

Jonson, Ben (2002): *Volpone*. Edición bilingüe de Purificación Ribes. Madrid: Cátedra.

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1. Ben Jonson, *Volpone* and its translations into Spanish

Every scholar of English studies has been taught at university that Ben Jonson is, next to Shakespeare, the most important dramatist of the Elizabethan era. However, these two authors are completely different. Shakespeare portrays the tragic destiny of human beings and Jonson depicts the darkest and meanest sides of people's behaviour. While Shakespeare's greatest plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, etc.) are marked by tragedy and depression, Ben Jonson's (*Volpone*, *Epicæne*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, etc.) expose social abuses, show up the follies of the day and satirize the baseness of human nature; he pokes fun at the absurd fashions of the time by means of exaggerated characters and situations. In short, Shakespeare delves into the human soul and Ben Jonson moves around the boundaries of human passions, absurdity and stupidity; as a satirist, he attempts to arouse hostile emotions such as mockery, disdain, hatred, disgust, etc. at the expense of the character that is being satirized.

The important contribution made by Ben Jonson to world literature, and in particular his brilliant *Volpone*, is not reflected in the number of Spanish translations of his works that have been published. Hardly any have appeared in the last fifty years, apart from those of Borrás and Bermejo (Alfil, Madrid, 1953), Tasi (Moll, Palma de Mallorca, 1956) and the splendid translation done by Adolfo Sarabia twenty-two years ago (Bosch, Barcelona, 1980). In an attempt to make up for this deficit, the publishing house Cátedra has just published (in 2002), as part of its *Letras Universales* collection, an extremely well-edited bilingual edition of *Volpone* (the only erratum I found was on page 241, line 5) translated by Dr. Purificación Ribes of the University of Valencia.

Though the earlier translations are very good, everything in life needs updating in the light of new insights, innovative findings, new perspectives or the original proposals brought up by the constant research carried out by young scholars in each historical period. The research done in each particular period contributes novel ideas enabling new aspects of the everlasting freshness and vividness of these classics of world literature to be discovered. Such books are true fountains of wisdom and when we analyse the language used, in this case from the point of view of the philological challenge entailed in translating a literary work of the 17th century, they offer an array of the universal features and properties of people's most obscure passions and weaknesses.

Purificación Ribes gives us a translation which is faithful (within the limits defined by the concept of faithfulness in translation), clear, limpid and, above all, exquisite. Cervantes (*Don Quijote*) tells us that reading a badly translated text can be compared with the experience of someone "quien mira los tapices flamencos por el revés, que aunque se ven

las figuras, son llenas de hilos que las oscurecen, y no se ven con la lisura y tez de la haz". This is certainly not the case with Dr. Ribes' magnificent translation of *Volpone*. In my opinion, her choice of language and turns of phrase are felicitous, stylish and eloquent, both from the point of view of philology and from that of traductology, for the reasons I shall discuss below.

Some literature teachers like to ask their students on the first day of class what the word literature means. The conclusion reached is that literature embraces so many aspects, perspectives and values that it is no easy task to give a comprehensive definition of this phenomenon, so characteristic of the human race. However, there is one point on which everyone, or almost everyone, would agree and that is the aesthetic value of literary texts. This is precisely one of the features of this publication, since the aesthetic values of language, for instance, the rhythm, tone, register and ideal choice of language, may be appreciated in both the original text and Dr. Ribes's translation.

2. *Volpone* and the diachronic view in English philology

The translation of an English literary text of the 17th century is not a task to be undertaken by anyone who lacks a sound philological background. A fundamental feature of modern English studies is the importance that has always been attached to the diachronic dimension of the language. Indeed, philology goes back to the 19th century when language was approached from an entirely historical point of view, and this has left a lasting mark on the university syllabuses of English philology. The historical or diachronic approach to language affords three main informative aspects which can be clearly distinguished in Dr. Ribes's book: the literary, the purely linguistic and the cultural.

