On Modernizing the Language of Romeo and Juliet for Finnish Teenagers*

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Abstract
This article examines a recent production of Julia and Romeo at the Finnish National Theater (2018) as an example of innovative linguistic adaptation, accomplished through the use of style variations and a touch of rewriting. While most of the FNT Finnish text is based on Marja-Leena Mikkola’s poetic translation (WSOY 2006), the dramaturg Anna Viitala, working closely with the director and actors, added a layer of colloquial, teenage language. Features include tiny insertions, such as vou [wow],” oki [OK], and phrases teens use with each other or to annoy their parents. Sometimes a single poetic line is replaced with a shorter and more colloquial speech, framed by much more poetic text. In a larger piece of rewriting, Romeo and Juliet’s shared sonnet is turned into a hilarious poem Romeo is writing on love, drawn in part from Troilus and Cressida. For the most part, these juxtapositions of colloquial language added a comic touch, inviting teenage audience members to relate to the characters. But they were also effectively used to heighten tragedy, as for example in the simple repetition of a Finnish word for hello and goodbye, hei, which Romeo and Juliet awkwardly said to each other when they first met, and which was repeated three more times later in the play at key moments. The analysis points to the significant role stylistic variation can have in theatrical translation and adaptation, and suggests translators think beyond a simple continuum between archaizing and modernizing as strategies for translating historical texts.

Keywords
Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, translation, adaptation, style, colloquial

* Many thanks to Andrew Chesterman and the anonymous reviewers of Concentric for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this article.
In discussing the strategies available to translators in the translation of older texts, Francis R. Jones and Allan Turner trace a continuum between archaizing and modernizing approaches, ranging from “hyperarchaization” to “violent modernization” (159). For example, the opening lines of Holmes' archaic and modern translations of a rondel by Charles d’Orleans nicely show the range, where *jeunes amoureux* become “Lusty yongue bachelers” (170) in the archaized version and “young rockers” in the “violently modern” one, as the idiom dates the translation to a fairly specific time, the 1960s or 70s (168). Jones and Turner state that “minimal modernization” seems to be “the most commonly proposed solution,” as this is the one which seems most “timeless” (177). What Jones and Turner do not discuss, however, is texts which have adopted a range of different strategies—texts, for instance, like the production of *Julia & Romeo* at the Finnish National Theater (FNT) in 2018. While most of the FNT Finnish text is based on Marja-Leena Mikkola’s modern poetic translation, the dramaturg Anna Viitala, working closely with the director Jussi Nikkilä and the actors, added a layer of colloquial, teenage language, what one might consider closer to “violent modernization” in the Jones and Turner framework. In this article, I discuss the use of stylistic variation and rewriting in the production. Features include tiny insertions, such as *vou* [wow], *okei* [OK] or phrases teens use with each other or to annoy their parents. Sometimes a single poetic line is replaced with a shorter and more colloquial speech, framed by much more poetic text. In a larger piece of rewriting, Romeo and Juliet’s shared sonnet is turned into a hilarious poem Romeo is writing on love, itself adapted from Pandarus’ song to Helen in *Troilus and Cressida* (3.1). For the most part, these juxtapositions of colloquial language added a comic touch, inviting teenage audience members to relate to the characters. But they were also effectively used to heighten tragedy, as for example in the simple repetition of the Finnish word *hei*, which can mean both hello and goodbye, which Romeo and Juliet awkwardly said to each other when they first met, and which was repeated three more times later in the play at key moments, most heartbreakingly at the end. Especially in an era when Shakespeare’s early modern English is being translated into modern English, it might be useful to consider what sorts of effects are possible in a text which combines modern and colloquial language, thus playing with a variety of styles.1

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1 I am using “style” in the sociolinguistic sense discussed by Peter Trudgill, indicating a continuum from the very formal to the very informal (83). In this analysis, the very formal is represented by Mikkola’s traditional poetic translation and the very informal by the colloquial inserts added by Viitala.
Most translated Shakespeare is translated into modern language (a boon for foreign Shakespeare theater-goers perhaps), but there also seems to be a widespread assumption that older translations quickly begin to feel dated. In Finland, the publishing company WSOY undertook a project to re-translate the complete works of Shakespeare in 2002-13, with one of the most repeated justifications being that the older translations by Paavo Cajander (published between 1879-1912) had aged and become difficult to understand. For example, one reviewer commented that “A contemporary person simply does not understand them when heard onstage, although when read they can provide unique and nostalgic pleasure” (qtd. in Keinänen “Canons” 113). At a seminar organized to celebrate the completion of the WSOY complete works re-translation project (21 November 2013), the audience burst into laughter when actors began playing Cajander’s version of the *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scene, due to what felt like stilted language, and sighed in relief when they heard the same scene again in Mikkola’s modern translation. Within any foreign Shakespeare, then, there might well be multiple translations from different eras, and some readers or viewers might be familiar with more than one version. \(^2\)

