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Book Reviews

Tetsuhito Motoyama, Rosalind Fielding, and Fumiaki Konno, eds. and trans. *Re-Imagining Shakespeare in Contemporary Japan: A Selection of Japanese Theatrical Adaptations of Shakespeare*. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021. Pp. xi + 315.

Reviewed by *Miki Iwata**

When Shakespeare was growing into a British national poet in the 18th century, English intellectuals tried hard to establish an authentic reading of Shakespeare. Elizabeth Montagu, for example, in response to Voltaire's unfavourable assessment, maintains that "It is strange that Mr. de Voltaire […] should not rather speak with admiration than contempt of an author, who by the force of genius rose so much above the age and circumstances in which he was born" (17). In the post-postmodern contemporary world, however, to offer a *correct* attitude towards Shakespeare seems almost impossible. His plays now function as a platform open to a variety of different interpretations, and this anthology of contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare in Japan provides new additions to this already rich well of literary imagination.

Julie Sanders, quoting Charles Darwin's idea that the environment is "not monolithic and stable," but "a matrix of possibilities," argues that adaptation and appropriation "are all about multiple interactions and a matrix of possibilities" (160). Sanders's description of adaptation seems especially appropriate in Japan, a country which had a radically different cultural environment from that of Europe when it met Shakespeare in the late 19th century. After more than 250 years of national seclusion during the Edo period, Japan rediscovered the West as the threatening other. At that time, to read Shakespeare could mean a serious attempt to understand the other and re-fashion themselves in the reflection of the other. Since then, "Shakespeare in Japan" has

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been offering multiple possibilities of his works to Japanese and, sometimes, non-Japanese audiences.

The editors and translators of *Re-Imagining Shakespeare in Contemporary Japan* are acutely conscious of this peculiar context of the history of reception of Shakespeare in Japan. Even though the three theatrical adaptions included in this volume were written and performed either at the end of the 20th century or in the 21st century, this anthology begins with a general introduction which gives a whole picture of "Shakespeare's reception in Japan," starting from possible (but unproven) interaction between Shakespeare and Japanese drama in the late 18th century, through the *kabuki* or other overtly Japanised adaptations in the Meiji period, which sought to introduce the English playwright to the Japanese audience of the day, and the *shingeki* (New Theatre) versions, focusing on the representation of "authentic" Shakespeare, to the underground, free adaptations since the 1980s.

These vicissitudes of acting style are deeply interconnected with the translation, as Japanese is drastically unlike English in terms of both grammar and vocabulary. For example, personal pronouns in Japanese are so diverse and highly gendered that the simple "I" in English could convey a variety of different implications according to the translator's choice. Thus, the introduction also offers the history of Japanese translation of Shakespeare's texts, ranging from the word-for-word translation of Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), through the modern versions that more resemble spoken Japanese by Fukuda Tsuneari (1912-1994) and Odajima Yūshi (1930-), to the gender-conscious translation of Matsuoka Kazuko (1942-). With the help of this conscientious introduction, the reader understands well what historical and cultural backgrounds these three contemporary plays may connote before they actually set about them. As in other countries, Shakespeare has allowed Japanese adaptors to hold a mirror up to themselves.

Given this background, all the three plays included in this volume, to some degree, deal with the Japanese historical/social/cultural contexts of the time when these plays were written and performed. And, interestingly, those particular contexts are intertwined with the sense of "topophilia." It was a term coined by Yi-Fu Tuan, the pioneer of humanistic geography, to indicate the spiritual relationship between man and place. According to him, humans, either a group or individuals, like it or not, cannot escape from forming an emotional connection with their environments, but we should note that it includes "all the human being's affective ties with the material environment," and is not confined to favourable or positive feelings (Tuan 93). Thus, while all the three plays in this volume reflect the Japanese topography of the day, their setting varies from nightmarish to nostalgic.

Another characteristic of these plays—though it may reflect more about the editorial attitudes of the editors than about the playwrights and theatre

managers—is that, throughout the volume, the authorship of the selected plays is attributed not to an individual author but to the theatre company. By this, the reader can see the importance of the collaborative and social dimension of dramatic art. Though this feature will not be so conspicuous in the latter two plays in the volume, *HAMLET X SHIBUYA—Light, Was Our Revenge Tarnished?* (2012) and *The New Romeo and Juliet* (2012), since the playwright and the head of the company are identical, the situation is a little more complicated in the case of the volume's opening play, *The Three Daughters of Lear* (1995) by the Tokyo Shakespeare Company (TSC).

The TSC was founded in 1990 by the director Edo Kaoru, who has been working on the translation of Shakespeare by herself rather than using the existing translations for their performance. Her emphasis on creating the most appropriate words for them is well demonstrated in *The Three Daughters of Lear*. The play was first written by Okuizumi Hikaru, her spouse and novelist who won the Akutagawa Prize, one of the most renowned literary prizes in Japan. However, it was repeatedly revised and altered, first by Edo and then by collaborative hands through rehearsals. The process of its making is strongly reminiscent of the pioneering feminist adaptation of *King Lear*, i.e., *Lear's Daughters* (1987) by the Women's Theatre Group (WTG) in collaboration with Elaine Feinstein.

