplements. Teachers who adopt a more hands-off approach by openly encouraging or deferring to such translations without regard for their quality or use value essentially exclude themselves from occupying a much more valuable and active helping role in their classrooms. With such a role comes a greater level of investment, however, as teachers need to possess their own command over the plays and their language.

As Cohen reminds us, "Shakespeare's audience went to the playhouse not in possession of the language they would hear there but in search of it" (55). If students eschew this search in favor of more "modern" versions of English promised by readily available translations, they run the risk of disenfranchising themselves to find what they already know: language that is easy to understand. What students may not realize, though, is that this conscious bypassing of the original for something seemingly easier makes them complicit in dismissing Shakespeare's language as somehow less real or valuable than their own. If students and teachers are not conscientious in their approaches to understanding Shakespeare's language, one of the world's most enduring cultural and literary icons may end up becoming misidentified as a grandiose wordsmith, "full of forms, figures, shapes, objects." With a click of a mouse, what students may have come to regard as "gibberish" is easily replaced by convenient sound bites that divest Shakespeare's words of their sound, meaning, history, and value.

In the moralizing words of Holofernes, whose bombastic speech made him an object of the audience's ridicule, such approaches are "not generous, not gentle, not humble" (*Love's Labour's* 5.2.617)—or, just "not nice" per *BookCaps*' translation of "generous" (*Plain and Simple* 181).

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Notes

[1] Sharon A. Beehler in her chapter "Teaching Shakespeare's Dramatic Dialogue," *Teaching Shakespeare Today*, ed. James E. Davis and Ronald E. Salomone (NCTE, 1993) emphasizes the high stakes of attuning classroom instruction to the contemporary conditions of social class, stating: "Today Shakespeare serves as either the means by which a person enters the dominant society through familiarity with the culture or the model against which one must exercise resistance in order to demonstrate fair-mindedness toward disenfranchised members of society" (14).

[2] See Richmond's Shakespeare Translation Project at http://web.csulb.edu/~richmond/index.html housed at CSULB.

[3] Frey in "Teaching Shakespeare in America," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35.5 (1984) claims that even the modernization of spelling is problematic since it can "prevent the reader from hearing what Elizabethan auditors heard" (554).

[4] Ralph A. Cohen in *ShakesFear and How to Cure It* (The Arden Shakespeare, 2018) argues that students fear of failing to understand Shakespeare's language becomes a "self-fulfilling prophecy" that is reinforced by the use of or reliance of such resources (53).

[5] Founded in 2009, Shmoop.com celebrates its presence in thousands of schools worldwide. It describes its teaching method as one that "revolves around the basic idea that learning is often too hard—so we carry gallons of humor-laden academic WD-40 to squirt on the tracks whenever we can. If students enjoy the process, they will do it...more" (Shmoop.com).

[6] Critics have noted that the arrival of the women to the court also results in the overturning of instructional authority, as the Princess' ladies teach the men how to court them. Kathryn M. Moncrief, for example, in "'Teach, us sweet madam': Masculinity, Femininity, and Gendered Instruction in *Love's Labour's Lost*," *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncreif and Kathryn R. McPherson (Ashgate, 2011) argues that "the seemingly fixed gender hierarchies and gender roles are disrupted in the rehearsal and display of a different model: the female schoolmaster and male pupil" (114).

[7] Holofernes' professional and learned status becomes a matter of inquiry when Armado, a foreigner, asks if the schoolmaster is "lettered" to which Mote, Armado's page, responds, "Yes, yes, he teaches boys the horn-book" (Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's* 5.1.41-42)