I have not found many scholarly discussions of Shakespearean translation which explicitly take up questions of archaizing vs modernizing, much less how extreme stylistic variations might function in a translated text. In keeping with Jones and Turner’s observation that most translators favor minimal modernization, only one article discusses archaizing tendencies: late nineteenth-century translations of Shakespeare’s tragedies into Hebrew tended to favor older Biblical forms, though as Hebrew was revived as a spoken language in the early twentieth century “patterns became more complex” (Golomb 206). By contrast, most articles discuss modernization or even colloquialization. For example, the translator and scholar George Volceanov discusses his efforts to create a more modern and correct translation of *King John* into Romanian, and in a separate article Mariana Neagu analyzes his translation, starting from the assumption that “a translator of drama must translate into the modern target language if he wants his characters to ‘live’” (though she also points out that translators should also reproduce a “bookish or old fashioned style” as needed) (67). The French Shakespeare translator Jean-Michel Déprats also writes about questions of historicity, and whether translations should be pseudo-archaic or modern. David C. Moberly examines the first Arabic performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1930, which was translated into colloquial Egyptian Arabic, thus making Shakespeare available for the first time to

\(^2\) On re-translation in Finnish drama, see Aaltonen (2003). For the concept of re-translation more broadly in Finland, see Koskinen and Paloposki (2015).
the uneducated Egyptian public, especially women. In her sociological study of Egyptian translation, Sameh Hanna also considers Shakespeare translations into colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Ron Engle briefly comments on Peter Zadek’s controversial use of colloquial German, which Zadek defends as “natural” (102). Jorge Díaz Cintas discusses Spanish subtitles for Lawrence Olivier’s Hamlet film, finding them simplified and accessible, and thus failing to convey the traditional and archaic quality of the original. What these studies show is that decisions about where to place a particular translation on the archaic-modern spectrum are deeply embedded in the linguistic, literary and theatrical history of the target culture, and these decisions can raise strong feelings in spectators.

Within the Finnish context, Aaltonen (1999) has traced the different phases of the transmission of Shakespeare into Finland, pointing out that Shakespeare became increasingly more colloquial beginning in the 1960s, when directors began teaming with translators to create their own unique interpretations of Shakespearean classics (152). Nestori Siponkoski’s work (2014) on the editorial processes of the WSOY complete works translation project notes in passing that the level of colloquiality was sometimes discussed by copyeditors and translators (123). A questionnaire study of Finnish respondents to two stylistically-different contemporary Finnish translations of Hamlet revealed wide variations in expectancy norms regarding Shakespeare translation, with some preferring a more compact and poetic (thought to be more archaic) translation while others preferred a more prosaic and modern (Keinänen “Receptive”). In that study, respondents disagreed on whether the language should be archaic, modern, or something in between, without about half of the respondents thinking it should be “old,” while others thought it should “not be too old” but also “not too modern.” Even those who thought the translation should reflect the age of the original hoped that the translation would be “easy to understand” (Keinänen “Receptive” 28). Two recent Finnish dramatic adaptations of Romeo and Juliet, Jari Juutinen’s monologue Juliet, Juliet! (2007) and Laura Sipari and Liisa Urpelainen’s Romeo vs. Julie (2014) similarly experiment with the juxtaposition of modern colloquial and more poetic language, but in the opposite way to the FNT production: both are mainly written in modern colloquial Finnish but juxtapose excerpts of poetic Finnish translations of Shakespeare for humorous and/or jarring effects (Keinänen “Pleasures”).

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For discussions of Romeo and Juliet translations more broadly, see Trivedi (India) and the collection Romeo and Juliet in European Culture, edited by Juan F. Cerdá, Dirk Delabastita and Keith Gregor. Agnieszka Romanowska provides an interesting counter-example, where an early twentieth-century Polish translation/adaptation was criticized for the “pomposity and verbosity” (104) of its language.
Within the English-speaking world as well, there are discussions about the need to modernize Shakespeare. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's controversial project to commission new “translations” of Shakespeare into modern language generated wide debate (Gamboa; Shapiro). The “No Fear Shakespeare” online series by Sparknotes provides side-by-side text, modernized and original, and similar series are available (for example by Prestwick House, Shmoop) as an aid to student engagement with Shakespeare’s language. The Cambridge School Shakespeare also brings a modernizing element to Shakespeare, keeping the original text, but accompanied on facing pages by modern prose explanations of the stage action, a glossary, and study questions. Targeting a teen and young adult audience, a “violent” form of modernization and colloquialization is the OMG Shakespeare series (Penguin Random House), which translates Shakespeare into text messages, emojis, checking in at certain locations, and updating relationship status; the second book in the series was YOLO Juliet, 2015. As far as I am aware, however, none of these modernizing Shakespeare efforts experiment to a large extent with juxtaposing more formal and less formal styles to achieve their effects, and it is to these I now turn.

