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Nothing like the Sun: Shakespeare in Spain Today

Today Shakespeare is more present in Spain than ever as a result of the critical interest and spectacular growth of his popularity among Spaniards who recognise him as the embodiment of cultural and literary values. Since the celebration of the Seventh World Shakespeare Congress in Valencia in April 2001, Shakespearean scholarship in Spain has provided new ways of understanding the playwright. It has opened up debates on issues which have made possible new scholarly studies, translations and performances that have proved more active and vigorous than ever, and whose effects can be seen in different facets of Spanish culture and life.

Which Shakespeare/ Which Spain?

Who is Shakespeare today? Or, in Balz Engler's words, "Does the term refer to a person, to a set of printed texts, to a cultural icon, to a theatrical tradition, or to a combination of all these?" (Engler 27) What does Shakespeare mean now? One can only say that Shakespeare means different things to different people: Shakespeare is constantly reshaped and refashioned in different places and situations; it is not Shakespeare but rather "Shakespeare" that really matters in the Shakespace (Hedrick and Reynolds 3) where it is written and rewritten in an unending process of cultural reproduction. As Shakespeare no longer "merely continues to signify Englishness" (Joughin 1), it is possible to read Shakespeare within a distinct context without his language (Kennedy) for "the meanings of Shakespeare's works (and of the Shakespeare the author) can constantly respond to the needs, fantasies, preoccupations, and conflicts of the moment" (Lanier 230).

Shakespeare's appropriation and adaptability become more problematic in the new political mapping of Spain whose identity as a multilingual nation has become a burning issue today (Béjar). The debate about the Spanish nation, its identity and language in the new democracy, as both a historical and a contemporary political problem, is particularly complex due to the legacy of the Franco dictatorship which deeply eroded the legitimacy of Spanish nationalism. During and since the transition, Spanish nationalist discourse has evolved to meet the challenge of new concepts of nation, identity and culture, and proposes different configurations of the relationship between nation, state and language, as minority languages have co-official status with Spanish. While the Constitution of 1978 defines Spain as a nation of nationalities, many politicians and intellectuals now claim that Spain is a nation of nations, while others that it is a post-national state (See Balfour). But what is really at issue is not whether Spain

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exists or not as a nation; rather, it is the traditional ways of seeing Spain from both the centre and the margins, the ways in which Spanish and other nationalities are projected and how they influence the idea of Spain as a nation. It shows the comparative rivalry between Spanish national identity and the historic nationalities or regions like Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia deriving from the peculiar architecture of the state in Spain, and their effect on social and political cohesion. We are witnessing a transformation of Spain from the Spain of the tambourine and Don Juan to “multiple Spains, to a fragmented, multi-cultural society which nonetheless still (on the whole) conceptualises itself as the sum total of its long and rich cultural and political history” (Gies 4). This radical change produces tension and conflict as a result of the confrontation of the two Spains, of the traditional and conservative in contrast with the modern and postmodern.

Zara, Almodóvar, and Shakespeare

Shakespeare’s plays –like Zara’s fashion house and Almodóvar’s movies– have been locally and universally accepted. They combine commercial and popular success. They represent values and aspirations that influence society and its institutions in various ways. They are cultural icons that remain in wide cultural circulation once “the old division between high and low culture has been erased” (Smith 2). But appropriating and rewriting Shakespeare is not a passive phenomenon. Rather the reproduction of Shakespeare’s legacy is opened to a multitude of interpretations as

An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never at one with itself [...] one must filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several possibles that inhabit the same injunction [...] if the readability of a legacy were given, transparent, univocal, if it did not call forward and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it.
(Derrida 16)

Shakespeare can be appropriated in many ways. He has the potential for adaptation to multiple cultural identities through an ongoing process of acculturation, assimilation and cultural fusion that produce new readings of his works.

Culture as “a mental construct which fuses together elements of myth and history, desire and projection, imagination, and accomplishment” (Gies 5) becomes a clue to understanding the rise and growth of Shakespeare. Thus the different interpretations of Shakespeare that have appeared among us are also due to the cultural and contextual factors which have shaped “a sort of duality –immortalised by Cervantes and the Spanish playwrights of the Golden Age [...] gives rise to opposed tendencies between the spiritual and the sensual, the passionate and the sceptic, the real and the romantic [...] the alliance between idealism and practicality” (Fox 34). Although democracy has made possible cultural decentralization which has had a positive effect on the making of Shakespeare, the traditional debate between a unity in Spanish culture and a plurality of cultures still continues. However the idealization of the concept of Spain as a nation by the writers of *The Generation of 1898* is no longer valid in a map divided between politically and culturally different regions.

One cannot maintain the existence of one single Spanish culture but must recognize a multiplicity of cultures as “Many of the most dynamic examples of what is often held to be Spanish are produced by the historic nationalities of the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia.” (Smith 2). Spain is a mosaic of cultures where Shakespeare has been accepted as part of those cultures, a social phenomenon operating with some form of signifying power that is manifested in cultural productions and

practices through various negotiations, resistances and accommodations generated by the current political, economic and cultural re-mapping.