The WTG version is a kind of prequel to Shakespeare's play and describes how the three daughters of Lear grew up to become the characters shown in the play. The violently patriarchal Lear oppressed his wife to death, bullies the two elder daughters and fondly pets the youngest only to make her a typical "father's daughter." The details of their experiences in the play are based on the actual voices of ordinary women in workshops that WTG and Feinstein held many times for this project. Thus, by rejecting the individual, controlling author, which already has a masculine connotation, WTG transformed fragmentary and anonymous voices of women into a work of art that highlighted problems in the society in which they lived. Although it might have been a mere coincidence, it is interesting that the first collaboration between Edo and Okuizumi in a similar vein to WTG also deals with *King Lear*.

However, while WTG's *Lear's Daughters* is a prequel of *King Lear*, *The Three Daughters of Lear* depicts the afterlives of the daughters and the fool in Hell. The fool, who disappears from Shakespeare's play in the middle of Act 3, is now Satan's liaison man and descends to the bottom of Hell where Goneril and Regan suffer an endless punishment: to count iron nails and swallow them up every day, in order to administer a test for them. Only one of them, if she succeeds to prove more evil than the other, can be promoted (or, in fact, degenerated) to Satan's subordinate witch. The fool expects Virgil as a guide of Hell but, instead of the classical poet, his henchman who does not have any memory of his former life, if any, and calls himself the Hell Wag takes the roles of a guide and an assistant of the test.

At a glance, the play's setting in Hell does not really chime with the idea of "topophilia" mentioned above. However, as one of the editors of the volume, Testuhito Motoyama, points out, we should note that the Hell setting in the play is in fact "a response to Japanese society during the early 1990s" (44), when the economic bubble was exploded. The long and serious effect of the asset bubble collapse was later called the "Lost Decade" of Japan. *The Three Daughters of Lear* was written and performed in the midst of the Lost Decade, which "makes Hell [in the play] part of the world in which the audience belongs" (44). In the latter half of the play, as a part of the test for the elder sisters, the Hell Wag assumes the shape of Cordelia, supposedly with the help of Satan's magical ring. However, the climactic moments insinuate that the Hell Wag is in fact the genuine Cordelia and she, with her self-righteous and obstinate love, has the least hope of salvation among the three sisters. In the first performance in 1995, this insinuation was unmistakable because the fool finds at the last moment that he forgot to lend the magic ring to the Hell Wag. Even though the ending was later revised and has become more ambiguous, the editors restore the 1995 ending in this volume. Their decision illustrates the play's trait as a literary record of the ambience of Japanese society in the Lost Decade.

The second play, *HAMLET X SHIBUYA*, was made and performed by Kakushinhan Theatre Company (the word "kakushinhan" stands for "a crime of conscience" in Japanese), a theatre company of the Lost Generation, the appellation for those who experienced adolescence during the Japanese Lost Decade. According to Rosalind Fielding, the "cityscape of Tokyo […] is essential to the company's performances and often takes on a role as a character in its own right" (148). Especially in *HAMLET X SHIBUYA*, the two most representative districts of Tokyo, Shibuya and Akihabara, are merged into a single, literary third world where the worldview of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is aptly used to highlight the serious social problems of contemporary Japan.

In blending Akihabara with Shibuya, Kimura Ryunosuke, the company manager and playwright, had in mind a case of indiscriminate murder that happened in Akihabara in 2008. The culprit, driving a rented truck, first plunged into Akihabara's traffic-free zone and then, leaving the vehicle, randomly attacked passers-by with a knife, causing 7 deaths and 10 injuries. Kimura splits the Hamlet figure into two characters whose names are Shibuya and Akihabara respectively. Akihabara in the play is urged by the ghost of his father to take revenge on society's cruelty, that led him to commit suicide. To answer the plea of the dead father (who may be either a genuine ghost or Akihabara's hallucination), he drives a truck not into Akihabara's pedestrian area but into a huge intersection in front of Shibuya station. On the other hand, Shibuya's girlfriend is one of the 7 victims of the murder and, because of the traumatic shock of losing her, Shibuya forgets her name and begins to call her "Ophelia." As the play progresses, Shibuya increasingly loses his sanity and starts to believe

that it is he who is the culprit of the indiscriminate murder, who killed Ophelia. Thus, while a Hamlet split into Shibuya and Akihabara is merged again in the course of the story, the revenge theme in the original is scattered widely through the various contemporary elements of Japan in the early 21st century.

Although it is clear that the Akihabara case is quite influential in the making of Kimura's play, it was also occasioned by a traumatic disaster, the Tohoku Great Earthquake and Tsunami on 11 March, 2011, which triggered the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. Kimura comments in the interview with the editor(s) that nuclear plants could be the symbol of the old value systems "that infringe upon the dignity of individuals" and says, "Witnessing 3.11 made me feel that what I feel now is more important, and that led me to found Kakushinhan" (165). The post-3.11 Japanese society which Kimura describes in *HAMLET X SHIBUYA* is dauntingly bleak, but not without a ray of hope, since, in the final scene, Shibuya's "Ophelia" (once again, she can either be a ghost or a creature of his imagination) reminds him of her true name—Light.

For Shimodate Kazumi, the manager and playwright of the Shakespeare Company of Japan (SCJ), a theatre company based in Sendai, one of the main cities in the area affected by 3.11, finding the element of hope is far more urgent than for Kakushinhan. Before 3.11, SCJ produced adaptations of Shakespeare whose settings were relocated into towns in Tohoku and whose language was transformed into various local dialects of the region, with the purpose of defying Tokyo-centrism and developing their local dialects into a profoundly dramatic language. After the disaster, however, Shimodate became totally at a loss and thought that they could not go on playing any more. And yet, he changed his mind because, he confesses, "an elderly lady, who approached me in Sendai after 3.11, said, 'Please don't give up Shakespeare. It's something I always look forward to. Please stage something not sad and not long'" (233). The result of SCJ's attempt to answer her request, and cater for local audiences who were all more or less directly damaged by the disaster, is *The New Romeo and Juliet* (2012).

