Multicultural Shakespeare:

TRANSLATION, APPROPRIATION AND PERFORMANCE

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Tom Clayton (December 15, 1932 – August 9, 2023)

Tom Clayton's death, at the age of 91, from complications of prostate cancer, has been registered as a sad loss for the world of Shakespeare Studies, in the US and elsewhere. Everyone who knew Tom would join Hamlet in saying "He was a man, take him for all in all: / I shall not look upon his like again" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.187-188). Indeed, his native Minnesota can be proud of such a Shakespeare scholar, father, husband, and friend, internationally known and respected throughout the world of English studies. His memory will be living in our minds and in our hearts long after his passing.

Tomas Swoverland Clayton was born in New Ulm, MN, in 1932. The family lived in several towns in Wisconsin, before settling in Winnona in 1943. Tom Clayton was Regents Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, and a distinguished scholar of Shakespeare, seventeenth-century British Literature, and Classics. He graduated the University of Minnesota *summa cum laude* in English and Latin. At university, he met Ruth (Madson), his future wife, and "fell in love with her at first sight," as he would confess to me many years later. Tom was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to study at Wadham College, Oxford (Classical Honour Moderations), then he married Ruth (in September 1955) and joined the US Army, training at Ft. Knox, KY as a radio operator. Tom served with the 3rd Battalion 14th Armored Cavalry at McPheeters Barracks in Bad Herzfeld, Germany, until his discharge from active duty in 1957. During the conversations we had about his youth, Tom used to speak with nostalgia about the time spent in

Germany as an active soldier in the US Army. After his army duty, Tom returned to Oxford and earned his D.Phil. in English Literature in 1960. He began his teaching career at Yale, then at UCLA for six years, before joining the faculty of the English Department at the University of Minnesota in 1968. During the forty-seven years at the University of Minnesota, Tom Clayton taught seventeenth-century English literature, with a focus on Shakespeare and the Classics. He mentored undergraduate and graduate students, chaired the interdisciplinary Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies, and served on the University Faculty Senate.

Professor Clayton's main academic area was textual criticism, and his work was brilliantly acerbic, displaying acute critical acumen. Among his chief works are: the Oxford English Text edition of *The Works of Sir John Suckling: The Non Dramatic Works* (1971); the Oxford Standard Edition of *The Cavalier Poets: Selected Poems* (1978); *The "Hamlet" First Published (Q1, 1603): Origins, Form, Intertextualities* (1992); *The "Shakespearean" Addition in "The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore": Some Aids to Scholarly and Critical Shakespearean Studies* (1969); and many editorial and critical essays on William Shakespeare, Andrew Marvell, John Donne, and John Suckling, published in academic journals and as book chapters. Many of these works continue to be cited today and I am certain that his last essay, published in the current issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* will find its place among the essential critical scholarship related to Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*. I know that this last "baby" of Tom's brilliant mind was much cherished and desired in the last year of his life, so he worked hard on it, and he barely managed to submit the essay to this journal before he became too ill to do any further work.

Tom Clayton received numerous grants and awards, most importantly a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Morse-Amoco Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, the Morse-Alumni Award for Outstanding Contributions to Graduate and Professional Education, and the Regents Professorship (1999), the highest recognition given by the University of Minnesota to a member of its faculty.

Tom was blessed with boundless energy and a wry sense of humour. Many friends enjoyed his pleasant company for a drink, whether at *The Founder's Arms* (London), *The Dirty Duck* (Stratford-upon-Avon) or *George & the Dragon* (Minneapolis). Personally, I had several occasions of enjoying Tom's company at the biennial International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon and at the Shakespeare parties "among his private friends" hosted by Roger Pringle at his residence. Wherever he went, Tom Clayton impressed everyone with his warm and friendly personality. His partner, Janice Derksen, died in 2024. Tom will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues, and by his family: his daughters (Pamela Schultz, Katherine Clayton); his sons (John Clayton, David Clayton); his grand-children (Dayna Cosetta, Samuel Clayton); and his great-grandchildren (Miles, Thomas, and Ava). As for Tom's passing to eternity, we should join Horatio in saying, "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest" (*Hamlet*, Act V, scene ii, 365).

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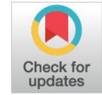

Contributors

Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk is Associate Professor of English literature at the University of Warsaw. Her publications include several monographs centred on Shakespeare and translation either in theatrical context or within Polish cultural history and a number of essays on drama analysis and literary translation (CUP, Palgrave, *Shakespeare*, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*). In the years 2016-2024 she managed two state-aimed projects at digitising all Polish 19th-21st century Shakespeare translations (http://polskiszekspir.uw .edu.pl), whereas since 2009 she has been editing a critical series of new translations of Shakespeare (currently 6 volumes). She is member of ISA, ESRA and CEESRA.

Boram Choi is a lecturer in the School of Drama at Korea University of Arts. Holding an academic background in English literature and dramatic theory and criticism, she earned her MA from the Department of Performance Studies at New York University and completed her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Her research is particularly centered on the adaptation and reception of Shakespeare within Asian cultures, with a special emphasis on the creative works of 21st-century Korean and Japanese.

Thomas Swoverland Clayton (1932-2023) was Regents Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, and a scholar of Shakespeare, seventeenth-century British Literature and the Classics. He graduated the University of Minnesota *summa cum laude* in English and Latin and earned his D.Phil. in English Literature at Oxford, in 1960. He taught at Yale and UCLA and continued his teaching career at the University of Minnesota, where he taught for forty-seven years. Professor Clayton's main academic area was textual criticism and his chief works are the Oxford English Text edition of *The Works of Sir John Suckling: The Non Dramatic Works* (1971); the Oxford Standard Edition of *The Cavalier Poets: Selected Poems* (1978); *The "Hamlet" First Published (Q1, 1603): Origins, Form, Intertextualities* (1992); *The "Shakespearean" Addition in "The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore:" Some Aids to Scholarly and Critical Shakespearean Studies* (1969); and many editorial and critical essays on William Shakespeare, Andrew Marvell, John Donne, and John Suckling. Professor Clayton received a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Morse-Amoco Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, the Morse-Alumni Award for Outstanding Contributions to Graduate and Professional Education, and the Regents Professorship from the University of Minnesota in 1999.

Xiaoye Dong is a professor in the School of Foreign Studies, Northeast Forestry University, Harbin, China. Her research interests cover Chinese American literature and narratology. Her recent publications include the Chinese paper in *Fudan Forum on Foreign Languages and Literature* (2023).

Rhema Mei Lan Hokama received her Ph.D. in English literature from Harvard University and is associate professor of English literature at Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), where she teaches classes on Shakespeare, Milton, lyric poetry, and global literature. Beginning in 2025, she will be joining the faculty at the English department at the University of Washington in Seattle. Rhema is the author of *Devotional Experience and Erotic Knowledge in the Literary Culture of the English Reformation* (Oxford University Press, 2023), which places the poetry of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in conversation with post-Reformation developments in popular divinity. She is currently working on a second book project about how the Reformation gave rise to new frameworks for thinking about national, political, and religious inclusion during the global Renaissance.

Min Jiao is a professor in the faculty of English Language and Culture, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China. Her research focuses on Shakespearean studies. Her recent publications include the English monograph *Hermeneutic Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2023).

Mythili Kaul is a retired Professor of English from the University of Delhi, Delhi, India. Her doctoral work at Yale was on Shakespeare's Romances. She edited *Othello: New Essays By Black Writers* (Howard UP, 1997), and her work on Shakespeare has appeared in *Shakespeare the Man: New Decipherings* (ed. R. W. Desai, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2014), and in several journals including *Notes & Queries*, *American Notes & Queries*, *Hamlet Studies*, *Shakespeare Yearbook*, *The Upstart Crow*, *The Critical Endeavour*, *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, *The Forum for Modern Language Studies*, *English Studies*, *Multicultural Shakespeare*.

Sam Kolodezh is a lecturer at the University of California, San Diego and New York University, Los Angeles campus. His research focuses on intermedial theatre, Shakespeare, and how concepts of time shape character and identity on stage and screen. He is the co-editor of a forthcoming publication of postmodern Bengali plays by Bratya Basu.

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik is Assistant Professor in the Department of American Studies and Mass Media at the University of Lodz. She is the deputy editor of *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, a co-curator for the International Shakespeare Festival in Gdansk, and the author of numerous articles on theater history, translation, and theatrical adaptation in Poland.

Weijian Lin is a Ph.D. student in the School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, China. His research focuses on English Renaissance poetry. He has published a Chinese paper in the *Journal of Hebei North University* (2019) and finished his M.A. thesis on Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2020).

Adela Matei is a doctoral student affiliated with the Doctoral School of Humanities at Ovidius University of Constanta, soon to defend her dissertation entitled *Metatheatrical and Metafictional Spaces: Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Early Modern and*

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Agnieszka Rasmus, Ph.D., teaches at the Department of Studies in English Drama, Theatre and Film, Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz, Poland. Her research focuses on transnational cinema, seriality and adaptation. She is the author of *Filming Shakespeare, from Metatheatre to Metacinema* (Peter Lang, 2008) and *Hollywood Remakes of Iconic British Films: Class, Gender and Stardom* (EUP, 2022). She has published widely on Hollywood remakes and Shakespeare in popular culture.

Amra Raza, Ph.D., is the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities and former Chairperson of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of the Punjab. It is through her efforts that the Department has evolved into an "Institute of English Studies" in 2021. She has an MA in English Literature, as well as an MA in Linguistics with distinctions in both. She is a researcher, creative writer and English Language Teacher Trainer. She holds the National Jane Townsend Poetry Prize (1990) for her poem "A Nights Swim" and is the Co-editor of *Voices and Visions: Young Writers from Pakistan* (2008) published by University Oxford Press.

Zakia Resshid Ehsen is a Ph.D. in English Studies with over fifteen years in academia. She has served as an Assistant Professor at Riphah International University and Garrison Post Graduate College, and has been a visiting faculty member at the University of the Punjab. Zakia holds certificates in creative writing and English literature from institutions such as the University of Edinburgh, University of Reading, University of Sweden, and Wesleyan University. Her research, including papers published in *Shakespeare* and *Contemporary Social Science*, focuses on Post-Colonialism, Shakespearean Studies, and Critical Theory. She is an active member of the South Asian Literary Association and NeMLA.

Bryan Reynolds is Chancellor's Professor and Claire Trevor Professor of Drama at the University of California, Irvine, and the Artistic Director of the Amsterdam-based Transversal Theater Company. He is a scholar, theater director, playwright, and performer, whose theater work have been produced in almost seventy venues in twenty counties, and he is the author or editor of over twenty-five books and plays.

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Maria Sławińska is a theater scholar and cultural journalist, she completed her master's degree in Contemporary Art at the National Education Commission University in Kraków. She writes for e-teatr, *Dialog*, *Didaskalia*, and *Gazeta Wyborcza.* She participates in scientific conferences and loves traveling to theater festivals in search of good art. She is a multiple participant of the Theatre Critics School course and many

other theatrical events. She has served as a festival journalist for theater festivals in Rzeszów and Zabrze. She is year's laureate of the Leopold Unger Scholarship and an intern at the *Polityka weekly*.

Yu Sun is an associate professor in the College of Foreign Languages, Northeast Forestry University, Harbin, China. Her research interests cover comparative literature and Shakespeare studies. Her recent publications include the Chinese monograph *English Translations of Mo Yan's Works by Howard Goldblatt in the Perspective of Cultural Translation* (Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2019).

Jesús Tronch is a university teacher and researcher at the Universitat de València Estudi General. His research focuses on the transmission and editing of the texts of early modern English drama (often in comparison with Spanish theatre), on the use of digital technologies in this research, and on the reception and translation of Shakespeare in Spain. Among his monographs, he has published *A Synoptic 'Hamlet'* (2002), and co-edited with Clara Calvo *The Spanish Tragedy* for Arden Early Modern Drama (2013). He is currently co-directing the open-access EMOTHE database and digital library of Early Modern European Theatre.

Kanchanakesi Warnapala graduated with honours from the Department of English, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and subsequently obtained her Master's Degree in English and Doctorate in English from Michigan State University, USA. She is at present a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka and has published her academic research in journals such as *Interventions, Early Popular Visual Culture, the European Journal of Life Writing*, and *South Asian Popular Culture.*

Yueqi Wu is a Ph.D. student at the Shakespeare Institute in University of Birmingham (UK). She graduated from MA European Literature at Humboldt University of Berlin (Germany) and received a BA degree in German Language and Literature at Southwest Jiaotong University (China). Her research areas include Shakespeare adaptations in Chinese opera, cross-dressing performance and film studies. She also works as a cultural journalist and film critic for Berlin International Film Festival and a freelance columnist for Chinese.

Yao Yao is a probationary employee at Jiangxi Academy of Governance, China. She earned her Ph.D. from the School of International Studies, Zhejiang University. Her research focuses on medieval English drama. Her recent publications include "From Ritual to Moral Elevation: The Essence of Medieval English Morality Plays" in *Forum for World Literature Studies* (2023).

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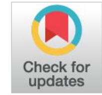

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik*

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we present the latest issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare*, which brings together a dynamic and thought-provoking collection of scholarship that delves into the richly textured world of Shakespeare's plays. At the heart of this issue lies an exploration of the diverse voices and perspectives that have shaped the translation and interpretation of Shakespeare's works across various cultural and linguistic landscapes. The articles featured in this issue offer a multifaceted examination of how Shakespeare's texts have been reimagined, reinterpreted, and rewritten by scholars, artists, and translators from around the globe. From the complex dynamics of gender and power embedded in the act of translation to the innovative appropriations of Shakespeare's works in postcolonial and contemporary contexts, this journal issue illuminates the transformative potential of Shakespeare's enduring global legacy.

The issue opens with a new section, "Shakespeare Translators' Voices: The 21st Century Perspective," created by Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk and Jesús Tronch in collaboration with the active translators of Shakespeare representing an array of approaches both to the original text and translation as a process and a product. The task of retranslation is coupled with a discussion on the nature of the resulting text. The translators describe in detail the tools of the trade and their thoughts on the target text as something meant for the stage and the audience or, just to the contrary, as something intended to be read.

The articles presented in this issue exemplify the breadth and depth of the ongoing scholarly engagement with Shakespeare's oeuvre. Rhema Mei Lan Hokama's exploration of the trial of a Portuguese sailor in a Chinese court, as depicted in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, offers a captivating examination of how Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* intersects with the complex realities of early modern global exchange. "Radicalising Shakespeare: Staging the Sri Lankan Juliet in *Julietge Bhumikawa*" by K. C. P. Warnapala

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discusses how the character of Juliet in the Sri Lankan film *Julietge Bhumikawa* (1998) provides insight into the discourse of female purity and madness in the patriarchal culture of *Romeo and Juliet* on the one hand and its reconfiguration in the contemporary Sri Lankan society on the other. Adela Matei constructs a comparative analysis of the imaginary landscapes in *The Tempest* and Julian Barnes' novel, *A History of the World, in 10½ Chapters.* At the same time, Mythili Kaul presents a careful reading of *The Tempest* against the background of Aime Cesaire's *A Tempest* as a "reinscription" of Shakespeare play in terms of the issue of colonialism and discusses the influence of Lemming on Cesaire.

Thomas Clayton's "'Yet in His Idle Fire:' Once More unto the Bertram and *All's Well*" looks critically at one of Shakespeare's rarely staged plays to shift the focus onto Helena and identify *All's Well* as a "near-romantic comedy." Sam Kolodezh and Bryan Reynolds examine Ron Athey's *Solar Anus* as an auto-poetic "aberrant variation" of *Macbeth*, utilizing the thought of Bataille, Deleuze, and Guattari to discuss the controversial performance as an "excess of Shakespace." Agnieszka Rasmus looks at the docudrama *This England* (Winterbottom, 2022) and how Shakespearean allusion can function as a complex framing device, pointing to the lasting influence of Kenneth Branagh as a "Shakespearean celebrity," whose effects may be felt in the reception of the series.

With Yuequi Wu's "Reclaiming Cross-Dressing: Masculinity Construction in the All-Female Yue Opera's Shakespearean Adaptations," we move to the operatic genre, the global casting conventions, and their reclaiming by women in the Yue opera. Boram Choi continues the discussion on casting conventions in "The Cultural Paradox of All-Male Performance: (Dis)Figuring the Third Beauty in the Studio Life's *Twelfth Night*," while Zakia Resshid and Amra Raza examine the recent Shakespearean stagings in Pakistani Theatres with recourse to the notion of appropriation and post-dramatic theory.

The articles brought together in this issue look critically at how Shakespeare's works continue to be interpreted, translated, and adapted, pointing in the process also to the larger societal issues into which Shakespeare's texts may become implicated. We hope that the analyses and perspectives presented here will propel diverse ways of thinking and writing about Shakespeare in the local and global contexts: a task more pertinent than ever considering the onslaught of populism, military conflicts, and societal polarization in various areas of the world.

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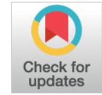

Shakespeare Translators' Voices: The 21st Century Perspective

Edited by
Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk*

Jesús Tronch**

This collection of translators' voices originates with the seminar ***Shakespeare (re)translations: a field of innovation and transgression*** held at the 2023 ESRA Conference in Budapest and convened by Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk (University of Warsaw) and Jesús Tronch (University of Valencia). The seminar invited papers reflecting on Shakespeare translations both as a vehicle and a mirror of change in interpretative trends or staging practices in the late 20th or 21st century. In particular we explored the relation between translation and performance, the changes in translation norms, strategies and concepts, the evolving cultural status of Shakespeare translators, the (non)canonicity of translations, the political vs. aesthetic context of retranslations, the power of patronage in Shakespeare (re)translations, editorial practices in Shakespeare (re)translations, hybridity in translation (adaptation, tradaptation, appropriation), and, finally, the impact of new media on the emergence and dissemination of new translations.

The underlying aim of the seminar was to trace the ways Shakespeare translators respond to the challenges of the time and position themselves in and against the body of earlier rewritings. This referred in particular to the shifts in translation strategies as well as to the broadly understood translation discourse as manifest in critical pronouncements, scholarly analyses and translators' polemics. Thus we were eager to explore the relation of new translations to

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national cultures, and the way they affirm or contest earlier practices with regard to, for instance, literary conventions, generic features or language use.

As we eventually discovered, the majority of the participants of our seminar proved to be active translators of Shakespeare, contributing new translations to academic series, revising old scripts or collaborating with the theater on new rewritings. Impressed by the richness and variety of their experiences, we have gratefully accepted the opportunity offered by *Multicultural Shakespeare* to give voice to our Translators and let them share their insights on (re)translation of Shakespeare. Additionally we have taken advantage of the opportunity to invite a few excellent colleagues who were not with us in Budapest, and yet kindly agreed to join the exchange of thoughts on contemporary Shakespeare translation practice.

In the following individual contributions, the translators mainly discuss their motivation to retranslate Shakespeare (most of them arguing that the evolving nature of language makes prior translations age in time), their stage-oriented or page-oriented translation purpose (in one case aiming at combining both, and with translators "for the page" acknowledging that their versions would require revision if staged), their relationship with previous translations of the same work; and their decision of verse equivalents.

Paula Baldwin Lind [*]

Translated and published: *The Tempest* (2010), *Twelfth Night* (2014), *King Lear* (2017)
Translated and staged: *The Tempest* (2010) adaptation for a musical version

Translation and Retranslation in the Southern Cone of the World

Translations, adaptations, and other forms of reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's dramatic corpus play a key role in the formation of national literary canons within Europe and further afield. Retranslations are fundamental in this process of making works of literature available in different languages; they somehow **guarantee a constant renewal of the ageing previous translations**, as long as translators consider the cultural context and, above all, the target group of readers/spectators to whom the new versions will be addressed, so that they make a real contribution.

In the past years I have developed **a collaborative translation** methodology with my colleague, Dr. Braulio Fernández Biggs. We have already translated three plays by Shakespeare into Spanish for academic purposes; that is to say, texts that can be used for teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as for performance. In 2010 we translated Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the following year we could adapt it for the stage. The play was performed by the Academy of Performing Arts at Universidad de los Andes, Chile. It was a fascinating experience in which **we worked very closely with the theatre director and music composer**.

Our translation methodology does not constitute a complex or sophisticated model; on the contrary, it has turned out to be an effective system to achieve our ultimate educational objective. In general terms, it consists of six stages or steps: 1) choosing the source text, that is, the English edition we will translate. Until now we have always opted for the Arden Shakespeare editions which usually follow the First Folio; 2) in-depth analysis of the play and discussion sessions on the main critical works about it, so as to establish our own interpretation (character relationships, dramatic conflicts, etc.); 3) transcribing the English text and in that same document start translating line by line into Spanish. **If we don't find a solution to translate a specific line or speech, we collate our proposal with other Spanish editions of the play or we watch a filmed performance of that moment to analyse the action, movement, and gestures of the actors which give us a clue to interpret its meaning.** At this

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stage we also decide **the notes** that we are going to include in that specific section, although we write them at the end of the whole process; 4) dozens of readings and revisions of each translated scene once it is finished; 5) **reading aloud** of the final complete version with a group of students, actors, and other invited people to test the fluency, musicality and dramatic rhythm of the translation. This final oral revision is crucial for the success of our work; 6) writing of **a critical introduction** intended both for beginners and experienced readers of Shakespeare, as well as historical and philological notes that explain certain obscure passages or point out the meaning of debated expressions, obsolete words, certain puns or wordplay, among other issues.

We follow some editorial standards in our publications. First, we keep the original act, scene, and line numbers indicated on each page, following the Arden, Oxford, and Cambridge English editions. We also **respect the prose and verse division of speeches**—we even keep capital letters at the beginning of each verse to distinguish it visually from prose—, although we do not translate the latter into any specific Spanish metrical system, since there is no metre equivalent to iambic pentameter in our language. Following Umberto Eco's ideas on translation, we do not try to translate word by word, but rather **sense for sense**, a task that implies linguistic and cultural negotiations; therefore, we keep as much as possible word syntax (a particularly complex aspect) and adapt the pauses and rhythm resulting from the original punctuation to the possibilities offered by Spanish punctuation. This has allowed us, together with a certain lyricism that we endeavour to give to the verse speeches, to reasonably maintain the differences and inflections that Shakespeare wanted to give to his characters' speeches, for it must be remembered that the playwright did not only consider dramatic decorum in this respect, but that the differences in the language of the characters were designed to be easily perceived by the members of the early modern audience who were able to distinguish the speech of a nobleman from that of an ordinary person.

In all our translations, we have kept **the Elizabethan distinction of personal pronouns: the formal "you" and the informal "thou", even in those speeches where Shakespeare switches back and forth between both.** We have translated them in the current usage across Spanish-speaking America today: "usted" and "tú", respectively. Wherever possible, we have **reproduced the intentional repetition of words and even some cacophonies from the original text, as well as the liveliness of elisions and certain contractions that were possible to build in Spanish**. This was certainly not the case with the omission of articles and compound words. We followed similar criteria with regards to prepositions, the use of hyphens and parentheses, which we have maintained for the most part.

As far as the stage directions are concerned, we faithfully follow the Arden source texts set by their different editors yet considering the editorial

history of each play. For the translation of character names, we adhere to the Chilean cultural tradition of translating those names that have a Spanish alternative and leave the others in their original language.

Although we know that there is still much work to be done, **our translations of Shakespeare are part of a long tradition of scholars, translators, poets** of the stature of Pablo Neruda, Nicanor Parra, and Raúl Zurita, as well as theatre professionals, who have kept the work of the great English playwright alive in Chile since the beginning of the 19th century.

Nikos Hatzopoulos[*]

Translated and staged: *Winter's Tale* (2004), *King John* (2005), *The Tempest* (2008), *Twelfth Night* (2010), *Richard III* (2016), *Timon of Athens* (2018), *Macbeth* (2020), *Troilus and Cressida* (2022)
Translated: *As You Like It* (2019)

Translating Shakespeare for the Greek Stage Today

Let me make it clear, right from the start: **I always translate plays for specific productions**, either under commission by theatres or directors, or for productions I myself direct. This means **I always care more for the spoken word than for the written one**.

Translating directly for the stage is quite different than translating for a book. The reader has always the freedom to read twice when the meaning is difficult, to stop and resume reading, to ponder over some thoughts, to meditate or to read very quickly, or even to go straight to the last pages. But the theatre spectator has none of this freedom. What is said on stage is said only once, and in a certain rhythm; there is no way back, or forward. When the audience loses something in the clarity of the meaning, they go on with a handicap; and **when handicaps are accumulated, you have lost the audience**.

Having this in mind helps me take some critical decisions. As we all know, translating is a constant bargaining between what you lose and what you gain. And the outcome depends on what your priorities are. Do you choose to be faithful to the outer form (e.g., the verse technique, or the exact wordplay)?

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Or do you prefer to bring forward the spirit, the inner meaning, the unravelling of thought? Of course, the very best—the blessing—would be to achieve both. But, as we also know, this is not always possible when you translate to a different language (which is, sometimes, like translating to a completely different culture). So, my answer to the above dilemma is this:

Yes, I always try to achieve the necessary balance; I am always faithful to the poetic form, using an iambic metre and keeping the rhyming parts; I always try to render the exact words and the actual phrasing. But **when the desired form jeopardizes the meaning or the clarity of action for the audience, I always opt for the clear meaning**. Having this attitude, I would say I am more faithful to the spirit than to the strict letter.

Another dilemma is added when I am confronted with the obscurity of some Shakespeare passages, or with some inconsistencies that the editors find in the original text. I am not referring here to the passages where the ambivalence of meaning is deliberate by the author, but rather to those where there is not a consensus regarding their exact meaning. Here again, bearing in mind that the audience should follow an unhindered flow of thoughts, arguments and dramatic action, I have to choose one among the possible two or three different meanings proposed.

Greek language is continually evolving during the past two centuries, due to extended social changes, a fact that makes the retranslating of the classical texts mandatory. **The sense of humour, the sense of formal or informal, the expressions characterizing social status, the difference between nobleness and vulgarity, are not understood today the way they were some forty years ago**. Greek language has inherent peculiarities, some of which are considerable obstacles for the translators in their effort to be faithful to the original. For example, the most common nouns in Greek are 3 or 4-syllables long, and verbs may even be 6 or 7-syllables long, whereas most English words are one-syllable long. Trying to arrange these long words into an iambic pentameter may result in a severely distorted syntax, which demands on the audience a very hard effort in order to understand. We already had examples of distorted syntax in some older translations of ancient Greek drama, and there was a time that this kind of writing was highly appraised as "purely poetic," but to the modern ears it is almost unintelligible.

On the other hand, modern Greek language gives you by itself some weapons to overcome these obstacles. First, the fact that almost all Greek words are inflected gives you a considerable amount of freedom in syntax. You are not obliged to keep the "subject-verb-object" sequence, you don't even have to mention a subject, since this is inherent in the verb form. On the contrary, you have a lot of alternatives in the formulation of a sentence. And selecting different options lets you have different overtones and connotations, different

hues of the meaning. Secondly, **the mixture of the two recent forms of Greek language—*katharevousa* and *dimotiki*, the purist and demotic registers** respectively—which is usually spoken in everyday modern Greek, is by itself a very powerful tool. In every step, it virtually gives you possibility of choosing between two almost different languages. And the balance you achieve between the two enables you to express poetry, comedy, irony, social status, age, profession, majesty, arrogance, ignorance, buffoonery, etc.

Now, what is the factor that makes me choose this meaning to that one, this expression to the other one? **It is the inner life of the speaking character, their motives and the consistency of their reasoning. Actually, being an actor myself helps me to get into each character, and find out why they speak and what is the line of their thought and their reactions**.

Most important, the decisive factor that guides me is the specific production for which the translation is prepared. When I am almost done with my first drafts and have some passages with different possible renderings, **I always discuss with the director**, to find out their point of view for the play. I even encourage them to choose by themselves between 2 or 3 possible phrasings. All these alternatives are not really deviations from the original meaning; they are just variations within the limits of freedom that the Greek language allows, but they give different overtones to the text.

And lastly, I believe that **a good translation is completed during the rehearsals**. The ultimate trial for the text is to be spoken by the actors. There you can see what does work and what doesn't. And, of course, you can make changes till the last moment. In many cases I have changed things while rehearsing. Once I was even tempted to change a whole speech, because the kind of language I had chosen sounded quite unfamiliar in the mouth of the specific actor. But the director did not let me do it, because it was too late for the actor to memorize a new text!...

Iolanda Plescia*

Translated and published: *Troilus and Cressida* (2015) *The Taming of the Shrew* (2019), *Sir Thomas More*, (2022), *Henry VIII* (forthcoming in 2025)
Translated and staged: fragments of *Sir Thomas More* and *Troilus and Cressida* (2016), fragments of *Sir Thomas More* (2021), *Sir Thomas More* (2023, stage version)

Translating Shakespeare into Italian

I started translating Shakespeare into Italian as **a form of "deep reading:"** a privileged gateway into the source text. **Growing up bilingually**, I was used to feeling words slip and slide away as I reached for the right one, and translating seemed like a way to finally fix some kind of meaning on a page. My responsibility towards the target language and its users became clearer with the passage of time on my first assignment. Naturally, the more I translate, the more I realize that translations too are slippery and subject to constant change—but the satisfaction of getting things right every once in a while is too great to give up the challenge.

A classic is always new, and for all time, like Shakespeare in Ben Jonson's words. Not so with translation. Translation is transient, language change never stops, and **each new version is good for a generation or two, perhaps a few more if it's excellent**. But even in that case, the patina of time will leave a sediment on the translated play-text and it will be necessary to refashion it for new audiences of readers and theatregoers: this, it seems to me, is one of the main reasons for retranslation.

My first translation was of *Troilus and Cressida*, for the Feltrinelli series founded by Agostino Lombardo, a prominent Italian professor who had hoped to be able to translate all of Shakespeare's plays during his lifetime. Of course, I discovered on this first attempt that I could render meanings but not always the beauty or effect of a word choice. For example, a word that was exotic, already obsolete in early modern English, and therefore tantalizingly obscure, such as *orgulous* in the Prologue of that play, would become an everyday term that had lost all of its allure in Italian: orgoglioso. I pondered over different solutions, wondering if I should sacrifice sound and the contiguity of the Romance roots in favour of something that would produce a similar shock in the Italian reader. That was the first problem that drove home the point. **The individual choice that the translator finally commits to will never allow for adequate rendition of all of the factors at play simultaneously: sound, rhythm, history of the word, semantic and pragmatic values. It is not an accident that**

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Shakespeare wrote in early modern English: that was the only language that could generate him.

One of the biggest challenges in translating towards Italian, I find, is indeed **the closeness of the language to the Latinate words that often carry special meaning in Shakespeare precisely for their being set apart from the Germanic roots**. Not to mention what might happen in situations in which Shakespeare used a smattering of authentic (or at least authentic sounding!) Italian words, as he does in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the second play I tackled. The foreignizing device, conveyed by means of italics in the Folio text, and by breath and accent by actors, is completely lost on Italian eyes and ears; the strategies that can be put in place (such as keeping the tone of Shakespeare's slightly awkward Italian, or retaining italics on the page to visually set the words apart from the contemporary Italian of the translation) are a meagre consolation.

This experience of failure is probably, in fact, a prevailing sentiment in my work. That does not mean the practice is not rewarding, especially as for me it is tied up with my teaching and research into Shakespeare's language. This is perhaps another reason for retranslation in an academic setting: for teachers, translation can help harness our textual work to the "real" world for students wishing to grapple with concrete problem solving. In this sense, **I acknowledge my translations to be mainly aimed at readers and prepared with editorial and philological concerns in the forefront**. I have had the good fortune to work with theatre practitioners, actors and directors, and have developed a strong conviction that "middle ground" translations are never wholly adequate: **translation for the stage and for the page are two entirely different things**, and I readily admit that my "scholarly" translations—lively and readable as I nevertheless hope them to be—will need to be thoroughly revised if they are to be staged. While I claim a position for the translator which need not be hierarchically inferior, in matters of language, to the role of the practitioners, **I also accept change and adaptation to suit the specific vision of a staging**. What is important to me is that the two ensuing texts—for readers and theatregoers—are both allowed to live and thrive on their own terms. After all, most modern-day first encounters with Shakespeare occur on the page, in the classroom, and the act of reading need not diminish but may complement the gratification of seeing the text on stage with a special pleasure of its own, which it is our duty as instructors to convey. I am now in the unique position of editing and translating a play at the same time—*Henry VIII*, or *All Is True*—and I find my enjoyment of the textual work involved is heightened.

While I welcome collaboration—one of the most rewarding experiences I've had was a four-handed translation of *Sir Thomas More* with Nadia Fusini, now series editor of the Feltrinelli Shakespeare—when I am working alone **I tend to translate without watching stagings or looking at other translations**; I consider the draft as a sort of word puzzle I want to solve on my own, and my

strategies invariably rest on the kind of philological work I feel I'm doing, which is working through language diachronically, producing a modern text which however retains some of the specificity of its own time. **Negotiations with my publisher have been crucial in shaping the text**, as space allotted for footnotes and *mise en page* as well as marketing choices all have an impact on the final product: one particularly interesting case was my attempt to change the established Italian title for the *Shrew*, *La Bisbetica Domata*, whose passive form "domata" does not properly render the progressive (and inherently ambiguous) form "taming." After many deliberations, the publisher asserted the need to use the canonized, recognizable title, a decision I accepted since the grammatical structure of Italian only allowed for slight tweaking and afforded no entirely satisfying solution. Loss and gain: you win some, you lose some, as every translator knows only too well.

Elena Ciobanu*

Forthcoming: *Winter's Tale* (2024), *The Taming of the Shrew* (2024)

Taming a Shakespearean Shrew in Romanian Iambic Pentameters

In 2021, when the Romanian Shakespeare scholar George Volceanov included me as a new member of the team working on his current translation project dedicated to William Shakespeare's contemporaries, **I was not at all a novice to literary translation**. A number of years before I had published volumes of Romanian translations of poems by Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes and of theoretical essays on poetry written throughout centuries by famous figures like Philip Sidney, J. S. Mill or W. B. Yeats.

The translation of poetry helped me gain experience as a translator but the transposition of Elizabethan dramatic texts into Romanian brought with it some very different challenges. The sonorities we now recognize as distinctly Shakespearean are largely based on the use of iambic pentameters which are not characteristic of Romanian literature. I first tried my hand at **rendering such**

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metrical patterns into appropriate forms in my own language by retranslating George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* has been published recently (Tracus Arte, 2024). This preceded my retranslation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, **commissioned** by Volceanov **for the second revised 2021-2026 Shakespeare Tracus Arte edition** (the first edition was the result of the *Shakespeare for the Third Millennium* project, conducted in the 2010-2016 period). During the 20th century, Shakespeare's work became known to the Romanian public through two systematic translation projects resulting in two "canonical" editions: the E.S.P.L.A. (1955-1963) and the Univers (1982-1995) ones. Their strong philological bent, favoured by prominent scholars like Leon Levițchi, prevented them from being used for theatre performances to a great extent. By contrast, the Tracus Arte edition (2010-2016) has enjoyed considerable attention from this point of view, 18 of its retranslations having been already used in 27 performances on Romanian stages. This is certainly due to the very different principles adopted by the Tracus Arte translators (myself included) in their attempt at reviving the Shakespearean canon **primarily for the stage and for contemporary audiences** (after all, Shakespeare was striving not only to attain aesthetic excellence, but also, and very significantly, to cater for, and elevate, the tastes of his spectators). Such principles, as they were formulated by Volceanov (2021: 56-57), basically focus on the idea of performability, which entails important injunctions linked with depoliticization, debowdlerization, accessibility and modernization of language. The use of the latest British and American Shakespeare editions has given translators access to the most recent research in the field and has helped them in their attempt to observe the no less important stringency principle (as it was settled by Levițchi) which limits the number of lines that may be added in translation to no more than 7 per 100 original lines.

Previous translations of *The Taming of the Shrew* belong to Dan Amadeo Lăzărescu (1957), as part of the E.S.P.L.A. edition, and Violeta Popa (2016), as part of the first Tracus Arte edition. The necessity of a retranslation was undeniable at the beginning of the 21st century, after more than half a century from the initial Romanian version, fraught as it was with obsolete or archaic forms of words, odd turns of phrase, cacophonies or inversions that would be difficult to approach by actors on the stage. Popa's retranslation is an obvious improvement in terms of vocabulary, which is no longer characterized by obsolescence and is thus much more accessible to today's audiences. However, her retranslation does not adequately observe some of the guidelines (particularly linked with stringency and performability) in the translation poetics adopted by the members of the Tracus Arte project. Popa's frequent preference for a more explanatory style unnecessarily burdens the text with a number of lines that may even become obstacles on the phonic or semantic levels. Thus, for instance, she adds 12 lines to the original 80 that make up scene 5 from Act IV,

just like Lăzărescu before her. In my translation, I manage to arrive at a Romanian version of the same scene counting 81 lines, without any sacrifice in terms of meaning or euphony. **In working very closely with Popa's version on the table, I was also able to identify in it a series of semantic inaccuracies resulting from an erroneous or incomplete understanding of the Shakespearean discourse which constitute a serious argument in favour a new revised translation**. To give one example, in Act II, scene 1, in the dialogue between Katherina and Petruchio, both Lăzărescu and Popa translate "crest" by "coif" [helmet], which renders the logic of the dialogue somewhat loose as it ignores the fact that "crest," in this particular context, must be understood as referring to a figure/device on a coat of arms[1] (Petruchio calls Kate a "herald" a line before). My translation therefore uses the word "stemă" [coat of arms] in this case, and this allows for greater semantic clarity in the ensuing part of the conversation.

My work as a Shakespeare translator will continue with the retranslation of another comedy, *The Winter's Tale*, recently commissioned by Mihai Eminescu National Theatre from Chișinău, in the Republic of Moldova, whose future programme will include this play. Bringing Shakespearean cadences and meanings into Romanian constitutes one of the most rewarding professional experiences for me, as it offers me not only the intimate experience of such rare textual richness, but also a passionate and fruitful conversation with revered predecessors.

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[1] The Yale edition confirms this in the notes on the respective page (see William Shakespeare. *The Taming of the Shrew*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 67).

Piotr Kamiński [*]

Translated and published: *Richard II* (2009), *Macbeth* (2011), *The Twelfth Night* (2011), *The Tempest* (2012), *The Winter's Tale* (2014), *The Merchant of Venice* (2015)
Translated and staged: *Richard II* (2004), *The Twelfth Night* (2011), *The Tempest* (2012), *The Winter's Tale* (2017), *The Merchant of Venice* (2014), *Measure for measure* (2016, 2022, 2023), *Hamlet* (2019), *King Lear* (2021)

Shakespeare Set the Tune, it's my Turn to Play it

I undertook the work on the new Polish translations for one subjective and two objective reasons. The subjective one is simple: I felt like it. Every text in a foreign language is a challenge, and **there is no challenge more powerful**, a higher mountain than Shakespeare. One push (from Andrzej Seweryn, before his production of *Richard II* in the National Theatre, Warsaw, in 2003) proved enough. But there are also objective reasons: translations are getting old, unfortunately, and the new ones I know do not meet a certain criterion that seems extremely important to me. **I try to translate these dramas not as pure, literary texts, but as "theatrical scores," where the pace, the rhythm of the arguments and events, the timing of each monologue and each scene, is a parameter that, while obviously hidden, remains absolutely fundamental.** This is why I translate obstinately "**verse for verse**." This, of course, requires persistent "thickening" of the text, which is not always easy; but no one promised me it would be easy.

It remains, however, a "joyful creation:" I have the right to write Shakespeare's dramas—in my own words. Shakespeare has already done all the hard work, leaving me only the free choice of words, hopefully worthy of his genius.

However, I never feel like I'm doing "the same thing all over again." After all, every young pianist takes up Chopin's mazurkas knowing full well that his predecessors number in the thousands, and there are some real giants among them. He listens to them, to be sure, but above all he stares at the score. I, too, try to listen to Shakespeare, not to the other translators. And I have three supervisors: one, of course, is the poet himself (whose earthly deputy is Professor Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk, a merciless advocate of his interests); the second is the actor supposed to learn by heart the words I have chosen, and speak them from the stage, so I'd rather make sure he won't break his teeth on them; and the third is the spectator, who must understand these intricate phrases and arguments at first hearing.

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I say that I listen to Shakespeare and not to other translators, but, of course, I also look into their work. Not only into the Polish translations, but also into other languages I understand. More than once I find comfort in them, discovering that I'm not the only one this and that idea of Shakespeare's put to the torments of hell.

Above all, however, **I listen to Shakespeare, close my eyes and wait for the echo**. The right sentence may come immediately, or after a few months. When I sacrifice something, to squeeze meanings and images into the tight straitjacket of form I have imposed on myself, giving them, of course, a harmonious, poetic shape, I try to repay that debt at the earliest opportunity. Quite often, it presents itself in the very next verse. And frequently I discover that **not every word of Shakespeare's poetry deserves to have a whole verse added to it, in order to save at all costs the lump of meaning it contains**.

Elisabeth Plessen*

Translated, published, and staged: *As You Like It* (1986), *Julius Caesar* (1986), *The Merchant of Venice* (1988), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1994), *Richard III* (1997), *Hamlet* (1999), *Twelfth Night* (2010)

Translating Shakespeare into German

I have Shakespeare's stage in mind, each time I translate one of his plays. The triangle of the scenic space, a neutral space, and the gallery. Concerning the scenery the Quartos and the 1623 Folio note a change of act or scene only through *Enter* or *Exit/Exeunt* of the players. At the beginning, there is merely an *ACTUS PRIMUS. SCAENA PRIMA* and at the end *FINIS*, nothing else. With rapid transitions or contrast the flow of the action takes its course unhindered. The scope is wide. The early editions give us parsimonious indications about props or decor. This opens the imagination of the public (as well as the actors) up to the text—to concentrate on the blank verses or lines the actors speak. It emphases the importance for outer/topological orientation, to see in one's own mind the unseen. The German term therefore—*Wortkulisse*—I would not know it in English. A few hints depict the imaginary—a whole world or cosmos. The

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poles of/for the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean in *Antony and Cleopatra* f. e. are names, two cities: Rome and Alexandria, a deck, the mentioning of a Cape and Parthia, some bays of the Ionian Sea, a river Cydnus. In many cases it is clear from the text where a scene takes place. In some it is unclear (line 1727-1750). In this case Shakespeare allows himself the same freedom as a novelist. He does not need to give more attention to where the drama takes place than is dramatically useful. He does not need to focus more clearly on the circumstances. He makes full use of the freedom his stage provided. The rest is sheer presence of the actors and immediacy through dialog.

I do not follow the detailed notations of Samuel Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's collected works nor other arrangements or fixations of later editors and their categories, as I think **this kind of editing restricts the Bards endlessly sailing-on-mind and his allegorical, non-conceptual poetical style**. However, I admit: I love to read the notations and footnotes, these arguing parts in different editions and sometimes I almost get happily lost in them, especially in Horace Howard Furness' A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare.

Translations Echo the History of Language

Only one time I broke my concept. All translations were commissioned by various theatres for various stages. The first director was namely Peter Zadek. The director of *Julius Caesar*, commissioned by Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, was Michael Bogdanov. He planned a modern, experimental version of the play, wanted to explore its political aspects of terror or civil war, which still concern us today—with monitors on the stage, when Brutus addresses the public in the sense of a press conference, and a tank in the battle of Philippi in the last act. This concept Bogdanov thought required as contrast and element of suspense and inner action an old Shakespearian German, in short a modernized August Wilhelm Schlegel translation, as this version is still *the* known or standard one if you mention the Bard to Germans. So I transcribed and retranslated Schlegel in big parts but **without changing Schlegel's versification form** or formal atmosphere of dialogue as I kept his—in modern German completely out of date way to speak to a person (Shakespeare: you—Schlegel Ihr/Euch—Sie/Ihnen today). Underneath this "cover" or "pretending" I changed quite a lot. My problem here: I had to get into two different minds or creep under the skin of two writers i.e. Shakespeare's original I saw with my own eyes or tools of language as a writer/translator. At the same time I tried to free Schlegel's German from the codes of taste of his time (around 1800) and give the remaining version a liveliness and freshness which resulted from my eyes on the Bard and my comprehension of (the) language(s). I corrected Schlegel's omissions of context sometimes as well, i. e. Shakespeare's vulgar puns, mainly sexual allusions, and when Shakespeare repeats a word four times, like in

Portia's speech (2.1, scene between her and Brutus) I went back to the original and repeated in German the emphasis of "sick" four times. Slagging took place, the replacement of old fashioned or obsolete terms. I kept Schlegel's precise places of locations like at the beginning of the third act: *Rom, vor dem Kapitol. Trompetenstoß. Caesar, Brutus* etc. ... *treten auf.* (Rome. At the Capitol) Whereas Shakespeare only notes: *3.1 Florish. Enter Caesar, Brutus* etc. Or in 2.3 *Eine Straße nahe dem Kapitol.* (A street near the Capitol.) *Artemidorus tritt auf und liest einen Zettel.* Where the original only has: 2.3 *Enter Artemidorus, reading a paper*. This could be anywhere. Even on the moon! In Schlegel's translation reigns a kind of prescriptive order—of course, no director must follow it—but it confines or restricts the imagination if you read the play for the first time and do not get into the openness of Shakespeare's sailing-on-mind, where freedom reigns: actors enter/entered and get/got off the stage.

Translations age in a different way as originals, i. e. much quicker. It is their inner nature to put on patina, this slightly greyish, slightly dusty layer on some words, how thin or thick ever after a while—it depends on the translator's creative or artistic grip, as language is like a river in a permanent flow of its partly renewal.

Salvador Oliva*

Translated into Catalan and published: all Shakespeare plays (1980s), *Sonnets* (2003), *Edward III* (2014), *Venus and Adonis* (2016), *Rape of Lucrece* (2017)
Translated into Spanish and published: *Henry V* (2008), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (2008, with Ángel-Luis Pujante), *Titus Andronicus* (2010), *Timon of Athens* (2010, with Ángel-Luis Pujante), *The Taming of the Shrew* (2012), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2012), *Pericles* (2012, with Ángel-Luis Pujante), *King John* (2015), *Henry VIII* (2015, with Ángel-Luis Pujante)

Translating Shakespeare into Catalan

During the 1980s I had the privilege of translating the complete dramatic works of William Shakespeare into the Catalan language. This work was commissioned by the Catalan public television (TV3) to serve as the basis for the dubbed version of the BBC Television Shakespeare series to which they had purchased the

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rights. Subsequently, my translations were then published by the Barcelona Editorial Vicens Vives, and they have been since reissued in the late 2010s.

In the early 2000s, the Spanish publishing house, Destino, offered me the possibility of publishing a few translations with them, and with the permission of Vicens Vices, I agreed to this and at the same time took this opportunity to make some alterations in my previous translations in order to improve the text in the new editions.

Besides the complete thetrical works I have also translated in verse Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and his narrative poems *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Translating literary works is definitively a literary practice. It involves moving a work of art from one language into another work of art in another language. There are no specific methods or strategies to translating literature. In fact I agree mostly with Jose María Valverde (poet, professor, and translator of Shakespeare's plays into Spanish in prose in the late 1960s), who said that he translated by ear.

Translations age over time, something which originals do not. That implies that every one or two generations should provide new translations.

Translating drama for a theatre production is largely the same as translating for literary publication.

From my experience I believe it is important to consult previous translations of the same original, and henceforth make efforts to improve on them.

I do not think that there are techniques for translating. **The basis is the translator's linguistic talent.** The objective is to retain as much as posible the quality of the original as a work of art.

Theoretical essays about translating Shakespeare can only help, depending on the talent of the author of the essay. More important are studies about the author of the original, especially if they are linguistic studies.

As for the problem of translating the English iambic pentameter into Catalan, I opted for two solutions. With the sonnets, it was obvious that I had to adopt isosyllabism. Since Catalan has lengthier words than English, I believed that the best solution was to translate the ten syllables of the pentameter into the twelve syllables of a Catalan dodecasyllable or alexandrine: the dodecasyllable has no caesura, while the alexandrine does (although the Spanish "alejandrino" has fourteen syllables, it has only twelve metrical syllables).

With respect to drama, isosyllabism was not necessary, and I opted for a complex meter, as described by Benoît de Cornulier. The complex meter I used consisted of octosyllables, decasyllables, dodecasyllables and alexandrines. And then, in the few instances required by verse, I used caesural lines, which might consist of eight plus six metrical syllables, or six plus eight. Exceptionally I used lengthier verse lines, with a caesurea, but with hemistichs of six, eight or ten syllables.

My solution gives priority to rhythm (be it binary or ternary) rather than to the number of syllables. That is why, in a few instances, I used nine-syllable lines with a ternary rhythm; that is, three sequences of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllables, as reflected in this pattern: u u S / u u S / u u S (u) (u), where the slash does not indicate word boundaries.

Personally, as a retired professor of Catalan Philology, I consider that translating Shakespeare has been **the most stimulating and fulfilling work I have had the privelege of enjoying during my lifetime**. In my opinion, Shakespeare is the greatest literary author, which makes translating his work an awe-inspring challenge for a translator.

Mickaël Savchenko*

Translated and published: *King Richard III* (2023)

Translating Shakespeare into Russian

Shakespeare has been very fortunate in Russia: excellent Russian translations of his works are numerous, even if most of them are at least a few decades old. I did not contemplate retranslating one of his plays, but… **producing a new version of *King Richard III* for the prestigious** "Literaturnye pamiatniki" ("Monuments of literature") **collection was an offer I could not refuse**. This commission came from Prof. Nataliia Mikeladze, who was responsible for much of the volume's editorial matter, including the commentary. In a way, **I see my version as a counterattack against amateur translations**, which abound on the Internet and even make it into print nowadays.

I had prior experience with Elizabethan drama, having translated Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* for the same collection. Work on *King Richard III* took me two years, from early 2018 to early 2020 (which does not mean I worked every day! I had to combine this work with my job and sometimes would not touch it for months). Then I moved on to two of Shakespeare's sources for the play, Hall's *Chronicle* and *A Mirror for Magistrates*, selections from which were to appear in the appendices. These texts were previously unavailable in Russian.

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Given the specificity of the series, with its focus on literature, I had to approach Shakespeare's play as text, preferring the page over the stage. Obviously I was wary of heavy syntax and tried to not to use archaisms excessively—even if I made use of them systematically, as I see no point in producing yet another "modernizing" version. As a side note, **if I had to stage *Richard* using this translation as a basis, I would definitely alter it, using simpler language**.

My key objective was to recreate Shakespeare's text as closely as possible, even if the result would not always read smoothly. I don't want to pretend Shakespeare is our contemporary and transport him into our age, but rather invite the reader to travel back to his times and to inhabit his brain.

In poetry, the form is as much a part of the semantic content as the words. According to the existing Russian tradition, metrical texts are translated using metrical verse. The Russian metrical system is luckily very similar to the English one, which allowed me to reproduce non-metrical lines whenever Shakespeare had them, the variations in metre (as when Shakespeare used the iambic trimeter) and also all the rhymes. Apart from the purely formal aspect, I paid attention to the metaphors, including frequent use of legal imagery. It would of course be naïve to believe that a very accurate translation is by default a success. So I made sure not to butcher Shakespeare's spirit by being too pedantic.

Despite my attempts at recreating Shakespeare, I would more often feel frustration than satisfaction: the translated version looks inevitably impoverished semantically. **Shakespeare's language is palimpsestic: it is so charged with all the meaning it has accumulated over the centuries (what he actually said and what was read into it) that modern speech seems blank in comparison**. My translation technique consisted in reading the original, getting impregnated with it until I was able to hear (in my mind's ear) Russian equivalents, which fitted the metre. Sometimes I would copy the electronic version of the English text into Word and gradually replace it with Russian text. I would type alternative solutions in the margins and then eliminate everything but the preferred reading.

Working on the translation involved a good deal of research. I used the best scholarly editions (basing myself on Arden 3rd) and provided line numbers (our intention to publish the translation alongside the English original eventually did not materialize). I consulted the *Oxford Dictionary of Original Shakespearean Pronunciation* whenever I thought I saw an occasional rhyme (in the middle of a scene rather than concluding one), to check if the words actually rhymed in Shakespeare's time. At the same time, I had to look up some Russian words I had doubts about, in dictionaries and in the online poetic corpora, checking the prescribed and the actual pronunciation in terms of the stressed syllable. Reading historical literature was also of help.

In producing a new translation, the translator usually endeavours to surpass his predecessors and to correct their errors, if need be. However, **I avoided looking into existing Russian translations of *King Richard III* in order not to be influenced by the translators' choices—which was difficult, as some of Shakespeare's aphorisms have become clichés in Russian as well** ("The winter of our discontent," "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"); and some lines from previous translations were deeply engraved in my memory since my childhood. Some time after I finished work, I started looking into the translations again and was surprised to see how good they occasionally were. I have to admit I used to look down on those earlier attempts: working on Shakespeare gives you a feeling of superiority over anyone else. **When I was translating Shakespeare, I *was* him!** When confronted with these earlier renditions, I also saw that sometimes the translators had made the same choice I did.

What is verse translation? I would say **it's the art of a jeweller. It's all about inserting gemstones into a setting, the gemstones being Shakespeare's words, and the setting the metre and rhyme system. You have to cut and polish the stone so it fits, and you have to make sure the setting is solid enough to hold it.**

Sándor Fazekas*

Translated and published: *Sonnets* (2023)

The Sound of the Virginal: Retranslating the Sonnets into Hungarian

After five years of extensive work, my retranslation of *The Sonnets* was published in the summer of 2023. My motivation to retranslate *The Sonnets* came from two directions. The first mental impulse came from the academic field: my teacher at the University of Szeged, Annamária Hódosy held a seminar about *The Sonnets*. Although we were in Faculty of Literature, she quoted the poems in English, and when the Hungarian translation of Lőrinc Szabó emerged she noted every time that these versions differed greatly from the original text.

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One or two times it is acceptable, but when she kept mentioning this about every single poem, showing hidden and forgotten meanings of the original, I began to wonder: is it possible to make a new, more precise and less poetic translation? The second impulse was emotional: it came from within—from a dream. I woke up and made my first version of Sonnet 144. You can't make such an endeavor without strong emotional motivation—or maybe you can do it, but the result may not be too convincing. My colleagues helped me all the way to create my new version, and I won a fellowship for this. **I consider my endeavor as a teamwork, although the toughest part of it is certainly lonely: the responsibility for my decisions is entirely mine, but there are a lot of people who helped me**. First of all, my lecturer, Natália Pikli, who made my effort more precise and corrected my errors about the use of the Shakespearean expressions. She knows the context of these words, so she could correct my translation. I am not a professional poet, so I needed to elaborate my metrical concept together with a colleague who is, Viktor Horváth. Actually, I decided to make a **strict metrical translation** of the original, because the Hungarian language makes it possible, and this opportunity was left unused by my ancestors, who made poetic and loose translations.

When you find a great goal, it will give you new insights and sharpen your skills. It also redefines your connections with your colleagues. My motivation, besides what I mentioned before, was also to improve myself. Now I can speak and write the language of Shakespeare—the world of the dramas could be accessible to me. I discovered a new world, and at the same time, the skills and methods to make further discoveries in the world of Shakespeare. My career has also been transformed by this effort, and I am lucky to teach actors and need to go regularly to theaters and see the most current performances of Hungarian and also international companies. The next phase will be the constitution of a new vision, which is even more complicated than the previous one, the project of *The Sonnets*.

In my opinion, the retranslation not necessarily needs other methods or tools as the first translation. The main thing is that you need to find a different perspective than your predecessors, and also a different concept of the work. In my case, I needed to become independent from the poetical vision of Lőrinc Szabó, who was a great poet himself. It is inevitable to be different for me as I am not a poet but a literary historian, so **my goal was to make a bilingual edition with extensive notes and commentary**. In the past, the previous attempts at retranslations after Lőrinc Szabó have followed his path: he made such a huge impact that everybody tried exactly the same way that he elaborated. No wonder that their attempts are not accepted by the artistic and academic audience. I decided to create my own English version because I didn't want to rely solely on one single edition. It sounds rough, but I wanted to make my own mistakes entirely: the different readings of the Sonnets have so much diversity

that it seemed to me impossible to choose between them: I made the decisions in every dubious case myself.

In my case, the page came first, but I knew that when I would succeed in finishing the project, the stage would come after it inevitably. In my opinion, the poems are similar to the dramas: they come alive via performances. Luckily, I teach actors, so I know a lot of them: they can add new meanings and great emotional strength to the words. In addition, suddenly, a new opportunity came, which I didn't expect: the composer Péter Huzella made songs from my translations. As he mentioned, the music came quickly because of the iambic versification. It was a wonderful experience to hear those songs: it seemed to flow flawlessly as his own words.

The translation technique is determined by the properties of the material and the purpose of the translation. My key objective was to create a basically faithful and well-annotated version of *The Sonnets*, with my own English version. Maybe this is strange to imagine, but in our country, this kind of effort is still missing. The first version by Károly Szász and Vilmos Győry was born in the 19th century, and at that time, it was not a common policy to make annotated and/or bilingual editions, and besides that, Shakespearean research was also in a relatively early state. Lőrinc Szabó, who created the canonical translation, made a popular and well-known version but transformed the original into his own modern poems. His basic material was quite narrow, the edition of Sidney Lee and the German translation of Stefan George. The first version was born as early as 1929, the last, third one in 1955. By the time of the third version, he wrote a study which showed that he also had the desire to explore the context of the Petrarchan poetry of Shakespeare's age, but he couldn't finish it; it became my duty to show the connection between the contemporary poetry of the Elizabethan age and also the plays of Shakespeare. The vast amount of new dictionaries, editions, and commentaries helped my work to be more precise.

I found that the previous translations hadn't dug deep into the philological and interpretative dilemmas of these poems. The main thing was the vision and the modernity of the texts, not the philological debates, but Shakespeare loves wordplays and ambiguities, but these remain hidden until my edition. As my proofreader, Natália Pikli put it, this translation is a gamechanger in many fields.

The English editions which I used to create my own version were all very informative and enlightening. The most recent edition by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells was very useful for my translations, but I also admired the first edition's enigmatic nature. Katherine Duncan-Jones also did excellent work in the Arden edition, and made wonderful commentaries, so I had a massive background to build on. Booth's edition and also Burrow's gave me great support: the first one is extensive, and the second is laconical. I am myself curious about how to continue this wonderful journey with the plays, but I am preparing for another adventure.

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Filip Krajník*
Anna Hrdinová**

Translated, published, and staged: *Hamlet*, trans. by Filip Krajník (2022)
To be published: *Much Ado About Nothing,* trans. by Anna Hrdinová (forthcoming 2025)

Shakespeare and Beyond on the 21st-Century Czech Page and Stage

The tradition of translating Shakespeare into Czech goes back to the late 18th century, when the first Czech renditions of Shakespeare's plays were published as chapbooks for readers in the provinces or staged by the Patriotic Theatre in Prague. Besides the obvious commercial motivation, the aim of these productions was to showcase the ability of the language to reproduce a classic whose works then frequented German-speaking theatres in the Czech capital (Drábek 2012: 87-102). Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Shakespeare became for Czechs an adopted national poet of a kind (as he did for the Germans and other European nations around that time), one who served as an ally in their cultural and political efforts—whether under the Habsburg empire, the German occupation during the Second World War or the communist regime before 1990 (Krajník and Kyselová 56-60). To celebrate the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth, a new complete translation of Shakespeare's works was commissioned in the mid-19th century, the first such project in any Slavonic language. In his study of Czech translations of Shakespeare, Pavel Drábek identifies eight major waves, or generations, of Shakespearean translations into Czech to date, each having its own ideas of who Shakespeare was and how he should speak to Czech audiences (Drábek 2012).

