



## Book Reviews

**Thea Buckley, Mark Thornton Burnett, Sangeeta Datta, and Rosa García-Periago (eds.), *Women and Indian Shakespeares*. The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare and Adaptation. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2022. Pp. xx + 297.**

Reviewed by *Guixia Xie*\*

The edited collection *Women and Indian Shakespeares* by Thea Buckley, Mark Thornton Burnett, Sangeeta Datta, and Rosa García-Periago belongs to the Shakespeare and Adaptation series, which features mixed methodologies and a global perspective, and aims to showcase the dynamic phenomena of Shakespeare adaptation in different forms. This collection contributes significantly to an investigation of the engagement of Indian women with Shakespeare across a variety of media, adding a gender and area perspective to the series.

According to Philip Kolin, the gender approach to Shakespeare studies has been known to officially begin at the publication of Juliet Dusinberre's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* in 1975 (3-4). With the book completed in the 1970s during the height of the women's movement, Dusinberre hoped to "prize open the Shakespearean text and make it accessible to investigations about women's place in culture, history, religion, society, the family" (xii). After decades of development, particularly with the theoretical support from works of women studies and feminist critics, these questions are now inescapable inquiries in the academic agenda. The feminist approaches, as Ann Thompson observes, have changed what we read and how we read, and make a new stage and screen interpretation possible (xiv). However, despite the radicalizing energies brought out by feminism, women's role in society and in social development remain largely hidden and the issues around women have not received adequate attention. This collection, consisting of 12 articles organized

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into four parts (histories, translations, representations, and critics and creatives), is a collaboration of critics, historians, archivists, practitioners, and directors of a diasporic and global generation in India. More preciously, it contains the findings of a transformed Shakespeare in India through the gendered eyes. Below are the main contents of the four parts.

**Part One Histories** explores the history of women's engagement with Shakespeare in India. This part opens with Poonam Trivedi's "The 'woman's part:' Recovering the contribution of women to the circulation of Shakespeare in India." It serves as the documentation of the obscured but representative Indian women who were instrumental in creating and sustaining the Shakespearean entity in India. This chapter traces the individual journeys of English and Indian actresses in the early English trader settlements, acknowledging their roles in the thriving of English theatre. As a representative of female scholars, Dr. Kumudini Mehta's contribution mainly lies in her compilation of the most comprehensive and authoritative source of information about the westernization of Indian theatre and the performance of Shakespeare in India. Hansa Mehta is introduced both as the translator of Shakespeare and the fighter for women's rights. Her case shows that Shakespeare had been regarded as an arena for Indian women to prove themselves intellectually. The chapter also finds that women directors tend to provide radicalized interpretations of Shakespeare, such as interpreting the relationship of Lear and his daughters from the perspective of gender relations and self-identity. By recouping the women's role in shaping Indian Shakespeares, Chapter One helps to re-order the historiography of Indian theatre. Chapter Two is Paromita Chakravarti's "Framing femininities: Desdemona and Indian modernities." It explores Shakespeare's intervention in the theme and content of Indian films as mediated and manifested through his characters. The author conducts an intertextual reading of the postcolonial novel *Saptapadi*, a novel structured around *Othello*, and its different versions of performances and adaptations, as well as the other cinematic productions inspired by *Saptapadi* and *Othello*, to demonstrate how Desdemona played a role in the shifts of India's social, cultural, political, and cinematic histories of womanhood. Heroines in Shakespeare's plays used to be indigenized to meet Hindu tradition by highlighting the characters' intelligence, domestic skills, and innocence, but the independence aspects of these woman characters finally found a way to construct the educated, professional, mobile, and urban images of new women with neoliberal individualism in India.

**Part Two Translations** includes two chapters. Chapter Three is "Indian Shakespeares in the British Library collections: Translation, indigeneity and representation" by Priyanka Basu and Arani Ilankuberan. This chapter provides a list of Shakespeare's translations and adaptations in eight languages in India from the British Library collections and devotes itself to discussing early Bengali Shakespeare works and some of the Tamil translations in South India. The first part of the chapter discusses how Shakespeare, regarded as the

synonymy of learning and positioned above religions and races, catered to local sentiments and acted as a pedagogical tool in English language education. The second part explores how translations reflect the colonial, local socio-historical, and political attitudes toward women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and focuses on how the national sentiments were manifested in Bengali translations and adaptations of three Shakespearean plays. In these works, the translators openly protected the national duty either by speaking out their viewpoints on woman characters or by indigenizing the woman characters to meet the duties of women as prescribed by Indian culture. Chapter Four “Women translating Shakespeare in South India: *Hermanta Katha* or *The Winter’s Tale*” is a case study by Thea Buckley of O. M. Lakshmy Amma’s translation of Mary Lamb’s *The Winter’s Tale*. According to the author’s observation, Amma’s onomatopoeic localization, Hinduization of character names, and the use of mythical Hindu allusions illuminate her cultural perspective and can be viewed as an equation of intercultural power dynamics. The author also uses specific cases in the paratexts and in the text to demonstrate that Amma’s conscious linguistic selection not only fits the strategy of localization but also her feminist portrayal of gender and caste equality, which can be seen as an echo of the feminine act to raise the status of women in that period of time. Overall, though focusing on a case study, this chapter illustrates how Malayali translators use Shakespeare to underline and modernize South Indian ideals of egalitarianism.

The four chapters in **Part Three Representations** present the construction of women’s identities in Indian movies and performances. This part is closely related to the theme of Part Two. As Yoshiko Kawachi rightly observes, “translation and adaptation afford an opportunity for non-English speaking people to discover the limitless possibility of performing Shakespeare’s play-texts” (167). Chapter Five is Mark Thornton Burnett and Jyotsna G. Singh’s “‘I dare do all that may become a man:’ Martial desires and women as warriors in *Veeram*, a film adaptation of *Macbeth*.” The film *Veeram* is a double and radical adaptation which fuses the language and tragic component of *Macbeth* with stories and characters from the Northern Ballads in India into an emotional, sexual, and martial story. Chandu/Macbeth the protagonist is depicted to be indebted to Shakespeare in terms of resolve and ambition and to the native ballad tradition in his association with service and treachery. Yet, the highlight of the film is the empowered female warriorhood to unravel *Macbeth*’s tropes of martial masculinity. By privileging women with action and determination to bring about Chandu/Macbeth’s downfall, the film incorporates local effects with global projections and demonstrates how a Shakespearean adaption provides us with the opportunity to destabilize and realign gender. Chapter Six is “‘You should be women:’ Bengali femininity and the supernatural in adaptations of *Macbeth*” by Taarini Mookherjee. It explores how the images of ladies in the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana* and *Macbeth* shape the depictions of Bengali femininity and wifehood in three contemporary texts: Bharati Mukherjee’s

novel *Wife* and its two adapted performances, *Macbeth Mirror* and *Crossings*. In *Wife*, the author finds that the obedient and ideal wife in *Ramayana* is repeatedly invoked to echo the naivety of Dimple as an unmarried girl who longs to become a martyred type of wife. Later, as Dimple suffers from insomnia and fantasies, the novel's intertextual and indirect reference to *Macbeth* can be felt in the infanticide and murder elements, a phenomenon regarded by Mookherjee as the unintentional cultural consciousness inherited from the reading of Shakespeare. Bengali femininity in *Macbeth Mirror* can be seen in its use of three women shifting in and out of different characters in the performance, which suggests the disguising qualities of femininity. In *Crossings*, it has four female performers alternating as Lady Macbeth to explore a multifaceted lady. The subversion of the gendered roles against expectations and conventions of womanhood in these performances raises the question of what it means to be a woman and forces the audience to confront the fragility of idealized wifehood.