This work is indeed not sad nor long. The place of the play is a hot spa resort town in the countryside of Miyagi prefecture in Tohoku, while "Two households, both alike in dignity | In fair Verona" in *Romeo and Juliet* are transformed into the two families which run two representative hotels in the hot spa town. There are also lots of concrete references in the play that suggest the time is the 1960s—the days when the elderly who suffer from 3.11 enjoyed their bloom of youth. The play is full of the rich vernacular language which the audience use in their everyday life (the contrivance that the translators applied for conveying that element is the use of Scottish dialect). The young couple take a drug that makes them apparently dead, but both of them wake up in time at the united funeral and the play ends in the joy of their rebirth.

Compared with the other two adaptations, Shimodate's revision may sound too faux-naïf and complacent in that it looks to cater for the audience's nostalgia without tackling imminent social problems. Nevertheless, decisively holding that attitude in the immediate aftermath of 3.11 itself can be regarded as a radical assertion of what drama can do for those who are deeply wounded by the unprecedented catastrophe. *HAMLET X SHIBUYA* and *The New Romeo and Juliet* appear to show opposite stances, but both reflect their serious considerations in reaction to the 3.11 disaster in each way. Reading these plays together, we can see, to borrow from Sanders again, "multiple interactions and a matrix of possibilities" for Shakespeare in contemporary Japan.

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Boika Sokolova and Janice Valls-Russell, eds. *Shakespeare's Others in 21ˢᵗ-Century European Performance.* **London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021. Pp. 312.**

Reviewed by *Nora Galland*[*]

This volume intends to focus on European productions of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* that "think of the Other not in racial, but in ethnic terms" (2), for most of the essays "foreground ethnicity as an issue of debate" (6) to explore performances in which "[r]acial dichotomies are substituted by ethnic differences" (12). This was justified in the introduction by a reference to Shaul Bassi's demand to favor ethnicity over race (Bassi 13). Drawing on "Paul Gilroy's controversial claim that the category of 'race' should be dropped altogether", Bassi argues that it should otherwise be "at the very least, supplemented […] by the largely underutilized notion of ethnicity" (Bassi 13). In *Shakespeare's Others*, the conceptual distinction between "race" and "ethnicity" is left unexplained—both terms being at times used interchangeably in some chapters (34, 73, 128), or as antonyms in the introduction by Boika Sokolova and Janice Valls-Russell (2, 4, 6, 12).

What is most striking in this book is probably the lack of critical theory to address race, in particular the construction of whiteness. The volume is very uneven for some chapters do explore the naturalization of whiteness on stage (chapter 9), or the mechanisms through which race is erased or deconstructed (chapters 7 and 8), thus being aware of the repercussions casting choices have on the construction of race—intended or unintended by directors—while others seem completely oblivious to it (chapters 2 and 4).

The white supremacist vision of a white, or "racially homogeneous" (52) Eastern Europe is repeatedly hammered on the grounds that "in European countries without colonial histories, the acting profession is still white" (12), and again when it comes to discussing a Bulgarian production, it is said that "Bulgaria has no colonial history, and [that] the acting profession is racially, though not ethnically, homogeneous" (264). This assumption about the racial reality of Eastern Europe also appears at the beginning of the introduction to comment on Suren Shahverdyan's *Othello* production: "Such emphasis [on race] is far removed from the dominant interpretations on stages where performances

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are shaped by race relations, as in the United States, Britain and other European countries with imperial histories, in other words, by the grim legacy of colonialism and slavery" (1). Thus the Roma communities, the main racial minority of Eastern Europe, are treated as an invisible presence in what is introduced as the "white" part of Europe. Precisely, Ioana Bunescu, from Malmö University in Sweden, wrote extensively about "the negative attitudes", including indifference, "towards the Roma minority in eastern Europe" (Bunescu 43) in her ground-breaking study *Roma in Europe: The Politics of Collective Identity Formation* (2014, Routledge).

Race is at times oversimplified and reduced to racial difference, mainly Africanness, or African blackness, while whiteness and the Roma people are disturbingly sidestepped which creates a critical void in particular in chapters 2 and 4. The seminal work of Ayanna Thompson, a scholar well-known for her work on *Othello*'s adaptations and casting politics, is only quoted once to insist on the multiplicity of retellings *Othello* offers (3). Dympna Callaghan is another race Shakespeare scholar only quoted once (102). One might wonder why the general bibliography of the volume has not included more race scholars to conceptualize and theorize the deconstruction of race on stage, mainly through performances of whiteness.

The book is divided in three parts made up of 13 chapters that "consider the aspects of performances pertaining to the role of the Stranger within their specific political, geographic, cultural and linguistic contexts" (10). The first part is entitled "Relocating otherness: the Other-within" (24-126), the second part examines "New nationalisms, migrants: Imperfect resolutions" (127-228) while the third part deals with "Performative conversations" (229-268), *i.e.* conversations with theatre practitioners, Karin Coonrod, Arnaud Churin and Plamen Markov. The volume ends with a coda entitled "Staging Shakespeare's Others and their biblical archetype" (269-80) by Péter Dávidházi.