Perhaps one reason style variation seems so important in the FNT production was because of its timeless quality, or mixing of times, an important theme for Anna Viitala, the dramaturg. In an interview, she told me she imagined a kind of psychological time where everything was happening all at once. The Romeo and Juliet story has always been told, and will always be told. Both the opening of the play, where Juliet walks alone from the very far back wall to the front of the stage, and the very end, where Romeo and Juliet walk back that route together, emphasized the timelessness of the piece, which Viitala linked to a quotation from T. S. Eliot, “In my beginning is my end” and “In my end is my beginning” (182, 190). Played on the main stage of the Finnish National Theater, a traditional proscenium arch seating around 900 patrons, the production used a minimalist set, composed of a simple rotating box placed close to stage front. Juliet and Romeo both had balconies, the boxes nearest to the stage on the level of the first balcony, Juliet’s decorated with blooming flowers and Romeo’s, representing his banishment in Mantua, with dead ones. The younger generation were in modern dress, jeans and

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4 See Martins and Sagres.
5 My sincere thanks to Anna Viitala, who shared many insights about the production in an interview on 7 March 2019, and to Virpi Haanpää, who kindly provided both an early and final script. Page numbers are to the final version, dated 23.4.2018, which is divided into five acts with scenes numbered consecutively from beginning to end. Since these don’t correspond to modern English editions, I include only the page numbers of the script.
hoodies, with Juliet in simple dresses. The older generation, by contrast, were in more Victorian or Edwardian clothing, also adding to the timeless quality of the production. Juxtapositions of different linguistic styles can be seen as an extension of this timelessness, though of course paradoxically very colloquial language tends to be closely tied to a specific time and place. I am particularly interested in how colloquial language, especially in juxtaposition with more poetic language, was used to emphasize the comedy, but also to deepen the tragedy. To give some flavor of the effects achieved in Finnish, wherever possible in my back translations I have simply added the colloquial layer to Shakespeare’s English text.

While much of the colloquial layer is used to comic effect, the play begins with a non-Shakespearean sequence in very modern idiom serving to emphasize both in-group male bonds and the violence of the feud, and also adding a verbal punch echoing the physical blows. When we first see him, for example, Tybalt is practicing jumping kicks, and he asks Samson to hold his hand up high as a target for him to aim at:

| Pidä. Kato, kato! (hyppypotku) (1) | Here. Check it out! (jumping kick) |

Similarly, individual colloquial words are used during the fight sequences, such as Iske! [Hit him!] and Anna mennä! [Go for it!] in Act 3 (51).

Within the separate male groups, small colloquial inserts are also used to show affection and create humor. For example, in 1.4 the Montague supporters greet each other with deliberately clumsy off-rhymes, such as Mercutio replying to Benvolio’s greeting of Serkku! [Cousin!] with Kurkku [Cucumber] (8). Later in the same scene, a slightly larger addition of original material adds a layer of multilingualism as well as humor. Here, Benvolio and Mercutio are teasing Romeo about being in love, and he suddenly breaks off and tells Mercutio to “Stop it!

| Benvolio: Puhuisit vakavasti: ketä rakastat? | Ben: I wish you’d be serious, who is it that you love? |
| Mercutio: Rakastat erästä naista. | Mer: You’re in love with |
| Ben: Tell me in sadness, who is that you love? |
| [Mercutio not in this scene in Shakespeare’s version] |

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7 Admittedly, this makes the contrasts more jarring in English, given the qualities of Shakespeare’s early modern English. For some of the examples, I include separate back translations and Shakespeare’s version.
### Benvolio’s Speech

Benvolio’s speech is still fairly poetic, but then Mercutio’s teasing is more colloquial, while his use of Italian and English adds a mocking tone to the interaction. Romeo’s demand that Mercutio “stop it!” is colloquial, but then he begins to wax poetic again about Juliet’s looks, with allusions to Cupid and Diana as the speech continues (not quoted here).

Particularly good examples of the ways juxtapositions of poetic and colloquial text were used to achieve comic effects come just before and during the Queen Mab speech. In Shakespeare’s text, the Queen Mab speech comes in 1.4, before the boys crash the party in 1.5, but in the FNT version the speech has been shifted to during the party, and becomes part of a sequence where, in an added parallel to the Romeo and Juliet love story, Mercutio seduces Tybalt (more on that below). Romeo is telling Mercutio about his dream in poetic language, but then Romeo gets distracted thinking about Juliet, which is announced in colloquial speech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benvolio’s Line</th>
<th>Mercutio’s Line</th>
<th>Romeo’s Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Rosaline. . . Oh, l’amore è come il fumo. . . I want to put. . .</em></td>
<td><strong>Mercutio, lopeta!</strong> Hän on hyvin kaunis. (my emphasis)<strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Romeo:</strong> Mercutio, stop it! She’s very beautiful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 Benvolio’s line and Romeo’s response aside from the opening retort have been taken from Miikkola’s translation. Viitala has added Mercutio to the scene and the colloquial retort (1.1.217, 225)
Here in the bolded section Romeo speaks like a stereotypical love-struck teenager, the quick shift to a modern colloquial register creating a humorous clash with the poetry which comes just before and indeed after, as the Queen Mab speech continues. There is also an incredibly evocative, though very short, switch to a colloquial register during the Queen Mab speech itself. Mercutio delivers the speech to Tybalt, and as he describes the fairy world he circles in closer, almost taunting his enemy with his own physical charm. Finally, he gets close enough to ask if he can take a drag on Tybalt’s cigarette:

From here, Mercutio jumps right back into the Queen Mab speech in the translator’s original modern Finnish poetry, and the seduction continues.

In these examples among the younger generation of men, we have seen how colloquial insertions add punchy and even violent rhythms to the dialogue, highlighting the raw, young masculinity of the boys. Similar colloquial insertions are also added to the speeches between Romeo and Juliet, often for humor as the mannerisms of teenage speech is mocked. One of the most sustained and funniest are small insertions of “wow,” as in the balcony scene when Romeo comes out of hiding and the two see each other:
Julia:
Oletko Romeo, ja Montague?
[Romeo astuu esiin.]
Vou. . . (31)

Romeo:
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair
than she. Wow. . . (2.1.45-48)

Juliet:
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?
(2.1.102)
[Romeo comes forward.]
Wow. . .

Later in the scene when Juliet tells Romeo not to swear on anything, she says “wow” three times quickly in a row, causing Romeo, too, to fall out of poetry and reply “sorry” before she picks up the poetry again (33). Like many of these small colloquial insertions, the meaning of “wow” deepens towards the end. At the beginning of Act 5, when Romeo is in Mantua thinking of Juliet, telling of his dream, he utters a now much more poignant “wow” (in place of Shakespeare’s “Ah me!”) when thinking of being kissed by Juliet:

Juliet:
I dreamt my lady came and found me
dead—
Strange dream, that gives a dead man
leave to think!—
And breathed such life with kisses in my
lips
That I revived and was an emperor.
Wow!
[Ah me!] how sweet is love itself
possessed,
When but love’s shadows are so rich in
joy! (5.1.6-11)

Recalling the moments when Romeo and Juliet discovered each other during the balcony scene, the inserted “wow” reminds us of the physical connection between Romeo and Juliet, the surprise and wonder of meeting someone you think is good-looking and then finding out that they seem to be interested in you too. The nights I saw the production, the teenagers sitting around me often burst into laughter at these wows.
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Related to “wow” is “OK,” though these insertions were used more to express the uncertainty of youth, for example by being used as fillers, a word to say while the character thinks of something better to say. During the balcony scene, for example, Juliet pauses on “OK” before asking Romeo how he got there:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Julia</th>
<th>OK . . . How’d you get here?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okei. . . . Kuinka pääsit tänne?</td>
<td>This place is dangerous If any of my kinsmen find you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tämä paikka on hengenvaarallinen jos sukuni miehet sinut löytävät. (32)</td>
<td>How cam’st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore? [The orchard walls are high and hard to climb.] And the place death, considering who thou art, If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (2.1.104-07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this sequence, Viitala has additionally cut some of Mikkola’s translation—the question in the first line is reduced to just a few words and feels quite colloquial, and the mention of the orchard walls is left out. This version feels more adolescent, hesitant, the stumbling of a girl who has so quickly fallen in love that she doesn’t know quite what to say but nevertheless feels she should stand up for herself and challenge the boy. The modern “OK” also spills over into interactions between the teenagers and the adults, and also between adults. When the Nurse tells Juliet that Father Lawrence is waiting to make her a wife, she says “OK” (47) and similarly when Capulet and Paris are discussing the wedding date, Capulet asks “Is Thursday OK?” (64). The Finnish okei or ok are loanwords from English, adding a slight hint of multilingualism and code-switching to the play, though certainly the word has been used in Finnish for decades.

In a way that recalls and relates to this deployment of “OK,” effective use is also made of colloquial filler sounds, especially tuota, which corresponds to “uh” and again highlights the uncertainty of the adolescents, adding a light comic touch. For example, in the balcony scene just after Juliet has asked Romeo how he got in, he tells her how he flew in on the wings of love, but then stumbles for words:

| Rakkauden siivin liidin yli muurin, kivestä ei voi tehdä rakkauelle rajaa, | With love’s light wings did I o’erperch these walls, |
Modern Finnish adolescence is also marked by other repeated colloquial phrases, such as *tullaan*, a passive structure used actively to mean “I’m coming” which Juliet shouts on four occasions to the nurse at the end of balcony scene (34-35). A quickly repeated *mene, mene!* [go, go!] is also used to add an adolescent flavor to the language, such as when Benvolio tells Romeo to run after he kills Tybalt (54), or when Juliet tells Romeo to leave at the end of the aubade scene (66), though here the effect is much darker.

