One of the basic problems Vikelas had to solve in translating Shakespeare's plays was the form of the Greek language he was going to use. In his day the puristic form of katharevousa, with its stilted and stereotyped phraseology, prevailed in literature. Vikelas was quick to realize that such a vehicle for translating Shakespeare would be not only inadequate but perhaps comic too. In his endeavour to popularise Shakespeare and make him understood by his countrymen, he thought of using a form of language which would both be close to the demotic and still keep the dignity of Greek, a form which he did not hesitate to employ.

In translating Shakespeare I tried to keep to a middle path by writing in the vernacular as it is commonly spoken today. Others will judge whether or to what extent I have succeeded in applying the theory according to which in such a language the vigour and passion, the naturalness, in one word, of the original, can be maintained.

Vikelas' translation is based on H. H. Furness' edition of Hamlet (A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare (1877) as it is apparent from note 3 (p. 194) of his translation.

Vikelas translated verse with verse and prose with prose; as for the versification, he used the most popular Greek metrical device, the 15-syllable iambic verse, to render Shakespeare’s iambic pentameter. This verse (δεκαπενταπυλλάβος) is considered the national metre and is widely used just as blank verse is in English. It is the metre in which most of the Greek folk songs are written and it was adopted by Solomos and Valaoritis in their poetry. There is no doubt that the familiarity

* Part of a chapter from an unpublished Ph. D. thesis entitled Greek translations of Shakespeare: a comparative study submitted to and accepted by the University of Birmingham (Shakespeare Institute) in 1976.
1. Σαικσπείρον Τραγωδίαι μεταφρασείσαι ἐκ τοῦ Ἀγγλικοῦ ὑπὸ Δημήτριου Βικέλα. Μέρος Ε’ 'Αμλέτος. Ἐν Ἀθήναις, Ἐν τῶν Καταστημάτων Ἀνδρέου Κορμηκλᾶ, 1882.
of this verse made Vikelas’ version pass more easily into the people’s mouths. Thus one of the translator’s aims - to popularise Shakespeare in Greece - was to some extent achieved. Here is an example to illustrate the form of this verse:

\[ \text{Νά ζη θα αοις ή νά μι ζ'। I δού η θη πο ρι α} \]

(To be, or not to be: that is the question)

It is apparent that the Greek verse has five more syllables than Shakespeare’s pentameter, which has ten syllables. This might be considered a metrical defect. On the other hand, these extra five syllables provide room for an extension of Shakespeare’s poetic diction which is so compressed. Moreover, the paucity of monosyllabic words in the Greek language, undoubtedly compelled the translator to put an extra few syllables in his line in order to include the full meaning of the original.

It is unlikely that Vikelas, who was well versed in German, was not aware of Schlegel’s theory in translating Shakespeare, according to which, “a verse work should always be rendered into verse, and, indeed, into verse of exactly the same pattern”. But since, for technical reasons, it was almost impossible to compress the meaning of Shakespeare’s 10-syllable line into a Greek line of an equal number of syllables without squeezing it too hard or leaving out one or two words, Vikelas preferred to compromise, and treat himself to five extra syllables. These additional syllables have given the translator freedom in shifting the position of words within the line, a practice which provided simplification of the text making it thus easier to understand.

It is noteworthy that Vikelas has closely followed the original in reproducing the rhyming couplets which appear usually at the end of each of Shakespeare’s Scenes. The songs in the play are also rendered in the same metrical pattern as in the original.

Some passages from Vikelas’ work, compared with the original text, will show clearly the virtues and the inevitable shortcomings of the translation. Here is how Horatio relates to Hamlet the appearance of the Ghost:

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them; thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch;
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes. I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.\(^1\)

(I. 2. 196 - 212).