Each section starts with a short introduction by Lawrence Gutner to bind the essays together. Three contributions focus on *Othello* in Italy by Anna Maria Cimitile (chapter 1), Bulgaria by Boika Sokolova and Kirilka Stavreva (chapter 2) and Portugal by Francesca Rayner (chapter 9), and three on *The Merchant of Venice* in France by Janice Valls-Russel (chapter 5), Romania by Nicoleta Cinpoeş (chapter 6) and Hungary by Natália Pikli (chapter 7). The last four essays analyse both plays in Poland by Aleksandra Sakowska (chapter 3), Serbia by Zorica Bečanović-Nikolić (chapter 4), the Netherlands by Coen Heijes (chapter 8), and Germany by Bettina Boecker (chapter 10).

Lawence Guntner introduces the first part as "a close analysis of the strategies of representation, interpretation and re-imagining of local European alterities" (26), *i.e.* the hierarchical constructions of whiteness.

In chapter 1, "'Venice' is elsewhere: the Stranger's locality or Italian 'blackness' in twenty-first century stagings of *Othello*", Anna Maria Cimitile

explores the phenomenon of "translocating Shakespeare" (31), or the fact that, with "the displacement of 'Venice' to another Italian region or city, the text is translated into a regional Italian dialect" (30). She analyses the Sicilian 2013 *Othello* by Luigi Lo Cascio in which references to the eponymous character's black skin suggests the darker skin tone of Southern Italians. Cimitile also examines Giuseppe's Miale di Mauro's Neapolitan 2017 *Othello* in which the director "re-appraise[s] *Othello*'s 'blackness' by using as critical lenses the Gramscian vision of the 'Southern Question' and Pasolini's view of regional cultures and dialects" (40).

In chapter 2, "Refracting the Racial Other into the Other-within in two Bulgarian adaptations of *Othello*", Boika Sokolova and Kirilka Stavreva also tackle the issue of the "otherness-within" (50) with the 1975 *Othello* production of Lyuben Grois who decided to have "a racially unmarked Othello" (51). Here, the authors universalize whiteness by suggesting that whiteness is "racially unmarked" (51), and that this performance is "erasing Othello's race" (51). What happens is that the production erases Othello's *blackness* to relocate it "within a local context of cultural traumas inflected by communist society" (51). What the authors introduce as a "de-raced interpretation of the play" (52) is actually about the deconstruction of the *whiteness* of Othello treated as an "Other-within" (52). In doing so, they explore Lilia Abadjieva's 2005 *Othello* considered as "a tragedy of gender" (53) as well as the 2008 *Othello* by Ivan Mladenov presented as a "tragedy of social exclusion" (60).

In chapter 3, "Estranged strangers: Kryzysztof Warlikowski's Shylock and Othello in *African Tales after Shakespeare* (2011)", Aleksandra Sakowska deals with a "purposeful stereotypical treatment of ethnicity in *The Merchant of Venice*" and the exaggeration of "racial stereotypes in post-Holocaust Poland" (70) that Warlikowski deconstructs throughout his five-hour performance. While the treatment of otherness is often intermingled with mockery, Warlikowski explores different kinds of otherness: "Lear (the old man), Shylock (the Jew) and Othello (the black man)" (73) in blackface. Sakowska argues that in this production, Othello "becomes post-historical and to a certain degree post-racial" (81).

In chapter 4, "Drags, dyes and deaths in Venice: *The Merchant of Venice* (2004) and *Othello* (2012) in Belgrade, Serbia", Zorica Bečanović--Nikolić analyses Egon Savin's 2004 *The Merchant of Venice* in which the director "stressed difference and otherness in all its guises: sexual, racial, national, religious" (96). She also focuses on Miloš Lolić's 2012 *Othello* in which "Othello's face was at first painted black, in the old-fashioned manner, plainly denoting his racial otherness" (99). She claims that African blackness is "hardly an issue in contemporary Serbian society" which explains the use of blackface, as she puts it: "the obviously conventional black make-up was both

part of the theatrical tradition and of the semiotic function of colours in this production" (99).

In chapter 5, "*The Merchant of Venice* in France (2001 and 2017): Deconstructing a malaise", Janice Valls-Russell examines Andrei Șerban's 2001 *The Merchant of Venice* and Jacques Vincey's 2017 *Business in Venice*. Both productions "set the play in the audience's here and now […] [mark] a break with the French tradition of moving the action elsewhere" (112), they also explore "the othering process" and its very "banality" (112). Drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre's essay *Réflexions sur la question Juive*, Valls-Russell introduces Vincey's Shylock as "a secular, isolated figure, unattached to a wide community" (122) while Șerban's character is depicted as belonging "to a diasporic network" he could turn to "for support" (122).

Guntner then presents the second part as dealing with productions that took place in countries marked by an "ongoing redefinition of nationhood based on ethnicity [which] has led to a rise in xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia" (128).

In chapter 6, "'Barbarous temper', 'hideous violence' and 'mountainish inhumanity': Stage encounters with *The Merchant of Venice* in Romania", Nicoleta Cinpoeş analyses László Bocsárdi's 2010 *Merchant* which "extended the Stranger's case beyond the Jew" (135) and Horațiu Mălăele's 2017 *Shylock* in which "the mockery of justice was a grotesque display of double standards and hypocrisy" (145).

In chapter 7, "Staging *The Merchant of Venice* in Hungary: Politics, prejudice and languages of hatred", Natália Pikli presents the performance history of the Jew on the Hungarian stage and the representation of the Jew in Hungarian cultural memory. She then explores the Mohácsi brothers's 2013 *Merchant* that "placed Shylock's story into a world permeated by 'casual' racism and anti-Semitism, where Jewish jokes and intolerant remarks were a source of fun for both onstage and off-stage audiences" (156). On the contrary, Bertalan Bagó's 2016 *Merchant of Venice* "made light of otherness, downplaying any straightforward sign of Jewishness" (163).