As can be expected in a love tragedy, style variations are also used, especially increasingly toward the end, to heighten tragedy. One particularly striking modern touch is during Juliet’s fight with her parents about whether she has to marry Paris, where Shakespeare’s Juliet’s poetry is reduced in Viitala’s adaptation to an angry one-word answer, emphasizing her agitated mental state:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rouva Capulet:</th>
<th>Capulet’s Wife:</th>
<th>Capulet’s Wife:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torstaiaamuna, rakas lapsi, uljas ja jalo kreivi Paris tekee sinusta onnellisen vaimon.</td>
<td>Capulet’s Thursday morning, dear child, the gallant and noble Count Paris Will make you a joyful bride.</td>
<td>Capulet’s Wife: Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn The gallant, young and noble gentleman The County Paris at Saint Peter’s Church Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Julia: Ei! Ei, ei!</em> Kertokaa isälleni että en aio vielä mennä naimisiin, ja kun menen, olkoon sulhasena mieluumanmin Romeo, jota tiettävästi vihaan, kuin Paris. (68)</td>
<td><em>Juliet: No! No, no!</em> Tell my father I will not marry yet, and when I do, I would rather marry Romeo—whom you know I hate—than Paris.</td>
<td>Juliet: Now, by Saint Peter’s Church, and Peter too, He shall not make me there a joyful bride. . . . I pray you, tell my lord and father, madam, I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It shall be Romeo—
whom you know I hate—
Rather than Paris.
(3.5.112-23)

Like Juliet’s repeated “No,” Shakespeare’s text also contains repetition, where Juliet sarcastically repeats her mother’s words about “Saint Peter’s Church” and “joyful bride.” Here we can see something of what is lost with this kind of “violent modernization” as the religious layer of Juliet’s appeal to a Catholic saint is lost along with mention of getting married in a church. The reference to a saint also harks back in Shakespeare’s text to Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet, with its juxtaposition of religious devotion (holy shrine, pilgrims, saints) and physical desire (hand, lips, kiss), which Stephen Greenblatt discusses as the “refashioning of traditional religious materials” whereby (Catholic) theology and ritual practice are “turned into desire and its fulfilment” (112). In this production, the shared sonnet is also eliminated, replaced with Romeo’s awkward poem (discussed below).

Juliet's continuing short and colloquial retorts to her parents when they demand she marry Paris make her seem quite resolute, perhaps again at the expense of developing the play's religious themes as what is cut is Juliet's meditation on the sin of pride, often associated with women in the early modern period:

9 Grateful acknowledgement is made to one of the anonymous reviewers for this point.
The juxtaposition of Juliet’s short and angry responses with Capulet’s equally angry but more poetic speech highlights the age and power differences between them, paradoxically both giving Juliet power, in that she so clearly and simply says what she wants, but also taking it away, as she has less room to explain her thoughts and try to pacify her parents, less room to show that she has absorbed the religious teachings of her age. In some sense, these cuts too can be seen as a kind of modernization, as modern Finnish audiences are presumably even less likely than Shakespeare’s late-sixteenth-century audiences were to share Juliet’s parents’ views on female behavior and pride.

Even if cuts and colloquialization may be seen as simplifying some of the play’s religious themes, they were also used to heighten dramatic effect. By far the most sustained and effective use of colloquial language is repeated use of the Finnish word **hei** [pronounced like English “hey”), which is used in Finnish to mean both “hello” and “goodbye.” In this production, the word travels from a shy and uncertain greeting, to an expression of deep love, to goodbye, to a loving greeting in the afterlife. It was an amazing journey, and by the final **hei** I imagine most of the audience was in tears. **Hei** worked so effectively in part because it was part of the wider constellation of colloquial language already discussed, and also because it was poised so delicately between comic and tragic inflection; which is to say it allowed the audience to experience Romeo and Juliet’s dramatic arc as tragic and comic at the same time.