Since the latest generation of Shakespearean translators into Czech (first appearing in the late 1970s; Drábek 263-302) has produced several strong personalities that still dominate Czech Shakespeare, both in printed volumes and on stages, Czech theatre directors and dramaturges have been hesitant to commission new translations of Shakespeare or other Renaissance playwrights. The result is that **some of the most recent translations of Shakespeare are almost forty years old and already dated or overused**. Perhaps motivated by the vision of prestige for his theatre and himself, in 2019 the director of the

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Prague City Theatres approached Filip Krajník (who had previously translated a selection of Elizabethan sonnets into Czech) for a new version of *Hamlet* for the theatre's planned 2021 production of the play; however, the production's director ultimately refused to work with a new translation and rather opted for a "proven audience-pleaser"—one of the older versions from the 1990s.

Krajník's version, which had been almost completed for the Prague production before it was rejected, was ultimately staged in 2022 at the South Bohemian Theatre in České Budějovice as the first of the theatre's series of productions of classics for younger audiences. As a literary historian with little experience with practical theatre, Krajník decided **to combine his philological skills with the procedural knowledge of theatre practitioners and, during the translation process, closely collaborated with a team of dramaturgical consultants to achieve a theatrically effective and easily stageable text**. One of the decisions that Krajník made was to divert from the almost two-centuries-long tradition to translate the English blank verse into Czech in strict iambic pentameter—a convention about which Czech translators of Shakespeare had complained since the early 20th century (Krajník and Mitrengová 169). Czech is a notoriously uniambic language, with the average length of a word about a syllable greater than in English, which means that translating a verse line into an English metre (while preserving the original number of lines—another Czech tradition that developed throughout the 20th century) is almost always a matter of compromise, whether semantic, poetic or gestic. Krajník's **rhythmised free verse**, which is often metrically close to blank verse—but is not limited by it—better allows what he calls a "verbal gesture" and gives the translator more space to capture dramatic nuances in characters and situations than previous generations of translators had (Krajník 11). It is significant that, while Krajník never attempted to simplify or update the original to make it more accessible (unlike, for instance, one of his predecessors, Jiří Josek, who in his 1999 version of *Hamlet* tended to oblige his audiences, sometimes at the expense of the complexity of Shakespeare's text; Drábek 2000), the South Bohemian production (directed by young director Jakub Čermák, well-known from the Czech independent theatre scene) was praised for its topicality, for its **distinctively modern feel** and for lending "new meaning to many situations of the play, uncovering additional possibilities for their interpretation" (Landa 14; working translation).

Somewhat surprisingly, the collaboration between Krajník and Čermák immediately led to another project: a new translation and production of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*—a play that had been last staged in Czech in 1922. To a large degree, Krajník's *Edward II* follows the paths established in his *Hamlet*, chiefly in the collaboration with theatre practitioners and in paying attention to the dramaturgical qualities of the text, while also striving to retain its literary and historical value. These two translations ultimately led to an idea of

a new series of printed editions (entitled simply *Anglická renesanční dramata ve studentských vydáních*—English Renaissance Drama in Student Editions) of English early-modern plays in Czech for students and general reading audiences. Following the model of English student editions such as New Mermaids, the first two volumes in the series (that is, *Hamlet* and *Edward II*) contain philological and dramaturgical commentary, as well as contextual studies that help non-academic readers understand and appreciate the works and their background, while offering the plays themselves in modern renditions that follow the standards of current theatre. One of the ambitions of the series—led by Anna Hrdinová, whose new version of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* will be included in the third volume—is not only to re-translate the well-known works by Shakespeare, but also **introduce to Czech readers and theatre practitioners other English playwrights from the period who have been woefully understudied and understaged** in the Czech context. Through collaboration between the academic and theatrical spheres, the series thus seeks to broaden the image of English Renaissance theatre in the minds of Czech reading audiences, as well as contribute new material to the current trend of staging Shakespeare and English early-modern drama in general in Czech theatres.

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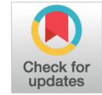

Rhema Mei Lan Hokama*

Shylock in Fuquieo: Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and the Trial of a Portuguese Stranger by China's Courts in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*

Abstract: In 1548, the Portuguese merchant Galeotto Perera was captured along with his shipmates in the waters off China's southeastern coast. In his account of his time as a prisoner in Fuquieo (in contemporary Fujian province), Perera details his trial before the city's magistrates in a Chinese court of law, writing of his amazement when he and his fellow Portuguese merchants were acquitted of the charges brought against them by two of the city's most prominent men. Perera's prison account reached an Elizabethan readership via Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), a sprawling compendium of European travel writing translated into English. In this essay, I maintain that the outcome of Shylock's trial in Shakespeare's comedy entails a reversal of Perera's legal fortunes in China. In light of Perera's assertion that the Chinese legal process "cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs," I argue that *The Merchant of Venice* asks why these European failures of justice, mercy, and truth sometimes happen in Europe's courts and in negotiations with non-Christian peoples. I aim to demonstrate that the comedy's treatment of economic and religious exchange with strangers is inflected by Perera's account of his encounters with the Chinese during his time in Fuquieo—as well as by other travel writings collected by Hakluyt that describe legal, financial, and inheritance quandaries that European traders faced during their travels to places like China, Java, and modern-day Myanmar.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Richard Hakluyt, global Renaissance, early modern maritime trade, early modern China, Galeotto Perera (Galeote Pereira), Caesar Fredericke.

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In 1548, the Portuguese merchant Galeotto Perera was captured along with his shipmates in the waters off China's southeastern coast in an anti-piracy sting operation led by the Ming Chinese general Zhu Wang.[1] Upon his arrest, Perera and his fellow crew members were imprisoned in Fujian—known to Perera as Fuquieo—where the Portuguese trader and his countrymen were made to stand trial before the Chinese authorities.[2] Due to China's staunch isolationist economic policies, which prevented foreign traders and merchants from doing trade within China's borders itself, Perera's account of his time in Fuquieo and his travels elsewhere within China offered one of the few eyewitness travel account by a sixteenth-century European available to early modern European readers. (Although it is not known how long Perera spent imprisoned, by 1553, five years after his capture, records show that he had managed to return to the Portuguese trading posts along China's Fujian coast.) Perera's account was known to early modern English readers via Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, a wide-reaching collection of European travel accounts in English translation, first published in 1589 and then in an expanded version spanning three volumes from 1598 to 1600. The majority of Hakluyt's collected travel accounts had never been published prior to their inclusion in the *Principal Navigations*, which made these tales of travel to places such as China, Indonesia, and Myanmar newly accessible for an English readership. Via Hakluyt's translation, Perera's recollections provided English readers a glimpse into the workings of the Chinese empire, its people, and the country's legal system.

In his travel account, Perera recounted his trial as a stranger in Fuquieo's court: "We poore strangers brought before them might say what we would," he remembered. Even though Perera and his fellow Portuguese travelers could speak no Chinese, and Fuquieo's courts had to rely on Chinese translators who had taught themselves imperfect Portuguese, Perera marveled at the fact that the Chinese were nonetheless keen on offering him a fair trial even in spite of these considerable hindrances: "yet did they beare with vs so patiently, that they

[1] Perera's name is sometimes modernized as Galeote Pereira or Galiote Pereira, but I have chosen to retain the original spelling of his name as presented in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, since this is how early modern English readers of Perera's account would have known and referred to him.

[2] In my references to the places mentioned by Perera and the other travel writers in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, I use their early modern names as they appear in Hakluyt's English translations, while supplying modern geographic identifiers when necessary. Perera's Ming-era Fuquieo has been referred to variously by readers as Fukien or Fujian, but those twentieth- and twenty-first designations suggest later developments in China's political and cultural reforms that are anachronistic in light of Perera's experience of early modern Fuquieo. Additionally, Ming dynasty urban and provincial designations do not map exactly onto China's modern and contemporary city zoning.

caused vs to wonder, knowing specially how litle any aduocate or Iudge is wont in our Countrey to beare with vs. … but we in a heathen Countrey, hauing our great enemies two of the chiefest men in a whole Towne, wanting an interpreter, ignorant of that Countrey language, did in the end see our great aduersaries cast into prison for our sake" (Hakluyt 11:208). Perera expressed bewilderment at the fortunate outcome of his own trial, in which the Chinese courts ruled in favor of the merchant strangers, even to the detriment of their accusers, who Perera noted were among two of the city's most prominent men.

Perera attributed his unexpected legal outcome to the rigorously fair legal process upheld in Chinese courts: "when any man is brought before them to be examined, they aske him openly in the hearing of as many as be present… Thus did they also behaue themselues with vs: For this cause amongst them can here be no false witnesse" (11:207). The Chinese legal attention to evidence and due process, Perera asserted, made their juridical process foolproof no matter who was on trial, allowing the Chinese courts to avoid the errors of judgment that Perera noted were sometimes made in European courts: "This good commeth thereof, that many being alwayes about the Iudge to heare the euidence, and beare witnesse, the processe cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs" (11:207-208). What made the Chinese judicial process foolproof, Perera reasoned, was the stark separation that the Chinese had between their religious beliefs and their attention to legal truth. Although Perera described the Chinese as both "heathens" and "idolaters" with respect to their religion, with regard to matters of justice he noted that the Chinese saw legal truth operating distinctly from matters of religion: "The Moores, Gentiles, and Iewes haue all their sundry othes, the Moores do sweare by their Mossafos, the Brachmans by their Fili, the rest likewise by the things they do worship. The Chineans though they be wont to sweare by heauen, by the Moone, by the Sunne, and by all their Idoles, in [legal] iudgement neuertheless they sweare not at all" (11:208). The strict separation of religion and due legal process in the Chinese judicial system, Perera reasoned, explained how Fuquieo's courts managed to treat strangers with partiality in matters of law, ruling on behalf of the Portuguese travelers who did not share Chinese religion but were regarded as having legal rights equal to their Chinese accusers under the Chinese legal code.

Perera ended his account of his trial by offering a thought experiment to his European readers. If the conditions had been reversed and an unknown stranger had found himself standing trial before a European court, Perera had no doubt that this stranger would have suffered a much less fortunate outcome: "For wheresoeuer in any Towne of Christendome should be accused vnknowen men as we were, I know not what end the very innocents cause would haue" (11:208). What would have happened to a Chinese stranger who by chance might have found himself standing trial before a Portuguese court?

Despite the fact that Perera's writings about China and Hakluyt's collected travel writings about the Far East were widely accessible to an English audience, little scholarly work has been done on Hakluyt's possible influence on Shakespeare's ideas about East Asia. Although there has been scant scholarly attention to the importance of East Asia in the making of the global Renaissance, the promise of securing maritime trade networks with Asian nations tantalized merchants, diplomats, and politicians during Shakespeare's lifetime. The English crown invested considerable naval resources in finding a maritime route to East Asia via the fabled Northwest Passage over the Arctic Pole, commissioning fleets, in 1583 and 1591, bound for the Asian nations of "Cambaia [Khambhat in Gujarat, India] and China" (Hakluyt 4.12). These ventures were initiated in part because of the enthusiastic petitioning of the explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who presented Elizabeth I with a plan to expand England's maritime reach from the Americas to China in his 1576 treatise *A Discourse of a Discouerie of a New Passage to Cataia*. The prospect of locating, mapping, and establishing trade with the mythical Cataia or Cathay fascinated early modern Europeans—even as Europe's foremost cartographers still lacked even foundational knowledge about China's geographic whereabouts. Most tellingly, in his map of Asia, the Flemish cartographer Jodocus Hondius depicted China twice—as China and Cataia—and Beijing three times. Hondius's map of Asia suggests that while Europeans had a fairly accurate geographical grasp of subcontinental South Asia and the archipelago nations of Southeast Asia—the places that are now contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—Ming China's longstanding policy against conducting open trade with foreign merchants meant that Europeans knew comparatively little about the East Asian nation."[3]

In spite of this lacuna in the scholarship on Shakespeare's literary engagement with East Asia, what is clear is that the travel accounts from the *Principal Navigations* were known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. G. K. Hunter (51) observed nearly sixty years ago that the Elizabethans had access to accounts of non-Christian peoples and cultures in places as far away as Malacca and Fukien, via accounts of those like Perera and Hakluyt. Likewise, Claire Jowitt has suggested that Shakespeare not only knew of Hakluyt's travel writings but appropriated these travel tales in plays such as *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest* (Jowitt, "The Architect of English Expansion"). Shakespeare never imagined a Chinese stranger on trial in a Portuguese court, but he comes close in *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the Jewish moneylender Shylock comes to court to prosecute his debtor, the Christian merchant Antonio—only to discover that Antonio's trial is actually his own trial, when the Venetian courts end up prosecuting Shylock using legal statues specific to his status as a resident alien. If Perera

[3] I have previously discussed Ming China's closed-door trade policy and Shakespeare's engagement with Cathay in *Twelfth Night* (Hokama 254-9).

described the true account of a Portuguese merchant tried in Fuquieo's courts, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* offers an elaboration on Perera's hypothetical "unknown stranger" made to stand trial before Europe's Christian courts.

Figure 1. Map of the world depicting the fabled Northwest Passage to China, as imagined by Sir Humphrey Gilbert in his treatise *A Discourse of a Discouerie of a New Passage to Cataia* (London, 1576). Copy from the Huntington Library

I suggest Perera as a possible sixteenth-century source for *The Merchant of Venice*—alongside a growing body of plausible source materials for the play such as Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (ca. 1378-85) and the trial and subsequent execution in 1594 of the Portuguese converso Roderigo Lopes for his alleged attempts to poison Elizabeth I while serving as her physician-in-chief. Another possible source for Shakespeare's comedy is the 1596 London legal suit brought against two Portuguese conversos Ferdinand Alvares and Alvaro de Lyma, which has been previously discussed by C. J. Sisson (38-51) and James Shapiro (72). Importantly, *The Merchant of Venice* departs from all of these other possible sources in a number of ways. For example, in Fiorentino's novella, unlike in Shakespeare's retelling of the story, the character referred to only as "the Jew" is not tried under statutes specific to his status as a non-resident alien. This addition is Shakespeare's innovation and resonates profoundly with the thought experiment from Hakluyt's tale of the imaginary Chinese stranger tried in a Christian court—from which Shakespeare could have imaginatively drawn as much as he likely did from the contemporary trials of Lopes, Alvares, and de Lyma.

Figure 2. Jodocus Hondius's map of South, East, and Southeast Asia—which depicts China twice and Beijing three times. *Asia Nova Descriptio Auctore Jodoco Hondio* [New Description of Asia by Jodocus Hondius] (Amsterdam, 1610). Copy from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology library special collections

In a seminal essay about converso Jews living in early modern London, Sisson outlined the details of the lawsuit brought against Alvares and de Lyma. In 1596, Mary May, the widow of the English merchant John May, brought a suit before the Court of Chancery against Alvares and de Lyma over the question of a debt that Mary May claimed the Portuguese Jews owed to her late husband's estate. John May, Alvares, and de Lyma had previously invested in a series of naval expeditions to Portugal and Spain, using ships that were owned by a syndicate of Portuguese Jews (Sisson 41). The court ultimately determined that Alvares and de Lyma did not owe John May's estate the contested debt, an outcome that has led Sisson to maintain that the Chancery court did not indicate "any hint of prejudice against the heretic stranger in London," and indeed demonstrated a "scrupulous concern for impartial and equitable treatment of both parties" (Sisson 50). Sisson goes on to conclude: "There was no oppression of the Jews in Shakespeare's London, provided that they outwardly confirm to the minimum requirements of the law which government all Englishmen in their relation to the State and to its Church" (Sisson 49-50). But in this regard, the

conversos of Sisson's case study were unlike Shakespeare's Shylock, who at the start of the play openly professes his Judaism before the Christians when he initially refuses Bassanio's dinner invitation on account of his adherence to kosher dietary laws: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following. But I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (Shakespeare, "The Merchant of Venice," 1.1.29-32). Shylock insists that he will not "smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into" (1.1.28-29). Another significant point of divergence between the historical conversos and Shylock is that while Alvares and de Lyma were granted the legal and political rights of full European citizens (Sisson 50), Shylock remains a resident alien in Venice—and indeed, his legal downfall is contingent upon his status as a foreigner in Venice.

Like many of Shakespeare's sources, it is impossible to ascertain with complete certainty whether Shakespeare had known about the charges Mary May brought against Alvares and de Lyma. Yet despite the considerable differences between Shylock and these historical conversos, Sisson and Shapiro nonetheless see the Chancery court case as a valuable cultural parallel for Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: "All things Elizabethan seem to turn into a commentary upon Shakespeare," Sisson has noted. "Shylock usurps the interest due to the living records of the race which he incarnates. The imaginative transcends the real" (Sisson 38). Shakespeare's mind was an absorptive one, attentive to the resonances between his own literary output and the cultural world that his early modern audiences would have known firsthand. Stephen Greenblatt has similarly proposed that Shakespeare may have perhaps found inspiration for the family dispute at the heart of *King Lear* in the 1603 lawsuit brought against the aging Brian Annesley by his daughters regarding ownership rights to their father's estate. Of the possible linkages between the Annesley lawsuit and the Lear plot, Greenblatt writes: "Whether or not the Annesley case actually triggered the writing of the tragedy, Shakespeare was singularly alert to the way in which the Leir legend was in touch with ordinary family tensions and familiar fears associated with old age. For his play's central concerns, Shakespeare simply looked around him at the everyday world" (Greenblatt 357). In a similar vein, whether or not Galeotto Perera's prison memoirs of his time in China inspired Shakespeare to write *The Merchant of Venice* cannot be known for certain, but I propose that Perera's thought experiment about the foreign stranger tried in Europe's courts should be read as a textual suggestion that exists in parallel to Shylock's own trial as a non-citizen alien in Shakespeare's imagined Venice. When read alongside Perera, Shakespeare's Venice becomes the European and Christian counterpart to Perera's Fuquieo, a city of heathens where Christian strangers nonetheless receive justice in matters of the law.

In this essay, I argue that it is possible to read Shylock's trial as a dramatic enactment of Perera's thought experiment: what would happen to a stranger tried by European courts? In light of Perera's assertion that the Chinese legal process "cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs," I maintain that *The Merchant of Venice* asks why these European failures of justice, mercy, and truth sometimes happen in Europe's courts and in Christian exchanges with non-Christian strangers. Although Shakespeare never imagined a Chinese character for the Globe's stage, I aim to demonstrate that *The Merchant of Venice*'s exploration of cross-cultural and interreligious exchange between European Christians and strangers responds to the questions raised by Perera's account of his encounters with the Chinese during his time as a prisoner in Fuquieo, as well as by the other accounts of European travels to the Far East in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*.

Fuquieo: Venice of the East

During his several years as a prisoner in Fuquieo, Galeotto Perera was given considerable freedom by his Chinese captors to explore both the city as well as the freedom to travel to other cities in China as far away as Paquin (Beijing) and Quinsay (Hangzhou). In his account, Perera described Fuquieo as a major hub for China's domestic and international trade: "there be a great number of Marchants, euery one hath written in a great table at his doore such things as he hath to sel. … the market places be large, great abundance of al things there be to be sold" (11:212). Perera also described Fuquieo's peculiar urban infrastructure, with its many homes and buildings built over the numerous rivers and canals which intersected the city. He noted that the Chinese used small barges as their preferred mode of transportation to navigate along the city's waterways:

> The city standeth vpon water, many streames run through it, the banks pitched, and so broad that they serue for streets to the cities vse. Ouer the streams are sundry bridges both of timber and stone, which being made leuel with the streets, hinder not the passage of the barges too and fro, the chanels are so deepe. Where the streames come in and go out of the city, be certaine arches in the wal, there go in and out their Parai, that is a kind of barges they haue.
>
> (11:212)

The city's streams and barges, and its many "wel made" shopfronts "wherein marchandize is laid," made Fuquieo "as it were to seeme another Venice" (11:213, 212). Perera marveled, "It is a world to see how great these cities are" (11:213). In Perera's account, Fuquieo is Venice's Chinese sister city—a Far Eastern trading port that rivaled the urban planning, geographical layout, and

commercialism of Europe's most cosmopolitan trading hub. If Shakespeare found the dramatic kernel of Shylock's trial in Perera's thought experiment about the hypothetical stranger made to stand trial before Europe's Christian courts, he might have also found in the Portuguese travel account the idea of using Venice as a setting for the trial of this unknown stranger on European soil.

Elsewhere in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, Shakespeare would have had access to other firsthand accounts of European encounters with Chinese merchants outside of Cathay's borders. Although Perera offered the only eyewitness account available to a sixteenth-century European readership describing firsthand travels within Cathay, it was not uncommon for Europeans to travel to other East Asian and South Asian trading ports in Pegu (Bago, in modern-day Myanmar) and Bantam (in modern-day Java, Indonesia) in order to procure the luxury goods and silks that the Chinese merchants brought out from China. In an account of an expedition to Bantam that Hakluyt included in the *Principal Navigations*, a Dutch merchant detailed his encounters with the Chinese merchants that he met in that city. The merchant described the dizzying array of Chinese merchandise available to European traders in Bantam's ports, noting that the Chinese preferred to come aboard the Dutch ships in order to lay out their wares for purview: "When we came first, before Bantam, they came euery day in great companies into our shippes, and there set out their wares to sel, as silkes, sowing silkes, and porselines, so that our vpper deckes were full of pedlers, that wee could hardly walke vpon the hatches" (10:237). What is surprising about the Dutch merchant's account is that he appeared less interested in what the Chinese merchants had to offer than in the practices and behavior of the Chinese themselves. The Dutch merchant noted that Bantam's Chinese merchants prioritized financial gain above all else—even to the extent that they made their own bootlegged spirits from fermented rice to sell to the local Muslim population, profiting from the Javanese demand for illegal alcohol: "The Chinars are very subtill and industrious people, and will refuse no labour nor paynes to yearne money, there they make much Aqua vitæ of Ryce and Cocus [coconut], and trafficke much therewith, which the Iauars by night come to buy, and drinke it secretly, for by Mahomets law it is forbidden them" (10:236). According to the Dutchman, the squalid living conditions of the Chinese merchants of Bantam stemmed from their love of money, and their willingness to take on even the most grueling and filthy tasks for economic gain: "These people liue very hardly and poorely within Bantam, for there is not any work or labour how filthy soeuer it be, but they will do it to get money, and when they haue gotten something they returne againe to China" (10:236-237). Just as Fuquieo's riverways and mercantilism reminded Perera of Venice, the Chinese of Bantam reminded the Dutch merchant of the Jews of Holland: "They are verie like Iewes in our country, for they neuer goe without a paire of ballances, and

all thinges is good wares with them, and are ready to do any seruice" (10:237).[4] For the Dutch merchant, the financial practices of the Bantam Chinese had obvious moral resonances. Their eagerness to violate local religious prohibitions against alcohol and their willingness to reduce themselves to squalor in the quest for financial profit presented a vision of a money-obsessed people without moral conviction that resonated in the Dutchman's mind with contemporary early modern stereotypes about European Jews. In the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare himself imagines Shylock holding up the accoutrement of the Chinese traders of Bantam: "Are there balance here to weigh /The flesh?" Portia asks the court (4.1.253-254). "I have them ready," (4.1.245) Shylock replies. Portia turns Shylock's balances against him in the trial, telling him that he must cut off no "less nor more / But just a pound of flesh" (4.1.323-324). Portia declares that "if the scale do turn / But in the estimation of a hair— / Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate" (4.1.328-330). Portia has the usurer hoisted not by his own petard but by his balances—the shared symbol in the Dutch merchant's imagination of Jewish and Chinese greed.

In addition to describing the Chinese's obsession with financial gain in spite of all costs, the Dutch merchant also offered an account of Chinese religion. He noted that the Chinese of Bantam were idolaters who prayed to the devil himself: "They haue no special religion, but pray vnto the Deuill, that he would not hurt them, for they know that the Deuill is wicked, and that God is good, and hurteth no man, therefore they thinke it needlesse to pray to God. … In their houses they have great painted Deuils, before the which they place wax candles, and sing vnto them, praying them not to hurt them, and the more monstrous that their shapes be, the more they honour them" (10:236). The Dutch merchant apparently had no name for Chinese traditional religion with its admixture of ancestor worship, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucian belief. (By contrast, he had a much clearer understanding of the Islam practiced by the Javanese inhabitants of Bantam, who he describes as "Mores:" "The Iauars and inhabitants of Bantam… they hold the law of Mahomet" [10:237]) Like the Dutch merchant in Bantam, Perera had no name for Chinese traditional belief and practice, but offered a more generous account of Chinese religion. According to Perera, although "the inhabitants of China be very great Idolaters," they were not devil worshippers—as the Dutchman believed—but were worshippers of the sun and moon: "all generally doe worship the heauens," Perera averred (11:204-205). Perera went on to describe the Chinese belief in reincarnation, in which one might hope to be reborn as "a diuel if he haue lived well in this world," or "a bufle, oxe, or dogge" if he has lived badly in this life

[4] In a related vein, Rachel Trubowitz (153-58) and Walter Lim (225) have argued for the similar positions of the European Jews and the Chinese in Milton's providential theology.

(11:205). In a marginal note appended to Perera's account in the *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt suggested his own characterization of the nameless belief of the Chinese, deeming their religion "Pythagorean like" (11:205). If Shakespeare had read Perera's account via Hakluyt, he may have had Hakluyt's brief assessment of Chinese traditional religion in mind in dramatizing the Christians' caricature of Shylock's religious and moral perversions. In the trial scene, Graziano attributes Shylock's insistence upon justice to a vengeful nature born from Pythagorean reincarnation, positing that Shylock's soul had occupied the body of a wolf in a former life:

> GRAZIANO
> O, be thou damned, inexecrable dog!
> …
> Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith—
> To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
> That souls of animals infuse themselves
> Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
> Governed a wolf who hanged for human slaughter;
> Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet
> And, whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,
> Infused itself in thee; for thy desires
> Are wolvish, bloody, starved and ravenous.
> (4.1.128, 130-138)

Graziano imagines Shylock's moral failures—his "currish spirit," his hunger "for human slaughter," and his "wolvish, bloody" desires—in distinctly religious but decidedly non-Christian terms. Graziano's invective against Shylock evinces the play's larger worry that economic traffic and cultural exchange with strangers might cause one to "waver" in one's faith—a fear that the Christian characters allude to a number of times in *The Merchant of Venice* and one that lurks at the margins of Perera's own account of the Moors of Fuquieo.

Conversion and Commerce: Shylock's Venice and Perera's *Fuquieo*

During his travels in Fuquieo, Perera encountered "certain Moores," who had been living in the Chinese city for several generations as descendants of merchants and traders whose origins somewhere west of China were hazy even to the Moorish descendants themselves. As a result of their assimilation into Chinese society, Perera noted that the Moors of Fuquieo "knew so litle of their secte, that they could say nothing else but that Mahomet was a Moore, my father was a Moore, and I am a Moore" (11:218). Beyond this, Perera noted that these Moors could no longer read the Qur'an and many had taken to eating pork, such

that these descendants were only Moors in name but not in belief or custom: "they haue nothing of a Moore in them," Perera observed (11:219). According to Perera, that these certain Moors had forgotten their origins was not coincidental. This development was the consequence of Chinese protectionist policies that had several generations ago led to the execution of a number of prominent Moorish traders, as well as local city politicians and their family members who had converted to Islam through their exchange with the traders, based on rumors "of a conspiracie pretended betwixt [the Moors] and the Loutea [city official] against their king" (11:219). In his account, Perera related how the Chinese allowed these Moors to live peaceably in the country—until the local ruler of "a litle Towne standing in the hauens mouth" and his entire family decided to "become Moorish," and subsequently mandated that those in his jurisdiction adhere to Muslim dietary laws (11:218). Perera noted that this policy angered the local population, who subscribed to the belief that "In this part of China the people be at libertie, euery one to worship and folow what him liketh best" (11:218). The local population complained to the magistrates, and Perera noted that the central government took decisive action on behalf of the people, quickly executing both the Moorish traders and the local Chinese ruler and his family who had converted to Islam.[5] For all their initial openness to the Moorish

[5] In a study of nearly a thousand protests in early modern China, Ho-Fung Hung has argued that successful instances of Chinese protest frame the people's desire for justice in terms of loyalty to a strong imperial center: "In Qing times (1644-1911), a common remedy for powerless subjects abused by local officials was to travel all the way to Beijing to appeal to the emperor as their grand patriarch, hoping that he would sympathize with their plight and penalize corrupt local officials" (Hung 1). The political dynamics that Perera described in his account of the tensions among the pork-loving Cathayan villagers, the city's newly converted regional officials, and Cathay's central government can be understood by comparison to a contemporary political uprising in southern China. In an illuminating analysis of a 2011 political uprising among farmers in the Chinese city of Wukan, in Guangdong province, the former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew described the way the central Chinese government managed to meet the farmer's demands while retaining power in the central government. In the Wukan unrests, land disputes led several hundred farmers to mobilize nearly twenty thousand villagers in protests against land developers and local officials. In the central government's response to the uprisings, the state acknowledged the legitimacy of the farmer's complaints about the disputed farmland and a chief organizer of the protests was made a new village chief by means of a local election. Lee maintained that the central government's response to the protests should not be understood as evidence of China's trend toward democracy; on the contrary, he argued that the Wukan protests reveal strategies that the Chinese state has used for millennia to quell political and economic unrest: "Before any incident escalates, the very powerful state security apparatus can come down hard on unrest to nip the problem in the bud. But it is also able to take the side of villagers against corrupt local officials" (Lee 14). "For 5,000 years, the Chinese have believed that the

traders, Perera's account made clear that the Chinese central government would not tolerate any attempts at conversion within Chinese borders, which it regarded as a threat to state power. As a result of Ming China's decisive anti-conversion stance, Perera noted that the roughly two hundred descendants of those original Moorish traders who still reside in Fuquieo are "so confused" about their ancestral religion that a number of them even eat pork: "they haue nothing of a Moore in them but abstinence from swines flesh, and yet many of them doe eate thereof primly" (11:219).

In his account of the Chinese state's suppression of the Moorish traders and the converted city officials, Perera averred that the real reason for the political crackdown stemmed from the Chinese people's voracious appetite and love of pork: "all these countreymen and women chosing rather to forsake father and mother, then to leaue off eating of porke, by no meanes would yeeld to that proclamation. For besides the great desire they all haue to eate that kinde of meate, many of them do liue thereby" (11:218). In Perera's account, the Chinese appetite—and not any particular anxiety about the continuity of Chinese state power—was the central source of political upheaval.[6] Considering the historic suppression of the Moors of Fuquieo, Perera wondered whether interreligious exchange and even conversion were possible among the Moors of Fuquieo and the local Chinese inhabitants of the city: "I asked them whether they conuerted any of the Chinish nation vnto their secte" (11:219). The Moorish descendants answered that they had managed to convert a number of the "Chinish" women via marriage—but only with great difficulty, considering the Chinish women's attachment to "eating swines flesh and drinking of wine" (11:219). In spite of the Chinese state's crackdown on the Moors' attempts to convert the Chinese officials to Islam, and the difficulty of getting even the Chinian wives to conform to their Moorish husbands' dietary rejection of pork and wine, Perera remained enthusiastic about the Portuguese project of drawing the Chinese into the bounds of Christendom: "I am perswaded therefore, that if this Countrey were in league with vs, forbidding them neither of both, it would be an easie matter to draw them to our Religion, from their superstition" (11:219). Considering that the Christians did not forbid the consumption of either pork or

country is safe only when the centre is strong" (Lee 13). Likewise, Lee explained that Chinese protesters realize that their political demands can only be heard if they oppose local officials while maintaining allegiance to the central state: "This has been a common strategy taken by the Chinese protestors for thousands of years. They know that opposing the central authority means certain annihilation. So they oppose wrongdoing by local officials while declaring loyalty to the centre" (Lee 15).

[6] In a similar vein, Robert Markley (71-4) offers an illuminating account of communities of ethnic Jews in early modern Kaifeng who forgot their ancestral religion as they became assimilated into Chinese culture.

alcohol, Perera imagined that the Chinese would have been much more amenable to the Christian faith. Perhaps Perera was being facetious in his commentary about the possibility of converting the Chinese to Christianity—or perhaps he had misread or willfully chosen to ignore the Chinese insistence upon social and religious uniformity underpinning the state's crackdown on the Moors of Fuquieo. But if he was joking, Perera's tongue-in-cheek commentary about conversion nonetheless highlighted the tensions between the Moors of Fuquieo and the local Chinese population with respect both to interreligious marriage and the consumption and selling of pork.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, a comedic exchange among Lancelot, Jessica, and Lorenzo about Jewish conversion and the price of pork contains echoes of the Chinese anxiety about interreligious marriage and of Perera's joke about the Chinese wives' love of pork. In 3.5, Lancelot riffs on Jessica's recent conversion from Judaism to Christianity as a consequence of her marriage to Lorenzo, a Christian Venetian. Like the Chinese wives of the Moors of Fuquieo, Jessica has given up her father's religion in choosing a husband of a different faith. It is this act of conversion, Lancelot jokes, that will harm the Christian commonwealth by raising demand for pork: "This making Christians will raise the price of hogs; if we grow all to be pork eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money" (3.5.20-22). A few lines later in the exchange, Jessica reiterates the joke to Lorenzo: "He tells me flatly there's no mercy for me in heaven because I am a Jew's daughter; and he says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians you raise the price of pork" (3.5.28-31). Lancelot's joke about the price of pork is lifted nearly verbatim from Perera's account of Chinese eating habits and their cultural and religious preferences for the flesh of all sorts of animals. In his travels throughout China, Perera took note of the wide range of culinary preferences of his hosts, noting the types and prices of animal flesh sold at their markets: "There is great aboundance of hennes, geese, duckes, swine, and goates, wethers haue they none: the hennes are solde by weight, and so are all other things. Two pound of hennes flesh, geese, or ducke, is worth two foi of their money, that is, d. ob. sterling.[7] Swines flesh is sold at a penie the pound. Beefe beareth the same price, for the scarcitie thereof" (11:200). Perera opined that "the Chineans are the greatest eaters in all the world, they do feed vpon all things, specially on porke, which, the fatter it is, is vnto them the lesse lothsome. … Frogs are solde at the same price that is made of hennes, and are good meate amongst them, as also dogs, cats, rats, snakes, and all other vncleane meates" (11:200). In their love for all meat, and especially of pork, Perera joked that the Chinese appetite

[7] In his 1625 reprinting of Perera's account, Samuel Purchas glossed this amount as "three halfe pence" (3:199).

had the consequence of driving up the per-pound cost of animal flesh. He lamented that were the Chinese to adopt the vegetarianism of the Jains and Hindus of India, the price of pork and other animal victuals would be considerably reduced for Portuguese traders in China: "And if this Countrey were like vnto India, the inhabitants whereof eate neither henne, beefe, nor porke, but keepe that onely for the Portugals and Moores, they would be sold here for nothing" (11:200).

Perera may have been joking about how the Chinese voraciousness for all kinds of flesh had the inadvertent consequence of raising the price of pork for Christians, but Shakespeare took the underlying suggestion of Perera's joke seriously in *The Merchant of Venice*, which explores Perera's implicit suggestion that in matters of foreign trade and commerce, the dietary preferences of one nation might inevitably holds monetary consequences for another. Not only does Shakespeare adapt Perera's logic in Lancelot's joke about Jewish converts to Christianity raising the price of pork, he also incorporates the logic of Perera's joke into Shylock's much more serious criticism of how Antonio's practice of offering interest-free loans hinders his own ability to lend at interest: "He lends out money gratis and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3.38-39). The terms of Shylock's bond contain echoes of Perera's joke as well, and Shylock's assessment of the possible monetary value of the bond to himself echoes the Portuguese merchant's catalogue of the various kinds and relative values of animal flesh prized by the Chinese. In lending Antonio his requested 3,000 ducats without interest, Shylock argues that the terms of the bond afford him nothing of commercial value: "If he should break his day, what should I gain / By the exaction of the forfeiture?" (1.3.156-157). The clause that Antonio must hand over a pound of his own flesh if the bond is not repaid in three months' time, Shylock notes, is useless to him from a monetary standpoint considering that a number of other animal fleshes would be more profitable to him than a pound of human flesh: "A pound of man's flesh taken from a man / Is not so estimable, profitable neither, / As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats" (1.3.158-160). Noting that his motives for defining the peculiar terms of the bond are not financial, Shylock suggests instead that he offers Antonio the interest-free loan as a token of kindness and to earn reciprocal kindness in turn from the Christians: "To buy his favor I extend this friendship … / And for my love I pray you wrong me not." (1.3.161-163). Importantly, Shylock notes that the bond marks a kind of financial transaction that does not traffic in the logic about monetary value that form the basis of both Perera's and Lancelot's respective jokes about the relative price of pork—one that diverges from his usual practice of usury, which he acknowledges has been hindered by Antonio's interest-free loans. Shakespeare's appropriation of Perera's monetary logic of interreligious exchange suggests that Shylock is motivated by something other than commercial gain in proposing the bond's peculiar terms of repayment. In devising

the bond, Shylock was perhaps making his own joke about the value of a pound of flesh—one that he had never intended to carry through considering Antonio's considerable financial credit (Shylock twice calls him "sufficient" [1.3.14-15, 22]) and the merchant's own promise to return "thrice three times the value of the bond" (1.3.152) in a mere two months' time.

Shylock's expected payment in agreeing to the bond is his hope that the Christians will treat him fairly—"I pray you wrong me not"—from that point forward. But the Christians use Shylock's willingness to loan the 3,000 ducats to Antonio in order to rob him. Bassiano invites Shylock to a dinner party to celebrate the agreement of the bond, and it is during the few hours' time that Shylock is away from home that Graziano colludes with Lorenzo, Solerio, and Solanio—with aid from Shylock's daughter Jessica—to rob Shylock of his ducats and jewels. "[W]e will slink away in supper time" (2.4.1), Lorenzo says to his co-conspirators. Indeed, it is unclear, from a business perspective, why Shylock's attendance at the dinner party is required of him. The terms of the bond have already been notarized by the end of 1.3: "This kindness will I show" (1.3.136), Shylock tells Antonio and Bassanio. "Go with me to a notary; seal me there / Your single bond" (1.3.137-38). And when the Christians first approach Shylock about the loan, Shylock initially turns down Bassiano's invitation to dinner—as I noted above—on account of the fact that he will not "smell pork" with them (1.1.28). But by the end of the agreement, Shylock has changed his mind about dining with the Christians: "I am bid forth to supper, Jessica. / … But wherefore should I go? / I am not bid for love—they flatter me—" (2.5.11-13). For whatever reason, Shylock decides to go to the dinner party even as he intuits—rightfully, as it turns out—that there is something foreboding about the occasion: "I am right loath to go; / There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, / For I did dream of moneybags tonight" (2.5.16-18).

In the end, the Christians use the dinner party, funded perhaps by Shylock's borrowed ducats, to rob Shylock of his remaining ducats and jewels. Shakespeare may have even adopted the plot device of staging a dinner party for a stranger from Perera's travel account, in which the Portuguese traveler detailed the lavish dinner parties that the Chinese threw for him during his time as a stranger in Fuquieo. Perera described how his Chinese hosts treated him and his companions not as prisoners but as honored guests during their visits to the homes of dignitaries throughout the country:

> When we lay in prison at Fuquieo, we came many times abroad, and were brought to the pallaces of noble men, to be seene of them and their wiues, for that they had neuer seene any Portugale before. Many things they asked vs of our Countrey, and our fashions, and did write euery thing, for they be curious in nouelties aboue measure. *The gentlemen shew great curtesie vnto strangers, and so did we finde at their hands*. (11:219, emphasis mine)

Perera's report gave European readers a firsthand account of a people who showed courtesy unto strangers. More remarkable still is his hosts' kindness in spite of Perera's status as a prisoner: again and again in his narrative, Perera marveled at the Chinese's treatment of him, while doubting that the Europeans would ever show similar generosity to a stranger in their own lands. At the dinner parties held in his honor, Perera described in detail the eating habits of his hosts: although the Chinese sat at tables with chairs as the Europeans did, they differed in that they preferred to chop up all of their meat and victuals before serving, and in this way were able to avoid eating with their hands. Instead, Perera noted that his hosts "feede with two sticks" (11:204). As a result of these novel dining habits, Perera marveled that the Chinese were able to eat their meat "very cleanely," using "neither tablecloths nor napkins" (11:204). But even more marvelous than the Chinese cleanliness at supper, Perera noted, was their exceptional courtesy toward strangers like himself: "Ne is the nation only ciuill at meate, but also in conuersation, and in courtesie they seeme to exceede all other. Likewise in their dealings after their maner they are so ready, that they farre passe all other Gentiles and Moores" (11:204). Shakespeare did not stage the dinner party at Bassanio's house, leaving it up to his audience to decide whether the evening went well for Shylock or not. But regardless of what transpired at supper, Shylock returns from dinner with the Christians to a home ransacked by Christians. If *The Merchant of Venice* reverses the major episodes of Perera's chronicle of his time in China, situating his trial and his accounts of the Chinese dinner parties on European shores, Shakespeare was interested in exploring the implications of Perera's realization that the foreign stranger "in any Towne of Christendome" would not fare nearly as well as he did as a stranger among the Chinese: "I know not what end the very innocents cause would haue" with us Christians, he mused. What do Chinese civility and justice suggest about European civility and justice, both Perera and Shakespeare implicitly ask, if the Chinese can extend fair treatment under their laws to their city's foreigners and extend kindness to strangers at their dinner tables in a way that the Christians cannot?

According to the Chinese standards of civility toward strangers that Perera described, there would have been no doubt that Shylock was abused by the Venetian Christians. But the Christians regard their own treatment of Shylock, and their seizure of his ducats both by legal and illegal means, as acts of mercy. At the end of his trial, when by Antonio's request Shylock is made to "presently become a Christian" (4.1.385), the Christians choose to see Shylock's forced conversion—instead of outright execution—as a Christian act of mercy: "Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke" (4.1.361), Portia commands Shylock. "What mercy can you render him, Antonio?" (4.1.376), she asks of the merchant. The seizure of Shylock's wealth—to be managed and used by Antonio—and the requirement that he convert to Christianity are the Christian

courts' acts of "mercy" for the resident stranger in their midst. Shylock's coerced conversion and the seizure of his Jewish wealth for Christian use is foreshadowed earlier in the play, in the moments leading up to his robbery at the hands of the Christians. Lorenzo frames the robbery as an act of mercy—indeed, an act of conversion that might bring Shylock salvation: "How I shall take her from her father's house, / What gold and jewels she is furnished with, / … If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven, / It will be for his gentle daughter's sake" (2.4.29-30, 32-33). In Lorenzo's logic, Shylock's hope of salvation rests upon Jessica's goodness—that is, her willingness to help him convert her father's Jewish wealth into "Christian ducats" (2.8.16). Just as Perera saw the possibility of Chinese conversion as the first step in an economic alliance that would prove financially beneficial to the Portuguese, in a similar way, Lorenzo understands the benefits of Shylock's conversion in terms of its monetary benefit for himself. Lorenzo's logic foreshadows the coerced conversion that Antonio and the Duke demand of Shylock as part of his punishment; at the end of the trial, the Venetian state seizes Shylock's wealth as part and parcel of his conversion. If the play raises the anxiety that Jewish conversion holds economic dangers for Christians, as Lancelot's joke about Jessica's conversion and the rising the price of pork suggests, Shylock's fate demonstrates that at least this specific act of conversion is nothing but economically valuable to the Christian state. Shylock is made to become Christian, and his Jewish wealth is transferred into Christian coffers and Christian management.

"Christian Ducats" in Foreign States: *The Merchant of Venice* in Pegu and the Indies

If Shylock could not keep either his Jewish religion or his Jewish money as a resident alien in Venice, what would prevent a Christian stranger in a foreign land from losing his identity and his wealth under local laws that privileged residents over strangers? Perera's and Lancelot's parallel jokes about how the voracious appetites of the Chinese and the conversion of the Jews raise the price of pork for Christian consumers encode a wider anxiety that many of Hakluyt's writers articulated about what would happen to their Christian money if they found themselves in difficult circumstances in foreign lands, subject to foreign legal statues. This concern is paramount in one of Hakluyt's collected travel accounts by the trader Caesar Fredericke, who the English translator Thomas Hickocke described as a "Marchant of Venice" whose voyages took him "into the East India, and beyond the Indies" where he spent eighteen years in pursuit of "merchandises and commodities, as well of golde and siluer, as spices, drugges, pearles, and other iewels" (11:224). In his account, Fredericke described the inheritance customs and death taxes of the kingdom of Pegu, in

modern-day Myanmar, in which it was customary for the state to seize a third of an individual's wealth upon death, noting that European merchants were not exempted from this local custom and legal statute: "they that die in the kingdome of Pegu loose the thirde part of their goods by antient custome of the Countrey, that if any Christian dieth in the kingdome of Pegu, the king and his officers rest heires of a thirde of his goods" (11:293). Fredericke noted that the Christian merchants accepted this statute because it was applied equally to both Pegu's inhabitants and foreigners alike: "there hath neuer bene any deceit or fraude vsed in this matter" (11:293). In short, Pegu's legal terms were clear to all Christian foreigners who came to do business in the city.

A way for long-term Christian residents to avoid Pegu's death tax, Fredericke noted, was to simply make sure that one went home to die back in Europe: "I haue knowen many rich men that haue dwelled in Pegu, and in their age they haue desired to go into their owne Countrey to die there, and haue departed with al their goods and substance without let or troubles" (11:293). Fredericke's account of the Pegu kingdom's willingness to hold both citizens and foreigners as equal under inheritance law, and to allow foreigners the loophole of leaving the country in full possession of their wealth and goods without being subject to an exit tax, made Pegu an enticing place for European foreigners to live as long-term resident aliens, as the Venetian merchant's account suggests. But while Pegu subjected both citizens and foreigners to the same set of laws, Fredericke noted that there were other trading cities that allowed European Christians to be tried under different laws that made exceptions for foreign traders: "In all the cities that the Portugales haue in the Indies," Fredericke noted, the local magistrates—for a small bribe—were willing to allow Portuguese traders to be exempt from local inheritance laws so long as they provided the state with a copy of their Christian will and testament: "the gouernours whereof, if you giue them for their paines, will take a coppy of your will and Testament, which you must always cary about you; and chiefly when you go to the Indies" (11:292). Fredericke sought to quell European anxieties about unfair legal or commercial treatment while resident in these foreign states, noting that it was customary for these cities in the Indies to allow Christian merchants the privilege of being tried in separate Christian tribunals: "In the countrey of the Moores and Gentiles, in those voyages alwayes there goeth a Captaine to administer Iustice to all Christians of the Portugales. Also this captaine hath authoritie to recouer the goods of those Marchants that by chance die in those voyages" (11:292). Indeed, it was not the local officials who the merchants had to be wary of but rather the Christian ship captains, who often kept the goods of dead sailors for themselves: "they that haue not made their Wills and registred them in the aforesayde schooles, the Captaines wil consume their goods in such wise, that litle or nothing will be left for their heires and friends" (11:293). What Fredericke's account makes clear is that to be tried

under Christian laws might actually pose a financial liability rather than offering a safeguard for unsuspecting European traders in the Indies.

Fredericke took pains to note that in the Portuguese trading cities that dotted the coasts of the Indies, and in the trading ports of Pegu, Christian merchants could expect to be treated equally—if not exceptionally—under local laws, and could trust these foreign states to deal fairly in their exchange of goods and money. The local rulers in this port cities were keen on attracting European foreign trade, and made legal exceptions for these strangers in order to ensure that their own cities would remain at the forefront of global commerce and exchange. Shakespeare raises this very question of what cities owe to strangers in broaching the question of how cities can attract foreign traffic and trade. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio makes the case for Shylock's right to his bond—both legally and commercially—from his cell in the debtors' prison. Antonio's speech contains echoes of Fredericke, that other merchant of Venice. Like Fredericke, Antonio understands that for a state to thrive economically, it is necessarily to extend certain legal and commercial rights to the strangers who do business and trade within the city:

> ANTONIO
> The Duke cannot deny the course of law,
> For the commodity that strangers have
> With us in Venice, if it be denied,
> Will much impeach the justice of his state,
> Since that the trade and profit of the city
> Consisteth of all nations.
> (3.3.26-31)[8]

In *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, Tyndale argues that Jews, Saracens, and Turks are owed a right to earthly profit and material happiness under legal and civic structures that should regard all people as equal under natural law: "the infidels"—so long as they abide by earthly laws—"have promises of worldly things," Tyndale maintained (65). According to Tyndale, a state's legal code ought to treat Christian and non-Christian equally under the commonwealth's laws, which ought to guarantee even non-Christians the right to pursue peace and worldly advancement. To deny non-Christian peoples this temporal right is to violate natural and divine law, and Tyndale asserts that God would intervene on behalf of a Turk or Saracen wronged by an unjust Christians: "Whosoever

[8] Coincidentally, the seafaring Antonio in *Twelfth Night* articulates a similar argument to the one made by the merchant Antonio of *The Merchant of Venice* in favor of economic restitution to one's foreign enemies—one not grounded in considerations of moral fairness but rather directed toward the interests of international trade and naval exchange, "for traffic's sake" (Shakespeare, "Twelfth Night," 3.3.34).

therefore hindreth a very infidel from the right of that law, sinneth against God and of him will God be avenged" (65). To wrong a non-Christian on earth is, Tyndale maintains, tantamount to committing doing wrong against God. Shakespeare's early modern audiences would have had at least a passing familiarity with Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man*, as well as his arguments about the theological justification for regarding Christian and non-Christian alike as equals before the law. Thus it is striking that the reasons Antonio offers in defense of Shylock's right to his bond diverge from Tyndale's theological argument in favor of a purely economic one. According to Antonio, Jews must be regarded as equals to Christians in matters pertaining to "the justice of the state" not because they were spiritual equals but in order to advance Venice's status as a global hub for international trade and exchange. The merchant's reason for why infidels should have justice in Christendom are, in the end, purely mercantile. Despite his divergence from Tyndale, it is Antonio who in fact offers the best counterargument to Portia's legal pronouncement—even if the play's outcome ultimately does not take into account his suggestion for how a Christian state ought to treat its non-Christian residents in matters of worldly pursuit.

When we read Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* against the backdrop of the travel tales of Caesar Fredericke, that other "Marchant of Venice," and alongside the prison memoirs of Galeotto Perera, a Portuguese stranger in Fuquieo, it is clear that Shakespeare's play reverses some of the implicit anxieties and questions raised by European travelers to Asia in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. What does it mean that the courts, monetary laws, and civil codes in these faraway Asian cities extended to these European Christian strangers the very freedoms that Shakespeare's Venice has denied to Shylock, a Jewish resident alien of their city? Shakespeare's reversals of Perera's and Fredericke's travel accounts compel us to wonder whether the Europeans were indeed more merciful and just than the strangers who they met on their travels to the East, or whether—as Perera suggests—Asian jurisprudence and international policy might instead serve a models for Christian Europe's new forays into global exchange and trade.

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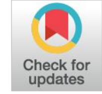

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Radicalising Shakespeare: Staging the Sri Lankan Juliet in *Julietge Bhumikawa*

Abstract: Through an analysis of the Sri Lankan film, *Julietge Bhumikawa* (1998) (Illusions of Juliet), I argue that the film radicalizes Shakespeare-inspired film through providing a bold site of enunciation to the character of Juliet. While the Sri Lankan Juliet is cast as mistress, interrogating discourses of purity surrounding not only the original source text—*Romeo and Juliet*—but the contemporary Sri Lankan society as well, *Julietge Bhumikawa* reconfigures female gender ideologies by unraveling the nexus between female madness and patriarchal culture.

Keywords: Sri Lankan film, gender, Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, "other woman."

Introduction

The Sinhala film, *Julietge Bhumikawa* (Illusions of Juliet, 1998), is a daring and unusual Shakespeare-inspired film based on *Romeo and Juliet*. Directed by Jackson Anthony who was a renowned Sri Lankan actor in cinema, theatre, and television, as well as a versatile director and producer of several other notable films such as *Aba* (2008), and *Address Ne* (2015), *Julietge Bhumikawa* constructs a compelling narrative where Juliet is transposed to the eighties in Sri Lanka. It tells the story of a woman named Anjali, a film actress, who gradually descends into madness, believing she is Juliet herself, perhaps because of an illicit love affair with a fellow actor named Devinda. While Devinda is married, Anjali is a single woman living alone. Her obsession with the Shakespearean play, *Romeo and Juliet*, comes to light when Devinda first visits her home. Not only does she have a closet full of early modern costumes from the Shakespearean play which she purchased at an auction whilst in England, which

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has cost her a fortune, but she also knows the play's lines by heart. This paper argues that while the Shakespearean play invokes an adolescent love with emphasis on its purity and innocence, *Julietge Bhumikawa* is a radical representation of a Sri Lankan woman who is embroiled in a non-normative relationship, which unravels the nexus between female madness and patriarchal culture.

Shakespeare in Ceylon

While Shakespeare has been a part of the Sri Lankan stage since colonial times, with evidence to support that Shakespearean plays were performed as early as the 19th century, Shakespearean film adaptations in Sri Lankan cinema have been almost non-existent. Due to the "economic frailty of the industry" (AJ Gunawardene 3), and a civil war that dragged for nearly three decades, Sri Lankan cinema has remained a fledgling industry since its inception in the early to mid- twentieth century, despite some formidable cinematic work. A lack of resources and funding have impeded both commercial and artistic cinema at present and as Naman Ramachandran (Sri Lankan Cinema in Crisis) notes, after the end of the civil war, "film production marginally improved with 30-40 films being produced annually, but with the twin blows of COVID-19 and the economic crisis, this slowed to around 10." Roughly divided into two streams, mainstream commercial cinema has dealt with song-filled action entertainers with formulaic plotlines while art cinema has taken up more serious, social-realist themes. Both streams have captured the postcolonial realities and contradictions inherent in the culture.

A. J. Gunawardana (103) observes that the Sri Lankan film audience is a "divided audience," "openly bifurcated on linguistic lines," which consists of the Sinhala-speaking majority and the Tamil speaking minorities. Hence Gunawardana (103) rightfully notes that "when one speaks of Sri Lankan cinema, one is really referring to Sinhala-language film." The first-ever Sinhala film came out in 1947, and the "1960s stand out as the decade that assembled the most spectacular array of cinematic talent in the whole history of Sri Lankan cinema" (Ariyadasa 21). The 1970s saw the emergence of a national cinema in Sri Lanka, which depicted "social issues that agitated the minds of men and women of Sri Lanka" (Ariyadasa 22). Ariyadasa (23) argues that the 1980s became the "crisis years," due to many factors, one of which was the introduction of television to the country. Ashley Ratnavibhushana (30) argues that rules and regulations imposed by the State Film Corporation, a state-controlled body which was created to establish an independent film industry, in fact prevented "the emergence of new, creative film-makers" severely impacting an art-like cinema to flourish by the eighties.

However, Sri Lankan cinema's lack of engagement with Shakespeare is perhaps due to the transmission of Shakespeare in Sri Lankan culture. The British ruled in Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, from 1795 to 1948, and the English language was introduced through colonial education to mainly the upper and middle classes of Ceylon. Through missionary schools set up in Ceylon, English education spread through the country, though it was an "uneven spread" (Wuister 15). Willemijn Wuister further states:

> British set up schools with a Western curriculum, to produce schooled workforces. Their goal was to create a low-cost English-speaking staff to work in the lower levels of bureaucracy. The English language proved to be the factor of success. (16)

The British Governors of Ceylon insisted on the superiority of the English language over the indigenous languages. As Subathini Ramesh and Mitali P. Wong note,

> This was the beginning of an educated class of locals called the elites—the privileged group of citizens. These men had access to English education and the opportunity to taste the western culture in England. (19)

However, when Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, the

> English language, which enjoyed the prestigious position of being the official language, the language of administration and the medium of instruction at schools, began to lose its importance gradually. (Ramesh and Wong 28)

The native languages became the language of instruction in schools, drastically decreasing its reach. While the English-educated classes would have no doubt been familiar with Shakespeare's works, Shakespeare would have become irrelevant in the native language schools.

As Linda Colley notes, critics tend to,

> deny that Shakespeare was ever simply an "icon of the British establishment" and insist nonetheless on the degree to which different British interest groups have found useful over time to interpret or champion his work in particular ways. (7)

While it has not been recorded whether Shakespeare was taught and disseminated through a school curriculum in colonial Ceylon, Shakespeare would have been regarded as a British cultural icon in Ceylon for certain. As Kumai Jayewardena notes in *Nobodies to Somebodies* (2000) certain British cultural elements such as dress, eating habits, living spaces and aspects of

lifestyle were adopted by the colonized elite of Ceylon. As Marshall R. Singer (1964) has noted in *The Emerging Elite: A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon*, the graduates of prestigious schools were well versed in British history than their own, which suggests a traditionally western curriculum. As such, English literature would have certainly been a part of the scholarship and would have become a valuable element of social capital providing the Ceylonese an opportunity to demonstrate their civility, modernity, and western taste. Yet with independence in 1948, and the reintroduction of the indigenous languages, only the Anglicized elite would have had access to such an English education through elite public and private schools.

Hence, when *Julietge Bhumikawa* was released in 1998, it receives little public attention. As Anoja Weerasinghe, its main actress, has stated in an interview in 2021, the film failed to garner attention because of the public's unfamiliarity with the Shakespearean text. She suggest that the audiences' lack of acquaintance with the play may have hindered the film's receptivity. It also highlights the film's strong interrelationship with the play. What is interesting is that while *Julietge Bhumikawa* is not a straightforward adaptation of the play, the film fails to stand alone when the audience requires understanding of the play to comprehend the film and its events. Weerasinghe has been one of the most sought-after actresses in Sri Lankan cinema, especially in the eighties and nineties. The male lead is taken up by the charismatic and handsome actor, Kamal Addaraarachchi, who is also well known for his versatile roles. The rest of the cast includes well-known performers such as Wasanthi Chathurani, Mahendra Perera, Chandani Seneviratne and Sriyantha Mendis. Blending operatic, ballet, and theatrical elements, the film employs a variety of postmodern breaks with realism when it transports the audience to certain events from the Shakespearean play with renaissance props and costumes. For instance, the masked ball is staged in the film where all the actors dress in rich and colorful fabric, accented with lace, ruffles and jewels. Yet one can argue that the film surpasses its textual source especially when it opens spaces for radical critique of female sexuality in Sri Lanka.

Brief Synopsis

The film opens with Anjali watching a ballet adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* where Devinda acts as Romeo. Enthralled by his performance on stage, she contacts him, which soon leads to an affair between the couple. He, though initially a stage actor, is soon invited to act in films by Anjali, despite him being critical of their flimsy content. Devinda, in his maiden film shot with Anjali, rescues her from being drowned in a river when she slips down a rock during a dance sequence. This incident cements their bond, and the Shakespearean

story of the star-crossed young lovers is adapted into a tense relationship between an older, unmarried celebrity actress and a married actor with a pregnant wife and child. Anjali imagines herself as Juliet and lives in a fantasy world, perhaps to sublimate the fact that her reality is one of loneliness. Unlike in the Shakespearean play, there is no patriarchal agent to dictate her life although patriarchal society is nevertheless present. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet, Lady Capulet, and the nurse are all subject to the social dictates of Lord Capulet who may dispose of his daughter as he wishes. Yet in the Sri Lankan film, patriarchy is manifested in the role and status of women. When Devinda and Anjali find themselves as lovers on and off screen, rumours soon circulate about Devinda's extra marital affair which begin to intimidate Anjali more than Devinda. While Devinda's wife, Saroja, becomes aware of the fact, Anjali becomes more and more alienated, suppressed, and irretrievably lost when Devinda cannot accommodate her as expected. Anjali's only comfort is to take refuge in a delusion of female innocence which is available through the persona of Juliet in Shakespeare's play.