Δύο νυκταίς κατά σειράν οἱ δύο των, - ὁ Βερνάρδος
κι' ὁ Μάρκελλος, - εἰς τὴν φρουράν, εἰς τὴς νυκτὸς τὰ βάθη,
τὸ εἶδαν μὲ τὰ 'μάτια τῶν: Τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ πατρός σου,
μὲ πανοπλίαν ἐντελῆ σιδεροφορεμένον,
ἐμπρός των ἐμφανίζεται, καὶ μὲ πομπώδες βῆμα
ἀργὰ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς περνὰ ἐνώπιον των.
'Σ τὰ 'μάτια τῶν τὰ ἐκθαμβᾷ ἐμπρός, τὰ φοβισμένα,
ἐπηγεῖ κ' ἤλθε τρεῖς φορὰς, - τόσον πλησίον, ὡστε
τοὺς ἠγιγίζε τὸ σκήπτρον τοῦ σχεδόν, ἐνώ ἔκεινοι
ἀκίνητοι καὶ ἀλαλοί, λυωμένοι ἀπ' τὸν φόβον,
δὲν τού ἀμφίθεσαν. - Αὕτα τὰ εἶπαν εἰς ἐμένα
μὲ ἀκραν μυστικότητα, κ' ἐγώ τὴν τρίτην νύκτα
μαζῇ τῶν ἐξενύκτησα, καὶ ὅπως μοῦ τὸ εἶπαν,
τὴν Ἠδικν ὀραν τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ μὲ τὸ Ἕδιον σχῆμα,
λέει πρὸς λέειν καθ' εἰς ταῦτα φάντασμα ἑφάνη.
Τὸν ἢευρίον τὸν πατέρα σου' τόνα μου χέρι τάλλο
δὲν μοιάζει περίσσοτερον.

(p. 21)

\(^1\) References throughout, unless otherwise stated, are to *The Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by W.J. Craig (London, 1905; reprinted 1974).
Let us first examine the form of the translation in comparison with the original text. There are sixteen and a half lines, containing 130 words, in the original. Vikelas' version has an equal number of lines with just four more words, i.e. 134. This comparison shows that although Vikelas has used a longer metrical line, he has retained the form of the original quite closely. Actually, no Greek translator of Shakespeare was ever able to render the iambic pentametre with lines of equal length. Kavafis and K. Theotokis were the only ones to approach Shakespeare's verse using an 11-syllabic line, and this was at the cost of leaving out one or two words here and there.

A literal "translation" of the translation will allow the reader to see for himself what is left of the original:

[Two nights in a row these two - Bernardo and Marcellus - in their watch, in the depths of the night saw it with their own eyes: The figure of your father with full panoply iron-clad, appearing in front of them, and with a pompous pace slowly and with dignity passing before them. Before their astounded and frightened eyes it went to and fro three times - so close that its sceptre almost touched them, while they, immovable and speechless, melting with fear did not speak to it. - They told me these things in utmost secrecy, and I, the third night spent with them, and as they told me at the same hour of the night and with the same form word by word, everything, the ghost appeared. I know your father; My one hand does not resemble the other more.]

On this passage the following remarks can be made: The noun "gentlemen" of the original has not been translated; neither have the adjectives "dead" and "vast". The phrase "with his truncheon's length" is analytically rendered by "so near that its sceptre was almost touching them", τὸσον πλησίον ὦστε τοὺς ἡγημίζε τὸ σκήπτρον του. The present tenses "they speak not", "the apparition comes" are translated by past tenses: "they did not speak", δὲν ὧμίλησαν and "appeared", ἐφάνη. By changing the tenses into the past, Horatio's narration is deprived of its immediacy and in this way much of Shakespeare's powerful effect is lost. Also "I knew your father" has been changed in the translation from past
tense to present tense ‘I know your father’, Τόν 'ξεύρω τὸν πατέρα σου. The changing of verb tenses recurs in the translation as, for example, in line 58 (I. 1):

Is it not like the king?

is translated τὸν πρώην βασιλέα δὲν ἔμουαξε; where the present tense is translated by a past tense. Similarly, the past perfect tense of the original in “My lord, he hath importuned me with love” is translated by the present tense: Μοagnitude, πατέρα μου διὰ τὸν ἔρωτά του.