Chapter Seven "*Romeo and Juliet* meets rural India: *Sairat* and the representation of women" by Nishi Pulgurtha touches on the question of gender conventions and stereotypes with the tabooed romance between different castes. Besides flipping the conventional stereotypes of beauty and ideologies of equality in Indian movies with a dark-skinned female protagonist to represent the upper-caste and fair-complexioned young Dalit hero, the film also highlights its woman-centric feature by depicting Archi the upper-caste lady as an independent who takes the initiative in the pursuit of love, decides on eloping, and dares to face obstacles set by the family or society. Yet, the romance ends with patriarchal caste-based violence. The film reveals the extent of patriarchal control over women and the discrimination resulting from the overlapping of caste, class, and gender. The adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* once again proves the universality of Shakespearean plays to be the medium of articulating local identities. Chapter Eight is Jennifer T. Birkett's "Dy(e)ing hands: The hennaed female agent in Vishal Bhardwaj's tragedies." The author chooses a more nuanced approach and focuses on the discussion of women's hennaed hands, a symbol of an idle wife and marital merriment in Indian tradition. Yet, in Vishal Bhardwaj's three appropriations of Shakespeare's female characters in the tragedies, the director endows henna with an omen of female proactivity and violence. In *Maqbool (Macbeth)* (2003), Nimmi/Lady Macbeth is cast as the mistress and murderer of Abbaji/Macbeth, and Nimmi's hennaed hands are always highlighted to cue the audience to associate the hands with mischief and intrigue. *Omkara (Othello)* (2006) also endows the hennaed-hand women characters with violent determination to indicate the crucial role women play in resorting to justice and resolving domestic tragedy. Similarly, *Haider (Hamlet)* departs from Shakespeare by designing a suicide Ghazala/Gertrude with red hennaed hands. In these three appropriations, with the support of cinematography to highlight the hennaed hands, the victim-heroines are depicted

to be able to claim revenge to right wrongs, which represents progress in the male-dominant convention in Indian cinema.

**Part Four Critics and Creatives** focuses on women directors and artists and their cinematic encounters with Shakespeare. Chapter Nine “Embattled bodies: Women, land and contemporary politics in *Arshinagar*, a film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*” by Rosa García-Periago examines Bengali filmmaker Aparna Sen’s *Arshinagar*. Taking a female-centered perspective, Aparna Sen transposes the conflicts between the Capulets and the Montagues in *Romeo and Juliet* to the long-standing Muslim-Hindu divide and stamps the female bodies as the contested spaces of national ideologies and political instability, so as to feature women as long-term victims of senseless violence. Besides, the film modifies Shakespeare’s play by expanding the narrative to include another pair of lovers of the previous generation and two parallel grandmothers of different classes, to emphasize the continuing expressions of intolerance and to function as a representative of the trauma caused by political disorders in India. With these fresh rewritings of Shakespeare, Aparna Sen raises questions about gender, religion, and politics, and destabilizes their distinctions. Chapter Ten “Where the wild things are: Shifting identities in *Noblemen*, a film adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*” by Mark Thornton Burnett also centers on the woman-directed Shakespearean movies. The film mimics the Shakespeare-in-high-school film genre and, through character parallels (Shay with Shylock), plot twists (role play), and scenic re-creations (Gothic feature architecture) connecting with *The Merchant of Venice*, it explores Shay/Shylock’s male friendship, same-sex desire, bullying and violence, competitions, and revenge. In the film, Shay/Shylock undergoes bully due to discrimination from two seniors at the top of the schoolboy hierarchy, and turns from a generous young man to an embittered and murderous force. The part of the homoerotic attraction is depicted through Shay’s sexual awakening towards his drama teacher Murali, who becomes the cost for Shay’s revenge on the seniors in the end. This film, by rewriting Shakespeare, examines race, caste, and discrimination through the cultures of contemporary India.

Chapter Eleven is “Women punctuating Shakespeare: Campus theatrical experiment, the Shakespeare Society and the insider/outsider dialectic” by N. P. Ashley. Regarding campus theatre as the entity that brings theatre and education together, this chapter, in a first-person narrative voice, introduces the production of Shakespearean plays by the Shakespeare Society at St Stephen’s College. With reference to the Society’s reviews and other archival documents, the author traces the history of the establishment and practice of the formerly all-male Shakespeare Society, exploring how the Society, which used to frame women in stereotypical and limited ways, has played a role in presenting women in college Shakespearean performances over time. The chapter also highlights three recent Shakespearean adaptations produced by the Society under the

advice of female scholars. The author finds that the involvement of women actresses and advisors in the production adds a woman-centric dimension into the production. Titled as “Adapting Shakespeare: Directors and practitioners in conversation,” Chapter Twelve is a transcription of a roundtable conversation by five leading contemporary women artists and practitioners working at the intersections of adaptation, Shakespeare, and India. Mark Burnett the moderator raises questions concerning the significance of Shakespeare, the challenges in adapting Shakespeare to different languages and mediums, and the new meanings and applications of Shakespeare in the adaptations. The participants admit that challenges in adapting Shakespearean plays lie in the linguistic-related aspects, the capture of the thematic essence of the plays, the mingling of Indian traditional art forms with Shakespeare, the contextualization of Shakespeare in contemporary times, etc. They all mention the elasticity of Shakespearean plays which makes any interpretation possible, and the adaptations in turn help to enrich the dimensions of Shakespeare, bring the canonical tradition down to the contemporary audience, and act as an arena for the discussions of any political or gender-related issues with pertinent examples from Shakespeare.

With its wide-ranging contents, *Women and Indian Shakespeares* displays for us the most recent development of Shakespeare in India through a gendered perspective. It also presents us with the new life of Shakespeare in the hands of theatre directors, filmmakers, translators, writers, and scholars, displaying a kaleidoscope-like robustness of Shakespeare on page, stage, and screen in India. This collection stands out with the following features: First, the collection introduces a broad array of materials related to the topic of women and Indian Shakespeares, ranging from the history of women’s role in the Shakespearean enterprise to the different translational, cinematic, and theatrical adaptations in which women are engaged to enable new readings of Shakespeare. These materials are of reference value for future studies related to Shakespeare and gender topics. Second, the fact that many contributors from different fields were involved allows for a diversity of perspectives. This collection includes people from different fields, including professors, commentators, writers, directors, dramaturges, translators, choreographers, etc. Each presents different interpretations of Shakespeare from his/her field of expertise and in different forms, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of women’s engagement with Shakespeare. Third, the collection fully demonstrates the malleability of Shakespearean texts. When coming to be connected with a gender perspective, local cultures, and different media, Shakespearean plays can be deployed in narrating love stories and developing conceptions of colonial and postcolonial situations. Last and also the most unique feature of this collection lies in its consideration of women’s role in the Shakespeare entity. It presents how women have figured in various ways as agents of resistance, redemption, and marital seduction; victims of caste,

religion, and class discriminations; and citizens of religiously and politically conflicted spaces, highlighting their roles in shaping different futures across patriarchal and societal barriers.

