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Shakespeare and Utopia

Guest editors: Delilah Bermudez Brataas
Magdalena Cieślak
Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik

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Volunteers won the 2010 Mitchell Award at the University of Texas, and subsequently made the long-list for the Dylan Thomas Prize in the United Kingdom. Alongside Karen Alvarado he is the co-artistic director of Thinkery & Verse, where he directed and performed in a four-actor "Much Ado About Nothing," toured Manhattan living rooms with "The Priceless Slave," and created "Bride of the Gulf," a transnational collaboration with artists from Basra, Iraq that toured to the 2018 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

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Introduction: "With Such Perfection:" Imagining Utopia through Shakespeare

It is a rare thing to think of Shakespeare and his plays without the utopian in mind, if only through a nostalgic idealization of literature, theatre, his stories and characters, or the author himself as the idol we may make of him. The utopian impulse for a better place, a better future or a better self is encapsulated in the comedies, while the tragedies may be regarded as hopeful in this respect as well. Retroactive hope is a recurrent motif and a source of resilience in a number of Shakespeare's works: after all, to hope for justice, redemption or love against the imperfect, disillusioned reality is a profound act, one that is shared by many Shakespearean characters. It is through hopeful moments of self-reflection and self-forgiveness that they may inspire a striving for a better version of individual and collective selves, while potentially providing us as readers and spectators with the strength to endure hardship and pain. Shakespeare on stage in particular inspires yearnings for a sense of unity and communal belonging created through shared theatrical experience.

Utopia is a concept, whose definition, origins and long cultural history have been given much critical thought (Claeys; Eagleton; Gottlieb; Jameson). The word itself is based on the ambiguity inscribed in the pun contained within its form since the time Thomas More used it in his seminal work *Utopia* (1516): "u-" "topos" means a non-place, while the alternative spelling is "eu-" "topos," a good place (Sargent 1-37). Thus, utopia is a notion caught up between the impossibility of, and the hope for, a better future: a social design for the

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betterment of humankind that remains elusive. As Fátima Vieira contends in "The Concept of Utopia," however, it is "to be seen as a matter of attitude, as a kind of reaction to an undesirable present and an aspiration to overcome all difficulties by the imagination of possible alternatives" (7). Nowhere is this attitude more visible than in the sphere of human learning, perceived already in Plato's proto-utopian *Republic* as a space, where human minds are formed, and moral values shaped. From the humanist perspective of the utopian politics of education and human betterment, this task is to be achieved predominantly through literature and especially the experience of the classics, with the notable example of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's poetry and dramatic works have been seen as a potent tool in the formation of the human intellect since Matthew Arnold placed Shakespeare in "unquestioning preeminence" in his introduction to T. H. Ward's influential *The English Poets* (1880), after which the Victorians carried it further, across disciplines and mediums, promoting the belief that "exposure to high culture like Shakespeare made you a better person" (Irish 2). The insistence on the pedagogical merits of including Shakespeare in the polysystem of translated literatures (Even-Zohar) has gradually led to the formation of literary canons around the world that included Shakespeare in the complex dynamics of intra- and interlingual, as well as intersemiotic translation (Jakobson). The utopian project of canonizing Shakespeare as a paragon of virtue (19th century) and a cultural icon (20th and 21st centuries), expressive of the universal human genius, has been undertaken by theatres as well, with bardolatry on the (translated) page and (adapted) stage sweeping all over the world since the 19th century.

With performance and enactment comes the desire to repeat oneself: to return, through recreation, to the utopia we may imagine once existed. With the commitment to authenticity in architecture and performance that embraces original practice, London's Globe Theatre is perhaps the most venerable concretization of the utopian Shakespearean impulse: a living testament to the utopic desire to reclaim the idealized Elizabethan stage. Similarly, adaptations galore that recreate either Shakespeare as author-character, or follow Shakespearean characters beyond the confines of their *hometexts*, have exploded in popularity across mediums and forms mobilized by our utopic desire to meet and commune with the Shakespeare we have idealized, or to materialize yet again the characters we ache to know.

With utopia, the search for the ideal has always led to a specific place; whether it is a constructed island given a map, a ruler and a language as in Thomas More's *Utopia*, or the theatrical stage, there must be a "there"—a location; after all, the *topos* of utopia requires spaces where it may manifest. Robert Appelbaum explores the details of Shakespeare's most literal utopia in *The Tempest*, and argues that Gonzalo's commonwealth relies, fundamentally, on the perspective of the utopist and their interaction with the concept of utopia, writing *in Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*:

> In order to want to occupy the position that Shakespeare shows Gonzalo wishing to occupy—one must first of all not be in possession of it. An ideal commonwealth can only come into existence—in the imagination, of nowhere else—because it is already not in existence. It is Not Here. It is Not Yet (48).

A utopist invents a utopia because of the absence of a space that is better than the real, and through the action of inventing that space the utopist “invents oneself, or at least re-invents oneself” by projecting outward the mastery of that ideal (48). Appelbaum notes, as Shakespeare suggests, that “the utopist inevitably confronts an insuperable gap between his creative practice and the object his practice has created” (48). The desire for transformation of the constructed ideal into a lived reality adds a temporal aspect to the striving for an ideal space. In *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth in Renaissance England* Christopher Kendrick argues that the early modern was indeed a critical historical nexus of change through which playwrights, in particular, demonstrated a specific expression of social progress:

> The situation of the playwright […] accounts for the very forming presence of a utopian impulse, for the routing implication of basic questions of human happiness and the habitually strong sense of blocked possibilities, in plays that have little expressly utopian about them. The situation in its complex transitoriness helps to explain how Marlovian and Shakespearian dramaturgies could make the late Elizabethan stage itself into something of a utopian machine (199).

Utopia then has been a flexible tool of representation for the theatre; in a way, “the stage was set” to produce and reproduce the utopian. However, Shakespeare’s plays, as Kendrick suggests, at times feel more utopian than Utopia as a political project allows, because they were written polyphonically, so that a plurality of voices resounds in them, and therefore it is “easy to find what one wants in them” (199). Theatre as a “utopian machine” has continued to provide utopian hope through reinvention, adaptation, translation, operating on the particular utopic value of Shakespeare, whose works accomplished this more effectively and transcendently than most.

The presence of the utopian impulse in Shakespeare’s works has already been discussed in Shakespeare and early modern studies in the English-speaking context (Boesky; Bulger; Campbell; Knapp; Kendrick; Leslie), *inter alia* by Brevik, whose focus is a historically-minded analysis of *The Tempest* against the background of modern political thought, and Huebert, who explores the role of utopia in Shakespeare within the changing environment of the early modern.

The Tempest has been most thoroughly discussed in relation to utopia, given it is the one play that contains a conventional utopia and is set on a magical island (Vaughan and Vaughan), yet we do find utopian thought, themes, and spaces, across Shakespeare's work, most notably in the single-sex spaces of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Measure for Measure*, the land found after a storm at sea of *Twelfth Night* as well as the pastoral idyll of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. It is in the infinite variety of stage adaptations and productions of Shakespeare's plays where we find their utopian potential—in the adaptability of his texts.

The stage and the myriad ways we reinvent it, has progressed to allow for an enclosed space of boundless possibility in which one can see whatever one wishes to see and in which rigid binaries may blur, even if only for a moment, in the here and now to create a sense of transient unity. It is from this premise that Jill Dolan developed her concept of "utopian performatives" in *Utopia in Performance* (2010), to define the moments in theatre that open up the audience to "a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking and intersubjectively tense" (4) and "allow fleeting contact with a utopia not stabilized by its own finished perfection […] but a utopia always in process, always only partially grasped, as it disappears before us around the corners of narrative and social experience"(6). A utopian performative in this context is a moment of empowerment that gestures towards a vision of a better reality and reveals an ethical dimension of the performance that has a potential transformative, if not political impact. The present volume tests out this proposition, to investigate the presence of the utopian impulse in Shakespeare's works in print and on stage in both English and non-English speaking contexts, to establish how Shakespearean "utopian impulse" is transmitted and transmuted in its diverse new forms.

The current special issue arose from this potentiality, and through the presentations and discussions that emerged at seminars held at the meetings of the European Shakespeare Research Association.[1] Over three conferences, we examined how Shakespeare's works contributed to the development of utopia as a genre, the ways in which Shakespeare's idealized presence as international, social, and cultural icon influences our contemporary understanding of utopian literature, and most vividly, the ways in which the utopian impulse has been created, staged, or critically engaged in theatrical productions of his works across centuries and continents; across cultures and languages; in print, on stage and in film. We further considered the impact of utopian literature and criticism on Shakespeare in performance. Investigating the utopian impulse in Shakespeare’s works, we found how that presence emerged as the influence of classical ideal spaces and the bourgeoning potential of the new world as a utopia.

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[1] "Staging Utopias: Shakespeare in Print and Performance" Seminar, ESRA Conference: Shakespeare and European Theatrical Cultures: AnAtomizing Text and Stage, 27-30 July 2017, Gdańsk; "'Something Rich and Strange': Remapping Shakespeare's Utopia" Seminar ESRA Conference: Shakespeare and European Geographies: Centralities and Elsewheres, 9-12 July 2019, Rome; "Shakespeare and the Nature of Utopia/Utopian Nature" Seminar, ESRA Conference: "The Art Itself Is Nature: Shakespeare's Nature/Art/Politics," 3-6 June 2021, Athens.

The Authors collected here approach Shakespeare and utopia from diverse perspectives, yet all oscillate around common themes that are poignantly relevant to this historical moment. Shifting between cultures and languages, as well as spaces and places, the articles collected in this volume flicker between performance and text. They are as timely as they are timeless, introducing reflections of Shakespeare both in Anglophone and non-Anglophone contexts. Anne Nichole A. Alegre’s article “To Make Dark Heaven Light: Transcending the Tragic in *Sintag Dalisay*” introduces us to a little discussed Asian adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*: Ricardo Abad’s *Sintag Dalisay*. Alegre documents not only the multiple sources for the Filipino poetic text, but the transformation of that text for the “intercultural stage” employing the music, movement, and spectacle of *igal* dance accompanied by music played on indigenous instruments from the variety of Philippine traditions. Alegre’s close reading of the subtle poetic expressions in scenes from the performance, aesthetic movement, and bodily expression of poetry, defines the ways this particular adaptation stages and presents utopian impulse in a way that transforms Shakespearean tragedy by simultaneously appropriating several mythologies. Furthermore, it provides a valuable discussion of the importance of physicality for Shakespearean utopian form.

Rowena Hawkins’ article “‘Hopeful Feeling[s]:’ Utopian Shakespeares and the 2021 Reopening of British Theatres” takes us in another direction and reminds us of the “here and now,” of the post-pandemic moment that has come to re-define our society on a global scale. The isolation and lockdown during Covid-19 led to a vast array of creative online performances from the readers’ theatre Zoom performances of *The Show Must Go Online* series which broadcast weekly readers theatre performances of Shakespeare’s complete works, to the explosion of digital screenings from theatres around the world. Hawkins transports us to the utopic moment when theatres reopened in 2021 and audiences cautiously emerged, eager to enter theatres, yet changed. She explores the hopeful moments generated by two performances, focusing on how the pandemic remained present, yet mitigated by the joyful hope of not forgetting, but incorporating, the dystopic real through textual adaptation and the aesthetics of stage and costume design. Most importantly, she reminds us of the society generated by theatre through audience involvement via her personal theatre experience and in the process she captures the utopian moment, saliently.

Archana Jayakumar returns us to the Asian Shakespeare adaptations in her “From Race and Orientalism in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to Caste and Indigenous Otherness on the Indian Screen,” which offers a detailed close reading of the 2012 *10ml Love,* an independent film in Hindi and English, following the lives of cosmopolitan youth in urban India. Jayakumar deftly presents how “two opposing political utopias” emerge and are consequently subverted in the film as it reveals, through strategic scenic design and language, the “tensions between the utopias at both ends of the political spectrum” through the “various marginalized social locations and identities across Indian society.” Though Shakespearean adaptations in Hindi cinema have recently been explored (Trivedi and Chakravarti; Sanders; Panjwani et al.), Jayakumar’s article sheds further important light on the rich cinematic traditions in India, which make ample use of Shakespearean source texts. Leaving Asia and the UK for the United States, John M. Meyer’s article brings us squarely in the presence of the uniquely coopted “prelapsarian poet” of the U.S., William Shakespeare, identified, as Meyer argues, as author of literature before “the institutionalization of colonial slavery” and thereby symbolically freed of the associated shame that literature of the United States necessarily bears. Questioning the space and place of Shakespearean performances, routinely idealized in outdoor performances yet located near or at sites “specifically tied to the enslavement and disenfranchisement” of people of African descent, Meyer insightfully connects location to text to reveal an “unexpected connection between the performance of Shakespeare in America and the subjugation of Black persons” which raises questions about “the unique and utopian assumptions of Shakespearean performances in the United States.” By asking where we perform Shakespeare and why, Meyer’s article questions the unique idealization of Shakespeare in the United States and how this translates into a problematic utopian endeavor. While Meyer explores how *where* we perform Shakespeare informs our understanding, Ronan Paterson’s article, “Utopia, Arcadia, and the Forest of Arden,” approaches textual idealization of place in *As You Like It*. From within the idealized pastoral realm of Arden, Paterson first questions the consideration and naming of Arden as a “forest,” and its various textual transformations and ambiguities. He then traces the ‘green world’ in English pastoral poetry and how it informed Shakespeare’s recreation of his own role as a utopist through his own yearning for a golden world. Just like Meyer’s, Paterson’s article offers a critical cultural and historical key to the “space” and “place” in utopian worlds through the lens of Shakespeare, his text, and how we perform them.

In his “Staging Dystopian Communities: Reimaging Shakespeare in Selected English Plays” Michał Lachman focuses on Edward Bond’s *Bingo* and Frank McGuinness’s *Mutabilitie,* and a recent reimagining of *Macbeth* in David Greig’s *Dunsinane* that create utopian spaces within Shakespeareana through the use of Shakespeare as character. His article carefully outlines how the utopic potential of Shakespeare includes textual reinvention, and how building “dystopian visions of contemporary communities or images of state and political justice” emerges profoundly in the “palimpsestic presence” of Shakespeare himself. Through three plays that link the dramatic movement of history from 1973 to 2010, Lachman traces how Shakespeare as a “cultural construct” is deployed as a means to understand contemporary political and social life through each play’s complex “dystopian vision” that nevertheless captures the visions of the “world apart” that is central to literary utopias. Following one specific adaptation and modernization of Shakespeare’s text, Magdalena Cieślak interviews theatre director, actor, and writer, Stratis Panourios, whose long history of working with Shakespeare in Greece led him to a provocative work, staging of *The Tempest* as “therapeutic theatre” at the Korydallos Detention Centre, Greece’s largest prison complex, located in Korydallos, Piraeus, in 2017. Staging Shakespeare in prisons is a familiar endeavor by now, even if that prison is only a frame for adaptation, as in the Donmar Warehouse’s all-female productions of Shakespearean “trilogy” that also included *The Tempest* with each play set in an imagined female prison which incorporated and enclosed the audience. Prisons call into question the many variances of utopia and dystopia, particularly envisioned through enclosure and concepts of freedom. No play does this more poignantly than Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. In this insightful interview, Cieślak discusses with Panourios his experience, revealing the challenges and decisions in developing and staging this engaging performance which was, at times, problematic. Perhaps most vividly, the experience revealed the continuing desire of the theatre practitioner to capture the utopian moment of hope in a space often associated with hopelessness.

Finally, Sibel İzmir article, “Transformative Potential and Utopian Performative: Postdramatic *Hamlet* in Turkey” returns us to the liminal space between utopia and dystopia; between the dystopian reality of Turkey’s recent catastrophic earthquakes, coming so soon after the now year-long brutal violence of the Russian war against the Ukraine, all in a world still reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic. İzmir’s article, revised for this issue in a Turkey definitively changed in the aftermath of the earthquakes, focuses on and analyzes a production of *Hamlet* directed by Işıl Kasapoğlu in 2014 for the Istanbul State Theatre, which challenged and deconstructed the traditional Shakespearean performances using post-dramatic theatre techniques to engage the audience with the “transformative potential” of the theatre. İzmir bravely connects the European thinking on the postdramatic theatre with Jill Dolan’s notion of the utopian performative, venturing to describe how to continue to use Shakespeare to generate utopia within a dystopian world through and in diverse, often clashing theatrical traditions, schools of thought and paradigms that might speak to one another, albeit indirectly.

In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Nataliya Torkut of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre appealed for continuing support for Ukraine in its ongoing defense of freedom, noting in conversation with Jessica Murphy that "Ukrainians need not only weapons but culture and art in order to survive the onslaught of war:" she insists on the "extreme importance" of reading Shakespeare, because, she states, "we need something that helps us feel that life is worth living" (online). The persistence of Shakespeare within even the most dystopic of spaces and times is, in itself, a utopic endeavor, as the Authors and the guest editors of this issue can amply attest. Shakespeare's oeuvre and cultural presence indeed become a "utopian machine" through which it is possible to imagine a world full of possibility, lived "with such perfection." The articles offered here critically re-examine the role of utopia and the utopian impulse in Shakespeare's works and its relation to the transformations that they have undergone in diverse places, through different languages and mediums. Not without a reason *Staging Utopias* suggests those ways of engaging Shakespeare in trying scenarios, in places and ways that might not seem familiar. This issue took shape during and emerged out of the pandemic, the war and natural disasters: these translate to the lived experiences of heartache, illness and loss. *Staging Utopias* has become, inadvertently, a witness to the spirit that will not be broken and a sense of togetherness that upholds us as Shakespeare readers in the hardest of times. We are deeply grateful to our Authors who persisted in their valiant undertakings: it is owing to their craft and determination that we can embark on a voyage into an undiscovered country: a reading mind that is like no other place. It is only through acts of reading, after all, that a textual utopia can momentarily be realized, when it is performed jointly, in a community united by a utopian impulse to learn from one another and "feel that life is worth living" (Torkut online). It is through reading, discussing and performing Shakespeare that the utopian can be glimpsed both in our lived experience and/or in textual worlds that we come to share, hopefully in peace. Let us continue to read—and reach to Shakespeare for the stuff of dreams.

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An Interview with Stratis Panourios

The interview has been conducted by
Magdalena Cieślak (University of Lodz, Poland)

Magdalena Cieślak (later as MC):
Let's start with a little bit of background for the project—both the workshops and the eventual production. Could you tell us what ideas and premises were the driving force for having *The Tempest* performed at the Korydallos Detention Centre?

Stratis Panourios (later as SP):
Let me start by indicating some thoughts and questions that I noted in my Director's Notebook, before selecting the field of Shakespeare (and his *The Tempest* later) for the workshop material.

I already knew the power of Shakespeare's texts in the reintegration of prisoners since I've had seen that they have been used in other prisons for many years. So, I started with some research questions: How can theatre be done in prisons? Why do we want theatre to become a thing in a prison? Can a theatrical group be created in prisons? Can team members without previous experience perform a classic text? Why Shakespeare in prison? In what area of the prison could such a demanding theatrical project be performed? How many performances would we give? To what spectators? What would be the translation of the work? Who would play the role of Miranda? What if she was a professional young actress? How could this be supported by the National Theatre? Who would be the costume designer, the set designer? When would we start and when would we end? Those were the questions that were being gradually answered over eight months.

I knew very well that if I asked any colleague, actor or director, if they could stage *The Tempest* with a group of prisoners who had never worked professionally in the theatre in about one hundred and eighty hours of rehearsals,

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the answer would be no. Even professional troupes would find it difficult to stage it in any theatre in such a short time. Especially in a prison. But the issue was not only to stage a play, but to stage this exact play with those actors and, of course, in that space.

The choice of Shakespeare wasn't incidental, because his most significant plays concern the study of his villains' psyche. Such plays give us the opportunity to become acquainted with characters who have committed crimes, who have overstepped all limits, legal as well … I felt that, by getting in touch with a Shakespearean play, all the participants would have the opportunity to compare, through acting, and each one for himself, their past experiences, their current choices and also their future potential.

MC:
Why did you decide to select a play by Shakespeare?

SP:
Who was Shakespeare? What do we mean when we say "Shakespeare"? Who can understand what Shakespeare writes? Who has the right to perform Shakespeare?

In the fourth workshop meeting, I mentioned the name of William Shakespeare for the first time and found that almost everyone had heard his name. Every person had their own references, so I realized that that English writer may have died four hundred years ago but his name and fame is so big that almost all the participants of the Theatre Workshop in the prison knew him. I also told them about the version of his name that can seem a nickname: "Will I Am Shake-speare"—I am the will, I hold a spear.

I asked if there were any of his plays in the prison library and immediately Nikos, the librarian, brought us twenty different works that for some reason were there. Until then, no one had sought them. My suggestion was that we all start studying these works together as single plays: that everyone would take a book and after reading it, in the next meetings, they would present it in their own way for the group. *The Tempest* was among the plays.

We then talked about how everyone felt about how the works were created and about the need to create this universal mosaic of stories. Suddenly, Shakespeare, the great writer, became more familiar and would become even closer to us the more we talked about him. We even imagined a dramatization of his life in relation to his works and talked about the films that have been made on this subject.

After a while, our team would present a version of the "Shakespeare Phenomenon:" an entire world, a universe of people, words and themes that could not but become the name of our group, "Phenomenon."

We also found that the so-called “villains” of Shakespeare, such as Richard III, Iago and others, were the most exciting to play. It is also interesting to see how the “outside” society rewarded the actors who played the villains, that is characters who, paradoxically, committed many unspeakable crimes. For example, a few years earlier an article commented on the performance of an actor: “Outstanding performance of Richard III in Epidaurus.” We discussed at length this particular case of duplicity of the society which, while imprisoning those who have committed wrongdoing, enjoys seeing such people on stage commit heinous crimes, and appreciates them in laudatory reviews. Theatre and life are, however, different things, but what does it mean that the most interesting dramas are built on villains?

MC:
What motivated your specific choice of *The Tempest*?

SP:
But what is *The Tempest*? We consist of a multitude of “Egos”, a number of different people who run scattered all around, pushing each other, creating storms at times. This is perhaps the inner life of a person, I thought, which at any time can calm down or break out into a storm. It is in this inner psychological space that we worked, in the inner storm of a human. From the beginning this was the exciting thing about this work, this thirst for the unification of one’s inner life. The decision was taken unanimously by everyone.

MC:
How did you decide to approach the rehearsals for *The Tempest*? How did you adapt the text and cast the roles? What were the choices that governed the design of the music, costumes, and setting?

SP:
Rehearsals began with lessons on the fundamentals of theatrical art: an introduction to the world of theatre and especially acting. At the same time, the members of the group read and presented plays by Shakespeare on a weekly basis. A small group was also created to edit Shakespeare’s poetic text and make the necessary adaptations. What has been added is an actual “release” at the moment when Prospero releases Ariel, a moment in the project that created a special emotion for everyone, participants and spectators. Regarding the distribution of the roles, the choice was made by the participants themselves after discussions we all had together. Costumes were chosen by the costume designer of the national theatre, Mr. Sakis Xaxiris. Our stage area would be the garden-island and our main and unique object in it would be the iron double bunk bed.

MC:
One of the central characters in your production is Gonzalo. Can you explain why this particular character is of such importance for your reading of the play? In what way are his ideas of a utopian state crucial for the social role of the project?

SP:
Gonzalo, as Shakespeare mentions him in the list of characters, is an honest old advisor from Naples, and I see him the same way. Although he was appointed to dispose of Prospero and Miranda at sea, he actually helped them survive, giving them water, food, clothes and books that Prospero considered important. He is the one who tries to calm the crew on board when the shipwreck occurs. He is the one who firmly believes that Ferdinand is alive. He is a positive thinker, who believes in the will of Heaven, one who is able to notice the miracle of the dry clothes of the shipwrecked. By giving him the "we split" lines on the ship,[1] we could treat him as a family man with a wife and children, and a brother as well. While both Prospero and Alonso have brothers, they do not resemble them, they are like snakes. On the other hand, Gonzalo is the only one who seems to have a great relationship with his brother, because when the boat sinks he says his goodbyes to him:

> GONZALO: We are sinking! Farewell, my wife and my children! Farewell, my brother! We are sinking!

These lines are not always attributed to Gonzalo, as it depends on the edition, but they compliment my interpretation of the character.

The issue of strife and betrayal between siblings is a common occurrence in prisons, and some of the participants had real problems with their siblings, who led them to prison for hereditary and financial reasons.

The moment of the shipwreck, as we discussed it in the workshops, is similar to the moment of an arrest by the police, where the person arrested is saying goodbye to his loved ones. It is the point of no return when one realizes that a peculiar death of sorts is coming.

Prospero identifies Gonzalo with Divine Providence, which he mentions to his daughter Miranda talking about the moment they were at sea:

> MIRANDA
> How did they get ashore?
> PROSPERO
> Divine Providence helped us: we had some food, some water, that a brave Neapolitan, Gonzalo… supplied us.

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[1] The director refers to the following section from act I scene 1: *A confused noise within:* "Mercy on us!"—"We split, we split!" "Farewell, my wife and children!"—"Farewell, brother!"—"We split, we split, we split!"

These lines from Vasilis Rotas' Greek translation of *The Tempest* gave us an opportunity to discuss the matter of fate. A question hovers among the detainees when they are in their cells. Is it fatal to go to jail? Could they do something so that their actions, and consequently their current life, were different?

We referred to Ioannis Stovaios who states in his anthology: "Things are done in four ways. Necessarily, by destiny, by choice or by will and by chance."[2] Dividing the facts of life along these four laws, many of the participants began to understand the mechanism of events that had led them to prison. They distinguished incidents that belonged to one of those laws. They saw that their seemingly fatal choices had been either random events or done necessarily and not at will. We found that the third law, of conscious choice, was rare.

The role of Gonzalo could well be played by an elderly prisoner philosophizing about life, with an experience of many years of incarceration. In our production, however, the role was taken by a young man, 35 years old, who maintained a very good friendly relationship with the man who played Prospero. It was their desire to play "friends" since they were also friends in the prison wing. Thus, they had time to discuss their roles and assist each other in learning the text. In the theatre, Prospero and Gonzalo may not even know each other and may have to imagine or create a friendly relationship during rehearsals, while in our case the friendship was a strong bond there at the beginning.

The participants are baptized again through the performance. For the duration of the rehearsals and their presence on stage, they are reborn. This is particularly visible in the participant who plays Gonzalo, as he becomes a different person, even if just for a few months. His inmates call him Gonzalo inside the prison. And during his famous monologue, when he says "And were the king of it, what would I do?", he becomes a king, president or prime minister of the country. After this monologue he cannot be himself, but he acquires respect and prestige, even if this is related to a theatrical monologue.

He is also given the opportunity to speak on behalf of all the prisoners to say that he imagines their own world, outside the prison. A world that is "upside down" or "opposite" to today's world. In the monologue, Gonzalo says: "I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries / Execute all things." In our rehearsals we pondered on whether this world should be the norm and not the other way around. For a moment we thought of replacing the word "contraries" but eventually followed the original. This verse opened a whole world to us. Through extensive discussions during rehearsals we achieved a connection between the world of Gonzalo and Platonic ideals.

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[2] This is an alternative transliteration of Stobaeus's name: Joannes Stobaeus, (Stobaeus, Iōannēs Stobaios or John of Stoboi), c. 500 AD, author of *Anthology* (*Florilegium*), a collection of works by other Greek writers—ed. AK-P.

Since the staging of our play not only involved rehearsals but also a lot of research, one of the participants took the initiative to guide us with a lecture, making an introduction to Plato's work *Politeia* or *Peri Dikaiou*. As a modern version of Socrates, a prisoner, he spoke to us about the importance of justice and how much happier a righteous person is from an unjust one. He spoke to us about the definition of justice, the structure of society, property and privacy, and philosophers-kings; he spoke about the allegory of Plato's Cave and the importance of the truth for different regimes; and about art, utopias and dystopias. Our room was transformed into the "Gallipoli" of the book and all of us into philosophers-kings. We could talk for hours and hours about the issues in Plato's *Politeia*, so we decided for the time being that maybe one of our future performances would have the theme of *Politeia*, where we could all study it thoroughly.[3]

As reference books and texts on the ideal state, we studied Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, written in 1516, presenting a story taking place on a strange island somewhere in the South Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South America. We could not help but associate Shakespeare with the reading of this book, making sure that the decision to link the prison to Prospero's Island was the right one.

This reading was followed by references to the Biblical Garden in Eden and the Protoplasts, Sir Philip Sydney's *Arcadia* (1580), a summary of Michel De Montaigne's *Of Cannibals* (1580), and we ended our study with texts written by the participants on the subject of their own vision of an ideal state. The adaptation of Gonzalo's monologue in our show was based on the texts by the participants.

The participant who plays Gonzalo had now the opportunity to talk about his ideal state, a world without crime and prisons. Until then, his voice was heard only in his apology in court, while now his monologue was addressed to the spectators. And the spectators are by no means jurors. On the edge of the stage, he was free not only to apologize but to share something very important: his own discovery and the thoughts of an ideal utopia.

His words are dominated by a big "if". "If" the world was different, maybe he would not have to be in prison, he would have the opportunity to live like other people. He would live a normal life and his childhood would be full of wonder and hope. Because in the conversations we had, we likened this time to childhood, which for most prisoners may have existed as an idealised state. In the rehearsals, of course, we experienced this through the joy of creation.

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[3] Following these discussion, a series of books on Plato's *Politeia* are now available for reading in the prison library.

MC:
You mention that you didn’t want to bring anything into the production from outside the prison. And yet, there is one critical outside contribution—the professional actress playing the role of Miranda. The role could have been played by one of the prisoners, considering that Shakespeare’s theatre only had men playing all the parts. What is the motivation behind your decision? How does Miranda’s presence contribute to the discussion of utopia in the production? Would it be possible to create a utopian space with an all-male cast?

SP:
The choice of a professional actress came to establish the theatrical utopia that was being built step by step. Her existence in the rehearsals for five consecutive months created a unique meeting of a utopian space of coexistence. She gave the team the concentration and the will to complete our course at all stages of the process. She was the official guest on the group trip bridging the life in the immobile dystopian world of the prison and the life outside. Each rehearsal was a potential visit from the outside world, a window through which they could gaze upon the life that would await them after their release. Here I remember Miranda’s words,

> Oh, wonder!
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O, brave new world
> that has such people in ‘t!

and the emotions they generated among the participants in the rehearsals as well as in the performances for the audience.

We do have an idea for a future show with an all-male cast. There is a thought to deal with plays by Aristophanes, who is more related to the Greek tradition and mentality.

MC:
How did the philosophical aspects of the discussions about law, justice, property and the organization of society in the utopian (dystopian) context, which started from the analysis of *The Tempest*, resonate with the participants of the play and become the key (like a protagonist) to the production?

SP:
Vasilis Rotas, in his introduction to his translation of *The Tempest*, the one we worked with in Korydallos, notes the following thoughts that have been a compass throughout our journey: “To hold power, to have been treated unfairly, to have the strength to punish, to hold the unfair in your hands and to

use your power only to forgive the unfair, to give them the chance and the way to rediscover themselves…”. Throughout the research period and the rehearsal process we worked along the path between opposites: storm—calm, revenge—forgiveness, island—land, theatre—life. Working towards bridging these opposites helped us tremendously in developing psychological and philosophical discussions that were used on our interpretation of the play.

MC:
How is utopia presented in the production?

SP:
During the rehearsals, I was looking for a main stage object that with its presence, use and functionality would be emblematic of our performance in this space. I did not want to bring anything from the outside, from the cellars of the National Theatre, or to build something especially for our performance. I had to think of an object that would be unique and would create different interactive spaces.

So, I started to observe and consider objects I encountered in various places, until I remembered again the stage instruction of the play at the beginning of the second scene: “In Prospero’s cell.” Then the idea of a bunk bed came to me. Yes, a bunk bed, this iron double bed, associated with prisons and the military, could symbolize the ultimate object of the show. What else can symbolize Prospero’s incarceration for twelve years on this island? And what else could connect our show with the prison itself?

In the rehearsals, I let this idea be tested by the participants. I think it is very important for the director to share with his actors the development of the project so that they can together move forward towards their goal. Indeed, the comments we all made together and the stories about life in the cell led to a unanimous choice of this particular object. For the prisoners, the bunk bed symbolizes the island of Prospero, the place where he spends most of his time. On the bed, he travels between past, present and future. It is an immobile object that has the innate ability to move the imagination.

The bunk bed also had many stage advantages. The actors could move on three levels: under the bed, on the first bed and on the top bed, sitting, lying down, but also standing. Also, with its four corners, it created other additional spaces of actions that would help our scenes, and its physical weight would give safety and stability to the actors’ movement.

Visually, nothing could compare to the bunk bed in the middle of the prison garden, placed in front of a tree. There, the bed transformed into an entity beyond imagination. The actors who climbed the bed seemed to be somewhere far away from that place, on a real island, young and free for a new life.

But the most important thing was that the prisoners who saw this object star in the show would miraculously see their own cells grow bigger; they would see them transformed in front of them into a vast garden and, thus, their life stories would come to life.

MC:
What is utopian in the Korydallos Detention Centre *The Tempest*?

SP:
The act of the performance itself. A group of twenty-five participants after eight months accomplished something that no one had imagined. People who until then had no direct connection with the theatre discovered Shakespeare’s poetry. They spoke in his words. They created new revelatory connections with life and theatre. In a way, they gave a gift to themselves, to those involved in the performance process, as well as to the audience. Through their actions, they freed theatre from all unnecessary things. From the arrogance of its elitist side. They called out the purpose of theatre’s existence and its truth. The spectators who came from outside to watch the show also experienced their own utopia. They would never have expected in their lives that they would see Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* inside a prison, inside the prison’s island garden. It was a lesson in freedom for all.

MC:
You see theatre as a medium of important social mission, one with immense potential impact on people. Could you comment on how the prison project demonstrates that power (role?) of theatre?

SP:
Theatre is a free and non-binding instrument of communication between people and societies through its aesthetic values. An instrument that always asks questions through the performance, both in reflections on the contemporary world, and in age-old questions about individual and social existence. It is an instrument that, after the performance, mobilizes the audience, giving either a signal of danger or an impulse for the regeneration of another world of values.

No adjacent theatrical form, like cinema or television, can mirror its essence and its mission because theatre is an art form realized by the presence of the person, the individual and the group together. Theatre itself uses human presence as a medium to create an arena of representation and confrontation of social values and human relations, essentially becoming the same as the dialectic of life. It is the bearer of dialogue, abolishing the monologue of the first poems about the god Dionysus. Thus, theatre historically expresses social changes and keeps the values of the historical periods in its form. The mission of theatre is to trouble the complacent as well as the anxious. The theatre itself as an artistic creation was the highest form of individual and social criticism.

It became the highest institution of dialogue, "tormenting" through on-stage performance the emotional and mental world of a human being, as well as the ideas, thoughts and perceptions of us as political and social beings. As Walter Puchner said in his speech about "Democracy, dialogue, theatre," "Dialogue, a delicate balance, which requires discretion, attention, tolerance, respect for the neighbor. It is a subtle value, the more complex and numerous society is. Dialogue means sociability; it is the basis of friendship, love, family, society, democracy".[4]

MC:
How do you see Prison Shakespeare's role in shaping potential dystopian/ utopian spaces for their inmates?

SP:
Nikos Kazanztakis, author of *Zorba the Greek*, travelled to England and wrote a book about his impressions, *From England: A Travel Journal by Nikos Kazantzakis*. In the long chapter on Shakespeare, he says: "An infinite spirit, from the depths of hell to the summit of Paradise. If the whole of humanity was to send a single representative to speak for its rights before God, it would send him. He is also the only one who could represent our planet at some giant interplanetary conference. No one ever used human speech with such power and at the same time such sweetness as Shakespeare, with such harshness and at the same time such melody and so magical an aura" (p. 261).

Through his plays, Shakespeare creates dystopic or utopic spaces and worlds but not just happy places. He enters into the participant's inner world, which is reflected in his own experience of the above worlds and in reality. Through the power of his transformative ideas he creates a context which allowed the participants of the theatre workshops to search where they came from, where they are now—in prison—and where they wish to be when they go out of the prison. There are many emotions and intellectual wealth in Shakespeare's plays, and through *Universal Dramatic Actions* his work can touch and affect every aspect of human relations. His work, therefore, is capable of replacing the perspective of the participants through the transformation of their dystopian everyday life into a projection of their own personal utopias, which each of them would like to build in the now, in before and after, in the future. So *the Utopian world of reintegration* no longer seems to be far away from them, or impossible, but seems real and possible.

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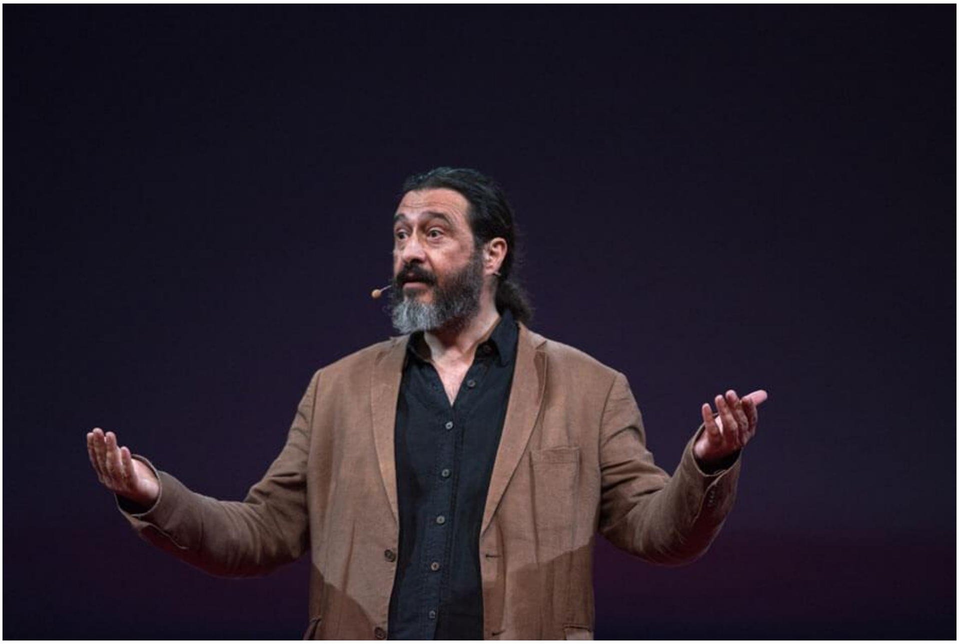
[4] The quote in Stratis Panourios's translation, see: Walter Puchner, «Δημοκρατία—Διάλογος—Θέατρο» [Democracy—dialogue—theatre], Α. Αλτουβά / Κ. Διαμαντάκου (επιμ.), *Θέατρο και Δημοκρατία. Με αφορμή τη συμπλήρωση 40 χρόνων από την αποκατάσταση της Δημοκρατίας. Αφιερωμένο στον Βάλτερ Πούχνερ. Πρακτικά Ε΄ Πανελλήνιου Θεατρικού Συνεδρίου (5-8 Νοεμβρίου 2014)*, 2 vols., Athens 2018, vol. I, pp. 55-9—ed. AK-P.

Theatre allows introspection that can change your way of thinking and ultimately let you escape to discover a new you. It is not incidental that next to Asklipieio of Epidauros, at the sanatorium of the body, there also existed a theatre, the sanatorium of the soul. Theatre enters the psyche of an individual, influencing their feelings and thoughts, and essentially making a remarkable difference to both. In a single word, I would say that it can produce a “psycho-metamorphosis.”



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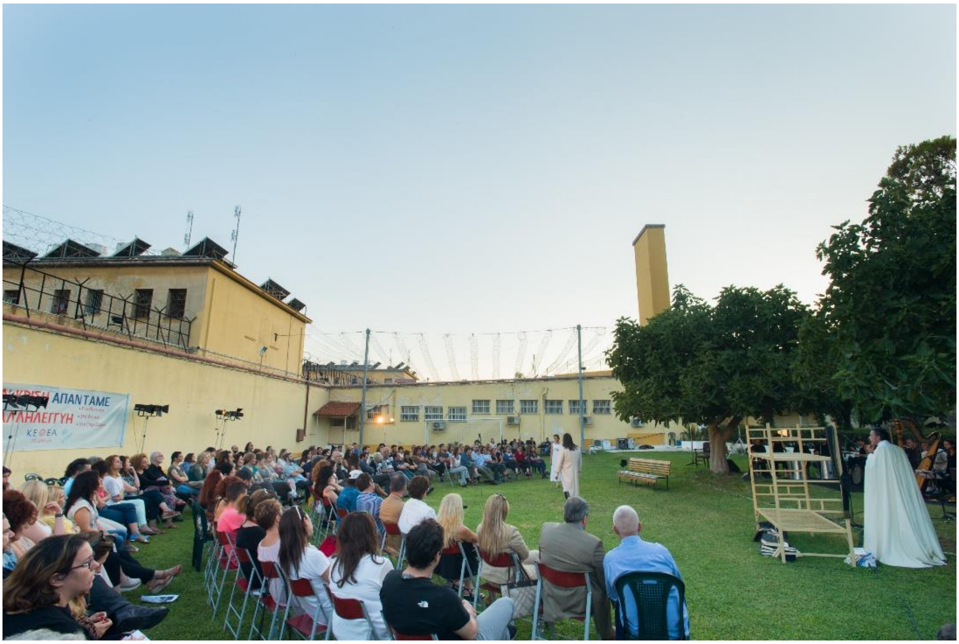
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"To Make Dark Heaven Light:" Transcending the Tragic in *Sintang Dalisay*

Abstract: Directed by Ricardo Abad and choreographed by Matthew Santamaria, *Sintang Dalisay*—a Filipino adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*—is often lauded for its use of the *igal* ethnic dance of the Sama-Badjau, a Muslim tribe located in the southern region of the Philippines. It depicts Rashiddin and Jamillia's star-crossed love amidst a violent and ancient feud between their families. This paper discusses the process and product of interweaving performance traditions and cultures in *Sintang Dalisay* and how the adaptation transforms Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from tragic to utopic. It does so in two aspects: the kinesthetic and the mythic. First, the use of the *igal* dance motif expresses and unearths the play's inherently religious and celestial language. Second, the appropriation of Asian myths or beliefs—particularly of Chinese and Filipino origins—transforms and transcends the tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet's deaths.