In the introductory chapter, consisting of 67 pages divided into various sections, Dr. Ribes presents some aspects of *Volpone* in a true professorial manner, that is, thoroughly, clearly and enjoyably. She starts with a brief summary of Ben Jonson's biography, followed by an analysis of how his works as a whole were received by the critics. She then focuses on *Volpone* and discusses the different performances of this play staged in England and on the Continent, together with the mutilations it suffered as a result of the prejudices of each period. Some Spanish translators, for example, refused to condemn the main character of the play. As Dr. Ribes informs us, the problem of the controversial ending, which few performances had been able to overcome, was resolved once and for all by David Williams in the version he staged in Stratford (Ontario). In this performance, after hearing the judges' verdict, *Volpone* leaves the stage and then reappears in formal dress and delivers the play's epilogue. In the section on sources, Dr. Ribes refers to the classical echoes of Horace's *Satires* (II,5), Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* and Petronius's *Satyricon*, which she goes on to discuss in greater detail in the numerous footnotes. The last section is devoted to an analysis of the three classical unities in Jonson's play.

In addition to the admirable philological dissertation given in the introduction, the hundreds of notes that illuminate the book are delightful nuggets of information, encapsulated lessons on the culture, tastes, personalities and atmosphere of the period in

England and other European countries (especially Italy), as well as on the institutions, in particular the judicial system, the corruption of which is denounced with a ferocity similar to that employed two centuries later by Charles Dickens in *Bleak House*. The author's linguistic and literary comments are also of great value:

a) Constant references to the classical sources of the play (Horace, Juvenal, etc.):

A lawyer could never have been; nor scarce/Another woman (Ni al letrado se habría oído ni siquiera a otra mujer), page 296 . [These same two comparisons can be found in Juvenal (Satires VI, 439-40)].

b) Explication and justification of the meanings of words with reference to lexicographic authorities:

I could stifle him, rarely, with a pillow (Con una almohada lo ahogaría divinamente), page 180. [This meaning of "divinamente" is listed as the 3rd sense of the word in the OED: *unusually or remarkably well; finely; splendidly; beautifully*, as the author explains in footnote 68 on page 180]

It should also be said that Dr. Ribes acquits herself very well in the translation of overweight noun and adjective phrases, such as the following:

Those turdy-facy-nasty-payt-lousy-fartical rogues (Esos bribones con la cara de boñigo, sucia testa, piojosos, hediondos).

c) A magisterial translation of double-sense words and of the connotations representing emotions, feelings, etc.:

My blood,
My spirits are returned; I am alive;
 And like your *wanton gamester*, at 'primero',
 Whose thought had whispered to him, *not go less*,
 Methinks I *lie*, and draw - *for an encounter*

Mi sangre,
Mi ánimo ha retornado; estoy vivo,
 Como el *jugador desenfrenado de "Primera"*,
 Al que su mente susurra: "*al envite*".
Me voy a apostar, y a sacar ... *para este lance*.

Spirit: II.8.b (sing. and PL: Liveliness, vivacity, dash).
 'Mi ánimo' is an excellent choice.

Wanton: A2: 'lascivious'; A2 'Unrestrained'.

'Desenfrenado' means both 'lúbrico' and 'empedernido' in Spanish.

(*At primero*): "A gambling card-game, fashionable in the 16th and 17th cents, in which each player was dealt four cards'.

De primera (juego de baraja en el que el lance con que se gana la partida se llama "flux") certainly underscores the ambiguity of the passage.

Not go less: 'lay the highest wager possible'.

'(AI) envite': ("puesta que se añade a la ordinaria en algunos juegos de azar", María Moliner) keeps the original sense and carries the connotation of Volpone's impatience to gain Celia's love.

Lie: 1) 'Lay or place the bet'; 2) 'lying in wait for an encounter' [In this case Volpone waiting for Celia].

'Apostarse' encompasses both meanings.

Encounter: 1) 'a match for a winning suit'; 2) 'An amatory interview'.

'Lance' is a very happy term in Spanish because it includes both senses in this case.

3. *Volpone* and traductology

The theoretical study of translation has been given various titles, of which traductology seems to be the term most widely accepted. Two of the main objectives of traductology are: (1) the study of language aimed at solving the problems of equivalence arising when two texts written in different languages but with the same meaning come into contact; and (2) a better understanding of the manipulation techniques used by translators in their quest for equivalence. The term manipulation in this context denotes skill and "linguistic efficiency", while equivalence implies "conservation of the same meaning". In this sense, translators are seen as manipulators of the target language in the search for equivalence so as to maintain the essence of the source language intact; whereas traductologists are rather analysts of linguistic resources who propose theories and models that attempt to provide a better explanation of the theoretical questions arising from languages in contact.