The collection, however, also has a few places that fail the reader's expectations. Though it declares to be women and Shakespeare in general, it does not include a thorough sampling of Shakespearean plays into discussion. Among the 39 Shakespearean plays, only *Othello* (Chapters One, Two, and Three), *Macbeth* (Chapters Five, Six, and Eight), *Romeo and Juliet* (Chapters Seven and Nine), *The Winter's Tale* (Chapter Four) and *The Merchant of Venice* (Chapter Ten) are discussed at length, leaving other plays either briefly mentioned or left out. This might arise from the fact that these five plays are the most adapted ones in Indian history that involved women. However, it would be better to include, if possible, more Shakespearean plays in discussion in order to enhance its inclusiveness. Similarly, in Chapter One, the author intends to avoid selectivity in building a Shakespearean archive of women translators, but when discussing women translators, scholars, and directors, only one representative is chosen for each section. Besides the limited selection of plays or representatives for discussion, the collection is also expected to be more theorized in the way that women and Indian Shakespeares can serve as a paradigm for similar studies in other countries or regions, since, as Wang Ning correctly argues, Shakespearean plays (in which we may include various forms of indigenized Shakespeares such as Indian Shakespeares) can be considered as "world theater," and the "innovation and breakthrough in theory" constitutes an integral part of literary studies (4-5). Nonetheless, these few places cannot obscure the splendor of the whole collection and its status as a good reference book for scholars in the areas of Shakespeare studies and gender criticism, or for practitioners in the domains of theater and film-making.

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**Elena Bandin, Francesca Rayner, Laura Campillo Arnaiz (eds.), *Othello in European Culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: Benjamins Publishing Company, 2022. Pp. xi + 270.**

Reviewed by *Sabina Laskowska-Hinz\**

*Othello in European Culture* is the third position in the John Benjamins Publishing Company series *Shakespeare in European Culture* (the previous titles are, respectively, *Shakespeare and Crisis* and *Romeo and Juliet in European Culture*). Published in 2022, the book features papers presented at the international symposium “*My Travels’ History: Othello and European Culture*” organized by the University of Murcia in 2018.

As its editors Elena Bandín, Francesca Rayner and Laura Campillo Arnaiz state, the collection of critical essays should be regarded as a discussion with Ayanna Thompson’s *Othello* studies, focusing on “conceptions of racial, religious, gender and sexual identity”. Thompson’s work exposes how thoroughly these notions shape and alter the audience’s anticipatory ideas about the play. Consequently, *Othello in European Culture* is an extension of these studies, with a focus on the geographical, political, and cultural circumstances underpinning *Othello* productions and reception.

The volume consists of thirteen essays organized into three sections. The first part, entitled *Trans(national) subjects*, includes four articles about 19<sup>th</sup>-century Austrian, English, Spanish, Hungarian, and German attitudes to Shakespeare’s *Othello*. However, the authors only partially focus on translations, adaptations, travesties, and critical readings of the play; they show how varied approaches to *Othello* have been influenced and gradually altered by the national traditions (including stereotypes), language and politics (immigration issues) of Spain, Hungary, Germany, and Europe in general.

The next group of texts—“*Othello*” and *European constructions of alterity*—focuses on Othello’s race and other markers of his Otherness interpreted for the benefit of the multicultural societies of France, the Netherlands, Greece, and Great Britain. However, it would be more accurate to consider these essays as studies on the avoidance, ridiculing, or substitution of the highlighted themes.

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The third part—*Adapting “Othello”: The audience is listening*—explores television, puppet, music, and ballet adaptations of Shakespeare’s play. It concludes with an overview of European performances, translations, paintings, films, videos, and novels that appeared from c. 1543 to 2020. In the thirteenth chapter, Jennifer Ruiz-Morgan offers a selective timeline of works inspired by Shakespeare’s *Othello*. It is slightly disappointing to see mention of numerous (14) Russian and Soviet works, and only two examples of Polish translations from c. 1805, one based on Friedrich Ludwig Schroder’s German version and completed by either Jan Nepomucen or Szczesny Starzewski, and another dated 1875-1877. However, it is understandable that a discussion of all European interpretations of *Othello* would require a separate book.

*Othello in European Culture* should be approached as a puzzle where readers can arrange the articles according to their needs. Yet, to appreciate the content thoroughly, it is necessary to read all the chapters first and then identify individual patterns to follow. The articles complement each other, debate, and continue one another’s thoughts. For instance, to understand the Spanish approach to *Othello*, it is advisable to read Laura Campillo and Elena Bandín’s “Adapting *Othello* for television in late Francoist Spain” (ch. 9) together with Ángel-Luis Pujante’s “*Othello* in Spain (1802-1844)” (ch. 2). Alina Bottez (ch. 11), among other issues, provides a comprehensive overview of the cultural, historical, and social reasoning behind the Spanish approach to *Othello*. Readers learn how due to national experience and the choice of translations, language adjustments or genre (ch. 2), a stereotypical vision of the Moor as “a dump” has been profoundly woven into the fabric of Spain’s national identity. Moreover, both Campillo, Bandín and Pujante expose *Othello*’s potential as a tool of political manipulation.

In “Traditions of playing and spectating”, Gabriella Reuss (ch. 3) discloses a seemingly neglected source for Shakespearean critical studies—promptbooks. The significance of these stage manuals (as well as iconographical material) is presented in the context of Desdemona’s death scene. The variations of killing manners—smothering, strangulation, or stabbing—like other semantically loaded poses and gestures, influence viewers’ comprehension of Shakespeare’s characters. Reuss’s essay triggers further questions about the traditions, meanings, and technicalities associated with specific stage arrangements. These issues are explored in the chapters devoted to opera and ballet: “The circumcised dog and the subtle whore” by Alina Bottez (ch. 11) and ““It is not words that shakes me thus”” by Iris Julia Bührle (ch. 12). Isabel Guerrero presents a slightly different approach to gesture in “Pulling the strings.” She introduces us to the world of puppet theatre with its history, traditions, and techniques. This manual is supported by an analysis of three recent puppet productions of *Othello*. By pulling the strings, these adaptations seem to explore various interpretive possibilities within the play.

The theatre audience is the subject of chapters 1 and 7: “Charles Mathews’s *Othello, the Moor of Fleet Street* (1833) and Maurice Dawling’s *Othello Travestie* (1834)” by Manfred Draundt (ch. 1) and “Let it be hid?” by Paul Prescott (ch. 7). Dawling focuses on the shift in tolerance limits and changes in expectations among 19<sup>th</sup>-century theatregoers and critics of *Othello* travesties. He compares the appreciation for Dawling’s highly racist, politically incorrect version and the disgust with Mathews’s version with the contemporary reception of these works. The continuation of the audience-centred approach is to be found in the essay (ch. 7) in which Paul Prescott, based on other studies and his private experience as a lecturer, builds an image of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century British audience, blind to the racial or religious issues associated with *Othello*. Three relatively recent examples of British productions confirm that theatre directors tend to overdo their work to avoid serious race discussions and please their privileged white audience.