**Hei** is the first word that Romeo and Juliet speak to each other, and in its first use provides a comic little moment revealing the awkwardness and uncertainty of young love. On his way to the Capulet party, Romeo is writing in a little book he carries about his fears for the evening when he sees Juliet, who has appeared from behind the house curtain, which has been drawn to create the exterior of the Capulet home:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>miehen? (69)</strong></th>
<th><strong>fine man to be her husband?</strong></th>
<th><strong>that is meant love.]</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capulet: . . . And yet ‘not proud’ . . . (3.5.137-51)</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Romeo: Aavistelen pahaa [kirjoittaa muistikirjaansa]</strong></th>
<th><strong>Romeo:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>jokin armorton ja pelottava seuraamus,</strong> <strong>jokin määrääika, tähtiin kirjoitettu,</strong> <strong>alkaa tämäniltaisista juhlista ja päätää</strong></td>
<td><strong>I fear too early, for my mind misgives</strong> <strong>Some consequence yet hanging in the stars</strong> <strong>Shall bitterly begin his fearful date</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With this night’s revels, and expire the term
Of a despisèd life, closed in my breast,
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
Woowww. . .
[Juliet approaches Romeo]
Juliet: Hei.
Romeo: Hei.
Nurse: Juliet!
[The Nurse pulls Juliet back behind the curtain] (1.4.306-11)

The mood changes completely with the next repetition of *heı*, which are the last words spoken before the intermission, after Romeo has been banished. Juliet is giving the “Come night” speech from her balcony, and Romeo appears on his balcony across the stage. She notices him, and says quietly:

Juliet: Hei.
Romeo: Hei. (57)

It was a stunning end to the first half.

Two more instances finish the sequence. At the end of the aubade scene, the word hovers poignantly between hope and despair, hello and goodbye:

Juliet: No, it is day, it is. Be gone, away!
More light and light it grows.
Go! Go!
[Romeo begins to exit]
Juliet: Wait! I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
O, do you think we shall ever meet again?
Romeo: I do.
Juliet: Hei.
And the final instance of *hei* comes at the end of the play, after Juliet has committed suicide. These are the final words the two speak to one another, and indeed are the last words in the play since the reconciliation of the parents at the end is cut. This final *hei* brings us back to the first one, and Romeo and Juliet, now in the afterlife, walk slowly back to the door at the far back of the stage from which Juliet emerged at the beginning of the play. Here it means both goodbye and hello, an unhappy ending to an unhappy tragedy, but also something deeper, even hopeful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Julia: Teen sen nopeasti.</th>
<th>Juliet: Then I’ll be brief. [Juliet kills herself.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Pimeys.</em></td>
<td>[Darkness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Julia ja Romeo laittavat kehikon pyörimään.</em></td>
<td><em>Julia and Romeo spin the set.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia: <em>Hei.</em></td>
<td>Juliet: <em>Hei.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: <em>Hei.</em></td>
<td>Romeo: <em>Hei.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOPPU</td>
<td>THE END</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(93)</td>
<td>(5.3.169)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I had never seen a production of the play which cut the reconciliation between the parents, and at first I missed it since it offers a glimmer of hope that the children have not died in vain. But this production did not provide such consolation, only the promise of love in the afterlife, signaled by the final repetition of *hei*, its meaning perhaps changed once again. Note that in these shared *heis*, it is always Juliet who speaks first. This could be seen as a sign of strength: certainly Satu Tuuli Karhu’s Juliet was the braver of the two teenagers, often delightfully so, and as seen in the inversion of names in the title, the director and dramaturg also wanted to highlight Juliet’s strength. But there is also a kind of power in having the last word, and it was always Romeo’s.

Until now I have been analyzing short colloquial insertions, mainly used to heighten comic or tragic moments, or both at the same time as in the last instance of *hei*. There is one longer sequence worth mentioning in this discussion of style variations in the play, the addition to the party scene of a poem by Romeo which delightfully captures the awkwardness of adolescence and hence works to draw a teenage audience into the world of Shakespeare modernized. In Shakespeare’s version, Romeo and Juliet have very little to say to one another at the party scene other than the shared sonnet and a few lines thereafter; the dramaturg Viitala wants
to give us a little more of their first meeting. This sequence masterfully combines very colloquial Finnish idiom with more “Shakespearean” writing, some of which is actually Pandarus’ poem to Helen of Troy borrowed from *Troilus and Cressida*. During the party scene, Romeo and Juliet break away from the crowd. At first, Juliet is very formal with Romeo, greeting him politely and employing romantic and somewhat formal language typical to Shakespeare’s version, interspersed with the kind of quick colloquial retorts we saw in Juliet’s fight with her parents:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julia:</td>
<td>Sopii tutustua paremmin. Toivon että jalo herra ja herran jalous tulevat minulle lähemmin tutuksi. Romeo: Hyvin sanottu.</td>
<td>Juliet: We could maybe get to know each other. It would be nice to become further acquainted with your noble lord and your lordship’s nobility. Romeo: Well said. Juliet: No! Romeo: No?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia:</td>
<td>Ei! Romeo: Eikö? (21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Juliet is terrified and her terror manifests itself as awkward and forced speech, talking without quite knowing what she is saying. Again, the idiom is vaguely Shakespearean:

| Julia: | Selkä on vatsan suoja, äly on juonien suoja, naamio on kauneuden suoja ja vaiteliasuus on hyvän maineen suoja (zip) – jopa onkin miehellä hyvin muodostunut otsa. Miksi puhun sivu suuni? Kun syö pelkkiä kyyhkyjä niin niistä veri kuumenee, ja kuuma veri johtaa kuumiin ajatuksiin ja kuumat ajatukset kuumiin tekoihin. Sulkekaa suuni. (22) | Juliet: Your back protects your stomach, intelligence protects against intrigue, a mask protects beauty, and silence your reputation [zips her mouth closed] –oh the man doth have a goodly brow. OMG, why did I just say that? If you only eat pigeons your blood gets hot, and hot blood leads to hot thoughts and hot thoughts lead to hot deeds. Shut your mouth, Juliet. |