Keywords: Shakespeare and adaptation, Filipino reception of Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations, genre transformation, global Shakespeare.

The adaptation and appropriation of Shakespeare onto the Asian stage is necessarily and ontologically intercultural. This is true not only because of Shakespeare's transformation into "non-European theatre forms, languages, and cultures," an oversimplification bemoaned by Poonam Trivedi in her introduction to *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia* (17). Such rudimentary understanding limits intercultural Shakespeare into an exercise of polarities and binaries and diminishes the theatrical text as a diorama confined to mere optics. The collection *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys*, edited by Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick, and Poonam Trivedi, also mentions the pitfalls of seeing intercultural Shakespeare as "exotic marvels in a 'show and tell' mode" (Lei 3). Shakespeare in the hands of Asian heritages demands a reconstitution of meaning and value,

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which is achieved by the performance as both a process and an end-product. As Fischer-Lichte demonstrates in *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures*, "there is always also a political angle to [the] aesthetic" (10). Yukio Ninagawa's 2006 *Taitasu Andronikunasu,* for example, had successfully mounted a *Titus Andronicus* fully translated into Japanese but performed on a British stage under the Royal Shakespeare Company. The choice of a Japanese aesthetic and language on a British stage, sponsored by a British institution, bespeaks the "inextricable link" of the aesthetic, the political, and the ethical (Fischer-Lichte 10). In addition, the collaborative process with Thelma Holt and Ninagawa's engagement with Peter Brook's 1955 adaptation of *Titus Andronicus* are processes that can reveal intercultural theatre's "utopian and transformative potential" (Fischer-Lichte 10). It has re-imagined a bloodless and violently beautiful *Titus Andronicus* and underscored the value of Japanese-language in Shakespearean theatre-making.

The works of Ricardo Abad do similar intercultural work for Shakespearean adaptations in the Philippines "by framing the plays in Philippine history, using Philippine theatrical/performance traditions, and addressing its undeniably colonial past and its postcolonial present"[1] (Ick, "And Never" 184). Such a practice gives the opportunity to stage utopia, in which categorical differences of style, forms, and even genre are transcended or "re-played" on and through the stage. Utopian performatives,[2] as Jill Dolan suggests, "spring from a complex alchemy of form and content, context and location, which take shape in moments of utopia as doings, as process, as never finished gestures toward a potentially better future" (8). Fischer-Lichte calls the utopian dimension "the very core of the concept of interweaving performance cultures" (11). And such concepts of utopian performatives are undeniably found in and exemplified by Abad's *Sintang Dalisay,* first staged in 2009 as a workshop production and choreographed by MCM Santamaria. The process and product of interweaving performance traditions and cultures in *Sintang Dalisay* transforms Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from tragic to utopic. It does so in two aspects: the kinaesthetic and the mythic. First, the use of the *igal* dance motif expresses and unearths the play's inherently religious and celestial language. Second, the appropriation of Asian myths or beliefs—particularly of Chinese and Filipino origins—transforms and transcends the tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet's deaths. Before an in-depth discussion on each aspect, necessary background context must be provided about *Sintang Dalisay*'s source texts and performance text.

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[1] In "And Never The Twain Shall Meet?" (*Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*, Routledge, 2010), Judy Ick first discusses the "colonial baggage" that comes with Shakespeare's position in the Philippines. She then discusses several performances directed by Ricardo Abad who is "easily the most thoughtful and prolific Filipino director working on Shakespeare in the Philippines in the past decade" (184). Where most esteemed university theatre groups choose to perform Shakespeare in its original language, and always with some air of reverence, Ricardo Abad confronts this colonial baggage. Performances include *The Merchant of Venice* (Ang Negosyante ng Venecia) performed as a *komedya* (a Filipino genre inherited from Spanish literary tradition), *Twelfth Night* (Ikalabingdalawang Gabi: Kung Ano'ng Ibigin) where Illyria is transposed into a fictional Southeast Asian island, *Taming of the Shrew (Ang Pagpapaamo sa Maldita)* which adapts the play into the context of the American Colonial Period, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which incorporated elements of Bollywood and Filipino *fiestas* (community festivities celebrating their local patron saint's feast days).

[2] In the introductory essay of Dolan's *Utopia in Performance*, she specifically uses the term "performative" as a noun or name that pertains to performance that "calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (5). The term emphasizes how performances are active "doings" or on-going processes that seek to present a utopic world.

The Text, the Tune, and the Theatre: a Background

One of the source texts of Ricardo Abad's *Sintang Dalisay* is itself a story of intercultural textuality—a "pastiche" in the words of Judy Ick in her essay "The Undiscovered Country".[3] First published under the authorship of G.D. Roke, *Ang Sintang Dalisay ni Romeo at Julieta* is a 1901 *awit,* a genre of Filipino metrical poetry that developed from the Catholic religious tradition of singing the *Pasyon* or the story of the Passion of Christ. Ick cites Damiana Eugenio who had identified multiple sources for *Sintang Dalisay,* namely "the Italian Mateo Bandello's '*Romeo e Giulietta'* (itself derived from Luigi Da Porto's *novella Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti*), William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, and Arthur Brooke's '*The Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet*' (both derived from a French re-telling of the tale in Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires Tragiques*)" (Ick, "The Undiscovered Country" 9). Roke's *awit,* therefore, takes four Western sources of the Romeo and Juliet story and uses a local poetic form to appropriate the story for a Filipino market. Such change of form also entailed additions and subtractions in content. The author's choice to lengthen and romanticize the death scene[4], for example, is "most apropos to its presumed Filipino readership. It dramatizes and highlights the moment of the *sawi na pag-ibig*. Doomed, tragic, thwarted, forlorn, unfortunate, ill-fated love, the term *sawi na pag-ibig* has no direct translation into English yet is at the heart of Filipino literary traditions." (Ick, "The Undiscovered Country" 10).

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[3] For the detailed textual history of G.D. Roke's *Ang Sintang Dalisay,* see Judy Ick's "The Undiscovered Country: Shakespeare in Philippine Literatures" (*Kritika Kultura* 21/22, 2013/2014).

[4] The scene is best described in Judy Ick's essay: "Juliet awakens in time to find Romeo in the tomb but only after he had already drunk the poison creating the opportunity for a melodramatic farewell scene where death is held in dramatic abeyance only long enough for our lovers to bid each other their tearful goodbyes. In this case, "long enough" takes all of forty stanzas (not counting all the ruminations on the nature of tragic love that follows the double suicide)." ("The Undiscovered Country" 10).

But Roke's poem is not the only source text used by director and writer Ricardo Abad. The *awit* after all is a form that is not suited for the stage and is written in a language that is no longer comprehensible to the modern Filipino audience. Abad, with co-writer and translator Guelan Luarca, had to first simplify the language of Roke's *awit* and use another text: Rolando Tinio's *Ang Trahedya ni Romeo at Julieta*.[5] In "The Ten Mats of *Sintang Dalisay*," Abad described the performance text to be an "intertext" of Roke, Shakespeare, and Tinio, writing that "Roke gave us the poetry; Shakespeare in translation gave us dramatic structure" (7). It might also be added that Santamaria's field work and research of the Sama-Bajau culture gave the text its distinctly Moro-Islamic lore, so that "Romeo and Juliet […] now become Rashiddin and Jamila. Capulet and Montague become Kalimuddin and Mustapha. Verona is now Semporna, and Mantua, Romeo's place of exile, is now Dapitan, an allusion to Jose Rizal's place of exile in Mindanao" (Abad and Santamaria 25). The entire process of translating and adapting the tragic love story onto the intercultural stage is detailed in Guelan Luarca's essay, "Ang *Sintang Dalisay* bilang Tsapsuy at Halimaw ni Dr. Frankenstein" (*Sintang Dalisay* as Bricolage and Dr. Frankenstein's Monster). Luarca describes the performance text to be an amalgam of Roke, Tinio, Shakespeare, Abad, Luarca, and Santamaria, so that through the final product "the canonical text of Shakespeare, once a colonizing apparatus of American education, is now decolonized through an intense, tedious, and sometimes even haphazard weaving [of these different sources]"[6] (Luarca 91).

The performance text, of course, is only one slice of the cake. The transformation of Shakespeare's tragic play on the intercultural stage is not only a matter of textual translation or amalgamation, but also one of spectacle. Abad and Santamaria describe *Sintang Dalisay*'s use of *igal* as the production's "centrepiece." In their essay, "Localizing Shakespeare," Abad and Santamaria explain that the choice of costume, music, movement, and song accorded with the decision to use *igal* as a dance motif.[7] *Igal* is described as a "dance tradition of the Sama or Sinama-speaking peoples of maritime Southeast Asia. The postures and gestures of this dance are quite comparable to that of Thai, Khmer, Javanese, and other classical genres of Southeast Asia" (Abad and Santamaria 27). For the production, Santamaria, with the help of the Sama-Bajau Masters from Tawi-Tawi,[8] developed a theatrical *igal* that served to "(1) facilitate the formation of character, (2) underscore the presence of a struggle or conflict, and (3) outline a plot from exposition to climactic break and resolution" (33). The choice of *igal* led to a musical ensemble that is composed of indigenous instruments from different locales of the Philippines, including the *agung* and *kubing* (Mindanao), the *gangsa* and *patanggkuk* (Cordillera), and the *kuribaw* (Cagayan), and of course the *kulintang* or gamelan (De La Cerna 95). The ritual excess of *igal* also redounded to the bright and colourful costumes of the production. Styled and designed by National Artist Salvador Bernal, the Mustaphas (Montagues) wore hues of blue and the Kalimuddins (Capulets) wore shades of red. The set, however, was left almost bare "save for a sculptural piece suspended at the centre, one that echoed the frame of a traditional house in Sulu"[9] as a contrast against the festive colours of the dress and the sonic intensity of the music.

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[5] Unlike Roke in *Ang Sintang Dalisay*, Rolando Tinio (1937-1997) translated Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as "Ang Trahedya nina Romeo at Julieta" directly from English to Filipino. While it retained the dramatic five-act structure, Thomas Chaves in his essay "Thou Art Translated" describes Tinio's translations to have "used their own cultural agency to familiarize for Filipino readers or audiences what otherwise would have been distant, alien, or strange" (345).

[6] Luarca's essay is written entirely in Filipino. The original passage reads: "Ang kanonigong teksto ni Shakespeare, na ginamit bilang aparato ng Amerikanong edukasyon at pananakop, ay nakontra-sakop sa pamamagitan ng marubdob, mabalasik, at masasabi pang *pabayang* pagpapatse-patse." (91).

Because of the intertextuality of the performance script, the spectacle of the *igal* as a dance motif, and the use of indigenous music and dress, *Sintang Dalisay* emerges as a performance adaptation that does not merely interpret Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It is a performance that resonates with Linda Hutcheon's theory that an adaptation is "an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (7), "a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" (8), and finally "a form of intertextuality" (8). The creators of the performance script and director Ricardo Abad acknowledge the multiple source texts used in shifting the Romeo and Juliet story from the medium of text/s to the medium of the stage using different theatrical traditions. The process involved a lot of intertextual experimentation that even audiences may recognize and draw connections from. This shift in medium also necessitates reinterpretation and recreation, which *Sintang Dalisay* as a performance brilliantly accomplished by its appropriation of the local cultural practices and traditions of the Sama-Bajau tribe, combined with other performance traditions in Southeast Asia and parts of the Philippines.

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[7] For a discussion and description of *igal*'s ritualistic use, especially in social contexts, see "Localizing Shakespeare as Folk Performance" by Ricardo Abad and MCM Santamaria in *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia* 10.1 (2020): 17–66. Abad and Santamaria detail how the Sama-Bajau tribes perform *igal* as a solo tradition in festivities, weddings, and local gatherings.

[8] Tawi-tawi is a small island in Southern Philippines where the use of ritualistic *igal* had been preserved. Santamaria's fieldwork and research had led to genuine encounters with the local *igal* dancers in the region. These local artists later on participated in the production of *Sintang Dalisay* as instructors to the actors and players of the performance.

[9] A detailed description of the costume, stage, and production can be found in Abad's "The Ten Mats of *Sintang Dalisay*; or, How Romeo and Juliet Became Rashiddin and Jamila" in *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia* 10.1 (2020): 03–13.

And yet the appropriation of such cultural practices and traditions—from dance to costume to music—does not, of course, claim authentic representation of cultural groups and locales. Martin Orkin writes that "even if theatre practice inevitably appropriates cultural practices, discussion of the use of dancing or any other ritual related device need not be restricted merely to this particular discursive concern with 'authenticity' or 'commercialism' in the representation of a hypothesized 'other 'and an alleged 'primitive'" (49). After all, it is not the aim of *Sintang Dalisay* to be an authentic representation of either the Sama-Bajau tribe or William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead, the production, interweaving performance traditions, attests to how "the meanings of Shakespeare's works (and of Shakespeare the author) can constantly respond to the needs, fantasies, preoccupations, and conflicts of the moment" (Lanier 230). The source text itself, G.D. Roke's *awit*, is a reworking of Shakespeare's play in order to accommodate the needs and sensibilities of a Filipino readership. Indeed, the process of creating the performance text—what Luarca called *tsapsuy* or Dr. Frankenstein's monster—had also been borne out of the impulse to decolonize Shakespeare. And the appropriation of Romeo and Juliet into a Moro-Islamic context had been a response to strained Christian-Muslim relations in the Philippines.[10]

In the same vein, Erika Fischer-Lichte writes that intercultural theatre has a utopian dimension in that "processes of interweaving performance cultures can and quite often do provide an experimental framework for experiencing the utopian potential of culturally diverse and globalized societies by realizing an aesthetic which gives shape to unprecedented collaborative policies in society" (11). The production process of *Sintang Dalisay* was experimental in its use of theatrical *igal* and total theatre,[11] and the rehearsals reveal that collaborative exchange between the Sama-Bajau and the Manilenyo performers is not only possible but is also transformative. Abad and Santamaria write that "*Sintang Dalisay* was a modest attempt to achieve mutual solidarity between two specific groups, Muslims and Christians, via a process of collaborative intercultural theater-making" (88). The attempt, modest as it seems, demonstrates the ability of theatre and performance to present "what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized" (Dyer 20). It has certainly woven a sense of community between the two groups of performers, whereby the Muslims teach their traditions and heritage to the predominantly Christian actors and ensemble. In a sense, the reconciliation of the Mustaphas and Kalimuddins becomes a metaphor for the collaborative work prompted by *Sintang Dalisay*.

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[10] A section in Abad and Santamaria's "Localizing Shakespeare" is dedicated to an exposition of the current state of Muslim-Christian relations in the Philippines, a relationship that is not only rooted in religious differences but also in geopolitical and social tensions. In this section, Abad and Santamaria also discuss its effects on the Sama-Bajau tribe of Tawi-Tawi.

[11] Julian dela Cerna describes the philosophy of Erdu Abraham in the essay "The Music of Erdu Abraham: An Openness in *Sintang Dalisay*" in *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia* 10.1 (2020): 93–97: "Total theater, for example, has been around in

As will be discussed later, the incorporation and interweaving of cultures create an important site of utopia as *Sintang Dalisay* is able to contain "small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (Dolan 5). In the following section, what Fischer-Lichte calls the "aesthetic which gives shape to unprecedented collaborative policies in society" is analyzed in *Sintang Dalisay*'s deliberate employment of the *igal*.

Kinesthetic: the Use of *Igal* as Dance Motif

The focus of the essay is how *Sintang Dalisay* is able to transform the tragic and transcend into the utopic by interweaving performance traditions. As discussed in the previous section, the use of *igal* is central to the production and is also largely what had captivated international viewers despite the language gap. This section will detail a close reading of two scenes from *Sintang Dalisay* as archived in A|S|I|A[12] and how the language of *igal* as a dance motif captures and aestheticizes the inherently religious and celestial language of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The two scenes are "Ang Sayaw ng Mga Bituin" (The Dance Celestial) and "Pagpupulot-gata ni Rashidin at Jamila" (Rashiddin and Jamila's Wedding Night). Prominent dance researcher and scholar, MCM Santamaria,

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the indigenous communities and was even the mode of theater in neighboring cultures, such as the Beijing opera. Our modern plays, perhaps by dint of habit and practicality, have relied on individualized roles for the troupe, with each member being delegated with a particular task in a production" (94).

[12] A|S|I|A is an online archive of Asian performances of Shakespeare's plays. A recorded version of *Sintang Dalisay*'s 2011 performance is archived on the website. This is what the paper uses to analyze and close-read the two scenes from the play.

maps out a vocabulary of Sama *igal* dance terminology in his essay "From Tortillier to Ingsud-Ingsud".[13] His work is essential to the discussion of these scenes in *Sintang Dalisay*. In this section, *igal* dance terminology will be introduced as each scene is described, interpreted, and analysed.

The Dance Celestial in *Sintang Dalisay* takes the place of the Capulet ball in Shakespeare's Act 1, Scene 5, when Romeo and Juliet first meet. As in the tragedy, the performance also situates the first meeting of Rashiddin and Jamila within a community festival organized by the Kallimudins (Jamila's clan). Somewhat resembling a dance mixer or a waltz, actors exchange partners as they dance the *igal* to a fast-paced indigenous tune, heavy on brass percussions and local wind instruments. The music slows down and the lighting dims when Rashiddin and Jamila meet. What used to be an 18-line dialogue of iambic pentameter between the star-crossed lovers is now transformed into a wordless dance.

Both Rashiddin and Jamila's movements are united by the constant use of the *limbai* and *tau't-tau't* in the upper body, and the *ingsud-ingsud* of the feet. *Limbai* is described by Santamaria as a "movement that evokes the swaying of coconut fronds. Arms are raised and lowered alternately at the sides with the elbows leading with wrists following in articulation of wave-like motion either at the hip, shoulder, head, above the head levels" and the *tau't-tau't* is "the act of over-extending the elbows, thus once again evoking the motion of waves" (125). Meanwhile the *ingsud-ingsud* "is the lateral movement of the feet executed through a shuffling movement through the ball and the sole of each foot" (126). Taken together, the dancer or dancers resemble the delicate treading of fisherfolk on a boat to maintain balance and footing, so as not to fall off into the sea.

Although both Jamila and Rashiddin use these three movements, there are certain gestures that characterize each character during the dance celestial. Rashiddin's opening movements, for example, can be distinguished by the repeated use of the *kidjut-kidjut*, or "the jerking movement of the shoulders which may be done alternately or in unison" (125). The gesture is jumpy and agile, and is almost like a shudder of amazement, shock, or surprise. This sets a visual contrast to Jamila's slender *limbai* arm movements. One may recall Romeo's lines in Act 1, Scene 5:

> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:

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[13] MCM Santamaria's essay "Totillier to Ingsud Ingsud: Creating New Understandings Concerning the Importance of Indigenous Dance Terminology in the Practice and Kinaesthetics of the Sama Igal Dance Tradition" is a thoroughly comprehensive description and compilation of *igal* dance terminology. In this essay, Santamaria gives a system and a structure to the *igal* dance tradition. Such a task has allowed for the formal study of the use if *igal* in performance and rituals.

> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
> (1:5:91-95)

Rashiddin's *kidjut-kidjut* as he approaches Jamila is an effective visualization of his flirtatious excitement just before his "unworthiest hand" touches Jamila's "holy shrine." But Jamila does no such movement in the duration of the dance celestial. After all, Jamila is not the pilgrim, but is herself the shrine. Jamila's opening movements can be characterized by abundant use of varying *kello'-kollek* hand positions and *hendek-hendek* leg movements. *Kello'* is "the act of rotating the palm at the wrist in an outward direction, fingers ending in a position pointing downwards" (125), and *kollek* is "the reverse of kello'. The palm is rotated at the wrist in an inward direction, fingers ending in a position pointing either upwards or to the sides" (125). The *kello'-kollek* is then a combination of the two movements in varying successions and combinations. The *hendek-hendek* is the "the upward and downward movement of the body in place or while turning around using an ingsud-ingsud movement" (126). The *kello'-kollek* suggests a kind of beguilement and teasing. Will Jamila accept Rashiddin's advancements openly, or will she shun the good pilgrim? There is also a certain coyness in the *hendek-hendek,* perhaps recalling Juliet's coy response to Romeo:

> Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this,
> For saints have hands that pilgrims 'hands do touch,
> And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss
> (1:5:96-99)

It is also certainly interesting that many of Jamila's arm positions are held and maintained in the higher areas of her body. At one point in the dance celestial, Rashiddin lowers himself on one knee and Jamila places her foot on Rashiddin's leg. In Abad and Santamaria's essay, they describe how this choreography came about: "Calsum Telso, our lone female master, suggested that the female dancer should lead in this part of the dance. The female dancer does this by taking leave of the present male dance partner for the next one by nudging the male dancer's thigh with her right foot" (35). This is a modification to *igal mag-iring* or dancing by pairs. The choreography puts Jamila in a visually higher position than Rashiddin throughout the dance. It is a creative interpretation of how Juliet gives the instructions on how Romeo might kiss her. The choreography is also a captivating way to aestheticize Shakespeare's pilgrim-shrine metaphor, with Rashiddin half-kneeling and Jamila looking downwards as though on a pedestal.

Sintang Dalisay, of course, did not make use of the pilgrim-shrine metaphor in its translation. But the spirit of Shakespeare’s dialogue is visualized in the use of *igal*. Rashiddin’s *kidjut-kidjut* captures the excitement of an unworthy pilgrim, Jamila’s fluid *kello’-kollek* with *hendek-hendek* visually represents Juliet’s suggestive coyness, and the modified *igal mag-iring* of Rashiddin and Jamila aptly represents their pilgrim-shrine roles.

If the Dance Celestial transforms Shakespeare’s lines into motion, the Wedding Night draws from an event in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* that is merely implied. In the play, Shakespeare does not write the scene where the star-crossed lovers consummate their marriage. Instead, there are two scenes in which Juliet and Romeo each express their desire of sexual union using celestial and heavenly imagery. In Act 3, Scene 2, Juliet expresses:

> Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaways ’eyes may wink, and Romeo
> Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen.
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
> By their own beauties;
> … . . . .
> Come, civil night,
> Thou sober-suited matron all in black,
> And learn me how to lose a winning match,
> Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
> (2:2:5-9, 10-13)

Juliet impatiently waits for night to arrive so she and Romeo may perform “their amorous rites.” In these lines, she asks the all-black night sky to teach her how to lose her stainless maidenhood. Later, it is in the backdrop of this night that Juliet fantasizes about the feeling of sexual ecstasy, contained in the image of Juliet’s “death”[14] and Romeo’s fleshly disintegration into “little stars”:

> Come, gentle night, come, loving black-browed night,
> Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die
> Take him and cut him out in little stars,
> And he will make the face of heaven so fine
> That all the world will be in love with night
> And pay no worship to the garish sun.
> (3:2:20-25)

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[14] In the Arden Shakespeare endnotes, Juliet’s lines are explained to depict sexual ecstasy: “Sexual ecstasy may be suggested by a firework of little stars and Juliet’s eager anticipation of her wedding night” (Weis 728).

If Juliet is preoccupied with the idea of sexual and virginal surrender, Romeo's lines in Act 3, Scene 5, suggest a complement. Romeo mourns his banishment, as it would mean to him an exile from his heaven that is Juliet:

> Tis torture and not mercy. Heaven is here
> Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog
> And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
> Live here in heaven and may look on her.
> (3:5:29-32)

In later lines, Juliet's heavenliness is to Romeo highly associated with her purity and physical virginity as he uses phrases like "white wonder of dear Juliet's hand" (3:5:36), "steal immortal blessing from her lips" (37), and "pure and vestal modesty" (38). The reverence with which Romeo describes Juliet's heavenly purity is complementary to Juliet's eagerness to surrender her maidenhood.

Sintang Dalisay's Wedding Night stands as a synthesis of these discrete and separate lines of Juliet and Romeo. *Igal* being central to the scene, the consummation contains the energy of Juliet's sexual anticipation and the spirit of Romeo's virginal reverence. The dance begins with Rashiddin and Jamila at opposite ends of the stage. They slowly approach the middle using the slow and careful steps of *henggel-henggel*. This movement is described as "the alternate bending and extending of the knees on tip-toe as the dancer briskly walks or runs forward" (Santamaria 126), although the walk is rather more sombre than brisk. Both Rashiddin and Jamila's arms gesture in *limbai* movement forward and backward. The approach towards the middle is careful, with each movement deliberately executed. Before the sexual act is begun, each one bows to the other in reverence as though in a ritual. Regarding these first *igal* dance movements of Rashiddin and Jamila's wedding night, Abad and Santamaria communicate how Romeo and Juliet regard the sexual union with sanctity and reverence. The ritual-like beginning of the Wedding Dance parallels the "amorous rites" where Juliet imagines losing and surrendering the maidenhood that Romeo so reveres. After the bow, Rashiddin and Jamila assume a high-fourth position: one arm raised above the head and the other extended towards the front. The position might suggest how the sexual union is both a heavenly task and an earthly desire. After all, the wedding night had been arranged by Friar Lawrence as an opportunity for Romeo and Juliet to consummate their marriage before Romeo's banishment. As they inch closer together, each one's front-extended hand makes a series of *kello'* gestures, so that their palms open outwards slowly and their fingers point down onto the mat—a gesture of openness and vulnerability.

Once united in the middle of the stage, Rashiddin keeps a higher stature compared to Jamila. He also keeps a wider leg stance and has bigger arm movements, while Jamila mostly keeps her *limbai* closer to her body. This creates the image of Rashiddin's figure framing Jamila's slender silhouette. Throughout the dance, Rashiddin remains behind Jamila and seems to lead most of the choreography, while Jamila follows in ecstasy and surrender. There is a notable change in blocking when Jamila turns her back against the audience to face Rashiddin. The blocking allows the audience to focus on Rashiddin's facial expression that shows wonder and veneration. As mentioned previously, Juliet's attitude towards the sexual act is an eagerness to surrender. The choreography of the Wedding Night can communicate this with Jamila keeping a lower position and Rashiddin a higher one. As Rashiddin leads the dance and frames Jamila's body, the choreography can simultaneously express Romeo's respect for Juliet's heavenly maidenhood as well as his command in this "winning match."

In the final moments of the dance, Rashiddin and Jamila descend onto the mat slowly. The expiration of their lovemaking is signalled by Rashiddin and Jamila's arms reaching out towards the heavens and by the ceasing of the percussion instruments. Their hands slowly descend back onto their bodies, but their fingers make very deliberate gestures of *ebed-ebed*. The *ebed-ebed* is described by Santamaria as "the shimmering or flicking of the fingers ornamenting the movement of the hands" (125). One might recall Juliet's imagery of the flickering "little stars" of Romeo's body right after the imagined sexual ecstasy.

While the Dance of the Stars captures the spirit of Shakespeare's scene and language, the Wedding Night gives an aesthetic that not only expresses but also elevates Romeo and Juliet's implied consummation. In both choreographies from *Sintang Dalisay*, *igal* is essential in expressing the religious and celestial imagery of Shakespeare's play. Despite being an indigenous performance tradition of the Sama-Bajau fisherfolk tribe, the conventions of *igal* dance can give form and expression to some very Euro-Christian concepts, such as the pilgrim-shrine metaphor and Romeo and Juliet's reverence for the sexual act. In interweaving a Philippine indigenous performance tradition with a Western text containing Western ideas and values, there emerges a "framework for experiencing the utopian potential of culturally diverse and globalized societies" (Fischer-Lichte 11). The utopian potential is precisely located in the openness of *igal* to shape the words of Shakespeare in dance and the openness of Shakespeare's text to be moulded into forms that go beyond English words. In a sense, it rings true to Fischer-Lichte's claim that interweaving performance cultures must go beyond postcolonialism, which could often be enmeshed in "the other" surmounting or re-possessing "the oppressor." The use of *igal* seems to do more than just showing ownership of Shakespeare's text. Instead, the use of *igal* has revealed possibilities of the diverse co-existence of cultures on stage: the Moro-Islamic giving a distinct form to the Euro-Christian and the sense of community built between Sama-Bajau teachers and Manilenyo performers.

Mythic: Transformation Through Appropriation

Igal is only one of the many non-Western cultural traditions that *Sintang Dalisay* embeds in the performance. This section will focus on the interweaving of Bajau death practices, early Bisaya[15] beliefs about death, and a Chinese myth, which all work to depict a life after the tragic deaths of Rashiddin and Jamila in "Ang Pagwawakas ng Sintang Dalisay" (Pure Love's End). The interweaving of such elements along with the use of *igal* demonstrates Fischer-Lichte's assertion that intercultural theatre does not only refer to "the dichotomy of the West and the rest" (15)—a dichotomy that simplifies the performance as the expression of a Western text using a non-Western performance tradition. Rather, intercultural theatre presents cultures that "constantly undergo processes of change and exchange, which can become difficult to disentangle from each other. Yet, the aim is also not to erase difference. Rather, the differences in and between cultures are dynamic and permanently shifting" (7). *Sintang Dalisay* exhibits and demonstrates this dynamism all throughout the performance, and especially so in the conclusion of the play. What follows is an analysis of the last scene of *Sintang Dalisay* and the myths, superstitions, and cultural practices that were incorporated—thus, transforming the tragic ending of *Romeo and Juliet* into something hopeful and, as Jill Dolan's description of utopian performatives goes, something that "leaves us melancholy yet cheered, because for however brief a moment, we felt something of what redemption might be like, of what humanism could really mean, of how powerful might be a world in which our commonalities would hail us over our differences" (8).

Sintang Dalisay's ending may be one of the most captivating scenes in the performance. In an excess and outpouring of grief, the Imam prays to Allah for mercy. Surrounded by the remaining members of the Mustaphas and Kalimuddins, the corpses of Rashiddin and Jamila's lay still centre stage. A haunting echo of wordless wailing emerge from the family members. In an essay by H. Arlo Nimmo entitled "Religious Rituals of the Tawi-Tawi Bajau," he explains that "female relatives of the deceased wail a mourning refrain which is soon picked up by the other female *mooragers*. Those closest to the deceased, male and female, fall into fits of grief, kicking, screaming, flailing themselves, and breaking objects within reach" (192). The performance modified this by incorporating a solemn death chant, instead of showing the family members "flailing" and "kicking." Abad and Santamaria explain that "Basar Jalaidi, a teacher based in the municipality of Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi, suggested the insertion of a *sail baat kabagtuan*, or a death chant," which is "supposed to be sung in order to help the transition of the dead from this physical world into the next world" (36). The resulting scene elevated the story of "woe" from a tragedy of star-crossed lovers to a tragedy of the community, wherein every character wails and mourns in musical, chant-like unison. In the performance text of *Sintang Dalisay,* the Imam ends the mourning scene with lines chanted in Arabic. A few lines are translated as follows:

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[15] Bisaya or Visayans refer to an ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines.

> Give way for us to pass
> For we are here, most
> honourable lords and ladies
> Open the portals!
> My beloved, my heart
> is already with you
> Take care of your husband
> who is here right now
> Your husband is here.
> (Abad, et al. 151)

Such lines bear to mind the belief in life after death. Particularly notable in the lines of the Imam is how the relationship of wife and husband must continue even in the afterlife. Thus, another element is interwoven in the incorporation of this belief. In his essay entitled, "Death: Its Origin and Related Beliefs Among Filipinos," Demetrio explains that "the early Bisayan of Leyte and Samar, according to Alzina, maintained that married persons were joined together again after death; the husband having the same woman he had before he died" (383). This is very much unlike the belief of Christians who see death as the severance of marriage ties. Demetrio adds further, "they eat and drink and cohabit as man and wife; but the women are no longer fertile once they have died" (384). Although Abad and Santamaria make no explicit mention of this early Bisayan belief in their essay, the chant of the Imam and the reunification of Rashiddin and Jamila's souls certainly show that *Sintang Dalisay* would like to present the lovers' death as a continuation of their marriage. The belief that death is not the end of life is strongly present in the beliefs of many ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines, as enumerated by Karl Gaverza in his 2017 article, "The Soul According to the Ethnolinguistic Groups of the Philippines."

Along with the appropriation of Bajau death practices and early Bisaya beliefs about the souls of married people, there is also the epilogue scene of *Sintang Dalisay,* which portrays Rashiddin and Jamila resurrected as butterflies. In the performance, the chanting of the family members end, and the scene is dark and silent. The souls of Badawi (Benvolio/Mercutio) and Taupan (Tybalt) enter the stage and lay white pieces of cloth and a box upon the bodies of Rashiddin and Jamila. The stage direction of the performance text reads: "Then at a beat, the two lovers rise and put on the pieces of white cloth as if they were wings. They are in another world, joyous, moving around the mourning mortals, chasing each other like butterflies" (Abad, et al. 152). In the performance, Rashiddin and Jamila rise gracefully while gesturing with the *limbai*. The ethno-music quickens and the lovers dance and jump around the stage excitedly. The movement of *engke'-engke'* is repeated which is "like the kapo-kapo except that the feet are raised from the ground. The term literally means 'raise-raise' or 'up-up,'" (Santamaria 127). Such agile movement suggests the flickering movement of butterflies as though in a garden and flying from one source of pollen to another. Rashiddin and Jamila stop for a moment to open a box of butterflies released onto the stage and the audience. This epilogue makes clear allusions to the myth of the Chinese butterfly lovers, Shanbo and Yingtai[16] who transformed into two butterflies after unsuccessful attempts to be together.

It is clear to anyone who is familiar with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that the depiction of any kind of afterlife is absent from the original text. The ending lines surely highlight that the story had concluded woefully and gloomily. Although *Sintang Dalisay* had also staged this sorrow in its incorporation of Bajau death practices, it highlights the hopeful aspects of the ending. The play leaves the audience not with an image of death, but with a hopeful image of Rashiddin and Jamila's happy reunification in the afterlife. Returning to Dolan, the final image of Rashiddin and Jamila "leaves us melancholy yet cheered" (8). While satiating the Filipino inclination toward happy endings, the transformation is made more meaningful because of the interweaving of different cultures—Bajau, Bisaya, Chinese—that constitutes the spectacle of the play's ending. It is also the interweaving of these cultures that could leave the audience with the "feeling of redemption" (8) that Dolan also describes in utopian performatives. The Bajau death rites, Bisaya beliefs, and Chinese myth have literally redeemed the commonly held judgement that Romeo and Juliet must have been damned to hell for their acts of suicide. Thus, *Sintang Dalisay* demonstrates the transformative aesthetic of cultural interweaving.

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[16] As told in "The Chinese legend of the butterfly lovers—Lijun Zhang" by TED-ed. Also star-crossed lovers, Shanbo and Yingtai fell in love. Yingtai, however, was betrothed to a young man from another prominent family. When Shanbo asked for Yingtai's hand in marriage, she turned him down because she did not want to disobey her parents. This causes Shanbo to fall very ill and weak. He eventually dies, but had left a letter for Yingtai, urging her to light incense before his tomb. As Yingtai proceeds with the marriage procession, she suddenly runs and goes to the tomb of Shanbo and lights an incense while grieving. A lightning bolt strikes and cracks open the tomb of Shanbo. Yingtai throws herself into the tomb. The parents of Yingtai could no longer see the bodies of both Yingtai and Shanbo. Instead, two butterflies emerge from the tomb.

Conclusion: Transcending the Tragic

In two sections, it is shown how the performance of *Sintang Dalisay* stages and presents utopia, and, in doing so, surpasses the notion of tragedy and woe that are so canonically associated with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Kinesthetically, the *igal* dance can aestheticize the language of *Romeo and Juliet* that is rich with Western concepts of Christianity and celestial imagery. Because of *igal*, the play gave a Moro-Islamic indigenous form and body to Anglo-rooted thoughts and ideas. The analysis is made not so much to highlight the binaries of Western and non-Western, for such a conclusion would simply reiterate neo-colonial sentiments and does not, therefore, allow the performance to be a utopian transformation. Instead, the use of *igal* to depict key scenes and imagery demonstrates that "processes of interweaving performance cultures thus generate a new kind of transformative aesthetics… the new transformative aesthetics aims to generate the greatest possible openness" (Fischer-Lichte 12). The achievement of *igal* in the performance is not authenticity to the dance ritual or its fidelity in translating the source text into dance. Rather, its achievement lies in creating an aesthetic that acknowledges and celebrates the plurality of possibilities that comes with interweaving performance traditions.

In the second section, the appropriation of three "myths" in the ending of *Sintang Dalisay* is shown to have transformed the tragedy of death into a hopeful and redemptive afterlife. The last scene and prologue of the play interweave Bajau death practices, early Bisaya beliefs about death and marriage, and the Chinese myth of butterfly lovers. But it is not merely done to depict a happy ending. After all, the haunting wails of the Mustaphas and Kalimuddins are an important element of the performance. It is instead a way to "capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (2) and therefore results in "performances [that] lead to both affective and effective feelings and expressions of hope and love not just for a partner … but for other people, for a more abstracted notion of 'community,' or for an even more intangible idea of 'humankind'" (Dolan 2). It is in such interweaving and appropriation that the tragic tale of *Romeo and Juliet* is redeemed. For a glimpse of a moment, *Sintang Dalisay* lets the audience imagine what Rashiddin and Jamila would be like if they had not been born into a society of retribution and violence. It offers the audience a glimmer of possibility—as a utopian world would—of what Rashiddin and Jamila would look like if the ire of their families did not hinder them from loving each other.

This conclusively demonstrates that utopia in performance is not so much about presenting an ideal world on stage. Any attempt to perform an ideal and perfect society could quickly devolve into a dystopia. Staging utopia is projecting the experience of hope and redemption, and, in the case of *Sintang Dalisay*, utopia on stage is achieved by the interweaving of *igal* with a Tagalog *awit*, Shakespeare's play, Tinio's translation, Filipino practices and beliefs, Chinese myths, and a lot more that had entered the intercultural stage. It is a utopia that is open to plurality, diversity, and the ability of intercultural theatre to make dark heaven light.

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Rowena Hawkins*

“Hopeful feeling[s]:” Utopian Shakespeares and the 2021 Reopening of British Theatres

Abstract: This article focuses on a specific moment in recent British theatre history: the late spring of 2021 when theatres reopened after a prolonged period of closure that had been enforced during the first waves of the Coronavirus pandemic. It considers The HandleBards’ production of *Romeo and Juliet* (performed at York’s Theatre Royal) and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the context of that unusual time. The productions, which both used bright colours and irreverent approaches to create festive atmospheres, had a shared joyful aesthetic which encouraged me to think more deeply about what audiences wanted—and needed—from post-lockdown theatre. In this article, I suggest that these vibrant Shakespeares, when presented in the immediate aftermath of the first waves of Covid, functioned as cathartic utopian performatives. They offered audiences uncomplicated joy and “a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like” after Coronavirus (Dolan 2005, p. 5). They “let audiences experience a processual, momentary feeling of affinity” and encouraged them to “imagine, together, the affective potential of a future in which this rich feeling of warmth, even of love, could be experienced regularly and effectively outside the theatre” (Dolan, p. 14). Utopian performatives are characterised by their transience and, inevitably, the simple joy of these Shakespeares was fleeting. Both venues have since hosted visually and thematically darker productions that have used Shakespeare to explore important social and political issues. Indeed, the HandleBards’ *Romeo and Juliet* and The Globe’s *Midsummer* are productions which might, in other circumstances, have been dismissed as simplistic. However, I suggest that these productions offered real hope for the future in the wake of crisis and demonstrate the importance of theatre in challenging times.

Keywords: Shakespeare and covid, Shakespare and crisis, Shakespeare in performance.

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This article focuses on a particular moment in recent British theatre history: the late spring and early summer of 2021 when, after an extended period of closure brought about by the first waves of the Coronavirus pandemic, theatres tentatively began to reopen. I reflect on that moment from the vantage point of summer 2022, when going to the theatre felt almost normal once again. I am reluctant to call this the *post*-pandemic moment because the virus is still with us but, thanks to vaccination programmes and increasing immunity, a trip to see a play no longer feels as dangerous as it did just twelve months ago. Looking back on a production of *Romeo and Juliet* by The HandleBards and a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre that I saw in that strange time, I explore the "moments of utopia" (Dolan, *Utopia* 8) that I found. I suggest that in the immediate aftermath of the height of the pandemic these joyful productions offered audiences "hopeful feeling[s] of what the world might be like" (Dolan, *Utopia* 5) after Coronavirus.