At the crossroads: European and Latin American Shakespeares

The admission of Spain into the European Community in 1986 facilitated cultural and literary exchanges that gave shape to new critical attitudes and approaches in the analysis and study of Shakespeare in the new Spain. Today appropriating and rewriting Shakespeare is not only an intra-cultural process but also an intercultural one, with other European countries where Shakespeare has been translated, performed and discussed beyond “the persistent construction of a monocultural, monoglottal Bard” (Gregor X). The picture of Shakespeare in Spain has been approached and contrasted with other European Shakespeares that are presented “not just as a supplement to recent Shakespeare studies, but in a way as a critical comment on its British insularity” (Delabastita and D’hulst 21). The new European context has also been responsible for an interest in Shakespeare whose effects can be appreciated in different aspects of academic and cultural life.

In the past ten years, the European Shakespeare has emerged as a major critical concern in contemporary criticism. The European Shakespeare network and association founded in 1998 in Murcia with its own webpage (www.um.es/shakespeare), and several collections like *European Shakespeares. Translating Shakespeare into the Romantic Age* (1993), *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (1994), *More European Shakespeares* (2001), *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare* (2003), *Shifting the Scene. Shakespeare in European Cultures* (2004) and *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean* (2004), reflect the critical interest of this new field of Shakespearean research. As Europe remains a composite of distinct languages, dialects, histories, and cultural practices, there are complex reasons to explain the emergence of this new academic field of “unprecedented activity in the study of the interaction between Shakespeare and Europe” (Wells 7).

Shakespeare is no longer an icon of England’s language, history, and culture, an English preserve for “he has been many nations and can potentially be every nation, and that is why he is a living presence in the new Europe” (Bate 115). The imperial Shakespeare has become the European Shakespeare, a challenge to the hegemony of the Anglo-centric: a construct of the European Shakespeare might not exist out of those interpretations that have prioritised and eradicated the local, the particular and the different by imposing an Eurocentric view of Shakespeare as well as stressing the importance of the universal and global as opposed to the local and particular. But the European Shakespeare also has its limits as in the end “readings are shaped by a reader’s particular location and knowledge.” (Orkin 1).

The vitality and dynamism of Spanish-speaking cultures are now an accepted fact, and Spanish is one of the few languages rivalling English at global level. We should take into account the common language and history with regard to the appropriation and reception of Shakespeare in Latin America, where he arrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century through Spanish translations (See Zaro) and productions (See Tronch). Despite the fact that there is a hybrid Latin American Shakespeare which conveys a real sense of the cultural, ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, as shown in *Latin American Shakespeares* (Kliman and Santos), we need to find a ground, “a third space, a point of conversation and conflict” (Modenessi 246) where Spanish and Latin American Shakespeares could meet, for they face the challenge of rendering Shakespeare in a common language.

New trends in criticism: Filling the Shakespeare gap

The historicist, postmodernist, deconstructionist, postcolonial, and gender-centred readings provided Spanish scholars with necessary tools for the critical debate. The national conferences of AEDEAN [Spanish Association for Anglo-American Studies] and, especially, SEDERI [Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies] have greatly improved scholarly research within the field of Shakespearean studies, as well as the publication of anthologies like *Shakespeare en España. Textos 1764-1916* (Pujante and Campillo). The volume contains a selection of texts on the reception of Shakespeare in Spain, written either in Spain or by Spaniards and arranged in chronological order, showing the evolution of the Shakespearean criticism of the period among us. The new major critical works and collections have represented a new challenge to the traditional idea of Shakespeare's critical relegation in Spain. They deal with different aspects and topics in the mainstream of Shakespearean studies. *Shakespeare and Spain* (González and Klein) and *Spanish Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (González) offer a variety of essays with a diversity of perspectives reflecting the maturity, richness and plurality of Shakespearean scholarship in Spain.

The question as to what extent there has been contribution to increasing the academic knowledge of Shakespeare has been answered by the new approaches and interpretations which are characterised by a capacity to embrace nearly every theoretical paradigm and also employ current critical methodologies common in contemporary Anglo-American criticism, such as cultural materialism, new historicism, or presentism. Although there are signs that the era dominated by some of these influential critical trends is coming to an end — as might be the case of new historicism (See Grady) — they still remain very much active and influential in the field of Shakespearean studies (See Lorenzo).

Spanish criticism of Shakespeare now reflects distinctive tendencies in its interpretation of the Shakespearean canon. On the one hand, it repeats past interest and topics. The rhetorical and linguistic analyses of the Shakespearean text (See Fanego), and the study of Shakespeare's dramatic sources (See Martín Rodríguez), continue as a productive field of research. Manuscripts and editions of Shakespeare are another major concern of Shakespearean studies in Spain. Today more than ever, the possibility of a Spanish First Folio seems to be a question without a conclusive answer. The crucial point is Gayangos's story, even though "The carelessness and contradictions shown in a number of details ... make him and his story suspect" (Pujante 27). Editorial and textual inquiry has also been conducted to establish whether editing Shakespeare is different from editing other Spanish authors, and whether the analysis of works like Cervantes's *Don Quixote* shows that "they have in common an original textual situation where there is a lack of autographs" (Tronch 43).