Polonius’ advice to his son Laertes is a much quoted passage characteristic of Shakespeare’s use of maxims and proverbial expressions:

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell; my blessing season this in thee!

(1. 3. 75 - 81)

[You should neither borrow nor lend;
(if) you lend, write off both loan and friend;
(if) you borrow, you have unlearned what economy is.
Above all, stay faithful to yourself,
and it follows, as night follows the day,
that never will you be unfaithful to others.
Consolidate these things in yourself with my good wishes Farewell.]
In any translation one should not expect a word for word replacement of the original. This would be absurd even in languages more closely related than English to Greek. In a Shakespeare translation, with all the more reason, one should not be surprised to see nouns translated by verbs, adjectives by adverbs, participles by clauses etc., provided that the meaning of the original is retained. Despite these grammatical changes, which are numerous throughout Vikelas’ translation, the meaning is conveyed satisfactorily. Discernible in this passage are the nouns “borrower” and “lender”, which are not translated by the existing corresponding Greek nouns δανειστής and χρεώστης - presumably for metrical reasons - but by the verb δανείζομαι (to borrow), which in its active form δανείζω means “to lend”. Furthermore, the accumulation in 3 lines of five cognates - δανείζεσαι, δανείζης, ἐδάνεισες, δάνειον, δανείζεσαι - does not resemble the verbal sound of the original, as Shakespeare uses only two of these words, i.e. “borrower” almost at the beginning of the first line, and “borrowing” at the beginning of the third. The clause ὡς ἐπεταξεν ἡ νύκτα ἡ τὴν ἡμέρα, although it reads smoothly, examined under strict grammatical rule presents some irregularity as far as the syntax of the verb ἔπομαι (to follow) is concerned. The usual syntax of this verb in Greek is ἔπομαι + genitive (ἔπομαι τινὸς = to follow someone or something), while Vikelas uses it with the preposition (εἰ)ξ + accusative (ἡμέραν). As Vikelas was an erudite scholar and could not easily fall into such a blunder, the only explanation one can find is that, very possibly, when he was putting down the verb ἔπομαι he was thinking of the synonymous verb ακολουθῶ, which does take an accusative. Discernible is also the inversion of the two sentences “Farewell” add “my blessing season this with thee!” which is made presumably for metrical reasons. As for the debatable meaning of the verb “season” Vikelas has followed Dr Johnson’s suggestion in rendering it into Greek, according to whom “season” means “so to infix it that it may never wear out” (see Furness, p. 70).

When the translator reaches “The Tale of Dido”, he appropriately changes style and metre. The style becomes, as in Shakespeare, bombastic, almost archaic, and the verse 16-syllabic. A few lines from this passage will illustrate the change:

The rugged Pyrrhus, - he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse, -
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal;

(II. 2. 430 - 4)

[The wild Pyrrhus, who bearing a panoply
as black as his soul, had night's face,
when he came hidden in the ominous horse,
has already smeared on his horrible figure
more dismal signes.]

In note 18 at the end of his translation (p. 198), referring to the
interposed lines, Vikelas appended the following comment, which re­
echoes Schlegel' s observations on the same point:

In the English text the parts recited by the players are in
bombastic rhyming couplets [sic], while their style, full of anti­theses and metaphors, differs inten tionally from that of the tra­
gedy. In order to retain this difference in my translation too, I
have not kept the rhyming couplets, but I have changed the
metre, and written the inserted verse in more elaborate language.

This note is more appropriate to "The Murder of Gonzago" which is
in rhyming couplets than to "Aeneas's tale of Dido". As Coleridge
said commenting on the former part, "the style of the interlude here
is distinguished from the real dialogue by thyme, as in the first interview
with the Players, by epic verse". (Furness, p. 244, note 145).