Actress as Transgressive

The Shakespearean Juliet is presented as pure and innocent, almost a divine being. Romeo's lines, "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!" (2.2.2-3) creates her as a heavenly creature. When Shakespeare's play opens, Juliet is also portrayed as obedient to her parents. She agrees to meet Paris, a suitor, when her mother requests Juliet to "Read o'er the volume of a young Paris' face" (1.3.87). Juliet acquiesces, saying, "l'll look to like, if looking liking move" (1.3.103). She is also presented as chaste, and virtuous, who must be awakened into sexuality by Romeo. She is at first cautious of Romeo's intentions. Aware of female propriety, and the importance of safeguarding her station, she tells Romeo,

> If that thy bent of love be honorable,
> Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,
> By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
> Where and what time though wilt perform the rite;
> And all my fortunes at they foot I'll lay
> And follow thee my lord throughout the world. (2.2.150-155)

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan Anjali is constructed as Juliet's opposite, othered on three accounts. Anjali is actress, mistress and single, all frowned upon by conservative patriarchal culture. The stigmatization of the actress is nothing new. Women across cultures have been discouraged from entering the

profession due to its public nature. As Kirsten Pullen argues in *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (2005), throughout history, categories of actress and whore overlap. Actresses have been seen as publicly available women who exploit their sexual attractiveness for popularity and enticement, no different to the sexual availability of the prostitute. This has certainly been the case in South Asia, where actresses have been seen as subversive agents, embroiled in vulgarity and commercialism. As Susan Seizer notes,

> In South India as throughout South Asia, moral concern over women's movement in public feeds into a dominant ideology of "the home and the world" as separate spheres of propriety for women and men respectively. Women who conduct business in the public sphere are suspect, a suspicion charged with the particular cruelty reserved for accusations of prostitution. (4)

As Vasana K. De Mel observes with reference to Sri Lanka, due to the influence of India's touring Parsi theatre, and South Asian culture, when women did appear in Colombo theatres in 1886,

> they were prostitutes, further reinforcing the notion that respectable women had no acceptance in public theatre lest they suffer the social stigma accorded prostitutes. (10)

De Mel further states that with the advent of the Sinhala nationalist movement which sought independence from the British, the nationalists moved forward with:

> rigidly fixed archetypes of ideal or flawed womanhood' on stage. The ideal woman was presented as a "Sinhala Aryan" woman who embodied respectability, and virtue, who rejected western dress and manners, in order to reinforce the ideology that Sinhala traditionalists cum nationalists were "patriotic" persons in antithesis to Western and Westernized Sri Lankans who were deemed corrupt, disrespectable traitors. (10)

Hence, actresses, to escape the label of vulgarity, had to abide by culturally acceptable practices such as being chaperoned, and adhering to dress codes.

Such a purist ideology has continued to dominate the filmic imagination of Sri Lanka where actresses have had to tread a fine line between respectability and disgrace, and admiration and condemnation. Subject to potential gossip and scandal, actresses have been under societal pressure to conform to a strict morality and safeguard their reputation against accusations of promiscuity. They have had to be extra cautious when selecting roles and have had to subject themselves to self-censorship to not transgress sexual and moral boundaries. In instances when actresses have taken up risqué subjects such as nudity and sexual

desire, they have been socially vilified and ostracized, and condemned as deviant. Since Sri Lankan cinema is largely a male dominated industry, most of the film plots have relegated the female role to predictably that of a secondary one, where the female character most often is a bystander positioned firmly within the domestic sphere. Even when women-centric films have been made to generate political and social consciousness, they have retained the model of femininity based on domestic virtues. Even off screen, actresses have had to pander to the dominant perceptions of a gendered respectability and socially acceptable female behavior.

It is pertinent, in this instance, to briefly illustrate the existing constructions of masculinity and femininity in Sri Lanka. Women have been traditionally limited to the domestic sphere of family and home and have been entrusted with the task of maintaining moral propriety especially through motherhood, which is seen as an integral part of a female's identity. Although Sri Lanka is ahead of many other South Asian countries in terms of gender equality, especially in terms of free and equal access to education and health care, hegemonic societal norms which perpetuate gender stereotypes and biases have contributed to female under representation and discrimination in the social, economic, and political spheres. Very much a patriarchal culture, Sri Lankan culture endorses fixed gender codes and an ideal femininity as the objective for upper, middle, and lower-class women across religion. While both men and women have been expected to maintain cultural continuity through marriage, men continue to be seen in the role of the breadwinner, and hence, decision-maker.

Issues of Morality

It is against such a backdrop that *Julietge Bhumikawa* manifests an unusual investment in gender. It can be presumed that Anjali, as actress, already lacks social propriety in the public eye. Further, her single status also compromises acceptable womanhood as marriage is the ideal to which women should strive. However, despite her unconventionality, her celebrity star power as actress allows her to maneuver society within those narrowly defined parameters as seen in the film. As an actress, she is seen as having moved outside society's moral and sexual boundaries and therefore her relationship with a married man does not raise eyebrows within the film community. Nor does Devinda's sexual indiscretions cause him to lose his social and professional status; traditional familial codes do not impact the male to the same extent that it does women. Hence the film, from the beginning, with its choice of male and female protagonist, provides a counter narrative to Shakespeare's play. If courtship and

marriage are the central concerns of Shakespeare's play, the film is essentially a counter narrative to that script.

Anjali occupies the position of mistress in the film, a position that is not only clearly in defiance of society's moral norms, but also one which forecloses possibilities of marriage. The fact that Devinda has a child further exacerbates the moral condemnation surrounding Anjali's status. It is apt in this instance to also consider Buddhist notions of gender in Sri Lankan culture. While Buddhist doctrine at its core does not differentiate between men and women based upon gender, certain Buddhist practices and traditions have been discriminatory and misogynistic towards women. As L.S. Dewaraja (1994) argues,

> [c]onflicting with the Buddhist ethos and negating its effects in varying degrees is the universal ideology of masculine superiority. So that in all three societies—Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma—there is an ambivalence in the attitudes towards women. (para. 19)

As such, in practice, women were often relegated to a secondary position, and their sexual nature viewed with suspicion. Celine Grunhagen (102) argues that in Buddhism, "the attitude towards the human body is ambivalent" and the body is "considered a hindrance that binds us to the world and to suffering." Within such a context, "ascetic practice and especially the abstention from sexual pleasures" are advocated:

> woman as both the object of the male's lust and as an allegedly cunning temptress personifies the aspects of life and the world that the ascetic has to renounce. (Grunhagen 105)

Further, Buddhist doctrine, regardless of gender, emphasizes fidelity, and treats adultery as a transgression. It is in fact highlighted as the third of the five fundamental precepts of Buddhism. Hence, if Shakespeare's Juliet evokes wholesome femininity embodied through her childlike innocence and sexual vulnerability, Anjali's relationship with Devinda creates her as oppositional to Juliet. The chaste and virtuous Juliet is overtly sexualized in the film as mistress. Several scenes in the film highlight Anjali's insatiable thirst for sexual fulfilment. Yet it is precisely this unlikely juxtaposition of Shakespeare's Juliet against the Sri Lankan Anjali which helps open new sites of sexual desire and identity, and rupture and rearticulate some of the gender ideologies prevalent in the play.

The film casts Anjali as a mysterious and solitary woman who purchases a colonial styled bungalow with wooden staircases and balustrades in the countryside, in addition to her house in the city of Colombo where she lives. The character of Juliet's nurse who is also Juliet's ally and surrogate mother in

the Shakespearean play, is a man servant called Lawrence in the film, who Anjali laughingly identifies as the friar from the play. While women living alone, not assisted by either a female relative, companion or a maid servant is unusual in the Sri Lankan context, her chaperone is in fact a male, a man names Supun who is seemingly feminized and queered in the film, who stands for both Tybalt and the nurse. Hence, parent-less, and relative-less, Anjali's propriety is at stake, further constructing her as the "other" in the film.

Anjali is depicted as secretive, giddy, erratic, and capricious, essentially inhabiting a divided and fragile self. While her performative self as actress reveals a bubbly character, her actual self is reserved, quiet and brooding, subject to deep and habitual depression. The film depicts several scenes where she seems to be psychologically disengaged from her surroundings. For instance, she is shown sharing a drink with Supun, all whilst preoccupied with herself. To what extent she is true to her actual self even with Devinda is questionable when he becomes a proxy figure for Romeo. Devinda transports her to the fantasy realm of Juliet. When both, in jest, enact the iconic balcony scene from the play, Devinda symbolizes for Anjali the Shakespearean lover who represents passion, romance and adventure. Her romantic fantasy of being Juliet cannot be fulfilled without a Romeo, whom she finds in Devinda.

The Sri Lankan Romeo

In Shakespeare's play, the love shared by Romeo and Juliet is ecstatic and overpowering, leading both to defy other loyalties and values. While Juliet rebels against parental authority through her alliance with a Montague, Romeo too breaks rules by entering a forbidden alliance with a Capulet. Likewise, Anjali's and Devinda's relationship too cannot exist within the confines and expectations of Sri Lankan society. Yet while Romeo and Juliet match in their passionate commitment to each other, to what extent Devinda is equally invested in the relationship is in question. It is evident in the film that it is Anjali who initiates the relationship, while Devinda merely acquiesces. For instance, in one scene, immediately after a romantic film song shoot, Anjali, in an unabashedly spirited and lively fashion, leads Devinda onto a misty hill, where they share a moment of intimacy. Both are dressed in white, reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet who often appear in white costumes. The scene is quite significant as Devinda wishes to admire the picturesque scene ahead while Anjali invites his gaze towards her, making explicit her desire for him. Even when Devinda visits her at home for the first time, she insists that he stay longer. Devinda seems more intrigued with the unconventionality of Anjali while Anjali yearns to experience the passion firsthand which Juliet experiences through Romeo. Anjali

seems oblivious to the fact that Devinda is married, precisely because his unavailability helps her to construct herself as the tragic heroine of the play.

In fact, Devinda displays a fragile masculinity which is somewhat like that of Romeo in the Shakespearean play. Robert Appelbaum notes that although masculinity in the play is closely tied to masculine aggression, the play dramatizes,

> an attempt to exalt [heterosexual love], an attempt to overcome patterns of violence and aggression through an engagement with what the two main characters take to be the joyful “bounty” … their mutual desire. (254)

Although Romeo activates a violent masculinity towards the end of the play, he displays a softness throughout the play. As Sasha Roberts (54) rightly notes, “Romeo’s denial of the conventional codes of aggressive, feuding, masculine honour makes him what a woman should supposedly be: submissive.” Devinda, likewise, is also projected as weak, in relation to Anjali, not merely in temperament. While Shakespeare’s play pits the Montagues and the Capulets as equal in social position, the film notes a clear social class distinction between the two Sri Lankan lovers. Devinda’s modest house to which he moves in is only still half paid for, while Anjali is a rich woman who owns two houses, hinting at their respective backgrounds. Anjali is also the more senior actress, who has taken up the aspiring Devinda as her male lead.

Devinda, the Sri Lankan Romeo, is located securely within marriage, and is shown seemingly tied to Sri Lankan custom and ritual. This is evident through certain scenes such as when he ceremonially moves into a new house accompanied by his wife and family. Saroja, his wife, is shown clad in *osari*, a traditional and more conservative form of dress, with her hair neatly tied back. If a woman’s dress and demeanor are indicative of her morality and national values, Saroja is certainly whitewashed as morally pure in the film. In fact, the film emphasizes the physical and sexual difference between the two women. While Anjali is depicted as a westernized woman, Saroja, is depicted as the opposite. She is determined to carry through with her marriage despite rumors of her husband’s affair with Anjali, highlighting her supposed moral superiority and selfless devotion for the greater good of the family. Saroja signals female duty and sacrifice while Anjali strongly represents the transgressive woman who is in bold pursuit of love and sexual passion. However, the film resists utilizing Saroja’s moral purity as a foil to construct Anjali as the infamous anti-heroine of the film. Anjali, despite her non normativity, remains central to the film.

Believing herself a tragic heroine, her irrational belief in the love of Juliet leads Anjali to become increasingly more detached and ungrounded especially when Devinda cannot meet her passionate expectations. His moral obligations towards his pregnant wife and child lead him away from Anjali. Her

inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and failure to find her identity beyond Juliet aggravates her condition. In her search for an ideal, she gradually loses grip with reality and spirals into depression. Being an actress, she is further vulnerable to the division of self. As an actress, she transitions in and out of character. However, what is intriguing about Anjali is that, in both her professional and personal life, she takes on fictional persona, for survival. While she adopts many characters as actress, she occupies the subject position of Juliet in her personal life.

Demystifying Romantic Love

The film seems to express a deep cynicism towards romantic love through Anjali's devotion to the play. Her preoccupation with the character of Juliet, though seemingly juvenile, suggests a fantasy for the world of romance created by Shakespeare. She tells Devinda that Juliet has always been her "dream," suggesting a strong identification with the doomed Shakespearean character. One particular scene stands out. Anjalie, clad in a white gown, reminiscent of Juliet's white dress, stands outside her balcony, professing her love to Devinda who has propped himself on a window outside, declaring his love, like Romeo. Anjali's investment in romantic love, and Juliet, is suggestive of a spiritual void within her. She seems invested in the idealistic young love depicted in the Shakespearean play. The play projects the lovers and their passion as beautiful and unsullied. As Mera J. Flaumenhaft (545) notes, the play "remains the paradigmatic depiction of pure and passionate love, ruined by a meaningless feud and unsympathetic opponents." The Sri Lankan film deviates from this motif of heightened love through a depiction of mature love, not young love. Instead of a thirteen-year-old Juliet—the youngest of Shakespeare's heroines—and her teenage lover, a not-so-innocent couple in their early to mid-thirties, make a twist in the Shakespearean plot. If the Shakespearean Juliet is a victim of a repressive social order, Anjali's predicament is far more complex. What the film reveals is an alternative context, a couple embroiled in the complexities of a troubled relationship.

To what extent Anjali's all-consuming fantasy of being Juliet is a compensatory mechanism needs to be examined. Rosemary Jackson contends that fantasy is not escapist but subversive, a mechanism to engage with the repressed, which amounts to the transgression and rejection of the symbolic order of things. Jackson argues,

> in expressing desire, fantasy can operate in two ways…it can *tell of*, manifest or show desire … or it can *expel* desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity. (2)

Jackson further notes that fantasy is:

> not to do with inventing another non-human world: it Is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and apparently “new,” absolutely “other” and different. (5)

Hence, it can be argued that Anjali consciously cultivates fantasies to create a counter-reality which is far more fulfilling than her socially constructed reality.

Anjali’s flight into an imagined Shakespearean world of ideal love and sacrifice denotes a profound dissatisfaction with romance which is unavailable. It is critical at this juncture to discuss Anjali’s role as an actress. As evident in the film song sequence which features Anjali and Devinda, the scripts Anjali is given are romantic. As Laleen Jayamanne (100) notes, the Sri Lankan formulaic film is a “boy-meets-girl narrative of seduction and resistance.” She (100) suggests that such films define “female sexuality in terms of romantic love” as illustrated through love songs shot in picturesque locations, which “forecloses the possibility of articulating a female desire which cuts across traditional definitions of femininity.” Such idealistic films which feed unrealistic expectations contrast with Anjali’s own narrative of insatiable desire. Anjali points out that the media hounds her for details of her personal life. Yet she maintains a distance from such intrusion. The need to pry into the physical realities of the actress suggests the relationship between the actress and the characters she plays. In a culture which insists on female respectability, it is not unusual for the actress to be pressurized to fit the image of the dignified woman. Hence the actresses’ private lives are supposed to remain in sync with the idealized roles they are asked to perform on screen. Hence, the moral standards imposed on Anjali by her profession are contrary to her subjectivity.

It is also necessary to discuss what Juliet, through tragedy, manifests as a character. The deadly feud between the two families brings forth a crisis where the lovers must pledge their loyalty to one another through death. Ruth Nevo (243) argues that the play is a “‘tragedy of chance’ rather than a ‘tragedy of character’”, and that “random events press towards evil while the willed actions of the protagonists are radically innocent.” Jagriti V. Desai (15), however, notes that the character flaw in Juliet is “impetuosity”, and that Romeo too displays the same, in his haste. Regarding the Sri Lankan lovers, impetuosity is not a luxury both can afford. The nature of their relationship is such that attainment of desire is not possible. Anjali can only ruminate as desires and dreams are distant, and she cannot achieve a sense of symbolic fulfilment which the Shakespearean lovers achieve in death. If the strength of Shakespeare’s play is more in its tragedy than in its romance, Anjali’s desire for such heightened emotions leads to self-delusion. Overpowered by loneliness and emotional vulnerability, she falls prey to internalization, when she believes that she is none

other than Juliet, awaiting her lover. Anjali's idealistic notions about a daring love shared between Romeo and Juliet, clearly absent in her own life, result in her incarceration in a psychiatric ward, which undermines the romantic plot.

Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy which does not end in marriage, as most Sri Lankan formulaic films do. However, as a tragedy, the play's theatricality and emotional intensity fails to be cathartic for Anjali. She gradually begins to exhibit delusional tendencies and loses her own voice. Her loss of belief in her own fantasy of ideal and incandescent love which is resistant to reality leads her to madness. It is unclear to what extent the Shakespearean play allows Anjali to contextualize her own experiences, since the narrative is largely reticent about what may have impelled Anjali to seek self- identification with Juliet. She refers to a large inheritance in the bank and calls it her "cursed inheritance" which will be used for her "tomb." Such obscurity about Anjali's character and past suggests the film's disinterest in simplifying the nature of Anjali's illness.

Unraveling the "Other Woman"

The film, instead of embroiling Anjali in a narrative of shame, reveals the instabilities and tensions of a patriarchal social order. The film takes up the debate of the "other woman" through Anjali's predicament. Aware of the stereotypical and patriarchal framework of society, the film certainly brings up questions of sexuality and gender, through Anjali's relationship with Devinda. The film is a complex narrative which explores the gendered nature of the plot of infidelity and its double standard. Carol Chillington Rutter claims:

> In tragedy, Shakespeare habitually uses the woman's body to proxy the crisis of masculine self-representation that is the play's narrative focus. What Hamlet or Lear or Othello finally understands about himself is achieved through his catastrophic misunderstanding, misconstruction of Ophelia, Cordelia, Gertrude, Juliet, Desdemona. (251)

In the Sri Lankan film, the body of Anjali is utilized to expose the male sexual ideology regarding the "other woman." Jayamanne observes that Sri Lankan cinema has had rare instances of exonerating the adulterous wife, as in *Duhulu Malak* (floating flower) which was screened as early as 1976. As Jayamanne (98) states, it is, "perhaps the first Sri Lankan film to represent adultery in a manner that makes it seem visually pleasurable" and that, "the fact that the adulterous wife is not punished by the narrative can be considered an advance on the previous moralistic resolutions." However, women who stray away from men and marriage, yet seek fulfilment outside of such a patriarchal framework, are often castigated despite their social and professional standing. Though powerful and important in her professional life, Anjali is placed in an ambiguous

position in relation to Devinda, unsure of her footing. As Kim Snowden (14) notes, the other woman is "somewhat of a paradox-unable to exist without marriage but never allowed completely within it." Victoria Griffin too suggests:

> on the one hand the mistress seeks to live outside and undermine the institution of marriage; on the other, she is as subject to the institution as the wife, being defined by it. (19)

Snowden further states that the other woman is "disposed of in some way in the female adultery plot, again through death, suicide or extreme remorse or distress that borders on insanity" (14). However, in the film, Anjali resists such easy dismissal.

Anjali is depicted as clearly dissatisfied with the label of mistress and all that it implies. One scene is significant. During a heated argument between Devinda and Anjali, Devinda reminds Anjali that he is married with a wife, child and house, and that limits need to be adhered to between a man and mistress, in an extra marital relationship. She, in turn, furiously confronts him and queries as to what the fine line is between wife and mistress. She refers to herself as the "*hora geni*," which is a term used in colloquial Sinhala to denote the "other woman." In fact, "*hora geni*," metaphorically refers to a stealthily kept woman. Hence invisibility is a prerequisite for Anjali, in the husband/wife/mistress triad. Devinda seems to suggest that there are prescribed boundaries of being mistress, and that Anjali should not resist such regulation. To encroach upon his time and commitment is seemingly off-limits for Anjali as the "other woman." Resisting certain feminine coded traits such as passivity and selflessness, Anjali fails to perform the script of the "other woman" to his satisfaction, exploiting the cultural anxiety about the potential threat of the other woman to the institution of marriage.

Hence patriarchal society's need to authorize a specific role for the "other woman," and thereby contain her within that role is challenged in the film. Societal condemnation of the affair is crystal clear when Anjali is hospitalized because of an overdose of sleeping pills, making her contentious relationship public. The film cuts across to varied sections of society from the film fraternity to tabloid journalists, to government servants to workers to the general populace who all gossip about the titillating bits of their affair, suggesting an unforgiving and judgmental society.

The film is bold to take up a category of women who have been hitherto underrepresented, and under analyzed. Anjali is a radical revision of Juliet. While Devinda, too, is sensitively depicted as a man in a helpless position caught between two women, Anjali is shown unable to negotiate the complexities surrounding their relationship. She is seen stalking Devinda when he takes his pregnant wife for her monthly medical check-up, instead of taking

Anjali shopping on a pre-planned date. This ultimately leads to a break-up between the two lovers. Continuously murmuring, "O Romeo Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo," the love-stricken Anjali experiences extreme mental anguish, which disrupts not only her mind but her body as well. A notable scene in the film is when her body acts as a sign of her ailing mind. She, after an alcoholic stupor, writhes in agony on her bed, unable to any more express her pain verbally, and the camera draws attention to her body. She is clad in a black dress, and she lies spread across a bed covered with white sheets, bringing her hyper-visible body to the forefront of the screen. Thus, the intensity of her pain is accentuated in the film.

The film also displays the visceral pain of not only the lovers but the other characters as well, especially the women. In the asylum, its patients register their mental distress through their panic-stricken bodies. The patients, both men and women, are seen frantic, pacing, moaning, hollering, and crying out. Saroja, too, as the heavily pregnant, but sane woman, displays some of the very same tendencies. She is shown in agitation, easily out of breath, shaking, trembling, and gasping. Such physical manifestation of emotions is also evident in Shakespeare's play. Love incurs a price through physical pain of the two lovers and most around them.

While Juliet defies patriarchal authority yet succumbs through death, her defiance is through the sacrifice of life. She rejects the marriage proposal by Paris, stating "He shall not make me there a joyful bride!" (3.5.118). Later, in utter despair, she tells the Friar, "Come weep with me—past hope, past cure, past help!" (4.1.46). With her hands on the potion, she cries out, "Give me, give me! O, tell me not of fear!" (4.1.123). However, Anjali's defiance is far starker and more frantic. If one is to adopt the feminist assertion of madness as rebellion, Anjali's self-abandonment, deemed as madness, becomes a refuge for the self, rather than a loss. Anjali is audacious enough to not only commit herself to a married man in a conservative society, but to finally withdraw herself into an imaginary world, into Juliet's persona, severing any contact with the external world. Anjali perhaps demonstrates a desire to move away from the claustrophobic surveillance and policing of the female self by society, into the fantasy she finds comfort in. Delusion allows Anjali self-invention. However, in her delusional retreat into the play, she seems to be held captive in a moment where she cannot access Romeo.

Female Madness and Patriarchy

The film brings up the nexus between female madness and patriarchy. Madness is a recurring theme in Shakespeare, as evident in plays such as *Hamlet* where both female and male madness are staged. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare

sees love and passion as an antidote to reason. As Sybil Truchet (17) notes, at first, Shakespeare seems to adopt a conventional notion of madness as irrational. She notes that at the beginning, his "view point of reason and folly is an orthodox one," yet later, the "tragic outcome of the love affair imposes then a new idea of reason and madness" (21). Truchet (22) argues that reason proves to be "inadequate" and is associated with "domestic and social order and the maintenance of established custom" that are detrimental to fulfilment. Truchet finds Shakespeare's play approving of "forms of irrationality as total passion and the sacrifice of the young lovers" is seen as a "higher form of reason" (23). Reason and logic result in the blood feud between the Montagues and the Capulets, which is indeed inferior, and can only be undone by the love shared between the two lovers.

However, reason prevails in the Sri Lankan film when madness proves to be an inadequate antidote. Anjali's obligation towards Saroja for having saved her life when Saroja took her to hospital after an overdose, and Anjali's inability to un-entangle herself from the ensuing guilt placed upon her by none other than her own self, leads her to madness. Yet to what extent such madness is irrational is questioned in the film because Anjali is not indifferent to the fact that she has become a conduit in the potential victimization of another woman, Saroja, the wife. Therefore, madness is not only a form of escapism, when it allows her to entirely abandon the persona of Anjali, who accrues the label of sinner. It is also an act of selflessness when Anjali's behavior does not correspond to her self-interest. However, if Anjali has sinned against another woman, she is brought back into the fold of sisterhood through a recuperative relationship with the Psychiatrist. While many feminist scholars argue that female mental health has always been patriarchal, where norms for female behavior have been dictated by men, the film stands out in its choice of casting the psychiatrist as female. To bring Anjali back to reality, the woman doctor proposes, by way of treatment, that Anjali be allowed to strongly identify herself with Juliet. Hence, the doctor suggests that they enact scenes from the Shakespearean play to trigger Anjali's memory.

The treatment is partially successful when Anjali begins to gradually visualize the masquerade ball scene—act 1 scene 5—of the play. Yet the therapeutic exercise fails when Supun, the friend, and Lawrence, the servant, abduct Anjali from the asylum and bring her back home to her countryside bungalow. While Anjali, still severely delusional, goes to bed, Devinda arrives drunk, and violently confronts Supun and Lawrence who cannot restrain him. Taking the kitchen knife Lawrence has just used to cut meat, Devinda assumes the persona of Romeo and enters Anjali's bedroom. Seeing Anjali in bed, he enacts the deathbed scene from the play, and falls next to her, severely drunk. Anjali's ending mimics the dramatic ending of Shakespeare's Juliet. Juliet surmises that Romeo is dead and stabs herself, saying, "Then I'll be brief.

O happy dagger! / Tbis is thy sheath/there rust, and let me die" (5.3.174-175). Anjali too wakes up and finds Devinda motionless, and assuming that he, her Romeo, has killed himself, violently stabs herself in the heart, still in the guise of Juliet.

Anjali's tragic end is utilized as social critique of the position of women. The film makes it clear that women, regardless of whether they are wives or mistresses, are victims of patriarchy. Saroja, who visits the asylum, strangely enough with her husband, shares a moment of empathy with a female patient who has lost her mental balance due to a bereavement. Saroja, reaching out to the female patient exclaims, "poor women," seemingly suggesting that women, as a collective, suffer. Her comment is tied to a previous comment where she tells her concerned sister that she may be carrying a girl, and that the girl child, even as foetus, must learn to bear the brunt of being a woman. Saroja's comment is clearly tied to the Buddhist notion of female birth because of one's past negative karma. As Chand R. Sirimanne (6) points out, the belief, "that a female birth is the result of less favourable kamma than for a male birth" which arises "from the belief that only a male can even aspire to become a Buddha in Theravāda," creates bias, propagating patriarchal and misogynistic ideology and practice. Saroja's internalization of such disempowering gender codes is evident through most of her self-effacing actions. Although she is aware of her oppressive status within marriage, she is reluctant to step aside her role as wife, citing the well-being of her children. As she herself confesses to her sister, she helps save Anjali's life merely to neutralize the vicious gossip of the affair. Even when she later visits Anjali in the asylum along with Devinda, it is perhaps to lessen the damage done to her marriage.

Hence, to what extent Anjali is scapegoated by the patriarchal order is a concern when the film chooses to end not with the lovers but with Saroja giving birth. In the final shot of the film, when Devinda wakes up and realizes that Anjali has stabbed herself, he lets out a scream which overlaps with the piercing cries of Saroja during labour. The camera cuts across from the deathbed scene to Saroja giving birth in hospital. A close-up of Saroja's face comes into view, in the throes of childbirth. Saroja's screams gradually fade with the first cry of the newborn, as the camera pans out, to a matron who informs Saroja that she has given birth to a girl. The final close-up shot of the film is Saroja's face, tears trickling down, not of joy, but of apprehension, of having brought to life a female, destined for suffering, according to her opinion. If Saroja is the representative of stoic wifehood and motherhood in the film, the film is a consistent reminder that such womanhood can be accommodated by patriarchy. Further, the fact that Devinda, though visibly traumatized, has not taken his own life at the end is suggestive of the same, that errant masculinity has potential for moral and physical redemption. While Devinda, with Saroja and family, will most likely reintegrate back to normativity, Anjali, the

recalcitrant female, must die in the film. In Shakespeare's play, both Romeo and Juliet are equally invested in their love, and therefore, display a unity in death. Yet, in *Julietge Bhumikawa*, Anjali as the 'other woman' must pay the price alone. However, her self-willed and violent self-killing is symbolic. It is an ultimate expression of her commitment to the passionate Juliet. To devote herself to Juliet is to devote herself to a romantic delusion, and sever ties with reality, and seek fulfilment, if not with the Sri Lankan Romeo, at least in the finality of death.

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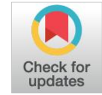

Adela Matei*

Figuring Displacement: Spaces of Imagination in Early Modern and Postmodern Intertextual Transmissions

Abstract: This essay examines, ecocritically, geocritically, and comparatively, the metaphoric spaces represented in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and in Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*—seas, mountains, islands, jungle—to show that these spaces allow for different interpretations, yet they are spaces of individual imagination in both the play and the novel, suggesting transformation and metamorphosis. I argue that these literary spaces show a common feature of *displacement*, which allows human language to re-imagine other worlds—in literature and in visual arts. The spaces of imagination proliferated through Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Barnes' novel have suffered a transformation in time and space, as they speak to past and present audiences and readers. The sea in Barnes' chapter entitled "Shipwreck" symbolizes danger but also hope, as does the sea in the storm scene in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The Mountain in Barnes' eponymous chapter represents an isolated and inaccessible landscape on Mount Ararat, at the intersection of three cultures (Armenia, Turkey and Russia), but it also represents the biblical language of faith and hermitic isolation. Similarly, the island in *The Tempest*, which is—geologically—a mountain above the water, represents metaphorically the island of the mind. The jungle in Barnes' chapter "Upstream" is a remote place in the forest on the Orinoco River, where Europeans and native Indians interact while making a movie; this movie is a work of visual art, represented in a novel; so is any one of the many productions of *The Tempest*, which reiterates the island's imaginary space in various directorial interpretations. All these locations are metaphoric spaces of imagination, transmitted through different media, in which reality is transformed into literary representation by means of fictional description or theatrical action.

Keywords: *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, ecocriticism, Julian Barnes, multiculturalism, William Shakespeare, space, *The Tempest*.

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Space, Geocriticism, and Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism has recently exploded into the scene of literary criticism. The distinction between space and place, so rightfully delineated by cultural geographers, such as Y-Fu Tuan[1] in the 1970s, has morphed into the concept of "literary ecology" (Waldron xvi) in the twenty-first century, as expressed by certain American critics. In the introduction to the volume of essays entitled *Places and Spaces in American Literature* (2013), Karen E. Waldron discusses the changing perceptions and natures of literary landscapes of the North American continent in the nineteenth century. As Waldron argues, "the human dramas of this period were grounded in the environment, the complex ecology of the human/nature connection *in places and spaces*" (Waldron xvii). Indeed, this complex ecology is essential for literary study, especially when one looks at metaphoric space as a constant for defining language and identity in literature. In the chapter "Languages in the World," of the book *Multilingualism*, John Edwards defines the features that distinguish human speech from other communication systems. Among "*productivity*," "*traditional transmission*," and "*pattern duality*," Edwards mentions "*displacement*: the ability to talk about things remote in space and/or time" (Edwards 18). It is this feature of *displacement* that allows human language to re-imagine other worlds—such as in literature and the visual arts—and to display various features in these imaginary worlds by means of language.

This essay discusses various spatial symbols in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and in Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*—seas, mountains, islands, jungle—as figures of *displacement*, in order to show that the metaphoric spaces represented in the play and the novel stand for different interpretations of these locations, but they are spaces of imagination in both literary works, triggering transformation, change and metamorphosis, mostly generated by the sea and sea voyages, and often shipwrecks. As Steve Mentz observes in *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization 1550-1719* (2015), "Shipwreck lurks at the metaphorical heart of the ecology of saltwater globalization. The global maritime networks of early modern European expansion have ancient roots but radically expanded after the fifteenth century. As worldwide blue-water trade routes became essential to European economies,

[1] According to Y-Fu Tuan, in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, time and space are fluid and erratic; they are under the influence of society and people. Space is carried along, in the inner world, as it is animated by features such as freedom, mobility and established values; while place is characterised by inclusion, humanised features and meanings (Tuan 54). As Y-Fu Tuan avers in the introduction to this study, "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other. … Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask" (Tuan 3).

the cultural resonance of voyaging changed" (2). Drawing on the delicate tension between space and place, as I see it, both the play and the novel generate apparently random and undefined spaces, which are imbued with meaning derived from human experience. Moreover, despite the seemingly dislocated experience of place—as the exact locations in both the play and the novel are vague and inconsistent—the local displacement is figured with such consistency that it is almost impossible not to be able to make connections between these fictional places and human identity.

Examining the interpenetration between space and place, geocriticism confirms the potential of spatial literary studies in discussing the experience of place and of displacement through intertextual literary transmissions. In the Series Editor's Preface from the study entitled *Mobility, Spatiality, and Resistance in Literary and Political Discourse*, Robert T. Tally Jr. accurately defines the tenets of spatial literary studies. As Tally observes, "Spatial criticism examines literary representations not only of places themselves, but of the experience of place and of displacement, while exploring the interrelations between lived experience and a more abstract or unrepresentable spatial network that subtly or directly shapes it" (vi). It is this subtle network of spatial interrelations among two literary texts (drama and novel) that I highlight in my argument, by showing that the delicate intertextual transmission from dramatic action to narrative does not diminish the multiple potential of spatial representations during the process of rendering the experience of place through the literary text. As for the impression of displacement—in the sense that places suggested in *The Tempest* are critically and intrinsically displaced in Barnes' novel—this is only elusive, because the sense of place in both the play and the novel is given through the symbolic meanings attached to various locations.

In postmodern fiction, this multiple spatial transformation may not be possible outside the consideration of global changes and multiculturalism. Defining the state of globalization today, in *Globalization: The External Pressures*, sociologists Paul Kirkbride, Paul Pinnington and Karen Ward observe that "the consequence of globalization is seen as a 'sea change' in the existing social order and the creation of new patterns of global stratification" (Kirkbride et al. 31). The construction is borrowed (without direct reference) from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, when Ariel sings to Ferdinand how his father's supposedly drowned body has suffered "a sea-change / Into something rich and strange" (1.2.403-404). The two sociologists feel no need to reference the quotation, as they assume that every educated reader would fully understand that this is part of Ariel's song:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
> (1.2.399-404)[2]

This is a song about transformation and persistence at the same time, brought about by the contact with the salty sea water, which has the properties of preservation and also metamorphosis: bones are transformed into coral, eyes become pearls, and reality becomes richer and stranger than it was previously perceived. Kirkbride et al. (31) see globalization from the perspective of preservation of social order and the emergence of new global patterns. Ariel's song is a powerful metaphor of such sea change, as the allusion is to the transformation of reality through the work of visual art (painting, sculpture, theatre) and the literary work (drama, novel, poetry).

For this reason, I argue that the spaces of imagination proliferated in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and in Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* have suffered a "sea-change" throughout time and space, and they speak to audiences and readers from the perspective of displacement. The sea or the large expanse of water in "Shipwreck" symbolizes danger, but also hope, as does the sea at the beginning of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* for the Neapolitan mariners, who fear death but are bound to escape miraculously in the end. The Mountain in Barnes' eponymous chapter represents the isolated and inaccessible landscape of Mount Ararat, perched among several geographic worlds (Armenia, Turkey and Russia), but also symbolizing the biblical language of faith and hermitic isolation (through allusions to Noah's story). Similarly, Prospero's Island is a remote and imaginary space located at the intersection of reality (in the Mediterranean, on the way between Tunis and Naples), and the imaginary world, as every character sees the island differently. The jungle in Barnes' chapter "Upstream!" is a remote place in a forest on the Orinoco River—with Indians and Europeans interacting while making a movie, which is a work of visual art. Prospero's desert island is, at the same time, an island of imagination and a symbol of creativity, where spirits are actors evolving on an imaginary stage on stage. All these spaces display the linguistic quality of "displacement" (Edwards 18), in the sense that they are remote in space and time, but summon imaginary fictions existing in the present of performance (in the case of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) or the reader's imaginary present (in the case of Barnes' novel). These are metaphoric spaces of imagination, in which reality is gradually transformed into something rich and strange (just as Alonso's imaginary bones are transformed into coral and his eyes into pearls) by means of fictional description or theatrical action.

[2] References to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are to the Arden edition, edited by Frank Kermode. References to acts, scenes and lines will be given parenthetically in the text.

Seas and Tempests: "Shipwreck" and *The Tempest*

In the art critic's description of Théodore Géricault's painting "The Raft of the Medusa", from the chapter "Shipwreck" of Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*,[3] there is a passage in which the potential viewer of the painting becomes identified with the fate of the characters on the raft, when "They become us" (Barnes *HW* 137). This empathetic narrative continues when the viewers are transported into the powerful world of artistic representation: "How hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us" (Barnes *HW* 137). For the shipwrecked mariners, as well as for the empathetic viewer of Géricault's painting, the sea space is a compelling symbol of hope and despair, of catastrophe and salvation. The image of Géricault's painting, thoughtfully appended to the 2009 edition of the novel, in a glossy colourful reproduction, is meant to visually impress the reader with the picture of half-naked bodies fighting for survival against the background of the rough sea. This sense of hopelessness generated by the empathetic feeling springing from viewing the work of art can be associated with the characters' despair during the storm.

Before the audience knows that the tempest is a fiction created by Prospero's magic in *The Tempest*, they first see a group of Neapolitan passengers and the ship's crew fighting desperately for survival during a powerful storm. It so happens that, on the ship, there is a King (Alonso) and his court, as well as a Duke of Milan (Antonio), coming back from the wedding of the king's daughter (Claribel) with the King of Tunis. Although Antonio is a usurping duke—and therefore illegitimate—all that the audience can see at the beginning of *The Tempest* is a group of powerful people striving for survival, just as much as the humble mariners who attempt to control the ship do. There is no class difference in the face of death and disaster, and this is something that Barnes also shows through the figures of the officers of the *Medusa*, who have the same tragic fate as the cabin boy on the raft. In the initial storm scene of *The Tempest*, famously occurring "*On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard*" (SD 1.1.1), the Boatswain gives elementary instruction on seamanship to the Ship-Master in order to keep the ship afloat. The Boatswain also tries to raise the mariners' courage by instilling a sense of cheerfulness, or, as modern psychologists would say nowadays, positive thinking: "Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts!" (1.1.5). There is a sense of common cooperation among the mariners who strive for survival on the ship during the storm, and their comradeship is broken only by the arrival of the Neapolitan and Milan parties (Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo and others).

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[3] References to Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (hereafter *HW*) are to the 2009 edition and page numbers will be given parenthetically in the text.

As the Boatswain is visibly encumbered by the presence of non-professionals on deck, he tells them: “You mar our labour: keep your cabins: you do assist the storm” (1.1.13-14) and “I pray now, keep below” (1.1.11). Powerful rulers are a hindrance on a ship during the storm, where only the crew should work to manoeuvre the ship. Gonzalo’s invitation to “be patient” (1.1.15) is met by the Boatswain with the pragmatic “When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers for the name of King? To cabin: silence! Trouble us not” (1.1.16-18). Even if this might seem as rough impoliteness coming from a lower-class Boatswain in relation to his social superiors (king, duke, and king’s counsellor), it is clear that, in the face of impending catastrophe, social hierarchy does not matter and people should do what they can to survive.

In Barnes’ chapter “Shipwreck,” there are several narrative voices, but the most direct one is the third-person omniscient narrator of the news story describing the events that occurred before the situation that caused the people to be stranded on the raft. There are many echoes from *The Tempest* in Barnes’ chapter, such as when the “calm seas and clear weather” (Barnes 2009, *HW* 116) are described, and the mariners watch the reefs and take the soundings: “The lead announced eighteen fathoms, then shortly afterwards six fathoms” (Barnes 2009, *HW* 116). This is similar to Ariel’s song to Ferdinand, beginning with “*Full fathom five thy father lies*” (1.2.399) and it is a reference to the system of navigation in Shakespeare’s time, but also on a nineteenth-century French frigate. In navigation, five fathoms represent the minimum depth at which a ship would reach bottom. The difference between the play and the novel is that the people on the frigate did not get stranded on the raft because of a storm, but as a result of the fact that the ship hit a coral reef, as it got near the fatal five-fathoms depth and stopped. Similar imagery continues, as the coral reef is an intertextual allusion to Ariel’s song, “*Of his bones are coral made*” (1.2.400), which leads to the “sea-change” (1.2.403) in *The Tempest*, suggesting the transformation of reality into a work of art. This is also Barnes’ submerged allusion, as the real-life event of the shipwrecked people is taken over in Géricault’s painting, “The Raft of the Medusa”; then there is the description of the painting by the art critic, and the viewer’s emotional reaction to the scene depicted by means of artistic representation.

The space of the sea, therefore, in both *The Tempest* and “Shipwreck” is several things at once: first, it represents danger for everyone involved (the mariners on the *Medusa*, but also the powerful and the humble people in *The Tempest*), and it is also “calm seas and clear weather” (Barnes 2009, *HW* 116) in “Shipwreck.” Both the shipwreck in *The Tempest* and the disaster of the raft of the *Medusa* are dangerous events for humans, who are weak against the powers of nature and in the face of destiny. The second symbol of the sea is hope, as the mariners in *The Tempest* do hope to escape the storm by using their well-learned skills, and, for this reason, they do not wish to be encumbered by the passengers, even if they are powerful rulers. The mariners’ hope is fulfilled

at the end of the play, as the boatswain and sailors are secretly saved and their ship waits in a cove to take the crew and the protagonists from the island of spiritual adventures to their respective power places (Naples and Milan). By contrast, hope in "Shipwreck" leads to disaster, because it is as a result of this hope that the raft is separated from the boats that tow it. Some men on the raft cry "*Vive le roi*" (Barnes *HW* 117), which is a clear Bonapartist message, and the tow ropes are disengaged. As the narrator describes, "But it was at this instant of greatest hope and expectation for those upon the raft that the breath of egotism was added to the normal winds of the seas. One by one, whether for reason of self-interest, incompetence, misfortune or seeming necessity, the tow-ropes were cast aside" (Barnes *HW* 117). It is not only destiny, precipitated by sea winds, but also fate provoked by people that caused the sailors on the raft to be stranded dangerously at sea. Hearing that the raft contains Bonapartists, somebody let the tow-ropes go, out of spite, or by accident. The answer is not clear, but the narrative suggests that there are several causes for this disaster.

The third symbol of the sea is catastrophe, caused by both nature and human intervention. This also echoes Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as political intrigue lying at the basis of Prospero's intended revenge is also a cause for raising the tempest; therefore, it is human intervention (Prospero's magic) rather than divine fate that causes the Neapolitan party to be stranded on what they initially think to be a desert island in the middle of the Mediterranean. Similarly, the catastrophe of the raft of the frigate *The Medusa* being stranded at sea may have been an accident, or human malevolent intervention, or both. In a liminal situation at sea, it is impossible to control destiny and the ways in which events are going to unfold. For this reason, in both *The Tempest* and "Shipwreck," there is a strong sense of people being unable to control their destinies. As the narrator in "Shipwreck" explains, "With neither oars nor rudder, there was no means of controlling the raft, and little means either of controlling those upon it, who were constantly flung against one another as the waters rolled over them" (Barnes *HW* 117). Similarly, Prospero initially intends to control the destinies of the people on the ship, when he magically provokes the storm (with the purpose of taking revenge), but afterwards he realizes that it is impossible to control fate and people's minds, however hard one might try. As a result, Prospero drowns his magic book and breaks his magic wand. These symbolic gestures show that he gives up trying to control people's destinies, as they are uncontrollable, in any case. Prospero drowns his magic book in the sea, which is not only a symbol of catastrophe, but also a sign of regeneration, of transforming events and people "into something rich and strange" (*The Tempest* 1.2.404); he also drowns his book so no one else can use it. Like Prospero, Barnes' narrator accepts that no one can have absolute control over human actions, and that events occur somehow randomly, but people are altered as a result of these life-changing situations.

Mountains and Islands: "The Mountain" and *The Tempest*

The mountain in Barnes' eponymous chapter is similar to the island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in point of symbolic significance. They both represent isolation and quasi-magical faith, but also multiple perspectives and individual consciousness. In fact, geographically and geologically, an island is a mountain rising in the middle of water, of which only the tip can be seen. The peak of Mount Ararat during the fictional time of the biblical Noah landing on it was an island rising out of the post-Flood waters; these waters looked like an infinite ocean to the people stranded on the Ark. These images suggest various perspectives, and Shakespeare's play and Barnes' novel make full use of alternative views of similar places. In *The Tempest*, the island is a space of imagination, and this is why critics have strived to place it in various regions (the Mediterranean, the Bahamas, the Bermudas),[4] but with no success. The mountain in Barnes' novel is both a real place (Mount Ararat, situated at the borders of three empires, Russia, Persia and Turkey), but also an imaginary landscape formed in the mind of the extremely faithful Amanda Ferguson. From her religious perspective, Mount Ararat is charged with symbolic meanings, as she firmly believes that Noah and his family landed on Mount Ararat and he even planted a vineyard on the mountain slopes. Even if, from an objective perspective, the biblical story is fictional because it has not been backed by archaeological evidence, to Amanda Ferguson, Mount Ararat is the biblical Noah's Mountain, just because she believes it to be so.

Barnes's chapter ("The Mountain") shows that space can be imaginary just as much as it is functional and geographic. It all depends on individual perception, so Amanda's religious view is opposed to her father's pragmatic standpoint. As the omniscient narrator observes in "The Mountain," "Where Amanda discovered in the world divine intent, benevolent order and religious justice, her father had seen only chaos, hazard and malice. Yet they were both examining the same world" (*HW* 148). For this reason, Amanda's father "began to rebuke her for a belief in the reality of Noah's Ark, which he referred to sarcastically as the Myth of the Deluge" (*HW* 148). In an apparently logical

[4] In the chapter entitled "Prospero's Maps," of the book *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritial Exploration* (2012), Dan Brayton defines the inconsistent mapping coordinates of Shakespeare's Island in *The Tempest*. As Brayton writes, "But if the precise geographic location of the play's action has been one of the most persistently debated features of *The Tempest*, it has been one of the least stable. The island's imagery evokes archipelagos such as Bermuda and the Bahamas even as its most obvious geographical coordinates remain squarely within the bounds of the Mediterranean. This disruption of conventional notions of place has vexed scholars for generations" (Brayton 167). Indeed, it is this disruptive quality of geographic space in the play and in the novel that I argue for in this essay.

debate, Amanda argues that she believes "in a book of Holy Scripture read and remembered for thousands of years" (*HW* 148-149), whereas her father believes in information provided by newsletters. Amanda has religious faith, based on the tradition of the Bible, while incredulous people, such as her father, rely only on facts. There is no definite answer to the question regarding who is right in the novel because "The Mountain" is about the power of faith to help people defeat the vicissitudes of life (as Amanda is ready to confront the difficulties of a hard journey to meet the mountain of her faith), but it is also about how the faithful can be defeated by their own resilience (as Amanda dies, in the end, on the mountain, after an earthquake). It is not clear which position is true, but the mountain remains a symbol of persistence and trying to defeat the limited human condition at all costs.

Prospero's island in *The Tempest* is, similarly, a location suggesting different points of view, as each character sees the island differently, according to his or her perspective. While for Miranda the island is a space of love, where she can exercise her newly-learned discourse of affection in relation to Ferdinand, for Prospero it is a space of survival and revenge, but also a location where he can exercise his power over the mind. To Caliban, the island is his own space, as he possessed it before Prospero's arrival, and it is a space which he wants to take back from those whom he considers invaders of his private property, but later he admits "I'll be wise thereafter / And seek for grace" (5.1.293-294). It is as if Amanda's father had promised to change his sceptical view of the universe and accepted the power of faith that drove his daughter. To Ariel, in *The Tempest*, the island is a place of previous enslavement (as he was imprisoned by the witch Sycorax in a cloven pine), but it is also the hope for freedom (as Prospero promises him to free him from the bonds of serfdom if he helps his master achieve his purpose). To Alonso, the island is a place where he thought he had lost his son, therefore it is a location of catastrophe, but it is also a place of joy, when he sees that his son Ferdinand is alive. To Stephano, the drunken butler, the island makes him more compassionate, as he wisely concludes, "Every man shift for all the rest, and let no man take care for himself; for all is but fortune" (5.1.256-257). This might mean something profound about the nature of life and destiny, but it may also be a drunken inversion of a wise remark, which is more suitable to this bizarre character. For all the characters in *The Tempest*, the island is a place where they seek for their inner selves, but each person finds only what s/he is able to do, according to their capabilities. It is as if each character tries to learn a new language (of human understanding and compassion), but each of them learns it imperfectly, and they are not able to rise to Prospero's expectations.

Both the island and the mountain are places of isolation, where characters learn who they are through interactions with one another. The new speech of human compassion and understanding, which characters in *The*

Tempest and in Barnes' "The Mountain" learn incompletely, is won after many hardships and alterations of fortune, and none of the characters learns it totally. Amanda Ferguson dies trying to fulfil her wish of climbing the symbolic mountain of Noah's Ark, which is the mountain of individual self-fulfilment. She dies after an unfortunate fall, with the confidence that she has achieved her purpose and her destiny, while, from a pragmatic perspective, this is just the lonely death of a woman in a cave, while she watches the moon (*HW* 165). Seen from the perspective of Amanda's companion—Miss Logan—Amanda may have been left alone on the mountain as a result of miscommunication, as "Mis Logan had not a word of Turk or Russo or Kurdish or whatever mixture of it was the other two communicated in" (*HW* 165), so she must have conveyed her wish wrongly to the guide. Miss Logan did not hear or understand what Amanda told the guide, as some sort of last words, but these words could only be assumed to be that she asked to be left alone on the mountain. It was not miscommunication and misunderstanding of language that caused Amanda's death alone on the mountain, but her own decision to give the others a chance of survival, as she was left behind, because, otherwise, she would have hindered their progress (because she was wounded as a result of a fall). It is a generous gesture of renunciation in favour of the others, just as Prospero gives up his magical powers in favour of the community. Just like the island, the mountain is a place where characters find their true selves.

The Jungle and the Desert Island as Art: "Upstream!" and *The Tempest*

Like the mountain in Barnes' chapter entitled "The Mountain," as well as the island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the jungle in "Upstream!" is an isolated place where the main character ("Charlie") finds his identity in relative isolation, in a jungle populated only by the team of the movie and a number of natives. The epistolary style—a series of letters sent by the hero to his girlfriend back home—gives the impression of personal communication, but the narrative is rambling, as the narrator's mind shifts swiftly from one topic to another, in the stream-of-consciousness manner. As the film crew are in the jungle with the purpose of shooting a remake[5] of a movie, the space of the jungle is associated with artistic creation, most importantly with the visual work of art, as in *The*

[5] Even the fact that this is a remake of a previous movie turns the future work of visual art in "Upstream!" into a potential imaginary space, where time and space overlap, while interpretations vary in accordance with the time of the reception of the movie. Everything is volatile and unstable in this artistic perception of reality, as it is in the narrative world of the chapter, which is expressed subjectively through letters.

Tempest. Many critics[6] have interpreted *The Tempest* as the symbol of the creative author (Prospero), who generates fictions related to his own art, assimilated to Prospero's "The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, / The solemn temples, the great globe itself" (4.1.152-153)—an "insubstantial pageant" (4.1.155) or a "vision" (4.1.151), which fades "into thin air" (4.1.150). This is like the definition of a movie adaptation of Shakespeare's play—if Shakespeare had had a notion about movies. As it is, Prospero's description refers to theatrical art, which represents reality visually and through language, and this imaginary reality creates other visions in the audience's minds. The setting of Charlie's jungle in "Upstream!" is similar to Prospero's Island: they are both settings in which the performance directed by a particular artist unfolds. In the case of *The Tempest*, it is Prospero's manipulation of the other characters that makes it possible to associate him with an artistic director, who is aware of the meaning of his own art. In "Upstream!", the movie adaptation is a second-hand visual representation of real life's adventures and, in this way, it is associated with artistic creation.

The original movie referred to in "Upstream!" is entitled *The Mission* (1986) and it refers to a group of eighteenth-century Spanish Jesuits who try to protect a remote South American tribe, in danger of falling under the rule of pro-slavery Portugal. From the very start, multiculturalism is present in the representation of the Spanish Jesuits, who learn the indigenous people's language only to be able to protect them from the Portuguese aggressors. The original movie *The Mission* is always in the background of Charlie's narrative, but this is just a remake of the previous movie, therefore it is a simulacrum and a kind of fake. For this reason, when Charlie asks Vic (the director) about the script, he receives an ambiguous response: "Had a word with Vic about the script and he says not to worry but they always say that at this stage, don't

[6] In "Theatrum Mundi: Rhetoric, Romance, and Legitimation in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*," David A. Katz shows that Shakespeare's late tragicomic romances model metatheatrical devices speaking to and for an increasingly heterogeneous and cosmopolitan audience. As Katz observes, "Theatrical artifice succeeds in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* by adapting the comparison between moral and theatrical acting, offering a moral of ethics that encourages men and women to conceptualize morality as dramatic performance, as a form of role-playing dependent upon critiquing oneself as though one were an actor in a play" (721). Indeed, the concepts of metatheatre and role-playing are central to critical interpretations of *The Tempest*. Similarly, in *Touching at a Distance: Shakespeare's Theatre* (2023), Johannes Ungelenk examines the capacity of *The Tempest* to affect the audience from a distance. As Ungelenk observes, "In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare extensively argues that what theatre does can indeed be regarded as a form of conjuration" (230). Both Katz and Ungelenk ascertain the metatheatrical devices involved in Shakespeare's use of Prospero's Art as expressing creative art.

they?" (*HW* 192). The implication is that the script—the linguistic backbone of a movie or a play in performance—is always in the making, and the volatile linguistic process is a characteristic of the postmodern narrative.

Even if, by definition, the jungle is a sparsely populated place, with the advent of the film crew it turns into a multicultural agglomeration of people, Americans and natives, isolated in a world remote from civilization. As he tries to post one of his letters to the last post office of the civilized world, "before the Jungle starts" (*HW* 193), Charlie says that post offices are called "Our Lady of Communications" (*HW* 193), so they are invested with supernatural and religious power, probably because they are so rare and far-apart. The "Jungle" in Charlie's narrative is a personified capitalized being, with a mysterious power over the humans, as it engulfs their souls. Like Prospero's Island, the Jungle transforms people and pushes them to the limit of their human endurance, making them realize who they really are in relation to others. Like in *The Tempest*, people have various perceptions of the Jungle. When seeing a flight of big birds flying over the river, the second assistant "suddenly stood up and yelled out 'This is paradise, this is fucking paradise'" (*HW* 194), while Charlie confesses that he is "feeling a bit depressed" (*HW* 194). The contrast between one person's admiration for the jungle's natural beauty and another person's depression when seeing the same landscape shows the difference of perception. Similarly, in *The Tempest*, Gonzalo wonders at the lush green grass on the island (2.1.51), while the usurper Antonio observes that the ground is "tawny" (2.1.52), meaning parched by the sun to a brown colour. The same spatial reality is subjected to different modes of perception, and both the play and the novel represent the island or the jungle as outer-landscape variations of inner reality.

The film crew's contact with the Indians "cheered us up a bit" (*HW* 196), which proves that Westerners look at Native South-American peoples with slight contempt and amusement, as they would view animals placed behind bars in the zoo, or behind a glass case to be studied. As Charlie describes the encounter with the Indians, "there they were, … in a clearing on the bend of the river, naked as nature intended, standing very upright, which still didn't make them very tall, and looking at us without any fear" (*HW* 196). The Indians' nakedness is considered an expected fact by the civilized Americans, who think that the natives are creatures of nature and, therefore, they should be naked, as animals are. This is similar to Stephano's remark when he sees Caliban for the first time, "This is some monster of the isle with four legs" (2.2.66). Europeans see native peoples as curiosities, or "monsters", as they endow real people with features generated by their imagination. In fact, Caliban is no monster, but he is just perceived as such by uneducated Europeans (whether Italian or English). Just as the Americans in the jungle expect the native Indians to be naked because they are creatures of nature, like birds and animals on the island, Stephano's

social-class limitation makes him see Caliban as a creature that is different from the Western Europeans, therefore interpreted as a monster.

The Jungle in “Upstream!” is a space in which one can get lost easily, just like a labyrinth of the mind. Charlie wonders at the Indians’ sense of orientation when he says, “amazing sense of direction they must have in the Jungle” (*HW* 196). By comparison, a Londoner would be lost in the Jungle, as Charlie imagines that his girlfriend would lose her way in this space: “You’d be lost here I can tell you angel, especially given you don’t know how to get from Shepherd’s Bush to Hammersmith without a police escort*” (*HW* 196). Followed by an asterisk, this statement reads in the footnote “*Joke (not serious)” (*HW* 196), suggesting that the allusion to his girlfriend’s helplessness and disorientation in space—in comparison with the Indians’ sense of direction—would hurt her feelings. As a matter of fact, the comparison is in favour of the resourceful natives, while Londoners lead a more sheltered life, which does not make it necessary for them to have a sense of direction, as they would easily appeal to the authorities to help them out of any situation involving disorientation. The Jungle is like a living being, and only people accustomed to it can manage its traps, while Westerners are helpless against this natural immensity of space (just like the sea). Charlie’s description of the Jungle is similar to the way in which Gonzalo perceives their experience on the island, when he can walk no longer and asks Alonso to stop and have a rest: “here’s a maze trod, indeed / Through forth-rights and meanders!” (3.3.2-3). The island is assimilated to the labyrinth of the mind, an image similar to the human brain’s structure, with many circumvolutions. Like the Jungle, Prospero’s Island is a living being which confuses the strangers, and where only natives (such as Caliban or the Indians) can survive.

Conclusions

The sea, the mountain, the island and the jungle are metaphoric imaginary spaces that the characters—in both the play and the novel—perceive differently, according to their state of mind, religious belief, or just social status or level of education. Regardless of whether these characters move in and out of these spaces with ease or not, the spatial metaphors achieve dimensions that define each character’s identity. Prospero’s island is a space of power to him, but an impossible labyrinth and a threatening expanse of land and sea to the others. To Caliban, the island is home, and this is where he remains at the end of the play to seek for wisdom and grace. Similarly, the sea, the mountain, and the Jungle in Barnes’ three chapters from *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* are spaces that threaten the characters’ sanity and integrity, and even their life. None of these metaphoric spaces are beneficial to the human mind, as each of them poses

a problem to be solved or implies a limit to be surpassed. While in Shakespeare's play the metaphoric space of the island is controlled by the authoritarian figure of Prospero, the author/creator who manipulates the characters as a puppeteer would manipulate his puppets, in Barnes' novel, these spaces are just as many limits to be transcended in search for identity. Whether the characters succeed in surpassing these limits (or not) depends only on themselves, and this is why Barnes' symbolic spaces (sea, mountain and Jungle) are individual, not collective, and singular, not generally meaningful. Multicultural encounters in these symbolic spaces create new experiences but they do not alter significantly the individual psyche, as each character has his or her own psychological challenge to confront.