In chapter 8, "Dutch Negotiations with Otherness in Times of Crisis: *Othello* (2006) and *The Arab of Amsterdam* (2008)", Coen Heijes draws a parallel between Theo van Gogh's murder case and Johan Doesburg's 2006 *Othello*, for "[f]ollowing van Gogh's murder, the debate in the Netherlands focused on Muslims and migrants from Morocco" (175). Heijes points out that if this production resorted to blackface, Othello quickly removed the make-up only to leave his eye sockets completely black during "a memorable opening" suggesting "Othello's attempts to integrate in a white society" (176). *In The Arab of Amsterdam* (2008) directed by Aram Adriaanse, Shylock is rebaptized Rafi who introduces himself as "a Jewish Arab, an Arab Jew" (179) from Baghdad—thus being an outsider no matter where he lives.

In chapter 9, "'Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago': Radical Empathy in Two Portuguese performances of *Othello*", Francesca Rayner analyses radical empathy—"understood here as a process of disidentification with gender and racial stereotypes underpinned by a sense that such stereotypes demand artistic and political transformation" (196)—in Nuno M. Cardoso's 2007 *Othello* and in Nuno Carinhas's 2018 *Othello*. Rayner explores Cardoso's production to conclude that his "deliberately non-political reading meant that the gender and racial politics were left unexamined" (198). In Carinhas' production, she argues that "[t]he all-white cast functioned instead to naturalize whiteness as the racial marker that needs no explanation or justification" (199-200).

In chapter 10, "A tragedy? *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* in Germany during the 2015-16 refugee crisis", Bettina Boecker explores Christian Weise's 2016 *Othello*—"a post-colonial adaptation of Shakespeare's play" (212)—as well as Nicolas Stemann's 2015 *Merchant of Venice* in which the director "others everyone, but altogether does away with the idea of a centre, there is no 'Us' to give substance to the Other" (219).

In the third part of the volume, Boika Sokolova and Kirilka Stavreva start with "*The Merchant of Venice* in the Venetian Ghetto (2016): Director Karin Coonrod" in which they have a discussion focusing on the protean character of anti-Semitism that is expressed in several languages in the production. Then Janice Valls-Russell's conversation, entitled "Inverting *Othello* in France (2019): Director Arnaud Churin", explores the motivations of the director according to whom "*Othello* […] cannot be narrowed down to racism. It is rather a complex play about diversity, hatred of the Other, and the mechanisms of patriarchy" (231). In the end, Boika Sokolova and Kirilka Stavreva's interview, "Migrant *Othello* (2020) in Bulgaria: Director Plamen Markov", reveals that this production "sidestepped the topics that have recently defined otherness in Othello—race, sexism and age—to focus instead on the anxieties of migration" (231).

In the last section, Péter Dávidházi examines the extent to which the Other is needed in a crisis drawing a parallel between on the one hand Othello and Shylock and on the other the Biblical figure Jephthah. In all three cases, Dávidházi argues that "there is the same desire to use the Stranger for gaining power and to preserve his negative stereotype for the same purpose, thus exploiting the Other ruthlessly both as an aid and as a scapegoat" (274). He also refers to the "Shibboleth test" (275) and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter to theorize the use of modern dialects on stage as well as gender politics.

Although the volume might seem uneven when it comes to the (de-)construction of race—whiteness in particular—on stage, it gathers thought-provoking reviews of a variety of European performances dealing with Shakespeare's Others. It is therefore a useful companion for anyone exploring otherness in contemporary adaptations of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* on European stages.

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Pia Brînzeu, *Fantomele lui Shakespeare* [*Shakespeare's Phantoms*]. Timişoara: Editura Universităţii de Vest, 2022. Vol. 1. Pp. 428. Vol. 2. Pp. 379.

Reviewed by *Monica Matei-Chesnoiu**

Fantomele lui Shakespeare [*Shakespeare's Phantoms*] is a challenging and exceptional book, a landmark in Romanian culture, and also one that defies any effort of providing a comprehensive statement of its objectives and achievements. Not only do the two extensive volumes (1:428 pp. and 2:379 pp.) examine an almost exhaustive list of contemporary novelistic and dramatic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, but they also address a wide variety of readers, from the amateur Romanian booklover interested in present-day fiction to the erudite Shakespeare scholar, who is aware of the latest developments in the field of Shakespeare studies. The book itself is a ground-breaking megaproject in the area of Shakespeare studies in Romania and internationally, and it is a celebration of what Shakespeare means to all of us, young and elderly, student and university professor of British and American literature, translator, or director and actor set on producing a Shakespeare play or interpreting a character.

Fantomele lui Shakespeare opens with the clarification of the title's concept and methodology; as Brînzeu admits, Shakespeare "haunts us" with "intertextual phantoms" (1:9, my translation), rendered in various critical conceptualizations, from "*biotexts*," to "*palimtexts*" (1:9) and "*afterimage*" (1:10). While admitting that there are no limits to the expansion and development of these texts, alluding to the semioticians' "porous" borders (1:11), Brînzeu graciously accepts—with all of us—that Shakespeare was an intertextual writer himself, who appropriated other literary worlds (1:12). I particularly appreciate the statement according to which we should admit to having unleashed "the waters of a huge textual flow" (1:13) into the world. This geographic metaphor links the book's argument to notions of spatial literary studies, which runs as an undercurrent throughout this multi-spatial and multi-cultural investigation.