An extensive study on the national and historical background of *Othello* productions is conducted in the chapters by Lawrence Guntner (ch. 4), Paul Franssen (ch. 5), Xenia Georgopoulou (ch. 6) and Coen Heijes (ch. 8). Guntner (ch. 4) tracks alterations in the *Othello* text intended for the German stage and the shifts in German public sentiments regarding race, class, and social issues. The studies examine staging from 1661 (the first *Othello* performances in Germany) to the 2000s. Inquiries regarding the post-war modern, multicultural society are extended by Heijes (ch. 8), who discusses the reception of the play in the context of the Dutch nation. He considers the issue of “blackface,” regarded as an indication of race (the “blackface” phenomenon is also cited in chapters 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12) and raises the question of why Dutch society (theatregoers, theatre critics, but not translators), although multicultural and multireligious, still seems to disregard the social problems, especially race-related ones, touched on in *Othello* productions.

Franssen’s (ch. 5) essay seems to continue the discussion on Ducis’s neoclassical racist-orientated translation (ch. 2). At the same time, it establishes the foundation for Heijes’s reflection on *Othello* in the Netherlands (ch. 8). This time the focus is on political issues like the French Revolution and the abolition of slavery which influence the character of Othello on the stage. The author is aware of a constant shifting between class and race-centred interpretations of the play. Race is only cited as an additional factor when talking about the Moor’s class inferiority and moral ambiguity/immaturity, which—in the broader context—is often invoked to justify slavery.

Unlike the previous chapters, Xenia Georgopoulou’s “From black to white, from man to beast, from tragical to comical” (ch. 6) is slightly over complicated. Readers learn about the Greek reception of *Othello* without much elaboration concerning the ongoing treatment of this character as a passionate, primitive, animalistic, exotic, barbarous, overreactive, victimized, or ridiculed

figure. The essay lacks specific references to the socio-political background of the period under discussion which might have shed light on this attitude.

All Shakespeare scholars presenting their studies in *Othello in European Culture* invite readers to embark on international time travel in the company of Othello. When opening this book, students are about to visit several countries and mingle with European audiences of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. And I assure you, it is going to be a remarkable journey.

**Graham Holderness, *Samurai Shakespeare: Early Modern Tragedy in Feudal Japan*. Brighton: Edward Everett Root, 2021. Pp. 174.**

Reviewed by *Ted Motohashi*\*

Graham Holderness's most recent book can be regarded as a deeply personal volume by one of the most prolific Shakespearean scholars in the English-speaking world. This work amply manifests the author's interest in and love of Shakespeare and Japan, as he offers another intensive analysis of Shakespeare's tragedies in the former case, and presents a unique and intimate insight into Japan's feudalistic Samurai culture in the latter case. For someone like this Japanese reviewer who spent the large part of the 1980s in the United Kingdom pursuing graduate studies in Shakespeare and Renaissance drama, Graham Holderness's scholarly insight and professional skill in his trade-mark close reading of Shakespearean texts was one of the principal sources of his or her literary and academic inspirations. Since my doctoral thesis focused on Shakespeare's Histories, Holderness's works were among the obvious benchmarks of what I could have endeavored to achieve. And in this context, this particular title of Holderness also illustrates his incisive observation and deep knowledge about Shakespeare's canon, which do not disappoint prospective readers.

However, when it comes to his love of Japan and enthusiastic interest in its feudal age and culture (including his recently acquired hobby of collecting Japanese Samurai swords), the topic has not attracted my attention until quite recently when I collaborated with him in his edition of *Critical Survey* on "Shakespeare and Japan" by submitting an article on *Othello* in Miyagi Satoshi's *Mugen-Noh* version (Motohashi and Tsukamoto). As a matter of fact, I never thought this kind of work embedded with the author's literary magnitude in terms of Shakespearean scholarship and with his personal recollections regarding Japan's feudalistic histories was possible, until I read this book whose entire focus resides on re-reading Shakespeare's tragedies solely from Japanese Samurai perspectives with their unique cultural practices and political ideologies, which could look entirely unfamiliar and somewhat bewildering at least to the non-Japanese population.

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As the author himself admits, the scope of this book is limited: his targets of analysis in Shakespeare's dramatic works are only three tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, partly because these plays have been produced and adapted most frequently by Japanese writers and directors in novels, films and theatres. And Holderness's main interest, as far as Japanese Shakespearean productions are concerned, lies in Akira Kurosawa's films (which adapted all three tragedies above) and Yukio Ninagawa's stagings (according to Holderness, *Ninagawa Macbeth* in 1980 is "perhaps the greatest ever Japanese production of Shakespeare" [30]). Within this limited perspective, however, Holderness manages to produce an unprecedented essay on Shakespearean tragedies as well as on Japanese Samurai culture in a uniquely amalgamated way, personal and professional, historical and contemporary, literary and political. Below I will try to discern a few reasons for this feat of his as a kind of individual appreciation of this book.

Firstly, throughout the book, the author's typically reliable expertise in the close reading of the texts, Shakespeare's original as well as Japanese adaptations, stand out. When it comes to analyzing Shakespearean adaptations, particularly those in translations in non-European languages and contexts, scholars tend to focus on the locally specific historical backgrounds and the adaptations' spectacular sceneries inspired by the respective traditional art forms, rather than on the dramatic characterizations and thematic explorations, largely due to the critics' own—in most cases inevitable—lack of knowledge in linguistic and cultural materials in adapted texts. Holderness, however, puts equal emphasis on and pays ample attention to the thematic dimensions in original texts and translated texts, and his strategic choice of dramatic forces behind these three tragedies—"revenge" in *Hamlet*, "history" in *Macbeth*, and "religion" in *King Lear*—is particularly effective in relocating these plays (all of which were originally composed at the genesis of European modernity) in Japanese feudal ages with its specific military and patriarchal codes within the Samurai culture. Although this reviewer sometimes does not agree with the author's judgement on individual adaptations, some of which I feel depend on the Samurai settings too overtly for the sake of appealing to the Westerner's orientalist desire to be immersed in exoticism, Holderness's bold choices of these three themes, "revenge," "history," and "religion" certainly succeed in creating real connections between Shakespeare's original plays and Japanese adaptations in the feudal mode.