On the other hand, current Spanish scholarship reflects the new trends in the interpretation of Shakespeare. Shakespearean cultural studies have emerged as one of the most prolific areas of Shakespearean criticism in Spain. Perhaps the most distinctive concern has been the cultural adaptations of Shakespeare that provide much needed cultural contexts in the making of Shakespeare. These have been more interested in the shifting meanings of Shakespeare's self and works in cultural formations at certain historical moments to see how "Shakespeare is popularised and when the popular is Shakespeareanized" (Shaughnessy 5). They have sought to examine how Shakespeare has been appropriated, reshaped and contested, and have articulated them in a variety of cultural contexts. For example, Spain opted to cancel the official celebrations of the tercentenaries of both Shakespeare and Cervantes in 1916 to avoid the possibility of a diplomatic crisis. Spanish neutrality in the Great War and the cancellation of the events

“served in some cases as a spur rather than a deterrent to Spanish biographers of Shakespeare” (Calvo 2002), as artists and intellectuals regarded the official policy of neutrality as a means of silently supporting Germany.

It is not only Shakespeare but also his plays that have been used and appropriated under particular cultural and political conditions. Shakespearean cultural studies have demonstrated the culturally conditioned responses to his works on both page and stage. Several productions of *Julius Caesar*, one of the Shakespeare’s plays that calls into question the legitimacy of autocratic rule and the redistribution of political power in the wake of usurpation, were staged during the transition to explore possible parallels and answer “embarrassing questions about the legitimacy of absolutist rule” (Gregor 2006), for Spaniards all of a sudden had experienced modernity and post-modernity, mourning and celebration, disenchantment and hope.

Shakespeare is not what he used to be. Intertextuality, ideological negotiations and cultural practices have made him different, new. In the cultural encounters of exchange and production, he has become a postmodern author who has been re-imagined in fictional biographies like those by Robert Nye (Muñoz). Shakespeare has been replaced by other hardly recognisable Shakespeares. But the key point for us today is not whether, but how, to rewrite Shakespeare since contemporary rewritings are often powered by a kind of cultural embarrassment that seeks to define modernity by estranging the past. This is the challenge taken up by *Shakespeare en la imaginación contemporánea. Revisiones y reescrituras de su obra*, whose intent is nothing less than “to explore a representative sample of literary works that rewrite Shakespeare from a variety of critical positions and geographical and cultural contexts.” (Concha 10), showing the impact of Shakespeare in contemporary culture.

The different chapters cover a wide range of postmodern interests like popular culture, gender issues, filmic adaptations and rewritings of Shakespeare in contemporary fiction. The focus of the analysis of the volume is on written narratives that have used Shakespeare’s plays as a source of inspiration. The exploration of the postcolonial subject in *The Tempest* (Carrera) and the juxtaposition of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* with contemporary rewritings of this play (Hidalgo) show how postcolonial and feminist perspectives often enter into conflict. New links between *The Tempest* and Margaret Laurence’s *The Diviners* have been established in order to analyse the explicit and implicit intertextual elements (López). There have also been narrative accounts of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Zunino) and *King Lear* that have attracted critical attention (Calvo 2005).

Shakespeare is not only rewritten in the text but also on the screen where he still appears as an authorial and cultural icon (See Lehmann and Starks). In rewriting and refashioning the bard to meet the demands of changing cultural taste and technology, the movies perform the function of translating Shakespeare’s plays for contemporary audiences in different and peculiar ways and forms, as is the case of *Valentín* (2002), a film by Juan Luis Iborra that shows a particular kind of complementarity between Shakespeare and the cinema. The script of the movie was written two decades before, following the inspiration from the novel of the same title by Juan Gil-Albert. There are references to *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III* and *Othello* above all. It is the story of a group of actors who are rehearsing those plays in a country-house. The unexpected arrival of Valentín, who will play the female roles, will reproduce *Othello’s* tragedy because Ricardo, the director, is deeply in love with him, and Jaime, the leading man in the company, is resentful on account of his relegation. As in Almodóvar’s movies, there is much Shakespearean passion, violence and tragedy.

Since the official abolition of censorship in 1977, the emergence of Almodóvar’s movies has been the most important event in the history of the cinema in modern Spain. His films are characterized “by strong parts for women, their treatment of men and their

exploration of the complexities of masculinity and male sexuality” (Evans 275). He also expresses a concern with broken families, urbanism, and motherhood. Martin Orkin sees parallels between Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and Almodóvar’s *All About My Mother* since both “are engaged with maternity and pregnancy, with the facts, in this context, of human loss as well as joy that issue in the course of time” (Orkin 112). In Shakespeare, Almodóvar and Lorca, mothers are grieving and in despair, as they appear in the rehearsal of Lorca’s *Blood Wedding* at the end of *All About My Mother*. But the problem is that “the desexualised maternal process” is “man-made” (Orkin 123) as it is under patriarchal constraint.