Two fundamental techniques of *indirect translation*, that is, translation that is not literal, are transposition and modulation. Vinay and Dalbènet in their publication *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (Paris: Didier, 1958) declare that a translator who cannot transpose or modulate is not a translator. In transposition, one part of speech in the source language is converted into a different part of speech in the target language. For example, *He held that ...* (in this construction the nucleus is a verb) becomes "*en su opinión*" (the nucleus of which is a noun), or in the Spanish translation of *late delivery* ("*demora en la entrega*") where there is a transposition of the adjective *late* to the noun

"demora". Dr. Ribes's text is full of excellent transpositions. The following three may serve as examples:

Shall I hope? (¿Puedo albergar esperanzas?), page 241.

The testimony comes, that will convince (Aquí la prueba testifical, irrefutable), p. 241.

Heaven, that never fails the innocent (El cielo, amparo del inocente), page 419.

In the case of modulation, categories of ideas and semantic categories, rather than parts of speech, are manipulated. An example of modulation can be found in the everyday expression *Young people take everything for granted* (Los jóvenes no les dan importancia a las cosas). Vázquez Ayora (*Introducción a la Traductología*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1977) believes that modulation is the most important technique used in indirect translation. The following are four examples taken from the text:

By your own scale (Vuestra experiencia os avala), page 154.

That same fellow was an unknown fool (De bufón sólo tenía la apariencia), page 200.

I hear him coming (Ya va entrando en razón), page 254.

In addition to mastering transposition and modulation with ease and skill, Dr. Ribes has not given in to the "temptation of the paronym", that is, the attraction exerted by homographic or homophonic words and parallel syntactic constructions in the source language without first subjecting them to critical scrutiny. This tendency to use paronyms can be seen in the translation of many determiners and adjectives; for example, *certain* does not usually mean "cierto" but "determinado", *various* is more often "diversos" than "varios", and *particular* is almost never "particular" but rather "concreto". Dr. Ribes has taken great care over the translation of paronyms.

In conclusión, this is an exquisite volume whose translation will delight not only the educated reader delving into the study of the great figures of world literature, who will find a selection of telling aphorisms, ideas and maxims, but also the sociologist and the psychologist, both of whom are analysts of human passions, and especially English studies and traductology scholars, who will all find its valuable linguistic and cultural contributions of immense use. A traductologist who enjoys analysing translation techniques will find an endless series of brilliant examples of transpositions and modulations, etc, together with many other manipulative techniques, all performed naturally, simply and with great skill by Dr. Ribes.

I.S.P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge: CUP, 2001, 417p.

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In the last few decades, vocabulary has undergone a re-emergence of interest in the field of second language acquisition, as a reaction against years of abandonment and obscurity. Researchers such as Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy have demonstrated that vocabulary knowledge is a basic premise to develop almost any language skill. Moreover, recent studies gathered the conclusion that vocabulary acquisition do not occur by itself, but needs to be dealt with in language instruction. Unfortunately, it is still not clear how lexical enhancement can be reinforced.

A research group from Victoria University in New Zealand led by Paul Nation has devoted many years of study to illustrate the best way of facing 's task. Based on results obtained from years of empirical research on word frequency lists, Nation's main contribution lies on the idea that, once analysed the necessities of a L2 learner, there is a core vocabulary (around 2000 word families) that can be identified and that should be directly taught. After this core vocabulary has been assimilated, then it is preferable spending time on developing learning strategies that help learners increase their vocabulary size, until 95% of the common words are known in an average text. This systematic approach to vocabulary acquisition is unusual in the area of second language acquisition.

