

interpretation, which leads the reader back to some of the main worries in current research in the field in translation, namely, the importance of politics, the national and international state of affairs, the preeminence of some cultures over others, and so on. The study of translation is therefore, the study of a whole galaxy of factors, as is shown in the excellent group of articles written by an illustrious group of researchers and collected by R. Álvarez and M.A.C. Vidal in *Translation Power Subversion*.

Víctor Manuel Pina Medina

Michael D. Bristol. *Big-time Shakespeare*. London: Routledge 1996.

This is an interesting analysis of the development of Shakespeare's work in the past and present industry of entertainment, which brings together literary, sociological and even economic perspectives. The book is organised in two sections (under the headings *The supply side of culture* and *The pathos of Western modernity*) preceded by a twenty-five page introduction.

The initial attitude of the author, Prof. Michael D. Bristol, seems to be to reveal the use of the playwright's image as a potentially marketable decoy for products that are, if anything, only obliquely related to it; from films loosely based on his plays all the way down to credit cards or bank notes that carry his portrait. A business-like manoeuvre with a cultural alibi. However, the first pages of this book err on the side of trivialisation as well. A comparison of Shakespeare to The Beatles, Elvis Presley or Mick Jagger (in a paragraph which is also quoted in the very colourful back cover) looks very much like an '*epater l'Academie*' strategy which many may think we have had enough of.

Fortunately, after this flashy introduction, the author gets down to more serious business. The first part of the book opts for a sociological approach to Shakespeare's impact on Western civilization. An interesting conception of his everlasting success as a conflation of the contributions of editors, directors, actors and other members of professional and academic circles throughout the last four centuries gives way to a biographical reference to the most outstanding ones. From Restoration show business entrepreneur William Davenant to 18th century actor and theatre manager David Garrick; publisher Jacob Tonson and his rewriting-Shakespeare conflicts with Alexander Pope and the reputed scholar Lewis Theobald; with the latest conflictive step being Kenneth Branagh's current cinematic simplifications. The economic and social conditions of the culture entertainment industry do not seem to have changed that much after all this time.

Several critical issues are at stake here concerning Shakespeare's massive appeal: the way certain literary specialists reject his versatility at crossing the bridge between popular and high culture (which do not have to be mutually exclusive); the dialogical relationship between the moment of creation and the period of representation/reception; and the semantic potentiality of his work and how it can be manipulated by subsequent structures of power. Prof. Bristol dismisses the intention of the author as a key factor in establishing meaning, but does not join the poststructuralist mourning either. The text value itself, which is indebted to the author, but also to its multiple readings and performances, determines its unrivalled emancipatory strength.

The second part of this book will be more attractive for the literary scholar, who can find an in-depth analysis of three plays (*The Winter's Tale*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*) and its connections with current areas of discussion. In the chapter on *The Winter's Tale*, Prof. Bristol foregrounds the distortion of time as the playwright's device to portray contemporary social complexity, whereas *Othello* is considered a radical attempt to reveal the unlawful use of social institutions (marriage in this case). More interesting, from my point of view, is his reflection on the intellectual unacceptability of prominent conceptual features of these plays: the chauvinist picture of a passive female role and, in *Othello*, a blatantly racist presentation of character. Bristol sides with Bloom against the opinions of the so-called 'school of resentment': it is impossible to make a feminist or anti-racist reading of them, but their intrinsic literary value still makes Shakespeare the pivotal figure of the Western Literary Canon. The chapter on *Hamlet* is a grounded acknowledgement of the character as the archetypical 'genius' of Western modernity, although the relevance of using a comic strip (Calvin and Hobbes) to illustrate contemporary quotations of the play is hardly justifiable, specially for those of us who had never heard of it.

Shakespeare's skill at entrepreneurship is nothing he should have had to apologise for. Neither should the author of this book for its commercial intentions. One would recommend leaving aside an academic reluctance to this kind of presentation; reading this text will certainly contribute to our understanding of this world-wide academic, social and economical phenomenon which, whether we like it or not, Shakespeare has (been) turned into.

John D. Sandersog

Daniel Statman, *Moral Dilemmas*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1995. 174 pp. Col. «Value Inquiry Book Series», n° 32.

We must begin by considering what moral dilemmas are for the author of this very interesting, although not completely successful, work, Daniel Statman. A main problem is his very definition of a moral dilemma, and the initial picture of all his research project, a long and winding road around the project of reaching a strong and more rationalistic theory of morals:

“Moral dilemmas are puzzling situations, where agents seem to be under an obligation both to do, and to refrain from doing, a specific act. The possibility that such situations exist has been a matter of great controversy in the last decade. Some philosophers have argued that dilemmas are possible and, therefore, real. This view is often connected to other prevalent ideas in contemporary ethics, the idea of moral luck, and the «anti-theory» trend. Other philosophers have argued that dilemmas are impossible. In this view, we can never be under two real, «all-things-considered» obligations. This latter view is the one endorsed in the present book. I seek to show that dilemmas do not point to any inconsistency in our ethical reasoning nor do they justify giving up the idea of an ethical theory. This does not imply that dilemmas are not troubling, or that they are not the source of justifiable strong negative feelings. They are, and I try to show why. If the argument of the book is sound, it will