The critical literature invoked in the Introduction includes references to earlier rewritings of Shakespeare's plays (by Nahum Tate, Alexander Pope, Lewis Carroll, G.B. Shaw, Bertolt Brecht, Boris Pasternak and Eugen Ionescu), but also critical metaphors related to quantum physics (1:15) and Elizabeth Fowler's concept of "phantom templates" (1:21). Brînzeu has done much to

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achieve a paradigm shift in Romanian Shakespeare's studies by deciding to write the book in Romanian, as the paperback offers a wealth of material to the Romanian reader, who has fewer opportunities of information in this field than the reader in English. Citations from Shakespeare's plays are from the most accomplished and recent Romanian translations, and citations from the adapted texts of the novels are also from Romanian translations (where these versions exist).

Volume I looks into the novels *The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey, *Within the Hollow Crown* by Margaret Campbell Barnes, the whodunnit *Richard II: The Death of Kings* by Margaret Frazer (in *Shakespearean Whodunits* edited by Michael Ashley), *The King's Sister* by Anne O'Brien, *Vinegar Girl* by Anne Tyler, *The Great Night* by Chris Adrian, *Shylock Is My Name* by Howard Jacobson, *Escape from Verona* by David Gray, *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* by Lisa Fiedler, *Juliet* by Anne Fortier, *Saving Juliet* by Suzanne Selfors, *Gertrude and Claudius* by John Updike, *Ophelia* by Lisa Klein, *Something Rotten* by Alan Gratz, and *A Nutshell: A Novel* by Ian McEwan; the short story "Yorick" by Salman Rushdie; and the plays *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (*Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*) by Bertolt Brecht, *Shylock's Revenge* by David Henry Wilson, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, and *Vărul Shakespeare* (*Cousin Shakespeare*) by Marin Sorescu, showing the "huge textual river" (1:13) generated by Shakespeare's plays in the minds of contemporary writers.

When discussing Shakespeare's historical inaccuracies in *Richard III*, as revealed in Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951), Brînzeu concludes, "Literature may even defeat literature" (1:29). An almost prophetic critical statement about the dangers of the dictators' rise to power deserves being quoted in full; analysing the textual intersections between Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* by Bertolt Brecht, Brînzeu notes: "Just like Shakespeare, Brecht understood too well the ways of recurring history: certain presidents' aura of greatness is often illusory, and when corruption and crime are used to promote a destructive policy, evil comes back from the depths of hell, 'intertextually' recycling destinies and generating similarly scandalous events" (1:55, my translation). This statement shows that Brînzeu is not only an excellent connoisseur of historical development, a thorough Shakespeare scholar, and a fine analyst of dramaturgical adaptations, but she has the power—like Shakespeare, I would say—of foreshadowing events in history, while analysing dramatic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. It is impossible not to observe the similarity between the rise of Hitler's power in 1938 Germany—as alluded to in Brecht's play—and the rise of all dictatorships, in any place and at any time.

Some subchapters of this thought-provoking book are organized according to spatial metaphors (the labyrinth, anamorphic imagery, the garden), and are entitled suggestively, "The Labyrinth of Great Treasons" (1:69), "Anamorphic Games: Who is, in Fact, the Traitor?" (1:76) and "The Intertextual Garden" (1:80), when discussing *Richard II* and its adaptations. The metaphor of

the moon in relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers the occasion for enticing subchapter titles, such as "Moon Symphony" (1:169), "Moon and Amor" (1:171), or "Moon Queen" (1:187), when referring to the narrative embodiment of Titania's character in the Buena Vista Park, in Chris Adrian's *The Great Night* (2011). Images and texts from the Manga version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are seen as semiotic translations of the "*reversed ekphrasis* type*" (1:193). *The Merchant of Venice* is interpreted under the metaphoric sign of three: the love triangle (Antonio, Bassanio, Portia), the money triangle (Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock), the law triangle (Duke of Venice, Portia, Shylock), the family triangle (Shylock, Jessica, Lorenzo), the three wives' triangle and their rings (Portia, Nerissa, Jessica), the geographic triangle of the three Italian cities (Venice, Belmont and Padua), or Antonio's three ships (1:203). This close reading is particularly inspiring, especially when Brînzeu notes that these "unstable" triangles "fall one against the other" (1:203) in the play. The balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* is examined across several intertexts, such as David Gray's *Escape from Verona* (2011), Lisa Fiedler's *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* (2006), Anne Fortier's *Juliet* (2010), and *Saving Juliet* by Suzanne Selfros (2008).

Volume II discusses the novels *Dom Casmurro* by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih, *The Nature of Blood* by Caryl Phillips, *New Boy* by Tracy Chevalier, *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley, *Fool* by Christopher Moore, *The Gap of Time: The Winter's Tale Retold* by Jeanette Winterson, *Mama Day* by Gloria Naylor, *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* by Marina Warner, and *Sycorax* by John Brian Aspinall; and the plays *Lear* by Edward Bond, *Come and Go* by Samuel Beckett, *Macbett* by Eugen Ionescu, and *Mac Bird!* by Barbara Garson. The subchapter titles in this volume are organised according to spatial metaphors and the triad symbol. Chapter titles such as "The Green-Eyed Monster" (2:45), "The Illusion of the Centre" (2:88), and "On Stage" (2:171), when examining the novels *Dom Casmurro* (1899) by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, *The Nature of Blood* (1997) by Caryl Phillips, and *Fool* (2010) by Christopher Moore, reveal the submerged spatial and geometrical pattern of Brînzeu's book. The entire volume argues that Shakespeare continues to live in the minds of contemporary writers through these intertextual phantoms.