Jill Dolan's "inquiry into the ways in which performance might provide us with experiences of utopia" ("Performance" 455) was initially inspired by—and developed in response to—radical theatre in fringe venues made for and by people from under-served and underrepresented communities. In late 2000, Dolan collaborated with Rude Mechs (a theatre company based in Austin, Texas who were "determined to do local outreach into the Latino/a community") on a "performance series" titled "Throws Like a Girl: A Femme, A Butch, A Jew," which showcased "irreverent lesbian and feminist performance" ("Performance" 462, 464).[1] It was this series which served as the foundation for her theory of the "utopian performative" ("Performance" 460). Since the theory has its roots in "edgy, 'avant-garde,' 'non-mainstream' work" ("Performance" 462) such as "Throws Like A Girl…" it may seem inappropriate to apply it to productions of plays by Shakespeare, who is perhaps the Western world's most mainstream writer. The application of Dolan's theory becomes even more questionable when those productions of Shakespeare's plays are performed on mainstream stages like York's Theatre Royal (a large regional producing theatre in the north of England) and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (a replica early modern playhouse nestled on London's South Bank). What's more, the two productions I wish to focus on here were far from "edgy" or "avant-garde". However, in the book that grew out of her first article on utopia at the theatre Dolan noted that "utopia can be grasped in performance in any location” (*Utopia* 5), revealing her own “eclectic tastes” (16) and refusing to “parse distinctions between ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ or ‘community-based’ and ‘popular’ performance” (17). I think Dolan would agree, then, that it was possible to find “moments of utopia” in the joyously silly Shakespeares I discuss in this article. I will suggest that while not as political or as radical as the performances that made up the first “Throws Like A Girl…” series, The HandleBards’ *Romeo and Juliet* and The Globe’s *Midsummer* were utopian. They “let audiences experience a processual, momentary feeling of affinity” and encouraged them to “imagine, together, the affective potential of a future in which this rich feeling of warmth, even of love, could be experienced regularly and effectively outside the theatre” (Dolan, *Utopia* 14).

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[1] In *Utopia* Dolan states that "the 'Throws Like a Girl' series of women's solo performance" had its "first instalment in fall 2001" when "the Rude Mechs and I brought Holly Hughes, Peggy Shaw, and Deb Margolin to Austin to perform" (24). The date in Dolan's earlier article appears to be correct: Rude Mechs' website retains an archived listing for the "provocative performance festival" celebrating "the contributions of original female theatre artists to our cultural landscape" from 2000 ('Throws Like a Girl 2000').

Furthermore, Dolan’s theory is particularly useful as a lens through which to understand the potential social and political impacts of performance in times of crisis. Dolan first wrote about utopian performatives in the context of various “social scourges” including

> Poverty, famine, cancer, AIDS, inadequate health care, racial and gender discrimination, hatred of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people, the grossly unequal distribution of wealth and resources globally, religious intolerance, xenophobia expressed in anti-immigrant legislation, lack of access for the disabled, pay inequality, and of course a host of others (“Performance” 456-7).

She suggested that moments of utopia glimpsed through performance offered audiences hope that these issues “might be ameliorated” (“Performance” 457). While unlikely to be achieved “in our lifetimes,” Dolan’s conviction was that a “better future can be articulated and even embodied, however fleetingly”, at the theatre (“Performance” 457). Dolan went on to expand her “set of beliefs in the possibility of a better future […] that can be captured and claimed in performance” in “the long moment after [the] September 11” terror attacks, when “new definitions of citizenship” rooted in nationalism, racism, and fascism emerged (*Utopia* 3). These conditions prompted her to ask: “How can we hope for a better future in such an environment? What can hope mean, in a world of terror? What can performance *do,* politically, against these overwhelming odds?” (*Utopia* 3, emphasis in original). Dolan’s hopeful search for moments of utopia in the theatre has offered me a way to think about theatre in a different moment of crisis, the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic; to contemplate the “hopeful feeling[s]” that two productions staged in this moment of intense fear and uncertainty prompted for me; and to ask whether these feelings might be leveraged to work towards a better world.

York Theatre Royal, 26 May 2021

Let me begin with an attempt to evoke the feeling of stepping into a theatre for the first time after a prolonged absence, since to find utopia in the theatre we must begin by "pay[ing] attention to what we *feel*" (*Utopia* 34, emphasis in original). Before the pandemic I was a devoted theatre attendee, watching at least one play a week, and while there was plenty of performance to enjoy online when Coronavirus closed live performance venues, I was suffering from Zoom fatigue by the end of 2020.[2] What's more, I missed the inimitable *buzz* of a trip to the theatre, that ineffable thing that Dolan might, to Philip Auslander's disgust, call "the *magic* of theatre" ("Performance" 458, my emphasis).[3] I was excited to return to live, in-person performance and booked tickets to a show at my local theatre as soon as its reopening season was announced. However, when the much longed-for day finally came my excitement soon morphed into anxiety.

On 26 May 2021 I headed to York's Theatre Royal for a matinee performance of *Romeo and Juliet* by The HandleBards, an environmentally-conscious travelling troupe who cycle between tour venues, performing their accessible, family-friendly adaptations of Shakespeare's plays across the UK (and beyond). I had chosen the matinee deliberately since I hoped it might attract an older—and thus safer—crowd who were more likely to have stuck to the government guidelines during the lockdowns and more likely to have had their first Covid vaccinations. As I queued outside the venue I gulped down fresh air, trying not to worry too much about the fact that, in just a few short minutes, I would be indoors and sharing air with a group of strangers, something I had not done in over a year. I reached the front of the queue and showed my e-ticket to a steward. After the ticket and my confirmation of a recent negative lateral flow test had been scrutinised, and my temperature had been checked by another steward brandishing a handheld device, I was granted entry to the theatre building. In another time I might have headed to the bar for a drink or found a comfortable corner of the foyer to settle in, but theatregoing was different in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic closures. I was pointed, gently but firmly, towards the stalls and ushered to my seat. Other audience members seemed relaxed, but my anxiety refused to fade. I tugged at my face mask, checking that the edges felt secure enough against my skin, already feeling hot and uncomfortable as the stiff clip pinched my nose and my breath got trapped by the flimsy layers of material that I hoped would keep me safe. There was not yet any hope to be found at the theatre. In fact, my primary emotion was fear.

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[2] For accounts of the diversity and vibrancy of lockdown Shakespeare see: Aebischer; Allred, Broadribb and Sullivan; Kirwan and Sullivan; and Smith, Valls-Russell and Yabut.

[3] As Dolan notes: "in his [1999] book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, [Auslander] explicitly critiques as sentimental the notion that performance remains the domain of the live, that intimacy and immediacy are possible there in ways unavailable in other media, such as film or television" ("Performance" 458).

While waiting for the performance to begin I pondered The HandleBards' decision to tour *Romeo and Juliet* at this particular moment. Shakespeare's tragedy is heavy with plague imagery: as Rebecca Totaro notes, the play includes Mercutio's curse "A plague o' both houses!" (*Romeo and Juliet* 3:1:88), "one of the most memorable literary lines from plague-time England" (1).[4] *Romeo and Juliet* is also a rare example of an early modern play which represents plague as a "literal disease" rather than a metaphor (Totaro 22).[5] So why *Romeo and Juliet*? Surely a comedy would have been a better way to celebrate the reopening of the theatres? Surely a production of Shakespeare's most plague-ridden play would only serve to draw attention to the devastating modern plague we were all so desperate to forget? Perhaps, I mused, the pandemic context would offer us new ways of understanding Shakespeare's tragedy. After all, Totaro observes that Friar John's quarantine in Mantua, during which he is "[s]ealed up" in a house where it was (wrongly) suspected that "the infectious pestilence did reign" (5:2:11, 10) "often goes unexamined" by modern "audiences and scholars", though "Shakespeare's original audiences" would have "understood all too well that when the plague visited, all metaphorical houses were shaken at their foundations" (1). Those of us who gathered at the York Theatre Royal after our own periods of quarantine several centuries later brought similar understandings with us.

I doubt I was the only audience member, then, who was relieved that The HandleBards avoided easy parallels between the early modern plague and the contemporary Coronavirus in their adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead, the three-strong company (Tom Dixon, Lucy Green and Paul Moss) focused on the simple joys of singing together, laughing together and being in a theatre together after a year in which those things had been impossible (and, at times, illegal). Shakespeare's play may, in Paula S. Berggren's words, "explicitly […] dramatize the profound impression that isolating the sick […] made on the English populace" (150) but The HandleBards wished to acknowledge the pandemic only briefly. By adding a visual hand sanitiser gag to the thumb-biting exchange that opens Act 1, Scene 1, the company took an early opportunity to acknowledge the pandemic context and to encourage their audience to laugh at it. And laugh we did. This playful opening moment set the tone for the production and my nervousness began to ebb away.

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[4] All references to Shakespeare's plays are taken from Greenblatt et al.

[5] From a survey of the early modern English dramatic corpus Totaro finds that "only Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* offer extended representations of the plague" (22).

From their simple, festive, rainbow-toned set to the ukulele interludes that were deployed when proceedings threatened to get “a bit heavy,” The HandleBards welcomed their audience back to indoor, in-person theatre with unrestrained delight. Dixon, Green and Moss made their *Romeo and Juliet* while “cooped up together during lockdown,” creating “an unhinged and bonkers, laugh-out-loud” production “[f]uelled by cabin fever” and their “bookshelf full of Shakespeare” (The HandleBards). They invited audiences to “[f]orget the tears and tragedy” and instead “get ready for… Shakespeare as you’ve never seen it before,” with “music, mayhem and more costume changes than you can shake a spear at” (The HandleBards).

Their riotous production was a somewhat loose adaptation of Shakespeare’s play which centred on the hormonal lust of its teenage protagonists. The immature pair seemed happiest when noisily making out: at one point, Juliet (Green) swept Romeo (Moss) off his feet into a particularly passionate clinch (Figure 1, below). This proud display of saliva-swapping was both funny and heart-warming, especially in the context of the pandemic when would-be lovers had been advised to keep dates socially distanced. Green and Moss brought a chaotic, childish energy to Shakespeare’s lines, too. For example, Juliet (Green) was visibly proud of her witticisms in the “balcony” scene (Act 2, Scene 1), pulling self-satisfied faces after clever lines. Unable to control her emotions, however, she growled “I come!” to the Nurse who interrupted the exchange by calling her from off stage, before turning back to Romeo and giggling sweetly. The HandleBards’ *Romeo and Juliet* also featured plenty of digressions from the text. One particularly crowd-pleasing addition was appended to Juliet’s trip to Friar Laurence’s cell (Act 4, Scene 1) where, before obtaining the vial of liquid that would help her assume the “borrowed likeness of shrunk death” (4:1:104) and thus avoid marrying Paris, she first had to get through the door. This involved an elaborate mime sequence. First, Friar Laurence (Dixon) mimed unbolting an unnecessarily high-security door and entered the cell before ushering Juliet (Green) inside. Next, Green repeated the mime to “lock” the “door,” copying Dixon’s hand movements and sound effects. Friar John (Moss) then strode on stage from behind the curtain where the small cast did their quick changes and walked straight into the cell, much to the horror of Dixon and Green and to the delight of their audience. He was instructed to try again and, on his second attempt to join the scene, remembered to mime the comically complicated locking mechanism. Much of the comedy in the production centred around these Friars, who carried spray bottles of holy water to dampen the teenage passions of the titular lovers and even had their own “Ninja Friars” theme tune that they frequently sung while adopting martial arts poses. But the comedy was by no means limited to them: when Juliet tasted the “distilling liquor” (4:1:94) a few scenes later, she declared that it tasted “like strawberry” before vomiting violently and collapsing in a heap. In Shakespeare’s

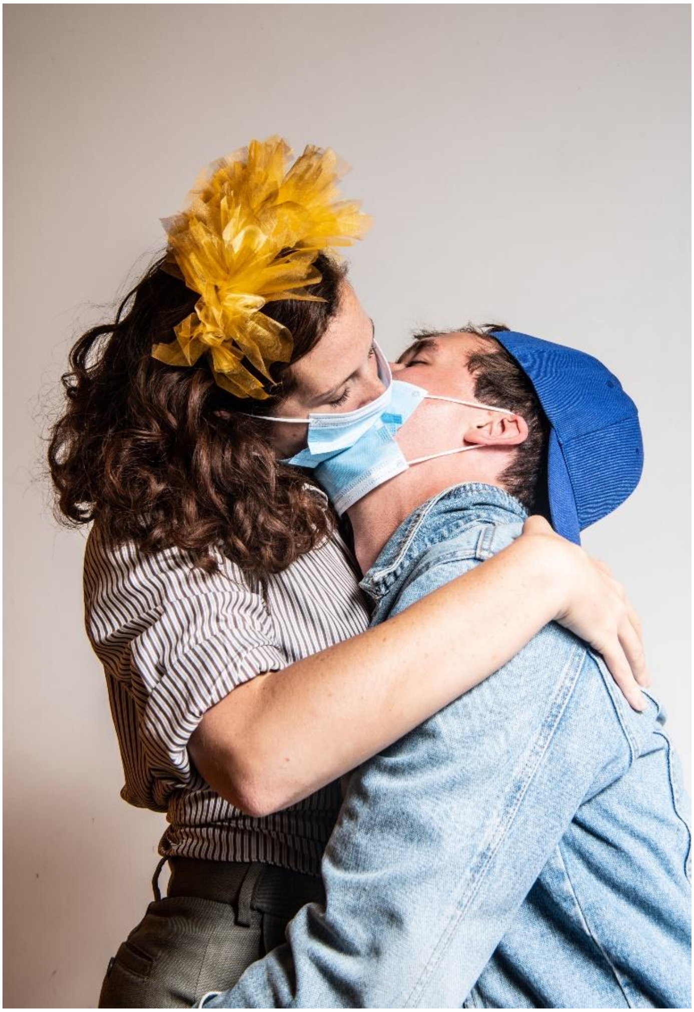

Figure 1: Young love—Lucy Green and Paul Moss in a promotional image for The HandleBards' 2021 touring production of *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Nel Crouch
Photo by Rah Petherbridge, courtesy of The HandleBards

play "[d]eath lies on" Juliet gracefully "like an untimely frost / Upon the sweetest flower of all the field" (4:4:55-56); in The HandleBards' version of *Romeo and Juliet*, death–like life–was both funny and grotesque, and ripe for comic exploitation.

By the time the real, lasting, tragic deaths rolled around at the end of the play, the audience were conditioned to respond with amusement rather than sadness, howling with laughter as Romeo (Moss) died slowly and melodramatically and again when Juliet (Green) pulled handful after handful of ribbons representing blood and guts from beneath her costume (Figure 2, below). This low-tech production, with its slapstick style and irreverent approach to adaptation, might seem like an unlikely place to find meaningful utopia but as I emerged from York's Theatre Royal into the soft sunshine of that late May afternoon I was full of "hopeful feeling[s]". I felt grateful to have experienced The HandleBards' celebration of love after a time in which many couples and families had been separated. I also found hope in the fact that I could share this silly Shakespeare with a group of strangers. After a period of intense isolation, it felt joyous to be in a darkened room watching theatre with others once again. As Dolan points out, there are many reasons why "people come together to watch other people labor on stage", including "fashion", "taste" and a desire "to collect […] cultural capital" ("Performance" 455). However, I suspect that in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic theatre closures the "less tangible, more emotional, spiritual, or communitarian reasons" for seeking out live performance were key drivers of our return to auditoria across the world. I can, of course, only speak from personal experience, but I was certainly propelled back to the theatre by a desire to "gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping, perhaps, for moments of transformation that might let [me] reconsider and change the world outside the theatre, from its macro to its micro arrangements." (Dolan, "Performance" 455).

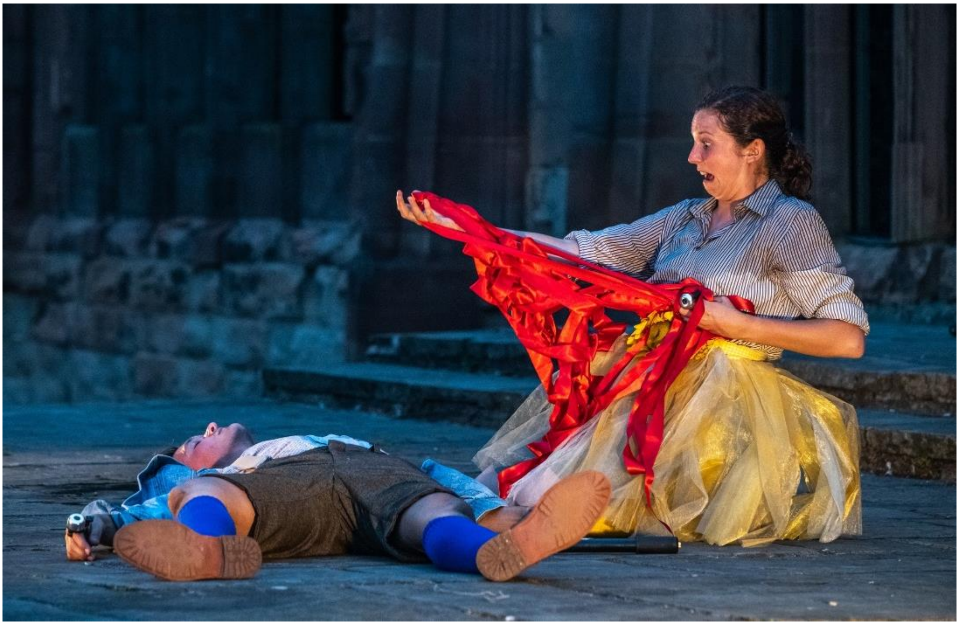

Figure 2: Lucy Green as Juliet and Paul Moss as Romeo in The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* (2021 tour, Coventry Cathedral performance), dir. Nel Crouch
Photo by Garry Jones, courtesy of The HandleBards

Throughout 2020, and for the first months of 2021, I had desperately avoided coming into contact with the wider world for fear of contracting a potentially deadly disease. Yet it was in the very act of gathering in a room with others that I found hope. Dolan draws on the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, whose "notion of 'communitas' in social drama […] very much describes what" Dolan calls "utopian performativity in performance" ("Performance" 473). Through Turner, Dolan charts "the social potential of utopian performatives" which "let audiences experience a processual, momentary feeling of affinity, in which spectators experience themselves as part of a congenial public constituted by the performance's address" (*Utopia* 14). Dolan suggests that, when "[h]ailed by these performatives," audiences can be rallied to hope for the possibility of realizing improved social relations" and "can imagine, together, the affective potential of a future in which this rich feeling of warmth, even of love, could be experienced regularly and effectively outside the theater" (*Utopia* 14). In that dark auditorium I felt community—and perhaps even the "magical […] flash of lucid mutual understanding" (Turner, quoted in "Performance" 473) that is communitas–which encouraged me to look forward to the easing of restrictions and increased socialisation with hope rather than fear. The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* reminded me that it was not only possible but truly joyous to be around strangers. During their performance I experienced a utopian performative that enabled me to release myself "from the inhibiting restraints of the 'as is' for the more liberatory possibilities of the 'what if'," relinquishing myself to the "common human need to hope" (Dolan, *Utopia* 21) after a time of such despair. I returned home with sides sore from laughing and a renewed hope for our shared future.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London, 5 June 2021

Just ten days after watching *Romeo and Juliet* at York's Theatre Royal I experienced more joyful post-pandemic performance in the form of the Globe's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* though this time I felt the magic of in-person theatre vicariously. Watching from afar via live stream, I was heartened to see the wooden O full of people once again, albeit in socially distanced household bubbles. I wondered if the audience gathered in the reconstructed open-air playhouse felt twinges of communitas like I had in York. Perhaps, given the space's shared light, they felt part of a community even more strongly than I had. I wondered, too, if any people among the waiting crowd were as scared as I had been before The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* had begun. My thoughts were interrupted when the Globe's production opened with a loud blast of Mexican-inflected brass band music and exploded into a high-energy production. Like *Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream* had potential contemporary relevancies in the early summer of 2021: as critic Chris Wiegand noted in his review of the production, the play "chime[d] with lockdown nightmares of confinement and separated lovers," the "discombobulation of a world turned upside down," and "climate chaos" (Wiegand). However, rather than dwelling on these parallels the Globe opted to "[throw] a party instead" (Wiegand), reopening the theatre with uncomplicated festivity, much as The Handlebards had done at York's Theatre Royal.

It was not only the approach to adaptation and the tone that felt familiar, however: I was also struck by Jean Chan's set design for the production, which bore some similarities to the HandleBards' for *Romeo and Juliet*. Both productions used bright streamers and colourful bunting to create festive atmospheres and this shared aesthetic of joy encouraged me to think more deeply about what audiences wanted—and needed—from post-lockdown theatre. The Globe's production was originally staged in 2019 and was directed by Sean Holmes for "Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank," the theatre's "flagship project for secondary and post-16 further education students" (Shakespeare's Globe, "Playing"), which specialises in accessible productions "designed to appeal to young people" (Rokison 6).[6] The decision to reopen with a re-cast revival of this production was interesting because it revealed what "the Globe believed we all needed" (Stephenson 710) in that moment: a light comedy with bright colours, broad appeal, and opportunities for audience participation.

Opting for a comedy was an understandable choice since, after so much real-life tragedy, light relief was in order. Joseph F. Stephenson observes that "[m]ost [British] companies chose to err on the safe side with their reopening repertoire", with "light comedies" dominating listings "during the summer of 2021" (709) and the Touchstone database of Shakespeare in Performance in 2021, held by the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute, supports this observation.[7] Comedies represented over half of the total number of Shakespearean productions in the UK in 2021. Of these, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the most popular, with a total of ten productions recorded in the Touchstone database.[8] Yet, in its original form, the play was not quite light enough for the Globe's reopening "party." As Wiegand notes, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has "troubling aspects", but these were played down in the

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[6] For a critical evaluation of this initiative see Yandell, Coles and Bryer.

[7] I am indebted to Kate Welch, Senior Library Assistant at the Shakespeare Institute Library, for providing this information. Thanks also to Robert Iles, who generously shared 2021 data from the Internet UK Theatre Database (iUKTDb; https://www.uktw.co.uk/archive/).

[8] Due to the ongoing Covid-related disruption to performance in 2021, there may be some discrepancy between the number of productions planned (and thus recorded in the database) and the number of productions which took place, but this information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Globe's adaptation in favour of playfulness and the creation of "a fun night" for returning theatregoers (Wiegand). Whether the darker elements were cut to make the play more accessible to young audiences or, as Stephenson suggests, "to meet its COVID-tempered run time of 140 minutes with no interval" (712) is immaterial, though: the effect was a thoroughly comedic production "that answer[ed] Theseus's request, in Act V, to 'ease the anguish of a torturing hour' and prefer[red] to see mischief not cruelty, light not darkness" (Wiegand).

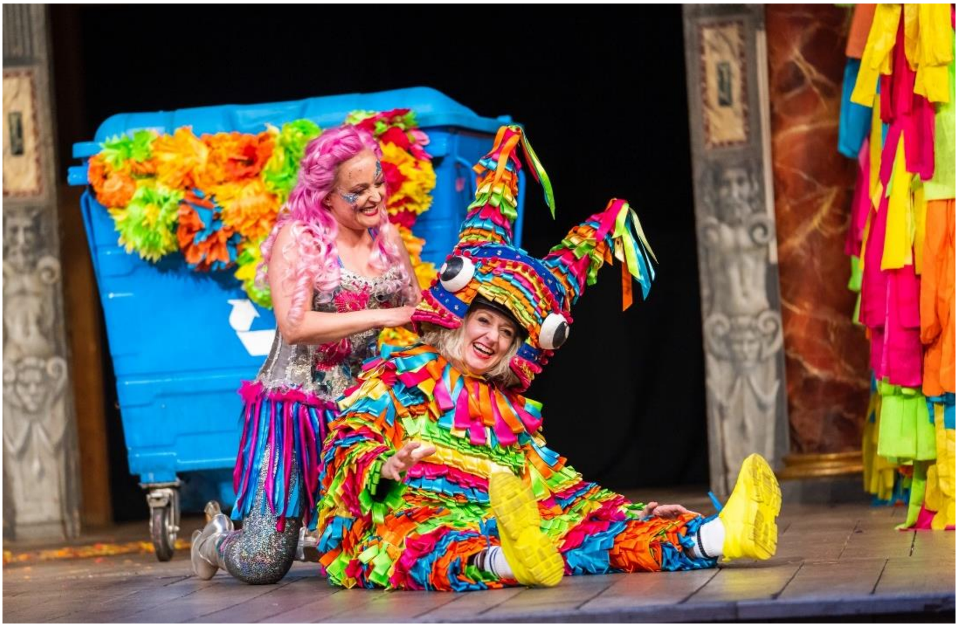

Figure 3: Victoria Elliott as Titania and Sophie Russell as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, dir. Sean Holmes (Shakespeare's Globe, 2021)
Photo by Tristram Kenton, courtesy of Shakespeare's Globe

If choosing a comedy and making it lighter were obvious choices for the post-lockdown moment, the Globe's reasons to revive an existing production were less clear. Cutting costs might have been one motivation for remounting a production "that had already been tested, with mostly satisfactory results, in 2019" (Stephenson 709), especially as the Globe had made no secret of its financial difficulty during the first year of the pandemic.[9] The production may also have been revived because it suited the post-lockdown mood perfectly, as a comparison of reviews reveals. When Holmes' *Midsummer* was first performed in 2019 Kate Wyver, a theatre critic for *The Guardian,* described the "joyful explosion of vivid chaos" (Shakespeare's Globe, "A Midsummer") as "over-excited" (Wyver). However, the production's bright colours and chaotic energy (Figure 3, above) met the demands of a post-lockdown celebration: Alice Saville praised its revival as "one big 'welcome back' party" in her illustrated review for the online theatre magazine *Exeunt* (Saville).

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[9] Artistic Director Michelle Terry's May 2020 warning that the theatre might not survive the pandemic unless donations were received to secure its future raised international alarm (see Jefferey).

Weigand suggests that Holmes' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was never permitted to "do more than amuse" (Wiegand). However, it was in this very amusement that I caught glimpses of utopia—a future where joy is treasured, and people come together to share it—just as I had while watching The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet*. This joy was so palpable that even I, a remote audience member watching on a screen and listening through tinny speakers, could feel it. Closing my laptop's lid at the end of the show, I began to think deeper about what these two productions offered. Beyond ecstatic celebration of the return to live, in-person performance, the productions modelled specific visions for a better world. I suggest that their shared visions were tripartite, with both productions encouraging audience members to do three things: be yourself, do it yourself (DIY), and share joy with others.

Be Yourself: "Utopic Romanticism" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*

In her review of the 2019 production of the Globe's *Midsummer* Wyver declared that "this production belongs to the lovers" and found "[t]he ricocheting relationships between the quartet […] a pleasure to watch" (Wyver). In my opinion, the production (or its revival, at least) belonged to the mechanicals, the group of artisans-cum-amateur-actors who perform the comedy's closing play-within-a-play. Productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* staged at the Globe have not always celebrated these characters. Emma Rice's otherwise brilliant 2016 production, for example, portrayed them as overzealous Globe ushers and treated them in a way that felt (to me) quite patronising. In Holmes' *Midsummer*, however, the mechanicals were allowed to shine, and their passionate amateurism was celebrated. All the mechanicals but Peter Quince (Nadine Higgin) arrived onstage for their rehearsal scene (Act 1, Scene 2) from the Yard, which immediately endeared them to the audience. Rokison suggests that "the use of the yard for elements of the action, most notably actors' entrances and exits, has been characteristic of numerous productions at Shakespeare's Globe" but seems particularly prolific in its "Playing Shakespeare…" productions, where "the entire auditorium" has often been used to ensure "that young audiences were consistently surrounded by the action," to "[open] up the action beyond the stage", and to "[implicate] and [involve] the audience in the world of the play" (20). In Holmes' *Midsummer*, this technique had the additional effect of making the mechanicals feel relatable and even part of the temporary community of the audience (a belonging that was compounded when they selected a spectator to stand in for Robin Starveling the tailor). Another element of relatability was added by the costume design. In stark contrast to the "quartet" of lovers, who were dressed in high-fashion, monochrome reimaginings of Elizabethan attire, the mechanicals wore recognisable modern street clothes that expressed their personalities. Their performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe" was pitched comically, with the mechanicals over-acting, over-projecting, and generally making fools of themselves. However, the audience were always laughing with rather than at the mechanicals, who were celebrated for being unashamedly themselves. The production's celebration of the mechanicals, in all their imperfect glory, is an example of what Dolan calls "utopic romanticism" which she says (quoting Richard Dyer), can "[give] us a glimpse of what it means to live at the height of our emotional and our experiential capacities–not dragged down by the banality of organized routine life" (Dyer, quoted in Dolan "Performance" 472).

Utopic romanticism could be found elsewhere in the Globe's *Midsummer*, too: in its portrayal of the brief, drug-induced same-sex romance between Bottom (Sophie Russell) and Titania (Victoria Elliott). In the giddiness of Sophie Russell's Bottom, who, as Wiegand notes, "almost floats with woozy love for Titania" (Wiegand), the audience saw another model of emotional intensity (Figure 3, above). This relationship finds its obvious parallel in that between the titular teens in The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet*, whose heightened emotions were used for comic effect but also to gesture towards an "intense, utopic romanticism" that creates "moments of magic and communion in performance" (Dolan, "Performance" 472). By celebrating these characters who were, for a time at least, living "at the height of [their] emotional and […] experiential capacities," each production modelled a utopian society rooted in acceptance of each member's authentic self (Dolan, "Performance" 472). At the level of the individual, both *Midsummer* and *Romeo and Juliet* proposed "modes of selfhood" (Dolan, "Performance" 477) rooted in collective joy after tragedy. After periods of pandemic-induced restrictions across most aspects of daily life, the productions both "[called] the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (Dolan, *Utopia* 5).

Do It Yourself (DIY): from the Balcony to the DJ Booth

Both the Globe's *Midsummer* and The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* celebrated amateurism and passionate imperfection. This was embodied in the mechanicals' performance style in *Midsummer* and in the character changes in *Romeo and Juliet* (each actor played multiple roles and costume changes frequently took longer than scene changes, which they occasionally drew attention to by doing extra laps of the stage declaring "She's not ready yet!"). It also manifested in elements of the productions' design aesthetics, which might be described as DIY (Do It Yourself).

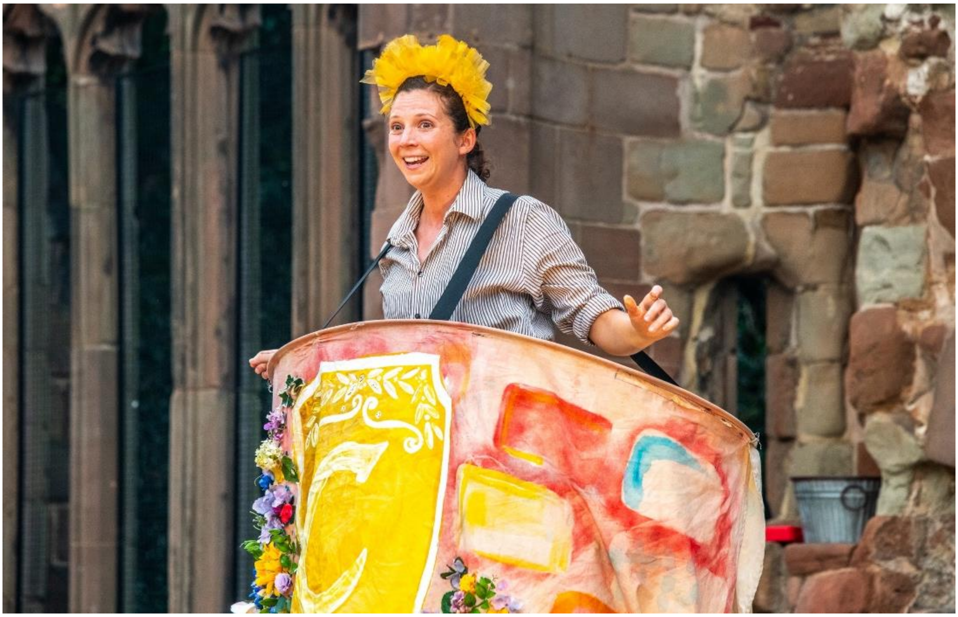

Figure 4: DIY design—Lucy Green as Juliet in The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* (2021 tour, Coventry Cathedral performance), dir. Nel Crouch
Photo by Garry Jones, courtesy of The HandleBards

In the Globe's *Midsummer*, Peter Quince began the "Pyramus and Thisbe" scene in a garishly hand-decorated DJ booth that was "powered" by the groundling standing in for Starveling on an exercise bike in the yard, much to the audience's delight. In *Romeo and Juliet*, each prop was part of what Peter Kirwan identifies as the HandleBards' "eco-activism:" the company cycle between venues and so parts of their sets, and some props, are "comprised of bicycle parts and tools" (Kirwan). Other elements must be lightweight and foldable for easy transportation. Juliet's balcony (Figure 4, above), for example, was a piece of decorated fabric attached to a hoop and worn about Green's body with a set of braces.

I propose that what these design choices suggested to the productions' audiences is that theatre does not have to be highly polished to be powerful and, by extension, that life does not have to be perfect to be enjoyed. The productions both provide support for Dolan's hunch that utopian performatives can transport us "out of the banal" but "[t]he materials of such transport can be modest; that is, impressive scenery and helicopters hovering in the flies of a stage aren't required to provoke such feeling" (*Utopia* 169). The hand-made set pieces and props also gestured towards a simpler way of life that might be adopted post-pandemic, one that is characterised by a can-do, DIY attitude and that is kinder to a planet facing ecological collapse.

Share Joy with Others: Audience Participation and Direct Address

The final element of the productions which gestured towards a simpler, happier, more communitarian world was the actors' eagerness to share their work with others. Each performance began with a heartfelt welcome back to in-person theatre which provoked loud applause from the audiences. There was acknowledgement–both on stage and off–that theatre had been greatly missed and that the actors were thrilled to be doing what they loved once again. Both productions also had a generosity of spirit that was expressed through direct address and opportunities for audience participation, creating intersubjective moments which, as Dolan points out, "often become utopian performatives" ("Performance" 471).

The Globe's *Midsummer* and The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* modelled joyfulness, carefree selfhood, passionate love and, above all, hope despite the constraints of society (in Verona, Athens, York, or London). In *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* Dolan asks herself if it is "too much to ask of performance, that it teach us to love and to link us with the world, as well as to see and to think critically about social relations?" What I hope to have shown though in this discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is that even (or perhaps especially) in times of crisis, performance really can teach us these things. Having shared and celebrated the positive impacts that these silly, celebratory Shakespeares had on me in the immediate aftermath of the Coronavirus lockdowns, I now wish to consider whether these productions and their utopian performatives had wider, or lasting, impacts.

Pondering "how […] the profoundly moving experience of utopian performatives in performance" might "be conveyed or carried into the world outside the theatre," Dolan finds hope in conversations "struck up" between strangers (*Utopia* 18) which allow “the moment of performance to linger longer” (*Utopia* 19). In the uneasy period between lockdowns when I saw both productions under discussion, however, we stuck to our “prosaic, individual arrangements of singles, couples, or trios” wading “through the crowd to the exit doors” (Dolan, *Utopia* 18) more than ever. Watching the Globe’s *Midsummer* remotely, I was unable to “linger” at all. Perhaps, then, “the breath-taking moment of potential connection and emotion” *was* “severed as soon as the house lights” went up in York, or when the audience left the Globe, or when I closed my browser after Puck’s final farewell (Dolan, *Utopia* 18). This would suggest that the impacts of these productions, and the “hopeful feeling[s]” they instilled, were extremely limited. However, in her book’s conclusion Dolan finds hope despite the necessary severance that occurs after performance. Asking “[w]hat, finally, do communitas and the utopian performative *do*? What is their action in the world?”, Dolan wonders whether “we burden them even by posing this question” (*Utopia* 169, emphasis in original):

> Perhaps utopian performatives create the *condition* for action; they pave a certain kind of way, prepare people for the choices they might make in other aspects of their lives. […] We too often flounder on the shoals of “what does this *do*,” when how something *feels* in the moment might be powerful enough (*Utopia* 169-170, emphasis in original).

I did not leave the Globe’s *Midsummer* or The HandleBards’ *Romeo and Juliet* feeling “galvanized” in the same way that Dolan reports people did following performances at the Rude Mechs’ theatre, Off Center (“Performance” 468). Nor was I moved towards feelings of “political agency” (“Performance” 477). I did, however, feel more joyful, more hopeful, more connected, and less alone. As Dolan so succinctly puts it: “perhaps such intensity of *feeling* is politics enough for utopian performatives” (*Utopia* 20, emphasis in original).

Our Revels Now are Ended

Utopian performatives are characterised by their transience and, inevitably, the simple joy of these Shakespeares was fleeting. Both venues have since hosted visually and thematically darker productions that have used Shakespeare not as a vehicle for celebration but to explore important social and political issues. For instance, The Globe’s 2021 *Romeo and Juliet* (directed by Ola Ince) used the tragedy to tackle contemporary knife crime and the UK’s mental health crisis. Jacob Hughes’ design for the production had a stark black, white and red colour palette (Figure 5, below). It also prominently featured sobering text on LED screens above the stage (“20 percent of teenagers experience depression before reaching adulthood," "75 percent of all children with mental health problems are not receiving treatment," "When boys are taught the rules of patriarchy, they are forced to deny their feelings"). Tonally, it could not have been further from the vibrant and light-hearted *Midsummer* that had opened the theatre's post-lockdown season and brought so much joy to that stage.

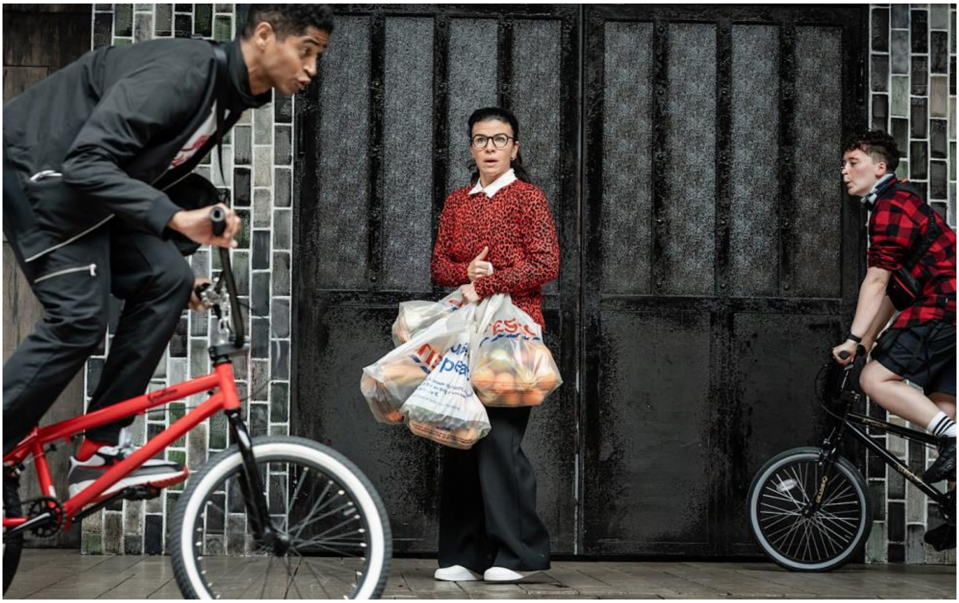

Figure 5: Alfred Enoch as Romeo, Sirine Saba as Nurse and Zoe West as Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Ola Ince, (Shakespeare's Globe, 2022)
Photo by Marc Brenner, courtesy of Shakespeare's Globe

The next production of a Shakespeare play that York's Theatre Royal hosted was Northern Broadsides and New Vic Theatre's earnest touring co-production of *As You Like It* (directed by Laurie Sansom), which explored queerness and non-binary gender identities in a cold and hostile forest of leafless trees represented by hat stands (Figure 6, below). I do not wish to suggest that these productions could not conjure "the soaring sense of hope, possibility, and desire that imbues utopian performatives" (Dolan, *Utopia* 7-8). As Dolan is keen to point out, utopian performatives "exceed the content of a play or performance" and audiences might find them in "even the most dystopian theatrical universe" (*Utopia* 8). Indeed, there was hope to be found in *As You Like It*'s general message of expressing your true self on your own terms through clothing. But the visions of utopia that might have been found in the Globe's *Romeo and Juliet* or the Northern Broadsides/New Vic Theatre *As You Like It* looked very different from those offered by the productions I have discussed here.

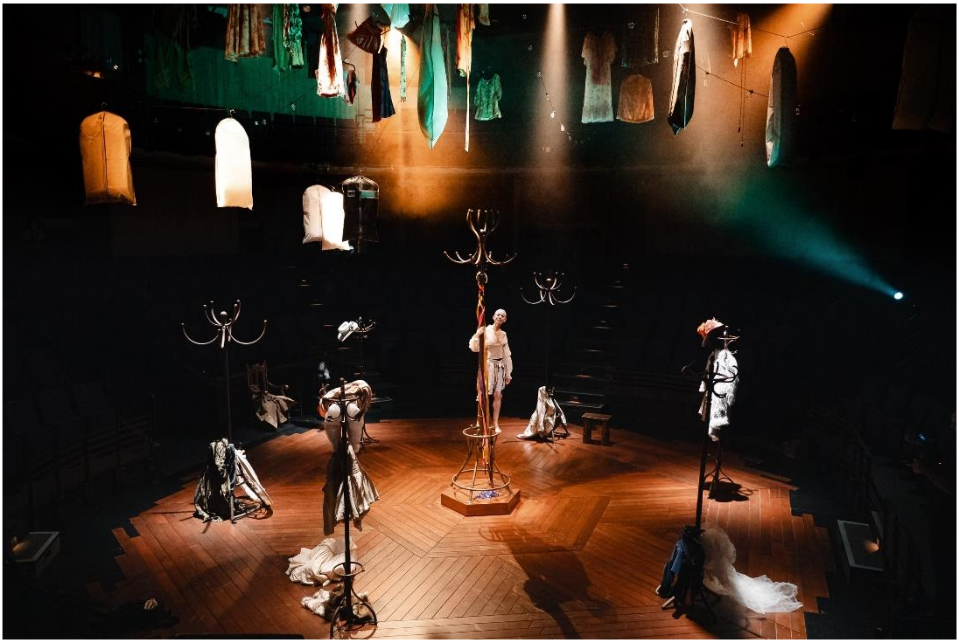

Figure 6: EM Williams as Rosalind in the 2022 Northern Broadsides and New Vic Theatre co-production of *As You Like It*, dir. Laurie Sansom
Photo by Andrew Billington, courtesy of Northern Broadsides

In other circumstances, The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* and the Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might have been dismissed as simplistic. In the post-lockdown moment, however, they offered audiences joy in both style and substance and fostered "hopeful feeling[s]" when such feelings had proved hard to find. The productions gestured towards real hope for the future in the wake of collective trauma and demonstrated the importance of theatre in challenging times.