A passage from Hamlet's celebrated soliloquy "To be, or not to be",
which Coleridge characterised as being "of absolutely universal interest",
in an examination such as this, should not be omitted.

To be, or not to be, - that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die, - to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; - to sleep; -
To sleep! perchance to dream! ay, there is the rub;

(III. 1. 56 - 65)

[To live or not to live? Here is the question. What is nobler? To live, to suffer
Fortune's arrows and her slings,
or against a sea of troubles oppose arms
and see their end by his opposition?
Died, - slept; Look! And with a sleep
to stop the heartache and the thousand troubles
which are destiny's flesh, it would be a consummation
to be warmly desired! To die,
to sleep. - To sleep? To dream, perhaps.
Look, look, here is the obstacle!]

One thing that strikes us here, when comparing the two texts, apart from the infinitive "to be" which is not translated by "to exist", is the replacement of the chain of infinitives, - to be, not to be, to suffer, to take, to die, to sleep, to say, etc - of the original by the Greek να + subjunctive. Modern Greek is perhaps the only European language that has lost the use of the infinitive, which has been replaced by a more analytical syntax, as above. Vikelas had no other choice but to follow this
practice; and he did it up to line 59. In translating the two infinitives 'to die', "to sleep" (line 60), however, surprisingly enough, he rendered them by past tenses ἀπέθανε, κοιμήθηκε (died, slept). This is an inexcusable inconsistency. One can notice also a deviation from the original as far as the syntax is concerned. Shakespeare's dependent interrogative clause "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer" is changed into a direct question: Τί είναι πλέον εὐγενίες; (What is nobler?).

At the beginning of the passage Vikelas takes the liberty translating "To be, or not to be" by a direct question Νά ζή κανιείς ή νά μή ζή; and starts a new sentence 'Ιδού ή άπορία for "- that is the question", thus disconnecting the line. Shakespeare's "in the mind" is left out, and so is the adjective "outrageous", while the position of the words "slings" and "arrows" is reversed within the line, for metrical reasons. "No more" is inaccurately rendered by 'Ιδού which might imply "that's all". "To say" and "natural" are also left out. The metaphor "that flesh is heir to" is not satisfactorily rendered by ποῦ εϊν' ή μοίρα της σαρκος (which are destiny's flesh). The present tense in the phrase "'tis a consummation" is translated by the conditional clause θά ἦτο (it would be), and the line corresponding to "ay, there is the rub" is filled out with the nonsensical ιδού, ιδού, again for metrical reasons.

This passage, although it tries hard to reproduce the meaning of the original, cannot retain the incantatory effect of Shakespeare's poetical diction. The tension of the original is slackened, toned down or obliterated. Soliloquies are the most demanding passages which actually put to the test the abilities of a translator. Especially Shakespeare's complex and packed imagery is hard to reproduce accurately, and it is here where the weakest point of the translation is discerned.

The following passage includes Ophelia's speech. After her dialogue with Hamlet and his rebuke of her, distressed and brokenhearted she exclaims:

Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fare state,
The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music-vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with estasy; Oh, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

(III. 1. 150 - 161)

Τί νοςς λαμπρός, ἀλλοίμονον, ἐδώ κατεκρημνίσθη!
Ἡ εὐπροσήγορη ματιᾷ, ἡ προχομμένη γλῶσσα,
τ’ ἀνδρείον ξίφος, ἡ ἐλπίς, τὸ ρόδων τῆς Δανίας,
αὐτός, καθρέπτης τοῦ συρμοῦ, τῆς εὐγενείας τόπος,
σημαδία βλούν τὸν ματιῶν, τόσον νὰ πέσῃ, τόσον!
Κ’ ἐγώ, ἄξιοδάκρυη καὶ μαύρη, ποῦ μ’ ἐδόθη
τῆς μουσικῆς τῶν ὀρκῶν τοῦ νὰ εὐφρανθῶ τὸ μέλι,
βλέπω τὸν νοῦν τῶν εὐγενῆ, τῶν ἡγεμονικῶν τοῦ,
’σάν ραγισμένον σήματον παράφωνα νὰ κράζῃ, —
τὸ ἄνθις τῆς νεότητος τ’ ἀσύγκριτον τὸ βλέπω
’ς τὴν τρέλλαν νὰ μαραίνεται! Κακή, κακή μου ώρα
νὰ ἴδω ἐκεῖνα πτοβλεπα, κι’ αὐτὰ νὰ βλέπω τώρα!