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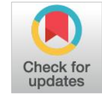

Mythili Kaul*

A Tempest[1] and *The Tempest*[2]: Aimé Césaire and Shakespeare

Abstract: Through an analysis of the play, the article seeks to demonstrate that Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* is a "reinscription" of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as "a drama of rebellion." It is told from the point of view of "the loser", Caliban, the "colonized", who confronts and defies Prospero who has usurped the island and deprived him of his patrimony. He demands his freedom and refuses to accept the "hegemonic europocentric vision of the universe." Césaire "demythifie[s]" Prospero who is not the benign Magus figure of traditional criticism but the "prototypical colonizer," a despot, "the complete totalitarian." The paper argues that, although he never mentions him, Césaire is influenced by George Lamming's radical reading of Shakespeare's play through "colonial" and "national" lenses, a reading that anticipates that of Stephen Greenblatt and the New Historicists and pre-empts the question of "linguistic colonialism" which is so crucial to them. While the colonial paradigm has featured in recent discussions of the plays and Césaire and Lamming have been grouped together, the article analyzes and applies Lamming's reading to both Shakespeare and Césaire and provides a fresh reading of both. The article also goes beyond the argument of Greenblatt and the New Historicists. *A Tempest* ends equivocally, on a questioning note, and Lamming observes that the Epilogue in *The Tempest* leaves the latter work, too, somewhat open-ended, a point that is taken up and discussed. The article in conclusion gives a significant, new interpretation, of the titles of the two plays which ties up with and highlights the theme of colonialism which is the focus of both plays.

Keywords: reinscription, colonizer, colonized, Lamming, "linguistic colonialism."

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[1] All references to *A Tempest* are to the Editions du Seuil *Une Tempete,* trans. by Richard Miller. Act, scene and page numbers follow the quoted passage in the text.

[2] All references to *The Tempest* are to the Arden edition, Third Series, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan. Act, scene and line numbers follow the quoted passage in the text.

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Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), born in Martinique, the French Caribbean, was a renowned French poet, politician, and the progenitor together with Léon Damas and Léopold Senghor (first President of the Republic of Senegal) of "Negritude," the first diasporic "black pride" movement and tract against racism.[3] In the 1960s he turned to the genre of drama and composed three major plays. The first two were *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* and the "third panel (*volet*)", as Césaire called it, was *Une Tempete* (*A Tempest)*. He conceived these plays, in Gregson Davis's words, "as reflecting major sectors of the black world (Africa, the Caribbean and the USA)." However, as Davis continues, "This neat triangular articulation is […] misleading, for *A Tempest*, which is purportedly representative of black America, exhibits elements of all three major theaters of the African homeland and diaspora" (Davis, 156-157).

In an interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur* Césaire states, "I have been strongly influenced by the Greeks, Shakespeare and Brecht. But my theater is above all a political theater because the major problems in Africa are political problems" (qtd. in Ojo-Ade, 17). Brecht's theatre, too, is political theatre, and Shakespeare's play, especially as it has been seen and interpreted in the past sixty to seventy years, is a political play, and it is not surprising that Césaire should have been influenced by both. What is also not surprising is that Césaire should be one of several writers and intellectuals during the late fifties and early sixties of the twentieth century when there was a "burgeoning," as Rob Nixon puts it, of black consciousness and nationalist movements in Africa and the Caribbean, to "[seize] upon *The Tempest* as a way of amplifying […] calls for decolonization" and "unabashedly" refashion it "to meet contemporary political and cultural needs" (557-559). *Une Tempete* foregrounds the political and racial theme.

The subtitle of *A Tempest* is *An Adaptation for the Black Theatre*. "In essence," Ojo-Ade observes, "Césaire Africanizes and negrifies Shakespeare's play to deal with the eternal theme of his political theater: Africa's past and present and the dilemma of the encounter with the European master" (252). As Césaire declared in another interview, this time in *Callaloo*: "*Une Tempete (A Tempest)* is the point of view of the loser (Caliban), not that of Prospero, the viewpoint of the colonized, not that of the colonizer. It is the reversal that appeals to me" (qtd. in Ojo-Ade, 249). A "reversal" that allows Césaire, as Roger Toumson observes, to make "Caliban's monstrosity […] disappear and Prospero's to manifest itself" (qtd. in Sarnecki, 279).

In 1954, Frank Kermode, in his Introduction to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the New Arden series, identified Caliban as the "core" or "ground"

[3] Césaire deliberately chose the confrontational word "negre" which, as he declares in his *Resolutely Black: Conversations with Francoise Verges*, served as both a "rallying cry" as well as "a stark reminder of slavery and colonialism" (viii).

of the play, the savage, bestial creature whose function is to "illuminate […] the world of art, nurture, civility", and New World material as central to it (xxiv-xxv). However, beyond these comments, his interpretation is the traditional one which sees Prospero as the Magus figure and his "Art" as benevolent, and Caliban as born to slavery, incapable of growth and education in humanity. Subsequent readings of *The Tempest* departed radically from this kind of view and saw the play as "shaped by" and a "contributor to […] the discourses of colonialism" (Goldberg 7). In the Introduction to the Arden *Tempest* in 2011, Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan point out that two major interpretations of the play in the late 19th century insist that it is essentially about the New World and symbolizes European and United States imperialism (98). These views have dominated recent critical thinking and Greenblatt's influential essay, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century" which appeared in 1976, marked the beginning of New Historicist readings of the play.

Césaire's *A Tempest* was published in 1969, much before Greenblatt's essay, the same year that the Barbadian poet, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, published a collection of poetry entitled *Islands* which included the poem "Caliban," and the Cuban poet, essayist, and Professor of Philology at the University of Havana, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, writing in Spanish, identified Caliban with the Cuban people. Two years later, in his book, *Caliban and Other Essays*, Retamar stated, "Our symbol […] is not Ariel […] but rather Caliban", for "what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?" (13-14).

Retamar credits George Lamming, the well-known Barbadian novelist, as "the first writer in our world to assume our identification with Caliban" (12). In her Introduction to Jonathan Goldberg's Sedgewick Memorial Lecture of March 2001, Sherrill Grace states that Goldberg is placing *The Tempest* "in a modern, indeed a *postmodern* setting by reading the play through the colonial and national lenses of the great Barbadian writer George Lamming" (5). In Lamming's The *Pleasures of Exile* (1960), a collection of political essays, "the relationship of Prospero and Caliban," in Goldberg's words, "is used throughout as a shorthand for the relation of colonizer to colonized," and he goes on to say, Lamming not only anticipates New Historicist interpretations of *The Tempest* but goes much further than the "New Historicist inquiry" (8).

Colonialism and post-colonialism are the predominant themes in Césaire's work in the 1960s. In his first play, *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (1963), he focuses on post-colonial corruption and the tyrannical Francois Duvalier who ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1971 and exploited the black masses. In the second play, *A Season in the Congo* (1965), his subject is Patrice Lumumba and the struggle for independence in the Congo, and he emphasizes that only revolution and the violent overthrow of military dictatorships can bring about

any real change. In his final and most meaningful exploration of colonialism and exploitation, Césaire "retreated from modern history and turned to Shakespeare as his vehicle" (Kelly, xiv). *A Tempest* (1969) explores the relationship between Prospero, the colonizer, and his two colonial subjects, Ariel and Caliban.[4] And in this as in other aspects of the play Césaire, although he never mentions the Barbadian novelist in any of his writings, is influenced by Lamming's seminal reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* He is perhaps, in Nixon's words, "fiercer" in "defiance" (570).

Césaire retains Shakespeare's setting, an uninhabited island, the characters, with minor alterations (as already mentioned, Ariel is a mulatto and Caliban a black slave and he adds a black devil-god, Shango), and follows the main lines of the action beginning with the storm and shipwreck with which Shakespeare's play opens. The "tempest," as in the original, is "brewed up" by Prospero (1.2.15).

Césaire's play, however, is, as Nixon observes, a radically polarized adaptation of *The Tempest* (572). Judith Holland Sarnecki puts it more strongly: *A Tempest* "is truly subversive in both intent and execution" (279). It foregrounds Caliban and the struggle between him and Prospero. The emphasis is on difference not reconciliation. "Caliban's culture of resistance is his sole weaponry," Nixon states, it is "formidable" (572), and the success of his uncompromising strategies is "imminent" at the end of the drama (573).

Davis calls Césaire's adaptation a "reinscribing" of Shakespeare's play as "a drama of rebellion" (158). Reinscription is closely linked to intertextuality. A text is retextualized in a contemporary situation in which a writer finds himself and out of which he is writing. Césaire reads, reinterprets, reinscribes and adapts Shakespeare's play to make his own political statements to contemporary readers and audiences. It is, to quote Rob Nixon again, "a radical reassessment" aimed at exploring its "potential as a vehicle for dramatizing the evolution of colonialism in his region and the alternatives open to would be liberated Antilleans" (573).

His Caliban enters saying "Uhuru" (1.2.17), one of the slogans adopted by the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s. He is confrontational and announces that he will no longer "answer to the name of Caliban" because it "*isn't*" his name, it is the name given him by Prospero's "hatred, and every time it's spoken it's an insult." He tells Prospero:

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[4] Ariel, in Césaire's version, is a mulatto slave, compliant, even complaisant, and Caliban a black slave, rebellious and hostile. Interestingly, in an adaptation of another Shakespeare play, *Othello*, Charles Marowitz's *an Othello*, Iago is the hero, is black, a Black Power agent, and tries to alert Othello to the racism and hostility of the white characters who ultimately destroy him.

> Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name.
> Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. […]
> you've stolen everything from me, even my identity. (1.2.20)

"X", it will be recalled, was the name Malcolm X took, another reminder of Caliban's association with the Black Power movement.

Caliban rejects as untrue Prospero's claim that he "educated, trained," and "dragged [him] up" from "bestiality." Prospero, he declares, took care to impart no "learning" or "science" to him. He taught him nothing,

> Except to jabber in your language so that I could understand your orders:
> chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because
> you are too lazy to do it yourself. (1.2.17)

The aim was not to improve, to raise, to edify, but to exploit, and language is the tool Prospero uses to exploit Caliban and enslave him.

Citing the Bishop of Avila's assertion in the late 15th century that "language is the perfect instrument of empire," Stephen Greenblatt states that "linguistic colonialism" is central to the colonial enterprise (17). Lamming anticipates Greenblatt:

> This is the first important achievement of the colonising process. …
> Prospero has given Caliban Language […] This gift of Language
> meant not English, in particular, but speech and concept as […] a
> necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be
> reached in any other way. It is entirely Prospero's enterprise. (109)

But he goes on to make the further important point that loss of identity and the learning of a new language are linked:

> Caliban is […] colonized by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation, which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his name! (15)

He is "exiled," too, from his patrimony. He has no past. Caliban, Lamming states, "has no self which is not a reaction to circumstances imposed upon his life." He is seen as "a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited for the purposes of another's development" (107). This is how he is seen, it is important to emphasize, by the colonizer, this is how he *must* be seen and *made to see himself* so he can be exploited and made subservient. He has been *recreated, reinvented*, by Prospero, by the *colonizer* and *colonialism.* "[T]his thing of darkness," Shakespeare's Prospero declares, "I / Acknowledge mine"

(5.1.275-276). If Prospero had not come to the island he would have been, Césaire's Caliban says in lines that echo Shakespeare's, "the king, that's what I'd be, the King of the Island. The King of the Island given me by my mother, Sycorax" (1.2.17). Prospero has usurped his kingdom and made him a slave and a drudge, a slave whom he mistreats and constantly punishes.

Ojo-Ade states that while there is conflict between Prospero and Caliban, there is "harmony" between Prospero and Ariel in Césaire's play and Ariel is Prospero's "ally and accomplice" (269). That is true of Shakespeare's Ariel not Césaire's. Ariel does Prospero's bidding as Caliban does, "most unwillingly." He calls him "Master" (1.2.16), but he is not a lackey. He intercedes for Caliban. More important, he, too, wants his freedom. When we first see him in Act 1, scene 2, he reminds Prospero that he "promised" him his "freedom, a thousand times" and he is "still waiting" (1.2.16). However, he is altogether more moderate, more conciliatory, in his approach as the debate between him and Caliban makes clear.[5] He states that they are "brothers in suffering and slavery, but brothers in hope as well." Both "want [their] freedom" but "just have different methods" (2.1.26). He is prepared to wait for it, Caliban wants "Freedom Now!" (2.1.26). Ariel does not "believe in violence:" "No violence" but what is important, "no *submission* either" [italics added]. If Caliban is like Malcolm X, Ariel is like Martin Luther King, determined, but using non-violent means to secure his goal. He is something of an idealist. Prospero, he says, "is the one [they've] got to change," and he is "not fighting just for *my* freedom, for *our* freedom, but for Prospero too, so he can acquire a conscience," and he asks for Caliban's help "to build a wonderful world" to which each of them would contribute "patience, vitality, love, willpower […] and rigor" (2.1.27). From Caliban's point of view, he is a collaborator, negotiating for liberty from a relatively powerless position rather than fighting for it as an equal. But that is not really true. He is more cautious, perhaps his idea of freedom is less inclusive and complete than Caliban's, but he does not compromise, he continues on the nonviolent path as leaders like Mandela and King did, and he is liberated.

Caliban's response is that Ariel does not "understand" Prospero at all: "He's not a collaborating type. He's a guy who only feels something when he's wiped someone out. A crusher, a pulverizer, that's what he is!" (2.1.27). Prospero, in Ariel's opinion, is "invincible," and Caliban's "struggle" is "doomed" (2.1.26). He cannot, he believes, be defeated in an armed struggle; he can be defeated only through persuasion and by applying mental pressure. But for Caliban, "Better death than humiliation and injustice" to which they are

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[5] Philip Mason sees the same distinction between Ariel and Caliban in Shakespeare's play: "Ariel is the good native, the moderate rationalist, the gradualist […] content to wait until it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom. Caliban is the bad native, the nationalist, the extremist" (88-89).

being constantly subjected, and he is prepared to blow up the island and Prospero and himself with it rather than remain in bondage (2.1.28).

He ceaselessly explores all avenues for rebellion and, indeed, is so desperate to get rid of Prospero, that he tries to get Stephano and Trinculo, his "new-found friends," to help him achieve his goal. Césaire's Caliban is not as naïve as Shakespeare's, he is more aware than the latter but wrongly assumes that being underdogs like him, they might also want to win back their "dignity" (3.4.55), might bond with him, show class solidarity. He is unable to see that they, like their originals, are racist and exploitative (3.2.41), that for them race transcends class. The rebellion, of course, fails, and he realizes that he was "an idiot" to think he "could create the Revolution with swollen guts and fat faces" (3.4.55). Peter Hulme states that Caliban reenacts Antonio's "usurpation" (239). That may be how Shakespeare's Prospero sees the "foul conspiracy" (4.1.139), but what Caliban seeks to reenact, it seems to me, is *Prospero's* usurpation of the island that belongs to him, a fact that he repeats to Stephano and Trinculo to get them to act with him: "I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island" (3.2.40-42). Prospero incidentally never denies the usurpation, he bypasses it.

At this moment, in a significant departure from Shakespeare's play, Caliban gets an opportunity to destroy Prospero. He has a weapon, Prospero does not. As he advances Prospero bares his chest and bids him "Strike! Go on, strike! Strike your master, your benefactor! Don't tell me you're going to spare him!" Caliban hesitates even though Prospero taunts him: "You don't dare! […] you're nothing but an animal […] you don't know how to kill" (3.4.55). It is true; he does *not* know how to kill. Ojo-Ade suggests that he spares him because of "the complex created and cultivated in him by the master" (278), that is, by the master-slave relationship. But, in my opinion, Caliban spares Prospero because he is unarmed: "Defend yourself! I'm not a murderer." Prospero's response is, "The worse for you. You've lost your chance. Stupid as a slave!" (3.4.56). Caliban shows himself superior to Prospero and distinguishes himself from him. He spares him because he cannot kill in cold blood. He wants Prospero to be in a position to "defend" himself (3.4.55), to be on an equal footing with him, something Prospero does not understand and a thought the colonizers certainly would not and did not entertain. The uncivilized "brutish monster" as Césaire's Prospero calls him (3.5.63) shows greater humanity and compassion than the civilized colonizer. Although he subscribes to violent overthrow, he eschews violence when confronting or confronted by an individual, rejects it outright.

In Shakespeare's play, Caliban sees through Stephano and Trinculo in the final scenes but not Prospero. In Césaire's play, however, he is no longer deluded. He sees and understands Prospero's reality and functioning. In his last

great speech, he sums up his years of mistreatment at Prospero's hands, the brutality he has endured:

> For years I bowed my head
> For years I took it all […]
> your insults, your ingratitude …
> and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest,
> your condescension.

The "worst of all" actually is not "condescension" but what he mentions later: Prospero's lying to him about himself and demoralizing him:

> you ended up by imposing on me
> an image of myself:
> underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent,
> that's how you made me see myself!
> And I hate that image […] and it's false!
> (5.5.61-62)

Prospero's domination of Caliban is based on race and his success in exploiting him depends on how far he can succeed in imposing a sense of inferiority on him.[6] Caliban now understands that Prospero's construction of him is a lie, that Prospero is a master of "deception." And since he knows him, simultaneously and significantly he also knows himself, frees himself from Prospero's thrall. He knows of what he is capable, he knows that "The old world is tumbling down," and one day his "bare fist" will be enough to "crush" Prospero's world (5.5.61-62). And he demolishes Prospero's self-delusions in what Sarnecki describes as "a volcanic eruption of words" (282).

In a special issue of *Massachusetts Review*, Robert Marquez writes: "Against the hegemonic, europocentric, vision of the universe, the identity of Caliban is a direct function of his refusal to accept […] that hegemony" (qtd. in Alden Vaughan, 254). In Césaire's own words, Caliban is "a rebel—the positive hero in the Hegelian sense. The slave is always more important than his master—for it is the slave who makes history" (qtd. in Belhassen, 176). "In Césaire's refashioning," Davis states, "the figure of Caliban is no longer a caricature of the savage, noble or ignoble; rather it incarnates the irrepressible will of the colonized to be his own master" (161-162).

We turn now to the other side of the equation, to Prospero. Césaire "demythifie[s]" Prospero who is "a prototypical colonizer" (Davis, 158).

[6] It is a tactic Iago uses. He harps on Othello's "otherness," on his racial inferiority, and his schemes work because he makes Othello see himself in that image.

> To me (Aimé Césaire declares) Prospero is the complete totalitarian […] Prospero is the man of cold reason, the man of methodical conquest—in other words, a portrait of the "enlightened" European. (qtd. in Belhassen 176)

He is a despot. The Master of Ceremonies tells us, "He has reserves of willpower he's not even aware of himself" (Prologue: 7). Actually, it is not that he has "reserves of willpower" but that he is driven by the *will to power*, absolute power. What he wants is total submission. We see this in his first encounter with Ariel who is disgusted with having to destroy the ship carrying Alonso and the other Milanese, asks to be spared "this kind of labor," and presses for the freedom he was promised. Prospero's response is to shout at him, accuse him of being an "ingrate," remind him that he freed him from the pine in which he was imprisoned by Sycorax, and tell him that he will have his freedom when he (Prospero) is "good and ready" (1.2.16).

Prospero, Caliban tells us, is "the Anti-Nature." Nature is "kind and gentle […] You've just got to know how to deal with it" (3.4.52). He is the opposite, in Caliban's view, of Sycorax and himself, both of whom are associated with Nature. James Arnold states that while Césaire's Prospero struggles against the natural world of the island, Caliban is represented as its ally (247). Caliban, Aimé Césaire declares, "is the man who is still close to his beginnings, whose link with the natural world has not yet been broken" (qtd. in Belhassen, 176). Trinculo calls him "a real Nindian! An authentic Nindian from the Caribbean!" (3.2.41); he is a New World inhabitant, in a close relationship, like all indigenous peoples, with Nature and the elements. Prospero violates Nature whereas Caliban's culture gives him the values Prospero lacks, a oneness with Nature and the earth that makes him constructive not destructive. Prospero exploits the land as he exploits Caliban. Prospero thinks Sycorax is "dead" and "the earth itself is dead," therefore he can "walk on it, pollute it […] tread upon it with the steps of a conqueror" (1.1.18) Caliban "respect[s] the earth" because he knows that "Sycorax is alive," and he sees her everywhere—in the rain, the lightning, "the stagnant pool" (1.2.18).

Earlier in the article, I had cited Lamming on Caliban's loss of identity, his being "exiled" from his patrimony and having no past. Césaire does not agree as the quotation from him makes clear. Caliban's "link with the natural world has not yet been broken" *because* he "is still close to his beginnings." Lamming, interestingly, contradicts himself and his earlier statement when he remarks that one reason Prospero treats Caliban harshly is because he "has not lost his sense of original rootedness" (101), and Nixon attributes Caliban's "relative cultural autonomy" to his "recuperation of a residual past" (572). He recuperates it through his memory of his mother. The island is his through

Sycorax, he associates her with it, and his closeness to it and everything surrounding it is due to his closeness to her.

Prospero could not have survived on the island without Caliban. It is not Prospero who "taught" Caliban; it is the other way round. It is Caliban who "taught" Prospero about "the trees, fruits, birds, the seasons." However, once "the juice" has been "squeezed […] from the orange" the "rind" is tossed away, once Caliban has served his purpose the "sweet talk: dear Caliban here, my little Caliban there" is replaced by "Caliban the animal, Caliban the slave!" (1.1.18-19). Prospero abuses Caliban all the time, tells him that he is a monster, bestial, ugly, barbaric, constantly whips and punishes him to keep him in his place and make him feel abject, inconsequential, worthless. And yet, Caliban defies him, answers back, and Prospero cannot tolerate his standing up to him. His "insubordination," he tells Ariel, is "calling into question the whole order of the world" (3.3.50). Caliban belongs to an inferior race, he is the "Other," and Prospero will not forgive him as he does the "men of his [own] race, and of high rank" (1.2.21). He will not compromise with him for he will not "compromise with evil" (3.3.50).

The truth is, Lamming states, that "Prospero is afraid of Caliban." He is afraid for the reasons given above but much more so because, Lamming continues, "he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself" (15). He hates him because he has made him "doubt" himself "for the first time" (3.5.63). Caliban challenges his assumptions about himself and makes him question them. He can no longer cast himself as a hero, construe his actions and attitudes to himself in the most positive light. He can describe himself as "indulgent," as not a "master" but "the conductor of a boundless score" who creates intelligibility "out of confusion" (3.5.65, 3.5.64), but he knows he is lying. What is more he knows and realizes that his greatest project is a failure. Caliban is his failure:

> from a brutish monster I have made man!
> But ah! To have failed to find the path to man's heart …
> if that be where man is. (3.5.63)

He has not won his affection. Caliban hates him and has planned to kill him. Small wonder he is shaken. He is "perturbed," his "old brain is confused," and he has a sudden realization that "Power! Power! Alas! All this will one day fade […] My power has gone cold" (3.3.49-50).

He tries to reassert himself. He frees Ariel, and the intoxicated Ariel, intoxicated with liberty, leaves with an agenda to "let fall" sweet notes that will arouse "a yearning" for "freedom" in "the heart of the most forgetful slaves" (3.5.58). In other words, he will strive to spread the message of freedom, work

for emancipation and liberation through nonviolent means as has been his stated objective throughout. “That,” Prospero declares, “is a very unsettling agenda” (3.5.59). Left alone with Caliban, Prospero postures with him. He changes his tactics, he is in a “forgiving mood,” he offers “peace” (3.5.60-61). But Caliban who fully understands Prospero’s game sees through the sham and rejects the overture. He is more strongly committed than ever to getting back his island and regaining his freedom. He will work to “get rid” of Prospero, “spit” him out (3.5.60), the vision of a future without Prospero being a step towards what Ojo-Ade calls “self-affirmation” (285). Caliban laughs at the concept of the White Man’s Burden, at Prospero’s “mission,” his “vocation” (3.5.62); at the assertion that he alone can “draw music” from the isle which will be “mute” without him; his “duty […] is here” and he has to remain to “protect civilization” (3.5.64-65). He knows the truth. Prospero will stay on because “like those guys who founded the colonies” he “now can’t live anywhere else;” he is “an old addict” (3.5.62). He is addicted to wielding power and enjoying privilege; he is addicted to self-importance and self-aggrandizement, and he realizes that in Milan he will be subservient to Alonso, he will be disregarded, he will be a cipher.

“Césaire believes,” in Belhassen’s words, that Prospero

> would no longer be able to leave the island over
> which he has exerted so much control […] He
> would have become a prisoner of his own “creation,”
> Caliban. (177)

He is unable to leave the island but, I believe, for the reasons outlined in the previous paragraph, not because he is a “prisoner” of his own “creation.” “Prospero and Caliban,” Belhassen states, “are *necessary* to each other” (177). I am not sure I agree. The truth, as we see throughout *A Tempest*, is quite the contrary. Caliban does not need Prospero; Prospero needed Caliban as Caliban reminds him: “what do you think you’d have done without me in this strange land?” (1.2.18), and now he needs him even more. He is dependent on him physically and psychologically. He is old, he is debilitated, he is “struggling,” as Davis comments, “against the encroachment of the jungle” (161). He is cold and needs a fire. He calls for Caliban as he did at the beginning of the play, calls repeatedly, but Caliban stays away. He will no longer heed Prospero’s summons. Prospero hears “snatches of Caliban’s song:” “FREEDOM HI-DAY! FREEDOM HI-DAY!” (3.5.65-66). It is a militant song in contrast to Ariel’s softer cadences. Freedom has yet to be attained. We have seen how the movements for freedom and independence in *King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* end by becoming a mockery and result in greater enslavement. True freedom is a difficult goal to attain and achieve and the play ends on an equivocal note. In an interview to *Callaloo* Césaire declared:

> I think that nobody can tell how the problem
> will be solved […] one can only try to imagine
> the conditions of a solution to the problem.
> (qtd.in Ojo-Ade 292)

Caliban, Jonathan Goldberg affirms, is "locked with [Prospero] in a dialectical struggle whose outcome remains to be seen" (15).

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* contains in essence all the issues that *A Tempest* focuses on and points the way to Césaire. It exemplifies, to quote Paul Brown, "a moment of *historical* crisis […] the struggle to produce a coherent discourse adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial phase" (48). In Walter Cohen's words, "*The Tempest* uncovers, perhaps despite itself, the racist and imperialist bases of English nationalism" (401). It is the first work, Meredith Anne Skura tells us, to show an encounter with a New World native; Shakespeare is the first to show the *mistreatment* of a native by Europeans (72). And the first person to see the play through "colonial" and "national" lenses was, as I have mentioned before, George Lamming. "I see *The Tempest*," Lamming writes, "against the background of England's experiment in colonisation." In view of the participation in the slave trade of John Hawkins and Walter Raleigh, the issue of the European enslavement of native populations was very topical, and Lamming observes:

> Considering the range of Shakespeare's curiosity [… it] would most certainly have been present in his mind […] And it is Shakespeare's capacity for experience which leads me to feel that *The Tempest* was also prophetic of a political future which is our present. (13)[7]

The island, Lamming remarks, is "a remarkable example of a State which is absolutely run by one man" (98). He is a despot and rules over his two subjects, Ariel and Caliban, with an iron hand. Césaire, it will be recalled, calls him a "complete totalitarian" driven by the will to power and demanding complete submission. Absolute power and absolute control. That is Prospero's "magic" which Sarnecki aptly describes as "none other than the delusion and rationalization of 'white superiority'" (280).

Ariel, too, serves Prospero but, like Césaire's Ariel, is more compliant. Lamming calls him "a lackey" (99), and he is more of a lackey in Shakespeare than in Césaire. Unlike Caliban he calls Prospero "great master" and "noble master" (1.2.189, 1.2.300), but he does remind Prospero, as forcefully as

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[7] Skura says something similar in her 1998 essay: "if the play is 'colonialist,' it must be seen as 'prophetic' rather than descriptive" (72).

Césaire's Ariel does, that he has done "worthy service" and demands his "liberty" (1.2.247, 1.2.245). The incensed Prospero becomes abusive—Césaire's Prospero is *sarcastic*, not abusive—and threatens him: he is a "malignant thing" (1.2.257), a "dull thing" (1.2.285), whom Sycorax confined in a "cloven pine" (1.2.277), and whom he will "peg" in the "knotty entrails" of an oak if he does not cease his complaints (1.2.295). Shakespeare's Ariel immediately asks for his pardon and promises obedience.

Shakespeare's Prospero is, in my opinion, more brutal, more sadistic, than Césaire's. Caliban is his slave, essential to him for his survival. He cannot do without him for

> he does make our fire,
> Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
> That profit us. (1.2.312-314)

But he never speaks to him without abusing him, insults him and his mother, calls him "poisonous slave" (1.2.320), "filth" (1.2.347), "Hag-seed" (1.2.366).[8] He torments him with "cramps," "[s]ide-stitches" that will "pen" his "breath up," and pinches that sting and are "As thick as honeycomb" (1.2.326-330), torments, Lamming reminds us, like those inhuman tortures inflicted on the slaves transported from Africa to the Caribbean, to Haiti (97-98). Despite the unendurable suffering to which Caliban is subjected, however, he stands up to Prospero, remains defiant, and in Lamming's words, "the spirit of freedom never deserts him" (101).

Prospero, Caliban states, is a usurper: "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.332-333). Caliban is "all the

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[8] Margaret Atwood's novel, *Hag-Seed: Shakespeare's The Tempest Retold*, was published in 2016. Shakespeare, she said in an interview to *The Guardian*, is her "favourite" author and he is "infinitely interpretable." *Hag-Seed* is set in a prison, and the prisoners, who are being taught *The Tempest* and will act in it, are asked to make a list of the "curse words" used in the play, one of them being "Hag-seed," one of Prospero's insulting names for Caliban. In a sense the prisoners are all Calibans, but the novel focuses not on them but on the producer/director, the Prospero figure who stages the play. And in her book, *Negotiating With the Dead*, while granting that "Caliban is not without insight," Atwood offers a fairly traditional reading of Prospero's character, quite positive, very different from that of Lamming, Césaire or the New Historicists: "Prospero uses his arts […] for purposes of moral and social improvement. That being said it must also be said that Prospero plays God. If you don't happen to agree with him—as Caliban doesn't—you'd call him a tyrant, as Caliban does […] You might also call him a usurper—he's stolen the island from Caliban […] We—the audience—are inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt, and to see him as a benevolent despot. Or we are inclined most of the time" (115).

subjects" that Prospero has "Which first was mine own King" (1.2.342-343). Shakespeare does not use the noun "colonizer" (which was first used in the early 1700s, in 1723 to be exact)) but Prospero behaves like one and uses the methods colonizers used to win other Calibans over. In lines far more poetic and moving than those in *A Tempest*, Caliban describes Prospero's behaviour when he first came to the island:

> When thou cam'st first,
> Thou strok'st me, and made much of me; wouldst give me
> Water with berries in 't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee,
> And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle. (1.2.333-338)

The giving of water with berries in it, the stroking, the teaching of words, established a bond between them, and Caliban feels abandoned, and Prospero's subsequent treatment of him, his being "sty[ed]" in a hard rock, seems an utter betrayal.

Prospero ascribes this altered treatment to Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda. Césaire's Caliban scoffs at the charge: "Rape! Rape!" and puts the blame on Prospero: "Listen, you old goat, you're the one who put those dirty thoughts in my head" (1.2.19). He implies that Prospero, obsessed with the fear of miscegenation, warned him against any such attempt and took the pre-emptive step of imprisoning him in a rock. Lamming dismisses it as a "Lie" but Shakespeare's Caliban does not deny the accusation; he says it was prevented, but

> would 't had been done! […]
> I had peopled else
> This isle with Calibans. (1.2.350-352)

Lamming, contradicting his earlier comment, wonders whether this reveals a "political intention," whether Caliban means that, had he succeeded, he might have increased the population, and "have numbers on his side" to "organise resistance against this obscene, and selfish monster" (102).

At this point Miranda enters the discussion and, as critics beginning with Dryden have noted, uncharacteristically attacks Caliban in language that echoes Prospero's but also uses racist slurs: he is an "Abhorred slave," "a thing most brutish," a member of a "vile race" (1.2.352, 1.2.358, 1.2.359), who deserves more than imprisonment. And Caliban replies:

> You taught me language; and my profit on 't
> Is, I know to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (1.2.364-366)

Sarnecki declares that "Caliban uses Prospero's own language to denounce him, to show his contempt for him, and to demonstrate that he understands the full extent of what Prospero has done to him" (279). And commenting on the lines, Greenblatt states:

> [the] retort might be taken as self-indictment: even with the gift of language, his nature is so debased that he can only learn to curse. But the lines refuse to mean this; what we experience instead is a sense of their devastating justness. Ugly, rude, savage, Caliban […] achieves for an instant an absolute if intolerably bitter moral victory. […] a momentary victory that is, quite simply, an assertion of inconsolable human pain. (25-26)

Greenblatt sees the imposition of a foreign tongue as a violation from which Caliban, the colonized, will never recover. He does concede, however, that "The rich irreducible concreteness of the verse compels us to acknowledge the independence and integrity of Caliban's construction of reality" (31). Lamming puts it much more strongly and points out that the "gift" of language transforms Caliban, it is a tool of advancement, and makes him "aware of possibilities" (109). At the same time, however, he observes that Prospero believes that "Caliban can learn so much and no more. […] Language […] is the very prison in which Caliban's achievement will be realised and restricted." It "will not allow his expansion beyond a certain point" (110). Critiquing Lamming, Janheinz Jahn states that the former sees Caliban as no more than a "child of Nature" (15), whereas he "is also a part of a culture, a different culture unfamiliar to Prospero" (240). Sycorax's "powers, the voices, the instruments and the riches that drop in dreams […] form a culture," a point I have made earlier in the article. Caliban must "consciously recognize it. He does this through language, Prospero's language, for he possesses no other" (241). But "in the process," Jahn continues and makes the crucial point, "*the language is transformed* [emphasis added], acquiring different meanings which Prospero never expected […] Caliban breaks out of the prison of Prospero's language" (242). *It becomes his own* and he is able not only to curse but also to express his inwardness and connectedness with the island he loves:

> The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> [. . . . .
> . . . .] And then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open, and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd,
> I cried to dream again. (3.2.135-143)

"[M]ultilinguism" and "multiculturalism," to use Sarnecki's words, replace monolingualism and monoculturalism (282). It is not only in "Césaire's re-fashioning," then, that "Caliban is no longer a caricature of the savage" (Davis 161). He is not a caricature of the savage in Shakespeare's play either.

Shakespeare's Caliban, Lamming comments, tends to take people at face value. He is "the epitome of a pure and uncalculated naivete" (114) and opens himself to Trinculo and Stephano as whole-heartedly as he did to Prospero. He does not see that they are, as Lamming calls them, "scum," and plots "revolution with them" (115). At the end he is ashamed of himself for taking a "drunkard for a god" and worshipping a "dull fool" (5.1.297-298), and in complete contrast to Césaire's Caliban, is contrite and will "seek for grace" (5.1.296).

Prospero continues to regard him as "a thing of darkness" (5.1.275), "disproportion'd" in "manners" and "shape" (5.1.291-292). He can generously forgive his brother who usurped his dukedom and whom he barely prevents from killing Alonso and Gonzalo, but he cannot forgive Caliban whose island he has taken from him. He gets into a "passion" and is "distemper'd" when he remembers Caliban's conspiracy (4.1.143, 4.1.145). Is it "ingratitude that bothers Prospero," Lamming asks, or "the shattering kind of self-knowledge […] that he really deserves such ingratitude?" (116). The knowledge that he has been indifferent, callous, has exploited Caliban and then abandoned and betrayed him?

Césaire's play ends, as we have seen, equivocally, on a questioning note: "I offer no solution," Césaire says. "The function of a work of art is to state a problem—and that's all" (qtd. in Belhassen 177). Lamming suggests that Shakespeare's play, too, is open-ended: "the Epilogue […] reminds us that the Voyage is not over. Indeed, we are right back where we started" (96).[9] There are notes struck that are reminiscent of Césaire's conclusion. Prospero's strength is "most faint" so he "must be here confin'd by you, / Or sent to Naples;" and he pleads,

> Let me not,
> […] dwell
> In this bare island by your spell;
> But release me from my bands (Epilogue: 3-9).

Will he reach Milan? Will he retire? And where, Lamming wonders, is "our excluded Caliban? And what fearful truth will Caliban discover now the world he prized has abandoned him to the solitude of his original home?" (96).

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[9] So do Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan. They, however, see Prospero "In his final words [erasing] the distinction between actor and audience, island world and our world" (5).

Caliban remains alone on the Island as he was before Prospero arrived. He has been "excluded" from the company and the voyage back to Naples. But would he want to be included? Does he at any point show that he "prized" the world Prospero created? After the mistreatment he has undergone, would he feel "abandoned"? The "foreign appropriation," as Lamming calls it (96), is over. He is where he was, on the island, he now has access to the *whole* of it, and it is his again. He has no master; he is his own master. He is free and will have to determine what freedom is and decide what he will do with that freedom.

The title, *The Tempest*, highlights, I believe, the theme I have been outlining in the paper. It refers to the tempest of Colonization, the whole colonial enterprise which shook and damaged so much of the non-Western world. Ariel's account of the wreck of Alonso's ship, Lamming says, "appropriately parallel[s] […] the unforgettable transport of slaves from Africa to the Caribbean" (97). Like Caliban, Alden Vaughan states, colonized people were

> disinherited, exploited, and subjugated. Like him
> they learned a conqueror's language and perhaps
> his values. Like him, they endured enslavement
> and contempt by European usurpers and eventually
> rebelled. (247)

A Tempest, as I have tried to point out, leans heavily on the original which is as radical in some ways as Césaire's play. The latter is "the point of view of the loser," "the viewpoint of the colonized" not the "colonizer," but then is *The Tempest* entirely the "viewpoint" of the "colonizer"? Current readings of the play are possible because it lends itself to these readings.

Shakespeare saw the beginnings of the colonial enterprise. He could only divine what might happen. He was "prophetic" not "descriptive." Césaire, writing at a time when several colonies had gained independence and others were struggling for it, had the benefit of witnessing the phenomenon, seeing successes and failures before him. He saw the disappointing outcomes of the movements for liberation in Haiti and the Congo and other former colonies which resulted in further exploitation and the tyranny of neo-colonialism. His Caliban wants real freedom, freedom in every way, safeguards that will ensure that people will never again be tyrannized, exploited, or subjugated.

The title, *A Tempest*, Sarnecki says, is related to Caliban's being "an ally of the natural world […] Storms are not an end in themselves […] they are part of an ongoing process […] destruction and renewal" (283). It is, as I have tried to indicate, far more and more blatantly, political. Césaire's play is modestly entitled *A Tempest*. It describes *one* struggle for freedom. And it is FREEDOM, spelled in capital letters, not mere independence, that is the goal.

There will continue to be tempests, tempests in countries and states all over the world, tempests raised by all marginalized and enslaved groups and communities, so that everyone, everywhere, will experience and enjoy FREEDOM HI-DAY.

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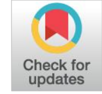

Thomas Clayton*

"Yet in His Idle Fire:" Once More unto the Bertram and *All's Well*

Abstract: As a bitter comedy, a dark comedy, and a problem play (all of these so-called), *All's Well* has suffered both neglect in the theater for most of its post-creation existence, and vilification from critics for over two centuries, especially in the twentieth. As a result, it is seldom taught and therefore even less often read. More's the pity, since the real *All's Well* is a most entertaining and otherwise rewarding play to experience in the theater and in the study, and far above its traditional status as a disappointment and even "a seedy, seamy affair." The conventional misreadings center on Bertram, the notorious bed-trick, the ending, and the tonality of the whole. The purpose here is to set these to rights and Helena into perspective as the script seems to present them, and identify this play as a special kind of near-romantic comedy that manages its dramatic vicissitudes so well that *All's Well* ends well indeed.

Keywords: *All's Well That Ends Well*, Bertram, festive comedy, fertility rites, page versus stage.

An epigraph from *All's Well* used in the June 1978 *Folger Library Newsletter*,

> … the time will bring on summer
> When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns,
> And be as sharp as sweet, (4.4.31-33)

gives rare emphasis to the sunny side of the briar patch. For "the reminder that *All's Well* is indeed a comedy is not unnecessary" (482), as Muriel St. Clare Byrne wrote in an admirable review of Tyrone Guthrie's hearty production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1959. *All's Well* is no more a bitter comedy than good girl gets middling boy is a cosmic anomaly, much less inevitably a tragedy. However, arguments to this effect have been too infrequent to deliver *All's Well*

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from the cellarage of its confinement by tradition, consensus, and teleological convenience. Even if it is brought forth from time to time to be judged anew as of old, to paraphrase Dr. Johnson of Bertram, the play has been "dismissed to darkness." Some mostly negative commentary includes essays by Martin Holmes (1972), Anne Barton (1974), John M. Love (1977), and Nicholas Brooke (1978), and a telling comment on a Stratford, Ontario, production in the Spring 1978 in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. The present essay stands in opposition, and I hope there will be others, though the critical history of the past two centuries (and decades) hardly gives one cause to be sanguine, despite the ample modern way-paving by both Byrne and Joseph G. Price in *The Unfortunate Comedy.*

The mighty opposites of the conventional contention are Dr. Johnson, as father of the sons of darkness, and Coleridge for the sons of light, and they are admirable epitomists. First, Dr. Johnson, in 1765:

> I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram; a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who marries Helen as a coward and leaves her as a profligate; when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness. (84)

Now Coleridge, in 1833:

> I cannot agree with the solemn abuse which the critics have poured out upon Bertram. … He was a young nobleman in feudal times, just bursting into manhood, with all the feelings of pride of birth and appetite for pleasure and liberty natural to such a character so circumstanced. Of course, he had never regarded Helena otherwise than as a dependent in the family; and of all that which she possessed of goodness and fidelity and courage, which might atone for her inferiority in other respects, Bertram was necessarily in a great measure ignorant. And after all, her *prima facie* merit was the having inherited a prescription from her old father the Doctor by which she cures the King—a merit which supposes an extravagance of personal loyalty in Bertram to make conclusive to him in such a matter as that of taking a wife. Bertram had surely good reason to look upon the King's forcing him to marry Helen as a very tyrannical act.[1] (253-254)

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[1] Holmes emphasizes the potential tyranny in the obliquely negative treatment, as he sees it, of the institution and practices of the Court of Wards: "… in his [Shakespeare's] treatment of Bertram, and still more in the king, he contrives to show that the trouble is not the fault of the people concerned, but of the anachronism which they have to operate, or which does its part, by its influence, to make them what they are" (91).

As often, the difference of opinion centers on Bertram, whom Johnson could not reconcile his heart to, but he did not find *All's Well* gloomy. As Jonson observes, "This play has many delightful scenes, though not sufficiently probable, and some happy characters, though not new. … Parolles is a boaster and a coward, such as has always been the sport of the stage, but perhaps never raised more laughter or contempt than in the hands of Shakespeare" (84).

The inherited contention is interestingly expounded in a pair of discussions of *All's Well* in the theater, where it is frequently said to play much better than it reads in the study, a state of affairs always inviting some rethinking in the study. First, Muriel St. Clare Byrne (1959), who begins:

> It is ironical to reflect that this so-called "bitter comedy", one of the least liked and least known of the plays, has now been introduced to a mass-audience, who have possibly never heard of it and almost certainly never read it, as a play written to delight and entertain in a theater. Many thousands of these lucky people now start off with the right idea, like Bankside audiences who recognized that a play was a play and did not confuse it with the sermon at Paul's. They are not a coterie for plays unpleasant, any more than Shakespeare's audience was. (556)

And, written about two decades later, the comment on a production at Stratford, Ontario:

> "*All's Well*," lamented the *New York Post*, was "done as if it were one of the problem plays." Would that it had been. For some years now the problem plays have been encroaching on the romantic comedies; in David Jones's production matters went the other way. … Nicholas Pennell resisted the general wholesomeness, but he located a certain charm in Bertram, and his final "If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, / I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly" seemed without reservation. A happy end, then, that took the title at face value. But in this concept there is no place for Lavatch the bitter fool. … For all its individual excellences, therefore, … I found the production unsatisfying. *All's Well* is a seedy, seamy affair, and David Jones resolutely turned his back on the blacker elements of the play. (Berry 222)

Or perhaps, as Guthrie had seen it, he saw it free of hoodwinking preconceptions.

In the present essay I want to comment on several aspects of the text and critical and theatrical contexts of *All's Well* that bear on our understanding of the play and invite a critical reorientation. I cannot sufficiently emphasize the need for detailed analysis, because, being unfashionable in recent years in overreaction against New Criticism (note those "no explication" signs at sundry journal doors), it is all the more needed to question the stock impressionisms that constitute the litany of orthodox maledictions. For example, of Bertram's

exposure in 5.3 one reads: “he turns and twists, lies and calumniates, providing an entirely realistic demonstration of just how far he can go in prevarication and meanness,” etc. (Barton 502). I have been tempted to make a collection of the unheroic epithets accorded the luckless Bertram over the years, but I leave that for the future, or to some other candidate for the company of collectors in the *Dunciad.* A few lines later the same writer adds: “In terms of psychological truth, there is no more reason for Bertram to accept Helena because of the bed-trick than because of the miraculous healing of the King” (Barton 502). This seems to me peremptory and gratuitous. Without suggesting the preeminence of country matters in the case, I should suggest that there is, in the ramifications of the bed-trick, one of the more usual if not better reasons on earth; and that there is a world of difference for Bertram between the King’s miraculous healing (three cheers! of course) and his own amorous experience, which he might care to spend a lifetime sharing.

As Muriel St. Clare Byrne comments, Guthrie’s production, and the ages’ audiences suggest, there must be institutional obstacles to seeing such plays steady and seeing them whole, and it is not difficult to suggest pertinent teleological fallacies. The most usual, perhaps, involve the searches for high seriousness, for a play’s genre and place in a subset of a large canon like Shakespeare’s; for a particular quality according with its chronological place and its real or fancied affinities with plays supposed written just before and after; and for an inferred Shakespearean version of the satirical thrust in much contemporary Jacobethan literature. But there is an entropic effect in the resulting certitudes. Who does not read Aristotle’s comment—out of context—on the evolution of tragedy with something of a sinking heart? “Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped” (*Poetics* 4.12; 1449a: 14-15).

Such teleologies have passed through good evidence and sound reasoning to a persuasive chronology, and even to a well-ordered canon of types of drama, from the early (and romantic) comedies through the joyous comedies and dark comedies to the romances; for example—a representation that has been modified only somewhat by C. L. Barber’s study of *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy.* But the comforts of convenience and established order have negative aspects of complacency and worse. The short of it all is that much of what continues to be said about *All’s Well* owes less to fresh observation of the play than to its well- or rather ill-established status, even caste, as an inferior, largely, and for many, just as well unread, dark or bitter comedy and problem play written in 1602-04 as the second member of a quasi-trilogy, with its predecessor, *Troilus and Cressida,* and its successor, *Measure for Measure,* both superior. In other words, a born-again loser. To my way of reading, as well as Guthrie’s way of producing, there is something definitely amiss in that dismissal; but *All’s Well’s* history has established it as a play that more than most lives a double life,

of Jekyll (when it is lucky) on the stage and of Hyde in the study, where it is rendered monstrous by critics considering too curiously. A game of seek and Hyde, it would appear.

Whatever the final judgement, the usual points of disagreement are well within the range of mortal ken: they are the character of Bertram, the bed-trick, the particular question whether the play ends well, and the general question of its predominating tone or, in R. A. Foakes's useful term and notion, *tonality*, which he defines as "the dramatic shaping of the action, or what I sometimes call the tonality of the play, the pattern of expectations established by the sum of relations existing between the parts of the action at any given point" (5). In *Comedy High and Low* Maurice Charney identifies one of the sources of contention: "It is unfashionable… to resist the proposition that all comedy aspires to the condition of tragedy. We must reject the glib assumption that comedy is a lesser form of art and experience that somehow needs to be ennobled and completed by tragedy. Dramatic criticism usually hunts out ways in which comedy may lay claim to darker overtones and a tragic coloring. Shakespeare's 'problem' *comedies—Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, All's Well That Ends Well—are* conventionally praised for the wrong reasons, and their supposed resemblance to tragedy immediately elevates their status in the Shakespearean canon" (Charney 174-175). In many a current view of Shakespeare's comedies, the plays are like Frost's woods, "lovely, dark, and deep," and lovely because dark and deep, the darker the deeper, and the lovelier.

Obviously, one might begin to restore the balance to our perspective by taking some account of *All's Well* as comical comedy. Whether comedy is "between" romance and satire, as Northrop Frye says it is, its association with risibility persists in all but the most somber treatments of the subject. And—Charney again—, "Just as tragedies end in death, so comedies typically end in marriage" (88), which for long was thought the type of the happy ending, not a prelude to divorce. What makes a traditional comedy a *fête accomplie* is a pleasing ending in the same key as its major antecedents, such that the whole is a harmony of varied and generally agreeable parts.[2] *All's Well* is such a comedy: it ends well in keeping with promises made earlier, and it is predominantly agreeable in design, controls, and effect. We might even take a measure by seeing what proportion of it is—yes—"funny;" that is, how much of it is downright, laughter-inducing, amusing, or wry. One can hardly be exact in such matters, but I found that some 38-42% of its 3,013 lines are individually or cumulatively comic in the generally understood sense of the term. By contrast, for example, with so comical a comedy as *The Comedy of Errors,* with 46% of its 1,787 lines comical, and a *great* deal of its humor in stage-business

[2] I leave out of consideration "black" comedy and other kinds with modifying terms, which speak for themselves.

and sight-gags. Therefore, there is substantial comic matter in thirteen to sixteen, and in the longer, of its twenty-three scenes, by contrast with ten of eleven scenes in *The Comedy of Errors*; and there is particularly concentrated comedy later in the play, in act 4, with the crushing of Parolles by a plot.

I am well aware that this is deep—or shallow—water, but readers of good will may be prepared to look at the play again on the basis of so quixotic and provocative a tilting.[3] By this measure, if sound, *All's Well* contains almost a third more comic dialogue than *Errors*. If *All's Well* seems substantially less comic than *Errors,* it is partly because the humor is not so broad. Moreover, much of *All's Well* that is not directly comic is concerned with the romantic girl-and-boy-get-each-other plot that is both primary and developed in extenso; the counterpart in *Errors* is rudimentary. *All's Well* in fact has pronounced affinities with a number of plays it is not usually compared with, except invidiously. When looked at up-close, it will be seen to be funny first and, often, "serious" only as virtually nothing comic fails to contain a serious component, correlative, or implication: life is no laughing matter, but local tonality is a matter of relative balance and immediate effect, not of residual contemplative value. Finally, the comedy in *All's Well* is distributed throughout a long play, despite the concentration in act 4, and it is found in every act. It begins in 1.1, with Parolles's and Helena's colloquy on virginity, a subject still serious in most perspectives, but with fine potentialities for comical excess. For example, while writing this essay I ran across the following opening in a newspaper column: "On the first day of eighth grade Pat Fertig announced that, in furtherance of her firm intention to be a virgin bride, she would no longer occupy a desk adjacent to that of Murchison the magician. 'His voice has changed,' Pat declared. 'That means puberty (Pat's father was a doctor) and I'm looking out for Number One. It's a challenge Murchison couldn't ignore. He's swiped everything else I own'" (Batson 1B). If the three scenes I allow to be doubtful are as comic as I think they are (2.1; 4.2, the seduction scene; and 5.3, the concluding scene), then the play *ends* with a considerable comic flourish, too, even without taking into account the epilogue, as practically no one does and I therefore mean to be.[4]

How *pervasively* droll *All's Well's* comic goings-on can be is all too often neglected or even unnoticed. For example, in an instance of the intermittent burlesque of affected courtly conversation that so well suits a play in part on *gentilesse* 2.2, entirely a comic duologue between the Countess and the

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[3] I find comic matter in the following scenes of *AWW* (* = entire comic scenes; [ ] = scenes many do not find comic): 1.1, 3; 2.[1], 2*, 3-4; 3.2, 5, 6*; 4.1*, [2], 3, 5; 5.2, [3]. By acts I find numbers of comic lines as follows: 202 in act 1, 330-79 in 2, 152 in 3, 410-86 in 4, and 52 in 5 (excluding scene 3, much of which others find comic, too, however), for a total of 1,158+ comic lines.

[4] Prominently comic are 2/3 of act 1, 4/5 or all 5 of act 2, 3/7 of act 3, 3/5 or 4/5 of act 4, and 1/3 or 2/3 of act 5. 2.2, 3.6, and 4.1 are entirely comic.

Clown, begins with thematic matter: "Come on, sir; I shall now put you to the height of your breeding (2.2.1-2)."[5] The Clown says he has, by way of serviceable courtly conversation, "an answer that will serve all men" (2.2.12-13), and invites the Countess to question him; first, "ask me if I am a courtier" (2.2.35). To her every question he then replies "O Lord, sir" (2.2.40; 43; 45; 47; 52; 57), with varying gestures and inflections. A stock comic catechism, in design. What gives it special piquancy (and also didactic force) is the following scene, where, amid the talk of Helena's miraculous cure of the King, Parolles inadvertently plays the clown to Bertram and Lafew's interlocutor. Whatever their observations, he portentously puts in, "So say I" (2.3.11), "Right; so I say" (2.3.13), "So say I" (2.3.15), "So would I have said" (2.3.19), and so on.

This buffoonery is wonderfully ludicrous in context, and is also a type of much successful yespersonship in real life that consists in reflexive and liturgical assents of no more content. Nor is that the last of it. In 4.3, at the height of his baiting and the point of his unhooding, hearing his captor's command, "Come, headsman, off with his head" (4.3.298), Parolles exclaims, "O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!" (4.3.299). Aside from whatever he may have contributed to the epigrammatic bravado of Patrick Henry, Parolles's feverish "O Lord, sir" has a comical Shakespearean trenchancy and breadth of the play's very own, one fully prepared for in 2.2-3.

All's Well is a fusion of romance and realism, folklore and factuality, magic and pragmatics, in which Helena, the poor but artful physician's daughter, is the central figure who wins a husband twice, once in form by curing the ailing King and again in fact by turning a trick that fulfills a nearly impossible condition. To her good angel and Parolles's bad, Bertram is a rebellious Morality Everyboy who comes to show executive and military skill ("leadership ability") in his flight from the miseries of enforced marriage and is reconciled to his imaginative and energetic wife all but in spite of himself at play's end. The play is also something of a *Bildungs-spiel* in court, and courtiership, implicitly for Helena (at A level), explicitly for Bertram (at O level), who is pointedly given the character of an "unseason'd courtier" early in scene 1. The vicissitudinous romance is the primary plot, and Bertram is the fly in the web or, as many think, the ointment. Aside from these formal identities, however, Bertram is something of an enigma, and his character, significance, and value in the play are the major bone of contention for almost all contenders.

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[5] The text cited is Hunter's New Arden edition. References to acts, scenes and lines will be given parenthetically in the text. The usual speech-prefix for Lavatch (Lavache) —a name used only once in the text, at 5.2.1—is "Clown," which suggests a different characterization from that of "Lavatch the bitter fool" typically found in dark readings of the play. It might be of interest in this connection that in recent colloquial Parisian usage, "*vachement bien*" is a phrase of approval.

A major source of difficulty is that Bertram is not among the primary characters in exposure and dialogue as he is in psychology, plot, and station. The spotlight of the play is rather on Helena, and after her on others well before it falls on Bertram. His position in *All's Well* is very much like that of Cressida—as Troilus's is of Helena—in *Troilus and Cressida*, structurally, and some elementary statistics suggest more affinity otherwise between *All's Well* and *Troilus* than between *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure,* with which it is usually mated—because of the shared bed-trick, usually.[6] Although Bertram has his proponents, including me, none is prepared to claim more for him than partial achievement and maturity, and the promise of much more, at play's end, not even Albert Howard Carter writing "In Defense of Bertram"—unfortunately (and unnecessarily) at Helena's expense (23). Arguments in favor of a potentially worthy—and comic—Bertram are basically three. First, that the shortcomings of adolescence—especially fictional aristocratic and fairy-tale adolescence—are not mortal sins. Byrne speaks to this:

> Edward de Souza's Edwardian Bertram's appearance and manner are exactly right—the right kind of male good looks, very, very young, still with undergraduate-level masculine and aristocratic self-conceit, cut exactly to the conventional pattern, as gullible and selfish as they come, the type that is always taken in by knowingness, the flattering and the man-of-the-world swagger of a Parolles and mentally about twenty years younger than Helena. He has a case—the case of the young, coerced male. It is possible that young William Shakespeare knew something of this resentment, by experience as well as observation. Mr. de Souza and his producer make such case as there is. He is too normal to be basically unlikeable: one simply has to wait for him to grow up. We see the beginning of this chastening process—no more. … (Byrne 562)

The association of Bertram's with Shakespeare's youthful situation is daring and brilliant, and, I think, a suggestion also apt.

The second argument is that sketching Bertram as a somewhat shadowy secondary places the focus on Helena, whose strength, virtues, and percipience

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[6] I give here the figures for these three plays and *Othello* (percentage of words):

Tro.			*AWT*	*MM*			*Oth.*
Troilus	**15.5**	**16**	**Helena**	**Duke**	**31**	**32.5**	**Iago**
Ulysses	14	13	Parolles	Isabella	14	24	Othello
Pandarus	12	13	King	Angelo	11	10.5	Desdemona
Thersites	9	10	Lafew	Lucio	11	7.5	Cassio
Cressida	**8**	9.5	Countess	Escalus	6.5	7	Emilia
Hector	6	**9**	**Bertram**	Pompey	6	4	Brabantio
	64.5	70.5			79.5	85.5	

compel a benefit of doubt in favor of her love of Bertram, confer an imputed grace upon him, and invite us to act in the spirit of her own acceptance of Parolles: she *knows* "him a notorious liar, / Think[s] him a great way fool, solely a coward" (1.1.98-99); yet as she says, "I love him for his [Bertram's] sake" (1.1.97).

The third argument follows from the second: virtually everyone in and out of the play comes to know Parolles for a fool and coward, including himself, and treats him accordingly. By contrast, Bertram's youthful faults are shown glittering and seen for what they are, and all the virtuous principals hold him dear and retain or even enlarge their hopes for him. As Jay L. Halio puts it, "all evidence indicates our acceptance of Bertram at the end is intended" (43).

Two prominent means by which Shakespeare *dramatically* justifies Bertram are (1) a very important boys-will-be-boys speech by Helena and pattern of reinforcement related to it; and (2) the calculated credibility of Diana's "lightness" that makes Bertram's alarums and excursions in Act V far less reprehensible than they are usually made out to be; in fact, in such half realistically, half comically bizarre circumstances, even reasonable. The first naturalizes his giving a treasured family heirloom for a song, or entertainment rather better; the second makes him a youth apparently as much sinned against as sinning, and very comically so. Helena to Diana's mother, the Widow (3.7.17-28):

> The count he woos your daughter,
> Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,
> Resolv'd to carry; let her in fine consent
> As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it.
> Now his important blood will naught deny
> That she'll demand; a ring the county wears
> That downward hath succeeded in his house
> From son to son some four or five descents
> Since the first father wore it. This ring he holds
> In most rich choice; yet, in his idle fire,
> To buy his will it would not seem too dear,
> Howe'er repented after.

This speech is a sharp instrument for undoing some of the knots in the mingled yarn of *All's Well*, not least in the unobtrusive siege imagery that is more than conventionally Petrarchan in this context, where it identifies one order of attempted conquest with another and helps to balance out their psychological kinship, if not their credit, in youthful Renaissance endeavor. Most important—for us in effect—is Helena's understanding and acceptance of Bertram's readiness to yield the ring for pleasure, "Howe'er repented after" (3.7.28).