Preparing this article has forced me consider the extent to which utopian performatives are "felt and gone even as we reach out to save them" (Dolan, *Utopia* 168). The productions I have discussed here certainly contained "moments of liminal clarity and communion, fleeting, briefly transcendent bits of profound human feeling and connection" which sprung "from alchemy between performers and spectators and their mutual confrontation with a historical present that lets them imagine a different, putatively better future" (Dolan, *Utopia* 168). However, looking back on them from the summer of 2022 has required me to ask myself if the hope I found in such joyful productions was naïve. The "better future" that they gestured towards has not materialised: Covid continues to rumble on and various crises (new and old) face the British population, and British theatres. Yet even as the summer passes and the country prepares for a winter of discontent, returning to The Globe's *Midsummer* and The HandleBards' *Romeo and Juliet* to explore the utopian performatives they contained has reminded me that there is joy to be found in a "Ninja Friar" with a water pistol and that there is hope in a theatre full of people singing along to a brass band rendition of Isley-Jasper-Isley's uplifting solidarity ballad "Caravan of Love". More seriously, the productions have provided a timely reminder that more hopeful futures are possible–we just have to "admire and believe in a utopia-in-process as a social goal," as Dolan does, "even if it remains a beautiful, intangible product of the ineffable […] or the marvelous" (170).

> One by one we're gonna stand up with the pride
> One that can't be denied
> (Stand up, stand up, stand up, stand up)
> From the highest mountain and valley low
> We'll join together with hearts of gold
>
> Now the children of the world can see
> There's a better way for us to be…
>
> Isley-Jasper-Isley, *Caravan of Love* (1985)

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Sibel İzmir*

Transformative Potential and Utopian Performative: Postdramatic *Hamlet* in Turkey

Abstract: Turkey is among those Non-Anglophone countries which have had a keen interest in Shakespeare and his plays for over two hundred years. When it comes to the staging of Shakespeare in Turkey, especially when protagonists or leading roles are considered, "overacting" is one of the most notable techniques highlighting, presumably, the spirit of the Renaissance and Jacobean times. Still, in recent years, there have been some productions which try to challenge and deconstruct the traditional ways of staging a Shakespearean play. One of such productions is *Hamlet* of Istanbul State Theatre, directed by Işıl Kasapoğlu in 2014, in which the director makes use of postdramatic theatre techniques. As the play begins, the audience sees a huge red jewel box which has been placed onto the centre of the stage. Soon after it is opened, it becomes clear that the character coming out of the box is playing and enacting not only the role of Hamlet but also many other roles in the play. Disrupting the habitual Shakespearean staging which heavily relies on mimesis in a closed "fictive cosmos" (Lehmann 22), the production, more strikingly, allows for an innovative Shakespearean acting as an innovative Shakespearean acting possible as the actor acts out all the major roles, such as Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius, etc., in such various ways as holding dummies in his hands and enacting their roles in monologues and dialogues. Fusing Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre with Jill Dolan's argumentation on utopian performative, this study will investigate how postdramatic theatre techniques challenge the traditional Shakespearean performance and contends that postdramatic theatre techniques used in Kasapoğlu's *Hamlet* contribute to the utopian performative and the possibility of creating a utopian impulse in the audience. The paper thus will claim that postdramatic performance of *Hamlet* renders a utopian performative possible by presenting a transformative potential in the audience members which engages in our present moment.

Keywords: utopian performative, postdramatic *Hamlet* in Turkey, postdramatic theatre, Jill Dolan, Hans Thies-Lehmann.

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Introduction and the Context

Writing about William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and exploring this much-studied play in the context of staging utopias might seem interesting, weird or even unsettling. How to put *Hamlet* side by side with the concept of utopia, let alone staging it with a utopian impulse? As a tragedy abundant in horrific images and content including homicide, regicide, bloodshed, incest and treason, it is undoubtedly far away from a political project involving an ideal space. With the growing interest in adaptation studies, especially after the second half of the 20th century, a great number of Shakespeare's plays have been reproduced and rewritten across genres. Shakespeare's kings, queens, bastards, servants, villains, lovers, fairies, ghosts and many other characters find a glimpse of the new and sometimes the better (or the worse) and obtain a voice in those brand new worlds, taking the shape of stage productions, novels, movies. Appropriation has thus become a way for many directors and theatre companies to challenge the conventional methods of performing a Shakespearean play.

Turkey has also recently witnessed various non-conventional stagings of Shakespeare's plays. *Hamlet* is one of the plays Turkish directors and audiences alike most cherish. Out of the numerous *Hamlet* productions, *Hamlet* directed by Işıl Kasapoğlu, staged by Istanbul State Theatre in 2014, undoubtedly stands out owing to its anti-illusionist methods and solo performances, making extensive use of postdramatic theatre techniques. Putting together Hans-Thies Lehmann's theories on postdramatic theatre and Jill Dolan's argumentation on utopian performative, this study analyses how and in what ways the techniques of postdramatic theatre as employed in Kasapoğlu's *Hamlet* may put in motion the utopian performative in Dolan's understanding of the term. This postdramatic staging of *Hamlet* potentially creates moments of utopian performative when it selectively and overtly emphasizes the theme of corruption in Shakespeare's text. The production, by foregrounding the theme of corruption and contextualizing it in the present moment, encourages the audience to assume a critical perspective and "reinvest our energies in a different future" (Dolan 2). This study demonstrates that staging and adapting a play by Shakespeare in a specific context underlines the present agenda and focuses on how the play resonates with it to the extent that it makes the staged production break with conventional theatrical techniques that historically would reconstruct or reflect Shakespearean theatre par excellence. As Katharine A. Craik puts it, Shakespeare's works are "not only capturing emotional experiences that belong to the past but are also reimagining and reinscribing, in new ways, the interconnected actions, events and encounters, which make up affective life now" (3). The way Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is reimagined by Kasapoğlu allows the viewers to think about and within the present time due to the interaction of this postdramatic staging with the particular political context leading to a momentary utopian performative.

Contextualizing the present moment by way of a presentist approach has become popular in many adaptations in theatre. As it is proposed by Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes in *Presentist Shakespeares*, we should certainly "recognise the permanence of the present's role in all our dealings with the past. We cannot make contact with a past unshaped by our own concerns" (3). Evelyn Gajowski further explains that "presentism has developed as a theoretical and critical strategy of interpreting Shakespeare's texts in relation to contemporary political, social, and economic ideologies, discourses, and events" and it "has consequently challenged the dominant theoretical and critical practice of reading Shakespeare historically" (675). Nevertheless, it does not mean that in a presentist evaluation of a literary or dramatic text, history does not matter. On the contrary, the past and the present are to keep their intricate and inseparable bond as historicism cannot exist without a latent presentism (Grady 115). Highlighting the value of the intersection of the past with the present in works of art, especially in theatre, is an element that not only enriches our perceptions about the original work (produced in history) but also has an illuminating effect on the reception of it (produced in present). When postdramatic techniques are employed by Kasapoğlu in *Hamlet* for the Turkish political/historical context to resonate in the production, *Hamlet*'s discursive references to the theme of corruption in particular serve as a presentist stimulus that can affectively and intellectually move the cast and the audience, thus creating a utopian performative with the Turkish political context as the difficult and yet necessary emotive background.

The year 2013 in Turkey was marked by civil unrest which was sparked by the Turkish government's plans to demolish Gezi Park on Taksim Square in Istanbul in order to erect a shopping centre. When democratically held environmental protests against the demolition of the park were met with violence from the government and over 100 people were injured, some seriously, they soon turned into massive demonstrations against the government. The police used tear gas and water cannons to raid the protesters, but the unrest continued and grew in size as artists, intellectuals, and opposition MPs joined in (Letsch *The Guardian*). As Ali Bilgiç explicates in his article, although the protests started with a pro-environmental agenda, they "quickly became a form of resistance against neo-Ottomanist conservatism […] and the protests rapidly became 'transenvironmental,' where environmental concerns connected with issues such as a general lack of democracy, human rights violations, and economic problems" (267). Later in the same year, Turkey was shaken by another crisis known, also internationally, as "The 2013 corruption scandal" or "17-25 December Corruption and Bribery Operation," involving several key politicians in the government, the family members of cabinet ministers as well as a number of famous bureaucrats and businessmen. Although the corruption allegations were severely denied by the government and MPs, a cabinet reshuffle soon followed which shook the public deeply and remained on the agenda for months to follow, just like the Gezi upheaval beforehand.

One may ask about the validity of the relationship between these events which shook the Turkish social and political landscape and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which in its core may be read as a play about an intellectual with humanistic values whose father was killed by his uncle and whose main ethical dilemma concerns not only this murder, but also the marriage between his mother and uncle that he sees as unlawful and incestuous; his is the drama of the inability to act and to take revenge. Therefore, on the surface, it may not seem plausible to relate Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with the aforementioned Turkish political and social context. The crucial relation is established only indirectly between the plotline of *Hamlet* and the events in Turkey through the way *Hamlet* was directed by Işıl Kasapoğlu. His deployment of postdramatic theatre techniques with specific dramaturgical effects, the foregrounding—sometimes overemphasizing—of the theme of corruption as verbalized by Hamlet in the playtext, and more importantly, the date of the staging, following the Gezi upheaval and the alleged corruption scandal, are meaningful and not accidental. Through the focus on the political in *Hamlet*, Kasapoğlu's production contained the affective and potentially transformative potential for the audience members who could not help but read the production along the presentist lines and relate Hamlet's speeches on corruption in general to the situation in 2014, thus providing the fleeting frames for a strong, potentially cathartic emotion, becoming a utopian performative in the process.

Theatre, Utopia and Utopian Performative

Theatre is undeniably a utopian space in itself regardless of the genre or content of the play performed on the stage. According to Siân Adiseshiah, theatre is utopian since it creates a "shared performance between theatre practitioners and audience that takes place in a collective space (or 'no-space')" (3) and can be at the same time anti-utopian because traditional and conventional stagings make use of the "modes of hierarchy, exclusivity and discipline that are inscribed in the economics, cultural forms and institutions of bourgeois theatre" (3). However, as explained above, in a postdramatic production it would be possible to employ techniques that avoid an anti-utopian enactment and thus potentially lead to a creation of a pro-utopian impulse. Such a utopian configuration in theatre and theatre's potential to create a utopian space has been the focus of attention of writers, scholars, directors and theatre practitioners. Jill Dolan, in particular, discusses the notion of a utopian performative that underlines the importance of relatability of theatre and may serve as an artistic setting for inspiring social change with the emotional and intellectual needs of its audience.

Dolan's seminal book *Utopia in Performance. Finding Hope at the Theatre* (2005) reconfigures, as its title suggests, the connection between theatre and utopia as, to her, "Utopia can be a placeholder for social change, a no-place that the apparatus of theatre—its liveness, the potential it holds for real social exchange, its mortality, its openness to human interactions that life outside this magical space prohibits—can model productively" (63). Dolan describes theatre as a place of live performance bringing people together to exchange experiences of creating meaning and imagination where "fleeting intimations of a better world" can be captured (2). She bases her argument on various contemporary performances and explains that each of them created "both affective and effective feelings and expressions of hope and love" (2), not solely on individual basis but communally. Dolan explicates what she means by utopian performative:

> *Utopia in Performance* defines and charts what I call *utopian performatives*. Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. […] Utopian performatives […] make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better. (5-6)

As it is clear, Dolan emphasizes that utopian performatives contain emotionally effective moments, moments that lead to an "affective vision" of a better world. This affective moment has a fleeting connection with utopia as a philosophical and political construct; Dolan's utopia in theatre is "a utopia always in process, always only partially grasped" (6). Significantly, such moments of fleeting emotion give audiences the opportunity to think and contemplate critically, in the Brechtian sense. As a matter of fact, Dolan does not hesitate to accept that utopia in theatre does not necessarily mean that one needs to find a representation of a better place or world on the stage (reminding her readers of the literal meaning of utopia: "no place"); on the contrary, by citing from such Marxist philosophers as Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse, she confesses that she yearns for the presentation of alternative worlds on the stage. Such alternative worlds are possible in utopian performatives as they resist fixed and static structures. Exploring how performance can be used as a way of creating an emotionally meaningful and intense experience in the present moment that can transcend the current reality and inspire a hopeful vision for the future through "utopian performatives", Dolan believes that the enunciation of certain actions can create an effective outlook on a world that could potentially be improved through heightened experiences of aestheticism, generosity and connection (5-6). The author argues that live performance creates a space for people to come together, share meaningful experiences, and imagine a better world. The book investigates how different kinds of performance can bring about a sense of a larger public in which people feel connected to each other and share a vision for a future filled with hope and a more radical humanism (2).

The utopian performative often operates on embodied, visual and affective languages in a space of performance which approaches something "not-yet-set but [which] can be felt as desire" or fantasy (Dolan 7). This notion of a performative seems to be similar to Bertolt Brecht's notion of gestus (Dolan 7), which is an action in performance that shapes social relations and allows the spectator to critically contemplate upon them. Utopian performatives are a way of conveying to spectators and actors alike the possibility of a more equitable and just future. They emotionally engage those witnessing them in order to encourage civic engagement that can potentially lead to revolutionary change.

Dolan also discusses how utopias cannot be pinned down to a single prescription by referring to Bloch and Marcuse's view on art's potential to express alternatives as she believes that:

> Utopian performatives exceed the content of a play or performance; spectators might draw a utopian performative from even the most dystopian theatrical universe. Utopian performatives spring from a complex alchemy of form and content, context and location, which take shape in moments of utopia as doings, as process, as never finished gestures toward a potentially better future. (8)

This is how performance uniquely relates to the concept of utopia: it is seen as a hopeful process that continually works towards a better future. Performance has particular characteristics such as temporality and spatiality that allow it to explore the utopian in a unique way, allowing audiences to be slightly disoriented and explore imagined places, which are essential for the process of imagining utopia. Performance also provides a sort of hope, as it is a product of both the present and the past, and can offer predictions and resolutions for the future. The author believes that utopia in performance captures the fleeting nature of time creating a communal epiphany in which existing social structures are put into question (13-14).

Dolan also highlights the idea that performance has the potential to push social and political agendas forward, as demonstrated through the idea of being "passionately and profoundly stirred" in theatre. It acknowledges that people from different backgrounds experience theatre differently, and can draw on those unique experiences to advance their own cause. The author also expresses faith in the idea that emotions experienced during performances can act as a catalyst for social action. In conclusion, the text argues that theatre attendance results in a transformative experience, to serve as a powerful tool for greater social change (15). In her book, Dolan frequently contemplates on the liminal moment of theatrical reception: the very moment during the performance and just after it when you are physically in the theatre building and have not left it yet. This moment, as pointed out by Elinor Fuchs in her review of Dolan's volume, "becomes her [Dolan's] 'utopian performative,' a modelling of how it would feel to inhabit a better world" (198).

Although Jill Dolan does not mention postdramatic theatre or Hans-Thies Lehmann in her book, there are striking resemblances between the way she discusses utopian performatives that may operate in "dystopian" scenarios and Lehmann's notion of postdramatic theatre. Resisting hierarchies and presenting, rather than representing, an anti-illusionist, anti-mimetic (alternative) world in which neither the text/the plot structure, nor character(s), nor the playwright or director have absolute power, both postdramatic theatre and utopian performative try to reach equity through theatrical production.

Postdramatic Theatre

Breaking away with all sorts of hierarchies in a staged production is one of the hallmarks of postdramatic theatre. In his ground-breaking book *Postdramatic Theatre,* Hans Thies-Lehmann argues that after 1960s many theatre productions in the West toppled the hierarchy of the dramatic text over its production calling for an "equal treatment of the playtext, playwright, director, performers, costumes, décor, etc. in order to subvert the rooted hierarchal order" (Izmir 71). In Lehmann's view, in this new kind of theatre, "staged text (*if* text is staged) is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition" (46, original emphasis). In other words, postdramatic theatre fosters the idea that the text does not have the upper hand as it usually has in conventional theatre; as pointed out by Markus Wessendorf, the idea is that "the other components of the mise en scène are no longer subservient to the text" (2003). Traditional theatre has historically enacted stories using mimesis, with the plotline set in a closed, fictional world. Disruptive elements such as asides or direct audience address have been present, but still they have indicated a unified world. According to Lehmann, postdramatic theatre blurs the line between fiction and reality. In some productions, this is achieved through what Lehmann calls "theatre solos and monologies" (125), which is also the case in the production explored in this study. In his book, he explicates how postdramatic theatre contains theatre solos and monologies with the restagings of classical dramas or narrative texts into one-person monologues. This can include iconic works such as *Faust, Story of the Maidservant Zerline, Hamlet* and *Orlando,* in which actors have taken on the challenge of playing multiple roles in a single production. Through these efforts, renowned literary works are given new life allowing for direct political address and self-expression. Thus, postdramatic monologues are used to create a sense of reality, blurring the line between the imaginary and real world (Lehmann 125). In other words, postdramatic theatre, through the use of monology, moves away from reliance on representational language, and emphasizes the physical presence of the actor. Monology is thus used to create the effect of isolating the body and voice of the performer, and using their idiosyncrasies as part of the theatrical reality. This is considered a symptom and index of postdramatic theatre, as it is conceptually different from traditional drama (Lehmann 128). Given this egalitarian treatment, postdramatic staging of a text in general has the capacity of reinscribing or restaging texts in utopian/dystopian modes by building bridges between the past and present.

Postdramatic *Hamlet* and Utopian Performative in 2014 Turkey

In order to describe how through postdramatic theatre it is possible to achieve what in Dolan's nomenclature is called a utopian performative one needs to address the ways in which utopian performative is generated through the postdramatic aesthetic of Kasapoğlu's *Hamlet.* Through a spectacular and striking solo performance by Bülent Emin Yarar, Kasapoğlu's *Hamlet* problematises such concepts of conventional theatre as representation, illusion, wholeness, character, and plot structure. The original playtext, translated into Turkish by Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu, was abridged collaboratively by the director, the actor and the dramaturg Zeynep Avcı, making the performance last for one and a half hours. Zeynep Avcı clarifies in an interview that in the creation of the text:

> Shakespeare's unique poetry, actuality, universality and, of course, theatrical elements were brought to the fore. It was desired that the audience listened to Shakespeare to the fullest. Some very famous lines were left out.[1]

Likewise, Kasapoğlu in an interview states that in the formation of the text the important thing was to be able to say what they wanted to and "to shout." Upon being asked the secret of *Hamlet* remaining topical, Kasapoğlu gives the following answer:

> The play visualizes how we live through the dilemmas we fall into and therefore mirrors us. Indecision is modern man's greatest predicament, and Hamlet has a lot to do with the present. This is what makes the classics immortal, they are always up to date.

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[1] Translations of interviews from Turkish into English are my own unless otherwise stated.

As an established and well-known director with many other successful productions, Kasapoğlu surprised many of his audience members who had expected to watch *Hamlet* staged with recourse to conventional methods of performance and mise en scène and closely following the basic plot known from the drama. The spectators' surprise can be well connected already to the design of the production poster, where the names of the director and other contributors are accompanied by the name of only one actor. This may be something shocking for the audience used to watching conventional ensemble-based Shakespeare performances. Challenging the habits of the audience is not an easy task; however, change in theatre often starts with challenges of this nature that are meant to transform the viewers and their habits and thought processes. As Peter Brook phrases it: "drama is exposure; it is confrontation; it is contradiction and it leads to analysis, construction, recognition and eventually to an awakening of understanding" (42).

The dramaturg Zeynep Avcı underlines this connection with the audience in her interview, arguing that Shakespeare as a playwright "has proven that theatre adds great value to human life as entertainment. I emphasize: entertainment! In other words, he is a man who proves that theatre is a magical art form that wants to entertain people, make people laugh and cry and sometimes excite them about the state of the world" (Avcı online). "Exciting people about the state of the world" while making them laugh and cry resides at the core of the theatre here; that excitement in Avcı's statement has a lot to do with creating an affective understanding of the world through the staging. Even

Hamlet
T.C.
KÜLTÜR VE TURİZM BAKANLIĞI
DT
DEVLET
TİYATROLARI
2013
2014

Bülent Emin Yarar in *Hamlet* (2017-2018)
(© The Turkish State Theatres Refik Ahmet SevengilDigital Theatre Archive and Library)

though the political context of the production was not mentioned in the interview as such, the phrasing of this passage suggests that while entertainment is the principal preoccupation of "safe" politically conventional stagings, this production promises excitement which in-between the lines is meant to be read politically: after all, that excitement is not connected with the entertaining potential of theatre as magic *per se* but with what happens outside, in the world, in its present "state".

Kasapoğlu revolutionizes the Turkish tradition of staging *Hamlet* by turning the playtext into a monologue, a practice rarely seen in modern Turkish theatre before.[2] Through such an insistence on the form, the theatrical conventions are de-hierarchized so that a non-hierarchical structure can emerge to further destabilise and potentially subvert the mimetic order but also challenge the politically "safe" ways of narrating things theatrically. The overall effect of achieving harmony of feeling and thought that realises itself as contentment is common in mainstream theatre, especially in comedy; here, it is questioned. What is potentially questioned through the alternations of form is not only, or not solely, the theatrical hierarchy but the hierarchy in the outside world. As Lehmann puts forth,

> in postdramatic theatrical practice: different genres are combined in a performance (dance, narrative theatre, performance, etc.); all means are employed with equal weighting; play, object and language point simultaneously in different directions of meaning and thus *encourage a contemplation that is at once relaxed and rapid*. (87, emphasis mine)

Once Kasapoğlu's production starts, the viewers see a massive red jewellery box placed in the centre of the stage. Shortly after it is opened, it becomes clear that the actor coming out of the box is playing not only the role of Hamlet but also many other roles in the play. Unlike traditional Shakespearean productions, which rely heavily on mimesis in a closed "fictive cosmos" (Lehmann 22), this production from the very onset disrupts hierarchies known from conventional theatre and foregrounds specific scenes/speeches that relate to one pervasive theme and set the tenor of the whole.

The lack of curtain-drawing, again an element rarely seen in Turkish modern theatre, strengthens the already mentioned effect of surprise achieved when the actor emerges out of the red, massive jewellery box. It may well signify the play and the protagonist's exceptional status but, more importantly, signals the overarching metaphor underlining the production's focus on corrupt governance. Whatever the box may symbolize, right from the very beginning the viewer is surprised by the production's episodic structure initiated by the famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy (3:1). Subversion of the playtext occurs not only through its cutting but also shuffling the order of the events, as the production uses only chosen scenes from the play: Fortinbras is never mentioned; Laertes has no lines and Polonius, Ophelia and Hamlet address him without getting any answer. Once the jewellery box is opened, the actor utters the first six words, not in Turkish but in English: "To be or not to be;" he then switches to Turkish and looking directly at the audience raises his voice considerably, which allows him to underline what comes through as a heavily politicized message: he exclaims how conscience turns everyone into cowards and ends his speech in tears.

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[2] Lehmann points out: "[o]ne aspect of postdramatic theatre revolves essentially around the monologue. It offers monologues of diverse kinds; it turns dramatic texts into monological texts and also chooses non-theatrical literary texts to present them in monologue form" (127).

The abrupt beginning of the performance with a recognizable scene from the middle of the play and the mixing of languages create a momentary confusion which leads to a potential rediscovery of communication across multiplicating signs. The scene seems to capitalise on what Lehmann discusses as simultaneity of signs which refers to the ideas of parataxis and non-hierarchy: unlike in the case of dramatic theatre, in which signals are communicated at one moment in order to stress their centrality, postdramatic theatre fosters the idea of simultaneity (Lehmann 87). On stage, the sounds of language are presented simultaneously; therefore, they are only partially understood, especially when different languages are spoken. Thus, when the principle of a single dramatic action is dismissed, the audience is given the opportunity of choosing and deciding "which of the simultaneously presented events they want to engage with" (Lehmann 88). Postdramatic theatre attempts to challenge the conventions of dramaturgical techniques and sign density by using techniques such as an abundance of images or an intentional absence of signs. This is to provoke the viewers to use their own imagination to fill in the gaps of the production and inform the narrative instead of relying solely on dense signposting navigating the plot.

By choosing to use the English version of "to be or not to be" the production signals alterity, achieving an alienation effect ameliorated to a certain extent by the audience's knowledge of the English phrase. Bülent Emin Yarar's performance as Hamlet capitalises on such defamiliarization as a technique achieved mainly through voice changes, diverse intonation patterns and diversified pitch. When he holds the crown in his hand and delivers the speech of Hamlet contemplating suicide, while staring directly at the audience, it is difficult to miss out on the theme of corruption, which is intentionally emphasized yet again: "O God, God,/How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable/ Seem to me all the uses of this world!/ […] tis an unweeded garden/That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature/Possess it merely" (1:2:132-137).

Bülent Emin Yarar in *Hamlet* (2017-2018)
(© The Turkish State Theatres Refik Ahmet SevengilDigital Theatre Archive and Library)

Without doubt, in the scenes when the actor in the role of Hamlet philosophises on corruption and the weakness of the human condition, directly engaging the audience, he creates potentially transformative moments, in which the audience contextualises the monologue and through the embeddedness in the "here and now" of Hamlet/actor establishes parallelisms with their own "here and now". There are more moments that establish this sense of connectedness and presentist continuity until the ending comes: the lights are off and sound effects indicative of sword and fighting are heard until the stage lights up and the actor speaks one of the most stunning lines from *Macbeth*: "What's done cannot be undone." He then continues to call upon the audience to bear witness to the story of the Prince of Denmark, fashioning the viewers into a collective Horatio: "in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, /To tell my story" (5:2:355-356). Then he cries vehemently. The lights go out and the jewellery box is closed.

The production renders mimetic illusion almost impossible due to its de-hierarchization of theatrical signs: there is no proper plot to follow for the audience and the events are not acted out but narrated. The use of stage props like glove dummies, satin cloths symbolising blood (red) and drowning (river; blue) also add to the anti-representational quality. As Lehmann indicates, "The principle of narration is an essential trait of postdramatic theatre; the theatre becomes the site of a narrative act. […] One often feels as though one is witnessing not a scenic representation but a narration of the play presented" (109). This quality of becoming a witness to the struggle narrated by the actor in the role of Hamlet seems to be of key significance in the way “the present time” is contextualised for the audience. Kasapoğlu’s production confronts the audience members with un uneasy reaction to the way the “here and now” is present and governed, and provokes the audience members by tasking them with bearing witness to the story they have just heard. It is crucial to highlight that the consequence in such theatre “is a changed attitude on the part of the spectator” (Lehmann 87). This “changed attitude” is built on a sense of empathetic listening, on being captivated by the narration, of being changed by it, provided that the sense of communal experience of the “here and now” has been established during the performance. Although content-wise, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* can be described as anything but utopian, in expressing the suppressed longing for a better future and despair for the disenchanting present, Işıl Kasapoğlu’s *Hamlet* can be thought of as what Dragan Klaić sees as: “dystopian drama [which] is in fact utopian; it involves utopian ambitions while describing total collapse” (3-4). In this particular case, transforming a well-known dramatic text into a monologue by means of postdramatic aesthetic qualities makes utopian performative possible since it enables a sense of shared predicament between the actor/Hamlet and the viewers/collective witnesses. As Dolan explains, “utopian performatives exceed the content of a play or performance; spectators might draw a utopian performative from even the most dystopian theatrical universe” (8). The production renders a utopian performative possible by presenting a transformative potential to the audience members, engaging them in our present moment by way of de-hierarchization of theatrical signs which translate into a resistance against the mimetic, but also political order. The production depicts not a finished product or a finite world but fashions the play into a monologue, a process which is in parallel with what Dolan thinks of utopia:

> Thinking of utopia as processual, as an index to the possible, to the “what if,” rather than a more restrictive, finite image of the “what should be,” allows performance a hopeful cast, one that can experiment with the possibilities of the future in ways that shine back usefully on a present that's always, itself, in process. Such a view of utopia prevents it from settling into proscription, into the kind of fascism that inevitably attends a fully drawn idea of a better world. (13)

Conclusion

Hamlet of Istanbul State Theatre directed by Işıl Kasapoğlu in 2014 stands out from other productions due to its anti-illusionist methods and solo performance, utilizing postdramatic theatre techniques. The production’s overall effect and the striving to create a utopian impulse may be seen as a subjective reflection, as this study is not based on scientific data analysis made among audience members. The production's staging time coincided with politically chaotic times in Turkey, however, and this is a context that weighed heavily on its performances in 2014, when many citizens in Turkey were feeling overwhelmed with the corruption of the authoritative system. Although *Hamlet* does not explicitly dwell on these issues, Hamlet's soliloquies on his disappointment with humanity, his comparison of an ideal king with an evil tyrant, and his ruminations on the meaning (lessness) of life might all be taken to reflect the general dissatisfaction among the republicans in Turkey. Jill Dolan argues that utopian performatives form "meaningful, moving, even transformational moments at the theatre" (33), supporting her argument with David Román's notion of "'critical generosity,' through which he argues that performance should be taken on its own terms, and read through the exigencies of a social moment, offering cultural criteria equally as important as more straightforward aesthetic ones" (33). In this respect, Kasapoğlu's *Hamlet* came across just like "us": "Hamlet's soliloquies have come to represent the ultimate articulation of a fraught, reflective consciousness: modern man captured in the process of emotional and intellectual formation" (Smith 163).

In this production, postdramatic techniques contributed to a potential emergence of the utopian performative, as argued by Jill Dolan, achieved through defamilarization of the audience by the actor and through stressing the overarching metaphor of corruption to provide an empathetic platform for presentist contextualisation. The study argues that staging and adapting a play by Shakespeare in contemporary times has more to do with the present agenda than the play itself, especially if the production breaks away with conventional theatre. The reimagining and reinscribing of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by Kasapoğlu in a presentist and postdramatic mode can stimulate the audience to think about the present time due to its interaction with the political context. As indicated by Dolan, the fleeting nature of utopian performances can leave us feeling both melancholic and hopeful as such moments could be short-lived. These performances offer a glimpse of the potential to understand what redemption and humanism mean and a world where our similarities unite us instead of our differences (Dolan 8). At such emotionally resonant moments, imagining a better world and future or an alternative one can be labelled as utopian performative and articulates a transformative potential in the audience even though it might be fleeting and elusive.

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From Race and Orientalism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to Caste and Indigenous Otherness on the Indian Screen

Abstract: The article discusses an Indian film adaptation of William Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* entitled *10ml Love* (dir. Sharat Katariya, 2012). There is little scholarship on *10ml Love*, which has been studied mainly as an independent film in Hinglish that depicts the lives of the cosmopolitan youth in urban India. Drawing upon recent readings of the play that identify elements of racism and whiteness as well as an analysis from an Orientalist lens that sees India as a gendered utopia, I suggest that the film adaptation highlights not racial/white supremacy but caste supremacy; furthermore, it indulges not in Orientalist tropes but tropes of indigenous Otherness based on religion, gender, caste, and class. I argue that this film presents two opposing political utopias—a right-wing utopia that stands for the maintenance of traditional values and a left-wing utopia that attempts to challenge, question, and subvert the conservative order. However, *10ml Love* seems to endorse neither of the two utopias wholly; its reality appears to lie between the two utopias, a reality that is marked by stereotypes of Otherness. This paper analyses the audio-visual depiction of the tension between the utopias at both the ends of the political spectrum, as well as the realities of Otherness created by the presence of various social locations and identities in Indian society.

Keywords: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *10ml Love*, Indian cinema, independent film, film adaptation, race, Orientalism, Otherness, caste, religion, gender, class, utopia in film.

Introduction

Multiple interpretations of the concept of utopia have been suggested with respect to William Shakespeare's 1595 play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—or the *Dream* as it is commonly known. Jonathan Gil Harris points out: "'Utopia,' after all, is not only a pun on the Greek *eutopos* (a good place) but also *utopos* (no place). As Theseus reminds us in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'behind

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a local habitation and a name' is 'airy nothing' (5.1.17, 16)" (173). Hugh Grady proposes a reading that identifies the green world in this play as consisting of "two separate realms: a utopia and a dystopia […] one of them an idealised but momentary disturbed aesthetic realm, the other a jungle of dangerous sexual desire" (76). And James Stone compares India to a gendered utopia seen from an Orientalist lens owing to the multiple references to this country in the play: a pregnant Indian woman and her son who finds himself in Titania's care after his mother's death; the "spiced Indian air at night" (2:1:126) referring to marketplaces full of fragrant spices that had attracted merchants from several parts of Europe to various former colonies; the comparison between big pregnant bellies and ships loaded with merchandise that make us think of "traders on the flood" (2:1:129) and their acts of (forceful) impregnation of local women as part of the colonial ventures that the mercantilists would soon embark upon.[1] Stone suggests, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* bodies forth two distinct sexual spaces, alternative and antithetical to each other: a world of fantasmatic male sexual abandon (Theseus and the male lovers, human and fairy), and a female utopia like India […]" (107).

Stone's take is particularly relevant in the case of *10ml Love*, a 2012 Indian film adaptation of the *Dream* that was directed by the independent filmmaker Sharat Katariya. With respect to the Orientalist tropes in this film adaptation (or the lack thereof), Varsha Panjwani has noted in *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations*: "[…] the play is indigenised but not orientalised so that India is not viewed as 'something strange, something other;' rather Shakespeare is viewed through an urban Indian gaze" (Panjwani 187). This urban gaze is emphasised by the genre of the film, its setting and the choice of language(s). Trivedi and Chakravarti, the editors of *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations* note in the introduction that a film like *10ml Love*, set in the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai, "represent[s] a new genre of independent (indie) non-Bollywood and non-parallel/-art, low-budget films made in 'Hinglish,' a combination of Hindi and English which is spoken by a large section of educated, urban Indian youth." (14) However, I argue that this very urban Indian gaze of a Hinglish indie like *10ml Love* ends up creating a dichotomy not between the West and an Orientalised India as its Other, but between elite Indians in dominant positions and several indigenous Indian Others owing to their religious, linguistic, gender, caste, and class identities.

Jonathan Gil Harris highlights the presence of "polyglot linguistic markers" (60) in *10ml Love*—apart from Hindi and English, some characters speak a smattering of Punjabi or Urdu. These languages co-exist naturally in the film because its characters come from different linguistic communities, from various parts of India, live in diverse neighbourhoods of Mumbai, and are affiliated with multiple religious groups. For example, Hindi and Hinglish films tend to stereotype people from Christian communities as largely English-speaking; those born into the Muslim faith as likely to be proficient in Urdu, while Punjabi speakers typically belong to the dominant Khatri caste. People from Hindu families usually speak English (a sign of postcolonial privilege) or Hinglish if they are from an affluent background, and Hindi or any other regional Indian language if they are not from a well-to-do family or a less "posh" geographical region; and those proficient in English tend to communicate in a regional language with those "lower" than them in the social hierarchy.

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[1] All citations from the play have been taken from Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen's *William Shakespeare: Complete Works.*

As for *10ml Love,* this film portrays a romantic relationship between Shweta/Hermia who is from a prosperous family and Peter/Lysander who comes from a modest background. Shweta and Peter were born into the Hindu and Christian faiths respectively, as indicated by their names. Shweta's father/Egeus insists on arranging her marriage to a fellow well-to-do Hindu (and in all likelihood, a fellow Khatri) called Neel/Demetrius, with whom Shweta's childhood friend Minnie/Helena (presumably Christian, as suggested by her name) is madly in love. Shweta and Neel agree to the match, and their wedding serves as the inciting incident for the entry into the green world—whether one reads it as *utopos* or "airy nothing," or as a dystopia or "a jungle of dangerous sexual desire," "a world of fantasmatic male sexual abandon." It is a love potion called *Josh-e-jawaani* (literally, enthusiasm of youth) used by a Muslim apothecary named Ghalib/Oberon from a working-class background that leads to the many accidents and misunderstandings that the play is associated with—including a dalliance between Roshni/Titania (religion not explicitly mentioned but likely to be a Hindu woman) and Chand/Bottom (a Hindu man). The religious, caste and class identities of these characters are the key to understanding the film because it is just before Shweta and Neel's wedding ceremony that Shweta elopes with Peter, subverting a marriage arranged by her father and choosing a man from a different faith and financial class. The inciting incident ends up uniting Minnie and Neel, while Ghalib and Peter also strike up a friendship. In other words, these situations lead to what I will term a left-wing secular utopia that celebrates love and friendship between the film's characters who are associated with the major religions in India—Hinduism (almost 80 per cent of the population), Islam (a little over 14 per cent) and Christianity (just over 2 per cent).

On the other hand, a right-wing utopia is presented by a play-within-the-film sequence, on the lines of *Pyramus and Thisbe,* the play-within-the-play in the *Dream*. *10ml Love* has some of its characters rehearse for a staging of the *Ramlila*, a folk drama that celebrates the life of Rama—the eponymous Hindu character of the ancient Indian epic *Ramayana*—as a parallel track. For our analysis, it is vital to note that Ram Rajya (the rule of Ram, also spelt as Rama) is often glorified as the ultimate goal of the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP, India’s currently-ruling Hindu nationalist right-wing political party. Considering that *10ml Love* was released in 2012—two years before the BJP came into power at the centre and in various states—the film can be read as foreshadowing the rise of right-wing politics in India that is hinged on promoting Hindutva, or the essence of “Hinduness.” By staunchly opposing inter-faith marriages and reiterating its belief in the patriarchal order and hierarchies of caste (or *varna*, as the social stratification was known in pre-colonial times), the *Ramlila* track is the epitome of a right-wing utopian situation. In other words, it symbolises the return to India’s pre-colonial as well the pre-Islamic “golden past” that eulogises Rama as a *maryada purushottam* or ideal man. This status is conferred upon Rama because he is said to have fulfilled his patriarchal duty as a king by suspecting his wife Sita of infidelity after she was kidnapped (she later walked through fire to prove her “purity”) as well as his caste duty by killing a “low” caste man called Shambuka because the latter had dared to transgress the caste hierarchy.

It would thus not be far-fetched to state that this analysis of the play-within-the-film which glorifies caste supremacy could be compared to the recent trend of exploring race as we know it today in early modern literature, in opposition to the oft-made claim in the past that associating race and racism with early modern texts would be anachronistic. For example, in *The Cambridge Companion to Race and Shakespeare,* Ayanna Thompson discusses the construction of whiteness and Englishness in Shakespeare’s works as “race-making and racecraft in the service of racism, whose aim is to create justifiable systemic, structural, and material inequalities” (31):

> If you ask today in the 2020s if the concept of race existed for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the answer is an emphatic yes. Yes, the concept of race existed. Yes, racialized epistemologies existed and were employed and deployed. And, yes, Shakespeare himself engages in both the symbolic and materialistic elements that comprise race-making. Yes, Shakespeare and race are coeval; they grew up as contemporaries. (Thompson 21)

Similarly, in a 2021 online lecture entitled “Shakespeare, Race and Performance,” Farah Karim-Cooper shares an anecdote related to the terms “Ethiope” and “tawny Tartar” used by Lysander to reject Hermia in the *Dream*: “Away, you Ethiope, out tawny Tartar… This language makes me think of when I was told […] by a passer-by outside Waterloo station not too long ago, ‘Go home, Paki.’ He might as well have said to me, ‘Out, tawny Tartar’” (online). In keeping with the above manner of interpretation, we can state that the following lines from the *Dream* could also have racial implications: “Call you me fair? That fair again unsay, Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!” (1:1:184-185); “Who will not change a raven for a dove?” (2:2:114); “This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss" (3:2:144); "That pure congealed white; high Taurus snow, fanned with the eastern wind turns into a crow" (3:2:141-142); "The lover all as frantic sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt" (5:1:10-11).

Right-Wing Utopia or Ram Rajya: Hindu Nationalism, Caste Supremacy and Male Privilege

Caste supremacy is signalled at the very beginning of the film via the establishing shot. We see a medium close-up of a man gently blowing on an oil lamp to keep the flame burning in the darkness. What is clearly visible is his *janeu* or "holy" thread that is typically worn across the left shoulder by Indian men belonging to the "top" three categories of the Hindu caste hierarchy. In the establishing shot, it is first wrapped behind his right ear as is the custom while performing tasks that could endanger its "purity" (lighting the lamp in this case), and just after that, the man frees the *janeu* from behind his ear and tucks it back into his *kurta*, a knee-length traditional Indian outfit that is usually worn over *pyjamas* or loose pants. The slight low angle adopted by the camera as he walks down the stairs emphasises his superiority in his entourage. Through the scenes that follow—within the first two minutes of the film—we are made to understand that the man in question is called Ganshubhai; he is not only the head cook hired to prepare food for a wedding but is also in charge of an amateur drama group.