(p. 87)

[What a bright mind, alas, here is overthrown!
The courteous glance, the diligent tongue,
the brave sword, the hope, the rose of Denmark,
he, the mirror of fashion, the model of nobility,
a mark for all eyes, so much to fall, so much!
And I, deplorable and ill-fortuned, to whom was given
the honey of his music’s words to enjoy,
I see the noble and sovereign mind
like a cracked bell sounding dissonantly, —
the incomparable flower of youth I see
withering in madness! A bad, bad time for me
to see those which I saw, and to see these now!]

Here again, as elsewhere, Vikelas has recast the text into Greek,
giving the content almost complete, but without his version’s sounding
like Shakespeare. One cannot expect a translator, of course, to make
Greek sound like English. There is no doubt that the Greek passage
in itself does read smoothly, but a close comparison with the original
does reveal some inaccuracies i. e. “the soldier’s sword” is translated as
“brave sword”, τ’ ἀνδρείον ξίφος, “the rose of the fair state” becomes
“the rose of Denmark”, τὸ ρόδων τῆς Δανίας, the descriptive and powerful
Dimitrios Vikelas’ translation of *Hamlet*

metaphor “suck’d the honey” is rendered by “enjoyed the honey”, νὰ εὐφρανθῶ τὸ μέλι, “the sweet bells jangled” by “cracked bell”, ραγισμένον σήμαντρον.

One of the most dramatic scenes of the play is the Scene of Ophelia’s funeral. On seeing her body being carried to the grave, Laertes, full of grief, cries:

[Lay her in the earth; -
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! - I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

(V. 1. 266 - 30)

The Greek version of Vikelas’ :

'Σ τὸ χώμα βάλετέ μού την, κι' άνθάκια νά φυτρώσουν ἐπάνω 'ς τ' ἁγγελόμορφον, τὸ ἀσπιλόν τῆς σώμα! Καλόγερε άναίσθητε, 'ς τὰ δεξιὰ τοῦ Πλάστου ἡ ἄδελφή μου ἄγγελος θά εἶναι παραστάτης, ένω' εσύ 'ς τά Τάρταρα θά έχης νά οὐρλιάζῃς!

(p. 167)

[Lay her in the earth and let little flowers grow on her angelic, her chaste body! Senseless monk, on the right side of the Creator my sister will be a ministering angel, while you will have to howl in Tartarus’.]

The verbal sound here is rich and the style highly lyrical. The mood is produced in the translator’s own medium. Nothing is lost of the poetry, and perhaps, something is even added, when “her fair and unpolluted flesh” is turned into “angelic and chaste body”, τ' ἁγγελόμορφον, τὸ ἀσπιλόν τῆς σώμα, without seriously impairing the content. In the answer to the Priest, also, Vikelas puts some additional words into Laertes’ mouth, i. e. his sister will be “on the right side of the Creator”, 'ς τὰ δεξιὰ τοῦ Πλάστου, while the Priest will lie “in Tartarus”, 'ς τὰ Τάρταρα.

The Queen’s farewell to Ophelia and her scattering of flowers over
the grave are accompanied by these highly emotional words:

Sweets to the sweet; farewell!
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife,
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck’d, sweet maid,
And not t’ have strew’d thy grave.