Romeo can only stare at her in silence, a very funny moment as they stare at each other awkwardly, each trying desperately to think of something to say next. It is Juliet who finally finds her tongue, only to ask why Romeo is silent. This leads him
to reveal that he is a poet and has been writing a poem about love, leading to another comic exchange which is unfortunately not easily translatable into English. In Finnish there are two words for love, *rakkaus* and *lempi*. The former is perhaps more common as a way of evoking what the modern English word “love” also evokes, while the latter in isolation is more archaic and romantic, though in modern language it often used in combinations where the meaning is more like “favorite”—for example, *lempivärini* is “my favorite color.” Juliet cannot believe that Romeo would write a poem with such a gauche name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Julia: Miksi vaikenette?</th>
<th>Juliet: Why don’t you say something?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: - - -</td>
<td>Romeo: - - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia: Sano nyt jotain. No!</td>
<td>Juliet: Come on, say something!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: Minä luen nyt runon.</td>
<td>Romeo: I will now read a poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia: Minkä?</td>
<td>Juliet: What?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia: Runon?</td>
<td>Juliet: A poem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: Ei, vaan ”Rakkaus ja lempi.”</td>
<td>Romeo: No, “Love and Infatuation.”</td>
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</table>

Romeo then reads his poem, whose Finnish translation, like the original in *Troilus and Cressida*, includes rhymes which in this context feel comic, for example *nuoli* (arrow) with *kuoli* (die), and capturing rather well the singsong rhythms and stilted rhymes of Shakespeare’s version:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romeo: Aa, joo—Näin se alkaa. “Rakkaus ja lempi.”</th>
<th>Right, um—Here’s how it starts. “Love and Infatuation.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Rakkaus ja lempi vain!”</td>
<td>“Love, love, nothing but love, still more!”</td>
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</table>

¹⁰This is a clumsy translation into English; the important point is that Juliet rejects the second word in favor of repeating “love” twice. Andrew Chesterman suggests that Romeo’s title gives the idea of “Love, Ancient and Modern,” but then Juliet’s response would need to be totally rewritten.
Juliet then gently makes fun of the poem, saying the speaker has fallen in love “to the tip of his nose” (“head over heels” would be an English equivalent) but then tells him not to be afraid. Her straightforward expression of desire is adapted mainly from Troilus’ and Pandarus’ speeches in 3.2. Although the style of Juliet’s speech toward the end is more formal and poetic, the effect is also more humorous, as Juliet’s images of sexual desire and execution are comically over-the-top for a first meeting.
After their first kiss, Viitala again highlights the awkwardness of young love by reverting to colloquial wordplay, as Romeo says he has no idea how to respond to Juliet. All she wants is another kiss, but her awkwardness shows in the way she apologizes for kissing him:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: Olette vienyt minulta sanat.</td>
<td>Romeo: You make me tongue-tied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia: Annan ne takaisin.</td>
<td>Juliet: Let me untie it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo: Sopii.</td>
<td>Romeo: Please do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suudelma.</td>
<td>[They kiss again.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This extended sequence works nicely to introduce the characters, for example Juliet’s quick but awkward wit, and Romeo’s more ponderous and no less awkward responses. Especially for the teenagers in the audience, these additions probably make Romeo and Juliet more relatable, their colloquial idiom extremely familiar. At the same time, Juliet’s somewhat florid references to “Love’s thrice repured nectar” and her “feverous pulse” allow audiences to find humor in the exalted style as well.

While Viitala seems to have taken pains to highlight the awkwardness of Romeo and Juliet, often through juxtapositions of formal and colloquial language, it is interesting to note that she does not do this in the parallel couple of Mercutio and