The attitude speaks for itself as the play's, as well as Helena's, since she is both ethically normative and psycho-dramatically the thrice-aggrieved party:

abandoned, confronted with Bertram's favors proffered to another, and obliged to seek her rights by feigning another's wrongs. She takes it all cheerfully, and she designs, directs, stage-manages, and acts the business of the bed-trick in the same spirit. This treatment makes the bed-trick welcome and allows it to be amusing first and touching later. She knows her histrionic craft and "female wiles" well, and communicates conviction succinctly: "let her [Diana] in fine consent / As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it" (3.5.19-20). A point to be made in this connection is that, while Bertram's self-abandon is related to the spirit of "lust in action" in Sonnet 129 and the "*young* affects" Othello says are "defunct" in him, it is broadly comedized throughout the play, which makes a partly mocking celebration of the sexual senses and their mores in relation both to national customs and to the cunning of the sexes as traditionally viewed.

The sequence of comic events centering on the bed-trick has its initiation in 2.1, its detailed preparation in 3.5 and 3.7, its metabasis in the seduction scene (4.2), its climactic comic incident in the off-stage bedding of the lovers (between 4.2 and 4.3), and its frantic denouement in 5.3, when "wronged" mother and daughter arrive at Rousillion to betray Bertram's tilth and husbandry, and everyone is finally made to see the light on Helena's arrival.[7] (It may not be coincidental that ἑλένη is a torch.) This sequence is not strictly a plot, but it is an interwoven course of centrally important events, and failure to recognize and read it as such is a primary source of misunderstanding both of the tonality of the entire play and of Bertram's place in it. In brief, what happens is this. Bertram and we—playfully—are prepared to see Italian girls as especially guileful, for early on the King warns,

> Those girls of Italy, take heed of them;
> They say our French lack language to deny
> If they demand; beware of being captives
> Before you serve.
>
> (2.1.19-22)

Bertram is presented as a lusty, red-blooded young French lord who "corrupts a well-derived nature" with "the inducement" of Parolles, "a very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness" (3.2.87-89). In Florence, with the Pandarous assistance and direction of Parolles, he attempts to seduce a young Florentine woman, Diana. He is at first unsuccessful, but on giving her a ring "in his idle fire" (3.7.26) she "in fine consents" (3.7.19), and he is at once given an appointment and instructions for an assignation that is duly kept and enthusiastically

[7] The following scenes and lines, especially, constitute or bear on this sequence: 2.1.19-22, 3.2.87-89, 3.5.1-100 (entire), 3.6.106-12, 3.7.1-47 (entire), 4.2.1-75 (the seduction scene, entire), 4.3.13-33 and 88-94, 4.4.1-36 (entire), 5.1.1-38 (indirectly: Helena's progress), and 5.3 passim.

conducted. From Diana's Eve-like "sweet reluctant amorous delay," followed by her ready willingness to go to bed with him on payment of a ring, Bertram would have reason to suppose her a super-subtle Florentine and "common gamester of the camp" (5.3.187) from whom for a priceless ring he "had that which any inferior might / At market-price have bought," as he later explains (5.3.217-218).

In act V (again at Helena's instigation and direction), Diana and the widow arrive at Rousillion to claim Bertram as obligated fiancé, and he might well suppose he was being trapped and in danger of being victimized for life by whore and bawd intent upon making their fortune through his husbandry. He reacts accordingly, and in time even the King is brought to see Diana as a "common gamester" (5.3.187), at which point Helena arrives and saves the day she scripted for the purpose. These dizzying forthrights and meanders are typical Shakespearean end-play *Rashomon*isms, and we are tacitly invited to learn from them as well as be taken in by them, even like the characters themselves. The unraveling of deceptive complications is always epistemologically enlightening as well as immediately satisfying. In 3.7, Helena's assurances and counsel to the widow prepare us fully for the seduction scene and the bed-trick:

> … it is no more
> But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
> Desires this ring; appoints him an encounter;
> In fine, delivers me to fill the time. (3.7.30-33)

And the widow is convinced:

> I have yielded.
> Instruct my daughter how she shall persever
> That time and place with this deceit so lawful
> May prove coherent. (3.7.36-39)

Thus, the very seduction scene itself is or can be finely comic, and the bed-trick, so far from being the squalid tryst at the center of "a seedy, seamy affair" it is often made out to be, is in retrospect a wholly pleasing—if partly inadvertent—honeymoon. In any case, the imagination must supply the gestures and the values, for this is off-stage business but Helena surely supplies the key in her latterly "O my good lord, when I was like this maid / I found you wondrous kind" (5.3.303-304).

The seduction scene (4.2) is, in fact, a masterpiece of mockery of amorous behavior of various kinds, and effects a wonderful crossing of purposes. It begins with "They told me that your name was Fontybell" (4.2.1). We do not know who "they" is, but they sound like military boasters and traducers, and we have no reason to suppose that Bertram is making this up. It is a touch of the "stag-party set-up," in Byrne's phrase (567). Did Parolles tell him that her

name was Fontybell, et cetera? Very like him to do so, since he "reports but coarsely" of Helena (3.5.57). Bertram's attempted seduction is full of pseudo-commitments of a kind well understood by the women of the play:

> My mother told me just how he would woo
> As if she sat in's heart. She says all men
> Have the like oaths. He had sworn to marry me
> When his wife's dead. … (4.2.69-72)

and Diana's responses could easily be taken as a tactically delaying come-on. On Bertram's part, the emotional tone of the scene is one of rising eagerness, from "How have I sworn!" (4.2.20) to the coquettish fencing over the ring, which he tries to hold back because it is "an honour 'longing to our house" (4.2.42). But, when she replies, "Mine honour's such a ring; / My chastity's the jewel of our house" (4.2.45-46), potentially with seductive overtones and gestures, Bertram is conquered merely: "Here, take my ring; / My house, mine honour, yea my life be thine, / And I'll be bid by thee" [! surely] (4.2.51-53). The stage-comic possibilities of these lines of surrender are rich indeed, and it is surprising that editors seem so easily to resist at least one exclamation point (*The Riverside Shakespeare* has one in "ring!"). As soon as the ring is given, Diana is brisk and professional: "When midnight comes, knock at my chamber window; / I'll order take my mother shall not hear" (4.2.54-55), and so on; and Bertram has only one more—enraptured—line in the scene: "A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee" (4.2.66), at which point in Guthrie's production Guthrie "was prepared to commit himself to" the widow's "gorgeous, absent-minded automatic" "'Enter with a glass of milk'" (Byrne 567), a refreshment of Guthrie's invention more or less at the opposite end of a dish of prunes. In the play as written, the widow plays no such part, and Diana's bitter-sweet soliloquy balances delicately between a touching disillusion and comical hyperbole. It is not long before the King is seeking a husband for Diana, who here says "Marry that will, I live and die a maid" (4.2.74).

Seeking fun with Fontybell in Florentine Diana's arms, Bertram finds his unknown-lawful satisfaction with Helena his wife, unknown to be herself. After the encounter, in 4.4 Helena looks at once ahead and back in a reflective speech that is the complement of her "idle fire" speech. Especially striking is the subtle association of heaven itself with the bed-trick, as Diana assures the widow,

> Doubt not but heaven
> Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,
> As it hath fated her to be my motive
> And helper to a husband; (4.4.18-21)

Certainly, heaven helps those who help themselves, we note, but the rhetorical effect of the association remains. She goes on to reflect upon a paradox that effectively justifies Bertram's misconduct by the miscarriage of his wicked intention and his obliviously happy fulfillment of her coalescent virtuous one:

> … O strange men!
> That can such sweet use make of what they hate,
> When saucy trusting of the cozen'd thoughts
> Defiles the pitchy night; so lust doth play
> With what it loathes for that which is away.
> (4.4.21-25)

A "how understand we that?" speech (1.1.56), at first glance or hearing, if ever there was one, with a gustatory base in "sweet use" (4.4.22) and "saucy trusting" (4.4.23). Sweet and sour sex, in short. Helena is commenting with general reference on Bertram's particular situation, and on the pair of paradoxes proceeding from his imagined adultery with Diana: he gladly made love with Helena unrecognized, whom recognized he hates; and he "defiles the pitchy night" (4.4.24) only by design and supposition, not at all in fact.

Two additional matters that bear significantly on a revised view of the play are Bertram's final couplet and the epilogue. The constructions put on the couplet, "If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, / I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly" (5.3.309-310), would make an interesting study in themselves. The possible variations are legion, but the recurrent themes are two: most commonly, the couplet is taken as arrogant and refractory; rarely, it is received as wondering and reconciliatory. It is virtually impossible not to notice the close parallel between this and the analogous couplet in the seduction scene, "Say thou art mine, and ever / My love as it begins shall so persever" (4.2.36-37), but some see them as alike and negative in implication; some, like me, as contrasting and finally positive. On the negative side, Nicholas Brooke puts it this way, in part: "… the flattened affirmation restores something of the false confidence with which Bertram began this scene, assuring the King of his love for Lafew's daughter; still more, its double (feminine?) rhymes recall the equally awful couplet in which Bertram declared his faith to Diana" just quoted (Brooke 79).

By contrast, Warner Berthoff remarks that Bertram's "final couplet accepting Helena is notorious for appearing to make his submission dependent on still further disclosures. … But I see no reason not to read that 'If' as adjunctive rather than conditional, which changes sense and tone entirely. The lines, moreover, double the rhymed 'ever' of his earlier vow" (345 n23). A sort of middle ground is occupied by Martin Holmes: the couplet "must not come out judicially, as if it were to be followed by the words 'but not otherwise.' … The

one person, it seems, who can explain everything is the much injured but apparently still loving Helena, and it is to her, even while addressing the king, that he appeals for that explanation, of which he is in such desperate need. All is well ended, says the playwright, but if so, it is no thanks to the system"—of the Court of Wards, primarily (Holmes 91).

Though he has its significance wrong, I think, Brooke is right to emphasize the connection—properly seen as one of contrast—between the "vow" made to Diana in the seduction scene, which is manifestly equivocal, and the vow of reconciliation in this very different context, where it is in effect a promissory "Wow!" He is also right to query if not explain "(feminine?)" (Brooke 79). There well may be a designed contrast between the self-indulgent "effeminacy" of Bertram's earlier willful conduct and deceitful wooing of Diana, and his later display of a degree of civilizing "femininity" and surrender when he recognizes that Helena has won, he has "lost" (5.3.62), and both are one. All three of his lines have feminine endings, whereas Helena's enclosing *heroic* couplets—at either side of Bertram's speech—are triumphantly masculine: "this is done; / … you are doubly won" (5.3.307-308) and "If it appear not plain and prove untrue / Deadly divorce step between me and you!" (5.3.311-312).

It will bear and repay notice that there is also a significant parallel between these and "Helena's" earlier lines delivered by Diana in the seduction scene:

> … on your finger in the night I'll put
> Another ring, that what in time proceeds
> May token to the future our past deeds.
> Adieu till then; then, fail not. You have *won*
> A wife of me, though there my hope be *done*.
> (4.2.61-66)

Promise and fulfillment yet once more. A properly comic and romantic finale for a pursuit of the type that used to be expressed with folk-jocularity as "he chased her till she caught him," which, as Byrne hints, was Shakespeare's case with Anne Hathaway. We have the bed-trick added here to complicate the chase, but that is a given fact of fiction.

All's Well ends penultimately with the King's tonic speech and finally with an epilogue that is very much and importantly a *captatio benevolentiae* which unites role-players on and off the stage with genial Shakespearean ambiguities.

> The king's a beggar, now the play is done;
> All is well ended if this suit be won,
> That you express content; which we will pay

> With strife to please you, day exceeding day.
> Ours be your patience then and yours our parts;
> Your gentle hands lend us and take our parts. (Epilogue 1-5)

The charming last line offers a fair exchange, indeed, in a favorite hands-and-hearts conjunction undoubtedly to be sealed by the on- and off-stage business of the player's taking audience hands. Thus, this epilogue ends in much the same spirit, terms, and gestures as *A Midsummer Night's Dream:* "Give me your hands, if we be friends, / And Robin will restore amends" (5.1.423-424). If the fine's the crown, then this cheerful epilogue strongly argues that there should be any but a rueful smile in the countenance of this play.[8]

Two concluding observations seem in order, one general, tonal, and "neoteleological"; the other thematic and structural. The first is that, if *All's Well* is not "strictly" a festive comedy, it is also far more richly entertaining than the dramatic fast it is often made out to be. In a spirit of reconciliation of my own, then, I should suggest that *All's Well* be new-christened a "ferial comedy," with or without its usual siblings, because it is nearer the festive than the fasting and it may as well be calendared as such.

The second is that *All's Well* could be epitomized in the following mythopoetic terms. A fertility rite sets the King's fertility or at least his vitality right, leading to a marital fertility rite infertile until Helena sets her own and Bertram's fertility right by getting herself with child by him, whose wild oats of self-conceit turn out to be fruitfully domestic after all. In this relation, the play's title conceals a significant conundrum conveying the pan-Helenic action, and it helpfully anagrammatizes into a condensed expression of a major causal sequence: all swell that end swell. Fixing the King's fistula as the folk-tale precondition, Helena qualifies for marriage, shares the enjoyment of consummation and conception, in due course becomes great with Bertram's child, and as far as they or we can tell, all yet ends well. That was the end, and that is well. "Whate'er the course, the end is the renown" (4.4.36).

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[8] Eugene M. Waith has an interesting essay on epilogues in "'Give Me Your Hands:' Reflections on the Author's Agents in Comedy" (197-211). MND, *AYL,* and *Tempest* are discussed on pp. 200-04.

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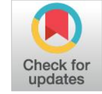

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Aberrant Shakespeare: Ron Athey's Excesses, Bataille's *Solar Anus*, Becomings-Macbeth

Abstract: In this article we argue that Ron Athey's performance *Solar Anus* is an aberrant adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth in which the parodic world of abundant excess that the witches catalyze is redemptively captured and transformed through the playful, androgynous, and excessive performance of Athey, who fulfills the witches' prophecy and continues to live on sovereignly as both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Athey is a Los Angeles-based performance artist who practices what is sometimes called "extreme performance," exploring the limits of aesthetics and the capabilities of the human body to express both beauty and pain. His work *Solar Anus* draws on the works of Georges Bataille, especially his short essay-poem, *Solar Anus*, as well as Paul Molinier, a queer French painter and visual artist who worked on the fringes of the surrealist movement. We work through the combined sociopolitical theory, performance aesthetics, and research methodology of transversal poetics and engage especially with the theories and explorations of aesthetics and sovereignty by Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in order to explore the ways in which Athey is capable of realizing the witches' prophecy of sovereignty without being destroyed by the parodic world that they create and inhabit. Alongside the concepts of sovereignty, we examine how Bataille's ideas of parody, sacrifice, and excess offer new ways of understanding the world of Macbeth and how excess and sovereignty both function within its porous borders.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Adaptation, Ron Athey, Transversal, Care, Surrealism, Macbeth, Bataille, Molinier, Deleuze.

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Excesses of Shakespace

Within and through the historically roiling *articulatory space* of Shakespeare, which is to say, *Shakespace*, surprising assemblages occasionally emerge. Articulatory spaces are fluid multifaceted, primarily abstract, spatiotemporal realms in which ideational streams, discourses, and performances negotiate and aggregate meanings, redefine their trajectories, boundaries, and strategies while orbiting and informing subjects of critical speculation. Shakespace is a particularly powerful articulatory space that intersects with many other articulatory spaces related to or within subjects, events, and themes within popular culture, politics, history, feminism, post-colonialism, Marxism, Christianity, cyberspace, academia, and so on. In effect, Shakespace is often *autopoetic* within the discourses through which it flows and between the various articulatory spaces as it becomes complexly generative and expansively playful.[1]

When autopoietic, Shakespace produces adaptations and parodies of itself within itself. These sometimes appear as *aberrant variations* of official and institutionally accepted articulations of Shakespeare's work. Such aberrant variations are often dismissed as farfetched, absurd or unimportant, and thus relegated to the margins of the official territories occupying and operative within Shakespace. And yet they are used by certain official territories in subversion/ containment fashion to reinforce its boundaries, which is to say, subversive activity is encouraged by *state machinery*—the singular and plural, amalgamated, dynamic interchange of state-supporting forces—only so that dominant structures can demonstrate their repressive power by ultimately suppressing it. *Official territory* is networked state machinery, ruling devices and properties within a society (*sociopolitical conductors*, systems for knowledge transfer, governmental and cultural structures, etc.), whether majorly comprised of dominant cultural components or minoritarian of a subculture or specific institution, that fuse and laminate overlap among subjective territories and provide the rationale, infrastructure, and parameters for that society. In contrast, aberrant variations generate innovative nodals, that is, surprising indeterminate points of connectivity, conduction, and potential on which innumerable themes, subjects, identities, characters, and aesthetics of Shakespace can be noodled—improvised and theorized on to create and cocreate new nodals on which to

[1] Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturna coined the term "autopoiesis" to describe the self-maintenance of cells. It was later adapted by Niklas Luhmann for his systems theory as a way to explain the feedback loops he describes and observes within social phenomena. Here we are informed by its many uses and use it especially to the way in which articulatory spaces are generative within a complex feedback-loop and feed-forward flow with subjective, conceptual, official, and transversal territories.

stabilize or noodle further, however viscerally, intellectually, and electrically (in short, *viscerallectrically*).

Aberrant variations frequently conduct and transform excesses of Shakespace into parodic cosmos like the Shakespearean universe of Troma Entertainment and their films circumnavigating within it, like *Tromeo and Juliet* and *Shakespeare's Shitstorm* in dynamism with *The Toxic Avenger* and *Sgt. Kabukiman*, or Andrew Fleming's *Hamlet 2* (in which Jesus and Hamlet team up to go back in time to save Ophelia), or in The Wooster Group's theatrical adaptations of *Hamlet* (spectrally spoofing John Gielgud's 1964 production with Richard Burton) and *Troilus and Cressida* (*Cry Trojans!*—featuring native Americans played by white people) or in Taylor Mac's "fabulous" sequel to *Titus Andronicus*, *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*. Such *viscerallectric play* operates through the framework of parody that Georges Bataille explains in his essay-poem, "Solar Anus." Parody inverts the order of things and then disarticulates hierarchies such that values become only ephemerally emergent and aleatory—Bataille's "base materialism"—a kind of Bakhtinian "carnivalesque" in which the high and the low, the sun and the anus, sashay in a destabilizing dance of limitless possibility.

Ron Athey's controversial performance, *Solar Anus*, resounds, for us, as an aberrant variation of *Macbeth*, an auto-poetically emergent property of Shakespace mashed up with Baraillespace and productively haunted by the complementarily aberrant, and thus elided, articulatory space of visual artist/photographer Pierre Molinier, famous for his fetishistic composites of erotic imagery. The parodic world of abundant excess that *Macbeth's* Witches catalyze is redemptively captured and transformed through the androgynous expressing, asymptotically transgender performance of Athey. He fulfills the Witches' prophecy and continues to live on as a processual singularity, a Deleuzoguattarian "double-capture" of combined Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Athey's is not a utopic redemption, but is instead an immanent one that allows for a playful, if often brutally beautiful, existence within a parodic world of base materialism that does away with the idealist concepts and practices characteristic of official territory. This *immanent redemption* ironically also allows for the radical sovereignty that the Macbeths so desperately seek, which allows Athey's character to become anything and everything he desires, including and not limited to both king and queen.

The *performative redemption* of and as the Macbeths by Athey occurs through parody and through care—care as parody and parody as care insofar as the puncture and penetration of his own body as performance is an act of self-care—however parodic it may seem—an act of care for a community that is both imagined and real, and an act of care of and for reality at the limits of the *unexperienceable experience* (non-computable via available registers for

comprehension).[2] Here, care follows a parodic logic that is strange, especially in the context of Bataille for whom excess is parody or sacrifice: parody insofar as meaning, value, recognition, and other forms of extension are unstable because "each thing is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form" and sacrifice insofar as there is always an "accursed share"—an excess of energy—that must be expended in some way through sacrifice ("Solar Anus" 5). For Bataille, the accursed share is the excessive part of exchange in an economy that cannot be recuperated back into the system and must be sacrificed. Yet such sacrifice can be controlled. For instance, the frivolity of art is an expenditure, a sacrifice, of resources towards no clear purpose that transmutes excess energy. Sacrifice can also be out of control and can occur through violence, war, and destructive gift-giving.

The creation of and participation in frivolity and art themselves become stabilizing forces within this model. Such stabilization is an act of care within and for the system and those that belong to it. At the same time, however, frivolity and art are necessarily unstable and not practical because they demand a type of sacrifice which is always in relation to excess and its inherent, uncontainable forces of destabilization. Excess, even if delimited by frivolity and art, will always push the boundaries of a system until it breaks. Consider, for instance, attempts by sociopolitical conductors (scholars, teachers, theater makers) to contain the excesses of Shakespace through institutional codification that must constantly adapt and expand because of Shakespace's proliferative autopoiesis and persistent inability to successfully map out its ever-shifting poetic terrain. Shakespeare's poetry, to be sure, precipitates particularly playful indeterminacy to meanings across history and cultures that ensures variability.

Ironically, rather than excess energy, when applied to sacrifice, parody, which is the other form of excess for Bataille, performs another type of double-capture through a feed-back loop that feeds forward. The parody of sacrifice—whether of art and frivolity or catastrophe or both—destabilizes the destabilizing and in doing so both contains it and produces further excess that might continue to be aestheticized through acts of parodic sacrifice as *care-through-parody* and then *parody-through-care* that produce an aestheticized reality that vibrates with relational intensity. There is a double capture through a symbiosis between the two functions that maintain the transformative power of their relational intensity.

In other essays, we have defined the engagement with and performance of such a reality as *allo-realism.* Allo-realism prioritizes the intensity of difference over the extension of difference—the relationship between affects, experiences,

[2] Explicitly or implicitly in conversation with queer, punk, mental health, and extreme performance communities, Ron Athey's works emerged in part as a response to the trauma and devastation of the AIDS crisis.

and changes in the aesthetic production of realism over signs, values, and meanings that produce a coherent and recognizable aesthetic of realism. Allo-realism helps us understand the parodic realities of Athey and *Macbeth* that go seemingly beyond and in-excess of what is sustainable, meaningful, and coherent—positively making aberrant sense, indeed something remarkable, of the "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (5.5.29-31).

Ron Athey's *Solar Anus*

Athey's *Solar Anus* is a performance that directly engages with Bataille's "Solar Anus" as well as the work of fellow controversial and outcast surrealist artist Pierre Molinier, who famously photographed and cut up images of himself as a woman. Like Bataille, Molinier was rejected by the head of the surrealist movement, André Breton, who at first embraced him and organized the only exhibition of Molinier's paintings during his lifetime. Molinier's photographs, which feature him dressed in women's clothing (especially black stockings), wearing high heels, with focus on his anus, and penetrating himself with a dildo, were overly transgressive for the surrealist group. In his photographs, Molinier uses a cut-up method to portray himself as both a man and a woman, to multiply legs, faces, buttocks, anuses, and bodies—often creating kaleidoscopic images that both depict and play with fetishistic iconography. In Molinier, Athey sees "true fetishism" and throughout *Solar Anus*, Athey pays homage to Molinier by recreating his images and using them as inspiration to play with and enfold gender like Molinier (Johnson 34).

Throughout *Solar Anus*, with measured suspense, Athey methodically transforms himself. Especially significant in *Solar Anus*, as we move on to the ways in which Athey becomes the Macbeths by way of Bataille and Molinier, are certain expressive actions: 1) Athey removes a long string of pearls from his anus around which is tattooed a sun, a tribute to Bataille's "Solar Anus." 2) He dons a golden crown that also has fishhooks that pull back—and cat-like feminizes—the skin on his eyes and cheeks after which he ceremonially powders his face and becomes a beautiful queen. 3) He repeatedly thrusts a dildo attached to his stiletto heels into himself, partially in reference to Molinier's photographs in which he similarly penetrates his anus with homemade dildos made from stuffed silk stockings that are attached to a high-heeled shoe. Through Athey's performance of this image, his body, as Dominic Johnson points out, "becomes the site of 'scandalous eruption' in performance" and brings to life Bataille's parodic vision of base materialism. 4) Athey pulls his scrotum over his penis and stitches it up so that his penis is enveloped within its fold; as a result, he becomes visibly without a penis.

Image 1: Pierre Molinier, Je suis content, variante, tirage argentique d’époque © Artcurial

Image 2: Solar Anus, Pearls, Courtesy of Ron Athey

In an interview during which Athey is getting a sun tattooed around his anus, he says that by getting the tattoo, he is "transforming something private and filthy into something glamorous and even burlesque in a way." The tattoo, he jokes, is "a very burlesque tattoo because it does tricks." There are multiple levels to Athey's anal burlesque. The transformation and play between filth and glamour performs Bataille's base materialism symbolically, literally enacting the solar anus. The enactment of the solar anus and the performance of eruption made possible by it on Athey's body also crystallizes base materialism within an aesthetic, thus capturing the unstable position of base materialism as both high and low, thereby articulating it and destabilizing its unstable position while simultaneously destabilizing recognizable or common forms of the aesthetic.

Athey does not capture the excess. He channels it and enacts a careful coexistence with excess that allows its survival. Consider how Athey opens *Solar Anus* by removing a long string of pearls from his tattooed solar anus, essentially performing a carefully orchestrated, scandalous eruption. Needless to say, a careful scandalous eruption is contradictory. What might it mean to scandalously erupt with care? What is a careful eruption? Is it one that is theatricalized and presented to an audience for interpretation and meaning-making

as Amelia Jones argues?[3] Does it also open up opportunities to move beyond meaning-making to engage in excess and frivolity with Athey and with each other—allowing the excess (erotic, social, artistic, political, etc.) to circulate while still destabilizing common and official forms of aesthetics and meaning-making?

Jones argues, "Athey in this way indeed embodies and enacts the radical potential to create intersubjective bonds that nurture social and political awareness of suffering as both personal and collective" (157). Athey's careful scandalous eruption, however, goes beyond nurturing social and political awareness. It normalizes and celebrates fetishism and suffering—transforming the excesses of both unproductive sexuality and pain into something immanent and legitimate, a successful humanity. It also allows for Athey to perform the approximation of sovereignty over his own body as Bataille describes it. For Bataille, sovereignty is the capacity to be in and enjoy the present without thought towards the future or the past. He writes, "What is sovereign in fact is to enjoy the present time without having anything else in view but this present time" (*The Accursed Share* 199). Hence, sovereignty is also a ceasings-to-be, a becomings-imperceptible.[4] While ceasings-to-be is related to death for Bataille,

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[3] Amelia Jones writes: "Presented as 'art,' Athey's action is 'parodic,' in Bataille's sense (for Athey, Bataille's idea of the 'solar anus' exposes 'the magic tricks inherent in the anus'); but in contrast to Bataille's version, Athey's elicits rather than eschews an emotionally charged interpretation. It opens the performer's body to the audience so that we must give meaning to this body in the durational moments of our proximity to these sounds, images and smells. It does this, as I will argue below, through its exaggerated engagement of spectacle. As Athey has noted, 'in my performance material, I am guilty of enhancing my history, situation and surroundings into a perfectly depicted apocalypse, or at least a more visual atrocity;' Athey's work is always visually, aurally, and otherwise excessive and theatrical" (156).

[4] Bataille writes: "The thought that comes to a halt in the face of what is sovereign rightfully pursues its operation to the point where its object dissolves into NOTHING, because ceasing to be useful, or subordinate, it becomes *sovereign* in ceasing to be" (*The Accursed Share* 204). On becoming-imperceptible, Deleuze and Guattari write: "To be present at the dawn of the world. Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality—the three virtues. To reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one's zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator. One is then like grass: one has made the world, everybody/everything, into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things. One has combined "everything" (*le "tout"*): the indefinite article, the infinitive-becoming, and the proper name to which one is reduced. Saturate, eliminate, put everything in" (280). Though Deleuze and Guattari write in terms of abundance while Bataille writes in terms of negation, the idea of nothing that Bataille articulates is close to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of imperceptibility insofar as nothing for Bataille is about escaping usefulness and subordination, or otherwise escaping a system or organization, or the systems and organization that the idea of being imposes on becoming.

it is ultimately a becomings that demands an unknowing. It is what we describe as *goings-x* through and beyond the unexperienceable experience in the chaotic spacetime of transversal territory; indeed, echoing ominously with imperceptibility.

Image 3: Solar Anus, Crown, Courtesy of Ron Athey

In the process of enacting sovereignty, Athey dons a crown that pulls back the skin of his eyes and cheeks with corded fish hooks, and then he powders his face, becomings-autocratic perceptibly to the audience by way of becomings-woman, becomings-androgynous, becomings-sovereign, becomings-imperceptible, goings-transversal. But before we consider the crown, let us consider the beads and the bubbles as we turn to *Macbeth*.

Clutching Pearls, Popping Bubbles

Terry Eagleton argues that the Witches are the heroines of *Macbeth* because they expose a social order that depends on oppression and incessant warfare while delusionally justifying both as necessary for the stability of the state. The Witches exist outside of this system along its borders as creative and intensive—a multiplicity that has creative and transformative power. Stephen Greenblatt writes that "the Witches in *Macbeth* are constructed on the boundaries between hallucination and spiritual reality and between fantasy and fact, the border or the

membrane where the imagination and the corporeal world, figure and actuality, psychic disturbance and objective truth meet" (193). They are the "bubbles" that Banquo describes, "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, and these are of them" (1.3.82-83). At the border, in a constant state of becomings, they are destabilizing and parodic themselves. Eagleton points out that they are "Androgynous (bearded women), multiple (three-in-one) and 'imperfect speakers', the Witches strike at the stable social, sexual, and linguistic forms which the society of the play needs in order to survive" (Eagleton 2). At the same time, they form an intensive and creative community of their own that is capable of absorbing all the solar energy to ride the waves of base materialism—pure excess—that destabilizes Macbeth's world and overturns the order of things through irony. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" such that the ground itself, as Banquo points out, bubbles, and is therefore ungrounded with becomings and metamorphosis (1.1.12).

The bubbles scandalously erupt like Athey's string of pearls from his anus. At work here is, as we have said, a careful scandalous eruption as well as the irony of the *fair-becomings-foul* and the *foul-becomings-fair*: the topsy-turvy, playful becomings-woman of homosexuality and androgyny (the string of pearls as a symbol of femininity and evocative of semen), and the imperfect speech of the act (defying singular and common interpretation). The pearls emerge also already from a membrane (in Greenblattian terms) that is the porous border between the inside and outside of Athey's body (his anus) and symbolically from a liminal space that is often taboo. The act itself aestheticizes and acts out a beautiful transgression: the anus absorbing the sun's energy tattooed around it and excreting beauty from the excess.

When the weird sisters speak their prophecy, they contaminate Macbeth with their excess. Eagleton writes: "They perform a 'deed without a name,' and Macbeth's own actions, once influenced by them, become such that 'Tongue nor heart/Cannot conceive nor name.' The physical fluidity of the three sisters becomes inscribed in Macbeth's own restless desire, continually pursuing the pure being of kingship but at each step ironically unravelling that very possibility" (2). Lady Macbeth is also contaminated by that excess and fluidity in her desirous masculinity, her sleeplessness (excess of energy), and suicide (sacrifice and expenditure of excess in Bataille's terms). Unlike Athey, who aestheticizes the bubbles while maintaining the instability of his own position in his trajectory of becomings-woman, becomings-androgynous, becomings-imperceptible, the Macbeth's are incapable of containing or channeling the excess in large part because the more they chase sovereignty, the less of it they have.

This is especially true of Macbeth, who does not have the state power he desires at the beginning of the play but is himself excessive and only partially captured by the state—a harnessed and deployed *war machine*. A war machine, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, is exterior to the state and is itself

exteriority. It resists the organs and organization of the state even as it may be captured by the state. Richard III, for instance, is an example of a war machine that Deleuze and Guattari offer in "Treatise on Nomadology":

> Shakespeare's kings could also be invoked: even violence, murders, and perversion do not prevent the State lineage from producing "good" kings; but a disturbing character like Richard III slips in, announcing from the outset his intention to reinvent a war machine and impose its line (deformed, treacherous, and traitorous, he claims a "secret close intent" totally different from the conquest of State power, and another—an other—relation with women). (354)

Macbeth is closely related to *Richard III*, as commonly observed, and it is a humanity and guilt, a becomings-subject, that is introduced in *Macbeth* that separates the two characters of Richard III and Macbeth.[5] Macbeth is a captured war machine and forgets, as it becomes too late to remember, that he is outside of the state in his own quest to embody and become the state.

As a war machine excessive and exterior to the state, Macbeth has more sovereignty as Bataille understands it. Macbeth exists in the present as pure and excessive violence: "For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name), / Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution / Like Valor's minion, carved out his passage" (1.2.17-21). He disdains fortune—not subject to his fate or his future, and he acts assuredly and violently in the present, embracing his sovereignty as a war-machine.

It is only when the Witches contaminate Macbeth with "supernatural soliciting" that he begins to lose his sovereignty and becomes a manager of excess rather than an agent of excess. As a manager of excess, he begins to repress thoughts for anticipation and fear of the future. He soliloquies to the audience: "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, / Shakes so my single state of man / That function is smothered in surmise, / And nothing is but what is not" (1.2.152-155). He both murders his thought of murdering the king and plans the murder which "yet is but fantastical," anticipating that it perhaps might not be. In both murdering his thought and planning murder, he becomes stuck and unable to act in the present. He can only act in and based on an imagined and anticipated future—a *future-present-space*—imperfectly and excessively prophesied by the Witches. His thinking exceeds his action, and in that moment he loses his sovereignty because he becomes a subject to an imagined future and to the image of his own thought.

Howard Marchitello convincingly argues that, "Macbeth's violent and frenetic actions are less the consequences of a certain pathology and more

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[5] See especially Fred Manning Smith, "The Relation of Macbeth to Richard the Third" (1945, *PMLA*).

a manifestation of what it means to exist in a world radically accelerated towards a mode of being (Virilio would say a 'milieu') in which temporality collapses into functional instantaneity" (433).[6] The "functional instantaneity" here refers to Paul Virilio's idea of real-time, which is not the present but is instead a collapsing of spacetime into the illusion of instantaneity—both too fast to anticipate and too fast to act on. Within such a time, one is still subject to the future but ultimately unable to act in the present, which is always happening too quickly. As Marchitello points out, Lady Macbeth collapses the future into the present directly when speaking to Macbeth: "Thy letters have transported me beyond / This ignorant present, and I feel now / The future in the instant" (1.5.63-65). In doing so, much like Macbeth who is suspended now in the anticipated future of prophecy, she also becomes suspended in that prophecy and, in fact, becomes another motor of Macbeth's action that is always already subject to the image of his own thought captured by the structures of the state. In imagining a future sovereignty, the Macbeths inscribe themselves within *official territory* and call upon their understandings of *state machinery* in order to become sovereign—thus forgetting their present-becomings and the necessity for the sovereign to be outside of official territory insofar as the sovereign subjective territory becomes the border of the state.

Lady Macbeth's excessiveness extends desirously into her unstable gender identity. Upon reading Macbeth's letter and learning of the Witches' prophecy as well as his uncertainty, she famously invokes, "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull / Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood; / Stop up the access and passage to remorse / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between the effect and it!" (1.5.47-54). She wants to become cruel and impenetrable, equating emotion with penetration as well as her menstruation. Though the passage is often read as her desiring to be masculine, as Stephanie Chamberlain explains with fascinating historical contextualization, Lady Macbeth also has a maternal identity, even as a murdering mother.[7] As a murdering mother, as Janet Adleman astutely argues through the object-relational lens of psychoanalytic feminism, she spreads her evil through her milk, and where there is evil there is uncertainty.[8] Hence, she spreads instability

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[6] Marchitello cites and echoes also Donald W. Foster's idea that Macbeth is at war with time.

[7] See "Fantasizing Infanticide: Lady Macbeth and the Murdering Mother in Early Modern England" in *College Literature* 32.3 (Summer, 2005): 72-91, 82.

[8] See Janet Adelman's "Born of Woman': Fantasies of Maternal Power in *Macbeth*" in *Cannibals, Witches, and Diverse: Estranging the Renaissance* edited by Marjorie Garber.

like the Witches. However, she strategizes towards her own stability unlike the Witches, who embody becomings and instability within which they revel.

Invoking the image of the murdering mother, Lady Macbeth questions her husband's masculinity, undermining his gender identity negatively rather than affirmatively:

> What beast was't, then,
> That made you break this enterprise to me?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
> They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
> Does unmake you. I have given such, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this. (1.7.53-67)

The unmaking of Macbeth echoes Lady Macbeth's unsexing, and more importantly, time and space unmake him—his inability to act at the right time and place is his undoing.[9] In other words, he resists parameterized becomings, comings-to-be a beast, according to Lady Macbeth. Ironically, if he were to embrace his becomings-animal within the parameters of his promise, then he would have perhaps been able make time and space rather than be unmade by it. Lady Macbeth, however, asserts that she would have acted on her promise and thus would not have been unmade by time and space, claiming her sovereignty as an actor in a future-present, or a present framed by a promise. Her sovereignty, she understands, would need to pass through a becomings-monstrous in singular pursuit of actualizing her promise and thus making spacetime together—imposing their intersubjective spacetime found in the virtual promise upon official territory and thus mapping their combined subjective territories over the official territory of the state. Macbeth loses his sovereignty, as Bataille understands it, when he is unable to act. He is unable to act in the present and thus unable to create spacetime. He also loses his sovereignty in the sense that his inability to act keeps him from attaining the crown that would officially make him sovereign in the eyes of the state machinery. When Lady Macbeth chastises and upstages him, she articulates his

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[9] For a conversation on the making of time and space see "Physics Divined: The Science of Calvin, Hooker, and Macbeth" by Kristen Poole in *South Central Review* 26.1/2, *Shakespeare & Science* (2009): 127-152, 145-146.

failure to make spacetime while simultaneously destabilizing his masculinity, humanity, and sovereignty as defined by official territory. In doing so, nevertheless, she also undermines the order of things that she implicitly subscribes to in her pursuit of becoming the head of state without changing the state machinery (including institutions that uphold gender norms) that preserve the state's existence.

Like the Witches with whom she is often grouped, Lady Macbeth is excessive and destabilizing in her wished-for androgyny. The destabilization of gender identity moves along parallel to the destabilization of the order of things in which state machinery protects sovereignty in all its forms: despotic and legislative. Still, gender instability in the form that it appears in with the Macbeths is not dangerous to the state. In fact, they wish to maintain the state, and the gender performances that they fail or succeed at only matter to them relative to their mission to be the heads of state. In contrast, the Witches are androgynous and queer outside of the state, on its borders, with no desire to be a part of it or oppose it beyond interfering with it through their machinations. Meaning, the danger to the state is not the instability of rule but exteriority itself, which does not respect interiority or the prolongation of structure.

Transducing Sovereignty

This brings us back to Athey's careful scandalous eruption and its delicate pearl bubbles that signify the instability of any structure: Bataille's base materialism. When he dons his crown, pulls back the skin of his cheeks and eyes, and powders his face, he becomes the Macbeths as they could be: sovereign in their androgyny and successful threats to the state that do not succumb to the guilt of transgression or the subjugation to pasts and futures. Athey transduces the Macbeths' sexual-gender instability in their quest for sovereignty into a careful sovereignty of the present that embraces gender instability and the becomings-imperceptible that true sovereignty demands. Moreover, he transduces Lady Macbeth's open eyes and shut senses into a beautiful hyper-awake and hyper-sensual drag face-head all too aware of the hooks of the crown tugging at its skin.

The transduction of the Macbeths' excess continues by Athey as he converts violent penetration into parodic pleasure engaged with Molinier's fetishistic play and cut-up photographs. Lady Macbeth wishes to be impenetrable. Macbeth is penetrated. His head is severed by Macduff who is "untimely ripp'd" from his mother's womb and thus does not breach the world, for he is not of "one of woman born." By caesarian section, his mother is penetrated for him to invasively be brought out into the world rather than his presence penetrating the world. The cesarian comings-into-the-world is a passive entry, while a vaginal birth is an active one. No penetration, penetration, no

penetration—enacting a Bataillean multiplicity of copulation: "A man gets up as brusquely as a specter in a coffin and falls in the same way. / He gets up a few hours later and then he falls gain, and the same thing happens every day; this great coitus with the celestial atmosphere is regulated by the terrestrial rotation around the sun" ("Solar Anus" 7). Whereas for Bataille this is a heterosexual copulation—"the male shaft penetrating the female and almost entirely emerging, in order to re-enter"—it is not necessary for the multiplicity of penetration to have a particular sexuality as an extensive set of characteristics ("Solar Anus" 7). Instead, a multiplicity is always intensive, characterized by the relations and tensions of the multiplicity.

Image 4: Solar Anus, Dildo, Courtesy of Ron Athey

Mediated by Molinier, Athey performs this multiplicity of penetration as he carefully and then violently inserts a dildo attached to his stiletto shoe into his anus, butt to the audience, while wearing his sovereign crown. In doing so, Athey can act out the penetrative multiplicity of *Macbeth*, which ultimately bolsters the authority of the state through subversion and containment that requires the Macbeths' deaths, exterior to the state in the bubbling realm of the Witches through the capture and aestheticization of base materialism. In this way, he can keep his usurper' s head, even as he might embody Andre Masson's

rendition of Bataille's *Acéphale*—a man in excess of reason—and still set the time free. Here, the time is not free because the time of the state is restored in the way that Macduff means it. Here, time is free because he is truly sovereign over it: he enacts pleasure and violence in a careful scandalous eruption again, and again, and again.

Suturing Macbeths

First introduced by Jacques-Alain Miller in "Suture: Elements of the Logic of the Signifier" and later made to be a staple of film theory, *suture* is a concept that describes the relationship between the lack and the structure, or the way in which a subject identifies themselves with a structure and sutures themselves into it. This functions as a sort of emplacement within narrative. Suture requires intersubjectivity and speaks to the porousness and instability of a subject while also pointing to the ways in which a subject becomes integrated into a discursive reality mediated by other subjects. That intersubjectivity, nevertheless, is predicated on lack.[10]

This type of lack-based intersubjectivity is evident in the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Throughout the play, Macbeth fails in their plan for him to become King. During each of his failures, Lady Macbeth must step in. She pushes Macbeth to better commit to the murder of Duncan. She chastises him for not following their original plan. She smears the King's blood on the guards while Macbeth is shaken. She covers for Macbeth at the banquet and then chastises him for confusing the guests. She continues to fill in for Macbeth's shortcomings until she herself is subsumed by guilt and the excess of their act. As Marchitello argues, Macbeth also sutures himself back into conversations through excuses of forgetfulness, though there are gaps of time when he is elsewhere in a vision or in thought. Together, they attempt to suture a sovereign identity into the state by covering over the flights into vision and apparition, the excesses of uncertainty, and the instability of their gender performances and desires within the confines of their quest for sovereignty within the state. Lady Macbeth's sleepless psychosis and eventual death then ushers in Macbeth's own unravelling and the dissolution of any coherence he may have imagined into the nonsense of "sound and fury, signifying nothing" (5.5.27-28).

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[10] Not all uses of suture as a metaphor are predicated on lack. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, sees suturing as a method of rearranging desire through education and suturing cultural fabrics. For Derrida suture is a metaphor for a questionable forgiveness that eschews that logical aporia of forgiving the unforgivable.

In his aberrant variation, Athey's suturing is of a different embodied order. It remains intersubjective if we consider the multiplicity of characters that Athey manifests and contains as a one-person *Macbeth* and the relationships we have established especially between Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the Witches, and Macduff. Athey sutures his scrotum over his penis. This type of suturing is not predicated on lack or on erasure. Like the Witches, Athey's penis is still present within the molded and stitched skin though it is no longer visible. The sutures remain visible as does Athey's scrotum. That is, there is no covering or smoothing over. The process of suturing and the sutures themselves remain hyper-present for Athey and for the audience. Instead of a covering up, or a healing of a wound, gap, or lack, Athey's suture—the taut uneven line of dark-threaded stitches—emphasizes transformation, transmutation, and transfiguration.

Athey does not fail through excessive masculinity driven to power, or a lack of masculinity contained by humanistic state power, or monstrous femininity and motherhood, or an inability to remain and act fully in the present. He metamorphoses into sovereignty by transmuting excess into aesthetics and transfiguring sovereignty itself into pure sovereignty exterior to the state, outside of future and past, contained only in the instant of the Witches' bubbles. In doing so, he is able to ride-out the excess of the Witches without hiding from it, or attempting to control, contain, or deny it. He enacts and embodies the scandalous eruption of base materialism that parodies the presence of suture through excess instead of lack.

Athey's aberrant variation of *Macbeth* immanently redeems the Macbeths and channels and parameterizes the Witches' excess through performance and aesthetics. Such an aberrant variation is auto-poetic insofar as it transduces the excess of Witches and then performs a variation of *Macbeth* in which the Macbeths' sovereignty is redeemed. Further, it functions as an allo-realistic production of *Macbeth* that emphasizes intensity over extension in the intensive-extensive interplay of realism. Through *viscerallectric* performance of Bataille's concepts as they flow over the bubbling spacetimes of Shakespace à la Pierre Molinier, Athey enacts the tensions and multiplicities always already playing out within the world of *Macbeth.* At the same time, like most aberrant variations and the allo-realistic performances that they often engender, Athey's *Solar Anus* offers insights into the arrangements of the multiplicities found in *Macbeth* and the ways by which excess, power, performance, and sovereignty motor through the negotiations of identity with which *Macbeth* wrestles and the virtual nodals of Shakespace on which its characters and audiences noodle. The Witches are still out there, and Athey playfully dances with them on the bubbling earth under the sun whose intensities we extensively follow and whose intensive realities we perform.

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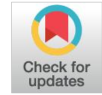

Agnieszka Rasmus*

Shakespeare and Covid Drama in *This England* (Winterbottom, 2022)

Abstract: This article considers the significance of different Shakespearean allusions in a political docudrama miniseries *This England* (2022), directed for Sky by Michael Winterbottom and scripted by Winterbottom and Kieron Quirke. The action focuses on the first crucial months in England after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, offering a panoramic view of the nation under duress as a newly formed government, with Boris Johnson at its helm, mishandles the crisis. The article seeks to explain the presence of multiple Shakespearean references, from the title alone, through numerous direct quotations to the casting of Kenneth Branagh as Johnson. Shakespearean traces play a pivotal, though confusing, role as they both critique the actions of the government and its leader by offering an ironic framing device while increasing the viewer's sympathy for its central protagonist via the presence of a Shakespearean celebrity.

Keywords: Shakespeare, adaptation, Branagh, Covid, *Richard II*, Johnson, *This England*, casting, reception.

This article aims to investigate the significance of several different Shakespearean allusions in a political docudrama miniseries *This England* (2022), directed for Sky by Michael Winterbottom and scripted by Winterbottom and Kieron Quirke. As Douglas Lanier reminds us, following Michel Foucault, "attaching an author's name (and image) to a text (or product) predisposes us to interpret it in a certain manner, to classify it with certain texts (or products) and not with others, to expect it to have certain qualities, themes, ideas, or formal traits" (2007: 93). The project's link to Shakespeare immediately raises the issue of the Bard's cultural capital and mythic resonance as England's greatest poet, whose works serve "as a point of reference for communal memory and understanding," especially in the troubled times of conflict and crisis (Makaryk 7). This is why

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each Shakespearean reference becomes a powerful intertextual intervention that affects the reception of the series, though sometimes producing confusing outcomes.

The action starts with the announcement of the result of the Brexit referendum, whose two opposing sides repeatedly evoked Shakespeare in their Leave and Remain campaigns (see: Blackwell; O'Neill; Kaptur), to then focus on the first crucial months in England after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The docudrama offers a panoramic view of the nation under duress as a newly formed government is slow to take decisive action to prevent further spread of the virus. As a result, we see the impact of that negligence on individuals and institutions, from the frail elderly in care homes, overwhelmed NHS hospitals, and grief-stricken households as the crisis is handled, or rather mishandled, by the newly appointed Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his aids. Shakespearean traces, from the very title, through direct quotations to Kenneth Branagh's casting as Johnson become powerful leitmotifs which significantly impact the reading of factual events and their architects.

Even before the show begins, we see the opening credits rolling over the black screen and an inscription with the date of the 23rd of April, 2019, traditionally associated with Shakespeare's birthday, as we hear an excited voiceover announce that Johnson's long-awaited biography of the Bard, *Shakespeare: The Riddle of Genius*,[1] is finally due the following year. This explains why Johnson frequently references Shakespeare in the series as he is researching for the publication—an activity that took precedence over the handling of the pandemic, as his former aid Dominic Cummings alleged a year before the show came out (Culbertson). Still, it is the way Shakespeare will be (mis)used by Johnson, the main character of the docudrama, which points to the series' inconsistency and tonal imbalance, making one wonder what purpose these Shakespearean references serve.

As the title alone indicates, its premise is bound up with Shakespeare-heavy allusions from the start. According to Jane Goodall, it "signals association not just with Shakespeare but also with a larger range of mythic and symbolic traditions: the Arthurian legends revived in Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Blake's 'Jerusalem' and the national hymn derived from it, Churchill's exhortation to fight on the beaches, and the arcane ceremony of royal funerals and coronations". It is derived from a famous and frequently quoted passage in act 2, scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in which the dying John of Gaunt expresses his love for England and then prophesies and laments its fall under the reign of the unfit ruler. The speech will be quoted in its shorter and then longer version

[1] Johnson's biography of the Bard was originally scheduled to come out in 2016 to celebrate Shakespeare's 400th anniversary. As of the time of writing, it has still not been published.

on two occasions in the series by Johnson, punctuating the show's critical moments and providing it with an ironic framing as we observe the meaning of "This England" change over time.

It is important to mention that *This England* is also curiously, if incidentally, bound up with another film—*This is England* (2006) by Shane Meadows,[2] as any Internet perusal or more advanced BFI catalogue search reveals. The two projects are linked by more than just Google algorithm, however, and it is possible that Winterbottom chose "This England" over the initial working title "This Sceptred Isle" to indicate affinity with his colleague's influential drama. Significantly, Meadows' film opens with an assemblage of archival footage from the 1980s which could just as well be branded "This is Thatcher's England"—England divided by the Falklands War, racial conflict, civil unrest, the rise of nationalism and underclass. Real-life events serve here as an objective lens through which to view the fictional story about a teenage boy, Shaun (Thomas Turgoose), seduced by the patriotic flag-waving of the National Front and then bitterly disappointed by its violent racism. Shaun's life is marked by the tragic loss of his father in the Falklands War, making him vulnerable to jingoistic rhetoric cleverly employed by adults to justify the boy's personal loss. The link between the two titles, even if coincidental, thus reveals common preoccupations and even stylistic choices as both feature Britain at the time of crisis under Conservative leadership. The first episode of *This England* similarly starts with a series of newsreels depicting the unrest caused by the Brexit referendum in the streets of London and the Parliament as well as Johnson's embroilment in a series of scandals. Where the tone of Meadows' title is deeply accusatory, pointing a finger at Thatcher's government, the title of the latter, *This England*, appears more open-ended, depending on the context.

We first hear the passage from which the title derives in the 32nd minute of the first episode when Johnson delivers the first part of John of Gaunt's speech (almost verbatim) to the assembled crowd at Number 10 to celebrate the official day the UK leaves the EU on the 31st of January, 2020:

> This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men [*and women*], this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,

[2] The film was later continued as a television miniseries.

> Or as a moat defensive to a house
> Against the envy of less happier lands,
> This blessèd plot, this earth, this realm, this
> England, (2.1.45-56)[3]

Johnson rather conveniently chooses this fragment and delivers it with aplomb, which is intercut with the archival footage of Britons proudly waving Union Jack flags in the streets. The complete speech is, however, much more complex. Writing about Gaunt's words, Paweł Kaptur observes how many consider them to be "an undeniable proof of Shakespeare's patriotic or even nationalistic views on the relations between England and Europe. Indeed, when quoted out of a [sic] context and in a fragmented, ruptured way, it may seem as an invocation of Englishness, manifestation of Britain's insular independence on the European continent" (571), which is how Boris uses the passage at the beginning of the show. As Kaptur writes: "Such a reading of the quoted fragment might build an appealing depiction of the English bard as of [sic] a defender of England's safety against exterior enemy forces, a propagator of the island's separation from the outer world as well as a progenitor of Brexit ideas" (571). However, as he notes, the context distorts this view as, for instance, Gaunt was "a Flanders born claimant to the throne of Castile and, moreover, Gaunt's speech relies on a text written by a French speaking chronicler Jean Froissart who lived in the Holy Roman Empire. Hence, its alleged Englishness and nationalistic undertone could be easily questioned" (571).

Of course, we do not know whether the PM spoke these exact words as the series blends fact with fiction. What we do know, however, is that this particular excerpt was a popular reference employed by the Leave campaign (Doherty 187). We also know from the account of Owen Bennet in *The Brexit Club: The Inside Story of the Leave Campaign's Shock Victory* (2016) that a different speech was delivered on the day of the result of the Brexit referendum—rather predictably Henry V's Saint Crispin address before the Battle of Agincourt—by another architect of Brexit, Daniel Hannan, known for his penchant for quoting Shakespeare at any opportune occasion.[4] According to Sam Knight of *The Guardian*: "When victory was certain, Hannan stood on a desk in the office and delivered the St Crispin's Day speech from Henry V […]—substituting the names of people who had worked on the campaign." Anna Blackwell likens the two politicians, explaining how Shakespeare serves here as "a tool for legitimation" (177):

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[3] All citations come from Folger Shakespeare Library at www.folger.edu.

[4] On Hannan's appropriation of Shakespeare for the Brexit campaign see: O'Neill and Blackwell.

> Like fellow Brexiteer, author and Shakespeare aficionado Boris Johnson, Hannan's seemingly erudite nature (signalled through references to Shakespeare) legitimises and complements the social capital he possesses as a white, middle-class, privately educated Oxford graduate. The implicit belief that Shakespeare is "good taste" naturalises Hannan's conservative beliefs and provides him with not only a language through which to express his politics but an in-built basis for them. (176)

Thus, it seems that Boris's citation of Gaunt's speech in the series replaces Hannan's as a comment on the political right's tendency to employ Shakespeare as their mouthpiece. It also serves as a critique of Johnson's aspirations as the next Winston Churchill since the series frequently portrays him emulating the former PM, also known for his allusions to the Bard's plays in his political writings and speeches. Episode 1 depicts Johnson quoting Churchill's words from 1940, saying that "all his life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial", comparing the significance of his appointment as PM post-Brexit to that of Churchill's during the Second World War. Churchill also quoted the first 5 lines from John of Gaunt's speech in his article "Let's Boost Britain" in the weekly *Answers* on the 28th of April, 1934, to celebrate Saint George's Day by referring to it as "the noblest tribute ever penned to this England of ours" (qtd. in Langworth). He then continued to ponder:

> Ours is a wonderful island. Taken on the whole, it is the most wonderful island in the world, and we are its inheritors. But inheritance carries with it responsibilities. […] What is being done to our island? Is it becoming more beautiful, more charming? Is it gaining continuously from the modern age and yet preserving all that has come down from the past?" (qtd. in Langworth).

Here, Gaunt's words become a springboard for a serious reflection—something entirely lacking in Branagh's Johnson's celebratory and nationalistic appropriation.

The real-life Boris Johnson is known for publicly referring to Shakespeare as a tool of self-legitimation and self-fashioning, modelling himself on the politician he openly admires[5]—an element of his public persona which the series seeks to, at least initially, caricature since, as one reviewer notices, the new PM is "unable to even get out of the bath without quoting William Shakespeare, Winston Churchill or Homer" (Vaizey). In this way, the creators of the show reveal an ironic gap between the two statesmen, particularly with Johnson's appropriation of the Churchillian war rhetoric to the times of Brexit-torn Britain. The real Johnson once opined that the EU was "pursuing a similar goal to Hitler in trying to create a powerful superstate" (qtd. in Ross). He also

[5] Johnson wrote *The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History* (2014), in which he seems to be drawing some parallels between Churchill and himself.

invoked Churchill in an interview for *The Telegraph* on the 15th of May, 2016, in which, as Thomas Doherty claims, he "encouraged us to emulate Churchill's wartime defiance not just of Hitler but of all that was happening across Europe" (184) to "set the country free and save the EU from itself by voting to leave" (Ross). And while it is true that, as Irena Makaryk reminds us, writing about Shakespeare and the Second World War: "Shakespeare presents a fascinating case study of the nexus of problems binding together concepts of collective remembrance, history, war, and national identity" (4), Branagh's Johnson's use of John of Gaunt's speech at the beginning of the show discloses a manipulative and selective appropriation. The new PM opts for an instantly recognisable fragment to appeal to isolationist sentiments and nostalgia but significantly omits the latter part of the speech whose words he will remember in the series' closing as they come to haunt him.

This public display of erudition and self-fashioning is gradually replaced by more contemplative uses of Shakespeare, which unexpectedly endows his character with sympathy, if not gravitas, especially as his Shakespearean quotations are also accompanied by increasing retrospection and introspection, seen in his nightmares which open Episodes 2, 3 and 4 and fragments of Episode 5 in which he is hospitalised with Covid-19. Branagh's Johnson's references to Shakespeare now typically occur in private rather than public spaces as we often see him stare pensively at the window. Thus, from the 47th minute of Episode 1, in which he looks at the window and says: "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth," (*Hamlet*, 2.2.318-319) onwards, Shakespeare will be largely reserved for his personal rather than public reflection as he is portrayed struggling with the magnitude of the pandemic as well as guilt and anxiety over his divorce, pending deadline for the book, estranged children, new fatherhood, illness, scandals and political squabbles within his own party.

Thus, whereas, initially, Shakespearean references serve to critique and mock Johnson's pretensions and grandiosity, in the latter part of the series they give the new PM some tragic weight, which points to the show's tonal imbalance as well as its confusing intentions. The fact that he is the only character allowed introspection turns him into the protagonist of the show with whom the viewer is encouraged to empathise. His fears and anxieties are vividly visualised in his black-and-white dreams when he is sick in hospital. Struggling to breathe in an oxygen mask, he hallucinates seeing his estranged wife and daughters, and his new partner holding their child, against some barren wasteland. These visions stand out from the rest of the series' documentary-like aesthetic (Fig. 1).[6]

[6] All the images are screen grabs publishable under Fair Dealing.

Fig. 1.

They have been called Bergmanesque by some reviewers (see: Rowat; McCahill). In them, his relatives express their disappointment, addressing him directly and looking intensely into the camera. Even though the scene lacks any literal Shakespearean quotation, it nonetheless evokes Shakespeare visually, in particular Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* (2015),[7] whose mise-en-scène singles out the weird sisters, one of whom is shown holding an infant, from a dark and harsh Scottish landscape (Fig. 2). Kurzel's witches are the story's moral compass (see: Rasmus "What Bloody Film is This. *Macbeth* for Our Time"), just as Johnson's female relatives are in his fever-induced nightmares. As a result of this stylistically sophisticated scene, Branagh's Johnson emerges as a troubled individual out of his depth, who even dreams sophisticated Shakespearean visions, unlike all the other Covid-19 sufferers presented in the series.

Shakespeare is used again in a similar way in the middle of Episode 2, in which we witness Johnson examine with trepidation the predicted figures of Covid-19 fatalities on his laptop computer. He then looks at the window and whispers: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all" (5.2.234-237), as the scriptwriters put in his mouth a fragment of one of Hamlet's most famous musings, increasing the viewer's sympathy for the troubled hero. Episode 3 opens with his dream, followed by him staring pensively at the window and whispering to himself: "Beware the Ides of March," as if to signify that he is

[7] For the discussion of Kurzel's *Macbeth* in the context of Brexit see: Rasmus "What Bloody Film is This? *Macbeth* for Our Time."

about to be betrayed by his allies.[8] Shakespearean quotations thus present the viewer with the contemplative and restrained Johnson rather than the bombastic and overconfident politician she or he may be familiar with from Boris's numerous public appearances.