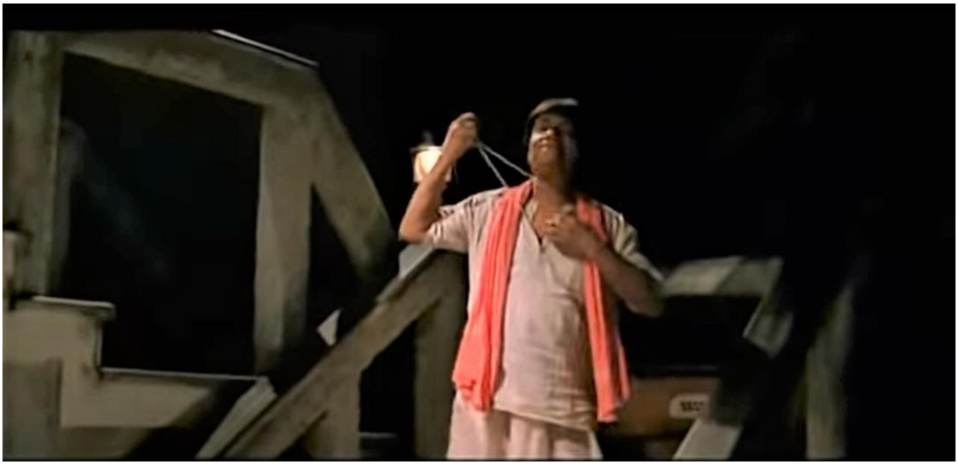

Figure 1: The head cook/theatre director Ganshubhai is shown adjusting his *janeu* or white "holy" thread that is a symbol of caste supremacy (0:46').[2]

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[2] All images from the film have been taken from https://youtu.be/kdXgxi5_RwQ

Although Ganshubhai visibly belongs to a lower financial class than the families of the bride and the groom, his *janeu* as well as the fact that he has been hired as a cook for a wedding hint at the possibility of him being a Brahmin. The food cooked by Brahmins is still generally seen as the epitome of "purity"—the "higher" the caste of the person, the higher up they are on the scale of purity/pollution. According to this scale, the Brahmins (priests) are the "purest," followed by the Kshatriyas (nobles and warriors), the Vaishyas (merchants) and the Shudras (peasants and manual workers). Those considered too "low" to belong to the *varna* system (the former untouchables, some of whom have adopted the political identity of Dalit, literally meaning "broken") are seen as the most "polluted" and "polluting." There is, therefore, to this day a demand for cooks from the Brahmin caste in India as well as in the Indian diaspora abroad. *10ml Love*'s establishing shot with only Ganshubhai could thus be read as a representation of the lasting "superiority" of Brahmins in Indian society and their "pure" status that makes them apt to be hired as cooks for auspicious occasions like weddings. Nonetheless, the *Ramlila* track in the film that features the cooks as theatre actors cannot be categorically declared to *endorse* caste supremacy. It could also be considered a critique of the caste hierarchy owing to the depiction of Ganshubhai as petty and unreasonable instead of epitomising the wisdom and maturity that is conventionally associated with Brahmins.

In spite of Chand—apparently one of the best actors in the drama group—proving himself apt to play the roles of Rama (the hero) and even Ravana (the villain), Ganshubhai relegates him to the non-speaking role of Hanuman (a celibate monkey). All of Chand's "auditions" are ridiculed by Ganshubhai, leading the rest of the group to join in the mockery. Chand's first "audition" is for the role of Ravana; as he stands up to separate himself from the rest of the group, the camera pans left to show him in the middle of the frame, a medium shot taken from a low angle emphasising his dominance as he recites his lines. However, although Chand is in the foreground, it is one of the characters in shallow focus in the background who is ultimately chosen to play Ravana. The latter happens to be hard of hearing—a detail that is repeatedly used for comic relief in the film—and Chand jokingly refers to his hearing aid as his *janeu*, indicating the latter's possible "high" caste status as well. Chand's "audition" for Rama is sneered at in a similar fashion although Chand folds his hands and falls at the director's feet to request him for the role, a slight high angle shot framing Chand in a vulnerable position. Ganshubhai ultimately picks a character with a pronounced stutter to play the part of Rama, again seemingly for comical effect. We later learn that the pettiness stemmed from the fact that Chand's late father (the former head of the *Ramlila*) had allowed Ganshubhai to play only minor roles throughout his career.

Ganshubhai is therefore unlike Quince in the *Dream*'s play-within-the-play sequence, who assigns the lead role of Pyramus to the character of Bottom who accepts it without any hesitation. Chand is also unlike Bottom when it comes to playing the male protagonist's female love interest in the *Ramlila*. Whereas Bottom offers to play the role of Thisbe too (a role that Flute balks at playing, even with a mask and a high-pitched voice: "Nay, faith, let not me play a woman. I have a beard coming." (1:2:36)), the question of Chand proposing to act as Sita does not even arise. He is too stereotypically "masculine"—tall, muscular, with a deep voice. Instead, Ganshubhai offers the role of Sita to a younger and slimmer man, whose immediate reaction is to refuse playing a woman. The pretext for this rejection is presented through a pun; the character says that people would call him "good" if he played a woman, the word "good" in Hindi being slang for a homosexual man. Chand gives Ganshubhai a demonstration of the meaning of "good" in Hindi by pinching the latter's derrière, which further angers him. The camera remains static during this scene, allowing the viewers to focus on the reactions and movements of the characters.

In terms of parallels between the plots of Shakespeare's play and Katariya's film, Pyramus is "a lover, that kills himself most gallant for love" (1:2:20) in *Pyramus and Thisbe*, while it is Sita who is willing to risk death not to prove her love but her "purity" in the *Ramlila*. Another difference between *Pyramus and Thisbe* and the *Ramlila* is that there is no final show of the *Ramlila* in the film unlike *Pyramus and Thisbe* that is performed at the end of the source play. However, the few instances when the cooks/dramatists are shown on screen after a rehearsal or even during a regular conversation, they chant proclamations to repeatedly hail Rama in unison: *Siyapati Ramchandra ki jai*, with added non-diegetic background music emphasising their fervour. These chants are also characteristic of a right-wing utopia although the absence of a full-fledged *Ramlila* performance could signal the dominance of a left-wing perspective.

Left-Wing Utopia: Attempts to Transcend Barriers of Religion, Language, Caste and Class

Despite the marriage arranged for Shweta and Neel by their parents, it is interfaith love that triumphs at the end. The presence of two Hindu-Christian couples—Shweta and Peter, as well as Neel and Minnie—is a sign of open-mindedness that veers away from the conservativeness of the parallel track of the *Ramlila* featuring the cooks/dramatists. We also learn that Roshni and Ghalib had a "love marriage" as opposed to a conventional arranged marriage usually fixed by the parents and extended family of the bride and groom; it is highly likely that Roshni was born into a Hindu family although her name is also found among members of the Muslim faith. These three relationships can be seen as part of a left-wing secular utopia that encourages love and friendship between the film's characters who are associated with the three major religions in India—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Three distinct political factions have been associated with the left in India's political history: (i) the Indian National Congress, simply known as the Congress in popular parlance, which is India's "grand old party" with a centre/centre-left leaning that was established in the year 1885 and was instrumental in the freedom struggle from the British; (ii) the Communist Party of India that was founded four decades after the establishment of the Congress with the aim to bring about equality among people from various economic strata of society; (iii) the Depressed Classes Foundation and the Independent Labour Party that were created in 1930 and 1936 respectively in order to agitate for the rights of people belonging to marginalised caste backgrounds.

Although the Congress constitutes the official opposition to the BJP, it would be inaccurate to state that the former party is communist or anti-caste. It is definitely more inclusive of people from various religious, caste and class backgrounds than the BJP but the dominating elements have been Hindu men from privileged caste and class locations for the most part. *10ml Love* was released when the Congress government was still in power at the centre and in various states, and this film appears to echo the ideology of this political party because of the prominence it initially gives to the Hindu Punjabi Khatri men who decide on a caste-endogamous marriage to retain caste and class status in society, in keeping with laws that date back to the ancient period in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, just as an ancient Athenian law that makes Egeus proclaim in the source play: "And she is mine, and all my right to her, I do estate unto Demetrius" (1:1:100), ancient laws in the Indian subcontinent detailed in a text called the *Manusmriti* ordained fathers to choose suitable grooms for their daughters, in other words, grooms from the same religious, linguistic and caste community as their own. An excerpt from the *Manusmriti* translated by George Buhler (3) reads: "The gift of a daughter, after decking her (with costly garments) and honouring (her by presents of jewels), to a man learned in the Veda and of good conduct, whom (the father) himself invites, is called the Brahma rite. III: 27" (online). Caste-endogamous marriages remain the norm in twenty-first century India, and, therefore, it is not particularly surprising that in *10ml Love* both Shweta's and Neel's parents convince their children to have an arranged marriage with each other because they both have the same religious, linguistic and caste backgrounds—Hindu, Punjabi and (most probably) Khatri. Contrary to Hermia who rejects Demetrius in the source play, Shweta agrees to the match with Neel and their marriage is accordingly fixed within a month of the "arrangement"—a sure sign of the social conditioning that Indians go through ever since childhood.

Also, and perhaps more importantly for our demonstration of the film's ostensible endorsement of the Congress party's ideology, Shweta's father is far from calling for a Hindutva-inspired honour killing, unlike Egeus who called for

Lysander's death when the latter eloped with his daughter: "I beg the law, the law, upon his head (4:1:148)." The Congress party has been often accused of appeasing religious minorities, and the fact that no opposition to inter-faith romance is expressed in the film's denouement can be taken for acceptance of the same—albeit grudgingly. And indeed, in the last ten minutes of the film, after the effects of the love potion have worn off, the two Hindu-Christian couples (Shweta and Peter, and Minnie and Neel) are no longer in the "blue world" of forbidden love and lust with the screen bathed in a deep electric blue—the equivalent of the source play's "green world"—yet no forces from the "real" world of the film's diegesis intervene to separate them. The transition from fantasy to reality is depicted through shots of Shweta and Peter in the woods. We hear soothing non-diegetic music as the camera tilts down to show us leafy trees and the couple asleep/unconscious in the foliage. The background sound stops abruptly and is replaced by diegetic sounds of birds chirping and humming, which signals the couple's exit from the "blue world" as they regain consciousness.

Shweta's definitive split from Neel is emphasised via a visual separation of the couples. While Shweta and Peter awaken in the woods, Neel and Minnie are pictured by the mountains after they leave the "blue world." Shots of a disappointed Minnie, telling Neel that he does not love her anymore as they are no longer under the influence of the love potion, are interspersed with reverse shots of Neel realising that he actually loves only Minnie, and are soon replaced by two-shots of the embracing couple. Although it is not shown in the film, we can presume that both the couples will go on to have "love" marriages. As for Ghalib and Roshni, they had a love marriage (most probably a Hindu-Muslim inter-faith one), which can be read as an attempt to dissent against the right-wing's Hindutva utopia. At one point, Ghalib's mother taunts her son for being hen-pecked and unable to subjugate his wife Roshni. She puts it down to his "progressiveness" for having indulged in a love marriage as opposed to a traditional arranged marriage. This scene depicts Ghalib's mother from a low angle that emphasises her dominance over her son and her power in the relationship dynamics. However, the viewers of the film know that despite Ghalib's insecurity and jealousy, and his mother's misogynistic bickering, they are meant to side with Ghalib and Roshni because their love marriage stands for a breaking away from the conservative right-wing's utopia that especially tends to target Muslims.

What is also part of the film's left-wing utopia is female characters asserting themselves in the face of the patriarchy. There is a reversal of gender roles when Roshni follows Chand under the effect of the love potion *Josh-e-jawaani*, an act that also appears to comment on her jealous husband's tendency to follow her around driven by suspicions of her supposed infidelity. While Titania puts her feelings into words to express her affection towards Bottom in Shakespeare's play: "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note. So is mine eye enthrallèd to thy shape. And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee" (3:1:99-103), Roshni lets simple gestures do the talking in *10ml Love*. A pleasantly surprised Chand who plays the character of the celibate monkey called Hanuman in the *Ramlila* track admits to her that it is the first time that a woman has ever pursued him. They are shown frolicking by a stream and in a field and even getting physically intimate in the "blue world." The dreamy background music accompanies Roshni's lilting laughter and transports the spectators into an other-worldly setting that entices and intrigues us because it is rife with the sentiment of the impossible on several levels. Close-ups of Roshni's face that express romantic feelings and sexual desire along with her agency to be "on top" and caress a blindfolded Chand with a feather as he lies on his back accentuate the challenging of gender norms. The reversal of stereotypical gender roles continues until the end of the sequence when the effect of the potion disappears along with the electric blue, and the camera slowly pans to portray a bemused Roshni collecting her clothes and walking away—while a bare-chested Chand wakes up alone and remains confused after her departure.

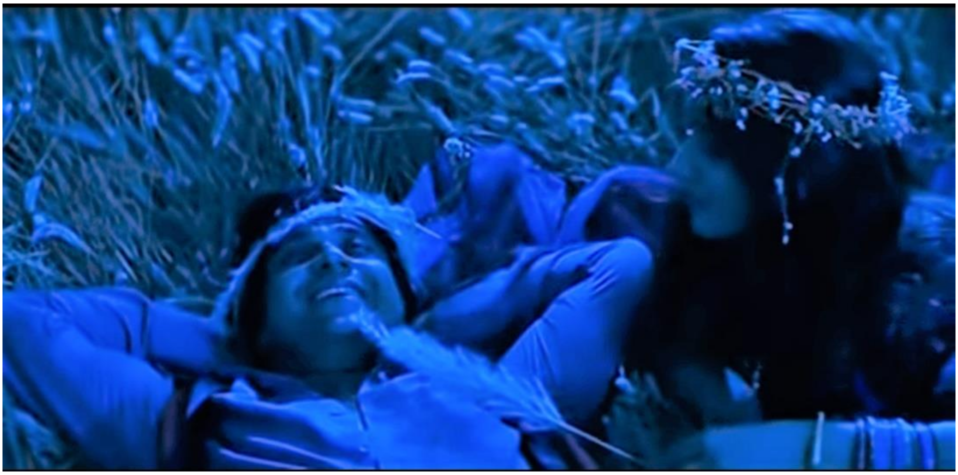


Figure 2: Roshni is shown in a dominant position with respect to Chand in the dark "blue world" of the dream sequence (1:14:25')

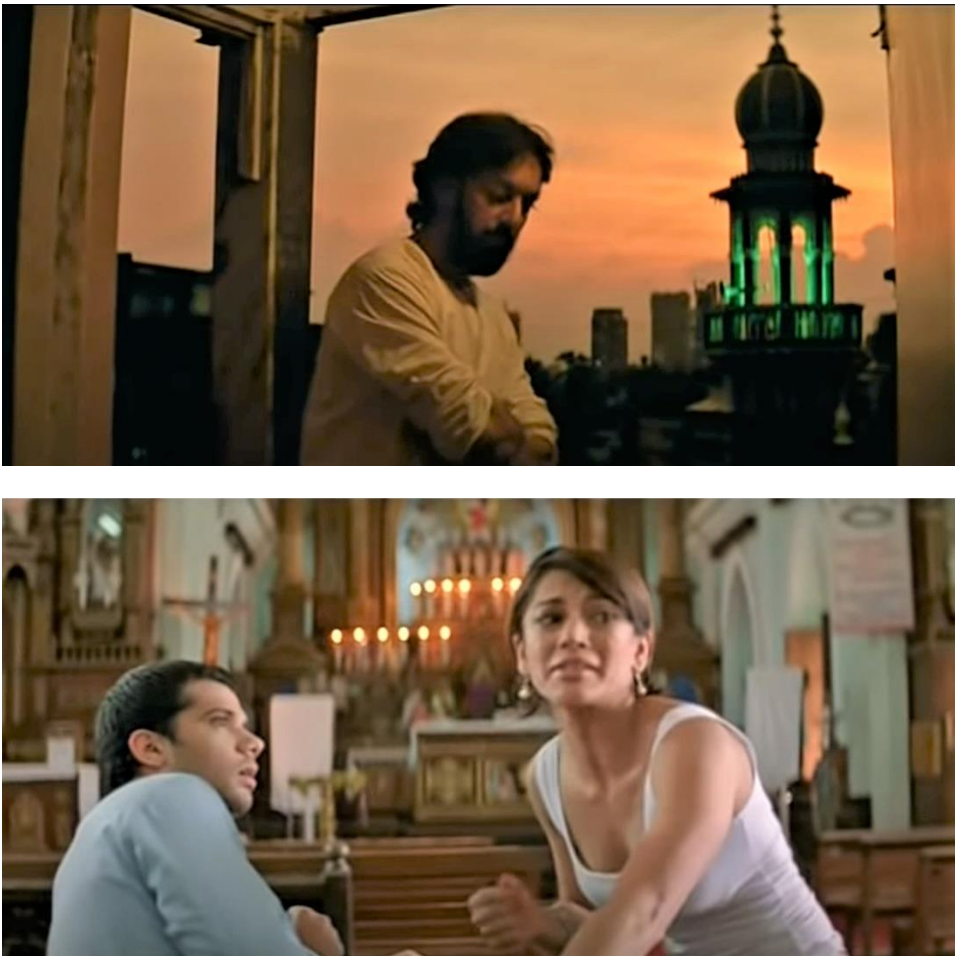
Realities of Otherness: The Prevailing of Stereotypes

Having explored allusions to the right-wing utopia that teeter on the verge of parody in the *Ramlila* track (with a stuttering Rama, a hearing-impaired Ravana and a celibate Hanuman who gets physically intimate with a married woman under the influence of the love potion) and the presence of inter-faith couples as well as attempts to dissent against stereotypical gender roles in the left-wing utopia, we can state that the reality of the film lies somewhere between the two utopias. What tends to eventually prevail is various Othering clichés associated with religion, gender, sexuality, caste and class. Let us study how these stereotypes are portrayed.

10ml Love belongs to the rare category of films that brings together Hindu, Muslim and Christian characters in the tradition of the 1977 Hindi-language blockbuster *Amar Akbar Anthony*, directed by Manmohan Desai. The latter film features triplets separated at birth (somewhat akin to *A Comedy of Errors*) and raised by families professing the three different faiths in question, thereby giving us the Hindu Amar Khanna, the Muslim Akbar Allahabadi and the Christian Anthony Gonsalves. In *10ml Love*, the three characters from these three faiths—namely Neel, Ghalib and Peter—cross paths at a much later stage in their lives and at a much later stage in the diegesis of the film, but we come across quite a few stereotypes related to their religious identities. Since Neel belongs to the dominant faith in India, his Hindu identity is the norm rather than an exception. On the contrary, Ghalib's "Muslimness" is accentuated by the henna he uses to dye his beard (a practice that is not conventionally associated with other faiths) and the language he uses (Urdu expressions such as *Khuda haafiz* as a greeting, and *Inshaallah* to signal hope).

He is often framed in profile close-up shots and low-angle shots that emphasise his henna-dyed beard; he is also portrayed in front of minarets and mosques lit in green, and the symbolism of the colour green associated with the Islamic faith does not go unnoticed. Moreover, the scene that introduces Ghalib as a roadside apothecary features a signboard that reads *Habib Meat Shop* in English and Urdu in the background as well as a reverse shot of an animal carcass, in accordance with the myth of the meat-eating, and therefore, "violent" Indian Muslim, unlike the peace-loving vegetarian Hindu majority (again, a misconception; it is only certain "high" castes that are forbidden from eating meat). In a similar vein, Peter is made to utter lines such as "God bless you" and "God will punish you." The reference to the divine force in the English language as opposed to Hindi (associated with Hindus) or Urdu (associated with Muslims) is a signaller of his "Christianness," along with sequences that show him in a church or mention that he has gone to church. However, not once does Neel visit a temple or utter expressions that invoke Hindu deities, signalling that his religious affiliation is the "normal" one and does not have to be explicitly mentioned—thereby shrinking the gap between the right-wing's Hindu nation utopia and the left-wing's Hindu-dominant reality.

Such essentialism aside, myths and misconceptions related to religion and gender are enmeshed in the case of Shweta (a Hindu woman) and Minnie (a Christian woman). While Shweta is modestly dressed for the most part, Minnie wears much more revealing clothes and sports short hair—signs of being



Figures 3 and 4: Ghalib is framed in front of a mosque that is lit in green, a colour associated with the Islamic faith (1:15:05'); Peter (seen here with Minnie) is shown in a church (39:03')

"modern," "Westernised," "un-Indian" or someone with loose morals, in other words. In fact, she is the only character who talks openly about having had a sexual relationship; in the sequence that introduces the characters of Neel and Minnie less than ten minutes into the film, Minnie reminds him of all the nights they spent together, including the night before this particular conversation which was apparently his last night of "bachelorhood" with her. They are filmed on a boat while returning to the Gateway of India from their getaway in the beach town of Alibag, the framing of the two-shot first emphasising their closeness by showing them side by side, and later stressing their impending separation by placing Minnie on the extreme right and Neel on the extreme left side of the screen. We are privy to her initiating the act with Neel—a series of over-the-shoulder shots depict Minnie wearing a low-cut blouse, helping Neel pick a perfume to wear for his "arranged" date with Shweta, Minnie running her fingers through his hair and trying to kiss him before she is ultimately rejected by Neel in a two-shot that has Neel push her away.

Moreover, Minnie is the only female character who kisses a man on the lips in the film. When she and Shweta apply face masks as a skincare treatment and Neel walks into the room and has an intimate chat with Minnie thinking that she is Shweta, Minnie takes advantage of the case of mistaken identity and kisses him. The display of affection could account for the fact that Neel's intentions were to reveal his former relationship with Minnie to Shweta; we hear soft non-diegetic music and the camera progressively zooms in from a medium shot to a close-up of Neel and Minnie to get us to focus on their facial expressions. In sharp contrast, let alone indulge in a physical relationship of any kind, Shweta (a "good" Hindu girl) does not even allude to any kind of premarital intimacy with Peter. The naming of the characters thus continues as per the conventions of Hindi cinema that tends to portray female Christian and Anglo-Indian actors and characters as "fallen" and "easy"—via acts such as smoking, drinking, wearing tight and revealing "Western" clothes as opposed to traditional Indian clothing, indulging in premarital sex and often getting pregnant out of wedlock. It comes as no surprise, then, to see Minnie wear a strapless blouse along with a *sari* at Shweta and Neel's wedding—an outfit that falls into the hybrid category of Indo-Western clothing. Furthermore, the camera work accentuates her bare shoulders and back, which in turn emphasises her "modernness" and, therefore, her Otherness with respect to "modest" Hindu women.

Finally, stereotypes related to economic class are also represented in the film. Firstly, class privilege or the lack of it is linked to the success of romantic relationships and marriageability. When Peter confides in a friend that Shweta and Neel are to get married to each other, Peter's friend rationalises that dreams of love and marriage are not for "small people" like them; they both are "only" mechanics while Shweta and Neel come from wealthy families. Considering that this scene takes place during the first five minutes of the film, is shot at a Christian wedding, and has Peter and his friend speak in an accent typical to Indian Christians from Goa, it serves the purpose of establishing Peter's Otherness on account of his religion and financial class.

Apart from this scene, class difference is depicted via two clear instances where wealthy people haggle with those from lesser-privileged financial backgrounds. Firstly, as per the tradition where Neel is meant to buy a *sari* for his bride-to-be for the wedding ceremony, he relentlessly bargains with the shopkeeper in order to save a few thousand rupees. On account of both the camera work and the target audience—owing to the film's choice of language

(Hinglish) and themes (inter-faith relationships, premarital sex)—the viewers of the film who probably belong to privileged sections of Indian society are likely to end up adopting Neel's point of view in the bargaining sequence. The camera is strategically placed just behind Neel during most of the sequence, putting the viewer quite literally in Neel's place. When the shopkeeper refuses to give in at first, Neel walks away and comes back only when the former relents. The fact that Neel stands next to Minnie and in front of the shopkeeper at the end of the sequence helps us see Neel's knowing smirks mocking the shopkeeper that are quite obviously directed at Minnie, and at the film's viewers—smirks that the shopkeeper is not meant to see.

Similarly, Shweta's father also decides to pay Roshni—who is from a lower economic class and has been hired to apply henna on the hands of the bride and other women attending the wedding—three thousand rupees instead of the five thousand that she had originally asked for. This information is revealed in front of one of his NRI or Non-Resident Indian relatives (who asks what it would cost in Canadian dollars) as well as the financially modest cooks/ dramatists who are trying to eavesdrop on the conversation (they seem to be impressed by the amount that will be paid to Roshni, indicating that they are perhaps underpaid too). This is because Indians from elite backgrounds and even upper middle-class families are socialised into being perpetually suspicious of "those people" who typically come from a lesser-privileged financial background and who often have no choice but to perform blue collar jobs or to be a part of the informal labour industry. Not only are the privileged sections of society conditioned to believe that "those people" are lazy, inefficient and shirk work at every possible occasion, they are also seen as experts at trickery. Moreover, Neel speaks rudely to the labourers hired to work at the wedding because as per the common belief, that is the only way to get the job done—and the camera follows suit, relegating the workers to the background, and focusing on Neel in the foreground, thereby accentuating the dominance of the Hindu man without overstating his "Hinduness."

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can state that although the film seems to present both a right-wing utopia and a left-wing utopia, it does not wholly represent or endorse either of them. This is because the parodic elements of the former situation—two characters with physical disabilities and one celibate character indulging in sexual intimacy with a married woman—ultimately overpower the religious and political aspects of the *Ramlila. 10ml Love* does give the impression of erring on the side of the left-wing utopia by depicting romantic relationships between men and women from different faiths and different financial class backgrounds (by uniting Peter and Shweta, and Minnie and Neel at the end of the film), but the film does not reveal if their families will ultimately accept their choices. In addition, it propagates stereotypes associated with homosexuality by mocking one of the cooks/dramatists and forcing him to play the part of a woman. Thus, the reality of the film appears to be rooted in stereotypes of Otherness linked to religion (Muslim characters associated with henna, meat, mosques and the colour green; Christians with a stereotypical accent and sexual promiscuity), gender (women seen as the property of their fathers; a misogynistic mother-in-law berates her son for not controlling his wife), sexuality (men who are not the epitome of masculinity as it is conventionally accepted socially must be gay), caste (only "high" caste people are pure enough to cook food for auspicious occasions like wedding ceremonies) and class (working-class people are suspected of taking advantage of the elite, and have also apparently internalised their supposed inferiority).

One cannot help but wonder if the team behind *10ml Love* would have stuck to the same ideological viewpoints had they made the film a few years later. Would the content of the film have been influenced by the right-wing Hindutva project of the BJP that has been India's ruling political party since 2014? Or, were the film to be released as a more mainstream production in Hindi instead of an indie in Hinglish, would the filmmaking team have made more conventional choices with respect to same-caste and same-faith marriages as well as premarital and extramarital sexual relationships? Whatever the case, it does appear as though direct or indirect signs of indigenous Otherness would have invariably found their way into the film; irrespective of the impact of left-wing or right-wing political leanings, tropes of alterity linked to linguistic background, religion, caste and class seem inevitable in a hugely-populated and socio-culturally diverse country like India.

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Staging Dystopian Communities: Reimagining Shakespeare in Selected English Plays

Abstract: Among the countless afterlives of William Shakespeare's playwriting there is a strong presence of his visions of state and political powers. In universal, philosophical ways Shakespeare was addressing issues concerning the state power, social organization, hierarchy, and rank in what inevitably were the origins of modern, capitalistic societies. Therefore, many of his powerful images resonate today in the works of contemporary writers who intend to compose stories of utopian or dystopian character which diagnose the condition of modern society. This article aims to present three plays by post-war English dramatists (Edward Bond's *Bingo*, Frank McGuinness's *Mutabilitie*, and David Greig's *Dunsinane*) which reuse Shakespearian themes, motifs, or characters to build politically contentious and subversive plots within a narrower context of their specific cultures, societies, and historical periods. It is assumed that the Shakespearean legacy the writers engage with is not merely a dramatic text, but a complex cultural structure of accumulated narratives, interpretations, and myths which contemporary dramatists rewrite and recycle. The aim of the article is to show how this multifaceted legacy of Shakespeare's life and work helps build dystopian visions of contemporary communities or images of state and political justice. In other words, the article intends to analyse ways of visualizing modern societies through the palimpsestic presence of the Renaissance master.

Keywords: Shakespeare, English Drama, adaptation, Edward Bond, Frank McGuinness, David Greig.

The aim of this article is to look at the presence of Shakespeare and his work in contemporary English drama and see how his multi-layered influence shapes the thinking about the modern state. Instead of analysing a vast territory of film and theatre adaptations, this analysis concerns itself with plays which use the

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Bard's plots as well as life to weave their tales of utopian or dystopian communities. On the one hand, the objective of the article is to focus attention on playwrights who reconnect with Shakespeare's drama; on the other, the article aims to describe how contemporary English dramatists compose their dystopian visions by using fragments of plays and biography of the Renaissance master. Shakespeare's presence in contemporary drama needs to be seen in a broad cultural context, as an anthropological phenomenon which encompasses the legacy spreading from film, history, economy, and politics to colonialism, capitalism, and nationalism. Shakespeare, therefore, is approached here not merely as a formidable producer of plots offering inexhaustible staging or filming possibilities, but as a cultural construct whose overall power, dynamics, and legendary significance can all be employed for a better understanding of contemporary political and social life.

Dramatic works and their theatre productions selected for this analysis do not retell Shakespeare's stories; they refrain from a simple adaptation of his plots for contemporary times. Instead, Edward Bond's *Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death* (1973), Frank McGuinness's *Mutabilitie* (1997), and David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) appropriate vast amounts of cultural material associated with Shakespeare's life and work, and accumulated through centuries of intertextual, palimpsestic recycling to reflect on the concepts of community, on the moral condition of state now and in the future. The political narratives which these playwrights offer are particularly subversive due to specific perspectives from which they are written. Edward Bond is an experimental, post-war political playwright, associated with left-wing opposition to the mainstream British drama of the 1960s and 1970s. Bond's *Bingo* shows the Bard at the end of his life, in Stratford, when the famous playwright seeks refuge from the London life and where private issues take over in defining his life choices. In this picture, Shakespeare is shown as a greedy entrepreneur who readily joins a group of money-grabbing investors from the local town. His biography helps Bond to build the image of the proto-capitalistic society of today as dystopian vision dominated by ruthless competition. Frank McGuinness, representing Northern Irish literature, maintains a characteristic ambivalence towards English tradition of writing and sees its presence both as a disruptive and creative force. In *Mutabilitie*, McGuinness dramatizes the clash of two cultures—English and Irish—by staging an imaginary and intensely absurd visit of Shakespeare to the Green Isle. The Bard, disillusioned with London life and culture, seeks comfort and employment among the Celtic natives and local English aristocracy. His search for personal renewal turns into a serious political disaster which paints a dramatic, dystopian vision of British colonial conquest and its founding philosophy. Finally, for David Greig, representing Scottish theatre, Shakespearean legacy remains a field for cultural debate over Scottish independence.[1] His *Dunsinane* provides a dramatic sequel to the plot of *Macbeth* in which we follow the brutal struggle for domination over Scotland between Malcolm and Grauch, Macbeth's miraculously saved wife. For all the variety of the three works, what unites these stylistically diversified and historically separated plays is the refusal to adapt Shakespeare's plays directly in their plots and characters. The plays analysed here creatively engage with his complex legacy, drawing inspiration both from literary and cultural contexts of the Bard's life. Recycling his biography with the accumulated myth, or providing an imagined sequel to one of his major plays, opens spaces for utopian speculation in which realistic mechanisms of power connect with fictionalised scenarios for political history. The aim of this article, then, is to analyse how these playwrights imagine utopian and dystopian communities using Shakespeare as their raw material.

For these playwrights Shakespeare's oeuvre offers an endless collection of ready-mades: artefacts in the form of scenes, landscapes, emotions, treacherous plots, ironic romancing, or iconic characters which can furnish a modern play with meaningful scenarios. The universe of the Renaissance author functions as a museum of objects which have grown to be seen as cultural artefacts through a long history of reception, reinterpretation, and maturation. Ready for a creative revival, they come down to contemporary times more as products of collective imagination than as authentic fragments of their own epoch's material history.

It is important to stress that the three plays analysed here represent Shakespeare and his dramatic plots as cultural meta-narratives which have the power to reflect contemporary imagination in its literary and political character. Engaging with Shakespeare's legacy opens a path of communication between the past and the present. On the one hand, it is simply a homage to the earlier, past epochs that could be seen like the Globe Theatre's historical productions of Shakespeare's plays. They are, in W.B. Worthen's words, "restored performances" (98), and they exemplify the experience of the "living history" (93) which modern audiences can relive and reuse as a historical time-travel. Yet, on the other hand, the dramatic adaptations created by Bond, McGuinness and Greig assume there exists a fundamental continuity or similarity between what Shakespeare perceived as a universal mechanism of power and its current incarnation as political oppression or philosophical doctrine. This dystopic fantasy, extending from late Renaissance to the postmodern era and later, is not merely a costumed performance of the living past. What it amounts to is a zone of reference in which, as Jan Kott claimed, every epoch finds its own reflection.

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[1] Greig was actively engaged in the 2014 Scottish Referendum, supporting the independence vote (Saunders 119).

This article does not aim to provide a theoretical analysis of whether a given contemporary play belongs to the genre of adaptation, appropriation, or any other subdivision within the broad area of recycling and reusing Shakespearean plots, characters, or traditions. Instead, it is interested solely in analysing the end-products of such appropriating mechanisms, that is, the created image of the society and community. However, it is worth pointing to at least two studies which make use of a broad variety of theories in providing a systematic analysis of Shakespearean revivals or rewrites. Martin Scott's more classical approach rests on the concepts of intertextuality in his surveys of the post-war drama covering the work of Tom Stoppard, Arnold Wesker, Eugene Ionesco or Charles Morowitz. He acknowledges the rich tradition of textual borrowing from Shakespeare's text, accumulating the "traditions that have grown around it through its performance over the centuries" (Scott 7). This study is significant for the fact that it recognises the importance of the entire, extended history of reclaiming Shakespeare as a contemporary author. A similar approach can be found in a recent study of appropriations of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama by Graham Sunders. His investigation into Renaissance dramatic legacies concerns a wide variety of authors (from Howard Barker to Sarah Kane, from Wesker and Morowitz to Jez Butterworth), and declares specifically what remains the major analytical perspective also of this article, namely, to see Shakespeare not as an isolated historical occurrence, but rather as a "process going beyond one of exposure, to the creation of *cultural space* within the existing architecture of the Shakespearian text" (Saunders 5). Shakespeare is therefore seen here as a timeless "cultural space," constantly being extended and growing with the new reflections of its contemporary interpretations.

Politically speaking, the post-war English drama, with all diversity of its politicized message, employed Shakespearean plots and characters to voice its own dissatisfaction with the country's politics and morals. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, left-wing writers saw Shakespeare as a powerful force to debunk the narrative of economic success or the positive story of the post-war consensus, showing the decomposition of the welfare state. Shakespeare creeps into the dark area of social life where the state fails to deliver on its major promises of prosperity. As Ruby Cohn observes, especially the leftist playwrights of the then younger generation who debuted in the 1970s, that is David Hare, David Edgar, and Howard Brenton, engaged in the task of scratching the "conservative veneer" of English politics (49) by using the Bard's oeuvre to paint a dystopian image of the community in which the levelling up of chances and prospects had not materialised. These "left-wing adaptors" of Shakespearean plots contested the "genteel cultural heritage" of English public life and exposed its "inadequacy" in reference to challenges of current politics (Cohn 49). In the background to these subversive derivations of Shakespearean legacy there lies the noble tradition of theatrical adaptations of his plays epitomized by the stately acting style of Laurence Olivier whose social position and artistic profile offered easy targets for the young left-wing attackers. John Osborne's *A Place Calling Itself Rome* (1973), David Edgar's *Slag* (1970) or *Death Story*, and Howard Brenton's *Revenge* (1969) and *Thirteenth Night* (1981), adaptations of, respectively, *Coriolanus, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, were all, in Cohn's view, attempts to both refute Shakespeare as a figure of authority and tradition as well as revise his heritage to provide critical perspective for the current politics of the state (1988, 50). By the same token, David Greig's *Dunsinane*, in Graham Saunders's opinion, can "incorporate elements from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and at the same time negotiate between medieval Scotland and recent military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq" (9).[2]

For Bond, McGuinness and Greig, Shakespeare constitutes part of the state-of-the-nation tradition of writing; a figure useful in describing and analysing the story of economic and social development which had gone askew. Shakespeare became manufactured goods, a product of culture whose democratic availability provided a proof for the success of the welfare state principles. For instance, Sean O'Casey, an Irish playwright and socialist who struggled for class betterment through cultural means, offers a telling example of the appropriation of Shakespeare seen as an element of cultural capital which needs to be fairly redistributed:

> I look forward to the day with confidence when British workers will carry in their hip pockets a volume of Keats's poems or a Shakespeare play beside the packets of lunch attached to their belts. (26)

In this context, Shakespeare appears as an emblematic author of wisdom and culture, of sophistication and refinement, whose presence should be mandatory in the life of every worker as much as machines, tools and modernized technology are indispensable in the smooth operation of industrial societies. Shakespeare as a grease of cultural revolution effectively sums up the speculative projection of fictional political concepts onto the canvas of contemporary society. The Shakespearian thesaurus turns into a fictional parlance of change and progress, but also of social critique.

The vison of the world apart remains one of the most constitutive features of literary utopia. As a genre, it comprises a universe whose location is placed outside of the geographic, social, philosophical, or scientific boundary of the current, real, and lived realities.[3] There may be different visions of such apartness, yet, there needs to be a mechanism of setting fictional plots and characters aside. Moreover, the traditional utopia offers "alternative solutions to reality," which "by means of fantasy" attempt to "imagine possible alternatives" to the known world and create a critical vision of what reality might be like in the future (Vieira 5-7). Among many characteristic elements of the utopian vision, "one of its most recognizable traits is its speculative discourse on a non-existent social organization which is better than the real society" (Vieira 7).

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[2] For an extensive analysis of Greig's relation to the Middle East and its role in writing *Dunsinane* see: Rodríguez, pp. 64-5.

It is also significant to stress the basic relation or formal affinity between utopia and dystopia. The latter is commonly understood as an "evil place" operating as "the opposite of 'utopia', the bad place versus what we imagine to be the good place" (Claeys 2017, 4). As Claeys explains in his comprehensive study of dystopia, the two genres might be seen as "twins, the progeny of the same parents" (7), and as such they both "conceive of ideal harmonious groups" (8).[4] However, as the concept of the "evil place," dystopia operates with a different "spectrum of anxiety" to utopia and in its darker vision, it evinces a highly developed "obsession with enemies," combined with the "determination to eliminate them, or at least neutralize their threat" (8). Therefore, dystopia offers the "management of fear" (9), to contrast with the utopian projection of hope. Finally, as Claeys stresses, dystopia is "intimately interwoven with discourses about 'crisis'" (14).

Without going into a complex formal discussion of the various subdivisions of the utopian genre,[5] one can state after Robert C. Elliott that "the difference between More's *Utopia* as utopia and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as satire is the difference in distribution of positive and negative elements" (24). If utopia, or dystopia, is a vision of idealized dream (or nightmare) of social state, Shakespeare functions in it as a pivotal point of reference for the expression of fictional admiration and criticism, for evaluation and judgement, for beauty and ugliness, for justice and injustice. Shakespeare's legacy helps contemporary playwrights to distribute such positive and negative elements across their reframed dramatic plots.

Edward Bond's *Bingo* (1973), written two years after his most famous Shakespeare adaptation, *Lear* (1971), illustrates the typical strategy of the left-wing writers in revising the Bard's work and life for the purpose of commenting on the economic realities of the day. The play dramatizes Shakespeare's final stage of life which he spent in Warwickshire away from the London hullabaloo. His days are filled not with intense poetic and dramatic creativity but with assisting his wife's illness and discussing business with local farmers. Bond frames the iconic biography of the greatest English writer with motifs of social inequality and injustice which Shakespeare himself condones and which he is too greedy to stop. One of the central plot lines of the play concerns local investors who plan to procure land by introducing a complex land enclosure policy. While considerable capital is inevitably going to flow straight into their pockets, for many small-time land holders, the plan leads to evictions, poverty, and bankruptcy. What is more, part of the land to be bought out is owned by the town council and generates rent money which pays for food for the local homeless and unemployed. In other words, Shakespeare's position, secured by his previous literary career now makes him one of the players in the capitalistic charade. The way Bond tells the story suggests that Shakespeare's moral standing, and his assessment by posterity, should rather be critically checked by the fact of his involvement in the business clearly exploitive and inhuman.

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[3] For the general introduction to utopia see *Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Claeys 2010). On the general philosophy and history of utopian writing and thinking see: Vieira.

[4] Or, as Claeys also calls it, they "exhibit a collectivist ethos" (2017, 8).

[5] For example, Arthur O. Lewis enumerated a "range of forms of anti-utopian fiction, including reverse utopias, negative utopias, inverted utopias, regressive utopias, cacotopias, dystopias, non-utopias, satiric utopias, and nasty utopias. These are classified into three main groups: the anti-totalitarian, the anti-technological, and the satiric, or combinations of all three" (qtd. in Claeys 2017, 275).

Pursuing this theme, the play follows some biographers' claims suggesting that the author of *Hamlet* was a miser, leaving his wife an old bed as the only inheritance named in the official testament record. Bond, however, further develops the image by showing Shakespeare as an active figure in developing early capitalistic society, with all its ruthless greed and moral dubiousness. Shakespeare's Hamletic hesitation, ironically dramatized in *Bingo* as an intertextual reference to the iconic character from the Bard's famous play, concerns not an existential dilemma but rather the loss and gain of economic profit. The contemporary protagonist is faced with desperate admonitions issued by other, morally sensitive characters, for instance of an elderly woman who warns him against his financial decisions: "If he shut they fields up he'll ruin whole families. They yont got a penny put by" (Bond 18). However, Bond's Shakespeare meekly follows the plan and finds it difficult to oppose the lure of capitalistic exploitation. As Scott observes, in *Bingo* "Shakespeare's humanity is seen to be reduced" (32-3).