Though there has been an increasing interest in cinematic Shakespeare since the publication of *Introducción a Shakespeare a través del cine* (Gil-Delgado), Spanish scholarship has been lacking links between Shakespeare and Spanish contemporary movies. We are more concerned with the reception of Shakespearean adaptations for the screen in Spain (See Jódar); with studies on the notion of fidelity that highlight the role played by adaptation with regard to changing concepts of authorship; and with recent developments of film adaptation applied to the discourse of otherness and homoerotic desire (Casas, Martín). They also explore the extent to which the intelligibility of film adaptations is dependent on contextual and intertextual factors and on the theoretical issues of “a performative intervention on an existing discourse formation which includes both the original product or text and the discourses using it, originating it, deriving from it or surrounding it” (García 181). Thus the major film adaptations of *Henry V* by Laurence Olivier (1944) and Kenneth Branagh (1989) transform the original as it is differently perceived according to the complex series of visual and intertextual networks that produce a particular meaning and impact on the screen (See Hoenselaars and Franssen). Moreover, Branagh’s *Henry V* has been considered one of the most important Shakespearean adaptations for it shapes and anticipates future adaptations though there is some reserve on the extent and success of the so-called the Branagh revolution (Díaz).

Teaching is another dimension or perspective of appropriation which makes us critical readers not only of Shakespeare but of other literary texts and cultural practices of our time: Shakespeare can only be made relevant to new generations of students if “his name can be invoked powerfully in the context of current concerns” (Kamps 27). Teaching Shakespeare today represents a greater challenge in a changing world with so many interpretations and transformations. The different approaches to teaching Shakespeare in Spain try to solve practical didactic and pedagogic problems that facilitate access to Shakespeare and provide the students with basic tools of Shakespearean criticism through the reading of set texts of particular plays in order to foster the student’s engagement with the matter at hand (Aragay/Zozaya and Cerezo). However, it would be more appealing and innovative to open new lines of research to explore in depth the way Shakespeare came to be known beyond the academic curriculum.

Shakespeare and his Spanish contemporaries is another active field of scholarly research as Shakespeare cannot be completely understood without his Spanish counterparts. To restrict Shakespeare’s contemporaries to English dramatists of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period deprives him of valuable comparisons with another culture that can illuminate the readings of his plays. Cervantes (Maestro/Tronch), Calderón (González) and Lope (Cañadas), among other Golden Age dramatists, were Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Though they lived in a different space and belonged to a different literary tradition, they shared a time of unparalleled literary creation that accounts “for the unique similarities between English and Spanish drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries...” (Cohen 9).

The appropriation of Shakespeare to Spanish culture has been facilitated by Spanish Golden Age dramatists whose works have been compared with those of Shakespeare. The intrusion of a rival poet on the Spanish scene has not had negative consequences for the reception of the bard in our country. Shakespeare has emerged as one of them. He has been admitted into the Parnassus of Spanish literary celebrities in spite of his Englishness and centrality in the western canon. Cervantes, Calderón, or Lope, who have been called at different times “the Spanish Shakespeares”, have helped us to understand Shakespeare better.

It is Cervantes and Shakespeare, however, who share literary supremacy. Both are deeply concerned with the questions and preoccupations that worry us today. The greatness of their literary achievement is not only due to artistic considerations but also to their “philosophical instinct” (González 311). The collections (Luis-Martínez, González) that commemorated the celebration of the fourth centenary of the publication of *Don Quixote* in 2005 tried to answer the question of “how both writers came to dominate the artistic imagination of Europe and the rest of the world for 400 years” (Ife 22) and to open up new discussions on their literary relationship, particularly on *Cardenio* that survived in Lewis Theobald’s *Double Falsehood* (See Freehafer) which is “For the present, and perhaps for ever, [...] the nearest we can come to *Cardenio*” (Wells 373). Shakespeare and Fletcher’s play was translated into Spanish as *La Historia de Cardenio* by Charles David Ley in 1987. He used Theobald’s adaptation as the basis for his translation as he thought it was true to the original. However, once “a basic consensus has been reached that *Double Falsehood* was not a forgery, but a real adaptation of the lost play”, a major concern for Spanish scholars has been to establish verbal parallels between Theobald’s adaptation and Shelton’s translation as Cervantes’s work “has a stronger presence in *Double Falsehood* than has been established so far.” (Pujante 96-97).

There has also been a considerable interest in the rewriting (Greenblatt and Mee) and in the reconstruction of the *Don Quixote* episode, using either Theobald’s adaptation (Taylor), or Theobald and Shelton’s texts (Doran). These adaptations seem to be controversial as they are not actually based on Shakespeare’s and Fletcher’s lost play. But what really matters beyond the authenticity is that they have made possible to stage Cervantes’s story today.

Lost and Found in translations

Shakespeare’s translations have played a major role in the growth and development of national and cultural identities. They have been made to rebuild and validate national cultures. The map of Shakespeare translations reflects the variety of the rendering of Shakespeare’s texts through a twofold process of adaptability and resistance. They have facilitated our access and familiarity with his works. Translations have traditionally been a productive field in Spain since Ramón de la Cruz’s translation of *Hamlet* in 1772. It was a second-hand verse translation based on the 1769 French version by Jean-François Ducis whose relation to its French source seems to be “problematic” (Pujante and Gregor 129)). The first translation in prose directly from English was Leandro Fernández de Moratín’s *Hamlet* published in 1798.