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12 This is a very free translation of the Finnish, which literally says: “You take away my words.” / “I will give them back.”
Tybalt imagined in this adaptation. Linguistically, the love affair of Mercutio and Tybalt serves as a formal contrast to Romeo and Juliet: aside from the moment discussed above where Mercutio pauses the Queen Mab speech to ask Tybalt in colloquial language for a drag on his cigarette, in their few moments of dialogue Mercutio and Tybalt speak formal verse, and the same is true when Mercutio speaks of Tybalt. This is also in contrast to Mercutio’s bantering with Benvolio and Romeo which as we have seen features inserted colloquial elements. At the end of the Queen Mab speech, here turned into a seduction sequence, Tybalt is given what in Shakespeare’s play is Romeo’s response. In this context, the exchange makes the LGBT subtext wistfully clear:

\[\begin{array}{|l|l|}
\hline
\text{Mercutio: Se sama Mab—} & \text{Mercutio: This is she—} \\
\text{Tybalt: Puhut olematomista} & \text{Tybalt: Thou talk'st of nothing.} \\
\text{Mercutio: Puhun unista.} & \text{Mercutio: I talk of dreams.} \\
\text{Mercutio suutelee Tybaltia. Rumpu.} & [\text{Mercutio kisses Tybalt. Drums.}] \\
\text{Mercutio ja Tybalt erkanevat toisistaan.} & \text{Mercutio and Tybalt separate.} \\
(27) & (1.5.94-96) \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

Later in the play, when Mercutio describes Tybalt to Benvolio as the Prince of Cats, the dramatic irony of the now admiring description is not undercut or distanced with juxtapositions of colloquial text. Also during the fight sequence, the young men speak the poetic translation, though the stage business is altered in keeping with the romantic layer. Tybalt is genuinely surprised when his sword becomes unsheathed and the stage direction states that he “strikes Mercutio almost accidentally” (53). After their deaths, they silently haunt the stage. Just before the interval, after Romeo and Juliet utter their heis (discussed above), Mercutio and Tybalt stand up and look at each other. After Juliet gets the sleeping potion from Friar Lawrence, according to the stage direction, the spirits of Tybalt and Mercutio meet at the back of the stage, walk together to the front, and look at each other (78). During Juliet’s speech alone before drinking the potion, Tybalt comes into her room, covering her with a blanket after she falls asleep, while Mercutio is in Mantua with Romeo (82).

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13 C.f. Baz Luhrmann’s *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*, where Mercutio is played as a homosexual. Harold Bloom has asked whether “Mercutio’s incessant bawdiness is the mask for what may be a repressed homoeroticism” (97), an issue also discussed by Stanley Wells (157-58). While critical discussion has focused on Mercutio’s relationship with Romeo, in switching the target to Tybalt the FNT production succeeded in creating interesting layers of dramatic irony.
After Benvolio tells Romeo that Juliet is dead, Mercutio and Tybalt again return to the stage, and it is Mercutio who hands Romeo the bottle of poison. Both appear in Juliet’s vault, and after Romeo drinks the poison, Tybalt touches Juliet’s brow and she wakes and sees Romeo (92). There is further silent stage business at the very end of the play, where Mercutio and Tybalt remove Juliet’s bed/tomb to the back of the stage and turn around and look at her, which is when she decides to kill herself quickly and the play ends. In a play built on rhetorical gaming, the silence of Mercutio and Tybalt resonated deeply.

So, what might we learn about Shakespeare translation from this case study? Done with a suitably light touch, these kinds of style variations, colloquial text interspersed with modern poetic text, work very well—and indeed, brought a great deal to the interpretation and effect of the play. The sudden shift to a colloquial style is surprising, a stripping away of one rhetorical mask—Shakespeare’s poetry—only to be replaced by another, stammering awkward youth. But when the poetry takes flight again, it feels like a victory and the patterning adds variety and interest. Done well, the colloquial inserts gain meaning far beyond their simplicity, as seen in the succession of heis. Moreover, the colloquial layer builds camaraderie not only between the characters on stage but also between them and the audience. Young people, perhaps brought to see *Romeo and Juliet* by a teacher and expecting to be bored, might have been pleasantly surprised by how easily they could understand the language.

But at the same time, it would be easy to overdo these effects, and risk losing the beauty of Shakespeare’s poetic language. Nuances of characterization can also be lost—an example being the religious layer, especially in connection to Juliet. Translators into foreign languages probably have a bit more leeway than directors and dramaturgs working in English, as English-speaking audiences might have very different expectations about what is allowed to be done to Shakespeare’s “original.”

To return to the Jones and Turner framework with which I began: while minimal modernization will in many cases be the preferred alternative in the translation of historical texts, in some contexts stretching language across the archaizing-modernizing continuum and utilizing stylistic variation will prove beneficial. As a timeless play *Romeo and Juliet* hardly needs to be modernized, but this production provides one example of how it can be done.
Works Cited


**About the Author**

Nely Keinänen is a senior lecturer at the University of Helsinki, where she teaches literature and translation. She is co-editor with Per Sivefors of the forthcoming *Disseminating Shakespeare in the Nordic Countries* (Bloomsbury Press) and has published in *English Text Construction, Shakespeare* and *Multicultural Shakespeare*, and in volumes with Oxford University Press and Routledge, mainly on topics connected to Shakespeare in Finland. She has also translated over thirty contemporary Finnish plays into English.

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