This wide-ranging book comes at a time of considerable rethinking about the resources needed for expanding the field of Shakespearean adaptations and appropriations, an arena rapidly growing to embrace film, global performance contexts, reception studies, and textual studies—especially in Romania. Brînzeu's two volumes are traditional in their outlines, but they are also a model of how to make diverse novelistic and dramatic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays work for Romanian readers. This review has done scant justice to its subject. Brînzeu's volumes are learned, historically capacious, thoughtful, and concerned with challenging topics in several related subdisciplines (adaptation studies, translation and performance studies). A broad survey of contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare (in novel and drama)

coexists with brief but astute readings of thirty Shakespearean plays, among which *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* (in Volume I), as well as *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* (in Volume II). The scholarly range of this book is admirable and motivating, and its readers are fortunate to find it on their shelves. The book is a godsend to students (especially doctoral students) and provides a mine of riches for more conventional readers.

Hongwei Chen 陈红薇, *Shakespeare in Post-War British Drama* 《战后英国戏剧中的莎士比亚》**. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2019. Pp. 284.**

Reviewed by *Yanhua Xia*[*]

Along with the canonization of Shakespeare, countless works have been created through rewriting Shakespeare's plays. This practice is characterized by scattered sporadic cases before the 1960s. However, as Christopher Innes writes, "with the germination and growing of deconstructionism and post-modernism since the 1960s, a large number of western dramatists and novelists have participated in the rewriting of Shakespeare's works. Writers, actors, stage designers, and directors worked together to produce variations on the original texts of Shakespeare's plays, and to rewrite new works for stage performance. It is an age which can rival with the Elizabethan times" (1). This great interest in rewriting Shakespeare across the world has reached a peak by the end of the 20st century from the United Kingdom and the European continent to Asia and North America. At the same time, to interpret the new variations of Shakespeare's works in the world since the end of the 20th century has been a popular topic for academics. In her recent monograph *Shakespeare in Post-War British Drama*, Professor Hongwei Chen, a leading scholar of Shakespeare studies at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, China, intends to make an original exploration into the distinguished British writers' works of rewriting Shakespeare in the post-war era.

In this work, the author has combined the history of rewriting Shakespeare's plays in the first place, and analyzed the value of rewriting Shakespeare's plays with a large number of examples. It involves a long list of writers, has a broad scope and in-depth analysis, which reflects the author's profound academic vision. In the history of world literature, the history of rewriting is actually very long. As early as Homer's time, the same story is often passed down through the rewritings of different people. It is an important phenomenon in the history of literature that the rewriting of different times takes the ancient Greek and Roman mythology as the motive. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon wrote that the German thinker Walter Benjamin once put forward the view that "a story is always the repetition of a story" (2),

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which should be taken as an objective understanding of the rewriting phenomenon. However, it is regrettable that there is a lack of research on the rewriting history of Shakespeare in China. This could be remedied with the publication of Chen's *Shakespeare in Post-War British Drama*.

As to the body of this book, it expounds the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective and points out that through the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays, "Shakespeare has gained unprecedented vitality, presence, and influence" (35). To achieve this goal, the author does not focus on the original works of Shakespeare but takes contemporary variations of Shakespeare plays, films, and television shows in different cultural contexts as study objects. She investigates these different works by combining the study of post-war British drama, Shakespeare culture, and rewriting theories together. The author has selected eight representative playwrights from a large number of contemporary British writers to carry out the project. The aim of this choice is not to make comprehensive research on the eight writers, but to choose two representative works from each writer's corpus, which makes a total of sixteen works as the research object, to discuss how Shakespeare could be rewritten, replayed, and uniquely understood in the context of post-modern culture.

In the history of world literature, the literary creation of many writers is literary rewriting, and Shakespeare is no exception. In the author's opinion, although Shakespeare, as a master of drama, has long been a literary symbol and a symbol of humanistic value, his dramatic works are not absolutely original. Based on detailed facts, the author found the creation of "copinism" was a fashion during the Renaissance and Shakespeare himself was even a master of rewriting. In the process of his drama creation, he absorbed countless references from former texts and history. Geoffrey Bullough, author of the magnificent eight-volume *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, once pointed out, "Shakespeare's writing is filled with ideas, images, plots and characters borrowed or interpreted from other dramatists and poets" (Bullough 1). Being in the copinism-inspired era, Shakespeare had no scruples about "stealing" from all the poetry, romances, chronicles, medieval and Tudor plays within his reach, recycling, and rewriting them. Documents of different sources have proved that many of Shakespeare's works are rewritten. Shakespeare scholars have done a lot of detailed research and found that *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* and other great classics of Shakespeare are not genuine original works, but have the origin of one or more source texts. *King Lear*, for example, was influenced by several pre-texts and is a mixture of many ancient myths, stories, and legends related to the ancient king named Leir. Chen argues that as a playwright in the age of copinism, "Shakespeare, like countless others who have adapted his plays for dramatic, aesthetic, commercial, or ideological reasons, has used history, characters, and other sources as the basis for astonishing works" (6).