The world that Bond tries to show through the redefined biography of the national Bard is aptly illustrated in the figure of one of the investors who persuasively argues that "there will always be real suffering" and justifies the need to accept it:

> You live in a world of dreams! Well, what happens when you have to wake up? You find that real people can't live in your dreams. They don't fit, they're not good or sane or noble enough. So you turn to common violence and begin to destroy them. (Bond 50)

The dream which the local investor mentions stands, of course, for Bond's vision of a contemporary capitalistic dystopia. In it, ordinary man is supposed to fit into the rigid profile of a narrative invented by few to exploit the many. Bond's introductory comments to the play clearly indicate his political and economic reading of Shakespeare's mythical status as a national Bard, whose decision to turn into the "property owner" puts him in line with such Shakespearean characters as Goneril, and her philosophy of governance dominated by "prisons, workhouses, whipping, starvation, mutilation, pulpit-hysteria" (6). The vision of the state in which Bond's Shakespeare is an active part functions according to strictly commercial, and thus cruel, principles:

> A consumer society depends on its members being avaricious, ostentatious, gluttonous, envious, wasteful, selfish and inhuman. Officially, we teach morality but if we all became "good" the economy would collapse. Affluent people can't afford ten commandments. (7)

Bond's narrative offers what *The Guardian's* critic, Michael Billington, calls a "radically revisionist portrait of Shakespeare" (Billington, *Bingo*). As the playwright himself warns, he is not "interested in Shakespeare's true biography in the way a historian might be" (Bond 4). Immersed in detailed financial speculation associated with the history of capitalism and commerce, *Bingo* successfully struggles to universalize its message, by addressing general issues of—in Bond's words—the "relationship between any writer and his society" (4). In this sense, Shakespeare's works should be read with the view on the later centuries of social history of which they are a significant part. In Edward Bond's worldview the Bard's cultural impact is significantly responsible for perpetrating social inequality, as in Michael Scott's words, Shakespeare's plays "have to be seen as part of bourgeois art which he raised to its highest form" (35). The reviewers of the 2010 revival of the play presented at the Chichester Festival pointed out exactly this contemporary, social dimension of the dystopian play.[6] For Sheila Connor from *British Theatre Guide*, the production exposed the "social injustice and inhumanity in today's world" (Connor, *Bingo*). Billington, in turn, observed that although such dystopian images "may not overturn the social order, they can both reflect and unsettle it" (Billington, *Bingo*).

The presence of Shakespeare within the dramatic vision functions exactly as a meta-fictional alternative within the realism of the story. In it, Shakespeare's own person, or his protagonists, or fragments of plots, exist as tokens of idealized reality immersed in an invented, contemporary narrative. For most of the politicized works of the twentieth century concerned with echoing the Bard's spectre, his oeuvre signals the arrival of the utopia or dystopia in social or political dimensions. In case of Shakespeare, the utopian (or more often dystopian) “speculative discourse” (Vieira 7) reuses the Bard’s plots and characters for a critical review of the known reality. It constitutes, as Chad Walsh would put it, an “attack on certain tendencies in existing societies” (qtd. in Claeys 2017, 276).

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[6] The Chichester production was directed by Angus Jackson.

Challenging colonial and national contexts of Shakespearean legacy are present in *Mutabilitie* by Frank McGuinness (1997) which tells a satirical story of the fantasy visit to Ireland undertaken by a character named William. He is a London poet and playwright who seeks refuge from the hostile environment of the imperial capital. McGuinness’s play, set in the late Renaissance period, also dramatizes the life of Edmund Spencer, the Queen’s envoy to Ireland, who controls the native people with military power and with what he considers to be his civilizational superiority. When he tries to convince Elizabeth, his wife, of the need for carrying out the educational project for the Irish, he speaks with a clear, colonial tinge: “they are capable of instruction. They are capable of salvation. […] They are civilized. I have succeeded in that” (McGuinness 9, 10). The native rulers of the land, king Sweney, his wife Maeve, and their court, live banished in a forest, secretly plotting a rebellion and revenge against the English oppressor. Their hopes are nourished by a legend saying that one day the saviour of the land emerges from water. Accidentally, William, is discovered right by the banks of a local river. The Irish natives immediately see in him the hero ready to fight against the English or, as they claim the “man who will sing the song to save us in English” (McGuinness 17). McGuinness makes Shakespeare an ironic participant of the cultural war between Ireland and England, using speculation about his secret Catholicism and creating a fictional story of the encounter with Edmund Spencer.[7] McGuinness’s William feels dissatisfied with the British society and claims that the English theatre no longer needs him. He wants to “get a job in the civil service” in Ireland (McGuinness 50). The oppressed Irish, in turn, believe that he can perform a miracle through his poetry “In this your theatre you will make our dead rise, William. You will raise our Irish dead, Englishman” (McGuinness 61). Ultimately, William’s visit ends in failure; he leaves without delivering any miracle of redemption for the Irish. His is merely the journey of a disillusioned poet undertaken into the country of oppressed and embittered bards.

As if this dystopian vision was not gloomy enough, Edmund Spencer burns down his own mansion to hasten the return to London. Spenser finally realizes how illusory his ideas about faith and civilization are, seeing that his personal doubts about the social project he performs are geting the best of him. In a monologue just before setting his castle on fire, he admits to a complete failure of implementing British rules on a foreign soil: "Eternal life, eternal light—such illusions of the mind, the broken, battered mind, torn to ribbons on the rack of its confusion" (McGuinness 98). McGuinness accurately presents how the project of spreading the idea of new social order ultimately proves to be a fragile figment of the character's mind.

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[7] Tracing the story of Catholic dissent in Elizabethan England was one of the themes pursued in McGuinness’s preparation for the writing of the play (Grene 92).

What is most interesting in McGuinness's play is his strategic use of Shakespeare's half fictional, half realistic figure as a character who intervenes directly in Irish politics. He penetrates the action of the play in a stealthily subversive manner, discussing life and art with Edmund and other characters. He exposes the futility of the English presence in Ireland, the failure of the Irish rebellion and the unreliability of literature or poetry in flaming the fire of potential insurrection. It is in this sense that the play reflects the characteristic feature of the dystopian literary genre in which it is "intimately interwoven with discourses about 'crisis'" (Claeys 2017, 14). At some point in the story, McGuinness stages a play-within-the-play in which Sweney as Priam and Maeve as Hecuba enact the fall of Troy. Crying and weeping for the "broken towers" of the great city (McGuinness 77) act as an ominous indication of what may happen to England. Moreover, the way McGuinness rewrites the ancient myth foregrounds the glory of the oppressed victims and stresses the necessity to "assemble [here] to sound the song of our saga" (McGuinness 77). This recycled myth is a reminder that even the defeated have the power to survive, and that in stories and legends they make up for what they lack in real power. Their resurrected spirits may threaten the greatest empire, as the Irish chorus sings in a clear reference to England and her Queen: "Great Gloriana, learn from Troy / Your kingdom's but a paltry toy / Great Gloriana, none are saved / When spirits rise from out their graves" (McGuinness 78). The poetic re-enactment of the fall of Troy points to an eternal cycle of history which predicts how all belligerent empires end; social and political systems created through war waged in the name of superiority of one nation over another are never about establishing civilization; they are about the impermanence of social and political systems. The perishable character of things sonorously echoes in one of the songs performed by File, Spencer's Irish servant: 'Ladies fair and men of valour / Flower a day and then wither. / Mankind, the sky, the rivered sea / Sing of mutabilitie' (McGuinness 43).

Although McGuinness's play contains many familiar quotes and references to Shakespeare's original plays and sonnets,[8] the protagonist's biographical story is intentionally kept unclear and twisted, as McGuinness composes it by following and reinterpreting mythical or legendary gossip about the Bard's life. For instance, McGuinness's Shakespeare reveals homosexual desire relating to the Irish men and thus also breaks cultural taboos which have accumulated around his biography. Shakespeare as gay, Shakespeare as catholic, or Shakespeare, the playwright, who has tired of British theatre, and finally Shakespeare as Ireland's saviour: these ironic appropriations of the historical figure and his fabulated identity create a half-comic, half-provocative dialogue between versions of truth and political or ideological dogmas.

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[8] Cf. Grene's detailed analysis of these references and borrowings.

On various levels, then, McGuinness's character of the writer enters into dialogue with English and Irish politics as well as with the cultural heritage of the conflict between the two nations. He is an icon shaped by centuries of interpretative effort and theatrical performativity which McGuinness reuses to defame and deform stereotypical ways of visualising the Anglo-Irish past. As Nicholas Grene observed, for McGuinness "the familiar Shakespearean texts are opened out into radically different imaginative territories" (96). Yet, the presence of Shakespeare inside the dramatic world of the play opens such "imaginative territories" on both sides, allowing not just to see the Bard's works in new ways, but to interpret Anglo-Irish cultural and political exchanges from an alternative perspective in which the positions of the coloniser and the colonised are temporarily united with the sense of exhaustion and disillusionment, disappointment, and frustration. Shakespeare, then, quite naturally builds himself into the dystopian fabric of social narrative. His persona travels across time as a historical figure appropriated for revisionist debates about colonialism, English and Irish identity, cultural and sexual politics.

For the contemporary post-war reality, which has been increasingly tinged with the demise of utopian hope and threatened with the spectre of dystopian regimes,[9] Shakespeare's life and dramatic stories offer a fictional mirror but also material for further adaptation, recycling and palimpsestic appropriation. The characteristic polarity between the image of the real place and of no place, the factual history and its fictionalised version, defined for the utopian genre, imposes a special pact on the reader who is both required to trust the accuracy of historical realism and at the same time accept its universalizing potential through fictional redefinition, projection or speculation. It is exactly this pact of belief and trust that is required in analysing *Dunsinane*, a Scottish play by David Greig. The central figure of this work based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is Siward, an English general who plays a decisively lesser role in the original play. Greig's work is a "sequel" to Shakespeare's drama, imagining what might happen after the moment the original ends. Siward leads the English army whose military objective is to secure Malcolm's reign and to fight dissenting clans. His political mission is that of bringing order to the Scottish land ripped between fighting factions after the deposition of King Macbeth. On the ground however, the situation turns out to be much more complex. Firstly because Lady Macbeth, in Greig's version named Grauch, remains alive and active in struggling for her and her son's rights to assume the throne, and secondly because Siward does not understand the cultural or even linguistic complexity of the nation he is expected to subdue. Therefore, his journey in search of a solution to the country's future and to securing English domination over the land is that from hope to disillusionment and from flexible dialogue to utterly vile bestiality. In Siward's case, learning the ropes of the local politics means not only an education in an alien tradition of brutality which sets English statesmanship in bucolically innocent contrast, but also revealing the hard bedrock of manipulation, lies and betrayal which constitute the rudiments of any modern state. The play can be interpreted in the context of current Scottish politics which in 2011—a year after the play's premiere—faced the challenge of the renewed calls for the independence referendum. This political environment imbues Greig's narrative with immediate, contemporary references to the cultural and political domination which England would wish to maintain and solidify, fearing the results of the possible collapse of the Union. However, in Greig's bleak concept of policymaking, one could see a universal mechanism of manipulation, an image of a degraded modern state in which achieving political aims inevitably leads to squandering any ethical values and imposing a system of exploitation.

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[9] Cf. Kumar.

While at the beginning of *Dunsinane*, Siward declares that his strategic efforts aim at making a "picture of the world which everyone agrees true," Malcolm's attempts to secure the throne for himself drift in an entirely different direction. In a speech to the parliament in which he tries to secure the support of the local clans, he does not leave any illusion as to how he understands the privileges of the monarch:

> If you make me king I promise you one thing only—total honesty. In that spirit I offer you the following. I will govern entirely in the interests of me. In so far as I give consideration to you it will be to calibrate exactly how much I can take from you before you decide to attempt violence against me. (Greig 80)

Siward faces the impossible task of pushing the country into any form of stable political balance, and he clearly displays a complete lack of skill in handling political ploys. Shocked by Malcolm's speech, he seeks explanation, asking him "What is it—the joke or the truth?" (Greig 81) and gets an answer which befits the corrupted state that Malcolm wishes to run: "Both." Unable to follow the rules of this game, Siward swiftly transforms into a ruthless military commander, as only battlefield violence seems to give him a sense of control and influence. The second part of the play depicts his gradual deterioration as a person and commander in a world which is too numb to register more deaths and let them change the political reality of the land.

Clearly, Greig's rendering of the universal mechanism of power and domination goes beyond the limited scale of the colonial and economic clash between England and her northern neighbour. Michael Billington, reviewing the Hampstead Theatre production for *The Guardian*, suggests that "Scotland is too complex, tribal and territorially distinctive ever to be understood by the English" (*Dunsinane*). He might as well be voicing his scepticism towards many foreign campaigns undertaken by Western governments over the course of a few decades. The fact that the play's main line of conflict is the colonial contact zone of English and Celtic cultures (some characters in Greig's play speak Gaelic) does not rid *Dunsinane* of universality. Greig, drawing logical political conclusions from Shakespeare's vision of the state, outlines the mechanism of contemporary governance which operates through eradication of political opponents and a philosophy of toxic alliances that we see in many contemporary conflicts. It is not surprising, then, that the London and subsequently the Edinburg's productions of the play generated associations with current international politics.[10] The critics pointed to how the play's universal philosophy of governance and expansion resonated with ongoing global conflicts and wars. It was obvious that the invading English army, who speak no Gaelic and find themselves treading over an alien landscape, illustrated the philosophy of contemporary military operations carried out on foreign territories and among essentially unfamiliar natives. Robert Innes Hopkins's set design for the Scottish production was built out of stone and the imitation of the stone flags of Dunsinane architecture, additionally spiced with a "large Iona cross […] on display at the top of a flight of granite steps" (Price 22).[11] The foreign atmosphere of the local landscape turns the English army into invaders who, as *The Guardian* critic Mark Fisher observed, bring associations with a "peace-keeping force making a chaotic situation worse" (*Dunsinane*).[12] The production, then, much in line with David Greig's original intent, assumed new senses in the light of current military operations undertaken by America and other Western states at the time of its premiere. Interventions in Iraq and then in Afghanistan, publicly justified as extended "war on terror" engagements, are highlighted as possible interpretative contexts for the play by the authors of the Shakespeare Theatre Company's resource pack who stress precisely the universality of the dystopian mechanism that connected the production with the current politics:

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[10] Chronologically speaking, the play was commissioned by Michael Boyd for the Royal Shakespeare Company. It premiered in London at the Hampstead Theatre in 2010 (directed by Roxana Silbert). *Dunsinane* received its Scottish premiere at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh in 2011.

[11] On the stage design see: Wallace, 198.

[12] On the theme of Scotland being "defined in opposition to England" in *Dunsinane* see: Rodríguez (63).

"Tragically, the continuing unrest and bloodshed in the Middle East makes the timeless *Dunsinane* even more timely today" (McGlone 6).[13] For the *Scotsman* reviewer, Greig helps us read the "contemporary resonances of the situation" in current politics, that is the presence of the "British troops in Afghanistan" (*The Scotsman*). Or, as Mark Fisher observes, *Dunsinane* exposes the "value judgements behind even the most enlightened attempt by one nation to control another," through which an "audience in Scotland finds itself empathising with the occupied nations of the Middle East" (Fisher). All these opinions highlight the presence of the dystopian concept of community imagined through a semi-fictional story of Shakespeare's historical play and reapplied to current political conditions. Such images of politics relying on the violent imposition of rules and laws of the stronger, colonising power constitute the dystopian strategy of reflecting the "management of fear" (Claeys 2017, 9) through which this literary genre builds its critical vison of the world.

As stated earlier, Siward's journey is that from possible utopia to fulfilled dystopia, as the protagonist of Greig's play remains stubbornly unable to nuance reality in a way which would grant it a modicum of space to develop beyond his rational limitations. Dystopia is a form of dream, and Siward possesses no capacity for its unpredictable workings:

> You're right, I'm tired, Malcolm. I'm tired of 'appear' and I'm tired of 'seem'. I only have bone and flesh and mud and bog and metal. That's the world my power's in and that's the world I'll fight in, and that's the world in which I'll win. (Greig 112)

Greig imagines the society entrapped by what Clare Wallace calls "England's paternal control" (205) as thoroughly unable to attain the condition of justice and stability. The picture of the modern state that Greig's play offers is that of permanent violence and disruption, established and finally justified by long tradition of spreading unrest. For as Malcolm instructs Siward towards the end of the play:

> You seem to think peace is a natural state, Siward, and conflict its interruption, but the truth is the exact opposite. Peace is what the sea looks like in a dead calm—a rare and beautiful moment—something impossible—a glimpse of perfection before the wind comes back again. You can no more force peace into existence than you can wander across the surface of the sea stamping the waves flat. (Greig 126)

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[13] Graham Suanders reconstructs and analyses the changing political impact of the two productions of *Dunsinane* (in 2010 and 2011) when projected against the conflicts in Iraq and subsequently Afghanistan (122).

With such a dystopian vision at hand, Grieg could only finish the play with a vague image of further, unpredictable exploration of an unknown territory. For as Marilena Zaroulia observes, images of utopia and dystopia in Grieg's drama always venture "beyond the realm of language and representation" (34). *Dunsinane* ends with a walk into a moral and political void:

> Everything has disappeared.
> There is only the Boy and white.
> And then there is only white. (Greig 138)

This movement "beyond culturally or socially specific codes" (Zaroulia 35) marks the final challenge of utopia or dystopia. Since they do not exist in the immediate reality, they need to be invented with the help of Shakespearean political imagination.

Concluding, many twentieth-century playwrights perceive and describe current political states through Shakespearean concepts. They also imagine possible reformatory scenarios by employing Shakespearean plots as imaginative models, as abstract experiments in political and social science, and as schemes for universal rules in which timeless workings of power and justice can be practically tested. Shakespeare's drama, life and cultural heritage provide not only a common code or vocabulary to discuss politics, but primarily a cultural material on which to build contemporary myths of possible political reforms, and more ominously, in which to phrase warning alarms for modern men and women. Shakespearean plots and characters belong to the political and cultural subconscious of modern times, they exist in the twilight zone of political thinking which cannot be fully hatched if they are not related to his utopian or dystopian scenarios.

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John M. Meyer*

"Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company:" the American Performance of Shakespeare and the White-Washing of Political Geography

Abstract: The paper examines the spatial overlap between the disenfranchisement of African Americans and the performance of William Shakespeare's plays in the United States. In America, William Shakespeare seems to function as a prelapsarian poet, one who wrote before the institutionalization of colonial slavery, and he is therefore a poet able to symbolically function as a 'public good' that trumps America's past associations with slavery. Instead, the modern American performance of Shakespeare emphasizes an idealized strain of human nature: especially when Americans perform Shakespeare outdoors, we tend to imagine ourselves in a primeval woodland, a setting without a history. Therefore, his plays are often performed without controversy—and (bizarrely) on or near sites specifically tied to the enslavement or disenfranchisement of people with African ancestry. New York City's popular outdoor Shakespeare theater, the Delacorte, is situated just south of the site of Seneca Village, an African American community displaced for the construction of Central Park; Alabama Shakespeare Festival takes place on a former plantation; the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia makes frequent use of a hotel dedicated to a Confederate general; the University of Texas' Shakespeare at Winedale festival is performed in a barn built with supports carved by slave labor; the Oregon Shakespeare Festival takes place within a state unique for its founding laws dedicated to white supremacy. A historiographical examination of the Texas site reveals how the process of erasure can occur within a 'progressive' context, while a survey of Shakespearean performance sites in New York, Alabama, Virginia, and Oregon shows the strength of the unexpected connection between the performance of Shakespeare in America and the subjugation of Black persons, and it raises questions about the unique and utopian assumptions of Shakespearean performance in the United States.

Keywords: Shakespeare in performance, utopia, race, slavery, Early Modern history, Black, African American, Public Theatre, American Shakespeare Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Texas.

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Mob violence and tyrant kings, misgendering and misogyny, nightmares and dreams, utopia and utopian natures, cutting-edge and classical: In the United States, Shakespeare is a mirror in which we wish to see our nature reflected, and since his work exists in the ‘public domain,’ we are free to polish that mirror to our liking and point it towards the passions and problems we hold in our heart’s core. William Shakespeare’s plays dominate theatre in the United States to such an extent that the Theater Communications Group has felt obligated to leave him off their annual list of the most produced playwrights—listing him would be too obvious and redundant (Tran; Daw). His popularity is singular—no one is performing Dionysus Boucicault, Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, or Suzan-Lori Parks with anything like the regularity of Shakespeare. And the popularity continues despite Shakespeare’s suspicious attitude towards democratic practice, and an expiry date that precludes his knowledge or interest in specific American mores or history. The chief critic at *The New York Times*, Jesse Green, has demanded a greater re-imagining of Shakespearean tragedies to restore what he sees as their diminishing impact, but his is a definite minority view, and some of the most exciting scholarship and public ideas lean into Shakespeare to teach us about Ourselves.

For myself, I love Shakespeare’s humane characterizations, his poetic vivacity, and the way his imagination can take the most awful of experiences and twist them into a psychological nuance that makes life less lonely and more bearable. I write about his plays, I sometimes imitate his plays, and I often perform his plays because of the insights they provide into my own life, especially when I was a soldier in America’s post-9/11 misadventures. I first read *Macbeth*, the tragedy of action, while I was in Iraq. Soldiers can and do experience the ways in which instrumental violence spins beyond its intended scope. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* gave me a foothold into exploring and surviving those feelings. All that’s to say: I have understood, on my own terms, James Baldwin’s argument that Shakespeare “operates as an unimpeachable witness to one’s own experience” (687), and that therefore Shakespeare’s usefulness as an honest witness makes our great obsession with him worthwhile.

I am more critical, however, of the enterprise I am a part of here in America, and the historiographical lacuna that both enable and blight our play and our interpretations. What is the setting in which we are performing Shakespeare? When we invite Shakespeare’s plays into our lives, how do we interpret the spaces in which these characters come to life?

The following essay examines the spatial overlap between the disenfranchisement of African Americans and the performance of William Shakespeare’s plays in the United States. Shakespeare died in 1616, over four centuries ago. In 1619 enslaved persons from Africa were brought to England’s

American colonies for the first time.[1] Those two dates do not point towards some incredible conspiracy by which Shakespeare's death led to an American slavocracy, or that his life caused one. But I will argue that in America, William Shakespeare seems to function as a prelapsarian poet, one who wrote before the institutionalization of colonial slavery, and he is therefore a poet able to symbolically function as a 'public good' that trumps America's past associations with slavery. With a slightly different take, James Shapiro views Shakespeare's plays as "common ground" for both liberals and conservatives, a place "to meet and air [Americans'] disparate views" (xi). I am approaching this from the left—the vast majority of theatre makers in this country seem to identify as being liberal, and my own politics tend in that direction. Even here, however, I am aware that I am offering a naïve view that requires ignoring some salient facts, such as the racist Massachusetts senator, Henry Cabot Lodge, marshalling his "blind devotion" to the Bard to argue for the artistic and moral supremacy of the "Anglo-Saxon" race (Shapiro 127-131). That is to say, I am assuming that the people I work with do not hold the Lodge view, are not overt racists—we are rather the naïve, unintentional racists that James Baldwin described as "looking away" from Black history—American history.

The modern American performance of Shakespeare emphasizes an idealized strain of human nature: especially when Americans perform Shakespeare outdoors or in rural spaces, we tend to imagine ourselves in a primeval woodland, a setting without a history. And our imagining of that primeval woodland often leads us to erase the lives of Black people in a way that patches over the anti-Black behaviours of our American forebearers. Our performances of Shakespeare also tend to assume a "little England" context that ignores the imperialist contexts of Shakespeare (much less our own), and so a similar point could be made about the displacement of indigenous peoples; trends towards "land acknowledgment" point in that direction (Keefe).[2] Still, at the places I have stumbled across in my own work, the record of the Black experience has been made largely invisible and, where detected, deeply disturbing. A handful of prominent examples can make the point. I am going to make a personal instance the principal case and start from there.

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[1] Black people reached Texas even earlier than that, due to the reach of the Spanish empire. See Barr; Hearn.

[2] A succinct review of Shakespeare's imperial contexts and how they intersect with race appears in Thompson (*Companion* 5-7).

Shakespeare at Winedale

Okay, so here's how the story goes: In the 1960s, a legendary Texas philanthropist named Ima Hogg (the name is part of the legend), began collecting frontier homes and furniture on a property called Winedale in Fayette County (Taylor Lonn 1-2). In 1967 she donated her collection to the University of Texas at Austin, and the land and buildings are now a part of the Briscoe Center for American History. She intended, as a preservationist and an old-school progressive, to root America's turbulent present in the virtues of the past; this meant emphasizing the pioneer spirit, and celebrating the material, artisanal cultures of quilts, crafts, furniture, architecture, and the like. In Hogg's view, Winedale reminded her of the Germany she visited and studied as a child, and the small-scale farms she idealized (Clark 56-57). Needing to attract more people to her collection, Hogg suggested that an English professor, James 'Doc' Ayres, bring students out to Winedale to study Shakespeare ("Let Wonder Seem Familiar"). Eventually, the university's program matured from a part-time study of Shakespeare through performance to a full-length summer program wherein about a dozen or so students study and perform three or four of Shakespeare's plays in rep. Audiences come from the surrounding area, and as far away as Austin, Houston, and Dallas, sheltering from the 100 degree heat in the air-conditioned shade of a structure that seats 300. Thanks to a modified hay loft, both actors and audience have a two-story structure that enables an unusual intimacy for the audience, and a commanding height for the actors. A mock Jacobean set-piece combines with a curtain and discovery space to offer the suggestion of the Early Modern period. The synthetic historical setting collaborates with the rural countryside to offer a place where Shakespeare's escape-to-nature plays make sense; it is also a setting where the political and social obsessions of Shakespeare's time (monarchy and feudalism and enclosure and mobs and courtly love and admiration of the Ancients) can be imagined back to life in a more meaningful way. It is a space that enables a social community centered on Shakespeare, and that community pushes the hurly-burly of Texas politics (guns and voting and abortion and demographics) past the fence surrounding Winedale.

Forty years later, the program was still in place when I heard about it (in Iraq of all places). It has become a key focal point for creative energy at the University of Texas Stromberger "This Green Plot" 2). Robert Faires likened Ayres' approach to Shakespeare as "an experimental drug with unexpected side effects, [it] yielded not just a slew of students with an expanded sense of the Bard's genius, but a mob that, having tasted the fruit of the Tree of Theatre, craved more" ("More Words from Winedale"). Several films have documented the program, including the recent *Take Pains, Be Perfect*, and the site recently received awards from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the American

Shakespeare Center (Faires "Winedale's Lauds"). The program now has an outreach component that gives performance opportunities to hundreds of underprivileged children each year (Stromberger). College-age students often describe the experience as a transformative part of their education and even compare the performance barn to a temple of Shakespeare, or to test out ideas about equality, participation, and public discourse.[3] One Winedaler, Bob Jones, wryly observed that it is much easier to learn to perform plays stuffed with nature references if you are actually surrounded by nature, rather than in one of the concrete ice boxes we tend to use for theatres (*Shakespeare at Winedale*).[4]

To describe Winedale, people tend to empty it of its social history, describing it as an "empty space" that requires participants to "leave behind the expectations and limitations they perceive to enable and govern their lives back home" (Kozusko).[5] If writers do describe any aspect of Winedale's social history, then they tie it to an American pastoral tradition of hardy pioneers (Kozusko), or to the German communities that began immigrating to the area in the 1840s (Barratt and Stewart). Further, the same writers situate the space in Central Texas, thus lifting it out of East Texas, a region associated with cotton, slavery, the South, intense segregation, and racism.[6]

True enough, the theatre barn in which we perform Shakespeare was once a German hay barn—that is how we describe it. It was built *after* the Civil War—a fact that makes all of us more comfortable with our use of the building, and most articles on Winedale happily draw attention to the post-Civil War date of its construction and emphasize the barn's German roots. But the severance is not so clear cut.

First, the cultural distinction between independent German colonists and Anglo slaveholders is easily overstated. Winedale is situated at a place where German colonization overlapped with slavery and cotton production, and German views varied from full-throated participation in the slave-trade to advocating for abolition (though there is little evidence for the latter in Texas (Kearney; Kamphoefner; Pruitt).[7] Still, the Germans who lived at the site did not own slaves (though this had more to do with the 13th and 14th amendments, Juneteenth, and the occupying Union army than an active choice on their part).

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[3] In an otherwise straightforward blurb, the Texas Exes gently mocked the Winedale insistence on transformative experiences (Roush and Gray).

[4] See also, "Let Wonder Seem Familiar: A History of Shakespeare at Winedale."

[5] Peter Brook's Empty Space discourse comes up a lot in discourse on Winedale. See for example, founder Jim Ayre's in an interview with Robert Faires, "25 Years of Shakespeare in Central Texas," For an anthropological interpretation of Winedale, see Barratt and Stewart.

[6] See e.g. Campbell; Glasrud.

[7] Seeking a more heroic role for German-Americans in the abolition of slavery, two German authors wrote *Ulhand in Texas*. See Rossa; Honeck. The most famous instance of tying abolitionist sentiment to German immigrants is certainly Quentin Tarantino et al., *Django Unchained*.

Second, the Winedale site and the theatre barn itself have a much more complicated history than described on its historic markers. The markers at our performance site indicate that Samuel K. Lewis, a “pioneer,” built the nearby Winedale Inn to take advantage of its proximity a new stagecoach route. (So far, so “alright alright alright:” stagecoaches are a classic Southwestern motif thanks to mid-century Westerns; see Grant). Since the historic markers do not mention slavery, it is not surprising that when the Texas Historical Commission forwarded the site’s application to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, not one word in 46 pages mentions an association with slavery either (Bell).

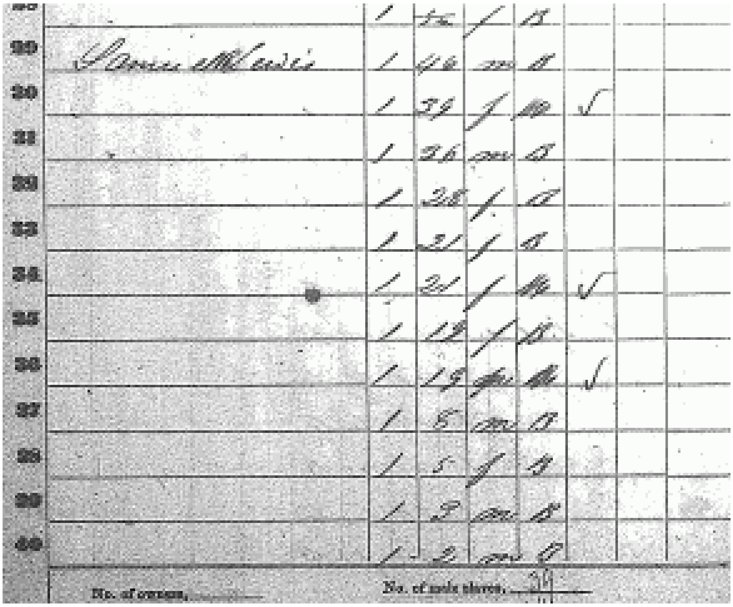
No. of owners,
No. of male slaves,

Figure 1: The above image comes from the ‘Schedule of Slave Inhabitants’ of Fayette County in the 1860 Census, with the image cropped around the Samuel K. Lewis farmstead. The census-takers did not record the names of the enslaved. The third column indicates age, the fifth column ‘B’ or ‘M’ for Black or Mulatto. In the sixth column, a ‘check’ indicates that the individual has run away and was a fugitive at the time of the census. The record was first identified and interpreted by the Briscoe Center for American History. The above photocopy was retrieved from Fayette County’s online portal

Unfortunately, it is just not true. Under Samuel Knight Lewis’ name in the 1860 “Schedule of Slave Inhabitants,” eleven unnamed enslaved individuals are listed, the oldest being 46, and the youngest just an infant of five months-old

("Schedule 2"). Three of those enumerated as slaves were also marked "fugitive," meaning they had run away and had not been found at the time of census; these included two women, 39 and 21 years of age, and one 19 year-old male. The story, then, is not of an independent pioneer, but someone very much enmeshed in the Southern slavocracy. Nor is it a story of a stable, bucolic "antebellum" society; the three fugitives offer evidence for considerable resistance on the part of those enslaved.

The historic marker at Lewis' grave, located close to Winedale, also completely omits his connection to slavery in Texas; it merely describes him as a settler and a one-term Republic of Texas legislator, as well as the founder of "the Winedale Inn," also known as the "Stagecoach Inn" or the "Sam Lewis Stopping Place."[8] The Texas State Historical Association's *Handbook of Texas* and the websites *Texas Independence Trail* and *Texas Escapes* all refer to the site as a German community founded on the "Lewis farmstead," avoiding the terms "cotton" and "plantation" and "slavery".[9] Since the applications for the historical registers in 1967 and 1970 almost entirely avoid the subject of slavery, this is not too surprising—these historiographical moves were all made in the same time period around the founding of Shakespeare at Winedale.[10]

On the other hand, given American history's Texas-sized obsessions with status and wealth, what is surprising is just how much the historic markers understate Lewis' possessions—an important element in assessing why and how Lewis used enslaved labour. The 1850 census lists the Lewis holdings in Fayette County at 69 improved acres, with the total value of the land listed at only $3,000. Just ten years later the improved portion increased to 800 acres, with the farm listed as being worth $20,000—a seven-fold increase in value. Though the structures Lewis left behind lack the neoclassical trappings of the plantations further east, the records here suggest that enslaved labour led to a substantial accumulation of wealth. But the way Lewis portrayed himself in the census understates his holdings. Contemporaneous tax records show a claim on 17,000 acres across several counties—an incredible instance of capital accumulation for the humble 'pioneer' depicted on the historic markers.[11]

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[8] Samuel Knight Lewis historic marker, Marker number 11680. https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5149011680/print/. For a photograph of the Samuel Knight Lewis marker, see: https://texashistoricalmarkers.weebly.com/samuel-knight-lewis.html/. N. access d.

[9] Marie Giles, "Lewis, Samuel K.," *Handbook of Texas Online*. https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/lewis-samuel-k/. Accessed 19 May 2021. Carole E. Christian, "Winedale, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*. https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/winedale-tx/. Accessed 19 May 2021. "Round Top: Winedale Historical Center." *Texas Independence Trail*. https://texasindependencetrail.com/plan-your-adventure/historic-sites-and-cities/sites/winedale-historical-center/. Accessed 19 May 2021. "Winedale, Texas: Texas Ghost Town." http://www.texasescapes.com/CentralTexasTownsSouth/Winedale-Texas.htm/. Accessed 19 May 2021.

[10] Texas Historical Commission. [Historic Marker Application: Winedale Stagecoach Inn], text, January 31, 1967; (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth477840/. Accessed 19 May 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu/; crediting Texas Historical Commission. Bell.

The Briscoe Center for American History has recently begun to reassess the contributions of Black Americans (some free and some enslaved) at the Winedale Historical Center ("The Winedale Story"). Prior to this reassessment, one has to jump back to folklorist Henry Yelvingston, a Texas writer who seems to have been most active in the 1930s and 40s.[12] His typed, one-paragraph, scrapbook note on the Winedale Inn states that "The structure was erected entirely by slaves on the plantation".[13] Four decades later, the legacy of slavery receives a one-line mention in an otherwise romantic academic article entitled "Winedale: Texas' Williamsburg," which seeks to establish a breezy parallel between the site's frontier spirit and the bicentennial of the American revolution—a line of thought entirely aligned with Ima Hogg's intentions for the site (Martin). All of the more recent academic theses on the site have no mention of slavery whatsoever, and the studies that look explicitly at theatre practices follow the lead of the historiography, and are silent on slavery (Stromberger; Barratt and Stewart; Moczygemba).

Earlier in this essay I mentioned that Fayette County narrowly voted against secession. Yet according to the Yelvington scrapbook, Samuel Knight Lewis' Stagecoach Inn was used as telegraph post for the Confederate States until the end of the war. So rather than Winedale being a German-abolitionist island in the sea of East Texas slavery, it may have been quite the reverse —an island of pro-slavery sentiment in a county that narrowly voted against joining the Confederacy. Of course, Fayette County was nevertheless dragged into the war once the secession referendum passed elsewhere in the state (Buenger).

The omissions suggest that by the late 1960s, references to slavery were not welcome. In this sense, the preservation of Winedale's pioneer and German legacy found common cause with the "Lost Cause" narratives that presented an idealized portrait of Southern and Southwestern life.

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[11] Samuel K. Lewis holdings, Briscoe Center for American History.

[12] See for example *Yelvingston's Ghost Lore: A Collection of Ghost, Phantom and Legendary Mysteries Chiefly of Texas* (1936). His version of the "Tengo Frío Bird" legend is included in Dobie. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc67649/. Accessed 21 May 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Press.

[13] Texas Historical Commission. [Historic Marker Application: Winedale Stagecoach Inn], text, January 31, 1967; (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth477840/. Accessed 19 May 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu/; crediting Texas Historical Commission, 9-10.

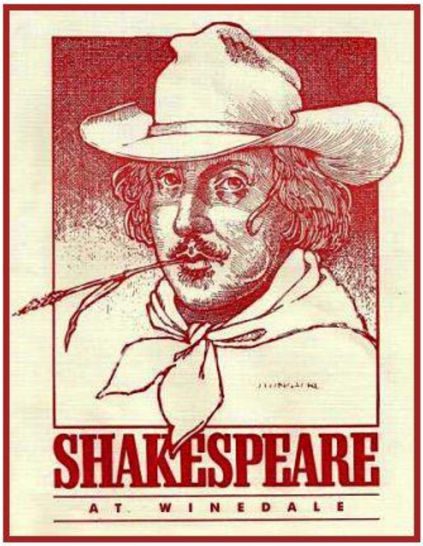

Figure 2: “Cowboy Willie”?

The inability to “see” slavery at Winedale has had some unintentional consequences. The t-shirt mascot for Shakespeare at Winedale—“Cowboy Willie”—hearkens back to Texas’ connection to cowboy culture. Given that it is a University of Texas program, that seems like a straightforward connection to make, and it is often considered a logo that “perfectly captures this long love affair between a poet and a place” (Stromberger). But with Anglo features, a pale face, a pale hat, loose cravat, agrarian straw-chewing, and an unshaven mug, the Texas Shakespeare also bears a resemblance to Samuel Knight Lewis, the slaveholder.[14] The American cowboy has always been an image loaded with contradictions and violence, but those who present us with the image most often intend to evoke a mythical spirit of liberty and independence; once we associate Winedale with slavery, the image suggests quite the reverse, and it becomes a little harder to interpret the site strictly in view of Shakespeare’s “pastoral pleasures” (Frantz and Julian Ernest).[15]

Seeing slavery at Winedale challenges our notions of the utopic: what exactly is the nature of the utopia we have been experiencing? But *not* seeing slavery at Winedale has also had its challenges. For example, the program has largely avoided the plays *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* due to a dearth of Black students signing up for the summer course (we can tell them it is in Central Texas but the compass still points East).[16] Other plays are present, but complicated. In *Comedy of Errors* the “master” characters repeatedly identify the clowns as “slaves.” And beat them. The sound of the play takes on a peculiarly unpleasant resonance, especially given the violent slapstick involved in the performance; it is not necessarily "deadly" theatre—but it is weird, especially when no one else among the actors or audience seems aware of the site's history.

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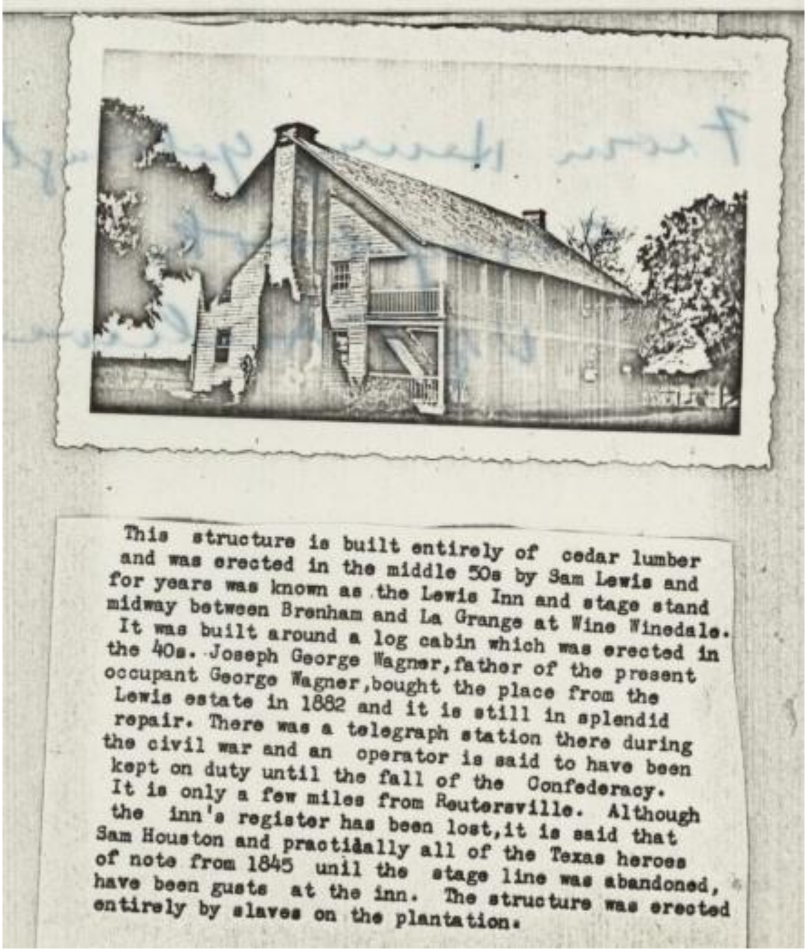
[14] An image of Samuel K. Lewis is available at the Briscoe Center’s online digital tour, “The Winedale Story.”