This book is structured into eleven chapters following a well established pattern that comprises all the aspects of both learning and teaching vocabulary in another language. The first two chapters introduce the reader to the main goals of vocabulary learning and the main features involved in knowing a word. Both chapters act as a general framework for the following eight sections devoted to the different elements entailed in the process of teaching vocabulary, such as L2 vocabulary and the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, vocabulary learning strategies or chunking and collocation. The last chapter presents a good example of what the author has developed in the previous ones for it contains a well-balanced course design for vocabulary enhancement. Furthermore, in the introduction, Nation states that the book was designed according to the four major strands, that is to say, meaning-focused input (learning through listening and reading activities), language-focused learning (direct teaching/learning of vocabulary), meaning-focused output (learning through speaking and writing activities) and fluency development. For him, the four strands need to be borne in mind when teaching vocabulary and this book aims to be a reflection of how the lexicon arranges into them.

In chapter 1, Nation explores the number of words in English, the number of words known by native speakers and, consequently, the number of words that foreign speakers need to use the language fluently. After a series of congruent analyses using frequency digital corpora (just as the ones employed by the Cobuild dictionary) it is stated that the learner going on to academic study needs to know 2000 or so high-frequency words plus

around 15000 and 20000 technical and low-frequency elements. To cope with such a great amount of foreign vocabulary, it is argued that time should be spent on directly teaching these high-frequency words. However, it seems wiser to train learners in the use of vocabulary learning strategies when dealing with the low-frequency ones, instead of teaching each of them.

"Words are not isolated units of language...there are many things to know about any particular word" (p. 23): with this clear statement, Nation emphasises in chapter 2, the cumulative nature of word knowledge and the main aspects involved in it. He frames the difference between receptive and productive knowledge, meaning by receptive the perception of a word form while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning; whereas retrieving and producing the oral or written expression of an intended meaning would be productive knowledge. All of these aspects are extremely important and deserve the teachers' attention.

Then and according to his systematic way of working, Nation brings forward a complete set of activities designed for vocabulary learning to take place, taking into account learning goals and psychological conditions implied. Nation firmly believes that learners can greatly benefit from both the oral skills (listening/speaking) and reading and writing. Repetition is strongly encouraged throughout the activities. It is quite remarkable that the author is constantly making use of new technologies and so computer-assisted vocabulary learning is also presented as a profitable way of putting this theory into practice.¹

Throughout the first five chapters, Nation's point of view is extremely clear: he will not carry on with the secular dichotomy between direct and indirect teaching. He considers both and encourages teachers to make use of them without prejudices. Quite on the contrary, teachers can benefit from them depending on the concrete learning stage, as it is reflected in the series of brilliantly designed activities mentioned before.

Another point worth mentioning is the author's concern about tackling all the aspects of vocabulary learning. He does not present vocabulary as isolated items but as a unity conveying a message in the shape of a text, which has to be borne in mind when designing a vocabulary-teaching plan, based on Halliday's field, tenor and mode. Nation points out the relevance of academic vocabulary for learners with scientific and academic purposes and so he suggests the design of academic word lists and tests so as to learn them. In the case of technical vocabulary, that is full of low-frequency words, the author encourages the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

As stated before, his direct and clear style leads to concrete and unambiguous directions on how to cope with that apparently unapproachable task of facing foreign vocabulary. He insists on the advantages of spending time on teaching high-frequency words, for they are a relatively small amount and may be used in almost every occasion. However, there are other words, the so-called low-frequency ones that are better learned by means of vocabulary learning strategies. Thus, in the three following chapters, "Vocabulary learning strategies and guessing form context", "Word study strategies" and "Chunking and collocation", those means of dealing with low-frequency words are brought forward.

Then, an extensive taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies based on Schmitt (1997) and Oxford (1990) is divided into three groups: (1) strategies employed in choosing what vocabulary is to be learned; (2) strategies used to find information about the word itself; and (3) strategies aimed at establishing words already known. Teachers are urged and guided to encourage and train learners in the use of the aforementioned strategies, by showing them several studies on learners' use of strategies and providing them with procedures to integrate these strategies in their everyday course. Nation argues that in spite of having the drawbacks of incidental learning, i.e., one can never be certain if learners are correctly learning, guessing from context is the most powerful tool for increasing vocabulary and as such, it deserves time and effort for teaching and learning. He takes into account all the factors entailed in this complex strategy and he brilliantly suggests ways of approaching it, both for high and low frequency terms.