The author's analysis is not to show that Shakespeare himself was a master of rewriting, but to show that it is reasonable for Shakespeare's plays to

be rewritten and reproduced by others. Since the 17th century, Shakespeare's plays have been constantly rewritten, and it is these rewrites that make Shakespeare's plays live in our collective memory constantly. In fact, paraphrasing has become a new way of understanding Shakespeare's plays, or a new text for understanding Shakespeare's plays. Take, for example, John Fletcher's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in the early 17th century. Fletcher named his version *The Women's Prize*, also known as *The Tamer Tamed*. In this new play, the gender relationship in Shakespeare's original play is reversed. The original plot of Petruchio taming his wealthy, shrewish wife Katharina was changed into the wife taming the husband. The whole play's theme was changed from male chauvinism into feminism. Nahum Tate, for another example, turned the tragic *King Lear* into *The History of King Lear*, a comedy about the restoration of Lear and the reunion of lovers, which was played in Britain for more than 150 years. According to the author's statistics, from 1660 to 1777, there were more than 50 adaptations of Shakespeare's plays similar to the biography of King Lear, some of which deleted, added, and re-wrote the original texts of Shakespeare's plays to varying degrees in terms of plot and language. The titles of the plays were changed and the characters reconstructed. "Entering the 19th century, Shakespeare became even more revered" (9). With the passing of time, the Elizabethan playwright Shakespeare has become a complete symbol of British and even Western culture, a great poet, philosopher, and prophet who revealed the secrets of the human spirit. Because Shakespeare has become a symbol of England, the world's interest in rewriting Shakespeare's plays has never abated. In the early 20th century, even Bernard Shaw, the master of modern theatre, was keen to create plays by rewriting Shakespeare's plays, and works such as *Shakespeare and Shaw* (1949) and *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1950) were Shaw's rewrites of Shakespeare and his plays.

This book has systematically sorted out the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays in different periods according to chronological order, so that readers could see a special way that Shakespeare's plays existed through rewriting and generate "a rethinking of what we mean by creativity" (Kastan 2020, 6). Shakespeare himself is a writer of rewritten plays, and his plays have been accordingly widely rewritten by later generations. For a long time, due to the lack of theoretical support, literary works created through rewriting are often regarded as derivative products of the original works, and it is generally necessary to make a claim of which works they are adapted from. However, the author points out in her book, "whether in the 1970s or 1980s or 1990s, although the study of rewriting practice in this period has introduced the perspective of post-modern cultural concepts such as intertextuality, people have not yet realized that contemporary rewriting is a creative form with post-modern cultural characteristics that is different from traditional rewriting and adaptation.

And even less aware that contemporary rewriting is an independent creative practice" (18). That is to say, rewriting has not been extricated from the dependency on the original work, and rewriting has not been recognized as a literary creation in its own right.

Therefore, how to evaluate the rewritten literary works has become an important question to be answered in the 20th century, especially since the post-war period. Within the post-modern cultural context of great influence, various theories such as the theory of intertextuality, multiple context theory, theory of reference, the author theory, narrative theory, translation theory, reader response theory, and Harold Bloom's theory of correction, are advanced to redefine "rewrite" with unprecedented new visions. Indeed, the post-modern trend of thought not only provides the thematic motivation for contemporary rewriting, but also offers a narrative mode beyond the traditional rewriting. Based on the rewriting theories of two critics, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, the author found a theoretical breakthrough to solve the rewriting problems that had not been solved for a long time. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier put forward the idea of "recontextualization" in the rewriting of Shakespeare's works in their edited anthology *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, which states that "rewriting is a process of the re-contextualization of the original text, including both literary and performance changes to the past works" (4). Therefore, a rewritten work is actually a new work which can evoke the reader's memory of the original work but differs from the original work. The theoretical discussion of rewriting is obviously the most important feature of Chen's book. Through a lot of discussions and analyses of the theory of rewriting, Chen summarizes that the theoretical ideas of post-modern culture have produced a huge impact on the rewriting practice of Shakespeare. They have not only changed the basic idea of Shakespeare rewriting, but also made rewriting itself become an independent creative practice of literature.

Through the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays and the discussion of contemporary theories of rewriting, Chen's pioneering research not only equips us with important insights, but also provides us with an example of how to do academic study. The study of the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays is both a contemporary and a historical topic. The author fuses together literature, drama, film and television adaptations to make a comprehensive investigation, which breaks the disciplinary boundary and places the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays in the historical process to conduct a dynamic study. "What is rewriting? Why rewrite?" "Rewriting: critical dialogues with Shakespeare" "Shakespeare's legacy in post-war British drama" "Who Writes Shakespeare?" are the four consecutive and logical questions to be looked into. These four questions are actually the various manifestations of Shakespeare's plays in post-war British drama. Based on these key questions, the process of the emergence, construction, and evolution of the idea of rewriting is sorted out, the mechanism of the

function of the theory of rewriting is revealed, and the path of the study of the theory of rewriting is discussed. Compared with previous researches, this book is more open, comprehensive, profound, and novel.

Under the cultural background of post-modernism, the rewriting of Shakespeare by post-war British playwrights is not only an unprecedented subversion of Shakespeare's plays, but also a new form of confirmation of the contemporary value of Shakespeare's plays. This book has given an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon: from the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays, we can see that contemporary rewriting is derivative rather than parasitic or belonging to secondary creation. Contemporary rewriting is a unique literary or cultural category widely accepted by the public which not only helps "Shakespeare get turned into the iconic literary figure he has become" (Kastan 2021, 163), but also is an independent literary and aesthetic existence produced in the post-modern theoretical context.

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