Secondly, in terms of the controversial questions regarding the appraisal of the global phenomenon of Shakespearean adaptations particularly in Asia, the author's approach is very sensitive towards the political and artistic judgement relating to the frequently raised criticism against the exotic Asianization. It is easy to criticize, for instance, Ninagawa's Shakespearean productions for pandering to the Western audiences' orientalism, which was partly true indeed,

but this accusation largely disregards the political and economic realities which Japanese theatrical practitioners had to face in the 1980s and 1990s when Japanese Shakespeares in the Western theatre were still novel and unfamiliar phenomena. For the last two decades, since not only Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare but also Japanese contemporary theatres have been introduced and staged in plenty around the international festival circuits and major national and regional theatres in Europe, the enthusiasm on the part of Western critics and audiences for the Japanese theatres has become more reserved and modest. As a result, the reputation of Ninagawa's Shakespearean productions has steadily declined, and probably from hindsight, such international directors as Tadashi Suzuki, Satoshi Miyagi, and Masahiro Yasuda will be remembered as the greatest theatre practitioners in terms of Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare's works, partly because each of them, unlike Ninagawa, has been producing their plays with the fixed company of actors who have been physically and psychologically trained according to the tight dramaturgical theories and visions by each director.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, the prospective readers would be struck by the fact that Holderness's personal interest in Samurai culture reveals what has been largely missing in the recent analysis of Shakespeare's drama, that is, the dramatist's own concern towards militaristic practices and ideologies in the nascent nation-state of England at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that was immersed in the exploitative colonialism and hierarchical struggles among the European superpowers. In terms of militarism, Japan had its own histories of internal warfare during the later Middle Ages, which culminated in Toyotomi Hideyoshi's consolidation of the Japanese nation and unsuccessful colonial invasion into the Korean peninsula at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This ultimately led to the unification of the country under Tokugawa Shogunate with the closure of the national border for 200 years, which contributed to fostering a peculiar Japanese culture ranging from cuisine to hygiene, from literary and commercial fruition to samurai values of chivalry, loyalty and thrift. Perhaps one of the noteworthy merits of this book lies not only in inviting us to look at Kurosawa's and Ninagawa's masterpieces from these uniquely historical and aesthetic points of view, but also in offering fresh insights into Shakespearean originals in terms of the deeply embedded culture involved with militarism and

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<sup>1</sup> Suzuki has been at the forefront of the world's greatest theatre practices for more than half a century now, still active in Toga Village deep in the mountains of northern Japan with Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT). Miyagi and Yasuda were regarded as the disciples of Suzuki. Miyagi is now the General Artistic Director of Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), the only truly "public" theatre in Japan. Yasuda is at the helm of Yamanote-Jijosha Theater Company based in Tokyo, and has been well known for the bold adaptations of Shakespeare's works such as *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus*, that consciously undermine the audience's orientalist expectations. See, for instance, Motohashi, "How Could We."

patriarchalism during the age of colonial expansion and national integration in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Although Holderness's flight into Samurai Shakespeare does not crash-land on the contemporary Japanese productions of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as those by Satoshi Miyagi and Masahiro Yasuda, whose works have tried to pierce the core of what might be called the malaise of European Modernity, rather than the characteristics of Japanese Feudalism, this book should be read, with personal affection and scholarly attention, by those who are interested in Shakespearean Samurais who are still abundant around us.

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**Katherine Walker, *Shakespeare and Science: A Dictionary*. Arden Shakespeare Dictionary Series. London: Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. 306.**

Reviewed by *Jie Tang*\*

Such a breakthrough it is for the history of science when Thomas S. Kuhn published his masterpiece *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962, which has been inviting numerous historians of science to deal with the historiography and sociology of science, and trace back to the early modern period or the Renaissance, which witnesses not only a greater break from antiquity and the Middle Ages in such sciences<sup>1</sup> as astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and navigation, but also a stubborn continuity in natural philosophy inherited from antiquity and the Middle Ages. The break and the continuity are exposed thoroughly in the glossaries which Katherine Walker delicately chooses and defines in *Shakespeare and Science: A Dictionary* (*Shakespeare and Science*, hereafter). With a deep probe into early modern science and interdisciplinary studies, it is not impossible to find the intangible demarcation between Renaissance science and literature. *Shakespeare and Science* is a rare find genuinely useful to both scholars and students whose interest lies in how early modern science and literature mutually fashion themselves.

*Shakespeare and Science*, one of volumes in the Arden Shakespeare Dictionary Series with the general prefatory aim “to provide the student of Shakespeare with a series of authoritative guides to the principal subject areas covered by the plays and poems. They are produced by scholars who are experts both on Shakespeare and on the topic of the individual dictionary, based on the most recent scholarship, succinctly written and accessibly presented. They offer readers a self-contained body of information on the topic under discussion, its occurrence and significance in Shakespeare’s works, and its contemporary meanings” (vi), features a wide range of entries related to early modern science such as alchemy, anatomy, astronomy, astrology, chemistry, cartography, cosmography, cosmology, geography, magic, magnetism, mathematics, medicine, metaphysics, meteorology, navigation, and physics. Organized into

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<sup>1</sup> The historians of science, in order to avoid potentially anachronistic connotations of and modern identification with what we call “science” today, assign the umbrella term “natural philosophy” to designate the study of natural bodies and phenomena.

alphabetic order as one may expect, 289 entries within 306 pages from “(a)bodement(s)” to “zone” round out in Walker’s dictionary that consists of a list of abbreviations, a list of headwords, an introduction (6 pages), an intensive and extensive bibliography (33 pages, inclusive of early modern primary texts and secondary texts), and a general index.

Embracing the Arden Shakespeare Dictionary Series’ tradition, Walker divides each of the entries into three sections: (a) supplies a brief and clear definition of terms current in early modern science; (b) offers a selection of where, and in what sense, it is used in Shakespeare’s works; and (c) affords an annotated and manageable bibliography directing to further readings on Shakespeare and science both early modern and contemporary materials. Words in question that are defined and discussed elsewhere in the dictionary are highlighted in bold so that the reader can pursue the topic aided by cross-reference. For example, the word “mineral(s)” goes as: “**mineral(s)** (a) Minerals were a particular class of **substance** in early modern **natural philosophy**; they are the inorganic **substances** usually contrasted with both **animals** and plants” (146). Thus, the bold-faced **substance**, **natural philosophy**, and **animal** not only guide the reader to concepts that all bear on “mineral(s),” but have their own independent entries in the dictionary.

Katherine Walker renders compact answers to basic questions on the subject in her Introduction. The dictionary is entitled “Shakespeare and science,” then what the word “science” implies is an unavoidable question. In a user-friendly manner, Walker gives her own definition at the very beginning, “Although the word ‘science’ did not refer to a coherent, discrete set of observational and experimental practices in the early modern period, I use the term to capture the capaciousness of knowledge-making of the natural world during the Renaissance. Before the institutionalization of scientific practice, the term was much more fluid and inclusive” (2), so that “Early modern science was more encyclopaedic than our own narrower conception of scientific practice” (2), enfolding astrology, astronomy, cookery, distillation, dyeing, medicine, metallurgy, military tactics, navigation, magic, and optics. Then another question moves to what Shakespeare’s science is. Walker states “Shakespeare’s science is not Francis Bacon’s, nor is it precisely Johannes Kepler’s or Galileo Galilei’s” (3), rather “a much more eclectic, inclusive set of observational practices” and “a compelling range of practitioners who all attempt not simply to describe, but to know, their environments” (4). “There are no scientists in Shakespeare’s works ... not a single figure in Shakespeare’s works can be said to make a living strictly from scientific inquiry” (1), but “there are natural philosophers in Shakespeare’s drama” (1) who show a strong passion to seek out the answers to Nature’s riddles. For example, physicians among Shakespeare’s characters use the form of questioning that is labeled as a scientific inquiry in modern medicine, and read celestial bodies to explain their influence on

terrestrial bodies.<sup>2</sup> Even though Shakespeare is open to a unified methodology of science, “we see Shakespeare testing different epistemological and empirical positions” (3). Walker also points to where the sources of Shakespeare’s science are from. “Shakespeare’s works possess a rich trove of scientific conceits, and he takes up, and playfully adapts, the language of various scientific pursuits in his drama and poetry” (3), she observes. Further, Walker couches that many of Shakespeare’s characters read the book of Nature and comment on early modern scientific knowledge (3), and avers that Shakespeare, as famous ancient authors and emerging authors on science flooded England during the early modern period, “could have read or heard discussion of works such as William Gilbert’s *On Magnetism* (1600), Francis Bacon’s *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and, abroad, Galileo Galilei’s *The Starry Messenger* (1610). Other significant texts that consider scientific ideas may have informed Shakespeare’s understanding of the cosmos, including John Florio’s translation of Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais* (1603), ... Philemon Holland’s 1601 English translation of Pliny’s *Natural History*” (4), yet the Bard “never mentions by name the philosopher Plato or the natural historian Pliny” (4). “Absent, too, are the words astrology and botany” (4). There is, indeed, a preoccupation in Shakespeare’s works analogous to the questions being asked by Shakespeare’s contemporary countrymen John Dee, Thomas Digges, Thomas Harriot and William Gilbert, among many others (3).