(V. 1. 231 - 4)

"Ανθη 'ς το άνθος!
"Ω, χαίρε! Τού 'Αμλέτου μου σε ήλπιξα γυναικα,
μ’ άνθη να στρώσω ήλπιξα την νυμφικήν σου κλίνην, -
δχι, παρθένε μου γλυκεια, τον τάφον σου να ράνω.

(p. 167)

[Flowers to the flower!
Oh, farewell! I hoped you would be my Hamlet’s wife
I hoped to deck your bridal bed with flowers,-
not, my sweet virgin, to strew your grave.]

The touching phrase of endearment, "‘sweets to the sweet’", is rendered by a Greek phrase of equal sensitivity and felicity, although different etymologically: "‘flowers to the flower’" "Ανθη’ς το άνθος! The remaining three lines lose nothing of the poetry of the original.

Finally, almost at the end of the play, while the destructive power of the poison is eating at Hamlet’s life, he has time just to utter the following words to the audience:

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest) oh, I could tell you -
But let it be. - Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

(V. 2. 321 - 7)

'Εσείς ποι βλέπετε’ έντρομοι κ’ άχροι αύτην τήν θέαν,
κ’ είδοθε βωβοί άκροαται αύτής τής πραγμάτειας,
καιρόν άν είχα, - άλλ’ αύτός ο μαύρος δεσμοφύλαξ,
ο Θάνατος, έπανω μου χέρι βαρύ άπλώνει, -
"Ω! είχα πράγματα νά πώ! 'Αλλ’ άς τ’ άφήσω. - Φίλε,
άπέθανα, σ’ δμως ζης, και σ’ δικαιώσε με
κ’ έμένα και τά έργα μου.

(p. 188)
[You that frightened and pale are looking at this
and are mute listeners to this tragedy, (sight,
had I time, - but this black gaoler,
Death, lays on me his heavy hand, -
Oh! I had things to say! But let them be. Friend,
I am dead, but you live, and you must justify me,
both me and my deeds.]

Vikelas' version is not quite free from a number of shortcomings
the most striking of which are the following:

1. Mistranslations:

(a) "When he the ambitious Norway combated" (I. 1. 61) is
translated ὅταν τὸν ὑπερήφανον τὸν Νορβηγόν 'νικοῦσε (p. 7). (When he
defeated the proud Norwegian). Shakespeare by "combated" does not
mean here "defeated" but opposed in single fight.¹

(b) Similarly, the line "No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to
charm" (I. 1. 163) is translated δέν φαίνεται Νεράιδα, δέν πιάνουν στργλας
μάγια (p. 11). (Neither does fairy appear, nor witchcraft takes effect).
Vikelas mistranslates the verb "takes" by "appears". "To take"
here means to have malignant influence, said of supernatural powers or
"to bewitch".²

(c) "As any the most vulgar thing to sense" (I. 2. 99) σάν κάθε άλλο
αἴσθητον τήν πρόστυχήν μας φύσιν (p. 16) (Like anything else perceptible
to our vulgar nature). In Shakespeare's time the adjective "vulgar"
meant "common, ordinary", without the modern narrowing down of
meaning.³ "Sense", too, is used in Elizabethan times to indicate not
"nature", as Vikelas translates it but "understanding, power of sound
reasoning". Moreover, the adjective "vulgar" in the translation, wrongly
placed as it is, qualifies the noun "nature", while in the original it has
not the same function.

(d) "Thy knotted and combined locks to part" (I.5.18) is translat­
ed καὶ τά ἀπλωτά μαλλιά σου νά χωρισθοῦν (and your loose hair to part).
Hamlet's hair is not "loose" ἀπλωτα but, on the contrary "knotted",
ahat is tangled. The word "combined" is left untranslated.

(e) "No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp" (II.2.55).

1. Alexander Schmidt, Shakespeare Lexicon (Koenigsberg, 1874 ; republished
2. E. A. Abbot, A Shakespearian Grammar (London, 1870 ; republished N.
(Let the sugared tongue sweetly lick the *great* grandeurs). "Absurd" means "insipid, tasteless", not "great", τρανά.