[15] The “Pastoral pleasures” quote is from Campana.

[16] We can make adjustments. We cannot accept the historical as normal in an age when the American presidency became a four-year mouthpiece for white nationalists. Shortcomings have been articulated and actions suggested in Kimberly Anne Coles, Kim F. Hall, and Ayanna Thompson (Coles, Hall, Thompson). See also: SAA Diversity Committee, “Antiracist Resources,” https://shakespeareassociation.org/resources/inclusive-pedagogy/. N. access d.

It is not clear who at the Winedale Historical Center made the decision to avoid the subject of slavery, or why. Was it a deliberate decision? Was the historical image of Texas too tied up with Southwest hokum to spark anyone's curiosity? Did Ima Hogg or the University of Texas specifically ask that slavery be stricken from the record? Was the purpose of stripping out slavery to ensure the sites could "pass" as white, and therefore serve as unproblematic anchors for Ima Hogg's humanities programs?



This structure is built entirely of cedar lumber and was erected in the middle 50s by Sam Lewis and for years was known as the Lewis Inn and stage stand midway between Brenham and La Grange at Wine Winedale. It was built around a log cabin which was erected in the 40s. Joseph George Wagner,father of the present occupant George Wagner,bought the place from the Lewis estate in 1882 and it is still in splendid repair. There was a telegraph station there during the civil war and an operator is said to have been kept on duty until the fall of the Confederacy. It is only a few miles from Reutersville. Although the inn's register has been lost,it is said that Sam Houston and practically all of the Texas heroes of note from 1845 unil the stage line was abandoned, have been guets at the inn. The structure was erected entirely by slaves on the plantation.

Figure 3: A page from the Henry Yelvingston scrapbook, probably made in the 1930s. UNT archive, "Portal to Texas History"

The answers are murky. Before Ima Hogg bought the property, she commissioned a survey from the James A. Nonemaker, the director of the Harris County Heritage Society. He eschews the word "slavery," but clearly locates the site in East Texas, ties it to the traditions of planters in Virginia and elsewhere, and considers the decorative painting in the interior to be the finest example of "any sort in the Southern States;" he therefore concludes that the building's preservation is made "absulutely [sic] imperative" as an ideal type of frontier plantation (Nonemaker 4). Wayne Bell, perhaps the key figure in the Texas preservationist movement (Sheehy), personally led workshops at the site, and he and his students thoroughly documented the buildings, assessed how they were constructed, and determined the uses and reuses (Harwood). By the time of their 1990 historical survey, slavery had completely dropped out of depictions of the Winedale Historical Center. A nearby transverse crib barn (now used occassionally for historical demonstrations) "which appears on an 1869 map of the Lewis Estate" was almost certainly built before the Civil War, and may well have involved enslaved labor (Brown). We do not know the names of the enslaved. We do not know what happened to them after the Civil War, or when they left the area, or where they are buried, or who their descendents might be, or what further violence they suffered in "bloody" Texas.

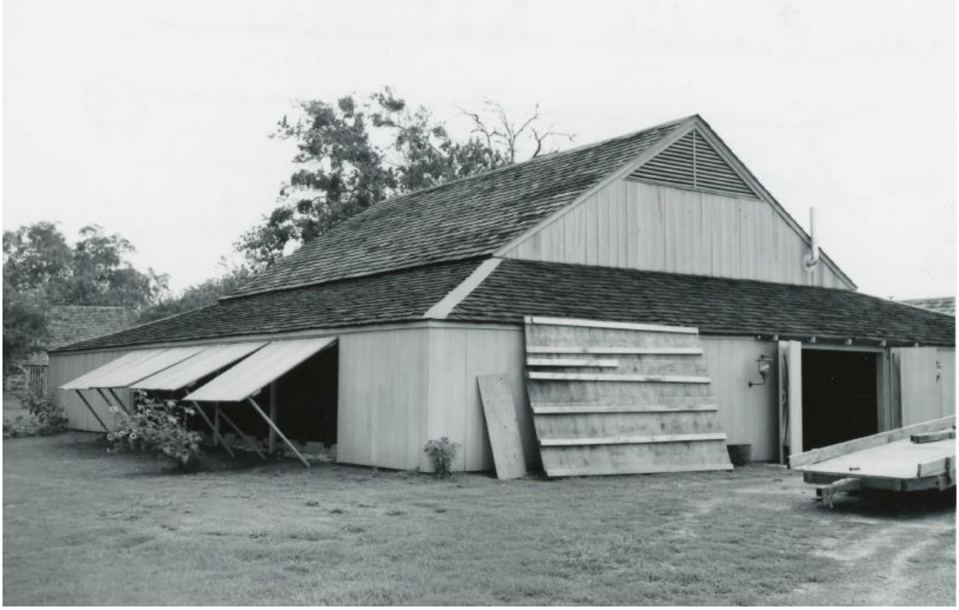


Figure 4: The Winedale theater-barn as it appeared in 1970. Wayne Bell papers, University of Texas at Austin. Wayne Bell's surveys determined that the beams had been recycled from a cotton gin and cotton press. The beams were likely carved by enslaved Black laborers

For those of us who use the Winedale theater barn, the connections to slavery are tactile, all too real, and all too invisible. According to an architectural survey from the 1960s, the frame of the theatre barn was built with lumber recycled from the land's previous use as a Southern plantation (Bell). The beams we use in our theater quite literally propped up the twin instruments of the Southern economy, a cotton gin and a cotton press. Enslaved laborers most likely hewed the timber and carved the beams. Looking at beams, we can see where the plane tracks have notched wood.

In order to perform in the theatre barn, the audience and students must navigate around and under the low-hanging carved beams—the same beams that were used to construct the cotton press and house the cotton gin. We are not always successful at avoiding the beams—minor head injuries sometimes occur. It is a painful irony that when performing Shakespeare in America, we duck our own history.

I briefly move on to other sites to demonstrate a trend, rather than one miserable American happenstance. In these cases, we will again see how the progressive movement's embrace of Shakespeare in the early and mid-20th century will, with vaulting ambition, o'erleap itself and—.

The Delacorte Theatre in Central Park

Seneca Village, the largest pre-Civil War African American community in New York City, stretched along the east side of the avenue now called Central Park West from 82nd to 89th streets. It began on a subdivided farm in 1825 and was one of the few places where free Blacks could legally buy property (Taylor Dorceta 276). Three decades later, the land became increasingly valuable, and wealthy white New Yorkers began dreaming of removing their neighbours. New York's elite pressured the city to destroy it through the use of eminent domain in order to ensure Central Park's rectangular shape (Manevitz). One dismissive New Yorker denigrated the people living in the area for marrying and leaving the races "amalgamated" (Taylor Dorceta 274). They mischaracterized the settlement as "shanties" that should be removed to shield wealthy residents from impoverished neighbours and to create a "pastoral Transcendentalism" (Taylor Dorceta 260, 268). The Seneca Village residents were unaware of their neighbour's plans, as evidenced for their breaking new ground for a church just two years before eminent domain forced their exit beginning in 1856 (Taylor Dorceta 277). Another sign of stability was the presence of a family such as that of Andrew Williams, who purchased a lot for $125 in 1825 and remained there until forced to move; since that time, all the men in the family have been named Andrew Williams, and all of the women receive a name that also starts with 'A', such as ‘Ariel,’ the first Andrew’s great-great-great-great granddaughter.[17] After displacing the Williams family and hundreds of others, the city used a 1,000 strong all-white workforce to build the park (Taylor Dorceta 282-283).[18] Today, on a hill overlooking the largely invisible site of Seneca Village is the Delacorte Theater (roughly aligning with 79th street), home of the city’s largest Shakespeare festival, and a vanguard member of the non-profit theatre movement. If the Public Theater’s Shakespeare Festival is not the largest such festival in the American landscape, it is certainly the best known, and it has set standards followed by countless others (Venning). Tickets have always been issued free of charge, thereby driving up demand (Bennett). More importantly, the festival takes place in the open air of the park, exposing actors and audience to the elements. The festival’s founder, Joseph Papp, elevated the perception of outdoor Shakespeare from an amateur practice to the pre-eminent American method of exploring Shakespeare’s plays. In Central Park, performing outdoors is a vague gesture towards Early Modern performances at the Globe in London, but it is also an embrace of the park itself, and the experience of nature in the middle of a metropolis. Unlike at the reconstructed Globe on the bank of the Thames, the Delacorte provides no shelter for the actors or audience, and one of the consequent rituals includes intercom announcements of weather delays, much like at a baseball game. In the background of the theatre sits the quirky “folly” called Belvedere Castle (“beautiful view”). With longstanding connections to the New York acting scene, the theatre offers actors a place to work on their craft in an environment without as much commercial pressure, and therefore its stages often attract high-status professionals; it also serves as a launching point for future stars, including the great James Earl Jones, Colleen Dewhurst, and George C. Scott. One of the recent stars, Lee Schieber, commented that one of the pleasures of working in the open air was incorporating the natural environment into his performance because “the setting is really the star of the show” (Grode).

The buried ruins of Seneca Village never entered the discussion around the festival’s shift into the adjacent Delacorte, but that is the point: Shakespeare, perceived as a public good, fits within the pastoral Transcendentalism tradition in a way that the complexities of American history do not. By the time Joe Papp, the founder of the New York Shakespeare Festival, started operating in the 1950s, Seneca Village had been effectively erased for a little less than a hundred years. Though Joe Papp demanded relevance from his productions (something he did not always get) it was Shakespeare’s brand as a pastoral public good that allowed his ventures to mesh so well with the elite interests invested in Central Park. When Papp strayed too far from the pastoralism, it could result in crashed productions. In one of his later seasons this pursuit resulted in a flood of complaints, such as the following assessment from M. E. Comtois in *Shakespeare Quarterly* about an indoor series Papp produced:

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[17] Central Park Conservancy, “Seneca Village: The Williams Family Legacy,” 2020.

[18] Whiteness helped European immigrants get a job, but it could not help them keep it: in accordance with the typical practices of the time the laborers were poorly paid, and fired if sick or injured.

> It seems wasteful to use [Shakespeare's] plays as vehicles to comment on our present society, when the worlds they create and the insights they contain, studied and our stage, will prove fresher and more soul-satisfying than the daily newspaper ever can. (408)

Buried within the Comtois critique is the assumption that American news (history in the making) is neither soul-satisfying nor fresh, whereas the Shakespearean canon remains "constant as the Northern Star,/ Of whose true-fixed and resting quality/ There is no fellow in the firmament." (*Julius Caesar* 3:1:61-63) Comtois points out that the indoor season she describes failed at the box office. The theaters were too dingy and small, the acting and costuming too naturalistic (or else too loud): in a word, they were not transcendental.

Joe Papp's free theatre in park has never suffered from the absence of the picturesque, such that the happening—the transcendent event—can overwhelm whatever is on stage. A sense of this comes from Papp's romantic memories of using an amphitheatre built by the Works Progress Administration along the East River; he loved the way the poplar trees swayed in the breeze, and therefore insisted a decade later that they plant poplars to frame the Delacorte as well (Turan and Papp 80). Papp's contrarian image tends to overshadow his extraordinary ability to conform to the times. The legend of Joe Papp's brief struggles against Robert Moses, for example, belies a decade of quiet cooperation, and the sweetheart deal the Public received from the park's commission (Turan and Papp 153-172; Sheaffer 51). When it came to the construction of the new outdoor theater in Central Park, taxpayers footed 60% of the bill while George Delacorte donated the other 40%. The theater's name appalled fundraiser Herta Danis, who thought Delacorte "got away with murder" (Turan and Papp 233).

It does not take too much digging into Delacorte's utopia to uncover the dis-ease of the place. In a feature for the *New York Times*, Papp crows about his success in casting an all-Black cast in *Julius Caesar*. One of the stars, Morgan Freeman, nevertheless "expressed a certain unease about the position he and his colleagues find themselves in. 'We've spent years doing kitchen-sink drama, dealing with everyday events within the black experience. It's very removed from the Sturm and Drang of Shakespeare. I think there's some feeling of being in a goldfish bowl'" (Blau).

Morgan Freeman's Sturm and Drang reference locates Shakespeare within a European Romantic tradition that prioritizes a white male's self-involvement (a Young Werther), rather than "everyday events within the black experience"—that is to say, everyday events within the American experience, "everyday" events that Freeman and his colleagues must repeatedly survive in order to get to the stage. In the kitchen-sink tradition, lighting divides the audience and actors, and the performances often use an imaginary fourth-wall that separates the audience and the actors even further. But for Freeman, that is not the "goldfish bowl." Instead, the goldfish bowl comes from being Black in all Black cast in a space named after a white benefactor performing a play written by a white writer surrounded by the most expensive real estate in the world largely occupied by rich white Americans. All this is not to say his performance would or would not succeed in his terms or on the terms of his director or his audience. Instead, between Schieber and Freeman, we can sense a sharp distinction between an idealistic urban retreat where "the setting is the star" and a dysphoric "goldfish bowl."

As of May 2021, the Public Theater has launched a cultural transformation plan that seeks to empower non-white artists.[19] So far, the Delacorte's adjacency to Seneca Village has only merited a brief aside in a podcast episode (entitled "Racoons are very intelligent creatures") that otherwise focuses on standing in line for tickets at 6 a.m., "great celebrity acting," and experiencing the winter and rough weather of producing theatre out of doors.[20] Much like Central Park itself, the podcast suggests that the Delacorte does not intend to experience nature or America's political circumstances, but to dominate them. The most moving performances at the Delacorte occur when the utopic imaginings of the Public Works program simplify the Shakespeare plays (i.e. "the worlds they contain") in order to demonstrate the immediate power of forgiveness—such as a *Twelfth Night* where even a humiliated Malvolio joins in the final song and dance number, or an *As You Like It* in which a paranoid Duke Frederick abandons his delusions of total control via a social rapprochement with his brother in the forests of Arden (Kwei-Armah and Taub; Taub and Woolery). Neither play's ending matches the source text, but both reflect some of the utopic aspirations of the 130 plus community performers that typically appear in a Public Works program.[21] The excitement of even these plays, however, requires the three-fold suspension of knowledge: 1) the fate of Seneca Village, 2) the fate of similar communities scattered throughout an ever-changing city, 3) the disjunction between the audience for the Public's plays, and the public at large.[22]

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[19] "Anti-Racism & Cultural Transformation Plan: Reflecting on Our Cultural Transformation Work So Far," The Public Theatre, https://publictheater.org/news-items/anti-racism--cultural-transformation-plan/anti-racism--cultural-transformation-plan/. N. access d.

[20] Dani Lencioni and Michael Friedman, *Racoons Are Very Intelligent Creatures*, podcast audio, Public Square: A podcast of the Public Theatre, 24:38, https://publictheater.org/news-items/buckets/conversations/podcast/podcast_ep3/. N. access d.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Jill Dolan, the preeminent exponent of theatre's utopic potential, finds Ashland "a charming small town whose streets are lined with chic, interesting shops and gourmet restaurants, all in the shadow of pine covered hills that gesture to the mountains beyond," a place where even a critic fortified against Shakespeare can find themselves spellbound, and where archaic language simply seems like the vernacular (Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator*).[23] The festival context, the actors' comfortable embodiment of the language and action, and the director's spare staging enabled what Dolan termed the most fluid and imaginatively productive Shakespeare she had seen.

In Oregon, the utopic sentiment is doubtlessly present in the historical landscape, but its meaning is not fixed. The framers of Oregon's first territorial laws held onto an implicit concept of "white utopia" and they therefore made an explicit exclusion of both slavery *and* ethnic minorities. The white settlers in Oregon sought to avoid embracing the "slaveholding power" of the South (Thoennes and Landau 453), and serve as a fraternal model to the country—the white part of it, anyway (Thompson "Expectation and Exclusion"). It was a wild irony that 2020's largely peaceful protests saw their most sustained and least-disciplined energy in Portland, a city with one of the lowest percentages of Black people, and where largely white crowds felt safe enough to use force to both attack and defend a federal courthouse (Fuller).

Ashland, the home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, possesses its own share of Oregon's contradictions. Perhaps the most striking image from 1920s Ashland shows the Ku Klux Klan marching openly through the city.[24] As at Winedale, the nearby historic markers emphasize the successes of white pioneers, civic leaders, and progressives. In a recent low point, in 2016 a townsperson yelled at OSF actor Christiana Clark that he could "kill a black person and be out of jail in a day and a half. Look it up. The KKK is still alive and well here." The actor responded by emceeing a Juneteenth Remembrance Day (Akins).

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[21] To make this claim I am drawing on my personal conversations with the unpaid community participants.

[22] Sheaffer notices that the Public and the New York Shakespeare Festival often rhetorically conflate their audience with the public-at-large in order to describe their productions as a public good. This is a common move when pursuing arts funding, as is the polishing of the proposal with Shakespeare (56).

[23] Dolan argues for the experience of utopic sentiment as a motivation for social change, a way of seeing a better future (*Utopia in Performance*).

[24] Oregon Historical Society. Date unknown. The photo can be seen online at https://www.klcc.org/post/white-supremacy-pervasive-scourge-oregon-history/.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival recently addressed the tensions with a pandemic-era short film, *Ash Land* (dir. Shariffa Ali). The filmmakers, the majority of whom were African American, described their artistic intentions in a podcast interview in which they observed that the Oregon Shakespeare Festival had sheltered them throughout the pandemic, and that they valued the gorgeous, pastoral setting; but they also had observed the absence of Black community. It does not betray the plot to say that the first part of *Ash Land* finds two Black women isolated in Ashland's rural setting. One of the women is refused a ride from a passing pickup; the vehicle is loaded with the imagery of "gun rights" and white libertarianism. The other character sits isolated in her trailer, and she uses makeup to change her skin colour. The rural space only begins to offer comfort after they link up, and the images shift towards cleansing, baptism, renewal, play, self-forgiveness and creating a community in the absence of others who look like you, or who look at the world in the same way. The film only runs twenty minutes, and the final five are devoted to an original song from Ray Angry of The Roots. The lyrics make explicit what is rendered invisible in the recorded critical reception of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's plays. "…still a body of water to cross, can we forget / All the bodily fluids we lost to the horsewhip? / Is health a sundown state of mind in the northwest? / Was Ashland built on burnt crosses and torches?" The final frame offers "We black. We in Oregon. Look at us." For an audience member, the short film offers a lot to give witness to in twenty minutes. In scale, it is a pocket-project that usefully articulates how difficult it can be for Black Americans to "take in" the rural settings in which we ask them to study, work, and play in the dramas of William Shakespeare—or for white audiences to "take in" the reality of the Black performers on stage.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival

Alabama Shakespeare Festival did not respond to my queries regarding the site's land usage history prior to its current role as an artistic playground. As with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, tracing the specific chain of ownership has not yet occurred, and since the theatre is located in the South such an understanding would allow us to know if people had been enslaved there, and perhaps what happened to them, or what took place there during Reconstruction, or indeed at any time prior to when the Blounts purchased the property for use as a cultural park. We do know that it is located in Montgomery, a "birthplace of the Confederacy," and a place where racial unrest sparked incessantly at the century-old flashpoints of police violence, corruption, and poverty (Miller).[25] The festival is more specifically located in the Blount Cultural Park, where the Shakespeare Garden offers a "Stroll Back in Time" and "romantic buildings inspired by the picturesque English countryside."[26] The romantic posture of the Blount Cultural Park uses Shakespeare's cultural capital to make an implicit prelapsarian leap away from the history of Southern rural life. To attract artists to the area, they may have needed every ounce of cultural capital (not to mention USD capital) they could get; Winton Blount was himself among a large set of wealthy southerners who turned towards the Republican party in the 1940s in a revolt against the perceived economic and racial liberalism of northern Democrats—hardly a popular posture among American artists (Feldman). The Blounts were devoted Anglophiles, and when the Carolyn Blount theater opened in 1985, it raised two flags: the American and the British. Rather than locating the action in Montgomery, the first production at the theater transported *A Midsummer Night's Dream* back to Edwardian England wherein the lovers escaped into the woods from a "class conscious" Athens. *Southern Quarterly* reserved its highest praise for the "lavish visual feast" of a *Richard III* production in which "few things occur to Richard. He is at the center of the action, a whirlpool forcing people to react to him," and for this reason, "the role of Richard may be Shakespeare's greatest achievement" (Robertson).[27] (Despite the exhausted gothic ennui found among William Faulkner's characters, the white southern man-of-action remains one of the strongest stereotypes in the region.[28]) As is typical in the American experience, the site places a supreme emphasis on the benevolence of the founders, and tames history within the set bounds of "culture" as set forth by the founders' vision. In a city rich in

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[25] Judith Miller, "Montgomery Tension High after Incident between Police and Black Family," *The New York Times*, 16 March 1983. The headline undersells the story: it involves a call for martial law, an accusation of torture, a rash home invasion by police officers, the incarceration of an entire Black family, and fervent protests.

[26] *Blount Cultural Park Visitor Information Guide: Inside the Shakespeare Garden*. Undated, but it includes a reference to Mayor Bobby Bright (1999 to 2009) and it was probably printed in the first decade of the 21st century.

[27] Robertson's "whirlpool of action" quote comes from the director of that season's *Richard III*, Edward Stern.

[28] See, for example, Alabama Shakespeare founder W. M. Blount, *Doing It My Way*. A more literary example can be found in Tom Wolfe, *A Man in Full: A Novel*. Compared with William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*. Ralph Ellison smartly parodies white delusions about self-reliance at the end of the 'Golden Day' episode in Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 2nd ed.

American history, it is, at times, an ahistorical island. Their ongoing Southern Writers Project tries to build a bridge to the mainland (Gardner). The artists involved have described the experience as one of artistic solitude, or a monastic existence (Willis 31).[29] As is the case with all the sites in this survey, more research is needed. Brevity can be felt as a kind of cruelty towards the students and artists who have committed their artistry to these stages, and that is not the purpose of this essay.

American Shakespeare Center

The American Shakespeare Center (ASC) is unique among the sites surveyed in its self-awareness of both the Shakespearean "time machine" it pursues, and its location among quite explicit memorials to slave-owning traitors to American democracy. That self-awareness translates to a reminder of what Paul Menzer describes as the "theatre's unique ability to be two places at once" (Menzer et al. 12). It is a semi-historical, semi-imagined, and reconstructed Blackfriars theatre from 400 years ago and 4,000 miles away, and it is tucked into what was once the frontier of England's first American colony and later became one of the geographic centres of "Lost Cause" tourism (12). Remarkably, it produces more Shakespearean and Renaissance drama than any other theatre in North America, and it lives in the Shenandoah Valley, one of the critical Confederate arteries, and consequently the site of several military campaigns (Menzer ivx; Gallagher; Cozzens; Bohland). At just over twenty-five years of age, the American Shakespeare Center is the youngest of the five theatre companies listed here. Up until 2020, the theatre was situated next to the "Stonewall Jackson Inn," and the biannual Blackfriars academic conference has made frequent use of the next-door hotel. Both the theatre and the hotel "[came] up together as financial successes" in the renewal of downtown Saunton, Virginia (Zeigler). The hotel finally changed its name in the midst of the Black Lives Matter protests last summer; the local newspaper focused on the reaction on Facebook, which tilted towards white people angry at the "ridiculous" attempt to "change history" (Peters). Of course, naming a hotel for dead traitor "changed history," and the building of the Blackfriars "changed history" as well. Local residents, historians, and marketing professionals tend to portray the Shenandoah Valley as an "idyllic rural heartland" that rarely challenges the normative assumptions of the Lost Cause tradition (Bohland 14-16).

The ASC's Blackfriar playhouse is nestled behind the brick façade of a 19th century carpet factory, and the building turned a story of 20th century urban industrial decline into one of 21st century arts renewal. The interior is approximately designed to mirror the layout, look and timber resonances of a 17th century Blackfriar's playhouse, presenting a "cross-hatched history of England and America" (Menzer et al. 6). The playhouse uses "universal lighting," a practice wherein the audience and actors share the space, can see each other. Before each performance, the actors "set the [audience's] clock" and describe the stage practices they will use, including doubling (multiple characters inhabited by a single actor) and audience interaction, and justify these techniques as being appropriate to the Early Modern period from which springs most of their repertoire (Menzer et al. 1). Yet this setting of the clock requires "selective memory, selective forgetting, and deliberate amnesia" on the part of the theatre-makers as they seek to draw the audience into their confidence and into a liminal space where their staging conventions propel the work (Menzer et al. 5).

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[29] Michael Emerson at "35 Years in Montgomery," Alabama Shakespeare Festival https://asf.net/35/. N. access d.

The pandemic of COVID-19 ensured a fraught year for every American theater, but the American Shakespeare Center found itself on especially precarious footing. According to the reporting of Jerald Raymond Pierce, administrators and artists from the theatre wrote a letter charging the artistic director—a white male—with bullying and abusive behaviour; when he resigned a few months later, he implied his actions were for the good of the company as he sought to offer the American Shakespeare Center a "tabula rasa" for the new year. For the artists who had composed and signed the letter (more than a hundred of them) the tabula rasa suggested a white savior narrative at odds with the tenor of the reproach they had sent to the board (Pierce).

Despite the relative youth of the company, the chaos of the past year, and the bizarre historical posture of region, the ASC's consistent aesthetic approach has yielded remarkable achievements in art. For the purposes of the present essay, lifting those of an exceptional Black artist seems most appropriate. In the short span of fifteen years, René Thornton Jr. performed the folio—all of Shakespeare's extant plays, and in a few seasons would offer powerful performances not just in the roles most closely associated with race (Othello and Aaron from *Titus Andronicus*), but the less explored characters in the canon that he came to prefer, such as the title character from *Timon of Athens* (Taylor Michael). The sustained excellence and unique achievements of René Thornton Jr. are an important part of the new history of Blackfriars, and the fact that he did this despite the very well-known and very racist history of the area suggests the prelapsarian move towards Shakespeare may not just be the prerogative of white artists and audiences. Thornton Jr. has moved on, and other Black actors now make use of the space. As Pierce recently put it, these performances give us the chance not to see how Black actors fit into Shakespeare's world, but how they allow Shakespeare into theirs (Pierce).

In this sense, the American Shakespeare Center offers a reinvention of heritage armed with a commitment to equity and a disciplined artistic approach. Menzer warns that "heritage always wantonly traffics in misrepresentations" ("Less We Forget" 20). Yet if heritage is inevitable, we can commit our actions towards the best available.

"The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning"

In the canons of the English language and live performance, no writer has bequeathed as rich a heritage as William Shakespeare. Throughout America, he remains the most performed playwright. His plays gave us lightening bursts of language that permanently shaped our idiom, our poetic imaginations, and our understanding of the human condition. His complex and deeply revealed characterizations created individuals like Hamlet, the Macbeths, Viola, Benedick and Beatrice, Romeo and Juliet, whom we often seem to know better than ourselves. My own mentor, James Loehlin, has expressed the following about Shakespearean performance in America, and in particular at Winedale:

> Shakespeare's language [can] still be communicated with power, clarity and immediacy to twenty-first century audiences, and that Shakespearean performances [can] still respond to a changing world while still functioning with the basic theatrical and narrative engines that made them work 400 years ago. (270)

This is how James directs, as well—he encourages repetition, repetition, repetition until the student actors can explore the contradictions within each scene, and for the most part letting broad brushstrokes fall away. As W. B. Worthen puts it, this is inquiry through action (264-87). The plays thereby develop their own internal logic, one that roughly aligns with Shakespeare's text.

> Without design choices that make sweeping interpretive statements, these productions play each scene for its theatrical value, and in so doing reveal the social relations within it with searching detail and clarity. (Loehlin "Playing Politics" 93)

In a sense, American history is the sweeping "design choice" or "interpretive statement" that could foil our inquiries into text. An English, Early Modern playwright has, with much merit, achieved the status of an American public good. Therefore, his plays are often performed without controversy—and (bizarrely) on or near sites specifically tied to the enslavement or disenfranchisement of people with African ancestry. We have seen that New

York City's popular outdoor Shakespeare theater, the Delacorte, is situated just south of the site of Seneca Village, an African American community displaced for the construction of Central Park; Alabama Shakespeare Festival likely takes place on a former plantation; the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia has made frequent use of a hotel dedicated to a Confederate general; the University of Texas' Shakespeare at Winedale festival is performed in a barn built with supports carved by enslaved labour; the Oregon Shakespeare Festival takes place within a state unique for its founding laws dedicated to white supremacy. A survey of Shakespearean performance sites in New York, Alabama, Virginia, Texas, and Oregon has shown the strength of the unexpected connection between the performance of Shakespeare in America and the subjugation of Black persons, and it raises questions about the unique and utopian assumptions of Shakespearean performance in the United States. The evidence falls far short of a racist conspiracy—there was no organized, explicit intent to erase the history of racism. But the evidence does show a consistent pattern of how the performance of Shakespeare serves as a scenic backdrop that overwhelms the senses in an attempt at new beginnings for European culture where the first attempt—slavocracy and systemic racism—was viewed as lapsing into immorality. Shakespeare is the workaround.

The insistence with which we celebrate the utopian in American Shakespeare belies a need—or maybe just a desire—for a prelapsarian Society. Do all societies have such a poet? We can easily imagine Tolstoy and Chekhov performing that function in Russia, or Homer providing that for the Greeks. Our vision of the meaning of Shakespearean performance in America may be as inescapable as it is historically inaccurate. But now you have read the slave schedules, and I have read the reports of Reconstruction-era violence, and I am asking us to try.

The absence of this knowledge prevents sites like Alabama's Blount Cultural Park and Texas' Winedale Historical Center from serving as places to "open up hard history," or seeing how Black lives have shaped America's built environment (Dudley). The activists and educators Theresa G. Coble *et al* argue that we can use history to learn to confront difficult emotions, recognize sanctified space, facilitate group bonding, identify models for activism, and move forward in activism (26-32). Ironically, the goals of Coble *et al* are not a universe away from the progressive goals with which many Shakespeare festivals were founded. In Texas, James Ayres wanted Winedale to be an escape "to the forest of Arden" for the sake of self-discovery; in the Coble framework, the enrichment occurs through deep immersion into American history rather than total immersion into Shakespeare. This is the frustrating thing about so many Shakespearean performance sites: they could better execute the work that they intend to do with Shakespeare (as Ayanna Thompson and Tom Mooney put it) if they admit the presence of the elephant shitting all over the students, actors, and audience members (Thompson, 2011). This would better honour the challenges faced by non-white students and awaken us to the ongoing damages and dangers of American society.

I am someone who has experienced Shakespeare as a kind of utopia. At the University of Texas at Austin, I studied Shakespeare through the process of performance, and the teamwork and creativity involved in that process will be a source of strength for me throughout my life. When participating in the program, it was very easy to imagine myself, like Rosalind and her friends, escaping to the woods. But those woods are neither ideal nor empty. American history has visited these places before. My essay has challenged the nature of that utopia and the social costs involved in creating Shakespearean utopias in the United States. The days I spent examining the Freedmen's Bureau reports of Reconstruction violence, scanning for explicit references to the Lewis plantation—and even without coming up without direct links to Winedale—Jesu. "Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter."

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Utopia, Arcadia and the Forest of Arden

Abstract: In *Utopia* (1516) Thomas More created a humorous world with a serious purpose. His invented republic was a place where existing conventions and structures did not exist, allowing the positing of alternatives. The creation of alternative worlds which satirise or critique contemporary society is a technique employed by writers in most genres, in most periods and in most cultures. More's work is interesting for us in this context at least in part because of the likelihood that Shakespeare was familiar with it. When he created The Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, for some of the characters there are utopian elements in their experience of that place. But Arden is not only a putative Utopia. Arden also contains elements of the pastoral Arcadia, again drawing upon ancient precedents, but more recently explored by English poets Edmund Spenser in *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) and Philip Sidney in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1593). This article interrogates the use of Utopian and Arcadian elements in the creation of one of Shakespeare's most complicated plays. Like More's *Utopia* its intention is comic. Like Sidney's poem it is romantic, but unlike both of them it is ultimately about returning to a real world, with new perceptions of who we are, not as a society but as individuals.

Keywords: Shakespeare and utopia, arcadia/utopia and the Forest of Arden, transformative wilderness, *As You Like It*.

When Shakespeare wrote his plays there was no expectation that they would be printed, let alone pored over and studied. But after the publication in 1623 of the special Folio edition of *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, edited by his friends after his death, scholars and students have read, analysed and dissected the plays. In the four centuries since his death Shakespeare has been spread around the world, and is now seen, heard, and read in languages unknown to him and in cultures and media undreamt of by the Elizabethan English. Instead of one theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain's/

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King's Men, performing the play from time to time as part of their repertoire, there are now thousands of productions of Shakespeare's plays all over the world every year, each one seeking to arrive at its own special interpretation. But the greatest difference between Shakespeare's time and the present is that nowadays the plays are closely analysed. The Head of Education at the Royal Shakespeare Company once told this author that at any given moment research indicates that approximately 147 million people are studying Shakespeare's plays and poetry around the world (2017).While many of those studying the texts are doing so at an introductory level in school, at more advanced levels they are not merely studied, but forensically dissected by scholars. This is a level of scrutiny to which a busy playwright in the commercial London theatre could never have expected his plays to be subjected.

One of the purposes of this scholarship is to contextualise Shakespeare's writing, to trace influences, to relate his writings to the details in his own cultural landscape, in order to attempt to home in on his intentions and meanings. But as scholars today examine Shakespeare in this light, the danger is that the academic, with vast libraries to draw upon, can seek for and find relationships which were never intended to be there. When Shakespeare used other writers as sources for his plays he generally did so quite blatantly, often transcribing passages almost verbatim. Yet modern scholars will sometimes discuss Shakespeare's writings in relation to ideas, sources, and concepts far outside his experiences, intentions or knowledge. Following a desire to understand and contextualise, the danger exists of over-attribution and an excessive desire to categorise.

As You Like It is a play which is often discussed in terms of two concepts, which may be conveniently referred to as Utopia and Arcadia. A simple internet search will throw up a very large number of articles, at all levels of complexity, which examine the play in the light of these two ideas. Despite the popularity of the first, Utopia, in this context, it is of questionable validity in looking at *As You Like It*. The second, Arcadia, however, is useful as a starting point for looking at the play.

To deal first with Utopia, in the first scene of *As You Like It*, Charles the Wrestler describes the exiled Duke and his followers in the Forest of Arden as "fleet[ing] the time carelessly, as they did in the Golden World" (1:1:103). This, together with the speech about life in the Forest uttered by the Duke himself (2:1:548 et seq.) about their life in the forest, have been taken by a number of authors as a starting point for discussion of the Forest of Arden as an idyllic, bucolic world, far away from the corruption of the court.[1] But to describe it as Utopian stretches the word beyond breaking point: even though different generations use the same words to describe what can be very different ideas, a word coined by an author, as it becomes more widely used, leaves behind the context for which it was created. One such word is *Utopia*. The word was created in the eponymous book by Thomas More, to describe a fictional country. The title page expresses the hope that the book will be received as being "as entertaining as it is instructive" (1516). Since the year of its creation the seriousness or otherwise of More's depiction has been debated, but certainly the name of his fictional country, *Utopia*, is derived from Greek, meaning "Not Place," and several of the names in the book are of a similar provenance. Examples would include his narrator Raphael *Hythlodaeus* ("dispenser of nonsense"), the river *Anydrus* ("not water") or the chief magistrate *Ademus* ("not people"). More's later martyrdom and sanctification have sometimes led subsequent commentators to take the book more seriously than More clearly intended, but More had a lively sense of humour, as his friend Erasmus attested. In one of his letters he says that "from earliest childhood [More] had such a passion for jokes that one might almost suppose he had been born for them" (Allen 16). More and Erasmus had worked together on translations into Latin from the Greek writer Lucian just over a decade earlier, and the real antecedent for More's subsequent book is Lucian's *A True Story*, written at some time in the Second Century CE. This model consists of "a familiar conversation raising a serious problem, followed by a fantastic traveller's tale describing an imaginary place in which the problem is solved" (Turner 7) In this respect More's *Utopia* has more in common with books like *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) than a more serious political treatise such as Plato's *Republic* (375 BCE).

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[1] All line numberings are from the Open Source Shakespeare editions.

The world which More's Hythlodaeus describes is run along strictly controlled lines in an attempt to achieve more perfect social relationships. It is a welfare state, in that everyone has food to eat, clothes to wear, drab though they may be, somewhere to live, is educated and has healthcare. The working day is only six hours. On the other hand, material needs are met on a rather basic level, it is impossible to travel without a permit, and women are required once a month to kneel before their husbands and confess their failings. It is worth pointing out that there is no equivalent requirement for husbands. In Utopia there is virtually no privacy, pre-marital sex is punished by celibacy for life, and adultery by slavery. Repeat offences are subject to the death penalty. More, himself famously ascetic, wearing a hair shirt until the day he died, was interested neither in material things nor sex, but knew that the same could not be said of most of his readers. For satirical purposes he took some of his ideas to extremity. Thus, in *Utopia*, More follows Lucian and anticipates Swift, in depicting extremes in order to castigate vice.

But this is not what the word Utopia has come to mean in succeeding centuries. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (https://merriam-webster.com) defines Utopia as "a place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government and social conditions." Utopian fiction often depicts idealised settings, where social and political harmony exist. What Utopian science fiction and 18th-century travellers' tales have in common with More's Utopia is the idea that such a society is remote from our own, either geographically or temporally, and it has found different solutions to what are, for readers, recognisable problems. A lot of Utopian fiction, however, takes itself far more seriously than More's Utopia. The word Utopian has frequently become used, whether that use is correct, as a term to describe perfect societies, with connotations of unattainability. "Utopian" is also used as a disparaging term for an impossible pipe dream, as well as the aspirational term for an ideal society to be worked towards. The second definition offered by Marriam-Webster is "an impractical scheme for social improvement" (ibid).

Anyone attempting to approach Shakespeare's Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* as a Utopian setting has an extremely difficult task ahead. This has not prevented some commentators from trying. To give but one example, Farrar (2014) in *Utopian Studies*, a journal specifically dedicated to such explorations, does so. But while his discussion of Utopian concepts and their application in the real world is fascinating, he is less successful in convincing that the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* should actually to be regarded as Utopian. If one abandons More's specifics, and takes the modern definition, of that which Merriam-Webster cited above calls "a place of ideal perfection," while a discussion of the Forest of Arden can begin in those terms, almost immediately the Forest diverges from such a description, and Farrar comes ultimately to this conclusion.

The role of Arden in *As You Like It* is not to represent an ideal. The role of the Forest is, like the wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the island in *The Tempest*, the heath in *King Lear*, to act for characters as a transformative wilderness. In these spaces the normal structures and rules of society, the standard codes, and patterns of behaviour, no longer apply. Characters cannot rely upon the deference due to their positions in society but must be thrown upon their own inner resources to achieve desired outcomes.[2] The Forest of Arden elicits differing responses from different characters. When Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone arrive, they are exhausted. It has been arduous to get there, and now they have no shelter. Touchstone says "Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I; when I was at home I was in a better place; but travellers must be content." (2:4:734-5) While a refuge from pursuit by Frederick's men, it is hardly initially a welcoming shelter. When Orlando and Adam arrive they too are exhausted, and starving. Orlando describes the forest as "Uncouth," "bleak" and a "desert" (2:6:882 et seq.) He later describes it as a "desert inaccessible," "savage" and canopied by "melancholy boughs" (2:7:1003 et seq.). As the play goes on their opinions modify, but the Forest is an environment where considerable dangers, such as venomous serpents and hungry lionesses, can lurk.

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[2] For fuller discussion of this point see Paterson (1-18).

It must be said that the definition of “forest” itself, in Shakespeare’s time, differs from the present day. Most modern definitions of forest presuppose a lot of trees. In standard contemporary usage, such as that of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, a forest is defined as an area of land “with tree crown cover” (Winson online). An article, published by that organisation, *What is a Forest?* (2011) offers a history of the origin of the word, originally a jurisdictional term dating from the Merovingian period. It originally meant royal game reserves, where the King and his retinue hunted deer, which contained both wooded and unwooded areas. The “forests” were placed outside the run of everyday legal writ, and could not be “cultivated, exploited or encroached upon” (ibid). Forests were subject to a different set of laws. Some of these laws are familiar to modern day audiences through, for example, the widely popular stories of Robin Hood, where deer are the property of the Crown, and killing them can be subject to draconian punishments. But there are other “forest laws” which remain in force in England even up to the present, such as the right of Foresters in Southern England’s New Forest (dating back to the eleventh century) to keep herds of ponies in the landscape.

Trees in forests could not be cut down, nor could the land be used for cultivation, but within their confines there were areas which were not wooded. These areas of untilled heathland were also defined as forest. On these areas of heathland some ruminant livestock could survive. The New Forest in Hampshire is an example of this. Domesticated cows might not always flourish, but hardy sheep, and of course deer, for whom the forest reserve existed, could.[3] The FAO definition referred to above classes both mixed native woodland and planted monocultures as forest, but in the everyday usage of landowners and forest managers, trees which are cultivated at the same time, such as those planted all over the Scottish Highlands by the Forestry Commission, are referred to as “plantations,” whereas “forest” tends to mean native, mixed growth.