Fig. 2.

Yet, the most powerful moment revealing Johnson's capability of retrospection comes in the last few minutes of the final episode, in which Branagh's Johnson returns to John of Gaunt's speech. The sequence opens with the real footage of different people clapping in support of true heroes: the NHS. As we see it unfold, we hear Branagh's famous Shakespearean voice deliver the same lines of John of Gaunt's speech as in Episode 1 off-screen, providing the images with contemplative resonance and none of the pomp of the earlier declamation. It then cuts to Johnson, who looks pensively at the window, then turns to his anxious-looking wife and comments: "Usually leave it there, you know, forget the rest". He then picks up the last part of the speech:

> [This England]
> Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
> Of wat'ry Neptune, is now bound in with shame,

[8] This could refer to Dominic Cummings's trip to Durham during lockdown, which eventually led to public outrage and Johnson's resignation. It could also suggest that Johnson's government does not listen to scientific advisors and does not take their warnings seriously enough.

> With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.
> That England that was wont to conquer others
> Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
> Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
> How happy then were my ensuing death! (2.1.68-74)

His earlier reading of the speech changes once it is delivered in a longer version. Now, it could also be interpreted not just as "a praise of England's invincibility and power over foreign forces" but also "as a warning against the self-destructive corruption and nationalism […]" (Kaptur 571). As Helen Hawkins wonders: "Has Boris ever been that sombrely circumspect and regretful? Give the scene to a tragedian as practised as Branagh, and it is bound to sing. But is this bit of fictionalising in aid of truth or, just as likely, dramatic impact?" As *This England* was completed before the Partygate revelations, its creators' vision of the PM is more sympathetic than some viewers might be ready to accept at present. Winterbottom claims that "The last episode is the most fictional—'lessons Boris Johnson learned from the first wave.' Which it turned out were not as many lessons as we thought he might have learned" (qtd. in Dalton).

What follows is an inscription informing the viewer that England was the worst-hit country in Europe, with Covid-19 claiming 112,264 lives by April 2021.[9] We then see a real clip from Cummings' testimony about the government's failure to manage the pandemic, followed by another one showing Johnson's resignation on the 7th of July, 2022. These videos stress the discrepancy between the real-life Johnson, who would cling to power for another year, refusing to take responsibility or blame for his government's mishandling of the crisis, covering up the Partygate scandal and repeatedly lying to the Parliament, and the fictional Johnson created in the series – a man overwhelmed with guilt and fully aware that, unlike Churchill, who in 2002 was voted the greatest Briton of all time, he will die in shame

This leads us, finally, to the discussion of the most important Shakespearean element in the series—Branagh as Johnson. The actor's involvement in the project was from the start its main advertising gimmick. His presence, even if hidden behind the layers of prosthetics and heavy make-up, is by far the strongest Shakespearean intertext. The thespian's face and voice seem to filter through the costume and endow Johnson with extra tragic weight, especially when his delivery of famous Shakespearean lines turns into a self-reflexive monologue.

Branagh is arguably one of the most important Shakespearean actors and directors of his generation. Jennifer Holl states that "Today, Shakespeare remains

[9] As of the time of writing, the figure has been updated to 132,632 (see: https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/)

the only playwright whose name in adjective form signifies a type of actor" (209), and mentions Branagh, whose "name, for example, hardly surfaces in print unless prefixed by 'Shakespearean' […]" (209). His impact in instigating a wave of Shakespeare screen adaptation in the 1990s is undeniable, causing some to refer to the decade as "the Branagh Era" or "Branagh Factor" (see: Hatchuel; Rasmus *Filming Shakespeare*; Crowl). With numerous Shakespearean roles on stage and screen, he is the ultimate Shakespearean celebrity, whose image is, at least in the eyes of the British press, predominantly bound up with Shakespeare, despite his involvement in numerous Hollywood genre films, including the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Blackwell 40).

Barbara Hodgdon explains how with his first choice of Shakespeare adaptation, *Henry V* (1989), critics immediately predicted "Branagh's trajectory as the next Olivier and, like him, linked to the nation" (59). Once he directed and starred in *Hamlet* (1996), he was no longer just a substitute for Olivier, as Blackwell proposes. In fact, the promotional materials for the film conflated him with Shakespeare:

> This is not to argue that the ascription of Shakespeare's authorship is consciously erased from the promotion of the text (it is still very much present). Rather, like the reframing of Hogarth's painting of Garrick as Richard III, Branagh's identity is formulated as so inherently Shakespearean that any mention of Shakespeare himself is curiously redundant. (40)

This sentiment materialised in 2018 when Branagh directed yet "another film about/on Shakespeare, not only playing in it but playing the Bard himself, thus producing a movie which, in a sense, is a culmination of Branagh's Shakespeare filming" (Fabiszak 70)—*All is True* (2018)—a biography featuring Shakespeare's last years in Stratford. This is significant for sealing his status as the greatest Shakespearean celebrity of his generation. Using some minimal prosthetics, an elongated nose and a wig, Branagh's face transforms into the Bard's iconic image which, as Jacek Fabiszak writes, is "modelled on the existing portraits of the Bard, a hybrid, palimpsestic face which has become *the* cultural trademark" (79). The actor opted, however, "not to use contact lenses, to go with my own blue eyes, because I wanted to get two things—the way he looked, but then the way he seemed to feel" (qtd. in Williams 2019). The end result is, as Ian McKellan (The Earl of Southampton) comments, that "the man sitting opposite you is Ken Branagh, but is also William Shakespeare" (qtd. in Williams 2019) (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3.

Writing about Shakespeare's face as the trademark of Shakespeare the brand, Lanier observes that, like any brand, it connotes certain ideas (2007: 93-94). He notes elsewhere that "Shakespeare's face offers an easy means for attaching commercially useful connotations to products, among them quality craftsmanship, *gravitas*, trustworthiness, Britishness, antiquity, cultural sophistication, intellectuality, and artsiness" (2006: 112). And what if Branagh's face, now merged with Shakespeare's, then morphs into Boris's? As the study of the reception will show below, Branagh's Johnson's face is a palimpsest, conflating and merging identities. To many reviewers, it appeared less than solid with the only stable feature being Branagh's gentle and thoughtful eyes peering through the liquid mask.

In her work on the actor's body and adaptation studies, Christina Wilkins finds that praise is usually accorded to those actors who undergo massive bodily transformations for a role by either putting on or losing a lot of weight through a rigorous diet and an exercise programme. This is because, as she argues, we habitually find such bodily transformations more authentic and realistic (30). When an actor wears a fat suit and prosthetics, we tend to look for the real body underneath or marvel at the deception (31). Stardom further complicates the acceptance of an actor's body as a specific character (44), which is why promotional materials often insist that, as was the case here, "Kenneth Branagh is Boris Johnson," conflating the actor with the character. Branagh's performance is the focal point of most reviews and, rather expectedly, typically discussed in the context of his Shakespearean persona.

Whereas some critics saw Branagh's impersonation in terms of caricature, satire or pantomime (see: Moreland; Vaizey; Fletcher; Hilton), many

nonetheless noticed that it gave Johnson surprising tragic weight and sympathy, calling Johnson "unexpectedly sympathetic" and "a palpable human being" (Lynskey), "a hopeless and tragic figure" (Fletcher) and "a tragic theatrical hero" (Einav). Lucy Mangan's review is even titled "[…] So Sympathetic to Boris Johnson It is Absolutely Bananas," while Beth English observes how "*This England* works hard to try and make the audience feel sympathy for a truly unsympathetic character". Branagh's presence is undeniably one of the reasons for such mixed reactions, provoking numerous reviewers to make Shakespearean analogies as well. For instance, Scott Roxborough compares Johnson to Shakespeare's classic tragedy, calling him "an odd combination of King Lear and the Fool: a Shakespeare-and-classics-quoting leader who is equal parts tragic and absurd." Dan Einav also notices parallels between Branagh's Johnson and a constellation of Shakespeare's tragic figures:

> Between the casting of Kenneth Branagh and the frequency with which the former PM is seen reciting Shakespeare, Johnson appears here as a tragic theatrical hero. He is as isolated and insecure as Lear; as indecisive and mirthless as Hamlet; and—in bizarre dream sequences—as conscience-stricken as Macbeth. Disguised behind heavy prosthetics and vocal tics, Branagh still cannot help but confer gravitas upon a man once dubbed by David Cameron "the greased piglet."

Moreover, despite or rather because of Branagh's uncanny resemblance to Johnson in *This England*, critics picked on poignant differences between the two men, especially visible in minutiae facial details, such as the eyes, giving Johnson qualities associated with Branagh as a Shakespearean performer (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4.

Goodall observes that:

> Branagh portrays his behaviour with startlingly accuracy but, as the camera closes in, the face just doesn't seem to belong. An image search for close-up shots of Johnson shows that he never stops mugging for the camera, which rarely catches him off-guard. When it does, the eyes are hard, almost blank, in stark contrast to the thoughtful, reflective qualities of Branagh's expression.

Zoe Williams also notices Branagh's eyes peering through the prosthetic: "In feverish, guilty dreams, we see his conscience played back to him in chorus. And this, along with Branagh's all-too-human eyes, buried under his prosthetic pouchy face, could be where people take issue." Similarly, Rachel Cooke finds the eyes mismatched with the rest of the face: "The prosthetics make Johnson seem pathetic, in the fullest sense of that word: vulnerable, inadequate, enfeebled. From this spongy pinkness a pair of tiny eyes peer out. They plead for understanding, for courage, for a brief respite from the awful business of being oneself." Mike McCahill pays attention to the vocal discrepancy, on the other hand, pointing to the curious hybrid: "And the voice we hear emerging from this rubbery carapace, blustering through the Johnson greatest hits, vacillates: sometimes it's spot-on, but sometimes it's Branagh, and sometimes it's someone else entirely."

Adrian Lobb explains the overall effect of Branagh's impersonation in the following way: "It may be due to Branagh's soulful performance, his ability to go deep into character with such empathy and skill, that Johnson never feels truly held to account by *This England*." This rings strangely true of the actor's earlier performance of the Bard himself, which Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* describes as "a triumph of ferocity and feeling that shuns Shakespeare the literary rock star to find the flawed, touchingly human man inside." But whereas Branagh as Shakespeare is perceived as a happy marriage of faces, if not identities, Branagh as Johnson is a harder mix for many critics to swallow. The Shakespearean celebrity's all too human blue eyes peering through the prosthetics are now also those of the gentle swan of Avon, and no amount of make-up can make them match the hardened face of the disgraced politician they know.

In sum, Winterbottom's *This England* is a confusing proposition. On the one hand, Shakespeare is used ironically to indicate the gap between the real Boris and the historical figures he emulates. It is a critical portrait of a man who hides behind carefully selected lofty quotations, appropriating them out of context to seek self-legitimation. On the other hand, the criticism aimed at this prominent architect of Brexit and the man now held accountable for his mishandling of the pandemic is softened by the very presence of the Shakespearean celebrity. The show reveals the importance of casting, which attracts attention to the project but can also distract from its purpose. Just as

Benedict Cumberbatch's portrayal of Dominic Cummings in *Brexit: The Uncivil War* (2019) turned Cummings into a charismatic genius, Branagh's Shakespearean identity peers through the mask and looks at us with Shakespeare's gentle eyes. Connoting erudition, class, trustworthiness and intellect, Shakespeare turns Johnson into a flawed albeit likeable hero.

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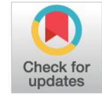

Yueqi Wu*

Reclaiming Cross-Dressing: Masculinity Construction in the All-Female Yue Opera's Shakespearean Adaptations

Abstract: Because it offers the stage such scope for polyerotic interpretation, cross-dressing has held an irresistible appeal to theatre practitioners across times and cultures, including Shakespeare in early modern England. The Shakespearean cross-dressing theatre, however, has long excited critical disapprobation as a cultural form which excluded women. However, can cross-dressing as a theatrical device be reclaimed by women as an alternative mode of Shakespearean performance? What academic and practical significance can a reversed, all-female casting of Shakespearean production offer? This paper will argue that the Chinese Yue opera's Shakespeare adaptations may shed light on how gender impersonation can be used to express women's wishes and desires.

As the second largest Chinese opera genre, Yue opera is a theatreform in which all roles are played by actresses for a predominantly female audience. Interestingly, Shakespeare is also Yue opera's most adapted foreign playwright. *General Ma Long* (2001, an adaptation of *Macbeth*) and *Coriolanus and Duliniang* (2016, an adaptation of *Coriolanus*) are two representative specimens of Yue opera Shakespearean adaptations with all-female casting. The male protagonists of both are played by cross-dressed actresses.

How do Yue opera female performers, whose style is generally perceived as soft and feminine, stage the Shakespearean war heroes famous for their bloodthirsty masculinity? Deploying a theoretical framework based on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory and Bertolt Brecht's account of the epic theatre, this essay aims to examine the masculinity construction in the all-female Yue opera Shakespearean adaptations, in order to open a discussion of how cross-dressing can be used to deconstruct and reassemble gender norms.

Keywords: Shakespeare, cross-dressing, Chinese opera, feminist theatre, Judith Butler, Bertolt Brecht.

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Although "there was no law prohibiting women from appearing on the English professional stage" (Rackin 115) in the early modern period, Shakespeare's company remained an all-male one. While some Shakespearean scholars once deemed the cross-dressing convention as a sign of Shakespeare's excellence in dramaturgy, for it shows "Shakespeare's ability to see through the limitations of conventional gender expectations" (Case 25), more now comment on the inherently misogynistic nature of boys-playing-women. As Case remarks in *Feminism and Theatre*, whether for the sake of maintaining "the celibacy of the stage" (22) or making room for homoerotic flirtation, the exclusion of female bodies "makes the fictional female upon the stage the merchandise necessary to facilitate [mainly males'] erotic exchange" (26). Although Shakespeare's all-male stage has inevitably allowed "men [to] appropriat[e] female power, symbolically striving for their own androgynous unity while rejecting the actuality of women" (Dolan 7), cross-dressing itself as a theatrical device can nonetheless be used to "produce[] fissures where feminists can find footholds for producing deeper, more radical fractures" (Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon* 2). How can female theatre practitioners reclaim cross-dressing to perform Shakespeare? While many Western all-female Shakespearean productions struggle in justifying their casting choice and suffer from "social and economic marginalisation" (Aaron 18), there is one Chinese opera genre that has spontaneously developed an all-female performing tradition. Through their female-to-male cross-dressing[1] in Shakespeare adaptations, we are given a unique opportunity to examine how women can play with coded gender norms—even with those encoded in classic scripts designed for all-male performance—so as to satisfy their fantasy and imagine new kinds of gender construction.

As the second largest opera genre after Beijing Opera, Yue opera is the only all-female opera genre in China. Due to "the legitimation of Beijing opera as 'the national theatre'" (Li 18) in official ideology, Beijing opera and its male cross-dressing tradition have created a misperception of Chinese opera as a male-dominated theatre. However, as Siu Leung Li points out in his monograph *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*:

[1] Although the field of cross-dressing is often connected with Trans Studies, it would be arbitrary to consider all cross-dressers as incipiently transexuals. Since transgender is still a newly introduced and sensitive Western concept in China, and many Yue opera male impersonators have struggled through their life to separate their stage persona from their personal life, it is inappropriate to assume all Yue opera's cross-dressers have any transgender tendency. Unless explicitly stated by the performers that they desire to transition to other gender identities in their personal lives, this article will regard the self-identified gender of the performers as in line with their biological gender.

> Chinese opera theatregoers and fans are obviously aware of the female Yueju opera that is arguably the most successful regional opera today, at a time when the most representative regional opera, Beijing opera, is waning and the most prestigious, Kunju opera, is literally dying, with their male transvestite[2] traditions almost eradicated in contemporary China. (41)

Despite the lack of international recognition, Yue opera never ceases to embrace new subject-matter to cope with the times. Its relatively shorter history has given this opera genre fewer limitations when adapting stories from other cultures. Since a *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation in 1942, nine Shakespeare plays had been adapted by Yue opera up to 2016 (Zhongqi Jiang 31), making Shakespeare its most adapted foreign playwright. The latest Shakespearean adaptation is an all-female *Coriolanus* (2016) by the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe. As a way of participating in the global commemorations of the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, this production adopted a rather modern style, and premiered not in its native habitat Hangzhou but at the Peacock Theatre in London 2016. Earlier in 2001, the Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe presented *General Ma Long*, an adaptation of *Macbeth* in a more traditional and localised style. This production features the only Macbeth played by an actress in Chinese theatre history so far. Both centering on military themes rather than on romance, these two productions stepped out of their comfort zone and offered a rare opportunity to examine how this all-female theatre genre at once constructs manhood and feminises Shakespeare. The recordings of the two productions are both available online for the public.[3] It is the purpose of this essay to explore the potential of theatrical cross-dressing in Yue opera Shakespeare adaptations through a theoretical model building on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory and Bertolt Brecht's notion of epic theatre.

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[2] Coined by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1910, transvestism (Latin for cross-dressing) is a term that contains pathological connotations. Therefore, many members of this community prefer the term "cross-dresser" (Garber 4). To avoid unnecessary offence, this paper will not use the term "transvestism." However, some of the references that appear in this paper still use "transvestism" as a synonym for cross-dressing due to time and culture reasons.

[3] The whole recording of *General Ma Long* production can be found here: *YouTube*, 2 August 2017, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gq6uLbPu5yI. The whole recording of *Coriolanus and Duliniang* production can be find here: YouTube, 14 April 2020, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnIXzNPOH4U (first half), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7KK5wsJqzs (second half). Both productions have Chinese subtitles.

The Female-To-Male Cross-Dressing Tradition of Yue Opera in Chinese Theatre History

Cross-dressing has long been an integral part of Chinese theatre history. The "'naturalistic representation' of gender" (Chou 131) on the Spoken Drama (huaju) stage only emerged as a side-effect of the incursion of Western realism in the early 20th century. Although Beijing opera's leading position "among the more than three hundred traditional operatic forms existing in China today" has misled many to take "male transvestism as a norm on the traditional Chinese stage" (Li 19), female cross-dressers have an equally strong presence in Chinese theatre history. The earliest record of Chinese female theatrical cross-dressing can be traced back to the reign of the Tang emperor Suzong (756-763), which is later than the first recorded male cross-dressing, in the third century (Li 33). The shorter history by no means implies any less significance of female cross-dressing onstage: as Li Siu Leung remarks, "the first full-fledged Chinese theatre (in the 13th century) was distinguished by female cross-dressing, not male transvestism" (38). The prosperity of cross-dressing and mixed-sex casting in the 13th-century Chinese theatre have also revealed that "a performer's sex was not the primary consideration for the role he or she played onstage" (Chou 134) in Chinese theatre. The all-female practice of Yue opera is not only an embodiment of the centuries-long cross-dressing tradition on the Chinese opera stage, but also an outcome of a particular era in Chinese history, namely the Republican Era (1912-1949).

Originating as "a peasant form of story-singing in the Zhejiang countryside in the mid-nineteenth century" (Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men* 26), Yue opera emerges from the underclass and is a representative of the minor opera (xiaoxi). According to Jin Jiang (*Women Playing Men* 29-31), the repertoires and acting styles of the minor opera differ from the major opera (daxi), such as Beijing opera, which was developed by the government, aristocrats, and intellectual elites. The major opera normally embodies the authoritative ideology and scholar-official aesthetics by featuring stories about the vicissitudes of the empire, while the repertoire of the minor opera mainly consists of tales of urban life, among which romantic stories of the "young scholar and virtuous maidens" (caizi jiaren) prevail. As the imperial system was dismantled, the masculine imperial narratives of the major operas gradually lost its appeal to the new Republican audiences, who were more drawn by the minor operas with topics more relevant to their lives. Because of their relatively feminine narratives and romance-based repertoires, minor operas are quite suitable for women's performing style. As the "anti-masculine ideal of masculinity" in late imperial China had long deemed male heroes with feminine appearance more attractive (Wu 29), scholar-beauty romances (caizi jiaren) "privileged the representation of 'soft' masculinity" (Wang 41). Therefore,

female cross-dressers actually possess natural advantages when performing young scholars in these stories.

When the emergent Chinese women's liberation movement of the mid-1910s freed many women from domestic confinement and encouraged them to participate in social activities, more and more female performers, characters, and audiences appeared in the theatre. The forerunner of Yue opera, Shengxian little opera, initially flourished in rural areas (as did other minor operas), where the official ideology about gender hierarchy was less rigid. Women in the countryside, as an important part of the labour force, enjoyed more freedom and therefore had more access to this informal theatre form. Due to urbanisation and the prevalence of gender-equal notions in major cities, Yue opera, which did not exclude women in the first place, attracted from the 1930s through the 1940s an enormous female audience in Shanghai, the culturally most influential and open city in southern China. All these factors led to the rise of Yue opera as a female-dominated theatre, catering specifically to women's tastes. Nowadays, all-female Yue opera troupes, deploying male impersonators, enjoy more popularity than the all-male and gender-straight Yue opera in the Shanghai market and have come to dominate that region's native theatre.

Even though both are impersonating the opposite gender onstage, it is necessary to separate male cross-dressing from female cross-dressing practices as they have rather different causes. The male cross-dressing theatre, as seen in the Elizabethan theatre and in Beijing opera, came into being because women were unable to appear on stage due to strict gender regimes and/or misogynistic cultures. However, female cross-dressing theatre, such as women's Yue opera and the Takarazuka Revue Company in contemporary Japan, are the outcome of particular artistic choices of the theatre makers rather than a practical necessity, for at no time were men forbidden to appear on the public stage. Theses theatre practitioners insist on an all-female cast because they believe that male impersonation by actresses can ensure a specific aesthetic for female audiences. While cross-dressing is considered a necessary strategy for men's theatre to cope with strict gender regimes, it functions as a vehicle for women-dominated theatre to carry their dramatic expression.

Butler and Brecht in Cross-Dressing: Gender as Performance and Gender as Epic Acting

In order to examine how cross-dressing can denaturalise gender onstage and turn the stage into "a privileged site for feminist analysis" (Diamond, *Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True-Real'* 62), we need a theoretical framework that can both de- and reconstruct performance. As one of the most influential contemporary gender theorists, Butler advances the notion that the nature of gender is

constructed by proposing that gender is performative. Even though Butler's 1993 assumption has been much criticised in recent years by trans activists as "an example of cis-sexism" as it "conflates sexuality and gender identity" (Joubin, *Shakespearean Performance through a Trans Lens* 76-77), I still believe that such criticism largely derives from a misunderstanding of Butler's theory. By providing my own interpretation of Butler's gender performativity theory, this article aims to illustrate the inspirational function cross-dressing can offer beyond sex-role stereotyping.

The transgender community's backlash towards Butler emerges mainly from the misinterpretation described by the theorist themselves in a 2021 interview as "voluntarist interpretation of the performativity of gender" (Otwarty Uniwersytet, 2021). Dissenters believe that when Butler asserts that gender is a performance, it is implied that "gender is like choosing clothes to put on" and gender is seen "as a 'choice' rather than as an essential and firmly fixed sense of self" (*Gender Performance: The TransAdvocate interviews Judith Butler*). In a 2015 conversation with Cristan Williams from *TransAdvocate*, Butler clarified that they does not see gender as a choice:

> Some trans people thought that in claiming that gender is performative that I was saying that it is all a fiction, and that a person's felt sense of gender was therefore "unreal." That was never my intention. I sought to expand our sense of what gender realities could be. (*TransAdvocate*)

Nevertheless, I do not agree that Butler is limiting the exploration of gender identity by saying gender is performative, just as I would contradict the assumption that cross-dressing reinforces gender stereotyping, even though both can conveniently be read that way. "Gender performance" and "gender performativity" can be easily mixed, yet Butler has clearly stressed that "[p]erformativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance" (*Bodies That Matter* 59). The concept "performative" stems from linguist J. L. Austin's speech-act theory. In his book *How to Do Things With Words* in 1962, Austin put forward the linguistic term "performative utterances," which are statements "that enact what is uttered" (Drouin 26-27) rather than simply describing something. To say gender is performative is to emphasise that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 33). Just as a marriage is actualised by the saying of "I do" as part of a wedding ceremony, by acting out the gender identity one is assigned or chooses, gender becomes substantialised. What Butler trying to convey through their performativity theory is not that gender is unreal, but that gender is a culturally formed phenomenon which is being produced and reproduced all the time.

I would argue that embracing the theatrical side of gender can offer more freedom for gender exploration both on- and offstage. Although mixing up "gender is performative" as "gender is a performance" can be a common mistake, these two assertions do not contradict each other in Butler's theory. In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) Butler has declared: "my theory sometimes waffles between understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical" because "the two are invariably related, chiasmically so" (xxv). The overlap between the theatrical and linguistic connotations of performative also contains intriguing potential for the study of cross-dressing. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler uses Nietzsche's philosophical viewpoint to dismantle gender ontology, which at the same time also accords with the nature of theatre: "'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (*Gender Trouble* 33). This explains why Plato distrusted theatre and mimesis as there is "no ideal standing beyond its representation and ordering the universe" (Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon* 11). By rejecting a "doer" behind the deed of gender, Butler's gender performativity theory helps to consolidate the closeness between gender and theatre: "gender—like theater—is automimetic. Both are imitations of an action, and action is always already mimetic" (Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon* 11). Therefore, the theatrical performance aspect of gender can further make gender "a domain of agency or freedom," which is also what Butler stressed in her 2021 interview:

> I think I still believe that we are formed from very early days through gender assignment and gender norms, expectations that society has of us, but we are not trapped fully within those terms. We can work with them and sometimes play with them, that we can open up spaces that feel better for us or more real to us. We are both culturally constrained and to some degree free. Gender is a site where we feel that. (Otwarty Uniwersytet, 2021)

When pointing out the absence of any "'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes" (*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* 522), Butler's theory does not wish to deny the authenticity of individual gender experience, but to shed light on the fact that gender is socially scripted, which, in turn, suggests the possibility that individuals can also play with it if they know how to write the script. As Butler puts it: "gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it" (*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* 526). Therefore, by playing the opposite gender onstage, theatrical cross-dressing is a direct window to observe how certain costumes, gestures and characterisation are associated with gender. A study of such "script" in cross-dressing would help us better recognise how gender constructions are formed and inscribed on the body, which could also enlighten us to develop new vocabularies of gender for our own needs. Furthermore,

Butler also argues that desires do not originate from our personhood but from social norms in *Undoing Gender* (2004) (2), which could explain the same-sex casting choice beyond social prohibition: men know better what kind of female characters their fellows want to see onstage, and male characters played by female impersonators can fulfil the desires of female audiences better than the performances by their male counterparts. By exposing the performative nature of gender and the social construction of desires, Butler provides the theoretical foundation for cross-dressing to become the tool of denaturalising gender and reconstituting desires. As for how to optimise the role of cross-dressing to turn the stage into "a laboratory in which to reconstruct new, non-genderized identities" (Dolan 10), we need someone whose theoretical endeavour is to revolutionise the representational apparatus of theatre itself. That, perhaps surprisingly, is Brecht.

By "[d]emystifying representation, showing how and when the object of pleasure is made, releasing the spectator from imaginary and illusory identifications" (Diamond, *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory* 83), Bertolt Brecht aimed to establish a new version of dialectical theatre in contrast to the empathic Aristotelian theatre. Whether it was Brecht's intention or not, the basic means and purpose of epic theatre "contained a profoundly feminist impulse" (Solomon, *Materialist Girl* 43). As "[t]he cornerstone of Brecht's theory" (Diamond, *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory* 84), the alienation effect aims to make the familiar strange onstage so that spectators would take social factors into account instead of simply empathising with the characters. Characters' behaviors were to be shown "in quotations" or be demonstrated rather than be identified with. If such epic acting can be applied to gender, that is to say, if the gender of a character can be alienated onstage, spectators may be able to realise that gender, like other identities, is a social construction rather than a natural attribute. Cross-dressing, in this sense, perfectly exemplifies the alienation effect: "gender is exposed as a sexual costume, a sign of a role, not evidence of identity" (Diamond, *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory* 85).

Since "the familiar cannot be rendered strange without first being established as familiar" (Solomon, *Materialist Girl* 47), Brecht requires a certain mechanism to "evoke familiar characters and situations quickly" (52) for alienation to take effect. This accounts for Brecht's fondness for parable and his invention of an original acting concept, Gestus, both of which contain the potential for the feminist deconstruction of gender. Can gender become a parable? Can stereotyping somehow be liberating? This is where Chinese opera becomes relevant.

As "[t]he explosive (and elusive) synthesis of alienation, historicization, and the 'not, but'," the Brechtian Gestus represents "a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau" in which social meanings are encoded (Diamond, *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory* 89). The Gestus would enable spectators quickly to

understand the character and the social embodiment without believing the actors have become the characters.

> By gestus Brecht meant a rich ensemble of theatrical representation, including language, body stance, pitch, facial expression, speech rhythms, and sound patterns—any theatrical means through which actors could physically depict human beings as social creatures in a world governed by power struggles. (Guntner 110)

This coincides with the performance ideology in Chinese opera. In Brecht's article *Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst* (1957), where the alienation effect is first mentioned, Brecht "celebrated the Chinese theatre's ability to manufacture and manipulate Gestus" (Martin 77). To elaborate on the signs and referents system of Chinese theatre,[4] Brecht gives an example of how the alienation effect is created in a scene full of Gestus. Through an excerpt from a Beijing opera play he saw in Moscow, Brecht describes how a fisherwoman onstage uses performing skills to demonstrate rowing a (non-existent) boat in both the fast current and in a quiet bay. Brecht noted that "this voyage has a historic quality" (14) as this scene is so well-known by the audiences that the performer's attitude has both acknowledged and even induced such awareness. The fisherwoman scene has demonstrated that the theatrical system of Chinese opera is based on a consensus between the audience and performers. Such emblematic nature is most vividly reflected in the role-type (hangdang) convention of Chinese opera. Characters in Chinese opera are categorised into different role-types according to gender, age, occupation, and other social identities. Each role-type possesses its own set of highly stylised acting conventions. Gender, like age and social status, is fixed by a specific stage formula, thus detaches itself from the performer's body and becomes a kind of Gestus. With certain costume and training, performers can successfully reproduce characters' gender identities regardless of their own gender. Such employment of gendered Gestus is not only appreciated but also celebrated by Chinese opera audiences, which is why the largest and the second largest opera genre in China—Beijing opera and Yue opera—are both characterised by cross-dressing.

Yet the gendered Gestus on the stage of Chinese opera has also inevitably faced criticism such as "reinforc[ing] notions of naturalized gender behavior" (Solomon, *Materialist Girl* 53). That is also why casting women in women's roles onstage in the 1930s China was deemed an improvement in theatre as it "freed women from the formalism invented by men and encoded

[4] Here Brecht means the traditional Chinese opera rather than westernised Spoken Drama.

in the performances of female impersonators" (Martin 82). However, such criticism also overlooks the progressive and feminist potential epic acting of gender can promise. Just as criticising a parable for being oversimplified is to remain on the surface, regarding cross-dressing as stereotypical fails to recognise that such Gestus exceeds the stage and signals a possibility of dismantling the gaze. In Solomon's *Materialist Girl: The Good Person of Szechwan and Making Gender Strange*, she points out that what Brecht called "the gestus of showing, the performer acknowledging that she is being watched and enjoyed" (53) is an empowering alternative for performers to break away from the fetishised "to-be-looked-at-ness." This kind of "looking-at-being-looked-at-ness" is what takes place on the Chinese opera stage, where, in Brecht's belief, the alienation effect is achieved. There is no fourth wall in Chinese opera as the performer "makes it clear that he knows he is being looked at" (Brecht 14). Such awareness of representation applies to cross-dressing as well—both performers and audiences of Beijing opera and Yue opera acknowledge that the gender of the character is part of the play. By detaching gender from performer's own body, gender becomes something "paradoxically available for both analysis and identification, paradoxically within representation while refusing its fixity" (Diamond, *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory* 89).

To return to my initial question: Does cross-dressing reaffirm or deconstruct gender? The Butler-Brecht theatre model offers an alternative answer: Cross-dressing can reinvent gender. While Butler has asserted that gender is a performance, Brecht's theatre furthermore points out that gender can be performed through the epic acting technique Gestus. In the following, I will return to Shakespeare's original text and the performance of all-female Yue opera adaptations in order to closely analyse how gender as Gestus is assembled, performed, and transformed into a kind of art to satisfy women's desires and fantasies in Yue opera.

What Maketh Man?: Masculinity in the All-Female Yue Opera Shakespeare Adaptations

Although Caius Martius Coriolanus may be perceived as one of the most emphatically male tragic heroes in Shakespeare, the ontology of his masculinity is always under question. Lehnhof observes that "no Shakespearean character exposes this dynamic [that early modern masculinity is not a natural given; it must always be achieved] more dramatically than the protagonist of *Coriolanus*" (360). Even the hero himself has noticed the connection between masculinity and theatrical effect: "Would you have me / False to my nature? Rather say I play / The man I am" (3.2.14-16). As "he negatively associates play-acting with effeminacy" (Lehnhof 355) and dissimulation with depravity, Coriolanus'

rejection of performance exposes his "sexualised fear that it will unman him" (354). Coppelia Kahn also notes that Coriolanus' antitheatricalism caused by his preoccupations with manliness suggests that "his masculinity might be only a costume he wears (like Macbeth's 'borrow'd robes'), artificial rather than natural" (*Roman Shakespeare* 154).

Similarly, *Macbeth* is also a play in which Shakespeare acknowledges that manhood is achieved through the display of particular qualities rather than something congenital. As Bailey notes, "[d]iscussions of manhood in flux and under siege have been central because gender disturbance provides the explanation for Macbeth's self-defeating choices" (192). Macbeth's greatest inner torment derives from the inescapable fact that he lives in a society where "true manhood is synonymous with heroic violence" (Wells 117). Macbeth's descent into the moral abyss is unavoidable, when his "dearest love" (1.5.56), Lady Macbeth, calls his manliness into question: "When you durst do it, then you were a man;" (1.7.48). It is his desperate attempt to prove that "I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none" (1.7.46-47). *Macbeth* is a story about how a violent manhood "designed to validate man's power and authority, paradoxically undermines man's autonomy and independence of thought and action" (Howell 19). Echoing the problematic nature of the acclaimed heroic valour in *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus* also dramatises a similar belief that "manliness in the early modern period could [only] be achieved and expressed" through one thing: warfare (Lehnhof 360). Therefore, one can conclude that what Shakespeare explored in both plays is the destruction that such valorisation of heroic savagery can cause to both the individual and the society.

Yue opera takes the violent aspect of masculinity into consideration when adapting these two bloodthirsty Shakespearean plays. As an opera genre best known for its excellent portrayal of "young scholars and virtuous maidens" (caizi jiaren) romances, the all-female Yue opera repertoire offers very few precedents for the staging of violent masculinity. Though Yue opera practitioners took different approaches in the two productions, they both resort to Gestus to substantiate the performative nature of manhood and violence. In the adaptation of *Macbeth,* carried out in traditional Yue opera style, the Macbeth figure Ma Long is first portrayed through the formulaic fighting sequence of the combatant (wusheng) role-type, as per traditional Chinese opera performance convention. Ma Long first appears onstage with a 30-second incredible stylised martial art fighting sequence, which is the most visually obvious Gestus of his masculinity in this production. Through a series of prearranged movements and acrobatic actions, a female performer can obtain the identity of a masculine General. In other words, rather than trying to achive a believable manly outer appearance, the masculinity of Ma Long is validated through this 30-second Gestus. At the same time, choosing the acrobatic fighting

Gestus also echos Shakespeare's proposition that manliness equals violence in *Macbeth*. Besides exhibiting violence directly through the physical Gestus in *General Ma Long* production, Yue opera adapters also encapsulate violence within the hero's masculinity into a social Gestus—the military. That is to say Ma Long's manhood is generated onstage through his military identity. The name of this Yue opera production is *General Ma Long* instead of simply *Ma Long* like Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, which shows the significant priority of his military Generalship in this production. Additionally, choosing "General" rather than the equivalent title of "Thane of Cawdor" or "King of Scotland" as his core identity to be put in the title represents this production's understanding that whatever political success Macbeth achieves, the essence of his identity and manhood is most essentially linked to the military.

As the traditional opera acting conventions lose their effect when the Yue opera *Coriolanus* adaptation is designed in a modern-day setting, Yue opera transforms costumes into Gestus to achieve the ultra-masculine identity in this production. While an overall masculine temperament is created through commoners' leather and denim jackets, windbreakers, and boots, this Yue opera production focuses on Coriolanus' extraordinary martial prowess as the essence of his manhood to distinguish Coriolanus' incomparable machismo from others. As part of the army uniform, beret symbolises militarism as the same group of actresses playing plebeians instantly transform themselves into Roman soldiers by putting berets on onstage. Since the play implies that "manhood [...] is less an outcome of elemental or substantial alteration than an unstable effect of addition, accumulation, and performance" (Lehnhof 359-360), "the gendering activity" (Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare* 144) war functions as "an institutionalised site of maturation in which boys are constructed as men by learning to fulfil mandates of masculinity" (Dittmann 659). Named after the Roman god of war, Martius deems warfare as the hallmark of his manhood, which in this production is embodied by the beret that he never takes off throughout the play.

Since the rise of Yue opera is very much indebted to the growing female audiences in Shanghai in the early 1920s, masculinity in this female constructed theatre is not only a theatrical effect but also a fetishised performance catering to audiences' desires. The female-dominated Yue opera theatre offers a space where there are fewer restrictions on women's behaviour and expression. Reversing the cross-dressing on Shakespeare's stage, "[w]hen men play women, [...] in these traditions—all non-naturalistic—the male actor becomes the fetishized women" (Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon* 11), the male impersonators in Yue opera offer the fetishisation of manhood on their female bodies. Jin Jiang has observed in her study of the Yue opera history that "the fans of women's Yue opera often unabashedly and unrestrainedly express their strong affections towards their favourite actresses in public, regardless of what others think" (*Poetry and Politics* vi). In these two Yue opera productions,

minor female roles take every opportunity to express their fascination with the male protagonist's body as a wink to the female audiences offstage. In *General Ma Long* production, one of the witches figure bluntly expresses her fondness for Ma Long by lifting his clothes and exclaiming: "You are so handsome. I like you!" The eroticisation of male bodies are even more explicit in the *Coriolanus* adaptation since it is set in a contemporary background. Even without any nudity in this scene, Coriolanus standing on a chair still positions him as an idol whose body serves for objectification. Coriolanus can barely move when one of the male commoners lifts his gown and hugs his thighs. The fetishisation of Coriolanus' body reaches a climax when two females hand him their ballots by holding his hands and touching their cheeks and foreheads suggesting erotic obsession and sexual desire.

Comparing the two all-female Yue opera productions, we can see certain similar tendencies in the male characterisation when women take over the ideological apparatus of theatre. In Yue opera, the antithesis of Shakespeare's stage where "[m]en [became] objects to be gazed at and assessed" (Louie 99), the male characters function as the idealised incarnation of female fantasies. As Jin Jiang observes, the young male impersonators in Yue opera "embody women's ideal men—elegant, graceful, capable, caring, gentle, and loyal" (*Women Playing Men* 223). Yue opera's Macbeth and Coriolanus are both endowed with certain qualities that are desirable by women, which is most vividly reflected in their emotional expressions towards their spouses. In Shakespeare's original play, Macbeth leaves Lady Macbeth descending into madness alone by coldly referring to her as "patient" (5.3.37) and only giving an indifferent and brief epitaph of her death—"she should have died hereafter" (5.5.17). However, Ma Long in the Yue opera adaptation not only actively tries to protect his wife from the ghosts, but also uses an one-minute aria singing to express his desperation as her body is removed from the stage. Similarly, Yue opera's version of Coriolanus is also much more affectionate and expressive in his interaction with Virgilia, compared to the character from the original text who is "Shakespeare's most opaque tragic protagonist" (Maus 2789). While in the Chinese literary tradition "warrior-fighter is often depicted as having no romantic feelings whatsoever" (Louie 23), the "feminized narrative of qing, or feelings" (Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men* 216) of Yue opera tends to portray male characters as romantic lovers in order to satisfy female audience's imaginations. Contrary to men playing women according to men's taste in the male-dominated theatre, "Yue opera's construction of the male on the female body yielded a kind of masculinity that served women's interests and helped define the feminine" (Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men* 231).

However, I have to note with regret that these two all-female Yue opera adaptations have consciously downplayed gender issues in the original Shakespeare texts. In order to "assimilate[] Shakespeare into the fabric of local

worldviews and representational practices" (Joubin, *Chinese Shakespeares* 16), Yue opera adapters have shifted the focus from gender to ethics in these two productions. With almost no sign of Macbeth's "pronounced lack of secure gendered identifications" (Bailey 202), the cross-dressed protagonist Ma Long shows no anxiety about his masculinity. Similarly, despite the ubiquitous patriarchal fear that "any passionate relationship [with women] will endanger or threaten his masculine identity" (Howell 5), the Yue opera Coriolanus is neither afraid nor ashamed to show his affection for his wife. While "Shakespeare's heroes and villains are […] sometimes hard to tell apart" (Wells 141), Yue opera Macbeth and Coriolanus are almost glorified into morally upright characters.

Although such an artistic choice in adapting Shakespeare may seem to be a reactionary one for a female-centred theatre genre, it is actually in line with the long-established tradition of Yue opera. As Radway observes in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, "in ideal romances the hero is constructed androgynously" (12). Yue opera becomes a perfect platform for romantic stories due to their androgynous aesthetics, particularly embodied by the male impersonator's body. The romance-centred ideology of the all-female Yue opera is also what limits this theatre's further exploration in the gender sphere, as romances are essentially "a ritual effort to convince its [recipients] that heterosexuality is both inevitable and natural and that it is necessarily satisfying as well" (Radway 13). Since romances can only serve as a release and escapist space for female fantasies, Yue opera never intends to overthrow gender hierarchy or challenge heterosexuality. By idealising Shakespearean antiheroes and their romantic relationship, these Yue opera adaptations inevitably overlook the insidious patriarchal power structure within these plays. It is rather disappointing but natural to see that Yue opera, a theatre genre dedicated to telling the perfect romantic story, only seeks solutions to gender trouble by creating an ideal male hero.

As previously discussed, the "self-consciously anti-illusory and stagy" (Lei 277) characteristics of Yue opera, or Chinese Opera in general, have made this theatre genre a potential platform for testing feminist theatre models such as Butler's gender performativity theory and Brecht's epic theatre. By observing how gender representations onstage are assembled, the artificiality of gender performance can be exposed, and the patriarchal gender system may be challenged. However, echoing Brecht's questioning of the "theater's capacity to teach us a way to see critically, and to apply that critical consciousness to the world" (Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon* 18) and Butler's questioning of "whether the denaturalization of gender norms is the same as their subversion" (*Bodies That Matter* 215), I also doubt to what extent can this theatrical cross-dressing deconstruct gender categories onstage or call gender norms into question. Very much like the early modern Shakespearean stage, the cross-dressing convention on the all-female Yue opera stage is not designed to

challenge patriarchal society but to entertain the audience. As Solomon contends: "It's one thing to recognize that there are theater-like aspects of masculinity. It's another to feel authorized to assume the strength and self-sovereignty masculinity claims." (*Re-Dressing the Canon* 18) Despite the certain level of feminist awareness Yue opera demonstrates, what Shakespeare can not achieve through cross-dressing can also not be achieved by Yue opera at the moment.

I do not intend to excuse the reactionary nature of these productions, but I do believe that this idealised tendency of Yue opera can open a new discussion for feminist theatre. If depicting women as the perfect and stainless figures is a manifestation of the male gaze, is the glorification of male characters a natural consequence of the female gaze? Additionally, does this female gaze qualify as the feminist perspective? These questions may not lead to a clear answer, but they are definitely worth exploring for the new generation of female theatre makers. To study the male representations on the Yue opera stage is to explore how women can construct the opposite gender. Not only does such portraying men as objects of desire reveals that the masculinity ideal "is a social construct that is constantly being manipulated for the purposes of those who control the means to do so" (Louie 99), it also shows what many female audiences actually want.

Maybe the denaturalising of gender categories in Yue opera plays is not as effective as Butlerian and Brechtian feminist theatre theorists have envisioned, but Yue opera definitely offers a positive alternative for reconstructing masculinity. In Kahn's comparison of *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*, she points out that women in these plays seek to transform themselves into men by "root[ing] out of themselves and their men those human qualities—tenderness, pity, sympathy, vulnerability to feeling—that their cultures have tendered to associate with women" (*Man's Estate* 151). The men those women created are monsters "insatiable in their need to dominate, anxiously seeking security in their power and their identity" (Kahn, *Man's Estate* 151). However, Louie has indicated that the manhood constructed by women writers in twentieth century China is different from the traditional patriarchal construct of masculinity: "masculinity is associated with a whole array of characteristics such as youthful innocence, sexual naivete, tenderness and exotica—characteristics which traditionally have been associated with femininity" (28). Moreover, similar to the Western misogynistic notion that the instigation of the female forces contaminates masculinity, "masculine sexuality in the Chinese tradition [also] valued the ability to suppress one's sexual urges" (Louie 6). Contrary to the desexualisation of heroes in other Chinese operas and the defeminisation in early modern English patriarchal culture, the all-female Yue opera provides an alternative gender model in which not only the affinity to women is essential, men also need to draw on certain feminine qualities in order to be portrayed as the hero.

In this essay, I have examined the all-female Yue opera's adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* with a theoretical model combining both Butlerian and Brechtian theories. Despite its definite lack of intellectual self-awareness, the potential of the all-female Yue opera still deserves to be studied in depth. Even though Yue opera does not explicitly challenge the framework of heteronormativity, it still offers a sincere and authentic female perspective on Shakespeare. Here, women once subject to the male gaze have reclaimed the tool of cross-dressing to redefine gender and construct the world according to their own imaginations. Whether Shakespeare was a misogynist or not is not of any concern here. What interests Yue opera is the malleability of his works. By effeminising two bloodthirsty Shakespearean heroes, the all-female Yue opera has rewritten the gender representations in their adaptations.

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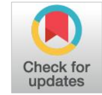

Boram Choi*

The Cultural Paradox of All-Male Performance: (Dis)Figuring the Third Beauty in the Studio Life's *Twelfth Night*

Abstract: The aim of this article is to explore the ambiguous and unstable boundaries of gender images depicted in Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* (2011) where male actors perform female characters similar to the practice on the Shakespearean stage. As Akira Uno, one of the influential illustrators of Japanese *shōjo* manga, participated in designing the stage set, costumes, and make-up of the characters, the production presents the effect of "the third beauty." This is characterised by both masculine and feminine attributes while simultaneously being neither masculine nor feminine. This unique feature reflects the position of women in modern Japanese society, where representations of female gender and sexuality are often marginalised and oppressed under the male-dominated social atmosphere. Consequently, the image of female gender has been rigidly fixed and stereotyped according to traditional norms. In this setting, the effeminate and beautiful boys in an exotic place become surrogates for females, who can freely explore their gender and sexual identity within the illusory world, where both homoerotic and heterosexual relationships are explored. Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* reflects this illusion by adapting the styles of *shōjo* manga, but the production seldom offers critical insights or questions on gender issues, especially in the context of the realities faced by Japanese women in daily life. This article examines descriptions of female characters performed by male actors and interviews with the director, Kurata Jun. The main focus is on how the artists perceive and express the concept of gender in relation to Japanese social conditions, demonstrated through their physical portrayals and gestures in all-male casting.

Keywords: all-male casting, *shōjo* manga, Studio Life, *Twelfth Night*, Japanese Shakespeare.

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Introduction

The exploration of gender ambiguity through exclusively male casting illuminates the multifaceted interpretations of the actors' presence within the Japanese cultural ethos and the historical continuum of gender enactment. The practice of casting male actors as female personas in traditional Japanese theatres, such as *kabuki* and *noh*, reveals an intricate method where actors embody and project an idealised femininity, rooted in a specific set of bodily semiotics. The theatrical tradition views the gender of female characters as a construct, created from precise performance codes and aesthetic styles, effectively infusing traits of femininity into the male physique (Mezur 137). Such fluidity of gender portrayal is further enhanced as actors take on various roles across gender boundaries, thus enriching the nuanced gender dynamics inherent in Japanese theatrical tradition. Carol Sorgenfrei observes that "transformation is a crucial aspect of Japanese performance" evident in both acting and staging, and she highlights that "an alluring ambiguity appears to be the key to understanding what it means to be Japanese" (351). This tradition of cross-dressing legacy continues to influence the gender expression and gestural vocabulary of characters and actors in contemporary Japanese theatre. By casting male actors for female parts, thus spotlighting the 'third gender'—a state transcending traditional male and female classifications—modern Japanese directors challenge the rigid gender dichotomies prevalent in their cultural and societal structures.

However, the introduction of Western realism into Japanese theatrical arts, marked by the emergence of the *shingeki* movement in the early twentieth century, led to a decrease in the prominence of gender fluidity in traditional Japanese theatrical styles. Suzuki Tadashi[1] notes that *shingeki*'s commitment to a binary gender structure limited actors to portrayals that mirrored societal norms in Japan (11). Takakuwa Yoko critiques this binary gender fixation, calling it a potential "spiritual illness or another form of madness" where society becomes "obsessed by the (internalised) 'truth' of what it means to be a man or a woman" (37). She argues that adhering to culturally prescribed gender roles onstage may alienate audiences from exploring alternate gender identities. The impact of this shift was two-pronged: it favoured Western aesthetics over Japanese sensitivities and created a paradox in which the Japanese, skilled in adopting Western theatrical styles, found it challenging to integrate these with native elements (Nouryeh 267). The rise of *shingeki*, led many artists to abandon traditional theatre aesthetics in favour of more realistic forms of expression.

[1] In writing Japanese names, I adhere to the Japanese convention where the family name is written first, followed by the given name.

Contemporary Japanese theatrical works often embody this dichotomous stance, wrestling with gender ambiguity while being ensnared in the *shingeki* tradition of reinforcing gender binaries. Studio Life's adaptation of *Twelfth Night* in Tokyo in 2009 and 2011 serves as a prime example of this intricate balancing act between traditional norms and contemporary gender discourse.[2] Directed by Kurata Jun, the production employs an all-male cast, rooted in Elizabethan theatre traditions where male actors historically assumed all characters. Kurata's innovative direction is further enhanced by her collaboration with Uno Akira (Uno Aquirax), a renowned manga illustrator. This partnership brought a *shōjo* manga aesthetic to the production, celebrated for its ethereal and transformative depiction of gender, thereby blurring the lines of traditional gender representation. This artistic choice not only modernises Shakespeare's narrative but also introduces a complex layer of interpretation, leading the audience to rethink and broaden their perceptions of gender norms.

Kurata's directorial approach melds the deep psychological exploration typical of *shingeki* with the imaginative storytelling found in modern media like manga. While her adaptation of *Twelfth Night* remains faithful to the *shingeki* tradition of psychological depth and a focus on the actor's narrative, it also explores gender fluidity through its casting choices. Yet, this combination of styles, albeit innovative, paradoxically upholds entrenched gender norms, despite the inherent challenges to traditional roles presented in the play. In this regard, Studio Life represents a significant moment in the evolution of Japanese theatre, where the amalgamation of classical and modern forms forges a distinctive conversation about gender. This article examines Studio Life's *Twelfth Night*, analysing how the production explores gender ambiguity with an all-male cast while concurrently capitulating to entrenched notions of gender binarism as propagated by *shingeki* performance techniques. The performance deals with gender and gender representations as cultural constructs in contemporary Japanese theatre. Moreover, the article scrutinises the directorial merging of diverse acting styles as representative of the tensions within Japanese culture, oscillating between conservative and progressive attitudes on gender and sexuality. Ultimately, this analysis explores how audiences perceive gender ambiguity in the context of prevailing societal ideologies in Japan, indicating a tendency towards a binary interpretation of gender roles.

[2] The Studio Life, founded by Kawauchi Kiichiro and Kurata Jun in 1985, has developed its artistic identity on three foundational pillars: original works by Kurata, dramatisation of foreign literature, and adaptations of manga into theatrical performances (2014). While Kurata's creations are often reserved for smaller-scale productions featuring the company's burgeoning talents, the dramatisations of novels and manga are staged as their principal productions.

The Beautiful Boys: Exploring the Art of Gender Ambiguity

The adaptation of Shakespearean works in Japan over the past century and a half has not only transcended the boundaries of performance art but also permeated diverse genres such as comics, manga, and animation. Manga, in particular, has established itself as a cross-generational cultural phenomenon, persisting for several decades. *Shōjo* manga, which primarily focuses on narratives of romantic complexities and the depiction of gender identities within the fantastical realms of non-specific 'other' places—often stylised versions of Western locales in different historical epochs—exemplifies this trend. A distinctive characteristic of *shōjo* manga is its protagonists, who are typically depicted as youthful figures with a pronounced androgyny; even the boys possess an ethereal femininity, effectively blurring gender lines. Regardless of the characters' gender, they are consistently illustrated with slender physiques with vibrant and expansive eyes, and their "hair is long and flowing, their waist narrow, their legs long and their eyes big" (Prough 95). These stylistic depictions emphasise gender ambiguity and fluidity which become important features in *shōjo* manga. According to Tomoko Aoyama, "none of the residents of the idealized world feels guilty about his being a homosexual, or has to seek his identity" (196). The portrayals of both female and male characters in *shōjo* manga are remarkably exotic and extend beyond realistic embodiment, casting their gender identities as indeterminate and unstable.

The portrayal of gender ambiguity is crucial for understanding how this genre translates gender representation in Shakespeare's plays. The narrative of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* begins in the unknown place called Illyria, with Viola's disoriented inquiry, "What country, friends, is this?" (1.2.1), setting the stage for a world where gender is both performed and subverted. In this new world, Viola's adoption of a male disguise serves not only as a survival tactic but also as a means to explore the fluidity of her youthful gender identity, affording her with the opportunity to challenge traditionally held distinctions between male and female identities. This liminal space in Illyria represents her passage from youth into adulthood, as reflected in Malvolio's description of Viola/Cesario as a "young fellow" (1.5.135) who is "not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy" (1.5.152-153). Moreover, Orsino's remarks on Cesario's appearance highlight the qualities of a maiden, "Diana's lip / Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe / Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman's part" (1.4.30-34). These lines underscore the duality of Cesario's gender presentation, capturing the essence of a page boy who can both allure and be allured by different sexes. There appear to be shared characteristics between the Elizabethan practice of boys portraying female roles on stage and the nuanced and indistinct gender portrayal of male characters in Japanese *shōjo* manga, both of which embrace a subtle and

ambiguous depiction of gender. Particularly, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* aligns seamlessly with the narrative conventions of *shōjo* manga, where young girls who cross-dress for various reasons mirror Viola's own journey, while other male characters are rendered as androgynous beauties, eluding strict categorisation as either female or male.

Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* invites audiences to explore the complexities of gender and sexuality through the practice of all-male casting. Abe Nozomi, an assistant director in the theatre company, reveals that "manga dramatisation is one of the styles that Studio Life has pursued." This approach is demonstrated in their adaptations of manga, like Hagio Moto's *The Heart of Thomas*, in the 1990s and is further evident in their more recent Shakespearean endeavors—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2006), *Romeo and Juliet* (2007), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (2008)—which have demonstrated notable parallels to manga in both visual and narrative styles, as well as in the portrayal and theatrical techniques of the male actors.[3] The production design of their *Twelfth Night*, from costuming to makeup and set design, is imbued with the quintessential elements of *shōjo* manga, a creative synergy achieved through their collaboration with Uno Akira. Uno, who was significantly involved in the Japanese underground art of the 1960s and 70s, is recognised for his influence on many Japanese manga artists (Kurata "The Studio Life"). As an artist proficient in graphic design, illustration, and painting, Uno is renowned for his distinctive style of drawing illustrations, characterised by "fantastic visuals, capricious and sensuous line flow, flamboyant eroticism" ("Aquirax Uno"). His artistic signatures—notably the large eyes, slender necks, and refined body lines—prioritise the emotive over the representational in girls' comics. Uno himself has expounded on the symbolism and significance of such imagery: "the big eyes become a mirror of their desires to become beautiful heroines. For the acceptance of the girl's image, it is important for readers to self-identify and see themselves in the two-dimensional image" (Uno 122). This depiction of female characters with large eyes has established a new aesthetic ideal among Japanese girls, signifying a cultural preference profoundly influenced by Western beauty standards.

Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* showcases male actors whose portrayals vividly recall the aesthetics of manga characters, distinguished by their androgynous beauty. Each character's fantastical representation, complete with colourful wigs

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[3] Koji Ishitobi, who performed Feste in Studio Life's *Twelfth Night*, notes a congruence between the structural elements of Shakespeare's text and the conventional narrative techniques used in manga. He states: "The monologue of Shakespeare might be comparable to the text found outside of manga speech balloons, serving to deliver a variety of messages including monologues, asides, and dialogue. This comparison suggests a similarity between the range of expression in Shakespearean drama and the visual storytelling in manga" (Kurata "The Studio Life").

and ornate costumes, signals their existence in a fantastical, exotic locale. The stage design of Illyria mirrors a utopian vision, reminiscent of the dreamscapes sought after by the female audience, a sentiment echoed in the settings of many *shōjo* manga, showcasing the younger generation's intrigue and aspirations toward Western culture.[4] Within this undefined, imaginative space, none of the female characters (or female audiences) feels guilty about being homosexual or having to seek their identity. According to Kurata, Uno's scenic designs imbue the production with a sense of realism so profound that "it may lead the audience to think that such a fabricated world exists in reality" (Kurata "Akira Uno"). The theatrical interplay between the crafted beauty of the play and the male performers' physical masculinity enables the audience to perceive a spectrum of gender representations: "the performer (Matsumoto), in the role of Viola/Cesario, possessed a beauty surpassing that typically attributed to women; his countenance was so delicately featured it could stir romantic admiration, yet his robust, muscular arms served as a distinct reminder of his masculinity" (Hara). The intergration of two different gender roles in a single actor suggests the fluidity of gender, inviting the audience to recognise a "third beauty." This theatrical exploration of cross-dressing manifests a "third beauty," intertwining feminine and masculine traits, thus defying conventional gender classifications predicted upon biological or societal norms.

In her interview, Kurata revealed that the production's design phase entailed a creative process akin to manga storyboarding, where she mentally sketched the characters' movements, such as "their postures and walking directions, aiming to translate these conceptual images into tangible stage representations" (Kurata "The Studio Life"). This approach is similar to the methods of devising the structure of manga, where characters' psychological and emotional states are portrayed through varied panel shapes and speech balloons, and each panel conveys distinct scene-specific information. Furthermore, Kurata suggested that "if the audience captures any images from the performers' actions or stage ensembles, the images might align with the scenes she had initially conceptualised" (Kurata "The Studio Life"). Kurata's admission of being "influenced by manga culture since the 1960s" ("The Studio Life") suggests the possibility that the audience might recognise familiar images within this production. These images, potentially embedded in their long-term collective memory, may resonate unconsciously with viewers, reflecting the deep-seated

[4] Uno's scenic construction of Illyria in Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* employs numerous cubic blocks strategicaly placed at the stage's periphery, while the central area is reserved for actors' entrances and exits. The primary benefit of this design lies in its boundless potential for transformation and movement, serving as dynamic visual signifiers. The temporal and spatial setting of the production is deliberately ambiguous, described as "someday, but not on a specific date" and "somewhere, but at no specific location" (Sohn 259).

impact of manga culture. This shared historical context of Japanese manga spanning the last five decades potentially establishes manga as a pivotal medium, fostering a communicative bridge between the production and its audience.