Today the number of translations has greatly increased. Indeed, we are living a golden age for translations and stage productions of Shakespeare plays due to the popularisation of the bard and to the public appeal of Shakespeare’s plays. New translations of *Edward III* (2005), made by Antonio Ballesteros for the first time into Spanish, of the *Sonnets* (2008) by Pedro Pérez, and of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2011) by Manuel Ángel Conejero have been published. Most of the new translations are mainly published for the stage, as they are most needed to meet the demand of

producers and directors. Consequently they do not appear on a regular basis. Only Ángel Luis Pujante continues with his project of publishing one annotated Shakespearean translation per year. His *William Shakespeare. Teatro Selecto* (2008) contains the translation of 22 plays in two volumes arranged in chronological order, including the unpublished translation of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* translated for the first time into Spanish in collaboration with Salvador Oliva, whose translation of *Henry V* also appears in this publication. A different project is the one launched by *Editorial 451* that aims to make the classics accessible to the common reader rewriting the texts “with much respect” in the light of present concerns. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Jesús Ferrero and Irene Gracia, respectively, are the first to be translated within this series (*El Cultural* 10).

Although “the marginalization of translation is a fact of Anglo-American literary culture in general” (Delabastita 126) and translation studies remain “the stepchild” (Ewbank 1) of Shakespearean studies, they offer a wide range of responses to the theory and practice of translation of Shakespeare (See Hoenselaars 2004). Shakespeare’s translations in Spain have been “sensitive to social, functional constraints as reflected in the translator decisions” (Zaro 71). Translation studies in Spain are concerned with the translatability of Shakespeare’s forms and meanings; with the issue of loss and gain in translation (Bassnett 54); with the distinction between translation and adaptation; with the translation as a model for rewriting (Conejero 57); and with the production of a general model of translational analysis of theatre texts (Ezpeleta 24-27).

Spanish translations do not concentrate only on the correctness or faithfulness of particular renderings of Shakespeare’s works. They reveal that meaning is not permanently rooted in the original text but is, to a large extent, determined by the context evolving in time and across political and cultural boundaries. A translation’s validity rests not in its lexical or idiomatic fidelity but in its ability to transcode the text along with its immediate context, negotiating meanings created by the interacting of linguistic and cultural elements. Translating implies a process of acculturation that takes into account those cultural elements where the translation is rendered. It means that translation is a culture-bound process that –in return– can affect the original text, changing and even distorting it. Thus translations of particular plays like *Henry IV* and *Measure for Measure* have influenced their reception entailing in the former a deletion, distortion or accommodation of the original Elizabethan culture-bound elements to the target text (Campillo), “while reflecting in the latter the differing attitudes towards Isabella and to her relationship with the other main characters of the play (Mateo 23).

Shakespeare is also translated into the other vernacular languages and minority cultures of Spain, as has been the case from the beginning of the twentieth century until now, particularly into Catalan. Shakespeare, “the writer most frequently translated into Catalan”, arrived into Catalonia “through scholarly studies (initially in Spanish), theatre productions (first in Spanish and Italian), operas (mainly in Italian), and translations and adaptations of his works in French and Spanish above all.” (Pujol 32). Shakespeare’s translations have played an important role in the shaping of Catalan as a language and have contributed to the creation of a national culture. As many as 40 writers have translated him into Catalan for more than a century, from the first full Catalan translation of *Hamlet* by Arthur Masriera in 1898 through Anfós Par’s 1912 rendering of *King Lear* into fifteenth century Catalan and the twenty-eight translations of Josep María de Sagarra for the stage to Salvador Oliva’s translations of Shakespeare’s plays (1984-87) and sonnets (2002) in verse (in the mould of the alexandrine sonnet) and prose, and Miquel Desclot’s translations for the Teatre Lliure that have made Shakespeare accessible to new generations of readers and spectators. Today translations in Catalonia still fulfil not only the need to understand a foreign work, but also the need for prestige represented by Shakespeare, who is used to reinforce cultural and linguistic

dominance. The Catalan Shakespeare, in contrast with the Spanish Shakespeare, has been regarded as “a supreme and exclusive model of culture and civilisation” (Buffery 3).

Translations are not so frequent in Galicia and in the Basque country, where Shakespeare is not so culturally significant. They are the result either of individual attempts like Juan García’s *Hamlet* (2002) in Basque or of providing the script for a particular performance like Miguel Pérez’s translations of Shakespeare’s plays that have been produced by Teatro do Noroeste or by Centro Dramático Galego.

Staging Shakespeare in Spain Today

Although Spanish scholarship has paid little attention to the study of Shakespeare productions beyond the research carried out by few scholars like Keith Gregor and Rafael Portillo, Shakespeare remains the most staged playwright, even more than the Spanish Golden Age dramatists. There has been an unprecedented increase in Shakespearean performances in contrast with the small number of plays by the Golden Age dramatists seen on the Spanish stage (Gregor 1). In summer festivals like Grec, Almagro, Mérida, Santa Susanna and Olite Shakespeare’s plays have proven a popular and commercial success in most cases, up to the point where professional theatre companies regularly include the most popular Shakespearean plays in their repertoires. The productions reviewed are those that engage with current affairs as well as those that show new tendencies in theatrical production from which to challenge and understand the present. But, as Alan Sinfield reminds us, “Not any interpretation will pass as Shakespeare, of course. A major role of theatre criticism is to police the boundaries of the permissible...judging whether or not particular productions fall within the scope of Shakespeare as currently recognized” (Sinfield 200).