So, when Shakespeare talks about the Forest of Arden, he is referring to a place which is wild and uncultivated, which contains both trees and open areas, where game is plentiful, equally importantly lies “outside the common juridical sphere” (Winson online). These parameters are all inherent in the term. But this is not just any forest. It is the Forest of Arden. Shakespeare’s Arden is an ambiguous, transformational place. It is simultaneously the Forest of the Ardennes, in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, and the forest near Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare’s Arden is different from both in significant details, although it draws upon both at different times. In the source Shakespeare drew upon in writing the play, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the forest is in France. As a Londoner, Lodge cannot be assumed to know the Warwickshire Arden in any detail, if at all, however in his text he spells the forest "Arden" rather than "Ardennes." While it would be wrong to suggest that the groundlings were avid readers of published fiction, many of the educated in Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar with at least the outlines of the story. *Rosalynde* had been a highly successful book, having run to three editions in nine years by the time Shakespeare wrote his play. In the way that present-day cinema has a voracious appetite for adapting best-sellers, with varying degrees of fidelity, the theatre in Shakespeare's time had a constant thirst for raw material to adapt, and often plundered literature. Shakespeare generally transcended his literary sources, but he scoured both fiction and non-fiction for the basis of almost all his plays. *Rosalynde* was what would nowadays be referred to as a "hot property." To use it as the basis for a play would have been something of a coup. Amongst those who had heard of the book, the story was known to take place in France.

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[3] In larger forested areas, such as the enormous Białowieża, in Poland and modern-day Belarus, even larger ruminants such as bison survived, and continue to do so.

The Warwickshire Arden is the forest from whence Shakespeare's mother's family came, and from which her premarital name was derived. Shakespeare knew Arden, and his depiction of life in the fictional forest is informed by that familiarity. Although the names of most characters are French, the vivacity of the scenes in the forest reflects a world of Shakespeare's own experience. The European Forest of Ardennes gave scope for the exotic, the English Arden gave opportunity for closely observed detail in his delineation.

In Shakespeare's play the first the audience knows of Arden is in the conversation between Charles the Wrestler and Oliver de Boys quoted above. In this exchange Charles describes the Duke's Exile:

> They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the Golden World. (1:1:100-104)

The Duke originally departed with "three or four loving lords" (ibid, 89), but now has amassed a more sizeable following. The reference to "the old Robin Hood of England" is immediately evocative, using the well-known cultural reference to a folk hero as shorthand to describe a lifestyle, where according to legend exiles and outlaws flocked to Sherwood Forest, and lived as "merry men" by poaching the King's deer. This story, told and retold in ballads, tales and dramas, was as widely known in Shakespeare's time as it is today, but the fact that Charles adds "of England" by way of explanation for Oliver allows for the idea that the play is taking place in the Ardennes. Charles' description of the Duke as living "carelessly" like Robin Hood is then underlined by the first scene which takes place in the forest, 2:1. The exiled Duke opens the scene with a speech praising their life in Arden:

> Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
> Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court?
> Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons' difference; as the icy fang
> And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
> Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
> Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
> 'This is no flattery; these are counsellors~
> That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
> Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head
> And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
> I would not change it. (2:1:548-565)

This speech certainly paints an interesting picture of Arden. It does not say that everything is perfect. It merely says that the things which were wrong with life at Court do not feature in the forest. The Duke prefers the cold winds of winter to the envy and flattery of Court. He is subject still to flattery, if not envy, partly because he is exiled with only the very most loyal of his followers, who have left everything to accompany him. He talks of the sweetness of "the uses of adversity," while comparing their life to a venomous toad, albeit one which wears a precious jewel in his head. He ends the speech with "I would not change it," but in practice he returns to the Court without demur when he can do so.

After he has given his pronouncement on their situation, an immediate contrast is drawn with one of their number who does not find the uses of adversity sweet. The Duke expresses a sadness that the deer, native to the forest, must die to provide them with food, and the First Lord begins to tell of the "melancholy Jaques" (575), who takes this sentiment even further. Jaques is a courtier who sees them all, the Duke included, as interlopers, who do "more usurp/ Than doth your brother who hath banish'd you" (ibid). Jaques is the voice of one who does not join in the game of being Robin Hood's Merry Men. Amiens can fulfil the role of Sherwood's Alan-A-Dale for the Duke's band: the other lords who accompanied the Duke into exile, and the young men who have subsequently joined him, can find a niche in the forest court, but Jaques is unable to pretend along with them.

This forest court is not a society which operates within Utopian principles. As outlined above, More's Utopia gives everyone sufficient food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical treatment when required. Arden provides food—if you kill it, shelter—which, according to the Duke, does not necessarily keep out the winter wind, and clothing perhaps, but there is no suggestion of education, other than that provided by "books in the running brooks" (546) and "sermons in stones" (547). When Orlando and Adam arrive, they are cared for, so some sort of medical care is possible, but Utopia provides material comfort without excess, at the expense of a range of very repressive laws. Utopia has a democratic, elected government. Arden does not. Everyone defers to the Duke. In Utopia discussion of politics outside the confines of the political system is subject to the death penalty. The aforementioned punishment for fornication, lifelong enforced celibacy, that for adultery of enforced slavery, and the thought that repeat offenders are put to death, are less likely to be laws found tenable by the merry men under the greenwood trees. For many inhabitants of the Forest of Arden, either native or exiled, falling in love, looking for a mate, is one of the main occupations, and certainly Touchstone has fornication in mind. He goes to elaborate lengths to ensnare Audrey while making sure that he is not going to be entrapped in his turn by entering a genuine marriage. If Utopia's laws on inter-sex relationships were to be enforced in Arden neither Thomas Lodge nor William Shakespeare would have much of their stories left.

But not all of Arden is wilderness in this way. Tracts of it are home to shepherds and their flocks. This draws *As You Like It* closer to the realm of English pastoral literature, rather than to *Utopia* itself or any of its derivatives. Shakespeare had read at least some of More's writings, having based his characterisation of Richard III very firmly on More's book on the subject (1510?), and having probably, if not incontrovertibly, contributed to the play *Sir Thomas More* which was presented at Henslowe's Rose Theatre in the early 1590s. He is considered by some scholars, such as Goldstein (1987), to discuss Utopian ideas, in the sense of a different and ideal political structure, in Jack Cade's episode in *2Henry VI*, (4:8:115-119) and in *The Tempest*, where Gonzalo speaks about what he would do if he had "plantation of this isle" (2:1:150 et seq.). In the first he is being satirical, and in the second he is transcribing Montaigne (*Of Cannibals*, 1580) rather than More, so these examples, and the absence of any real connection between *As You Like It* and More's text scarcely point to a strong influence of Utopian ideas on Shakespeare's writing. On the other hand he definitely knew several works of pastoral writers, and indeed within *As You Like It* directly references Marlowe's pastoral *A Passionate Shepherd To His Love*, (1599) posthumously published not long before Shakespeare wrote his play.

In English, pastoral writing is similar in many ways to that of the classical writers and is strongly influenced by that of the ancient world. Originally based upon Grecian *eclogues*, or dialogues between shepherds, it echoes poems such as those of Theocritus (310-250 BCE), and subsequently made widely popular in the Roman world by writers such as Virgil, in his *Eclogues* (44-38 BCE). It was the Roman writer who transferred the setting of these pastoral dialogues to Arcadia, in Greece, by his time regarded as a symbol of an idyllic rural paradise. The genre was revived in Europe by poets such as Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, eventually also adopted by dramatists such as Torquato Tasso, and then by early novelists and writers of romances such as Montemayor and Cervantes. The pastoral genre arrived in England from both Italian and Spanish sources. After both Petrarch and Boccaccio had written pastorally-inspired works, in 1504 Jacopo Sannazaro wrote his *Arcadia*. This publication really cemented many of the conventions of the pastoral upon which later writers built, although it was also the later additions of Spanish writers which helped form the English tradition. In Sannazaro the characters are all genuine shepherds and shepherdesses, not some courtiers in disguise. Spanish writers like Jorge de Montemayor added that and other similar devices, as exemplified by his *Diana Enamorada* (1559), and their influence was also felt in France, where later Honoré D'Urfe went on to write *L'Astrée* (1607), one of the most influential early novels in that country. In England it was Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) which began the fashion for the pastoral, and many poets, including Shakespeare's friend and rival Marlowe, his old adversary Robert Greene and his Warwickshire friend and compatriot Michael Drayton, wrote pastoral works, Sir Philip Sidney creating, in his two versions of *Arcadia*, (1585(?) and 1593), the work which came to epitomise the genre in English poesy. When he did so, Sidney acknowledged his influences in taking Sannazaro's title.

In the pastorals the protagonists are usually shepherds, and there is often the juxtaposition of opposing interpretations of love, honour, death, and other such themes, debated as in the duologues of the classical models. Pastorals generally present an idealised view of life in the country for primarily urban consumption, a life free from the stresses and unpleasant interactions of life in the city. In these Arcadian settings the cliches are that shepherds and shepherdesses spend their time playing upon their pipes and falling in love. The simplicity of life in the Country is contrasted with the venality, envy and strife of the Town. The names of the shepherds and shepherdesses in English pastorals often betray their origins in the mythology of Arcadia. Although this is a simplistic agglomeration of clichés from works the best of which are far more nuanced, the large number of pastorals or Arcadian romances by writers less gifted than Sidney or Spenser can demonstrate the prevalence of these and similar stock devices. While a contemporary scholar is likely to be familiar with the many subsequent parodies of pastoral writings, when in the 18th Century the pastoral had become a tired and ridiculed genre, in Shakespeare's time the pastoral, particularly following the successes both of Lodge's *Rosalynde* and of Sidney's second posthumous version of *Arcadia* (1593), was highly respectable, widely admired and very popular amongst the educated. Sidney's untimely death at the Battle of Zutphen in 1586, followed by his elaborate state funeral, created a further myth, that of the warrior-poet, and his influence became even greater, as almost every English writer of substance penned words in his honour, and his writings were avidly read.

When Shakespeare came to write *As You Like It* he was not just adapting a best-seller, he was adapting one which was part of a fashionable genre, and therefore had several of what would nowadays in the cinema be called "elements" to build upon. But Shakespeare had a deep and intimate knowledge of rural life, and did not fall into the clichés, although he played with the pastoral conventions with great skill. His Forest of Arden is populated by a shepherd and shepherdess, Silvius and Phoebe, both young, and an older figure in Corin. It also contains Audrey and William. Of these, the couple with a connection to Arcadia are the first two. Their names evoke that Latin version of the Arcadian world, Silvius being a Latin name drawn from the word for Forest. The name Phoebe is a Latinised version of a Greek name too, Shakespeare having, as Jonson said in his poem in memory of Shakespeare (1623), "Small Latin and less Greek" in his background. Both names fit easily within the conventions of English pastoralism. Although the name Corin, too, is based upon a Latin name, Quirinus, it is used in a form which sounds more Celtic. The name, which has been used by parents in Britain ever since the time of the play, may well have been invented by Shakespeare. William, being his own name, and Audrey, a name of Anglo-Saxon origin, locate those two characters firmly in the Warwickshire Forest.

Shakespeare's source, Lodge's story, itself stands upon the shoulders of others. He drew for a few incidents in his plot upon the same source, the medieval English poem *Gamelyn*, that Chaucer had been familiar with when writing the *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). In that poem the story of the three sons, and the hero entering the wrestling, and then escaping to the forest to join a band of outlaws, feature. Lodge wrote the story while on a sea voyage. He was adventurous and eager for martial glory, and sailed on several voyages, going on to sail both to Brazil and around the Straits of Magellan. He whiled away the tedium of such long voyages by writing, and he wrote *Rosalynde* during a voyage under a Captain Clarke to the Canaries and the Azores in 1586. It was eventually released in 1590. Lodge's *Rosalynde* has more in common with his friend Robert Greene's pastoral *Menaphon* (1589), published just the year before , than it does with Sidney's *Arcadia*, but the pastoral, the Arcadian ideal, was widespread in literary England at that time.

Shakespeare removes some of the less important actions from the original and curtails the story to a manageable dimension to fit onto the stage. He adds characters which, in the main, do not get in the way of what remains largely, although by no means completely, Lodge's plot. He does, however alter the cast. Lodge's characters have very different names. Rosader becomes Orlando, Saladyne becomes Oliver, Torismond becomes Duke Frederick, the exiled Duke in Lodge is called Gerismond, Celia is Alinda, and Silvius is Montanus. In that particular case, instead of relating him to the Mountains of Arcadia as Montanus Shakespeare relates him to the Forest of Arden as Silvius. Corydon becomes Corin, a more down-to-earth name. The names he chooses for the men of the de Boys family coincide with those from the well-known French epic, *La Chanson de Roland* (11th century). De Boys is a French name, meaning "of the woods," and there was actually a de Boys family in England, in Kent to be precise, in Shakespeare's time. But the names of the characters, the father Rowland (Roland), the older brother Oliver, and even Orlando, which is the variant of the name Roland used by Ariosto in his version of the same story, *Orlando Furioso* (1532) all echo this classic French poem. For an author looking for some names to replace those in the original which would immediately suggest France the Chanson provided them. One can only speculate as to Shakespeare's reasons for doing so, but Saladyne, the name in Lodge's story, for the popular theatre audience might well have sounded like Richard the Lionheart's opponent from the Crusades, and Rosader and Rosalind are close enough to each other in sound to cause potential confusion when spoken in a crowded theatre.

Greg, in the Introduction to his edition of *Rosalynde* (1907, xviii et seq.) offers a number of conjectures as to the provenance of some of Lodge's ideas, but he does not believe that there were other direct literary sources. He does, however, recognise the stock nature of some of Lodge's story elements. "The proud shepherdess and the lovelorn swain and the girl in page's attire were already traditional" (xix) when *Rosalynde* was written. He then goes on to speak of how the differing conventional types in Lodge's story were used by Shakespeare:

> It would seem as if, by placing side by side the masquerading court pastoralism of the main plot, the refined Arcadian tradition to which we owe Phoebe and Silvius, and the boorish if sympathetic rusticity of his addition to the cast, Shakespeare intended to bring the whole graceful figment to the touchstone of reality and hint at the instability of the ideal and convention of which he nevertheless made use. (xxi)

Shakespeare took a considerable amount from Lodge, but he also added and changed a great deal. His Arden is different from Lodge's. Lodge's forest is more straightforwardly Arcadian than Shakespeare's. As already stated, Lodge was a Londoner, and the world of *Rosalynde* reflects the existing predilections of the largely urban audience for the pastoral as well as adding considerably to the storehouse. Lodge uses the existing conventions and adds to them. Shakespeare is a writer who often makes use of conventions and conventional elements, but seldom leaves them unaltered. At times he may draw attention to those devices, and in *As You Like It* he definitely does, but Shakespeare's characters transcend the conventions in which they are rooted. Taking Greg's words quoted above, the "masquerading court pastoralism" includes Rosalind and Celia, as Ganymede and Aliena, buying the sheepcote and becoming shepherds, although they make sure that they continue Corin's employment to attend to the real work involved. They arrive in Arden with enough money to buy their position in the Forest society, which is more than any of the other exiles in the play are able to do. They are playing a role as pastoralists. Silvius and Phoebe, as Greg says, represent the "refined Arcadian tradition" and Audrey and William the "boorish if sympathetic… addition." Phoebe as the scornful shepherdess and Silvius as the heartbroken lover are familiar types in Arcadian romance. Audrey is a comic character of a fairly standard provenance, rooted in this case in the Warwickshire countryside. William's character is likewise a standard rustic comic type, although sharing the name of his creator, it is tempting to look for some additional self-deprecating humour derived from the association of his name with the author, a country boy who had come to the big city years before with the hope of becoming an actor.

Shakespeare adds other characters too, and they are the source of much that is best in the play. Touchstone and Jaques are both figures of Shakespeare's invention. While the Duke and his followers accept and make the most of their exile to the Forest, Jaques is the one among them who is most outspoken. When the Duke laments the killing of the deer, necessary as they feel it to be for food:

> …yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
> Being native burgers of this desert city,
> Should in their own confines with forkéd heads,
> Have their round haunches gored. (2:1:571-4)

it is the First Lord who reveals that the "melancholy Jaques" takes the idea further, expanding it to the point that he "…in that kind swears you do more usurp/Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you" (ibid, 577-8). Jaques' "melancholy" is the source of much entertainment on the part of others in the play, but it is not particularly amusing. He makes serious observations. His famous aria on the Seven Ages of Man (2:7:1137 et seq.) is actually moralizing. The Duke and the Lords expect Jaques to moralize. "Did he not moralize this spectacle?" the Duke asks (2:1:593), knowing full well that Jaques will have done so. Jaques is entertaining because he moralizes, and “in these sullen fits… he’s full of matter” (ibid, 618). Moralizing is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, “to comment on issues of right or wrong, typically with an unfounded air of superiority.” The Cambridge English Dictionary offers as a definition “to make judgements about right and wrong, especially in a way that does not consider other people’s ideas and opinions.” Both these definitions are absolutely appropriate in the case of Jaques. This sets Jaques up to be contrasted with the other Lords, in (2:5), where he comes out on top, against Orlando in (3:2) where he is bested by the young man, and eventually with Rosalind herself in (4:1). This is shaping into a worthy contest of wit, but it is interrupted by the arrival of Orlando. Jaques is not seduced by the idyllic view put forward by the Duke, he is upset by the destruction of the balance of nature around him by the exiles, and for him the best thing in the Forest is when he comes across another outsider, in Touchstone, who is another character given to moralizing. Yet at the end, despite his reservations about life in the Forest, he elects to stay rather than return to the Court.

Touchstone’s view of this supposed Arcadia is expressed to Corin:

> Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd’s life it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private it is a very vile life. Now in respect that it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect that it is not the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it suits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. (3:2:1134-43)

He waits for a reaction. “Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?” (ibid). Touchstone is looking for diversion, even for a sparring partner. Their discussion parodies the duologues in the Eclogues of the classical and pastoral poets. Corin’s simple philosophy does not give him the stimulus he seeks. Touchstone’s philosophising is a game, a mental exercise. As they debate the nature of life in the Forest, Corin’s more realistic, day-today perspective is easy meat for the sophistry of Touchstone. Touchstone needs another occupation, and before long he finds it in Audrey, a goatherd. No one can pretend that Touchstone’s intentions are honourable. In Arcadian poetry there is much of love and heartbreak, and there is sensuality and desire too, but Touchstone is not motivated by ideals of love. He deliberately seeks out the worst clergyman he can find, in order that the marriage he enters into will not be binding when he has grown tired of it. His role in this Arcadia is not a love-sick shepherd. It has more in common with that of a satyr in lustful pursuit of one of the less glamorous nymphs. His attitude to Audrey begins to change, partly because he has to see off a rival, when William comes along to claim her. But neither the characters in the play nor the audience can have much confidence in their union as a genuine and lasting one. During the play’s denouement Jaques tells Touchstone baldly that “thy loving voyage is but for two months victualled” (5:4:2587-8).

The characters which Shakespeare introduces are all at odds with the conventions of the pastoral. His source fits in with the genre, and Shakespeare explores some of those elements which Lodge has given him, but he questions and undercuts them at every opportunity. Arcadia harks back to “the Golden World,” as Charles called it in (1:1:104). The ideal upon which Arcadia is based is a world of simplicity which has been lost. The Golden World is in the past, a throwback to a more innocent time. The ideals put forward in Utopian writing tend to lie in the future, in that it is hard to argue that perfection in social relationships has been achieved in any known society. But although they differ, Utopia and Arcadia have in common the fact that are both seeking a perfect world. Other writers of the time, such as Michel de Montaigne, saw in the idea of the “noble savage” a glimpse of a society uncorrupted by civilisation. His *Des Cannibales* (1580) represents a coming together of the Arcadian and Utopian idea, with a simpler, uncorrupted society which also demonstrates what are, in European terms, visionary social relationships. It must be said these social relationships sit alongside other practices which are less attractive to European readers, such as the practice of eating one’s enemies. Although the expression “noble savage” was not used in English until Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* in 1672, Montaigne’s *Essais,* (1580) and the ideas within them were well known amongst the educated. Francis Bacon, to name one, cited Montaigne’s *Essais* as influences upon some of his own later essays. Montaigne was translated into English by John Florio in 1603, and Shakespeare certainly knew Florio’s translation of *On The Caniballes*, as he based Gonzalo’s “Had I plantation of this isle…” speech in *The Tempest* (2:1:852, 857 et seq.) very closely upon it, but he also knew French, and if he had not read Montaigne in the original he almost certainly knew people who had.

Shakespeare’s Forest of Arden is not Arcadian any more than it is Utopian, but it circles round the conventions of the pastoral. It also extends and upends another convention, that of the girl disguised as a boy. The truly radical element in *As You Like It* is in the way it weaves around ideas of gender. Shakespeare has other plays in which girls dress up as boys, but in *As You Like It* he takes the audience along the boundaries between the sexes in a far more blatant way. In *As You Like It* a boy actor playing a girl disguises him/herself as a boy, who then role-plays a girl to teach the would-be lover of the girl how to woo her/him. The stock device of the disguised girl is virtually nowhere else taken as far as this. When Orlando is practicing wooing Ganymede as Rosalind, much of the humour in the scenes comes from the confusion of the roles, but the gender ambiguity leaves other areas of potential confusion. Maybe Orlando is actually in love with both Ganymede and Rosalind. Whether or not this is the case, the contemporary practice of having Rosalind played by a woman rather than a boy undoubtedly changes the play from what it was in Shakespeare's time.

Arden is not an easy place to live, but it can have a profound effect upon those who take shelter within its boundaries. If many of the characters in the play who enter its demesne are fleeing oppression, they find a safe world in which to explore their own identities, wishes and desires. The Forest of Arden changes things for everyone who enters it. Orlando's mooncalf love for Rosalind is transformed gradually by Ganymede's education. Silvius becomes a less clueless lover, and Phoebe learns from her cruelty. A later exile, Orlando's elder brother Oliver, one of the play's earlier villains, is transformed by his experience when he gets there. Having been maltreated by the usurping Duke Frederick, and given a threatening ultimatum, he too heads for the Forest, where, like the other exiles, he also falls into extremity. His extremity is not merely hunger and privation, it involves a snake and a lioness, creatures which are to be found neither in the European Forest of Ardennes nor in the Warwickshire Arden, but which are found in this transformative wilderness. He is rescued by his brother, whom he has wronged grievously, and with his gratitude and repentance, he and Orlando are reconciled. But this takes place off stage. The audience do not see it. These incidents are reported.

Setting aside the appearance of Hymen, the Greek god of marriage, whose appearance requires separate consideration, the next human person to arrive at the boundaries of Arden is Duke Frederick, with a "mighty power assembled" to attack the Forest and capture his brother hiding there. But he meets an "old religious man," is in short order converted, sees the error of his ways and decides to return the Dukedom to his brother, and the lands he has confiscated to their rightful owners. This, crucial to the winding up of the various plots, takes place offstage. It is significant that this too is reported, by Orlando and Oliver's brother Jaques, the second son of Sir Rowland de Boys, who appears out of absolutely nowhere, for the sole purpose of delivering a message which resolves most of the outstanding threads of the play.

This resolution, as artificial as anything in Euripides, is Shakespeare's own invention. The actual solutions to the various outstanding difficulties in the plot come via a *deus-ex-machina*, although rather than Hymen, the actual *deus* who does appear, resolving the plot, that function is provided by Jaques de Boys. To speculate as to the actual role of Hymen is interesting. To a cynical spectator the unions to be celebrated are all quite sudden. Orlando has suddenly found his Rosalind was the boy he has been wooing in her stead. Celia has instantly fallen in love with Oliver, who has suddenly converted and become a virtuous person. Phoebe has agreed to marry Silvius, because she has just found out that the boy Ganymede, with whom she was in love, is actually a woman, and Touchstone and Audrey are, as has been established, a couple whose relationship is built upon shallow foundations. The arrival of a god of marriage is more necessary than usual to cement these unions together. Hymen's first speech makes this clear:

> Peace, ho! I bar confusion;
> 'Tis I must make conclusion
> Of these strange events
> (5:4:2518-20)

There is certainly scope for confusion, but Hymen will sort it out. The marriages having then been fixed by divine intervention, the resolution of the plot is now the priority, and it is at that point that Jaques de Boys appears. As soon as the news is given that Frederick has renounced his illegitimate claim, and that the Duke is restored, everyone unquestioningly decides to leave and go back to the Court. Despite the Duke saying "I would not change it" (2:1:565) he immediately does, and all his followers go with him, including Orlando, Rosalind, Celia, Oliver, Jaques de Boys, Touchstone, Audrey, Amiens, First Lord, Adam, and every one of the other lords and foresters, leaving Silvius, Phoebe, Corin but also, to everyone's surprise, Jaques.

Despite his professed unhappiness with the life of the exiles in Arden, he does not want to return to the Court. He wants to remain in the Forest and has no desire to take part in the dancing and celebrations. He plans to seek out Frederick, because "out of these convertites/ There is much matter to be heard and learned" (2580-1). Jaques sees for himself the magical, transformative effect of Arden, and he wants to remain there, initially at least in the company of the person most completely transformed within the Forest. He leaves the stage, there is then a dance, and Rosalind steps forward for an Epilogue. Shakespeare wrote epilogues for thirteen of his plays, but in *As You Like It* the epilogue is different from all of the others. It is spoken by a female character, who by the end of the speech has clearly stated that the person speaking it is not a woman. "If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me" (Epilogue.2608) The artifice is being deliberately pointed up.

The entire resolution of the play, the ravelling up of the threads of the plots, the acceptance of implausible marriages along with what the audience can accept as true love, the appearance of messengers out of the blue, the sudden conversion of hitherto unyieldingly wicked characters, the arrival of a Greek deity in an ostensibly Christian forest, and then the speaking of an epilogue which shows that things have not been as they seemed in any case, all add up to a different kind of ending. The implausibility of it all need not be a problem in the theatre. The feelgood factors in the attainment of a happy ending can be allowed to overcome the unfeasibility, and audiences can even be given scope to applaud each outcome. It is readers, and in particular scholars, who are more likely to criticise the artificiality, such as some of those quoted by Wojciechowska. In the theatre it can be construed as giving a popular and emotionally satisfying ending. It is, after all, "as [they are being invited to] like it." That which is a problem in the study can be a benefit in the theatre.

Arden is not Utopia, nor is it Arcadia. The play's idealised resolutions are blatantly, indeed joyously, artificial. It is futile to yearn retrospectively for lost Golden Worlds, just as it is futile to imagine unattainably perfect future societies. But within the theatre transformation and resolution are possible, whether like Duke Frederick, abruptly and off stage, or in front of the audience and gradually, like Orlando. People can be redeemed, and wounds can be healed. In the theatre perfect resolution and perfect relationships are attainable, if only for a fleeting moment, because a playwright can wave a pen and make it so. Arden is neither the aspirational Utopia nor the nostalgic Arcadia, but it is a place where "perfect" solutions can be created. In the theatre it is possible to both make fun of the artificiality of genre conventions and allow the emotionally satisfactory achievement of idealised resolutions at the same time. Theatre's ability to simultaneously juxtapose word, action and image gives scope for ambiguity which Shakespeare utilises in the Forest of Arden to a greater extent than almost any of his other plays. He takes a popular literary success, written as an Arcadian romance, and as he explores the story he questions, undercuts, and satirises the very conventions with which he plays so successfully. Shakespeare's play resolves itself, not in respect of ideal literary worlds, but in the Wooden 'O' of The Globe, the world which was Shakespeare's own.

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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 "prise 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 19th and early 20th 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 Pulugurtha 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 19th-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 Szczęsny 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 19th-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 21st-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 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st 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 visons by each director.[1]

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

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[1] 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."

Although Holderness's flight into Samurai Shakespeare does not crash-land on the contemporary Japanese productions of Shakespeare in the 21st 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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Motohashi, Ted, and Tomoka Tsukamoto. "Deconstructing the Saussurean System of Signification: Miyagi Satoshi and His Mimetic Dramaturgy in *Miyagi-Noh Othello*." *Shakespeare and Japan*. Ed. Graham Holderness, special issue of *Critical Survey* 33.1 (2021): 23-47.

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[1] 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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[1] 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.

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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.[2] 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 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).

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[2] 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.

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 16th and 17th 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 16th 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[1] 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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[1] 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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Theatre Reviews

New Hamlet. Dir. Aya Hayasaka. Toga-Sanboh Theatre, Toga, Toyama, Japan.

Reviewed by ***Takehito Mitsui*** [*]

In the summer of 2022, while the number of people infected with COVID-19 reportedly hit the daily record with over thirty thousand in Japan, to attend a theatre festival, I travelled to Toga, a small village surrounded by the mountains in Toyama, situated in the northwest part of the country. The normal journey from the capital is approximately four hours—thanks to the newly built bullet train line between Tokyo and Kanazawa via Toyama—, but the same trip took almost a day when Tadashi Suzuki, the acclaimed Japanese stage director, first arrived at the nearly abandoned village covered by more than three-meter-high snow in the winter of 1974. Since then, it has been the home of the theatre company SCOT (Suzuki Tadashi Company of Toga) and has also hosted the international theatre festival every summer since 1981. Many distinguished artists such as Tadeusz Kantor, Robert Wilson and Theodoros Terzopoulos have presented their works in past festivals—besides, the ninth Theatre Olympics, of which Suzuki is also one of the founding members, also took place in the village in 2019. Suzuki explains why he has chosen Toga as the base of his creation as follows:

> As the rest of society—in fact the rest of the world—was following the credo of "bigger is better," […]. We did not believe that high budgets, immense venues and large audience turnout naturally led to artistic success. On the contrary, it was apparent to us that increasing the financial, physical and social scale of a production often severely diluted its artistic quality and impact. I found that to understand the world, both a central and a marginal point of view were necessary. (Suzuki 87)

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With the global recognition and success of SCOT, having been based in the village, suffering from ageing and a decline of its population, for over fifty years, Suzuki has certainly proved that performing arts with a firm artistic ideology can successfully flourish while rejecting urbanistic commercialism.

Despite their artistic capability and resilience having been long accumulated by the leadership of Suzuki, the global pandemic has prevented even this outstanding art establishment from organising the annual international summer festival. Yet, they did not abandon their attempt to present high-standard stage works to eager audiences who longed to attend live performances. So, instead of inviting artists outside of the country, they offered four young Japanese artists performance spaces to present their works during the summer festival, at a time when many theatre practitioners were struggling to find opportunities to perform their works in front of audiences, as the strict rule the government introduced to prevent the spread of the virus forced to shut many performing art venues. Among the pieces presented at the Toga summer festival in 2022, this paper will analyse *New Hamlet*, directed by Aya Hayakawa, with the supervision of Oriza Hirata, one of the prominent Japanese stage directors and the head of the theatre company called Seinendan, based in Toyooka, a small city, situated in the middle of Japan, where he also organises a theatre festival every autumn in following the anti-urbanistic ideology advocated by Suzuki.

New Hamlet, first published—instead of performed—in 1941, is a closet drama written by Osamu Dazai (1909-1948), a prominent Japanese writer who produced numerous popular novels such as *A shameful life* [*Ningen Shikkaku*] and *Run Melos!* [*Hashire Melos!*]. His works are not only recognised as modern classics in Japanese literature today but also have been transformed into TV dramas, films and stage productions; for example, the stage adaptation of *Good-Bye*, his unfinished novel, directed by Keralino Sandorovich and first performed in Tokyo in 2015, was reproduced in 2020 due to popular demand. However, in contrast to those novels, *New Hamlet* is certainly categorised as one of his less known works; moreover, this piece is in fact rarely performed on stage, even though it is written in a form that seems to set a lower bar for itself to convert into a stage work—I will later discuss the issues of the theatricalisation of Dazai's *New Hamlet* while examining this stage adaptation.

Hayakawa's adaptation opens with the author Dazai Osamu (Tao Kurosawa) himself instead of Barnardo's famous line during the night watch.

> [...] My work is not a commentary book nor a new version of the Japanese translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, [...] I just wrote the story of an unfortunate family while borrowing some ideas from the setting and characters in Shakespeare's original work. I, therefore, have to stress that this piece neither does contain any academic nor political messages. I only wrote this story as a part of a phycological experiment. [...] (Dazai, *Shin Hamuretto* 174)

This sudden appearance of the author of the original text might strike many audience members familiar with Shakespeare's tragedy with a simple question, 'who is there?'. The lines are extracted from the preface of *New Hamlet*—this part is curiously omitted in the English translation of *New Hamlet* by Owen Cooney, which seems to be currently the only available English translation. This explicit reminder for the spectators, in fact, is an effective—or possibly essential—theatrical device inserted into the stage version by the director in order to extricate them from the shadow of the Shakespearean play, as the story they are about to witness is not another adaption but a new creation; otherwise, constantly comparing and contrasting it with the Elizabethan piece in one's mind, one would be puzzled or confused by its twisted storyline.

In terms of the originality of the work distinguishing from the original play by Shakespeare, as the writer also mentions later in the preface, his aim for writing the piece was to create a domestic drama regarding two families—when Danish royal household and Polonius's family. The author's intention—to conduct a psychological experiment in his writing—becomes apparent in the second scene soon after Dazai's soliloquy. Since the ghost scene is initially omitted in the closet drama, the story of the Danish royals begins with a descriptive speech by Claudius (Hiroshi Ota) explaining the reason why he has become the king of Denmark and the husband of Gertrude after the sudden death of his bother before his family members, Polonius, and Laertes.

> Claudius: I want to thank you all for your help during these trying times—surely, you must be exhausted. Due to the sudden nature of the King's death, I've been forced to take the throne and hold the ceremony of marriage with Gertrude before our tears have even dried. [...] Denmark has lately been at odds with Norway, and war could break out at any moment. How could we leave the throne empty of a king, even for a day? As Prince Hamlet is too young, I acquiesced to the unanimous urging of all of you that I take power. […] Since I'm such an inexperienced king, I would appreciate it if you would all continue to show your loyalty to me in the future and comfort my poor soul. Oh, yes, I almost forgot. Laertes, you wanted to ask me something, did you not? What is it? (Dazai, *New Hamlet*)

Claudius humbly portrays himself as a weak leader trying to earn his family's and attendants' compassion. In other words, the new king's eyes are only on building domestic concord in the castle. There is no display of a macho king with strong leadership dealing with the threat of the neighbouring enemy—i.e., ordering his attendants to send a diplomatic letter written by the king himself to Norway. This domestic theme is, as the author insists, strictly kept through the performance by the final scene in which ill-considered Claudius determines to wage war against Norway after being informed of the incident that the merchant ship of which Laertes was on board has been attacked by the navy of the neighbouring country. Furthermore, the majority of acts in *New Hamlet* take place inside the castle. The events that happen outside are hardly enacted on stage, and the audience members become aware of them when the news is delivered to people in the castle. This domestic setting is represented by the large unbalanced wooden frame (designed by Itaru Sugiyama), seemingly reflecting the blur and wobbly relationships between the characters, on which the actors stand, sit and walk on the intimate stage painted wholly in black in the mountain cottage called Toga-Sanboh theatre.

In the performances of the Shakespearean tragedy, Hamlet is typically depicted as the only character with extreme sensivity and a self-centred mentality. On the other hand, in this production, everyone reflects Hamlet's mentality to some extent. It can be observed that every character appears to have their own cynical view towards each other, and no truly trusted relationships are comprehensively depicted on stage. Thus, for the spectators, it seems unreasonable to depend on the remarks made by those egocentric characters. For instance, in Dazai's work, Ophelia (Yurika Seto) reveals to Gertrude (Soge Shin), who is strongly discontented with her affair with Hamlet (Morihiro Matsui), that she is expecting his baby.

> Ophelia: [...] I would be happy if I could somehow feel any kind of connection to your grace. I have given up all else. For now, I only look forward to safely giving birth to Your Highness's grandchild and raising him or her to be strong and healthy. I think of myself as a happy woman. Even if Lord Hamlet abandoned me, I could still live every day of my life with joy because of my child. Your Grace, Ophelia has her own sense of pride. [...] (Dazai, *New Hamlet*)

Because of her individualistic characterisation, it may be inevitable that Ophelia's sudden confession is received with surprise—or rather confusion—by many audience members, since the firm mental connections between Hamlet and Ophelia have been merely displayed in the previous scenes. In other words, while the characters in Shakespeare tend to play their roles in bringing forward the narrative in which they exist, the characters in Dazai's work tend to prioritise their individualistic desires driven by their pure will. This might not only hinder the audience members from recognising or understanding the psychological connections between the characters through the story, but it is also almost impossible to sympathise with the characters. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why this closet drama has rarely been performed on stage.

In order to solve this issue, Hayakawa cleverly devised the several appearances of the author himself during the show to remind the audience that the characters on stage were almost purely the creations of Dazai and not Shakespeare. In fact, Dazai is publicly known to have had a quite cynical personality, constantly declaring his lack of self-confidence as a professional writer, even though he was one of the prominent literary figures when the piece was published. His unique personality is apparent as it is one of the main themes in his works, such as his autobiographical novel *A shameful life*, one of his best-known works. In addition, his creative intention for writing *New Hamlet* is revealed in his letter to Masuji Ibuse, a contemporary writer: "I want to write about my past life and my wounded feelings. This may be an 'I' novel, but it has a dramatic form. I intend to write a novel in a new style" (Okuno qtd. in Kawachi 128). What 'a new style' implies is that he would try to create an autobiographical story in the manner of a dramatic text. In addition, this remark may also suggest that Hamlet is not only the protagonist to play the critical role which represents the author's personality, but all the principal characters, such as Claudius and Gertrude, Ophelia also embody Dazai's unique disposition. Namely, the aim of his psychological experiment may have been to write a story with the main characters directly reflecting Dazai's personality. In Hayakawa's stage work, the frequent presence of Dazai on stage alongside those characters—see the picture of Ophelia and Dazai below—also reminds the audience members that the untrustworthy characters represent the author's notion in parallel. With this theatrical effect, the spectators can be logically led to consent to constant scepticism displayed through this stage work in the same way as they read another autobiographical novel by Dazai.

In terms of writing the closet drama, Dazai also stresses, in the preface, that this work is not a play-script but a novel because he is not a professional playwright and does not know an appropriate style to write a play. As he argues that the piece is a novel, the lines allotted to each speaker are intended to depict the emotional exchanges between them for his readers. Overall, those dialogues tend to be rather lengthy and over-descriptive as a play-text—a stage work based precisely on the closet drama would possibly require over five hours to run through, according to Hayakawa's direction notes (2022). In other words, if those lines are delivered by a single actor, they will stand out as a prolonged and dull speech instead of forming lively verbal exchanges. Meanwhile, the other characters on stage would have to become his/her listeners, as if they joined the audience members in the auditorium, since the other characters merely intervene in those speeches. As a result, even though the author's intention is to create a family drama, it seems to be a fact that the descriptive lines would fail to display the dramatic tension between the characters. In so doing, it would leave very little space for the audience members to take their own interpretations of the characters' emotional transitions into their own accounts. On the other hand, avoiding itself becoming a simple text-reading performance, this stage work has been sharply edited to fit under eighty minutes. In this way, the story, still consisting of Dazai's original dialogues, moves at an adequately swift pace for the theatre audience without losing the quality of the intense psychological drama represented in the original writing.

This swift tempo especially serves the stage work for producing the dramatic final scene in which Claudius makes up his mind to move into a war against Norway. In terms of the story-building towards the climax, Graham Bradshaw and Tetsuo Kishi argue that this astonishing turn abruptly widens the scope of the narrative, whose theme has mainly appeared as a domestic matter in the previous scenes, whilst most of the readers presumably do not remember the hostile relationship between the two countries which is briefly discussed in the first scene (Bradshaw and Kishi 120). In other words, since the hostility against Norway is very concisely mentioned by Claudius in his opening speech, it would be difficult for the readers of the closet drama to recall. However, Claudius's decision would have been received as an actual and serious concern by the audience who has recently witnessed that a war between two countries in Continental Europe began so instantly.

Furthermore, when Dazai wrote the piece, the Japanese army was already at war with China for several years, followed by the attack on Pearl Harbour. In terms of the author's view on the war, Yoshiko Kawachi insists that *New Hamlet* should have been written on the basis of an anti-war ideology, as the dialogues between the characters express his psychological discord and his terror toward war, and a deep concern for fate is also demonstrated through them (129). This anti-war message is obscurely hidden in his writing because anti-governmental speech was prohibited by the Japanese authorities when the work was published. In other words, covering his anti-war ideology under the thread of the dialogue was an inevitable choice for the piece to be published safely without being the subject of strict censorship. In so doing, it can be assumed that the rapid, dramatic transition in the last scene resulted from the construction of the narrative that intentionally avoids heavy association with the topic of war.

On the other hand, believing that people's lives and art can coexist during wartime, Hayakawa, in the direction notes, also admits that her deep concern over the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine is reflected in her creation of the work (2022). As she suggests, unlike Dazai's closet drama, war is depicted as another central theme alongside a family drama in this stage production, and its anti-war message has indeed been received as an actual and current issue by the audience members. Reflecting Dazai's resistance to wartime censorship, it also reminds us how valuable it is to maintain the freedom of speech to enjoy the arts sincerely. Especially during the lockdown caused by the pandemic, we have suffered—or are still suffering—from the closure of the majority of arts venues. There is a considerably large number of people who have been concerned about the actions taken by the authorities and viewed them a restriction on the freedom of speech in arts in our modern times; nevertheless, they have been inevitable measures to prevent the virus from spreading.

Finally, having experienced such a hard time for the performing arts society, the theatre festival in Toga enabled me to rediscover the joy of attending live performances. Moreover, since my visit to the village was during the time when many art venues in Tokyo were operating under strict measures introduced by the government to reduce the high number of infections, I have become thoroughly convinced by Suzuki's creative ideology, which argues that performance artists should keep a certain distance from a densely populated urban society driven by commercialism for maintaining the stability of their artistic creations and enhancing the quality of their artworks.

Ophelia and Dazai Osamu
Photograph by Rokudo Tatsuro

Hamlet (centre) and the main characters
Photograph by Rokudo Tatsuro

Dazai Osamu (second from right) and the main characters
Photograph by Rokudo Tatsuro

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