At the core of this dictionary, like others in the series, are the entries themselves. A few examples must suffice within the limits of a review.

As defined by Walker, the “astronomy” (28-29), “the **science** of studying the **motion** of **planetary** bodies” and its Latin terminology “*astronomia*” meaning “the science of the stars” (28), is conflated with astrology, “the study of the **influence** of the stars and planets upon objects on the earth” (28), throughout the early modern period, but astrology is increasingly under attack because of inconsistency and imprecision. Shakespeare, as Walker cites, uses the word “astronomy” in Sonnet 14 and transfers “astronomy from the heavens to the celestial body” (28). No doubt, “This astronomy, moreover, is also more akin to astrology” that tells “good or evil luck” (28). The youth’s eyes in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1.1.88-91) are equated with stars “which he scans for his astronomy” (28). Walker also highlights “astronomer” in *Troilus and Cressida* (5.1.88-91) and *Cymbeline* (3.2.27-28). According to her, studies on Shakespeare’s astronomy draw on “specific references to astronomical phenomena in the plays ... and historicist readings of the knowledge of

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<sup>2</sup> Not until Gresham College founded in 1596 began teaching astronomy systematically was advanced astronomy included in English colleges. Before that, only physicians who pursued their M. A. and Ph.D. degrees had access to advanced astronomy, so many physicians during the early modern period were star-gazers.

astronomy and astrology in early modern England” (29). “It is unclear whether Shakespeare was aware of or interested in Copernican heliocentrism” (29), yet Walker lists David H. Levy (2016) and Peter Usher (2007) who argue respectively when examining *Hamlet* that Shakespeare knew new cosmological theories and read Thomas Digges’s report on Copernican theories. Moreover, Walker abstracts lexicons in Shakespeare’s works that are closely aligned with early modern astronomy, such as “atomy” (29-30), “chaos” (41-42), “crystal” (61-62), “crystalline” (62), “element(s)” (82-85), “*ex nihilo*” (88), “firmament” (93-94), “infinite” (111-112), “influence” (112-114), “Music of the Spheres” (155-156), and “sphere” (212-214).

The discussion of “mathematics” (134-135) is a gem. Walker explains “Mathematics is the science of numbers” (134), while the Renaissance identified the structure of the universe as mathematical, with the result that “Geometrical principles were everywhere” (134), and were applied to visual arts and the building of fortifications in military science. Mathematics was increasingly used in texts on navigation, commerce, and mechanical inventions. *The Taming of the Shrew* (1.1.37-38; 2.1.56-57; 2.1.80-81) mentions “mathematics” more than one time. That Cambio as a tutor in mathematics teaches Bianca indicates “not only men could benefit from this form of study in the period” (134). Concerning the development of mathematics during the period, Walker emphasizes two of Shakespeare’s near-contemporaries: Robert Recorde (c. 1512-1558) and John Dee (1527-1609). Treatises such as the first English geometrical textbook *The Pathway to Knowledge* (1551), the first English astronomical textbook *The Castle of Knowledge* (1556), the English algebraic textbook *Whetstone of Witte* (1557) by Robert Recorde, and John Dee’s preface (1570) to Henry Billingsley’s English translation of Euclid’s *Elements* promoted the growth of geometry which, while immensely important to Renaissance mathematics, was also a useful method for cartographers, navigators, and astronomers. “For Dee, mathematics was the key to understanding the cosmos” (134). In fact, “mathematician” and “astronomer” were virtually interchangeable terms in the sixteenth century and earlier. The reader is also allowed to scrutinize the increasing mathematization of the early modern period and the mathematics in Shakespeare through the secondary sources summarized by Walker. Meanwhile, the reader is able to enjoy a panoramic view on Shakespeare and mathematics through “arithmetic” (23-25), “cipher(s)” (44), among others.

Walker defines “navigation” (168) as “the science of charting the route or course of a ship” (168). It was a progressive science because of global exploration and colonization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The practical need of navigation necessitates much more advanced and modern development of mathematics, astronomy, cartography, and meteorology. “Shakespeare exhibits a clear understanding of the science of navigation” (168), writes Walker, at the beginning of *Tempest* and in *Othello* (1.3.38-39), while in

*Macbeth* (4.1.52-53, 59-60), “to express the complete dissolution of the efficacy of any science, Shakespeare imagines a world without the art of navigation” (168). There is more knowledge of “navigation” from other entries, such as “Aquilon” (22), “compass(es)” (52-53), “map” (131-132), “plummet” (188), “sea-mark” (205), “tides” (232-234), and “wind(s)” (250-251).

Walker explains “magnetism” (130) by cross-referenced “attraction” (30-31), “another word for magnetism” (30). “The power of attraction was an occult force” (30) during the Renaissance. Renaissance natural philosophers attempted to digest the magnetic powers of the lodestone and of the earth. Timon explains “each natural body draws in, and thus steals, benefits from others” in *Timon* (4.3.431-437). Concerning further readings on magnetism, Walker mentions Ben Jonson’s *The Magnetick Lady* (1632), and Mary Floyd-Wilson’s work (2013) which reads the woman’s magnetic womb in *Twelfth Night*.

Katherine Walker’s 289 entries on Shakespeare and science is a strong refutation of John Cartwright and Brian Baker’s finding that “Even the greatest poet of the age, William Shakespeare, shows little awareness or interest in the achievements or concerns of the astronomers” (35), and William Burns’s claim that “William Shakespeare ... took almost no interest in science” (171), even though the Bard discards some words exclusive to early modern science, like “astrology.” What underlies the values of *Shakespeare and Science* is Walker’s juxtaposing the texts of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, which enables the reader to be aware of contextualization and intertextualization back to this kaleidoscopic period. At the same time, Walker enumerates many important, updated materials on Shakespeare and science. This is a great way for the reader to catch the mechanics and dynamics of how we understand Shakespeare from different perspectives. Besides, Walker’s emphasis on the Bard’s outstanding fellow Englishmen, such as Richard Recorde, Leonard Digges, John Dee and William Gilbert, leads the reader to learn the vernacular advance in English science during the sixteenth century. Moreover, Walker fixes some frustrating omissions made by others in the series. For example, Walker adds the entry “spirits” (214), an early modern medical concept, omitted by Sujata Iyengar in *Shakespeare’s Medical Language: A Dictionary*. In a word, Katherine Walker fulfills Series Editor Sandra Clark’s aim and her own goal “to broaden the framework with which critics approach Shakespeare’s scientific ideas” (5), and *Shakespeare and Science* is not only the useful glossing of many scientific terms unfamiliar to the modern reader but also an emerging sense of Elizabethan concepts of science in their own and prior times, both medieval and classical.