After his production of *Otelo* (2001), Emilio Hernández’s *RomeoxJulieta* (2002) for the Centro Dramático Andaluz reminded us of the risk of taking Shakespeare too far away from Shakespeare. This adaptation by Antonio Onetti –as its title suggests– increased that same radicality and postmodernity of Luhmann’s *Romeo+Juliet*. The production was designed to present a contemporary abbreviated and updated staging of the Shakespearean text. All the elements contributed to create a juvenile effect in the costumes and music of the chorus which was composed of three skilful young girls singing and dancing rap. Like the bold twentieth-century musical version *West Side Story* it emphasised the generational gap and the bloody violence of youngsters who divided everything into two opposites. The quarrels and fights were a spectacle to be watched from the stands at the back of the stage.

The contemporary appeal of the performance was mainly achieved through the Andalusian setting and elements that were used in the production. The Andalusian resonance and contextualisation was both stronger and more evident in *RomeoxJulieta* than in *Otelo*. Flamenco singing and dancing became an essential part of the performance. The flamenco music was composed and sung by Tomatito, a renown flamenco singer. It increased the tragic experience and frustration which originated in deep pain and sorrow, having much in common with Lorca’s *Blood Wedding*. Love was reduced to sex. Romantic love was turned into promiscuous sexuality. The charm and the innocence of the play were lost. It was as if only the joy of sex could remedy the pain of loss and death. Free sex for everyone seemed to be the case with a nude Julieta running from one side of the stage to the other, Lady Capuleto having a sexual affair with Paris, and Mercucho enjoying a homosexual relationship.

Paco Vidal’s *Troilo y Cresida* (2003) was the first production of the play in Spain. Shakespeare’s deeply tragic account of human nature, war, and the ravages of time and malice was turned into an enjoyable frolic of love and youth for youngsters.

As advertised in the poster it was an “epic, cheeky, amusing, sexy, heroic, laughable and tragic” adaptation of Luis Cernuda’s translation of Shakespeare’s play. The staging could hardly have been more radical with its setting of a Nazi concentration camp and its presentation of a dramatic universe where man was reduced to mere instinct as a consequence of the destructive nature of war and its corrupting effects.

Sex was the only possible way out from that tragic situation. This obsession with sex was best dramatised in the burning passion of Daniel Guzmán’s Achilles and Alicia Pascual’s Helena. She was dressed in stockings, with a suspender belt and wrapped in a red gown, as a lascivious woman with an insatiable appetite for sex. Thus the play became a drama of sexual perversion. Here, as Michael Foucault suggests, “the particular power of sexuality lies in the extent to which it operates as a challenge to language, to order, to limits.” (Foucault 49).

Calixto Bieito’s *King Lear* and Denis Rafter’s *Twelfth Night* were two of the most innovative and successful Shakespearean productions of the 2004 season. Again this obsession with the idea of the theatre as a form of provoking and challenging the audience was present in Calixto Bieito’s *King Lear* that was more a theatrical exploration of the character and universe of the king himself, played by José María Pou, than a dramatisation of the Shakespearean text (See Delgado).

Denis Rafter’s *Twelfth Night* took place on a bare stage. A box and a log were the only props. The box was a magic one. Once it opened, music played, and the set lights turned blue and red to take us to the imaginary country of Illyria, an idyllic forest where impossible dreams and encounters might come true. We were transported to that fairyland from the beginning of the performance when a blue linen sheet appeared on the front stage symbolising the sea. There was also something of the Platonic idea of Lindsay Posner’s RSC production of *Twelfth Night* (2001) in the sense that we are all split souls searching for a hermaphroditic unity.

The production, with a strong cast who played with vivid, piercing intimacy, highlighted the lyrical, joyful, and bittersweet poetry of the text. Gladys Balaguer’s Viola spoke verse beautifully with a gentle accent and a subtle grasp of lyrical formality. Her speeches to Olivia had a wonderful natural intensity. As always, Malvolio’s acting and characterisation are crucial to the staging of *Twelfth Night*. You have to make a choice: he is either a monster or a victim of his own fancy. Antonio Castro chose a third way: a victim acting as a monster. But Malvolio was not one of the highlights in Rafter’s production. The extravagant make-up and the smiles with waving arms with which he attempted to woo Olivia provided the comedy with its darkest shadows.

The production might have been more reverential towards the original music of the play. “If music be the food of love, play on...” requires something of its period rather than songs by Louis Armstrong –however inspired. Denis Rafter’s staging of *Twelfth Night* employed gimmicks, a frequent feature of American and British productions of Shakespeare; however their use requires judgement and moderation. Larks and monkeys appeared only to break the tension of the scene; at best they were pointlessly distracting.