In opposition to those scholars who criticise the exploitation of decontextualised learning (Judd 1978; Anderson and Nagy, 1992), the author encourages the use of dictionaries and word cards, for they allow learners to focus on those aspects of word knowledge not easily covered by context learning and help learners control their own learning process. In the final chapter of this set, Nation points out frequent collocations as one of the main sources of native fluency of speech and as such, he insists on the convenience of spending time on learning them. Furthermore, some of them are highly frequent so they also deserve attention. The author goes on and brings forward ten criteria for classifying collocations and encourages teachers to train learners in chunking as the major means of analyses, providing a series of activities to practise that strategy. Nevertheless, one wonders whether due to space limitations Nation did not pay the expected attention to the best way of training learners in the use of these vocabulary learning strategies.

The last part of the book deals with one of the most important steps of teaching vocabulary: that of evaluation. Nation argues that there is not single "best vocabulary test" but a wide range of vocabulary test, formats according to: (a) the purpose of the test; (b) the kind of knowledge it will measure; and (c) the various aspects comprised in knowing a word and the conditions under which it will be administered (including multiple-choice, translation, context embedding and so on).

Finally, one of the most striking features of this book lies in the fact that it is not only a theoretical view about teaching and learning vocabulary but it also contains a clear exemplification of all the issues tackled throughout the whole book. It shows how to design a language teaching course focusing on vocabulary taking into account the elements mentioned in the previous chapters. Nation's ultimate goal is clearly that of any teacher: turning students into autonomous learners, taking control over their own learning process.

Despite the fact that much has to be done to improve both teaching and learning vocabulary, Learning vocabulary in another language provides a great contribution to this field of applied linguistics from which teachers and learners of second and foreign languages can obviously benefit. The clarity and directness of expression which characterise this volume are predictable considering that the author is an experienced researcher aiming

at providing pedagogical advice. Combining a solid theoretical basis and a great amount of well-chosen and recent bibliographical references, as well as the numerous examples of vocabulary learning strategies, activities and tests make this book a starting point for any vocabulary teacher or course designer, whose goal is to train their students to be more successful vocabulary learners.

Against those who consider vocabulary as something quite annoying to face, Nation presents vocabulary as a subject that can be systematically approached, analysed and taught, which benefits from almost every learning style, and it is here where his major strength lies.

Note

1. On his web site, Nation has developed downloadable computer programmes that examine vocabulary in texts (www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/staff/paul_nation/index/html).

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Brooker, Jewel S. (ed.) *T.S. Eliot and Our Turning World*. Macmillan Press: Basingstoke and London, 2001. 238 pp.

Reviewed by María Teresa González Mínguez

One of the best achievements of T.S. Eliot in the twentieth century, that, no doubt, still persists in the twenty first, was to adapt intellectual poetry to a much wider international public. His works, characterized by irony, rooted with popular culture and scholarship, have been reabsorbed today by the world of music, fiction, cinema and theatre.

Jewel Spears Brooker, former president of the T. S. Eliot Society, agglutinates in this superb volume the different lectures of "T.S. Eliot and Our Turning World," a conference sponsored by the Institute of the United States at the University of London in 1996. The event clarified some aspects of the poet and playwright's complex personality –family relationships, his marriage, religious beliefs and political tendencies– considered until now peripheric to his literary production, using for this purpose the last publications about his philosophical works and literary criticism.

The first two essays deal with the sense of loss and spiritual hunger of the British author. Following those who met Eliot and talk about his exquisite courtesy towards children,

Marianne Thormählen states that his childhood was full of sexual energy, an energy lost but never erased from his conscience. Revising "Dans le Restaurant" and other texts, Thormählen shows how that loss and the longing for a spiritual union are associated to the memories of the poet's first years of life. On the same line, Rudolf Germer, with his essay about/on Eliot's religious sensibility, discusses its relationship with an intense life dedicated to the spiritual search deeply marked by his conversion to catholicism.