For the adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, the initial step involved translating Shakespeare's text into Japanese. This significant undertaking was accomplished by Matsuoka Kazuko, a renowned theatre scholar and translator. Kurata made minor modifications to Matsuoka's translation to better suit theatrical dynamics (Kurata "The Studio Life"). Kurata chose Matsuoka's translation specifically for its distinct sensitivity towards female characters. This choice was made with the intention of providing audiences "a deeper connection with the nuanced emotional states of these characters," in contrast to the portrayal of male characters' inner worlds (Kurata "The Studio Life").[5] Kurata's emphasis on the emotional aspects of the characters could be correlated with the appeal of gender portrayals in *shōjo* manga to a predominantly female audience. This trend may reflect significant elements of Japanese culture concerning gender roles and perceptions. According to Kurata, Studio Life's productions have been "very popular particularly among female audiences aged 20 to 40" ("Akira Uno"). Given that *shōjo* manga often portrays gender ambiguously and primarily targets female readers, it frequently features romantic narratives between men and women as a central theme. Kurata notes that "female audiences, often experiencing solitude and isolation, seek liberation from these realities through empathizing with heroines who navigate life unconstrained by societal restrictions" ("The Studio Life"). This is one of the reasons that Kurata, as a female director, strives to describe the inner world of the female characters in a delicate and complex manner.

In particular, the exclusive use of male actors facilitates the exploration of diverse gender identities for the audience as they identify with various characters. Viola's disguise as a boy introduces a layer of homosexual undertones in her interactions with Orsino, suggesting a relationship between two men. At the same time, the visual portrayal with long hair and feminine costumes evokes the image of a romantic bond between two women. Additionally, Olivia's fervent pursuit of Viola/Cesario can be seen as lesbianism, and it also represents a romantic connection between two male actors in female attire. The male actors in female roles, by eliciting homoerotic responses from the audience,

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[5] Matsuoka is distinguished as potentially the third Japanese person, and notably the first woman, to translate the entirety of Shakespeare's works. Her translations are renowned for their alignment with colloquial Japanese, exhibiting less pronounced differentiation based on gender, age, or social class compared to other translations. In her production, Kurata specifically selected Matsuoka's translation due to its acclaim for rendering the speech of female characters "more natural to the ears of the audiences and to the actors and actresses" (Harris).

serve as agents of resistance against the rigid biological and social constructs of gender roles in contemporary Japanese society.

The gender ambiguity of the characters enhances the ability of female spectators to identify themselves with both male and female roles within the theatrical illusion. Engaged in a theatre production that dramatises *shōjo* manga, female spectators can envision themselves as the aesthetically portrayed girls and boys within this fantastical realm. Specifically, "beautiful boys' love (*bishōnen ai*) is often described and this has been considered a subgenre that certainly offers an imaginary playground for the Japanese girls who wish to escape from reality" (Shamoon 111). The concept of the beautiful boy has roots in historical Japanese culture, appreciating young men with androgynous beauty. In modern media, it features prominently in manga and anime, evolving to include explicit depictions of romantic and sometimes sexual relationships between male characters. Hence, the production may allow the female audience to feel a kind of homoerotic *frisson* through the depiction of relationships between attractive male characters, concurrently reinforcing heterosexual dynamics between male and female roles in alignment with the gender ideologies prevalent in contemporary patriarchal society.

In Studio Life's production, Malvolio's attire, notably his yellow stockings, is designed to resonate with a female audience. Retaining his black and grey suit jacket, Malvolio transitions from formal trousers to short pants with yellow stockings, a sartorial choice manifesting his affection for Olivia. The juxtaposition of his austere suit with the incongruously juvenile short pants carries a nuanced connotation of sexuality. In Japanese culture, this evokes the concept of *shōtacon*, a contraction of "*shōtarō* complex," which alludes to an aesthetic and thematic motif in manga and anime genres, where young boys are presented in a romantic or erotic light.[6] *Shōtacon* is related to "the concepts of *kawaii* (cuteness) and *moe* (in which characters are presented as young, cute or helpless in order to increase reader identification and inspire protective feelings)" ("Shotacon"). Malvolio's sartorial transformation seeks to embody dual appeal, blending masculinity with an effeminacy that historically echoes the Elizabethan practice of boy actors donning female attire to elicit a protective sentiment from the audience.

The exploration of gender ambiguity in Shakespearean theatre, especially through 'third beauty,' was notably exemplified in the all-male performance tradition. This practice saw boy actors assume female roles, creating an idealised, hybrid form that sparked sexual intrigue among both male and female audience members. Jean Howard notes that in such a context, women emerged as "desiring subjects" (79), and Phyllis Rackin highlights how Shakespeare's

[6] The term's origin lies with the character *Shōtarō* from the series *Tetsujin 28-go*, known in English as *Gigantor*.

works "explicitly mark the players' awareness that they needed to please female playgoers" (76).[7] From this perspective, it is conceivable that female spectators might fantasise about romantic interactions with male actors on stage, or envision themselves as characters whose gender is ambiguously portrayed due to their aesthetically pleasing appearance. Randolph Trumbach also comments that the boy actors enhanced their feminine appearance with wigs and makeup, arousing desires of both male and female spectators (128). The *shōtacon* style in Japanese theatre mirrors the thematic element of immaturity prevalent in Elizabethan all-male casts, resonating with both homosexual and heterosexual responses, especially among female audience members in Japan. Contemporary theatre companies interpret and adapt these themes within their cultural contexts, with adaptations like the yellow stockings scene in a *shōtacon* style reflecting key cultural nuances related to gender and sexuality in Japanese society.

The development of the 'third beauty' in *shōjo* manga and Japanese theatrical culture is intricately linked to Japan's evolving social landscape. Historically, gender roles in Japan have been rigidly defined, with stringent expectations on sexual expressions. Since the 1970s, Japanese women have gained increased economic and social autonomy, leading to more public expressions of their sexuality. This shift has provoked unease among men, often leading to negative connotations associated with female sexuality. Mark McLelland critically examines this dynamic, noting that Japanese media often marginalises female sexuality, dismissing "female activists as overly emotional and hysterical, referring to their arguments as 'red ranting' (red being associated with Communism but also being the colour associated with feminism in Japan)" ("Male Homosexuality" 63). Sandra Buckley also highlights the limited freedom of expression afforded to Japanese women, pointing out their struggle to articulate their experiences and desires in various aspects of life (178). John Treat argues that embracing a sexless state allows Japanese girls to "constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual production" (281). Consequently, *shōjo* manga emerges as a crucial cultural form, offering a sanctuary for female readers. These manga provide a space where readers can identify with protagonists who embody ideals of freedom and resistance against the sexist roles imposed by societal systems. Thus, this genre thus serves as a critical medium for exploring and affirming female agency and identity in a society still grappling with rigid gender norms.

[7] Rackin states: "The Epilogue to *As You Like It* is a good case in point. Spoken by the actor who played Rosalind, it addresses female and male playgoers separately, beginning with the women, whom it charges 'to like as much of this play as please you,' thus suggesting that the 'you' in the play's title refers primarily to them" (46-47).

Marginalised Women: Reproducing the Masculinist Fantasy

In Studio Life's adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, the portrayal of gender ambiguity through male actors becomes an allegorical commentary on the prescribed gender roles within Japanese patriarchal society. Contemporary Japan is characterised by rigid gender roles and suppression of women's sexuality, often casting women typically in passive roles. Interestingly, there is a concurrent yearning among women to escape these confines, mirrored in Viola's male disguise in *Twelfth Night* as a subversive act against patriarchal constraints, enabling her to navigate society as an autonomous entity. Unlike other Shakespearean comedies, such as *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* concludes without reaffirming standard erotic couplings or gender stratifications. This open-endedness underscores the play's investment in the complexities of gender, leaving behind a "large residue of bi-gendered and bisexual subjectivity" (Neely 120). Viola's cross-dressing introduces a 'beautiful boy' to the audience, complicating the nature of attraction in her interactions with Orsino and Olivia. Her male attire veils her female identity, allowing exploration of both heteroerotic and homoerotic dynamics. Thus, Viola's affections for Orsino and Olivia's affections for her can safely transpire, unencumbered by the revelation of her true gender. This portrayal resonates with female spectators, who may find Viola's fluid gender identity—simultaneously embodying and transcending both male and female—as a liberating reflection of their own experiences with the fluidity of gender roles.

Yet, far from the production's exploration of gender ambiguity, as manifested through Uno's visual aesthetic in the performers' appearance and stage design, the performers' acting style is predominantly bound to the delineation of gender. This is achieved by accentuating traditional notions of femininity and masculinity through a series of actions deeply entrenched in gender stereotypes. The influence of contemporary Japanese theatrical forms, such as *shingeki*, is evident in this approach, given its propensity to reinforce conventional gender images. The male performers, in particular, are tasked with portraying characters in a manner that reflects their own interpretations of both female and male genders. Their actions and gestures are strategically chosen to assert gender identities, aiming to cultivate a sense of authenticity in their character portrayal for the audience. As Kurata admits in an interview, "there is an apparent preconceived notion among the performers regarding the expected behaviours of females and males, based on their individual understandings of femininity and masculinity" ("The Studio Life"). This approach leads to a simplistic representation, especially of female characters, through gestures symbolising femininity. These binary gender portrayals resonate with the general societal attitudes towards gender in modern Japanese culture. As a result,

the performance adheres closely to the play's narrative without offering a critical or expansive examination of gender and sexuality.

For instance, Matsumoto Shinya's portrayal of Viola/Cesario is a compelling study of gender performativity. He meticulously delineates the feminine and masculine aspects of his dual role, particularly accentuating the transformation from Viola to Cesario. His portrayal of Viola is infused with distinctly feminine characteristics. This is evident in his nuanced manipulation of voice tone, which he renders softer, and in the delicate execution of gestures involving his hands and legs. A recurring motif in his portrayal of Viola is the gentle lifting of hands to touch his lips and chest, a symbolic amplification of the character's feminine allure. Conversely, Matsumoto's portrayal of Cesario is marked by overtly masculine behaviours, eschewing the feminine gestures previously employed. This transition is underscored in scenes where Viola, disguised as Cesario, conspicuously adjusts her clothes, touching her breast area to signify her underlying female identity while outwardly assuming a male persona. Matsumoto augments this transformation with a deeper voice, an expanded chest, and clenched fists, embodying traditional symbols of masculinity. Importantly, these gestures are deliberately employed to reinforce to the audience his portrayal of a male character. However, it is critical to note that these gendered gestures and behaviours do not mirror the broader contemporary Japanese perceptions of gender. Instead, they align with and perhaps critique the societal attitudes and mentalities towards gender and sexuality. In this respect, Matsumoto's performance can be seen as both a reflection and a commentary on the gender norms prevailing in modern Japanese culture, encapsulated in a form that is both evocative and reductive.

Despite characters embodying a 'third beauty' that transcends traditional gender binaries in appearance, their behaviours remain deeply entrenched in gender ideologies. Notably, this is exemplified in the interactions between Cesario and Orsino, particularly in Act 1, Scene 4, where Orsino's physical engagement with Viola/Cesario—including arm-wrapping, facial touching, and a tight embrace—reinforces conventional gender roles. Orsino's remark on Cesario's glossy and ruby-like lips and the ensuing posture reminiscent of a prelude to a kiss underscore the stereotypical gender roles in their interaction. Although the fluidity in gender portrayal, the dynamics remain conventionally heterosexual, with Orsino predominantly initiating interactions and asserting dominance. Conversely, Viola/Cesario's character adheres to passive, traditional femininity, predominantly reactive rather than proactive or assertive in their romantic development. This depiction subtly mirrors typical heterosexual relationships, even within the homosexual love plot framework. Additionally, the production's approach may echo stereotypes prevalent in BL (Boys' Love) manga, particularly the "*seme*" (aggressive) and "*uke*" (passive) archetypes, reflecting gender discrimination in Japanese society. Such representation

suggests that even in the fantasy realm of BL manga, societal biases against women persist. As a result, the audience, especially female viewers, are exposed to traditional gender role portrayals, where female characters are more passive and delicate in romantic settings compared to male counterparts. Therefore, while the production's visual presentation allows a fluid interpretation of gender through the characters' "third beauty," it ultimately reaffirms conventional heterosexual norms within an androcentric societal context.

Moreover, the physical interactions between two male characters in Studio Life's production amplify the narrative tension, resonating not only within the character dynamics but also among audiences familiar with *shōjo* manga tropes. McLelland's analysis of homoeroticism in *shōjo* manga highlights the unconventional nature of romantic relationship between two girls (*shōjo ai*) in Japan's male-dominant society. He argues that in such relationships, it becomes ambiguous "who should 'take the lead' (*riido wo shite*) in initiating a sexual encounter" ("The Beautiful Boy" 84). This perspective mirrors the dynamics in Studio Life's production, where Olivia's passionate love for Viola/Cesario remains devoid of physical contact, contrasting sharply with the frequent physical touches between Orsino and Viola/Cesario. This differential treatment reflects broader societal attitudes towards same-sex relationships in Japan. Buckley notes a greater societal tolerance for male homosexuality compared to lesbianism (174). This phenomenon is partly due to the avoidance by manga artists, such as Hagio Moto, of depicting female same-sex relationships. Hagio revealed in an interview that "I found the plan about the girls' school to be gloomy and disgusting … Take a kissing scene, for instance … as sticky as fermented soybeans" (Qtd. in McLelland "The Beautiful Boy" 83). She may have wanted to "avoid homophobic reactions from her female readers who might have found the idea of girls kissing disgusting" (McLelland "The Beautiful Boy" 83) and consider boys' kissing is somehow safer in Japanese society. Indeed, the representation of female sexuality in Japanese manga and media is often marginalised, with lesbianism being no exception. Consequently, Japanese comic books have historically gravitated towards exploring male homosexuality. In these narratives, the femininely depicted bodies of male characters often serve as a surrogate for female self-identification. This trend underscores not only the complexities of gender and sexual representation in Japanese culture but also the prevailing societal norms that influence these artistic expressions.

Furthermore, the portrayal of intimate moments between Orsino and Cesario evokes a unique response among audiences familiar with *shōjo* manga. Michael Shapiro insists that "spectators respond to theatrical representations of intimacy as primal fantasies" (144), indicating that this kind of scene provides the audience with a strong feeling of anxiety. He asserts that theatrical representations of intimacy, such as kissing and embracing, whether between

male or female characters, can arouse a spectrum of emotional responses in spectators, ranging from sexual desire to jealousy, embarrassment, and even fear. In this production, the female audience is likely to project themselves into the relationships portrayed between the beautiful male characters. This projection aligns with the male-dominated ideology prevalent in society, leading them to perceive such relationships as natural or acceptable. Here, the depiction of male love serves as a vicarious outlet for the expression of female sexual desire within the confines of Japan's repressed social conditions. However, this phenomenon appears to contradict the initial expectation that androgynous figures in the production would empower female audiences to identify with idealised versions of themselves, thereby enabling them to transcend the restrictive gender roles imposed by a patriarchal system. Instead of facilitating an escape from sexist stereotypes, the portrayal of these relationships may inadvertently reinforce traditional gender dynamics. This paradox highlights the complex interplay between gender representation, audience perception, and societal norms in the context of theatrical productions.

In the production, the director's approach predominantly aligns with a conventional portrayal of the play's narrative, eschewing in-depth examination or expansion of gender and sexuality within the context of contemporary Japanese society. The performance notably refrains from challenging prevailing Japanese perceptions of gender roles. As articulated by Kurata in an interview, her interest did not lie in exploring gender ambiguity, particularly through the all-male casting. She asserts, "the main purpose of this production is not to explore the theme of gender" ("The Studio Life"). Additionally, Kurata clarifies that any homoerotic interpretations between the characters or male actors are unintended and solely reside in the realm of audience perception ("The Studio Life"). In her performance, female characters are portrayed as conforming to the traditional expectations of heteronormative marriage, as originally depicted by Shakespeare, thereby reinforcing their roles within a patriarchal societal structure. The narrative trajectory follows Viola's aspirations for a conventional heterosexual marriage with Orsino, positioning this as a preferable, socially accepted norm. Simultaneously, Olivia, initially enamoured with a woman disguised as a man, eventually consents to a matrimonial union with a male character, signifying a retreat to conventional gender roles. This narrative choice, rather than exploring the fluidity and spectrum of gender identity, reinforces a conservative stance on gender politics. The production implicitly endorses the notion that females should adhere to their traditional social roles, thus negating the potential of theatrical expression to challenge or reinterpret the dynamics of homosexual love. While the play presents opportunities to explore the complexities of gender beyond binary constraints, the production ultimately opts for a conservative resolution. It suggests that females, both within the theatrical illusion and actual societal context, should revert to their pre-established positions, thereby maintaining the status quo.

In this production, one of the intricate challenges faced by actors is the portrayal of the female characters' emotional states through both physical and linguistic expression. It demands a understanding of characters' psychology and emotional depth, as highlighted by the directorial approach of Kurata. She revolutionises previous acting techniques by instructing her actors not to rely on physical gestures to convey the meanings of their lines. Instead, she encourages a deeper, more introspective form of acting where the performers are tasked with immersing themselves in the characters' emotional experiences. This process involves envisioning and internalising how the characters would feel in specific situations and then translating these emotions authentically as if the actors embody the characters themselves. Kurata's approach is grounded in her desire to enable actors to share a more profound and genuine emotional connection with the audience. Her technique aligns with Studio Life's artistic mission to explore the theme of "*raison d'être*" in their theatrical works (Kurata "The Studio Life"). This concept posits that every character possesses a unique existential purpose and resilience, persevering through life's challenges. In particular, Kurata attempts to focus on "the process of how the female characters carve out their own fortunes by reading Shakespeare's play from a female perspective" (Kurata "Akira Uno"). She seeks to explore how female characters navigate and shape their destinies within the narrative framework, thereby offering an insightful perspective on these roles. Through this approach, Kurata aims to capture the multifaceted nature of human life, shedding light on both the luminous and shadowed aspects of existence.

This production raises a critical question: In what ways does it assist female audiences in discovering their own *raison d'être*, particularly when it does not overtly address issues of gender and sexuality within the context of contemporary Japanese society? The concept of *raison d'être* embodies the complex ambiguities that arise from unique gender portrayals, and its theme can be particularly developed in this theatrical space where the illusions of representation are critically examined and demystified, especially through Viola's disguise. The audience is thus encouraged to engage deeply with the significance of Viola's disguise, not merely as a narrative device but as a reflection of her contextual experiences. Viola understands the danger of disguise as "a wicked" art (2.2.27) that leads Olivia to construct a fantasy based on Viola's appearance rather than the truth underneath it. This narrative device prompts female audience members to re-evaluate and expand their understanding of gender performance, particularly in light of the complexities of gender ambiguity in relation to contemporary Japanese social and cultural circumstances. Despite Kurata's seemingly peripheral focus on gender issues, the production inherently addresses these themes. This is evident in the meticulous replication of specific gestures and imagery, enhancing the production's illusion and inviting the audience to consider the female characters

as more than mere narrative entities. They become symbolic figures, enabling viewers to question and understand the instability and fluidity associated with visual indicators of gender identity. Moreover, the casting of male actors in female roles further enriches this thematic exploration. It introduces an additional layer of complexity, particularly with regard to the homoerotic implications that arise from these gender-crossing performances. The depiction of homoerotic desire among the characters offers profound insights into gender and sexuality, extending beyond the psychological dimensions of the characters.

On the theatre company's official website, there is an expectation set forth that "the audience can concentrate on the story of *Twelfth Night*, which will highlight a sense of theatricality as the result" (Studio Life). The company also asserts that the performance prioritises portraying the "psychological state of the female characters" and their journey "pioneering their own fate in avoidance of exaggerated gestures for emphasizing artificial femininity" (Studio Life). This approach indicates a focus on the inner experiences and emotions of the female characters rather than on the traditional aesthetics of masculine or feminine bodies. However, there appears to be an inherent contradiction in these statements. Theatricality, as defined by Davis and Postlewait, is "a way of describing what performers and what spectators do together in the making of 'the theatrical event'" (23). It encompasses the conventions of theatrical communication, including the audience's conscious recognition and reflection on the stage's happenings. More critically, theatricality is used "to describe the gap between reality and its representation" (Davis and Postlewait 6). William Sauter further elaborates that "theatricality is meant to represent the essential or possible characteristics of theatre as an art form and as a cultural phenomenon" (50). In this context, the claim that focusing solely on the play's narrative and the characters' internal states will engender "a sense of theatricality" seems questionable, particularly without integrating the broader social context of Japan into the production's theme. It appears that the audience is encouraged not only to engage with the characters' psychologies within their fictional realms but also to consider various explicit cultural and aesthetic conventions. This is because concentrating exclusively on the plot and characters' psychological depths might lead the audience towards a mimetic illusion of the fictional world, rather than acknowledging the production as a deliberate artistic expression of social identities intertwined with the play's thematic essence.

Conclusion

The practice in Shakespearean theatre of male actors portraying female roles can be seen as reinforcing the patriarchal ideologies prevalent in early modern English culture. Stephen Greenblatt, in discussing transvestite disguises in Shakespearean

comedies like *Twelfth Night*, suggests that this convention reflects a male-centric worldview, positing that "men love women precisely as *representations*" and that such all-male performances "theorize a masculinist fantasy of a world without women" (emphasis in original, 93). Consequently, it becomes crucial to examine how the representation of femininity within these constructs can contribute to a deeper understanding of the feminine gender in Japanese culture, which has historically been marginalised under patriarchal systems.

However, the use of all-male casting in Studio Life's adaptation of *Twelfth Night* appears to fall short in challenging the existing gender stratifications or in introducing transformative perspectives on gender, particularly in its relation to societal awareness and the prevailing male hegemony. Although the production employs the convention of cross-dressing to explore gender ambiguity, it ultimately perpetuates stereotypical gender roles through the adoption of the *shingeki* style of acting. This style reinforces gender binarism, relying on conventional actions that emphasise femininity and masculinity. Therefore, the thematic focus of this performance may be perceived as merely reinforcing established gender constructs, lacking a critical examination or revisionist perspective on traditional gender roles. This approach misses the opportunity to question or subvert pre-existing views on gender, thus limiting its potential impact as a social critique within the context of contemporary Japanese society. Kurata's incorporation of various performance styles in her production intricately portrays the complex nature of gender and sexuality representation in Japanese theatre culture. Simultaneously, it reveals her struggle to reconcile divergent views on female gender within the traditional and contemporary Japanese societal context. In particular, the use of gender ambiguity, exemplified by Uno's visual effect of the 'third beauty,' is employed as a transient form of entertainment. Yet, this approach is ultimately normalised by the audience, owing to the actors' realistic performances that reinforce traditional gender binaries within a heteronormative societal framework.

In this light, the influence of *shōjo* manga culture, which reflects a yearning to break free from the rigid roles assigned to women in Japanese society and theatricalises this aspiration, remains passive and constrained within the existing social structure. Hence, the production's role should be more dynamic and forward-thinking, guiding the audience to a deeper understanding of 'beauty' and encouraging them to question their traditional passive roles. In this context, exploring gender dynamics—encompassing heterosexual, homosexual, and queer relationships—is crucial. This exploration is not limited to merely understanding the play's characters or the act of cross-dressing. It is also imperative for female audience members as they seek to answer fundamental questions about their own *raison d'être* in their everyday lives. Adopting this perspective is a critical step towards empowering them to reevaluate the notions of gender and sexuality, both within the theatrical realm

and in real-life situations. Such a shift in perspective aims to lead them towards realising a personal truth that diverges from the traditional narrative of a happy, yet constrained, marriage as portrayed in *Twelfth Night*. It is about encouraging them to envision and embrace a reality where their identities and freedoms are not limited by conventional societal expectations, but are instead defined by their own unique experiences, choices, and aspirations.

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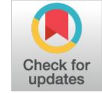

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Exploring the Visual and Performative Appropriation of Shakespeare in Pakistani Theatres

Abstract: This research paper examines the experimental nature of appropriation focusing on The National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) renditions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) and *Richard III* (1597). It investigates how these adaptations bring about changes in both dramatic structure and artistic expression, dissecting visual and performative elements to uncover diverse meanings within live performances. The research delves into how NAPA's creative choices offer new ways to examine Shakespeare's universal themes—jealousy, incest, ambition, and hatred—through unconventional theatrical presentations, viewed from a post-dramatic perspective. Using Hans Thies Lehmann's Post-dramatic theory (1960), it analyses alterations dramaturgical and aesthetical presentation such as plot construction, sign and symbol presentations. By bridging the gap between the art world and stagecraft, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how appropriation, aesthetics, and performance intersect. It also explores how these adaptations contribute to the global presentation of Shakespearean plays, offering insights from Pakistan's theatrical landscape.

Keywords: *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, sign and symbols, Pakistani Theatre, NAPA, Aesthetics.

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate how appropriation serves as an experimental tool in shaping the visual and performative elements of theatrical presentations. Specifically, it focuses on analyzing the dramaturgical mode of appropriation in NAPA's live renditions of the reworked versions of Shakespeares

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Hamlet (1603) and *Richard III* (1597). Established in 2005 by Zia Mohyeddin, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) stands as Pakistan's foremost institution in performing arts. Hosting international projects centred on Shakespearean plays, the institute emphasizes teaching and fostering creative expression, particularly in the performing arts (NAPA). Performances of the selected plays are integral to this initiative. This study uses Lehmann's post-dramatic theory to analyse the experimental techniques particularly the blurring of boundaries, musicality, presentness, displacement of the plot, interative theatrical technique, plethora of signs, physicality and stage settings in the selected live performances of the appropriated versions of Shakespeare plays. Through an exploration of these visual and performative elements, this study aims to illuminate the artistic decisions made by Pakistani theatrical troupes and their impact on the overall aesthetic experience, revealing insights derived from the experimental approaches employed in these Shakespearean performances.

Appropriation

Linda Hutcheon defines appropriation as "taking possession of for one's own; to take to one's self" (103), implying commandeering and controlling a desired object, as described by Marsden (1). Appropriation, according to Gemmel, is a purposeful and creative practice in art involving the reuse of visual materials or existing artworks. In Modern art, the focus is on experimentation, urging artists to challenge perceptions and present existing works uniquely. This valency for experimentation prompts artists, thinkers, and viewers to explore art's potential, experimenting with new techniques to rework source material. Michael Mandiberg argues that "Appropriation is a way to experiment with images and objects by shifting the context," altering their context, reframing their meaning in the process (Gemmel), thereby challenging the established nature of image production (Mandiberg). This involves challenging conventional dramaturgical modes or reconfiguring established norms of presentation, enhancing the aesthetic fervour to Shakespeare's original texts. In "The Empty Space," Peter Brook confronts conventional ideas of intricate sets and props, aligning with Lehmann's departure from Aristotle's unified model (Lehmann 10). This departure marks a significant shift in how theatrical performance is conceptualized, favouring an open and experimental approach that prioritizes immediate experience and visual dynamics over a linear narrative. Similar to Lehmann, Brook champions a universal and immediate approach to theatre (125), emphasizing the importance of the actor-audience relationship. His advocacy encourages directors to craft immersive, intimate, and accessible theatrical experiences, reinforcing the transformative power of live performance. In the context of NAPA's theatrical appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, such as

Hamlet and *Richard III*, this process empowers the Pakistani troupe with variant artistic expression, fostering a sense of creative ownership. This is consistent with Lehmann's vision, demonstrating how a departure from traditional norms can facilitate diverse and authentic interpretations in the field of theatre.

The term "aesthetics" stems from the Greek "aisthēsis," (Martin) meaning perception or sensation, and was modernized by 18th-century German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. He coined it to encompass the study of sensory experiences, perception, aesthetics, and art appreciation. In performing arts, "aesthetics" relates to the principles guiding the creation, interpretation, and appreciation of live performance art, involving how artists use elements like sound, movement, gesture, text, and visual design to craft a meaningful and engaging performance for both performers and the audience. This paper explores the aesthetic elements in Shakespeare's appropriations by thoroughly examining the visual and performative aspects. Through various theatrical components in NAPA's renditions, such as settings, props, body language, and rearranged plot elements, these adaptations convey new meanings, establish aesthetic ambiance, and contribute to shaping Pakistan's artistic identity.

Contribution

This study highlights how the Pakistani theatrical landscape contributes significantly to engaging with Shakespearean studies through an appropriation lens. It facilitates a vibrant exchange between the art world and the craft of stage performance, emphasizing the significant role of Pakistani theatre in redefining Shakespearean adaptations within experimental frameworks.

Research Methodology

To examine contemporary Pakistani theatrical renditions of Shakespearean works, a mixed-method research approach was utilized. Qualitatively, an in-depth analysis involved textual scrutiny and critical reviews of performances such as "*Richard III*" and "*Hamlet*." This qualitative exploration encompassed script evaluations, character developments, thematic appropriations, and semiotic assessments of visual elements, with a focus on artistic aesthetics. On the quantitative front, audience feedback and responses were gathered and scrutinized through surveys and discussions, shedding light on immersive experiences, perceptions of post-dramatic elements, and their impact on comprehending traditional and post-dramatic facets of theatre. This integrated mixed-method approach facilitated a profound understanding of the evolution of contemporary Pakistani theatre, revealing its innovative incorporation of post-dramatic elements in adapting Shakespearean plays.

Theoretical Framework

Effectively applying Hans-Thies Lehmann's post-dramatic theory, the analysis scrutinizes the experimental appropriation of Shakespearean plays by Pakistani theatre, revealing insights into artistic decisions in theatrical performances. Hans-Thies Lehmann, a distinguished German theatre scholar in the field of performance studies, introduces the concept of "post-dramatic theatre," challenging conventional notions of dramatic structure and character development. Lehmann posits that contemporary theatre has transitioned from narrative-driven plays to a more fragmented and non-linear approach, embracing elements like presentness, musicality, and physicality (Bulman 129, 423, 581). His theory delves into the exploration of presence, embodiment, and theatrical possibilities beyond text-based dramas.

The paper adopts Lehmann's post-dramatic theory, which challenges the dominance of text and questions traditional mimetic or naturalistic representation in theatre. Post-dramatic theatre moves beyond strict categorizations of theatre work and may be produced as a contemporary experimental performance. Lehmann does not reject the logos of earlier dramatic traditions but rather engages with them to create a new theatre text. The present research examines performative renditions that depart from a coherent plot and loyalty to Shakespeare's dramatic texts. Instead, it uses Lehmann's idea of refusal to construct a fictive cosmos or plot and prioritizes performance based on the simultaneity of action and plot, rather than creating a linear plot and action. The paper examines the paratextual elements used in appropriating Shakespeare's plays in contemporary Pakistani theatrical performances and applies Lehmann's idea of simultaneity to move beyond the sequential synthesis of plot and action.

The implication of post-dramatic theory benefits contemporary performances by allowing for a more experimental and diverse approach to theatre, encouraging the use of physicality, space, and time, promoting multidisciplinary collaboration, and emphasizing the importance of the spectator's experience. And Contemporary Pakistani theatre is characterized by its inventive use of theatrical styles, which incorporate elements of post-dramatic theatres, such as "narrative fragmentation, heterogeneity of style, and expressionistic elements" (Lehmann 24). This is why the present analysis of Contemporary Pakistani live theatrical performances borrows from Hans G. Lehmann's Post-dramatic theory.

Analysis

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicts a tragic tale of a young Prince Hamlet seeking vengeance against his uncle Claudius for murdering his father and marrying his mother. As Hamlet grapples with his desire for revenge and his sense of morality, he meets his tragic end.

In 2009, NAPA presented a theatrical performance of *Hamlet* in Urdu, following the same plotline as the original text. However, this appropriated version focused on the addition of musicalization and a unique display of expressionistic elements, employing techniques such as role reversal and blurred boundaries through innovative seating arrangements. These visual and performative techniques effectively express the thematic essence of Shakespeare's play.

The unusual seating arrangement in NAPA's production of *Hamlet* not only executes the reversal of roles technique for artistic exploration and experimentation but also provides the audience with a unique shift in perspective. In Shakespeare's original *Hamlet*, the play begins with the appearance of Hamlet's father's ghost (1.1.9), setting the stage for the narrative. However, with a little improvisation in NAPA's adaptation, the spectre appears a little later till Act 1, Scenes IV materializes among the audience/spectators, engages Hamlet and leads him towards the dim lit theatre towards the audience. The same act is repeated in Act 1 Scene V. In Act III, after identifying the ghost, Hamlet addresses the audience, pointing at the spectre. While interrogating the ghost's identity, he moves toward the audience, revealing the specifics of his father's murder. He requests the audience to notice a figure standing in the shadows among them, crafting a captivating and enchanting atmosphere that draws them into the scene, with Hamlet positioned amidst the spectators. As he directly engages with the audience and the ghost is present among them, the gradual disappearance of the ghost's presence becomes an experience for the audience. This involvement invites them to be part of the "moment of performance" (Lehmann 225). Similarly, in Act 1, Scene 1, Horatio approaches Hamlet, emerging from within the audience in a manner consistent with this theatrical performance, and later in Act 4, Scene 5, Ophelia addresses the audience about her bereft love for Hamlet, inquiring about a solution for a frail woman to live in a world without support. Such moments are when the usual power dynamics between performers and spectators are reversed, giving the audience agency and autonomy, ultimately enhancing the overall performance experience (Lehmann 225).

The audience forms a semicircle around the performing space, their seats at the same level as the actors (Gupta 65). By eliminating the traditional stage barrier and reducing the distance between them, the audience becomes integral to the performance, merging their respective areas (Kumar 43-46). This proximity lessens the gap between performers and audience, creating a vivid interactive experience, allowing spectators to immerse themselves in the play rather than merely observe (Citron et al. 95). According to Jacques Rancière, this approach "reshapes the area of the collective." As posited by Schechner, "Theatre is the domain of the performers; the performance is the domain of the audience" (70). The power of theatre lies in the theatrical "encounter" (Fischer-Lichte X) between performer and spectator. In this connection Peter Brook's his

book "The Empty Space," call such a theatrical performance where immediate interaction or engagement between performers and the audience takes place as a "living confrontation" (124). In this context, the term "confrontation" (Brook 124-125) is not necessarily synonymous with conflict but rather with a direct, vivid encounter that can provoke a range of responses, emotions, and reflections from all those involved. This post-dramatic technique acknowledges the audience as an active participant by incorporating their response. The strategy encourages innovation in staging, movement, and presentation, enabling performers to engage with spectators unexpectedly. Consequently, the audience gains a unique perspective where the boundaries between spectators and performers strategically diminish through the merging of the proscenium/stage and the auditorium. Overall, this technique employed by NAPA emphasizes the importance of breaking traditional dramaturgical boundaries between performers and spectators, allowing the audience to play a more active and creative role in shaping the theatrical experience.

The smooth transition of *Hamlet*'s plot is disrupted by the introduction of a storytelling technique followed by "The play within a play" in NAPA's Shakespeare performance. A storytelling technique is appropriated to retell the *Oedipus Rex* story (3.2.142). Upon meeting Hamlet, the performers assure him that the audience will be entertained, emphasizing this point by incorporating the recitation of *Oedipus Rex*. This narrative provides the audience with a multi-layered and nuanced understanding of Oedipus, as both *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* feature central characters destined for tragic ends, both experiencing themes of incest, infidelity, and their repercussions. The storytelling technique introduced in the plotline maximizes audience's engagement with various elements unfolding on the stage. The "narrative fragmentation" and heterogeneity of style" (Lehmann 24) in theatrical performance align with post-dramatic theatre, which disregards the traditional dramatic unity or consistency of style (Carlson 581). Consequently, in accordance with Lehmann's propositions, the introduction of yet another technique—a play within a play (discussed below)—intends to disrupt the smooth flow of the performance and, simultaneously, overwhelms the spectators.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the "Mouse Trap" (3.2.137) scene emotionally recreates the events of King Hamlet's murder through actors' dialogue and gestures. It aims to convey the story, emphasizing the reactions of characters, especially Claudius, who is tested by Hamlet's orchestrated performance. Unlike Shakespeare's traditional dramatic performance, NAPA appropriates it into a musical performance, presenting a mini Opera Seria. This form of serious opera typically involves tragic stories of heroes and kings (Opera 101). In NAPA's version, King Hamlet's tragic murder is dramatized through a song, heightening the dramatic effect with high notes and a dance between the actors. The term "dramma per musica" in Opera refers to creating drama through music,

combining various elements like art, words, music, drama, and dance to convey an entire story or plot. The performative technique creates a visually striking atmosphere through vivid lighting, dynamic movements, and expressive music, capturing the essence of a captivating theatrical performance. In this specific segment, Gertrude and Claudius, illuminated by red light, engage in a dance to celebrate King Hamlet's demise. Positioned on the stage, a group of musicians accompanies the scene, with a singer dramatizing the death of King Hamlet. Hamlet's dialogues interject, momentarily affecting the scene's momentum. The stage is bustling with various activities during this sequence. The performance space is filled with performers, dances, and musical interventions embodying a "living moment of presentness" (Fischer-Lichte 41). A significant correlation exists between the immediate experience on stage and the perception of duration, both representing a submission to the influence of time. In this mode, audience members are encouraged to engage fully in the distinctive unfolding of the performance in both spatial and temporal dimensions (Gough 3), particularly showcased through dance and music. This aesthetic approach in performance with "itself in the present" and "disturbing" (Brook 122). This post-dramatic approach incorporates physical movement, music, and stage design to generate meaning in the "performance text" (Schechner 85). Schechner labels such performance: as "the whole constellation of events," involving performers, audience, technicians—"anyone who is there" (Schechner 85). Another noteworthy performative aspect of NAPA's Mousetrap is that it begins with the smooth style of an opera seria presentation but transforms into an aleatory performance. The term "aleatory" is derived from the Latin word "Alea," meaning "dice," (Dahn) and it emphasizes the role of unpredictability and randomness in the creation or execution of the performance. The scene's pathos is further enhanced by a striking red lighting scheme, rhythmic movements, and crescendoing music, transforming the performance space into a tumultuous "superimposition of the sonic world" (Lehmann 87-88). The high notes do not sync with the dance performance as though everything presented on stage tends to move in a different direction. Such a performative approach challenges traditional notions of control and predetermined outcomes, providing a unique and unpredictable artistic experience for both performers and the audience. In NAPA's version, the inclusion of musicians, dance, and a non-verbal soundscape further enriches the multifaceted experiential moment for the audience.

In NAPA's appropriation of *Hamlet*, the innovative stage design, lighting, and props converge to present a striking craft of a visual and a performative spectacle. The stage incorporates a "plethora of visual signs" (Lehmann 89, 91) on the stage, creating a visually immersive environment. The stage is transformed into a grand chessboard, becoming a powerful sign that metaphorically embodies the characters' strategic struggles and complex

decisions. The metaphor of the chessboard extends beyond a mere visual spectacle; it carries variegated meanings, resembling a battlefield or a dynamics of a chess game. Adorned with alternating black and white squares, the stage floor becomes a visually impactful sign, offering a unique representation of the characters' intricate moves and strategic battles. Life within the play is compared to a game of chess, where strategic decisions determine outcomes, seen in the tragic consequences faced by characters such as Ophelia, Hamlet, and Gertrude. Each step Hamlet takes reflects his strategic maneuvers against Claudius, emphasizing the chessboard as a symbolic representation of the characters' lives. The parallel between chess and life highlights the pivotal role of strategic decisions, where each move can lead to advantageous or disadvantageous consequences. This thematic connection is exemplified in Ophelia's loyalty to Petrutio, Hamlet's procrastination leading to his demise, and Gertrude's misplaced trust in Claudius, resulting in her tragic end. Hamlet's deliberate, slow pace on the chessboard becomes a poignant manifestation of his internal struggles and indecisiveness. The metaphorical stage setting becomes an "incomplete," "open" (Brook 125) canvas for contemplation, inviting multiple interpretations. Peter Brook explains that such concept of theatrical designs serve continually dynamic and interconnected with the evolving actor-driven scene, emphasizing the stage's role as a metaphorical battlefield where strategic narratives unfold.

Next, the spectators are engulfed in a surreal atmosphere created by the combination of stage design, theatrical and lighting, and props. The entire stage and the audience are bathed in a blue hue, with draped white curtains casting an ethereal illumination over the entire set. This intentional use of lighting and colour contributes to the mood of the performance, creating an otherworldly ambience from the outset, preparing the audience for the journey they are about to embark on. While maintaining the psychological depth and motives of the original play, NAPA performance of *Hamlet* emphasized exceedingly on the visual signs.

The display of visual props transforms the stage into a performance-based environment, complementing the aesthetically pleasing nature of the theatre (Hinda 49). The strategically placed portraits and a large mirror serve a dual purpose, acting not only as concrete, performative, and communicative signs but also as elements of a shared language between the spectators and the performers. At first, the portraits draw the audience's focus to the persistent absence of characters, notably the late King Hamlet, whose physical presence is replaced by virtual representations through the portraits. However, the arrangement of static images, along with a large mirror facing the audience, delivers a visually stimulating experience of self-realization (Lehmann 10), complemented by various other signs on the stage(Lehmann 142). The mirror remains on stage throughout the performance, positioned next to portraits of the

murdered king. Unrelentingly, it gazes back at the audience, creating what Edwards describes as a "double self-portrait" (3). This unsettling effect occurs as spectators peer into the mirror, prompting self-reflection akin to the proverbial "Know thyself" (Edwards 7). This experiential technique operates as an evaluative medium, compelling the audience to ponder their past sins and urging them to reflect on prior events before moving forward. The audience's reaction to their reflection in the mirror is disquieting, deliberately engaging with the visual elements of the scenery and prompting introspection about their identity as human beings during the performance, thus inviting various interpretations. Lehmann argues that in post-dramatic theatre, meaning is created not only through dialogue and plot but also through the use of "signs" (72). These signs allow the audience to engage in a more active and participatory experience with the performance. In this manner, The boundaries or possibilities of artistic expression are explored or widened. As a result, Pakistani theatrical troupes are experimenting by appropriating new ways to incorporate elements related to the "abject" (something repulsive or unpleasant), the "corporeal" (related to the body), and the 'affective' (emotional or expressive) into their artistic endeavours (Ventzislavov).The process may involve pushing the boundaries of what has traditionally been considered acceptable or exploring ways to convey emotions or bodily experiences in an unconventional and impactful manner.

Shakespeare's history play, *Richard III*, was staged in English during NAPA's International Theatre and Music Festival in 2018. The original text adheres to traditional structural elements and employs various dramatic devices, such as soliloquies, dreams, and symbols. *Richard III* revolves around Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as he navigates a web of deceit and murder to claim the English throne, culminating in his ultimate downfall at the Battle of Bosworth Field. His, direct engagement with the audience occurs in Act 1, Scene 1 (247). In this scene, Richard reveals his ambitious plan to seize the throne of England and subtly attempts to gain sympathy from the audience. Through his statement, "That dogs bark at me as I halt by them" (247). Richard aims to elicit empathy from the audience. This connection between Richard and the audience persists throughout the play, with Richard frequently addressing the audience through asides and soliloquies, sharing his thoughts and revealing his true nature. These interactions serve to heighten suspense, create an ironic tone, and establish a pervasive sense of bloodshed and evil In the course of the play. The audience becomes increasingly aware of Richard's lies and manipulations as the play progresses (Shakespeare). In addition, in the original version, various supernatural elements are present in the play: Margaret's curses, Clarence and Stanley's prophetic dreams, Richard's accusations of witchcraft, his association with devils, his comparison to Proteus, and the Princes' discussion of ghostly uncles. Dreams, symbolic imagery, and the subsequent occurrence of tragic events

showcase the intricate interplay among dreams, symbolic imagery, and behavior in the play.

While NAPA borrows Shakespeare's title, its performance is far from conventional. This highly experimental rendition transforms into a dynamic exchange between performers and audience members, defied traditional norms and resulted to be a highly unintelligible one. Because in a conventional Shakespearean play, using scenes and the actions on stage help the audience understand the plot, even if they don't speak the language, making the performance more engaging. However, *Richard III* was less familiar to the Pakistani audience compared to other tragedies, and its historical context may have posed challenges for viewers.

Moreover, NAPA's performance further deviates by featuring a shifted plot, minimal stage designs, English dialogue and a solitary performer (Richard). NAPA's performance of *Richard III* challenges traditional elements such as unity of action, plot, and space. Shakespeare's play initiates with Richard's soliloquies, introducing his brother Edward's victory at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 and foreshadowing future events (Act 1, Sc 1, p 13). The plot then unfolds through scenes in five compact acts. Conversely, NAPA's rendition maintains Richard's constant presence on stage, eliminating shifts in scenes or actions. The focus squarely rests on this singular character throughout the play, making it solely his story—Richard's story. This portrayal creates a sense of unchanging time and space within a vast, empty theatrical environment. The bare stage, where Richard remains on stage from start to finish, emphasizes the character and his dialogue. Moreover, the presence of a bare stage symbolically transforms into an artistic space, akin to a blank canvas for an artist, where the story unfolds. Spectators are encouraged to use their imagination to fill in the details, witnessing a deformed character limping from one extreme to the next, addressing them through a monologue. *Richard III*, in NAPA's performance, becomes the exclusive presenter of his version of actions, establishing a static temporal and spatial orientation within the expansive, empty theatrical space, leaving spectators to interpret what lies ahead.

In contrast to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the rendition by NAPA depicts Richard without any royal affiliations, thus accentuating the malevolent desires inherent in an ordinary man. Unlike the titular character in William Shakespeare's historical play, where Richard's corrupt nature taints his association with royalty, Throughout Shakespeare's play, Richard manipulates and schemes his way to the English throne, portrayed as a deformed and ambitious man relentlessly seeking power, determined to eliminate anyone in his path. The character in NAPA's performance there is a deliberate choice to show Richard's lack of direct royal connections.

NAPA effectively engages the audience by relying on Richard's physicality and bodily presence as the primary performative tools. Unlike

traditional techniques, such as asides, soliloquies, or dreams, which intensify emotions, these are omitted in this performance. Richard assumes a central role, continuously delivering a speech while executing physical actions like running, shouting, falling, and pleading with the audience. Throughout the performance, he remains ordinarily dressed, deviating from Shakespeare's Richard, who typically represents royal connections through attire or disguises. Instead, NAPA's protagonist embodies the inner recesses of the human mind, revealing the hidden aspects true to the individual. In plain attire on a bare stage, he symbolizes inherent evil present in every person, mirroring the super-ego of each audience member. During his monologue, Richard questions the audience about the correctness of his actions, mirroring the way humans justify themselves in solitude, portraying the inherent evil within. Standing alone, he becomes a symbol of the audience's subconscious desires, fears, and conflicts. As he approaches and interacts with the audience, many nod in affirmation or respond quietly, merging with Richard as he mirrors their inner selves. He acts as a "mirror character" or an "alter ego," embodying their inner thoughts and desires. His intention is to reveal what he believes they all desire—power. In this portrayal, Richard becomes a reflection of the audience, whether achieved through fair or unfair means. Lehmann argues that the essence of post-dramatic performance lies in the concept of "presence," (Power 228) which engages and maintains the audience's attention throughout the entire show. In post-dramatic theatre, the performer's body and actions become essential, acting as the conduit through which the performer communicates, and the audience deciphers these actions. This approach to theatre underscores the importance of live performances, emphasizing the unique connection between the performer and the audience in the creation of meaning. In this performance the deliberate use of Richard's body movements, gestures, posture, and physical presence enhances the theatrical impact, making his physicality an integral part of the character and the play (Edwards 18).

Richard's adept use of language as a strategic tool empowers him to manipulate and control others effectively in Shakespeare's play. His skillful manipulation through language, seen in instances such as wooing Lady Anne (1.2.23) and orchestrating Hastings's execution, showcases the strategic power of his words. Clarence's imprisonment, eludes the Woodvilles and shifts the blame to the king for Clarence's death (1.4.73). His linguistic prowess allows him to navigate and shift blame successfully, while the eventual turn to violence highlights that, in the face of linguistic defense, aggression becomes the ultimate resolution.

In NAPA's appropriated version of the play, the performance strategically becomes an extension into interactive theatre. This is achieved by forsaking traditional soliloquies in favor of interactive monologues, where a single performer actively engages with the audience. *Richard III* maintains

a constant presence on the minimalist stage, deviating from the original play, where dreams and omens symbolize impending events and the consequences of Richard's actions. Apart from directly addressing the audience, he initiates dialogue, seeks responses, and fosters interaction between the audience and those on stage.

Moreover, NAPA's experimental approach, engages the audience in innovative and unexpected ways. The audience's interpretations and responses are assessed in a unique game-like dramatic manner. In this distinctive performance, conventional character roles are discarded as participants stand on stage facing the audience without engaging in performative actions. Some don name tags borrowed from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, featuring names like Hastings, Clarence, Elizabeth, Anne, Vaugh, and Buckingham. Unlike traditional performances where characters and dialogue propel the plot, these tags and physical presence contribute minimally to conveyed information or plot progression. A row of participants extends at the rear side of the stage, facing the audience behind Richard. While he continually recites extended monologues, establishing one-on-one interaction with the audience, those seated behind him remain silent and inactive. When Richard decides to "kill" a character, he either randomly approaches an audience member off-stage, hands them a "chit," and instructs them to go to a particular character on stage with a name tag, declaring them "murdered." Alternatively, Richard personally walks toward the character, tagging them with their name and the label "murdered." In one instance, Richard interacted closely with an audience member, inquiring about his name, pointing at Hastings, and offering him chits labeled "Murdered." Some of the audience members declined, stating they would not participate in the act of murder. This deviation from Shakespeare's play signifies a departure as the enactment, resembling a game, creates an intimate and immediate connection with the audience. It pulls them into the on-stage events, setting the overall tone for the entire production. According to Lehmann (137), this novel approach not only entertains but also educates the audience, stimulating their creativity and encouraging deeper reflection on the play's meaning and implications. Moreover, these unexpected gestures and audience involvement add an element of surprise, providing an opportunity for spectators to draw upon their own experiences and engage with a highly subjective and transient reality. NAPA's approach demonstrates an innovative take on appropriation, challenging traditional norms in Shakespearean performances. A collaborative and dynamic experience is fostered when the audience is encouraged to participate and interact with the performer. Through the use of the performative technique employed, the audience is allowed to interpret the themes of the play in their way. The entire presentation becomes a unique blend of dramatic interactive monologues and a game-show format, showcasing NAPA's innovative and experimental approach to Shakespearean works.

The final scene of the performance takes an intriguing turn, deviating from Shakespeare's play where the audience experiences pity and fear. In this rendition, the protagonist's lone death by an illusionary character starkly contrasts with the expected gravity of the situation. Richard's dramatic lines like "Slave, I have set my life upon a cast, / And I will stand the hazard of the die" and the iconic "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (5.5.303) are followed by his fall on stage. Notably, there are no other characters present on stage, unlike Shakespeare's original where Richmone, Catsby, and soldiers witness Richard's execution. This unconventional portrayal turns Richard's demise into a spectacle of dark humour, offering a unique engagement for the audience, even if it may appear awkward or disconnected from the rest of the performance. For a receptive mind, this scene carries significant performative and receptive value, hinting that if Richard is a manifestation of a human mind, it signifies the eruption of jealousies, ambitions, impulses, and greed within an individual. The portrayal underscores the idea that if the mind can generate such impulses, it also holds the power to take control and bring about its own destruction. Furthermore, the play's precise prompting challenges preconceived notions and encourages the audience to think critically through unexpected presentations.

Conclusion

The paper explores the reversal of roles technique, interruptions to the normal flow of the plotline, visual display of signs, and the blurring of barriers between the spectators and the performers are some of the theatrical techniques in appropriating Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Richard III* in NAPA's live theatrical performance. The emphasis is placed on visual and performative elements, highlighting aesthetic values that prioritize immediate experiences and human connection (Crossley 153). These modes of appropriation serve as a powerful means of challenging established performative norms and creating a more immersive and interactive theatrical experience. By breaking down the traditional boundaries between spectators and performers, this technique encourages active participation and challenges the established power dynamic between the two.

In conclusion, this analysis explores the significance of visual and performative elements used to underline the thematic appraisal in the performing arts through the lens of Hans Lehmann's post-dramatic theory. Overall, Lehmann's theory expands the possibilities for expression, promotes diversity, and enhances the audience's experience by creating a more engaging and immersive performance environment. As such, it is a valuable framework for understanding the evolution of theatre and its potential for the future. Ultimately,

the analysis has shed light on the ongoing evolution of Pakistani theatre and its capacity to engage audiences in innovative ways. include choices made by the theatre artists regarding how to adapt, reinterpret, and present the plays in a way that reflects their artistic vision.

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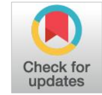

Book Reviews

Bao Huiyi 包慧怡. *Mirror Maze: The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets*《镜迷宫：莎士比亚十四行诗的世界》. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2023. Pp. 1520.

Reviewed by ***Lin Weijian****

In 2018, Bao Huiyi delivered a lecture on Shakespeare and poetry in Yueyue Bookstore, Shanghai, which later turned out to be a two-year project on teaching Shakespeare and his sonnets via audio courses. Her years of reading and teaching Shakespeare finally prompted the publication of《镜迷宫：莎士比亚十四行诗的世界》[*Mirror Maze: The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets*] (2023), a comprehensive literary encyclopedia conducting a detailed word-to-word analysis of the sonnets written in reader-friendly language, and at the same time providing a useful synthesis of the necessary historical context for understanding the sequence. In this book, Bao combines literary commentary with a review of the current translations, not only interpreting the sonnets to help the readers see the active intellectual society that generates the sonnets, but also leading the readers to cross the linguistic barriers themselves so that they might approach the sonnets as closely as possible. By doing so, Bao produces a literary guidebook into Shakespeare's sonnets not only for scholars from relevant fields, but more importantly, for Chinese readers—however limited their knowledge of sonnets and of the English language might be—who are ready to treasure this particular English golden treasury.

This pocket-sized work is divided into six volumes each titled by a line from a sonnet in that volume, with Sonnets 1 to 21 in volume 1, 22 to 49 in volume 2, 50 to 76 in volume 3, 77 to 104 in volume 4, 105 to 130 in volume 5, and 131 to 154 in volume 6. Bao does not adopt the common categorization of the sequence as the Fair Youth subsequence and the Dark Lady subsequence but

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categorizes it into six themes, namely *carpe diem* poems, metapoems, metaphysical poems, naturalist poems, love poems, and mock love poems (26-27). This thematic categorization, though as Bao herself acknowledges, is "subjective and rough" (27, my translation), serves as an efficient agent for beginners to understand sonnets in a broader scope. Nevertheless, one has to know that this is not to say Bao neglects the two narratives of the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady. Rather, she keeps the unfolding of the narratives always in mind throughout the six volumes.

In addition, all the sonnets are presented with a "title" or "keyword" that best captures the theme of the sonnet—for example, Sonnet 10 is accurately named "Building" despite the absence of the keyword itself in the sonnet. The naming of Sonnet 10 is certainly not arbitrary, as Bao convincingly proves how the latter part of the sonnet uses a series of architectural jargon to establish the connection between suicidal infertility and the demolishment of a house. Also, Bao enhances the effectiveness of the keyword by a typological examination of how the image of "house" is conceived as representing a family in the Bible (116), thus skillfully drawing together the connotation expressed in the keyword, the content of the sonnet, and the overall persuasion pursued by *carpe diem* poems. In her interpretation of Sonnet 10, Bao makes a keen observation on the phonic threads within the alliteration of *roof* with *ruinate* and *repair*, extending her analyses to every aspect of reading poetry. Such attentive spirit of "Every word counts" could also be found in her careful numerological examination of 12 in Sonnet 20 "The Violet," 6 in Sonnet 66 "Weariness," the sonnets that are the multiples of 7, and the like.

As for her categorization of the sonnets, *carpe diem* poems are the first group appearing for the readers, and the only group that appears continuously from Sonnets 1 to 17, rather than being scattered around the sequence. Before the formal interpretation of Sonnet 1 is "The Preface," where Bao specifically explains her motivation in renaming the first 17 sonnets from "procreation poems" to "*carpe diem* poems," claiming that the persuasion to procreate is only the surface theme of this category, while deep within the sonnets there lies a strong concern of perishable beauty threatened by the grim time. Citing both Horace's *Odes* and Genesis, Bao begins her interpretation with how Shakespeare deviates both from the classical epicurean *carpe diem* theme and the Christian doctrine by appealing to the readers to seize the day, "not for fun" (35), nor for an heir that "might bear his memory," but for that "beauty's rose might never die" (36). This interconnection of youth, heir, and beauty is satisfactorily traced in all her analyses of the *carpe diem* poems. For instance, in her interpretation of Sonnet 5 "Distillation," Bao insightfully observes the bridges between the constant circulation of life and death in which beauty could only remain still by being distilled through procreative work.

The widely known Sonnet 18 "A Summer's Day" marks the beginning of the second category, the metapoems which include 25 poems scattered throughout the sequence from 18 to 106.[1] Bao defines metapoems as poems "searching for permanency" (26) and "discussing the arts of poetry, or dealing with the themes or other aspects of writing poetry" by "a self-inspection in the meaning, motive, process, and technique of composing poetry" (191). In this sense, it is exactly because Sonnet 18, for the first time in the sequence, offers poetry as an alternative to procreation in sustaining beauty that this sonnet is categorized as a metapoem. The rest of the metapoems express similar themes. For example, in Sonnet 19 "Time," Bao focuses on examining the poet's confidence in using poetry to fight against Time's consuming energy, while in Sonnet 23 "To Hear with Eyes," Bao (239) examines how the poet expresses the limitation of human language.

Sonnet 22 "Exchange of Heart" is the first love poem that appears in the sequence.[2] In this category, Bao uses a rich variety of ways to approach how Shakespeare deals with the inner play of love and desire. Among the many impressive analyses, it is Bao's genre study of how Shakespeare interweaves the traditional love theme with other literary genres that most attracts the readers. For example, there is a comparative study of Sonnet 27 "Looking on Darkness," extracts of *Romeo and Juliet,* and *The Canterbury Tales* in order to show how Shakespeare wields sacramental vocabulary to sanctify love (279). Also, Bao (289) relocates Sonnet 29 "The Lark" in a medieval complaint/plaint poetry tradition as an expression of unfulfilled love. Or, from the perspective of influence study, Bao (313) sees Sonnet 30 "Elegy" as a middle point that has come all the way from Anglo-Saxon poetry and will continue in modernist works such as Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and its English version *Remembrance of Things Past* by C. K Scott Moncrieff.

Bao's focus on the genre is not limited by her categorization of the sequence when she specifically points out that elegy also functions lyrically in metaphysical poems[3] such as Sonnet 31 "The Tomb." Bao's analysis of Sonnet 31 focuses on the literary motif of death and how it is expressed in metaphysical fashions in the sequence. The comparison of the present lover to the tomb of the past lovers is seen as a conceit that explores the life and death of love in an elegiac tone (319). While fully acknowledging the fact that Shakespeare is now not seen as a metaphysical poet, Bao (248) still endorses her

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[1] Metapoems include Sonnets 18 to 21, 23, 32, 37 and 38, 49, 55, 59 and 60, 63, 65, 76 to 79, 81 to 83, 85, 100 and 101, 103, and 106,

[2] Love poems include Sonnets 22, 27 to 30, 35 and 36, 39, 56 to 58, 61 and 62, 66, 71 to 75, 92, 97, 108 to 110, 115 and 116, 122, 125, 126, and 145.

[3] Metaphysical poems include Sonnets 24, 26, 31, 33 and 34, 43 to 48, 50 to 53, 64, 86, 104 and 105, 107, 111, 113 and 114, 118 and 119, 121, 123 and 124, 141, 146, 148, 151, 153, and 154.

claim that 34 of the sonnets in the sequence are metaphysical—or proto-metaphysical as she cites Helen Gardner's work *Metaphysical Poets*—since they manifest basic characteristics of metaphysical poetry in their confident display of abundant knowledge of fundamental elements of the world, astrology, alchemy, calendar, navigation, botany, and the like.