Undoubtedly 2005 was *Richard III*’s year. Two productions (Manuel Guede’s for the Centro Dramático Galego and Àlex Rigola’s for the Teatre Lliure) and two adaptations (Chema Cardeña’s for Arden Producciones and Julio Fraga’s for Avanti) were staged in 2005. Its popularity and appeal might be due to the fact that “All plays about war and power, the main subject of the histories, became instantly relevant in wartime.” (Potter 450). The involvement of Spain in the war of Iraq, the threat of ETA, and the terrorist attacks in Madrid became a burning issue in Spanish life. The confusion and the terror had their dramatic counterpart in *Richard III*.

The two major productions of the Shakespearean play adopted a comic, ironic stance. They were mainly concerned with the potential of the play as spectacle. Playing with the play was their major interest. They tried to entertain the audience as if they wanted to make them forget the tragic events that brought chaos and despair to the country. They used comic and melodramatic elements to alleviate the radical, tragic, side of life. The tragic tone of the original play was reduced to make it more spectacular and entertaining as Richard appeared as the player-king. Sensational, violent, and musical elements gradually became an essential feature of these productions. They appealed to emotion as an alternative to overmuch thought about a situation involving terrorism and war.

The new production of Centro Dramático Galego emphasised two aspects of Shakespeare's *Richard III*: that the play abounded in comedy and that Richard was never more himself than when he was play-acting as a consummate actor. It was a wholly Galician production since the 15 actors were Galician, including Manuel Guede, the director, who had also translated the play into Galician. The opening of the play was seemingly intended to shock. Dressed in underpants and slippers Richard broke off his opening soliloquy. While an informal Richard was descending one of the two side staircases, the other characters were dancing to the music of mambo 11 as a reference to the people who would die. The popular song "Del Pita Pita Del", used to advertise Coca-Cola, referred to the kind of drowsy society of the play which was responsible for the ills dramatised. Such a passive, uncritical, and divided society was the cause of the tragedy of Richard himself. The production underlined that Richard was not the only one to blame for violence and terror.

The theatrical experiment with Xosé Manuel Oliveira "Pico" simply did not work. Playing Richard was not a suitable role for him. He was definitely not the actor to play such an evil and complex character despite Manuel Guede's intention of showing the bright side of Richard as a good and charming character. Much more interesting and innovative was the way Guede presented key scenes like the final fighting on the battlefield. This time the confrontation was dramatised as a television debate. The army leaders were more politicians than soldiers who voiced their complaints and tried to justify the war and explain their right to the English crown. The microphones could not stop the massacre of the war that was seen on different screens backstage.

Àlex Rigola's *Ricard III*, his latest Shakespearean offering as director, presented a new challenge to the staging of such a complex and intriguing play. It contained clear analogies with his earlier work: the corrosive political criticism, the appropriation and use of elements of popular culture, the use of microphones, and the profusion of images and music. For him, the text, translated by Salvador Oliva, was not as important as the idea of the play as spectacle, for lewd aesthetics prevailed over other considerations.

Rigola's production was intended to make spectators think about today's violence and war. He asserted in the programme notes that the play was set in a mad world where violence affects us in different ways. Rigola asked searing questions about how we were educating our families. This is made explicit from the beginning of the play, which opens with this Kant quotation, projected on the screen: "Man is what education makes of him".

It also provided a new departure, featuring a new location very different from the one used in his *Julius Caesar* (2002) with a more sophisticated and meaningful setting. The dramatic action was situated in a pub of the 1970s with a long red bar at the back of the stage. The lurid colours created an erotic and morbid atmosphere suitable for a mafia underworld where ambition for power and prestige justified all means and abuses. And Richard was the new Corleone who learnt that power was seductive and used his strengthening position to destroy those who were an obstacle to his dreams of political grandeur. The setting was reminiscent of Scorsese's *Casino* (1995) and

Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) to which Rigola was greatly indebted. This was the mafia kingdom of Pere Aquillé's Richard where drugs and alcohol were provided to offer full satisfaction.

Visual effects and images were used profusely throughout the performance (Delgado, *Plays International* 32). It was a complete visual spectacle. Rigola employed the visual resources with technical brilliance. Video recordings captured the actors on film and projected their images in real time on a large screen. A roving camera followed characters through the hidden corridors to show what was going on behind closed doors. Pop music also contributed to a visual and aural spectacle which transformed Shakespeare's play into a kind of Broadway musical. The tragedy of *Richard III* became light tragicomedy.

None of Shakespeare's plays of the 2006 season were anything like Lluís Pasqual's innovative productions of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, though the enterprise of putting the simultaneous staging of the two plays on with a single repertory company of twenty actors assembled for the project might have been too ambitious. Pasqual initially had the idea of presenting the new project at the Forum in Barcelona, but finally declined to do so considering that it did not match up to requirements. The idea was finally taken up when Pasqual accepted the artistic direction of the Arriaga Theatre that hosted the premiere of *Hamlet* on February 25 while the debut of *The Tempest* was on March 4.

The plays were put on separately, but with similar aesthetics, though the director himself recommended seeing *Hamlet* first and *The Tempest* after the break. In fact, the opening of *The Tempest* was part of the final scene in *Hamlet* that was performed on a bare stage with a staircase coming down into the stalls. Pasqual was concerned with violence and terrorism, making it clear that if we could not change the world, theatre could make us a little bit better.