However, cautious readers can find some inconsistencies, such as the publishing date of *The Castle of Knowledge*. Under the entry “mathematics,” the date is 1551 (134), while in Bibliography, it is 1556 (262). According to *Early English Books Online*, the treatise was first published in 1556. Scholarly readers who study early modern science maybe suffer disappointment on some entries.

For example, when explaining the “navigation,” Walker fails to touch upon Martin Curtes’s *The arte of nauigation...Translated out of Spanyshe into Englyshe by Richarde Eden* that was published at least eight times from 1561 to 1615, one of the most influential books on navigation in early modern England. Additionally, Walker does not refer to William Gilbert’s *On Magnetism* (1600) when discussing “magnetism.” For greedy readers, the more entries, the more satisfying. Nonetheless, Walker confesses that “This dictionary does not include all the science in Shakespeare,” and “some more specialized sciences, such as medicine, do not receive full treatment here” (5). Therefore, the reader who has a desire for a much more comprehensive survey of specialized sciences is encouraged to turn to *Shakespeare’s Military Language: A Dictionary*, *Shakespeare and the Language of Food: A Dictionary*, *Shakespeare’s Medical Language: A Dictionary*, and the rest. Indeed, the thirty-three-page Bibliography provided by Walker is a treasure trove for these greedy readers. No doubt, exhausting words on science in Shakespeare’s verbal universe would be difficult and demanding for anyone. It is safe to say that the reader enjoys “at a great feast of languages” (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, 5.1.34-35) through Walker’s work.

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**Ni Ping, *Interpreting Shakespeare's Plays in the Historical Context of the Reformation*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2019. Pp. 196.**

Reviewed by *Yuying Wang*\*

The secular and the sacred are the dual qualities of Shakespeare's works, which are stimulated by the Renaissance and the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. As Hamlet says to the player, "For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to show... the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (*Hamlet*, 3.1.20-25), readers can learn both the transformative trend of humanism, and the legacy of the medieval "Chain of Being" (Zhou, 59). In Shakespeare's plays, the humanism bear witness to secularity, while the profound impact of the Reformation sacredness.

Authored by Ni Ping, an associate professor from the School of Liberal Arts, Nanjing Audit University, whose research interest lies in Shakespeare's Drama, *Interpreting Shakespeare's Plays in the Historical Context of the Reformation* captures the dualities in Shakespeare's plays by placing them in the historical context of the Reformation. Based on the discussions of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Richard II*, and *King Lear*, her monograph is divided into nine chapters, and covers such topics as "The Living and the Dead," "Angels and Demons," "Sin and Witchcraft," "Love and Salvation," "Anti-Monasticism," "Anti-Puritanism," "Christian Racial Political Theology," "The View of Sovereignty," and "The View of Divine Will." The book can be described as a contribution to both religious and literary studies, and both researchers and amateurs in these two fields can benefit from reading this book. In the following, I will review the book from three points: the research perspective of the author, the main feature of the book, and its contributions to literary studies.

Having a glance at the title, readers understand that it is an interdisciplinary study focusing closely on the key words of "Reformation" and "Shakespeare's plays:" the book is an introductory work on religion based on literary texts as it provides a great deal of guidance for understanding the important themes of the Reformation. Ni Ping begins her study with the literary features of the Renaissance and covers the most common humanist idea—the

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affirmation and praise of human emotions, which “seem to be the eternal object of literary eulogy and the eternal theme of literature” (73).

Specifically, Ni Ping’s emphases on religion scatter throughout the whole book. The first chapter introduces the doctrine of purgatory and the relationship between free will, grace, and justification. In Chapter Two, questions of “where does sin come from?” and “what is good and what is evil?” have been well answered. Chapter Three focuses closely on the topic of “sin and witchcraft” and clarifies the relationship between “sin and free will” and the “salvation by merit,” together with the two different statements on salvation: “salvation by merit” of Pelagius and “salvation by grace” of Augustine (which are also discussed in Chapters Five and Six). Chapter Four explores the opposition and contradiction between the secular “humanity and the present world” and the religious “faith and the kingdom of Heaven” during the Renaissance. In the fifth and sixth chapters, Ni Ping uncovers the negative impact of “monasticism” and “puritanism” respectively: Chapter Five traces the origins of “anti-monasticism” to Jesus’s accusations against the Pharisees and the Reformation of Judaism, while Chapter Six outlines the differences between the Anglicans and the Puritans in their understanding of Justification by Faith and describes the causes and consequences of the introduction of sanctification into Puritan Justification. Ni Ping explains in Chapter Seven how the apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in Christianity after Jesus, played a major role in the emergence of Christianity as a universal religion and in the formation of Christian Ethno-Political Theology. The remaining chapters, Chapters Eight and Nine, deal respectively with the spiritual crisis that Europeans suffered after the Reformation and the crisis in the traditional system of Christian thought itself.

Meanwhile, Ni Ping pays much attention to kinship and love in Shakespeare’s plays. Concerning kinship, she compares the humanization of ghosts in *Hamlet* with Thomas More’s *The Supplication of Souls* to illuminate how the living and the dead, especially families, co-exist in a community. The living and the dead in the Catholic concept of purgatory belong to a community: the souls in purgatory benefit greatly from the suffrages provided by the living; in return, these souls in Heaven will help the living to attain eternal bliss by praying for them (4). After the Reformation, however, numerous Catholic rituals were abolished, including funerals, causing Thomas More to claim that the human community of mutual love and support was destroyed and the world was left with ignorance and greediness. While funerals carry the emotions of the living, a kind of nostalgia for the dead, *Hamlet* addresses the most controversial question in the 16<sup>th</sup> century England: “How are the dead to be remembered?” (18) Although Ni Ping does not give a direct answer, her discussion of kinship “community” suggests that the reformers largely touched the bottom line of

religion as the universal order<sup>1</sup> based on religion is broken. Hamlet is an example: the Danish Prince believes in ghosts rather than humans, which proves the distrustful and distant emotional relationship after the Reformation. Ni Ping also examines love in Shakespeare's tragedy and romance. As an interracial and intercultural love tragedy, *Othello* depicts the conflict between religious belief and secular emotion (love). Othello believes love can save his soul, implying his high dependence on humanity and the present world, a notion that is rejected by the orthodox Christian doctrine's vision of Heaven and the afterlife (80). In contrast to his tragedies, love in Shakespeare's late romances, such as *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, ushers in a happy ending, which indicates the protagonists' gradual grasp of Christian humanism, such as forgiveness, mercy, and universal love. Ni Ping's propulsive discussion from Shakespeare's tragedy to romance also clarifies the process from opposition to integration between religious beliefs and secular emotions (81). Therefore, her combination of religious and secular cultures provides readers with a new dimension of understanding religious culture and British literature.