A most remarkable touch in Eliot's production is his concern in the study of philosophy and religion in comparative terms. In order to demonstrate it, the second group of four essays is dedicated to his philosophical works. William Bissett analyses not only Heraclitus's influence in "Burnt Norton" and *Four Quarters*, but how Eliot's interest in nature and the fourth elements reveals his knowledge of the ancient Greeks.

William Charron, Professor at Saint Louis University (Missouri) –Eliot's hometown– and Jewel Spears Brooker's joint essay explores Eliot's 1913 graduate seminar on the work of Kant at Harvard, pointing out the wide relevance of the Kantian theory of opposites in his literary criticism.

The other two essays in this group describe the author as poet of the conscience. In the first, Stephen Medcalf studies the relationship of Eliot's works with F. H. Bradley, the Welsh philosopher on whose epistemology the poet wrote his doctoral dissertation. Focussing on the poems that Eliot wrote at Oxford in 1914-15, the Professor of Sussex University manifests how the assimilation of Bradley's theories intensifies his "exploration of consciousness" (70). In the second Tatsuo Murata looks at the importance of the Buddhist influence and how Vasubandhu's and Nagarjuna's theories determine his essays "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Notes on Eastern Philosophy."

The accurate considerations about Eliot's philosophical works parallel three singular studies dedicated to his implication in the world of art. In the first the polyphacetic Peter Dickinson examines Eliot's connections with two of the most eminent contemporary musicians, Igor Stravinsky and Benjamin Britten. The other two investigate the relationship of the author of *The Waste Land* with Shakespeare and Dante. His authors, Randy Malamud and David Gervais, elucidate the tensions produced by his knowledge of this writer in his poetic and dramatic works.

One of the most recent objectives of present criticism has been the discovery of Eliot's deep connection with popular culture. In 1923 the poet, referring to Marianne Moore's works, assumes that "popular culture and the fine arts are really two phases of the same enterprise" (134). Taking into consideration his relationship with *music hall*, David Chinitz indicates how, in his peculiar way, Eliot fought against the dullness he perceived as endemic in the arts on both sides of the Atlantic. Exploring the same topic, Michael Coyle brings to light in "Eliot on the Air: 'Culture' and the Challenges of Mass Communication" the compromise of the writer with BBC radio, also offering a useful appendix in which the prestigious specialist on the poetry of Ezra Pound makes a large chronological checklist of all his radio broadcasts.

The change in literary criticism in the last decades, has inclined scholars towards more moral and cultural than aesthetic considerations. This is the appropriate context for the

revival of the old accusation that T. S. Eliot was anti-Semitic. Revising *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (1995), again Jewel Spears Brooker questions Anthony Julius's (the divorce lawyer for Diana, Princess of Wales) assumption about the poet's attributed hatred to the Jews. Brooker insists on the fact that the reader must understand *a priori* what is Julius's definition of the concept, as his rhetoric and methodology appear to be more anti-Semitic than the few lines in Eliot's poetry in which he refers to the Jews in really negative terms. Concluding with the fact that the Jews themselves provided the poet with the instruments to approximate them, David Thompson examines his real attitudes towards these peoples in his poetry, prose and personal letters.

The last writings of this volume are concentrated on two important tendencies in contemporary literary criticism—authorship and gender. Richard Badenhausen rejects the figure of the lonely genius and emphasizes the way in which Eliot worked with Ezra Pound and the producer Martin Browne in both the creation of *The Waste Land* and his plays. In "T. S. Eliot and the Feminist Revision of the Modern(ist) Canon," Teresa Gibert gives a new vision about the charge of misogyny traditionally attached to the naturalized British author, suggesting that many of his essays could be even used to support feminist theses. The UNED Professor in Spain describes how the negativism of his representations of women, his attitude towards contemporary women writers, his feminization of culture and his relationships with real women are closely related to serious sexual frustrations. However, although the dialogue between Eliot feminist and non-feminist scholars is not easy, the first are trying to create "a feminist web which includes both sexes in the 'tangled mesh' of Modernism" (201).

The book also supplies an excellent bibliography of T. S. Eliot's works and other sources consulted for the elaboration of the different essays.

The audience interested in T. S. Eliot and even those non-familiar with him will surely enjoy this unique miscellany that offers the most dynamic and renovated vision about one of the greatest poets of the English language.