Francesc Orell played Prospero, Eduard Fernández was Hamlet, and Marisa Paredes played Gertrude in a very convincing way after twelve years without stepping onto a stage. Music became an important part of the performance as it reinforced the sense of mystery and magic in the two plays. Both productions were put on in Madrid and Barcelona as they were also coproduced by Teatro de Madrid, and by Teatre Lliure and the Grec Festival in Barcelona.

2007 was a boom year for Shakespearean performances in Spain. Eduardo Alonso's *Romeo and Juliet* for Teatro do Noroeste, Tamzin Townsend's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Magüi Mira's and Ferran Madico's *The Winter's Tale* were some of the memorable productions of the season. However, Helena Pimenta's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the latest production of Ur-Teatro, was the most impressive theatrical achievement not only for the ways in which it used the play as a source for a series of arresting images of our troubled times, but for the singular clarity and force with which it rendered the psychological states of the play's chief characters. It was presented at the Palacio de Festivales of Cantabria in Santander on 21 December to celebrate its twenty years as a theatre group.

It was in 1987 when UR-Teatro presented its first Shakespearean production entitled *Xéspir* which consisted of extracts from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Coriolanus* and *Richard III*. This Basque group had always been very much concerned with the search for a particular dramatic language looking for new, meaningful, ways of delivering dramatic texts to a contemporary audience through a total theatre that included music and dancing as its productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1992), *Romeo and Juliet* (1995), *Love's Labours Lost* (1998), and *The Tempest* (2004) showed.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona has been neither frequently staged in Spain nor much appreciated by Spanish scholars. Helena Pimenta's production dramatized the love story of Proteus and Valentine with a touch of bitterness. They were best friends.

But love for the same woman came between them. The staging highlighted disloyalty and treason, and, in particular, the blunt rivalry of the two protagonists that was staged in a boxing ring.

The Milan court was brought to the 1920s with bizarre décor which showed a corrupt society where favours were given at random. Pimenta was concerned with the contempt of court and the charm of small cities. Verona and the true love of Julia contrasted with the corruption and depravity of the court and with the sophistication of Sylvia respectively. On the whole, it was a highly polished and consistently entertaining production, but there were times when an excess of effects was added to the play, sometimes in defiance of the text.

The *King Lear* of the Centro Dramático Nacional was probably the highlight of the 2008 season. Gerardo Vera's *King Lear* dramatized the end of a sort of middle class cracked by modernity in the 1940s. It was performed on a neutral, bare space, so that on stage there was only one arm-chair and a chair. Vera opted for the absolute vacuum as for him the production was mainly a work of interpretation. Mayorga's translation and adaptation retained the essence of the original play but with a contemporary look. Shakespeare's tragedy was concerned with base passions and forms of true love. It was a human microcosm where the innocent and the horrible were mixed up. The play was not only an encyclopedia of the human but also an encyclopedia of the theatre as it contained all genres and all styles. In today's world, where honesty and loyalty are quixotism, Lear, played magnificently by Alfredo Alcón at 78, was still wandering with his perennial philosophy and diagnosis of today's ills. It was a sign of our times, anticipating Tomaz Pandur's *Hamlet*, with Blanca Portillo as Hamlet, Carlos Aladro's *Measure for Measure*, and Andrés Lima's *Tito Andrónico* three of the major productions to be seen in the 2009 season. *La violación de Lucrecia* was the most acclaimed Shakespearean event in 2010. Miguel del Arco's production encompassed the bestial and the beautiful, brilliantly recounted and eloquently spoken by a consummate storyteller and actress like Nuria Espert. She played all characters on a bare stage where Sandra Vicente's music and Juanjo Llorens' light design greatly contributed to create an "space of violence and alienation". She, as Lucrece, mustered an astonishing depth of feeling and emotion. Her heartfelt enactment of this brutal narrative poem was moving, powerful and excellently delivered.

The Challenge for the Future

Spanish Shakespearean criticism does not end here. It is an ongoing process open to new interpretations in the light of contemporary Spanish culture for writers like Javier Marías and José Carlos Somoza; poets like Alfredo Gómez Gil; dramatists like Francisco Nieva; painters like Carmela García and Susy Gómez; and movie directors like Inés París rewrite and reproduce Shakespeare today in many different ways according to present anxieties and expectations.

The history of Shakespeare in Latin America is also part of our cultural history. In spite of obvious differences, Latin American countries share with us parallel appropriations of Shakespeare through translations and theatre productions, particularly in Mexico and Argentina. The work of Spanish scholars will be of great importance, especially as an interest in early modern imperialism and colonialism continues to forge new links between Spain and Latin America in the domestication of Shakespeare. It will help us to know more about our/their Shakespeare and to decentre the Eurocentric Shakespeare.

The study of cultural and literary relations between early modern England and Spain, represents a challenge for us now. It is time to look at Shakespeare and the Spanish dramatists of the Golden Age in order to know more about their similarities and

contrasts. Another urgent task is to look into theatre productions of Shakespeare's plays because criticism in this field is practically non-existent. It is most needed in order to complete the picture of Shakespearean studies in Spain. Thus Spanish scholarship can make a stronger, more sustained and relevant international contribution to Shakespearean studies in years to come.

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