In terms of the characteristic of the book, its political overtone is very obvious, which is related to the differences between the English Reformation and the European Reformation. The historian Sir Maurice Powicke observes that "the one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England is that it was an act of State" (1). Thus, the political environment of the time is necessary for interpreting Shakespeare's plays in the context of the Reformation. Ni Ping presents many striking case studies. For instance, she argues in Chapter Six that *Measure for Measure* reflects the religious policy adopted by King James I of England in the face of the conflict between Anglicans and Puritans aimed at supporting the moderate former and containing the radical latter to stabilize the country (105, 118). Besides, the Duke's way of "public atonement" to save Claudio simulates God's way of redeeming the world, "in keeping with the Protestant political theology of Shakespeare's time, in which secular rulers were the earthly agents of God" (120). Chapter Seven explains *Othello* witnesses the Christian Racial-Political Theology, a theological concept that blends politics, religion, and race together, dominating in the European concept of race at that time. Unlike the previous view of the love tragedy between Othello and Desdemona owing to racial differences in skin color, Ni Ping believes the difference in faith is the unbridgeable gap between the couple. Desdemona is from the white European Christian world, while Othello the black Arab Islamic world. Historically, Europeans have always been prejudiced and hostile to

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<sup>1</sup> The abolishment of funerals in the Reformation undermines the universal order based on religion, one of the three orders summarized by Harari in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, and the other two are the monetary (economic) order and imperial (political) order (191).

Muslims. Therefore, the disparagement and discrimination against Othello, a Moor of Arab Muslim, indeed reflects the military conflict between the two groups. Englishmen during Shakespeare's period were very hostile to Muslims because "the Turks from the Islamic world were then a formidable military threat to the Christian world of Europe" (133). Undoubtedly, Othello fails to be a true Christian because he is the unconvertible "Other" in the Christian Ethno-Political Theology (142). Thus, Ni Ping makes a clear point that there is a paradox in the ecumenism of the Christian church, namely, that the human world it seeks to build is a world that can accommodate differences in physical appearance but not differences in faith (145). In the eighth chapter, entitled "The View of Sovereignty in Shakespeare's Plays," Ni Ping more explicitly juxtaposes religion and politics in *Richard II*. Political issues, such as the "deposing of the monarch," are closely related to the ideas of different religious sects. Richard II's fate insinuates a controversial issue in post-Reformation European society: "Do the subjects have the right to resist and even depose the monarch in the face of tyranny? (147)" The response of the Church of England differs from that of the Catholic Church: the former assimilated the "despotic" concept of kingship under Luther's political theology and took the strategy of "not resisting but enduring," while the latter, having inherited the "constitutional" conception of monarchy of Thomas Aquinas, Jean Charlier de Gerson, and the European Thomists, abided by the belief that "it should be resisted." However, Shakespeare gives no definite support for either side, and this indefiniteness suggests that "Shakespeare's *Richard II* participates in the English political conversation of the 1690s in the form of dramatic art" (170). The publication of this book thus has much to offer to the fields of history and politics.

Furthermore, Ni Ping offers remarkable analyses of Shakespeare's plays, making great contributions to literary studies. The first case is a reversal of the perception of the literary characteristics of a fixed era. The Renaissance is an era filled with diverse and complex conceptions of human nature. The reader might take it for granted that Renaissance works would be more human-centered and secular than medieval works, yet Ni Ping takes a fresh look at Shakespeare's plays through analyzing the religious nature of them. The Renaissance literature "both celebrates humanity and doubts it, is fascinated by the lustful pleasures of the flesh and disgusted by its sordid vulgarity, as well as longs for the life of the present world and aspires to the Heaven of the next" (70). Take the most confusing emotion in the world, love. *Othello* embodies the glorification and doubt of love in the context of religious culture. In Othello's love for Desdemona, this secular emotion is sanctified and idealized, and "it even replaces Heaven as the soul's home" (73), which glorifies love; nevertheless, when love is in crisis, Othello's soul also loses hope, and is left with doubt, even denial of love. After all, "Christianity points the hope of the salvation of the

human soul to Heaven in the afterlife ... It requires believers not only to resist the temptations of carnal desires, but also to put their love for God above all the worldly loves that are attached to the flesh in this world” (72). Like the human body, love as a worldly emotion has a short and fragile life. Faith depending on love is not firmly rooted and cannot help but brings about spiritual disillusionment and a crisis of faith later. The second case is the subversion of the conventionalized perception of a fixed text. Many scholars have argued that *Measure for Measure* reveals Shakespeare’s friendly attitude toward the Catholic faith (82). Ni Ping remains skeptical, and assumes that the play denies the Catholic monastic concept of virginity through the quasi-nun figure of Isabella in a euphemistic and subtle way (83). Although some in the play seem to endorse the monastic sexual ethic of “being a virgin is divine,” Shakespeare’s portrayal of Isabella exposes the extreme sexuality of Catholic monasticism. First, the ascetic life it demands prompts the ascetics to become proud, which in Isabella’s case is mainly manifested in her puritanical pride because of her virginity. Second, this arrogance leads her to violate the precept of love: “love thy neighbors as thyself,” the highest level of Christian ethics. Isabella’s indifference to both Claudio and Mariana (she agrees with the “bed-trick” which may hurt Mariana without any hesitation) is a proof. Third, Isabella’s eventual renunciation of celibacy is a critique of the harsh Catholic attitude toward gender relations, including conjugal sex. Ni Ping concludes that Catholic monasticism reveals a religious ethic of passive avoidance, and by exposing these ills, *Measure for Measure* affirms the Reformers’ proclamation of the precept of love and their encouragement of positive initiation into the world (103).

Of course, the publication of a book marks both its birth and the beginning of its growth. There is still room for improvement in this book. For example, when discussing the Reformation’s rejection of Catholicism, and especially the rejection of purgatory, the author mentions that purgatory is a fabrication of the Roman Church, on the grounds that it not only lacks a Biblical basis, but also is absent in the writings of early Christian theologians (3). A further introduction to “the Bible” is necessary as the historical and cultural background of this book is the Reformation. The meaning of the word “Scripture” in the phrase “the canon of Scripture” differs between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Catholicism supports the Apocrypha, which refers to the books in the Greek and Latin Bibles but not in the Hebrew Bible, while Protestantism accepts the Old Testament in the Hebrew Bible. The Catholics have refuted the Protestants by saying “the practice of praying for the dead is explicitly mentioned in Scripture, at 2 Maccabees 12:40-46.” The reformers, however, declared that this book was apocryphal (and hence not part of the Bible) (McGrath, 97-8). Thus, if Ni Ping had targeted the evolving meaning of “Scripture,” this book would have been more lucid on the contradictions between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Shakespeare's plays mirror the evolution and development of the religious ideas during the period. If Christian thought is one of the sources in Shakespeare's literary ideas, Shakespeare's plays must also map out traces of the ebb and flow and fluctuating influence of the Reformation. Both dramatic literature and the Reformation exhibit a dynamic effect. The former is the interaction between the characters and the audience on and off the stage, while the latter is the communication of traditional concepts of religion with modern thought. By combining the two dynamic effects, Ni Ping's study reflects the endless vitality of Shakespeare's plays and Shakespeare studies.

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