2. Inaccuracies:

There are numerous inaccuracies in translation, resulting either from a lack of meticulous insistence on the particular meaning of a word or phrase of the original or because a synonymous Greek word fitted the metre better. Here are some examples: "assail" = προσβολή (I. 1. 31) instead of ἐφόδος; "was offended" = ἔθυμωσε (I. 1. 49) instead of προσβλήθη; "the ambitious Norway" = ὁ ὑπερήφανος Νορβηγός (I. 1. 61) instead of φιλόδοξος; "impotent" = γέρος (I. 2. 29) instead of αδύνατος. It should be more accurate to translate "selfslaughter" (I. 2. 132) by αὐτοκτονία = suicide than by αὐτοκτόνος, for "self-slaughter" is an abstract noun and denotes the action (Schmidt, p. 1024), not the person who commits suicide, as in Vikelas' version. "He was a goodly king" (I. 2. 186) is translated by Τί βασιλεύς γενναίος (what a brave king), where the adjective καλός (fine, fair) would be closer to what Shakespeare meant. "Season your admiration" (I. 2. 192) was translated by the metaphor τὸν θαυμασμὸν χαλίνωσε (bride your admiration), but it would be more appropriate to translate "season" by μετρίασε "temper it", as Johnson suggested (Furness, p. 50, note 192), and "admiration" by εκπλήξιν (astonishment), as in III. 2. 311. The "ungracious pastors" is turned into κακόν διδάσκαλον (bad teacher), while the strong phrase "taints of liberty" (II. 1. 32) is translated by the much weaker γεννήματα τῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας (offsprings of independence). Ophelia’s description of Hamlet’s being "pale as his shirt" (II. 1. 81) is rendered simply as ἀσπρὸ 'σαν τό πανί (white as a sheet), whereby the audience or the reader does not learn that the Prince was dressed in a white shirt. "Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in" is translated 'Εσύ χαρέτισέ μου τοὺς λοιπον καὶ φέρε μοδ' τους. (Do you greet them for me, then, and bring them to me); "to do grace" means to do honourable distinction, to do honour, not "to greet". "Steals away" (III. 4. 134) is translated simply by φεύγει (leaves), without the sense of furtiveness. "What, art a heathen ?" (V. 1. 33) has become Τούρκος εἶσαι; (Are you a Turk?).

3. Rendering of puns and quibbles:

Shakespeare’s puns and verbal quibbles are the weakest points of Vikelas’ version and are undoubtedly a baffling problem for any translator. These literary devices, as they depend on linguistic connotations, are difficult to reproduce in another language and for a foreign audience
or reader to appreciate. Faced with this problem Vikelas is compelled to admit his weakness. In note 40 (p. 204), referring to the gravedigger’s pun “Adam digged; could he dig without arms?” which he rendered ‘Ο Άδαμ ἐσκαπτε. Καὶ τί ἔσκαπτε ἄν δὲν ἦλθε χωράφια; (Adam digged. And what did he dig if he had not fields?), Vikelas wrote:

I request the reader’s indulgence for the unsuccessful paraphrase of the untranslatable, as far as myself is concerned, quibble in the text. Adam, says the gravedigger, had arms. Arms means both “coat of arms” and “arms”, hence the quibble. I could not omit this passage completely because of the continuity.

The two puns in the following lines are discarded altogether and only the one layer of meaning is given.

POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar; I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.

(Π. 2. 109 - 12)

ΠΟΛΩΝΙΟΣ (Ὑπεκρίθην) τον Ιούλιον Καίσαρα. Μ’ ἐσκότωσαν εἰς τὸ Καπιτώλιον. Ὁ Βροῦτος μ’ ἐσκότωσεν. ΑΜΛΕΤΟΣ Πῶς νὰ τὸ κάμη αὐτὸ τὸ κακόν ὁ Βροῦτος!

(p. 94)

[POLONIUS (I enacted) Julius Caesar. They killed me on the Capitol. Brutus killed me. HAMLET How could Brutus do this evil thing?]

Shakespeare’s quibble is completely lost. The note appended in the back of the translation (p. 199), which simply indicates that there is a double word-play based on “Capitol”, “Brutus”, “brute”, “capital” does not help at all to reproduce the so essential quibble of the original.

4. Imagery:

Shakespeare’s use of imagery is such a vast subject that, as Caroline Spurgeon put it, “it would demand at least a book - if not a small library-
to itself”. Shakespeare’s literary figures - metaphors, similes, personifications, metonymies - these “little word-pictures” are devices which, according to the same scholar, “are used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate, and embellish his thoughts.”1 Their translation presents a complicated problem, as each language has its own stock of figurative speech which only can exist by chance in another language, if it does so at all. Vikelas at times substitutes a metaphor with a near equivalent, as in the following example:

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death
The memory be green

(I. 2. 1)

"Αν καὶ δὴν ἔλαβε καιρὸν ἀκόμη νὰ μεστώσῃ
ἡ μνήμη τοῦ φιλτάτου μας τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Ἄμλετου,

[Although there has been no time yet for the memory of our dearest brother Hamlet to ripen,]

Shakespeare’s “the memory be green” has become “for the memory to ripen”, νὰ μεστώσῃ ἡ μνήμη. Likewise, for “heart of strings of steel” (III. 3. 70), Vikelas writes καρδιά πέτρινη (stone heart). More frequent are the cases of images deprived of their peculiar meaning, when translated with an explanatory abstract paraphrase: Claudius says to Gertrude:

Well, we shall sift him.

(II. 2. 58)

Καλὰ, ἀς τὸν ἀκούσωμεν καὶ βλέπομεν κατόπιν.

(p. 54)

[Well, let us listen to him and afterwards we shall see].

Similarly, the phrase “A king of shreds and patches” (III. 4. 103) has become βασιλέας τοῦ δρόμου (king of the street).

In a number of cases Vikelas skilfully renders Shakespeare’s imagery with a Greek counterpart, for instance:

There is something in his soul
O’er which his melancholy sits on brood.

(III. 1. 164 - 5)

Κάτι κρυμμένον ἔχει
eἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ κλωσσαὶ μὲ τὴν μελαγχολίαν
(p. 88)

[He has something hidden in his soul and he broods over it with melancholy.]

5. Omissions:
There are at least ten lines omitted which were thought by Vikelas to be indelicate or obscene, since he was a conservative man, as far as morals were concerned. In one of his notes appended to his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* he wrote:

To those intending to compare my translation with the English text I owe an apologetic explanation for having toned down some times and for the omission of some expressions of the original. In view of the difficulty of translating and my hesitancy to publish such expressions in all their nakedness I considered preferable their concealment of the supression of a very few passages.

The omitted passages are indeed very few also in *Hamlet* and the measure of excision is taken because of the translator's prudishness. Omitted are the lines 108-13 (III. 2), where Hamlet is sitting at Ophelia's feet. Also lines 241-3 (II. 2) where Hamlet's dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern refers to "the secret parts of Fortune". Vikelas also tends to omit parenthetical phrases such as "not to crack the wind of the poor phrase/Running it thus" (I. 3. 108-9) and "I believe it is a fetch of warrant" (II. 1. 38). Another line which is omitted is "In equal scale weighing delight and dole" (I. 2. 13) from Claudius speech, and some minor other omissions of phrases not affecting the text. No one of these omissions is in the "Errata" at the end of the book restored.

To summarise: Vikelas' translation considered as a whole, if not accurate for the scholarly-minded, was undoubtedly a work with many virtues: it reproduced the original content, although with very slight deviations, it conveyed the spirit, although toned down here and there, it had clarity and fluency reading like a Greek ballad, and preserved some of the poetical diction and the dramatic effect of the original, although wearing a very Greek dress.