This proves to be a daring and arduous path because, by treating these sonnets as metaphysical poems, one has to possess an equal amount of knowledge in order to form a sufficient interpretation. Nevertheless, Bao has successfully shown her capability as a metaphysical critic when, for example, she discusses in detail the *aspect* as an astrological term in Sonnet 26 "Courtly Love" (269), or when she talks about how alchemy structures Sonnet 33 "The Sun" through a series of alchemical vocabularies such as *gilding* and *base* (341), or when in Sonnets 44 and 45 "The Elements" she subtly points out the correlation among the four elements, the four colors of the Minor Arcanas, and the four parts of human emotions and characteristics (453-454).

This Shakespearean erudition revives the long-gone world for the readers, striking a perfect balance between academic rigor and reading pleasure. Such a width of knowledge reaches its climax in the next category—the naturalist poems.[4] By definition, this category refers to poems that are not simply about nature, but are studying nature deeply—the plants, the animals, or the scenery. Its original Chinese name "博物" (literally, knowing and learning all sorts of things) also displays such an inquisitive spirit. In her analysis of Sonnet 26 "The Marigold," the first naturalist poem in the sequence, Bao exhibits a vast store of knowledge. Starting from Thomas Hyll's *The Profitable Arte of Gardening* published in 1563, Bao (258) puts with clarity how marigolds come to represent pursuers suffering the fate of desertion in various botanic documents, and how Shakespeare derives his image of marigolds both from the documents before mentioned and from Ovid.

Such a comparative method not only demands a large grasp of the first-hand materials that the Bard was reading at the time, but also requires the interpreter to become a naturalist like the Bard himself so that the interpreter could identify the rhetoric hidden in the poetic manipulation of ordinary-life objects. Examples like these are numerous: The interpretation of Sonnet 68 "Map and Wig" is a combination of Bao's own research on medieval T-O *mappa mundi* with interesting historical anecdotes of the Queen and her favorites (666), while that of Sonnet 87 "The Bonds" provides a detailed list of the history of the bonds as a financial product to help illustrate the relationship between the narrator and the Fair Youth (853).

[4] Naturalist poems include Sonnets 25, 54, 67 to 70, 80, 84, 87 and 88, 91, 94 to 96, 98 and 99, 102, 112, and 120.

The final category is mock love poems, which deal with the dark side of desire and appear mostly in the Dark Lady subsequence.[5] Bao's analyses of these poems first focus on how the negative emotions are lyrically expressed, then move on to discuss how the narrative unfolds itself from the Fair Youth subsequence to the Dark Lady subsequence. It is worth mentioning that her analysis itself becomes a poetic endeavor when Bao (421) writes "the narrator… staggering and swirling in love and loss, trying to find balance in imbalance" after counting the frequency of *loss* and *love* (as well as their variations) in Sonnet 42 "The Art of Loss." In her discussion of the Dark Lady subsequence beginning from Sonnet 127, Bao provides a comprehensive synopsis of current research concerning the identity of the Dark Lady (1257), the depressing rhetoric of lust (1265), the down-to-earth but often-criticized vulgarity in polysemes such as the *will* (1323-1325), and the self-desertion put into a confessional tradition (1483-1484). In an excellent concluding note for the Dark Lady subsequence, Bao claims that the Dark Lady subsequence, like the Fair Youth subsequence, is one unalienable part of the discourse for knowing the self-portrayal of the poet in love, and a universal love lyric the poet prepares for the world.

Overall, Bao's reading of Shakespeare's sonnets includes exhaustive textual analyses and concrete bibliographical studies, focusing not only on the sources of particular poetic images that inspire the Bard, but also on how they are uniquely adapted in both his sequence and plays. Subtle variants in different manuscripts and the editing history are also taken into account to draw a greater picture of the authorial conception in the process of composition, and analyses of these are often convincingly accompanied by an in-depth etymological review. Also, for many of the sonnets, Bao encloses abundant illustrations concerning the subject matter, thus creating a vivid and pleasant reading experience.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that *Mirror Maze: The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets* is rich in materials, comprehensive in scope, insightful in analyses, and serves a great pedagogical purpose for the study of Shakespeare, and for evoking public interest in this renowned English poet. More importantly, having already presented the sequence bilingually, Bao (27) would often provide her own translation to the key lines for "accurate representation of puns, metaphors or allusions." As a result, this book is friendly to Chinese readers of any linguistic level, and is able to lead them to appreciate the beauty of the sonnets in two languages. Besides, this book makes a strong case for teaching sonnets in China by exhibiting perfect equilibrium in a general introduction of elementary poetic techniques and a line-to-line close reading.

Teaching Shakespeare in a non-English-speaking environment is bound to be a cross-cultural investment (Chiu 129), but there is no doubt that both

[5] Mock love poems include Sonnets 40 to 42, 89 and 90, 93, 117, 127 to 140, 142 to 144, 147, 149, 150, and 152.

Bao's efforts in Yueyue Bookstore and in this monograph are fruitful and promising. Just as Bao writes on the back cover that "Loving Shakespeare is the beginning of a life-long journey of romance," Bao's work shows readers the capability of Shakespearean romance, and at the same time leads them to become part of this romance.

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Jane Kingsley-Smith, and W. Reginald Rampone Jr. (eds.), *Shakespeare's Global Sonnets: Translation, Appropriation, Performance*. Global Shakespeares. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. Pp. Xx+417.

Reviewed by ***Xiaoye Dong***[*]

Jane Kingsley-Smith and W. Reginald Rampone Jr.'s *Shakespeare's Global Sonnets: Translation, Appropriation, Performance* (2023) is a collection in the Global Shakespeares series, which explores Shakespeare's global influence and adaptation in the 20th and 21st centuries. "The global has exposed the 'constructed' nature of the 'universal' as an accident of history and an introduction of political regions" (Trivedi, Chakravarti, and Motohashi, 4). As the word "global" denotes, this inclusive and intriguing collection covers 22 scholars' academic papers from 15 countries, showcasing the current researches on Shakespeare's sonnets in 19 countries and regions such as Italy, China, and India, which demonstrates the interpretation and relocation of literary classics in shifting historical and political circumstances. The editors categorize the papers under three topics: translation, performance, and globalization. Before the three parts in "Shakespeare's Global Sonnets: An Introduction," W. Reginald Rampone Jr. reclaims the crucial position of Shakespeare's sonnets in the dramatist's creations and in British literature and then summarizes some representative collected papers.

The first part, "Global Translations: Defining the Nation, Refining Poetry" introduces the travel and translation history of Shakespeare's sonnets in different countries from a cross-regional point, as well as the creative translation strategies adopted by translators with various historical, social, and cultural backgrounds. The in-between nature of translation creates new and multifaceted meanings; therefore, the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets, while promoting the study of literary classics and the development of sonnets, enriches the literature of the target language and flings an array of impacts on the poetic language and literary creation of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Jane Kingsley-Smith's "'Mine Is Another Voyage:' Global Encounters with Shakespeare's Sonnets" comprehensively presents the history of Shakespeare's plays and poetry spreading in a worldwide range to analogize the

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circulation of Shakespeare's sonnets and that of his dramas, and to disclose the reception history of Shakespearean sonnets. Line Cottegnies's "The Rival Poet and the Literary Tradition: Translating Shakespeare's Sonnets in French" lists a translation timeline of Shakespeare's sonnets in France from the perspectives of literary history and cultural study over the past 200 years. Allison L. Steenson and Luca Trissino's "A Stylistic Analysis of Montale's Version of Sonnet 33: Translation, Petrarchism and Innovation in Modern Italian Poetry" is a typical case of literary translation, which carefully analyzes the meaning of Sonnet 33 and Montale's translation process. Valerio de Scarpis's "Addressing Complexity: Variants and the Challenge of Rendering Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 into Italian" gives full play to the rhetorical details of Sonnet 138 to testify that Shakespeare revised his sonnets by himself in his latter life. This paper usefully discusses the differences between the existing versions of this sonnet and the reasons for its rich and versatile interpretations. Bálint Szele's "'Far from Variation or Quick Change:' Classical and New Translations of Shakespeare's Sonnets in Hungary" outlines the translation history of Shakespeare's sonnets in Hungary. Melih Levi's "Sonnets in Turkish: Shakespeare's Syllables, Halman's Syllabics" maintains that Talat Said Halman reconsiders and rearranges meter, foot and other rhythmic features when translating Shakespeare's sonnets into Turkish. Anne Sophie Refskou and Tabish Khair's "New Words: Language and Shakespeare's Sonnets in the Global South" deals with Shakespeare's sonnets translation into Bangla, Malayalam, Brazilian Portuguese and other non-anglican languages in the Southern sphere. Reiko Oya's "The Pauper Prince Translates Shakespeare's Sonnets: Ken'ichi Yoshida and the Poetics/Politics of Post-war Japan" tackles the Japanese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets in the reciprocity of poetics and politics. Alexa Alice Joubin's "Translational Agency in Liang Shiqiu's Vernacular Sonnets" investigates the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets and contends that Chinese and English belong to quite divergent language families whose poetry evinces distinct linguistic, poetic and symbolic patterns. Therefore, English-Chinese conversion poses more challenges than translating English into other Indo-European languages.

With its prolific contents, the first part of the collection pinpoints the issues of the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets all around the world. The translation strategies undergo some common processes of evolution. Initially, translators mainly follow the form and structure of the original work, but the translation effect in terms of imagery, diction, rhetoric, and emotional expressions is unsatisfactory; henceforth, translators of the 20th century are much more influenced by modern linguistics and contemporary translations in emphasizing poetic complexity and adopting alterations in translation strategies. Based on comparative prosody, translators' convergence of Shakespearean traits and native ones molds national characteristics, which accelerates the poetic revolution in their own countries and stimulates the variety of languages and

cultures in a vast panorama. Furthermore, scholars argue that the main difficulties in translating Shakespeare's sonnets include their autobiographical nature, the mysterious identity or identities of "you," complex narrative clues, homosexual consciousness, etc. "Poetry translation presents a very particular gendered dilemma" (Spîsiaková 52). The gender attitudes of narrators and implied authors convey covert meanings, which inspire translation agency. Translating strategies also denote creative purposes. Yoshida resorts to different second person pronouns to distinguish Shakespeare's views on the young man from the ones on the dark lady whom he overtly disgusts. Comparably, Liang Shiqiu uses neutral pronouns to show the fluidity and ambiguity of poetic meanings. Involving as many countries as possible is one of the major contributions of this book.

The anti-imperial and postcolonial stance offers a certain breadth to Shakespeare study. Refskou and Khair concentrate on the language and symbolic representation of racial issues in poetic translation, and put forward the intertextuality between Shakespeare's sonnets and national literature in the examples including Indian Nobel winner, Rabindranath Tagore, Malayalam critic and writer K. Satchidandan, Caribbean writer Una Marson, Brazilian writer Geraldo Carneiro, and others with their translation changing their writing conversely. It is worth mentioning that female, mix-raced, Canadian English writer Sonnet L'Abbé integrates cross regional, cross racial, and cross linguistic features to her feminist rewriting of Shakespeare's sonnets, which renders an incremental gender orientation to the original sonnets. Oya relates linguistic features with social and historical factors and believes that in the context of rapid democratization of Japanese society in the late 1940s, Yoshida's translation to some extent devises a new scheme for contemporary Japanese literature and the westernization of Japanese culture. Identically, Liang's employing classical Chinese as target language in the context of advocating modern vernacular Chinese, reflects his elitist stance and humanistic position, which affirms again that translation mirrors its contemporary social and historical context.

The second part, "Sonnets in Performance: Theatre, Film and Music" is an adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets in the fields of drama, film, and music from a cross media eye to elaborate the presentation of sound, color, and action in sonnet performance. Filip Krajník and David Drozd's "Playing the Poems: Five Faces of Shakespeare's Sonnets on Czech Stages" juxtaposes five dramatic adaptations and performances of Shakespeare's sonnets in the Czech Republic in the new millennium to inquire the intrinsic dramatic quality of Shakespeare's non-dramatic works. Márta Minier's "'Not [...] for the Faint Hearted:' Volcano Theatre's *L.O.V. E.* as a Physical Theatre Adaptation of Shakespeare's Sonnets" displays a challenging and radical dramatic adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets by a Welsh experimental theater troupe in 1987 to continuously dig up sexual issues. Jim Ellis's "Homoerotic Counter-Mythology in Derek Jarman's *The*

Angelic Conversation" also pursues the study of homosexuality. Jarman's adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets in 1985 brings about a latent concern of marginality, including women, Blacks and gays. Nely Keinänen and Jussi Lehtonen's "Institutions of Love and Death: Shakespeare's Sonnets in Elderly Care Facilities," a case study of performing Shakespeare's sonnets in a nursing home in Finland, foregrounds the connection between sonnets and current life. Manfred Pfister's "'Music to Hear...' from Shakespeare to Stravinsky" builds a bridge between history and the present as well as between poetry and music based on the interpretations of Igor Stravinsky's musical adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets. In the article "William Shakespeare's Sonnets in Russian Music: Traditions—Genres—Forms," Stefan Weiss analyzes musical treatment of poetic emotions. Weiss divides the adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets in Russia into two periods: Shakespeare's sonnets in Russian and Soviet art song traditions (1900-1970) and the ones in Soviet pop music (1970-1990) to reveal that during World War II, the Soviet government began to accept British culture because of their allied relations, and not until 1974 did sonnet performances become popular. Mike Ingham's contribution "'Moody Food of Us that Trade in Love': Re-Mediations of Shakespeare's Sonnets in Popular Music" illuminates Rufus Wainwright's and Paul Kelly's respective adaptations of Shakespeare's sonnets to popular music.

The cross-media congruence of Shakespeare's sonnets and performance broadens Shakespeare study in the digital age and powerfully promotes their ongoing popularity and influence. First, the collection pioneers new points of view. Feminism dramatizes the dialogue between the poet, the young man, the dark lady, and the audience to bring about the knotty issue on the relationship of complex sexuality. Experimental plays go further by poignantly staging kissing between male characters and the intimate interaction between actors and the audience, which break traditional theatrical conventions and challenge the audience's habitual cognition. Second, the juxtaposition of dramatic scenes including imaginative encounters of Shakespeare and his rewriters or the intertextuality of original versions and adaptations registers multi-faceted self-reflective engagements of desires or politics. Third, it is found that with enormous infectious power, Shakespeare's sonnets can provide entertainment and achieve practical effects such as treating diseases. In addition, elderly people and patients understand Shakespeare's themes of love, loss, and death deeply. Another provocative suggestion is that Shakespeare's sonnets share similarities with both highbrow and popular music, especially hip-hop because rap is closer to oral expression than most other genres. The qualities of melody and rhythm are shared by both music and sonnets. It is the backgrounds of their respective creations, the intertextuality of their hypertexts, as well as the inherent qualities discovered in their sources that make the musical adaptation possible. What's more, musical cultures or actual circumstances mold composers' and nations'

political obsession. The popular features of theatre, film, and music endow Shakespeare's sonnets with a worldwide and profound impact. This section observes the far-reaching dissemination of Shakespeare's sonnets, but a regret is the lack of Asian performance, which is inconsistent with reality. In fact, "Shakespeare has a large audience and a huge performance market in Asia" (Wang 16). Researches on the Asian performance of Shakespeare's sonnets will greatly fuel their global influence.

The third part, "Global Issues in the Sonnets" takes readers into an interdisciplinary realm. Sophie Chiari's "'O'er Green My Bad' (Sonnet 112): Nature Writing in the Sonnets" analyzes Shakespeare's sonnets from the perspective of ecological crises. Through the topics of pain, crises, loss, and decline of love, the paper discovers the affinity between the fair young man and plants for they both require cultivation. Duncan Salkeld's "Black Luce and Sonnets 127-154" combs the tradition of Shakespeare researches on the "connection between black and beauty" and examines the identity of Black Luce. Simona Laghi's "Shakespeare's Sonnets in the ELT Classroom: The Paradox of Early Modern Beauty and Twenty-First Century Social Media" and Katalin Schober's "Pop Sonnets: The Interplay Between Shakespeare's Sonnets and Popular Music in English Language Teaching" take Italy and Germany as examples to probe the role of Shakespeare's sonnets in English language teaching. Walter Cohen's "Afterword: Around the World in 154 Poems, or, How to Do Things with Shakespeare's Sonnets" deploys J. L. Austin's theory of performative utterances to demonstrate how Shakespeare, as a symbol representing history and tradition, revitalizes contemporary life.

The third part provides readers with a wide-ranging vision to appreciate Shakespeare's sonnets and to discover how powerfully they affect literary paradigms and alter readers' presumption of social issues on gender, culture, class, and so on. Images express themes. Ecological studies indicate the inherent disharmony between nature and market to stress that self-interest, money, and ambition envisioned in nature imagery destruct natural beauty and point to the "black pastoral" tendency of the sonnets. Shakespeare's understanding of beauty is complex as well. His portrayal of a series of black images mirrors the influence of colonial fantasy—white men are predators, while black women become prey. Imagery may become the sources for discrimination, and students should be guided to ponder on the significance of life, friendship, love and be vigilant against social stereotypes. The Renaissance discourse on beauty and identity exposed in Shakespeare's sonnets resonates with today's conceptions. The scholars also innovate the pedagogical methods of sonnets to enhance students' understanding and analytical abilities to improve their sensitivity to others' situations or to decode various modes of meanings.

It is concluded that this collection of essays "is a diverse global understanding of 'Shakespeare's Language'" (141) with a wide range of content

and groundbreaking research perspectives. "When Shakespeare enters into the global era, his companions are the inheritors of cross-cultural communication" (Chiu, 134-135). The book reconsiders Shakespeare's sonnets in a cross-regional, intermedial, interdisciplinary, multilingual, and multicultural background whose scholarly achievements enrich, expand, supplement, and challenge current researches, changing audiences' understanding of sonnets, especially on the topics of translation, cross media dissemination, and pedagogy of Shakespeare's sonnets in non-English speaking countries. Overall, the highly innovative and inspiring book is expected to change the way that people read, study, and teach Shakespeare's sonnets in a global age.

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Reviewed by ***Yao Yao***[*]

A Narratological Study of Shakespearean Drama by associate professor Cheng Li from Sichuan University of Arts and Sciences, is a pioneering work in China which employs narratology to make a comprehensive study of Shakespeare's plays. By applying the narratological theories and methods, the book analyzes all 37 of Shakespeare's plays, which helps to enrich Shakespearean studies with a fresh perspective. Along the way Cheng explores the intriguing trend of "Sinicization" in the field of narratology.

In the first edition of Gerald Prince's *A Dictionary of Narratology*, there is an important note that narrative is a form of "recounting," indicating narrative's adherence to the principle of "pastness." This idea fundamentally differs from the immediacy of dramatic performances. However, in the subsequent 2003 edition of *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Prince removed this restriction, which demonstrated his further reflection on the principle of past narration. Interestingly, Chinese narrative has always defied this constraint. As Zhao Yiheng pointed out, "Chinese temporal form relies on adverbs such as the one meaning 'once upon a time,' rather than permeating almost all sentences in the entire text. As a result, Chinese novels and dramas, though exhibiting many distinctions, share a common absence of tense" (3). In this sense, *A Narratological Study of Shakespearean Drama*, with its adoption of a narratological perspective, is a significant departure from conventional practices.

In the preface to the "Shakespeare Studies Series" which he was invited to write, Peter Holbrook expressed his hope for the Western Shakespearean researchers to learn from their Chinese counterparts, who place Shakespeare within the broader context of world literature, thus allowing for an exploration of how Shakespeare, as a part of world literature, connects with non-English literary and artistic traditions (qtd. in Yang, 168). Yang Lingui noted that this reflects two fundamental characteristics of Chinese Shakespearean scholarship: "(1) affirming the positive and active value of the classics while acknowledging their limitations, and (2) conducting cross-cultural analyses of Shakespeare's

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works, aiming to open up broader channels for intertextual and gradual interactions between Chinese and Western literature and culture" (168). Cheng Li's *A Narratological Study of Shakespearean Drama* has exemplified these characteristics. Through creative transformations and applications of narrative theory, it facilitates a profound dialogue between Chinese and Western Shakespearean studies based on linguistic characteristics and cultural differences, thereby unveiling the artistic value of Shakespeare's plays in Chinese cultural contexts and promoting the construction of a localized Shakespearean system.

The book is organized into seven chapters, each focused on a unique facet of Shakespearean drama. It introduces the dimensions of time, space, structure, plot, character, subject, and level of Shakespearean drama narration, showcasing Shakespeare's superb narrative artistry.

Chapter One discusses the temporal dimension of Shakespeare's plays. It categorizes and analyzes the widely distributed time designators in Shakespeare's plays, including "chronometric chronyms" (direct time markers) and "figurative chronyms" (customs and background events), as well as "explicit chronyms" (physical time) and "pseudo-chronyms" (time that exists in fantasy plots or differs greatly from reality). The chapter shows the flexibility and diversity in Shakespeare's expression of time by analyzing his treatment of time from three aspects: length deformation, sequence displacement, and frequency. Aware of the difference between drama and novels, the chapter notes that the "break" between acts and scenes in drama, as an implied ellipsis, is the most common form of length deformation in Shakespeare's plays. It also finds that time span, as a unique form of length deformation, is widely used in Shakespeare's plays to balance plot density. The sequencing of events in the plays is not always chronological; instead, it is adjusted through retrospection and foreshadowing to alleviate boredom. And because drama has a fixed structural pattern, such as a recurring narrative of scenes at the beginning of each act, "multi-event multi-narration" often coexists with "summary" as a form of length deformation. What's more, time sometimes appears symbolically as an allegorical character and becomes an important structural factor that highlights the significance of time.

Chapter Two discusses the spatial dimensions within Shakespeare's plays. The chapter argues that drama values spatial narration and, through its analysis of spatial narration in drama, challenges the Western inclination to prioritize time over space in storytelling. The discussion is divided into spiritual space narration and physical space narration. It asserts that Shakespeare's spiritual space is linked to characters' speech, especially soliloquies, as well as dialogues and asides, which reflect characters' mental states. Physical space refers to the setting where the story takes place in the text. It is maintained that Shakespeare's plays are presented through four levels of fictional space narration, with overlapping of levels contributing to the complexity of the plays' spatial narration. The first level includes the indication of the drama title, introduction of characters, and explanation of location. The second level narrates

actions and stories of characters outside the story, including a type of narration similar to the "shuchang," the traditional Chinese storytelling stage. The author calls this fictional space "pseudo-shuchang," where the "storyteller" and "spectator" interact. The third level is almost equivalent to the "scene" of drama and has the characteristic of "immediacy." The fourth level contains narrations of "play within a play," "past" and "future," and "supernatural realms." Additionally, the chapter underscores the "articulation" in Shakespeare's plays—the phenomenon of pause and transition of story scenes, manifested in the explanation of characters' entry and exit, for instance. This chapter also explores ideal, supernatural, and night spaces in Shakespeare's plays, revealing Shakespeare's ways of expressing human desires, driving plots, shaping character traits, etc.

Chapter Three examines the structural dimension of Shakespearean plays. The chapter argues that the genre of drama necessitates a rigorous and intricate structure due to its constraints, and the four structures—"play within a play," circular, religious, and internal narrative—exemplify the drama's feature and demonstrate the sophistication of Shakespearean plays. The author believes that Shakespeare skillfully employs the "play within a play" technique in various ways. When illustrating that the circular structure is often considered the pinnacle of literary structures, the chapter cites Qian Zhongshu as an example. The analysis of the circular and religious structures in Shakespearean drama reveals how they are related to Shakespeare's humanistic and religious ideas. It is particularly examined how these structures manifest in the form of "happy ending" of legendary dramas and the "sin-judgment-redemption" structure in comedies and tragedies. The chapter also analyzes the internal narrative structure centered on the "web weaver," who is often an evil character and assumes the crucial role in driving the plot and determining the fate of characters.

Chapters Four and Five analyze the plot and character in Shakespearean plays, respectively. Chapter Four contends that Shakespearean plots are enriched and enlivened by artistic techniques such as suspense, foreshadowing, coincidences, and misunderstandings. It elucidates that suspense in Shakespearean plays often runs through the entire plot, creating a string of interconnected and advancing events. Foreshadowing, a common device in these plays either obviously or subtly, are expressed through diverse means such as dialogue, dream sequences, illusions, prophetic visions, omens, atmosphere, chants, and lyrics. The chapter further posits that coincidences in these works can be either deliberately made or accidental, occasionally appearing in overlapping or combined forms. Misunderstandings, on the other hand, can induce either comedic or tragic outcomes and are sometimes recurrently embedded within the plot. Both coincidences and misunderstandings can occur simultaneously. Then, the blending of sorrow and joy, coupled with intertextuality, reflect the aesthetic features and allure of Shakespearean plots. Chapter Five demonstrates the characters' clear

"functional" tendency in Shakespearean plays. The "functional" tendency of characters is exemplified in the following ways: characters who primarily engage in dialogue, those described by narrators, plot explainers, and Chorus, as well as those who actively participate in the events of the play, all serve to advance and connect the plot while their inner world and character traits remain unexplored. The chapter asserts that since drama often presents narratives objectively, character portrayal in Shakespearean plays is often indirect. The chapter reveals how the subversion of gender norms and the binary understanding of men and women are accomplished through gender "performance." Notably, this critique is exemplified primarily through "cross-dressing," where women dress as men or take on male roles in the plays, achieving a feminist critique.

Chapter Six explains narrative subjects in Shakespearean plays. The chapter categorizes Shakespearean narrative subjects based on their implicit or explicit states. Implicit narrators are backstage narrators, with stage directions serving as one of the five evidence types of their existence. Explicit narrators include both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators, with the former being outside the story and the latter being characters within the story. The chapter also analyzes two types of narrator intervention in Shakespearean plays. Guiding intervention follows a clear pattern, similar to the Chinese transitional phrase in chapter novel, "to know what happens next, please listen to the next episode," which is a way to engage the audience or reader. Guiding intervention is reflected in stage directions and paratexts. Commenting intervention, the second type, is widespread in Shakespearean plays, extending to the title, stage directions, character introduction, and the narration by both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators. The receivers of the narration are also classified according to the implicit or explicit states. The chapter contends that the emergence of the author's "personae" is a result of the fragmentation of the narrative subject. Characters serve as embodiments of the author, as if the author has assumed various personae to enter the plot. This chapter posits that in Shakespearean drama, both singular and plural "personae" coexist. The use of the plural form implies that multiple "personae" appear in unison to serve a specific ideology. This chapter elaborates on three aspects of realizing authorial subjectivity by associating "personae" with concerns about self, others, and history.

Chapter Seven analyzes the concept of narrative levels in Shakespearean plays. It adopts Zhao Yiheng's criteria and principles for narrative stratification, i.e. through switching between characters and narrators, with higher-level characters becoming lower-level narrators. The chapter contends that the intricacy of the narrative strata in Shakespeare's works rivals that of novels, encompassing no fewer than four distinct levels. They are: main narrative level (such as character dialogue and monologue), sub-narrative level (such as play within a play), over-narrative level (such as stage directions and asides), and over-over narrative level (backstage narrator's narration). The stratification

achieves effects such as giving an entity to the next-level narrator. For instance, the over-over narrative level provides a narrator for the over-narrative level. Moreover, stratification turns the upper narrative level into a means of commentary, and allows characters to express the unspeakable. The chapter further explores various "cross-level" narratives in the plays that transcend the spatial and temporal boundaries of the narrative world.

A Narratological Study of Shakespearean Drama applies narrative theory to Shakespeare's plays and reveals the Bard's mastery of narrative art to us. All the way through the exploration, the author notes the characteristics of the dramatic genre, seamlessly integrating narrative research with drama. Such an integration expands the boundaries of narrative research and sheds new light on the narrative techniques employed in Shakespeare's works. This innovative research has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of Shakespearean drama. Besides, the author incorporates traditional Chinese narratives and aesthetic sensibilities into comparison, thus promoting the "Sinicization" and "localization" of narrative and Shakespearean studies.

If there are any shortcomings, it is that the author's use of narrative theory for analysis falls short of surpassing the traditional analysis of predecessors in some parts. For example, the author's analysis of Iago did not go beyond Spivack's analysis through tracing the Vice. According to Spivack, "Between the emotions Iago says he feels and Iago himself throughout the play there exists a profound disjunction in mood; between his provocations, as he describes them, and the actual premises of his behavior there is a profound discrepancy in logic" (16). Regarding what ultimately causes Iago to do all those vicious things, Spivack believes that it is not out of "resentment or jealousy, or any other motive that [one] can think of in conventional humanity" (22). He thinks that Iago is transformed from the Vice in medieval English morality plays, explaining that:

> a figure out of another, older world is being naturalized into the drama of the Renaissance, and part of the process is to array him in new garments of the prevailing cut. Iago's resentments and his jealousies are, in fact, just such motives as a dramatist might employ to refashion into tragic naturalism a stock figure out of an archaic dramatic convention that had no use for the conventional incitement of human life. (16)

Cheng Li's critique focuses on Iago as the weaver of an intangible web of evil which forms the underlying narrative structure. He generally posits that this character represents evil forces and reveals the grim reality of the era, while bringing out Shakespeare's humanistic aspirations. However, Cheng Li's analysis overlooks the rich tradition of the Vice character in drama and neglects to acknowledge the split between Iago's actions and psychology. This oversight leaves room for further probing.

Likewise, the author's analysis of Portia did not transcend the achievements of female critique. It is maintained by Zeng Yanbing that the cross-dressing by female characters in Shakespearean plays, especially in his comedies, is a tribute to love and femininity which extols the power of love and commends women's intelligence, competence, bravery, wit, purity, loyalty, gentleness, and determination (Zeng 110-113). However, it is important to recognize that the author's male perspective lies beneath the praise. Liu Fang, for example, pointed out that under the influence of the author's gender, Portia's love view is portrayed as compromising with the male position and conforming to male psychology (88). Cheng Li also examined Portia's decision to cross-dress as a subconscious affirmation of the superiority of men in society, but he went no further than arguing that her adept performance as a man is just fleeting and she remains confined within the cage of the power discourse. Cheng Li overlooks the fact that the playwright's representation is itself a manifestation of the patriarchal cultural model.

These flaws aside, the author has made a great attempt on the Sinicization of narrative theory and the construction of a localized Shakespearean system, and has made huge contributions to the conversation between Chinese and Western scholarship. The book's exploration of subject and narrative levels represents breakthroughs both in narratological research and in Shakespearean studies; many of the arguments are ground-breaking.

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Reviewed by ***Min Jiao****

As a world classic, Shakespeare's plays have been the subject of scholarly examination in China for nearly two centuries. Among various artistic forms, theatre is more likely to be disseminated worldwide across linguistic and national boundaries (Wang 3). Previously, Ruru Li already discussed the layers of "filtration" in China's adaptation of Shakespeare and examines how these filters have reflected the ever-evolving dynamics of Chinese politics, society, and culture (Tang 334). Nevertheless, research specifically focusing on Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese drama stage (*huaju*[1] stage) is insufficient, and this gap in the existing literature has been addressed by Sun Yanna's *Shakespeares on the Chinese Huaju Stage.* Sun's book takes the element of time as the main clue, and fuses academic research with stage practice. Through an investigation of the transmutation process of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese *huaju* stage, the objective of the book is to elucidate the optimal approach for facilitating cultural exchange. Concurrently, the book also offers a comprehensive examination of the differences and similarities observed in Shakespearean productions on the Chinese stage throughout many historical epochs, which functions as a theoretical and practical basis for the advancement of contemporary Chinese theatre.

In Sun's book, Shakespeare's reception on the Chinese stage is classified into six distinct historical periods: civilized drama (1899-1918), early drama (1919-1930), wartime drama (1931-1948), "seventeen years" drama (1949-1966), new era drama (1977-1989), and diversified drama (1990-2021). The book centers on the examination of stage performance style, character development, plot structure, presentation of thematic themes, and aesthetic performance approaches. The employed research methodologies encompass bibliographical research, interpretation and analysis of play texts, play reviews,

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[1] *Huaju* can be literally translated as "plays in dialogue and monologue." It is used to distinguish a new style of drama/theatre from that of traditional Chinese drama/theatre, represented by Beijing Opera, which features singing, dancing and movement of actors on the stage to the accompaniment of music.

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and performance videos. Additionally, a historical review is conducted to categorize the analysis into distinct time periods and comparative research is employed to illuminate the similarities and differences in attitudes and reception towards Shakespeare and his plays across different historical epochs. This analysis delineates the evolution of Shakespearean plays on the Chinese stage, encompassing its progression from cultural translation and imitation to cultural weaponization. The book also traces the shift from cultural realism to cultural exploration and adaptation, encapsulating the entire process of cultural exchange. It begins with the initial stage of perceptual awareness, advances towards cultural understanding, and culminates in perceptual sublimation.

Chapter One, "Shakespeare and *Wenming* Drama (1899-1918):[2] **Culture Translation,"** traces the origin of Chinese *huaju* back to 1907, when Chun Yang Drama Society performed an adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, with the awareness that the precise origin of Chinese *huaju* is a controversial issue. This adapted play presented by Chun Yang Drama Society in Chinese marked the first drama performed on Chinese soil, which qualifies it as the first *wenming* drama. Then, in 1912, Tianxiao Bao presented a theatrical rendition of Shakespeare's renowned play, *The Merchant of Venice*, under the title *Woman Lawyer*. This adaption featured an all-female cast. In this adaption, the practice of cross-dressing in Shakespeare was not only a means of celebrating love and the concept of new woman, but also a weapon to expose the dark aspects of society and patriarchal centrism (Zeng 104). *Woman Lawyer* was performed by the Theatre Society Association, which was founded in 1914 by merging six Chinese theatre clubs. During this period, twenty Shakespearean plays, including *Pericles*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Middle Summer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Othello*, were performed on the Chinese stage, most of which predominantly relied on the text translations by Shu Lin, as compiled in his work titled *Yin Bian Yan Yv* (Lamb and Lamb).

Chapter Two, "Shakespeare and Early Theatre (1919-1930): Cultural Imitation" introduces the evolving perceptions on the roles of drama in the social context of revolution and anti-feudalism. Advocates of the New Culture Movement, a movement committed to promoting democracy and science, believed that the inelegant plot and monotonous performances commonly found in traditional Chinese theater impeded the dissemination of revolutionary aspirations. Radical theater reformers even held that Western drama was a significant instrument for their agenda. Therefore, the translation and examination of classic Western literary works began to gain significant

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[2] *Wenming* Drama can be translated literally as "civilized" drama, an earlier term for Chinese *huaju* drama.

popularity, thereby establishing a strong basis for the development of contemporary Chinese *huaju* in terms of performance theory and playwriting. Notable translators in this context include Shiqiu Liang and Han Tian. In May 1930, *The Merchant of Venice* was staged by the Shanghai Theatre Association under the direction of Yunwei Ying, with Zhongyi Gu's translation serving as the script. Although the staging and craftsmanship were on full display, traces of cultural imitation were discernible. The introduction of Shakespeare's plays into China holds cultural and historical significance primarily in terms of their impact on the dramatic landscape of China, rather than their role in conveying the philosophy of modern China. The incorporation of the theatrical aesthetics of Shakespearean plays, even on a superficial level, is a notable progression in the Chinese *huaju*'s historical development.

Chapter Three "Shakespeare and Wartime Theatre (1931-1948): Cultural Weapon" holds that Chinese *huaju* experienced a significant transformation in this period. This transformation involved a change from being primarily a cultural movement to being a revolutionary one. Additionally, there was a transition from amateur to professional status, as well as a shift from targeting urban to rural audiences. During this period, the realistic approach gained prominence, surpassing the notion of "art for art's sake." The primary objective of the translated plays was to engender a sense of anti-Japanese sentiment and foster patriotic enthusiasm throughout the populace. Prominent staging of Shakespearean plays in this period include Shanghai Amateur Experimental Theatre Society's staging of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1937, which explicitly embraced the Stanislavski theory as a performance model for the troupe, and focused on the realist approach. *Romeo and Juliet* was interpreted as depicting the burning off of the feudalistic shackles by the flame of youthful passion, hence a notable example of realist theatre with an anti-feudalism motif. During this period, the National Theatre Academy, presided over by Shangyuan Yu, consistently advocated the study of Shakespearean drama as its core curriculum. Each class of graduates was obligated to present a report performance on a Shakespearean play. This practice helped to enhance the quality of theatrical performances in China through the medium of Shakespearean drama. The plays staged include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. Subsequently, during the period of Japan's occupation of Shanghai, Jianwu Li adapted two Shakespearean plays, *Macbeth* and *Othello*. Li's adaptations revealed his attempts to localize Shakespearean plays within the Chinese context. In his adaptation of *Macbeth*, Li set the play within the historical context of the Five Dynasties period (about 902-979 AD) in China, and incorporated into the play key Confucian principles such as loyalty, filial piety, and righteousness, as well as elements from traditional Yuanqu Opera, such as the themes of "searching for the orphans" and "rescuing the orphans" to align

with the prevailing values and aesthetic sensibilities of the Chinese audience during that era.

Chapter Four "Shakespeare and Seventeen-year *Huaju*: Cultural Realism (1949-1966)" introduces the changing scenario of Shakespearean drama following the founding of the People's Republic of China. Shakespeare was introduced to China in a more systematic manner after 1954, leading to a more frequent performance of Shakespearean plays, particularly his comedies. *Romeo and Juliet* was the first complete Shakespearean play to be presented on the new Chinese theater stage. In April 1954, to commemorate the 390th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, performances of excerpts from *Hamlet* and the entire *Romeo and Juliet* play were staged. Besides, students from the Central Academy of Drama and Shanghai Theatre Academy staged plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* (1961), *Twelfth Night* (1956), and *Much Ado about Nothing* (1957) in this period. The performances at this point adhered to Stanislavski doctrine. Most of the produced plays, influenced by socialist realism and pursuing a form of character and psychological reality, accurately and faithfully captured the spiritual core of Shakespearean plays in terms of characterization and themes. Famous directors such as Qihong Zhang and Dao Hu played important roles during this period. Qihong Zhang adapted *Romeo and Juliet* in 1961, in which Juliet awakened just before her death to see Romeo. Shakespeare's plays, however, vanished from the literary canon after 1964 due to harsh critiques of Western arts. This included the rejection of Stanislavski theory and Shakespearean drama in the context of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China, during which literature and arts were appropriated for political objectives.

Chapter Five is titled "Shakespeare and New Time Drama (1977-1989): Cultural Exploration." After the end of the Cultural Revolution, Shakespeare's plays returned to the Chinese stage and were performed in an expanding repertoire with plays such as *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra* making their Chinese *huaju* stage debuts. The theatre artists argued for a return to theatrical arts after reflecting on the previous appropriation of literature and arts for political purposes. Plays with themes of humanism and life philosophy supplanted political and moralistic ones, with Shakespeare's plays emphasizing the humanistic spirit of truth, compassion, and beauty becoming the most favored. In 1986, the Shanghai Theatre Academy, the Central Academy of Drama, and the China Shakespeare Research Association collaboratively hosted the first China Shakespeare Festival. A comprehensive repertoire of 29 plays by William Shakespeare were staged, encompassing notable works such as *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, all making their debut on Chinese stages. During this particular period, notable productions of Shakespearean plays included *The Merchant of Venice* (1980) directed by Qihong Zhang, which highlighted the conflicts between Shylock, the moneylender, and Antonio, the

embodiment of the rising bourgeoisie. Another significant staging was *Macbeth* (1980) directed by Xiaozhong Xu, which delved into the internal conflicts, contradictions, and struggles of the characters. Additionally, it is noteworthy to remark that a rendition of *Romeo and Juliet* (1981) in the Tibetan language was directed by Qiping Xu, which contributing to the diversification of Shakespearean performances during this time.

Chapter Six is titled "Shakespeare and Diversified Drama (1990-now): Cultural Adaptation." During this period, the Chinese drama stage witnessed a departure from faithful renditions of Shakespeare's plays towards adaptations that predominantly reflected the personal values and aesthetic interests of the directors and manifested their individuality through dramatic concepts and stage practices. The objective shifted from the promotion and popularization of Shakespeare's plays within the public sphere to the utilization of diverse contemporary and postmodern theatrical techniques as a means to convey emotions and humanistic concepts. In the early 1990s, Chinese *huaju* encountered a crisis due to the influence of multiculturalism and mass communication techniques. Consequently, the number of Shakespearean plays performed during this period was limited. However, the visiting of esteemed foreign troupes, directors, and actors to China played a significant role in sustaining the performances of Shakespeare's works in the country. An important milestone was the inauguration of the Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival in 1994, which featured a total of nine theatrical productions based on Shakespeare's works. Notably, three of these performances were presented by foreign troupes. Directors of this era include Zhaohua Lin, renowned for his productions of *Hamlet* (1990), *Richard III* (2001), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016), as well as Qinxin Tian, recognized for her adaptations of *Ming* (2008, adapted from *King Lear*) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2014).

This scholarly work critically analyzes the reception and adaptation of Shakespearean plays within the context of the Chinese *huaju* stage. It explores the interconnectedness between Shakespearean performances and the Chinese *huaju* stage, shedding light on their mutual influence and dependence. Consequently, it offers theoretical and practical insights for the advancement of contemporary Chinese *huaju*. Meanwhile, the in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences between the performances of Shakespearean plays on the Chinese drama stage in different historical periods also expands the study of Shakespeare in China.

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Poonam Trivedi, Paromita Chakravarti, and Ted Motohashi (eds.), *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare: "All the World's His Stage."* London: Routledge, 2021. Pp. Xx+249.

Reviewed by ***Yu Sun****, ***Jiaqing Shi*****

The book *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare*, edited by Poonam Trivedi, Paromita Chakravarti, and Ted Motohashi, is a collection which features 12 academic papers from different scholars, exploring how Shakespeare has been adapted and utilized in Asian contexts and examining the impacts and interventions of Asian contributions in the global Shakespearean landscape. The collection highlights some Asian milestones in the development of global Shakespeare, such as worldwide tours of Chinese and Japanese theatrical productions, performances by Asian countries at global Shakespeare festivals, and innovations in the digital and graphic realms. It also discusses how Asian interventions in Shakespeare challenge and resist Western performance practices, thereby reshaping the global Shakespearean scenario. The essays reaffirm the significance of Asian contributions to global Shakespeare and expand the discourse on Asian engagements with Shakespeare.

The five essays in the first part "Asian 'Global' and Its Discontents" show that the extensive dissemination of Shakespearean plays in Asia has produced a large number of Asian Shakespeare adaptations. The use of Shakespeare for political and economic purposes is also reflected in the five essays. In the context of globalization, this part explores how Asian adaptations of Shakespeare seek a balance between localization and globalization, defining "Asian" and "global" Shakespeare within the complexities of unequal resources, digital divides, and complex relationships among nations/regions. The part discusses how Asian Shakespeare gains influence globally without explicitly showcasing an "Asian" identity. It also delves into the political issues represented by "Asian" and "global" Shakespeare.

Poonam Trivedi's essay, "Making Meaning between the Local and the Global: Performing Shakespeare in India Today" analyzes three Asian Shakespeare productions performed in Delhi—*Hamlet*, *I Don't Like It/As You Like It*, and *Dying to Succeed*. The performance has been adapted to keep to the

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original, breaking with tradition in terms of language choice, stage design, and performance dynamics, presenting a version of the Indian Shakespeare. This style of performance has been successful in India and has attracted audiences all over the world. Trivedi points out that these productions reflect contemporary Indian stage practices. The success of the three plays in global performances, especially at festivals in London, highlights India's successful interpretation of Shakespeare with dual attention to local and global concerns. The essay focuses on the evolution of language and performance in these three plays, challenging the concept of "Indianness" and arguing that Shakespeare's relevance in India today constructs a "middle" meaning between local and global concepts.

Ted Motohashi's essay "How could we present a 'non-localised' Shakespeare in Asia? Colonialism and Atlantic Slave-Trade in Yamanote-Jijosha's *The Tempest*" primarily analyzes the political history of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in Tokyo in the context of oppressive European colonialism. The essay questions the concept of Asian adaptations in the trend of contemporary global Shakespeare, emphasizing Japan's dual role as a victim of European aggression in modern colonialism and an aggressor against its Asian neighbors. Therefore, in *The Tempest*, the relevant elements of Japan are removed. And ordinary Japanese people, under the illusion, are westernized, so that we cannot see Japanese or Asian elements in the play. By highlighting colonial issues, reportraying characters, and adapting the end of the play, *The Tempest* ends with a pop song that cuts out Japanese elements. The essay also ends with an open ending that invites the audience to think, calling for a critical examination of "de-localized" Shakespearean interpretations to better understand and reflect on history, culture, and contemporary society.

Mike Ingham's essay "'We Will Perform in Measure, Time and Place;' Synchronicity, Signification and Cultural Mobility in Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio's Cantonese-Language *Macbeth*" discusses Tang Shu-wing's adaptation of *Macbeth*, focusing on a global and local production at the 2016 Hong Kong Arts Festival, and assessing the significance of a Hong Kong-based adaptation of a "Scottish play" that is globally local. Ingham adopts cultural theory, with particular reference to Raymond Williams's "Structure of feeling" and Stephen Greenblatt's "cultural mobility" paradigm, exploring the relationship between the production and cross-cultural Asian Shakespearean discourse. He also engages in the discussions of Shakespeare in Asian cultures, highlighting Hong Kong's unique position between global and local influences, as well as between Western and Chinese traditions. Ingham highlights the success of the production in introducing Cantonese Shakespeare to the international stage, as well as Hong Kong's unique cultural identity and the uncertain future it faces.

Mariko Anzai's essay "From Cultural Mobility to Cultural Mis-understanding: The Japanese Style of Love in Akio Miyazawa's Adaptation in the Cardenio Project, *Motorcycle Don Quixote*" analyzes the Japanese

contribution to the Cardenio Project, in which 12 dramatists all over the world were invited to write their own versions of *Cardenio*, Stephen Greenblatt and Charles Mee's collaborative work inspired by a lost Shakespeare play. The adaptation is based on episodes in Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, to investigate how cultural mobility works in the case of Shakespeare. Anzai reveals how Miyazawa's interpretation, based on Japanese customs, led to misunderstandings, especially by non-Japanese individuals like Stephen Greenblatt. Miyazawa's adaptation is seen as a deliberate "misunderstood" version, challenging cultural flows and underscoring the dual understanding between two cultures. Anzai interprets the adaptation, presenting Miyazawa's adapting style and explaining the reasons for Greenblatt's confusion. The essay emphasizes that cultural mobility may lead to misunderstandings, stressing the bidirectional nature of understanding between two cultures and providing a unique perspective on the play within the context of Japanese culture.

Andronicus Aden's essay, "Something Rotten in the State of Dankot: *Hamlet* and the Kingdom of Nepal," chronicles, for the first time, the history of Nepalese Shakespeare adaptations focusing on a reworking of *Hamlet* (and *Macbeth*) as *Shri Atal Bahadur* (1906), a unique adaptation which uses Shakespeare to critique the tyrannical regime of the Ranas (1846-1951) and calls for political change. During the Rana autocracy in Nepal, some Nepalese scholars smuggled some of Shakespeare plays as one of the tools to counter the authoritarian stance. Aden analyzes the elements of political unrest in Nepal during the special historical period, by comparing of Shakespeare's works and Nepali literature, using Shakespeare as a tool to express social unrest and political discontent. "Shakesepare's plays are not a simple 'mirror of reality', not a simple reflection of the current reality, but an in-depth look at the cultural psychology behind the reality" (Yang and Lu 162). By adapting and mapping national politics and reality, Aden helps us to see the social reality and dilemmas in these plays.

The first part of the collection *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare* examines Asian interventions in global Shakespeare in the context of globalization. From globalization and localization, we can see the innovation of Asian Shakespeare adaptations and the different roles of theatrical adaptations in different regions.

The five essays in the second part "The Asian Cinematic and Digital Sphere: Democratising the 'Global'" focus on the global media, film, television and digital domains, making Asian Shakespeare globally accessible through these borderless spaces. The unique adaptations of Shakespeare, incorporating local elements, are disseminated globally, subverting the cultural hegemony of the Western model of globalization.

Paromita Chakravarti's essay, "Globalising the City: Kolkata Films and the Millennial Bard" explores Shakespeare's influence on the Indian city of

Kolkata. Kolkata embodies the ubiquity of Shakespeare monuments, but locals are indifferent to the signs. Chakravarti analyzes several Kolkata films with Shakespearean plots, which explore the impact of globalization on the Bengali region and the changing perception of Bengali identity. The film adaptations of Shakespeare plays present the evolution of the urban scene, transforming it from a symbol of imperialist or colonial modernity to a place to examine the lives of young urban professionals. Since then, Shakespeare has been integrated into the Bengal region to reflect the diverse history of Kolkata and the communities that have faded away with globalization. Shakespeare plays reflect the importance of Kolkata's diverse history in the context of globalization.

In "Shakespeare's Uses in Chinese Media and Trans-sphere," Lingui Yang explores a diverse range of Shakespearean appropriations which reveal the construction of a new Asian global in the media trans-sphere which is both modern and postmodern, reinforcing yet challenging Shakespeare's hegemonic status in world culture. These adaptations illustrate how the re-creation of Shakespeare has successfully influenced different cultural contexts. Through the analysis of some Shakespearean plays and films, this essay explores modern and postmodern characteristics of Shakespeare adaptations, as well as Shakespeare's different roles in popular culture. Shakespeare's cultural capital has been transplanted and grafted into different cultural contexts, and his value and images have been transmitted and perpetuated in the practice of localization. In conclusion, Lingui Yang emphasizes that the flexible use of Shakespeare can help to spread the humanistic values of China.

Yukari Yoshihara's "Bardolators and Bardoclasts: Shakespeare in Manga/Anime and Cosplay" discusses Japanese transformation of Shakespeare, seemingly as bardoclasts of Shakespeare's authority, but actually as bardolators in disguise. Shakespeare is adapted and translated into manga/anime, transforming literary works into anime/manga forms, and this transformation is accompanied by the commercialization of Shakespeare. "Intermedia metamorphoses are part of the commercialization aimed at profit making, yet commercialization has the potential to make Shakespeare's works pop, in the sense that they are 'democratically' open to everyone" (Yoshihara 120). Commercial use of manga/anime and cosplay have introduced Shakespearean elements into the global market as cultural goods. By erasing local elements, it makes the works more globally appealing. Yoshihara points out that this blurs cultural boundaries and makes it challenge traditional Shakespeare's cultural authority. In short, manga/anime culture has challenged and commercialized the traditional image of Shakespeare, but has also opened up new cultural potential and areas for it.

Thomas Kullmann's essay, "Shakespeare on the Internet: Global and South Asian Appropriations," examines the use of Shakespeare's phrases on the Internet and the areas covered, particularly in the context of South Asia and

India, to see whether Shakespeare's popularity is considered as an impact of globalization and a form of "McDonaldization" and whether Shakespeare's continued existence is a sign of Western cultural hegemony. The essay also explores the background and reasons for South Asian countries citing Shakespearean quotes, suggesting that cultural knowledge, such as quoting Shakespeare, serves as a means of negotiating cultural and political positions.

Judy Celine Ick's essay, "The Performance Archive and the Digital Construction of Asian Shakespeare" explores the crucial role of digital archives in the rise of Asian Shakespeare. These archives, including videos, photos, and texts of Shakespearean performances from the Asian regions, enhance the visibility of these works globally, accessible to anyone interested in the subject worldwide. Ick has a new perspective on Shakespeare, Asia and the world. She believes it's good for Asian Shakespeare to spread and have an impact on global Shakespeare. In addition, the Asian Shakespeare digital scholars draw inspiration from these digital archives to produce more innovative digital archives and repositories that showcase diverse Shakespeare performances, expand Shakespeare scholarship, and then bring Asian Shakespeare performances to global audience through online databases, videos, and photographs.

The second part delves into the diversity of Shakespeare in Asian culture and its global impact. It narrates how the Asian region adapts, intervenes, and reconstructs Shakespeare's works, providing profound insights and emphasizing the influence of globalization and digitization on Shakespearean literature.

The third part "Historicising the Asian Global: Shakespeare as a World Poet," explores Tagore's admiration for Shakespeare, and elucidates that Shakespeare's reputation has exceeded the national boundaries as a world poet. This part also emphasizes the fact that Shakespeare does not belong to a certain nation, but belongs to the world.

Supriya Chaudhuri's essay "Global Shakespeare and the Question of a World Literature" questions the discourse on world literature. Despite Shakespeare having achieved worldwide fame through adaptations and translations, he doesn't appear particularly significant in discussions of world literature. The concepts of world literature and global Shakespeare are relatively independent. Chaudhuri argues that they fail to adequately consider Shakespeare's widespread dissemination and reception worldwide, and that the adaptations of Shakespeare may challenge the category of world literature. Moreover, the global circulation of Shakespeare was driven by imperialistic and colonial knowledge systems, and Shakespeare was intentionally used as a literary template by his subjects. With the spread and interpretation of Shakespeare in the world, many scholars have incorporated him into the world literature system. This view supports Tagore's questioning of the category of "world literature." Therefore, Shakespeare's position in global literature is not only a successful case of dissemination, but also a challenge to traditional literary categories and theories.

Swati Ganguly's essay "Beyond Bardolatry: Rabindranath Tagore's Critique of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" begins by discussing Rabindranath Tagore's poem "Viśva-Kavi" (World Poet), which is considered to be a tribute to Shakespeare. This poem challenges the nationalist claim over poets, asserting that poets belong to the world rather than a specific nation. Rabindranath Tagore compares Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*. The essay begins with Tagore highlighting the potential external similarities and internal differences between these two plays and then delves into a detailed discussion of these variations. As a literary critic and thinker, Tagore shows unique insights in Shakespeare's literary works, as well as his profound concern for postcolonialism and environmental issues. The essay presents the universal appeal of Shakespeare plays across cultures and eras.

In conclusion, Shakespeare is constantly being translated, interpreted, and adapted in Asia, keeping the bard in a constant cycle of reuse. The various cases presented in the collection showcase the unique adaptations of Shakespeare by Asian dramaturgs, incorporating Asian elements with distinctive perspectives. Moreover, the essays explore the global impact of Asian Shakespeare, emphasizing its special status in world literature. What's more, through Asian adaptations of Shakespeare, "Shakespeare's relationship with Asia is reciprocal: his plays have inspired and propelled the prosperity of Asian literature and arts, while the cultural market in Asia has played a significant role in popularizing Shakespeare plays" (Wang 16). The creative adaptations of Shakespeare in Asia have not only exerted a huge influence on Asia, but also spread Shakespeare to the world to a certain extent. These diverse and innovative Asian adaptations have injected new vitality into global Shakespeare, challenging the hegemony of Western Shakespeare and giving the world a new understanding of Shakespeare.

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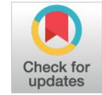

Theatre Reviews

Twelfth Night or What You Will. Adapted by Roman Pawłowski. Dir. Grzegorz Jarzyna. Zagreb Youth Theater, Croatia.

Reviewed by ***Maria Sławińska****

Love as a Chimera: Shakespeare in Modern Times

The performance of *Twelfth Night or What You Will* in the Zagreb Youth Theatre in co-production with the Dubrovnik Summer Festival is the first production by Grzegorz Jarzyna since he left TR Warsaw, after he decided to quit his position as director of the theatre due to the growing opposition of the acting team. Jarzyna had been an influential creator of the Warsaw stage for the last 25 years, and one wonders how he will pursue his creative career. Is the performance in Zagreb an escape from his hostile Polish environment, or is it just the realization of long-term plans?

One thing is certain: the performance of *Twelfth Night* directed by Jarzyna perfectly shows how to modernize Shakespeare's themes. In this process the director's collaboration with Roman Pawłowski, who created an innovative adaptation, was extremely important. The general shape of the stage events invented by Shakespeare was preserved, but the impishness of his comedies was doubled here, manifested in the change of the characters' identities. Pawłowski preserved only a few minor fragments of the original text, and the creators defined their production as only inspired by Shakespeare's play. As Juliusz Kydryński observes in his afterword to *Twelfth Night* in the 1983 edition of the play (in Maciej Słomczyński's translation), Shakespeare wrote this comedy right after *Hamlet*. In close temporal proximity, *Hamlet* and two "most excellent and merriest romantic comedies" were created [*Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*] (159). This proves the genius of the author, resulting from the

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ability to juggle threads from funny to tragic. It is therefore not surprising that contemporary theatre creators are inspired by his plays, although not all of them are as inventive as Pawłowski.

In his version Pawłowski changed the gender of the characters. Olivio (Dado Ćosić) with his assistant Mario (Mateo Videk) and Orsina (Anđela Ramljak) with her aunt Tomassa (Doris Šarić Kukuljica), who took her wealthy acquaintance Andrea (Barbara Prpić) on the trip, arrive at the luxurious Hotel "Illyria." The hotel manager Malvolia (Katarina Bistrović Darvaš) welcomes the characters with the words "One step closer to Paradise." Olivio and Orsina are married; however it is shown in the first scene that Olivio is not too fond of his wife. Feste (Petra Svrtan), who in this adaptation is a woman—the master of ceremonies—, hatches a mysterious plan with Mario, the aim of which is for "Orsina to understand who she really is," which will allow Mario to regain Olivio. For the plan to succeed, Feste will organize a masquerade ball, for the characters to regain their Shakespearean identities. In Feste's masquerade, Olivia is a princess, courted by Prince Orsino. Thus, in Pawłowski's version, the characters' gender was changed, only for them to return to their original identity during the masquerade. Among the main characters is also Violix (Mia Melcher), the equivalent of Shakespeare's Viola, who poses as a woman and a man in one. Violix appears at the costume party to make contact with Orsina. To serve this plan, the character takes the pseudonym "Cesario."

In the visual representation of the characters in Jarzyna's production, a kind of identity disturbance is noticeable. Aesthetically—but also mentally, as is manifested by the actors' engaged performance—all the characters are somewhere between social identity constructs. Feste, though a woman, has a mustache. Violix—the character most deviating from these constructs—is dressed in a black suit and red high heels. Violix is also bald, with no eyebrows. The character's appearance introduces a kind of mystery, which alludes to the ambiguous status of gender identity. By defining this status as "ambiguous," I adopt a highly probable perspective of the audience, which, during post-premiere shows, was mostly middle-aged. For the characters, Violix's status is not a surprise. Even though the character was not invited to the party, they accept it without hesitation. It even manages to win the love of two characters: Olivio and Orsina. Orsina is a character of a seductive woman, dressed in gold, who looks just as good in a man's suit. She easily takes on a male form, and she does it naturally, efficiently—in a masculine way. This can be seen during one of the most important scenes, when the characters are sitting at theatre dressing tables, and dress up directly in front of the audience. Women put on men's clothes, and men women's. Olivio, unlike Orsina, puts on women's tights and other items of the wardrobe almost ceremoniously. Among all the characters, it is he who is discovering his true identity at this moment. The exaltation he expresses while applying makeup in the company of Mario (already in the

form of Maria) is combined with irritation towards Orsina, whom he complains about to Maria.

This intriguingly written stage adaptation was the basis for a modest staging. The actors' movements were planned with particular precision. The set (by AAFGJAP) is mostly a square on the stage, highlighted by light (the lighting design is by Aleksandr Prowalinski), which becomes all the places mentioned in the play; hence the characters' paths cross, just as their fates mix. The whole play deals with a kind of mixture, which is also related to the characters who, by adopting different identities, also provide a mixture of personalities. This, in turn, corresponds to the diversity of identity, gender, personality, which is a lively discussion in social life. The performance sends a direct message that everything in the world can and should be acceptable, and we—observers and participants in the project of life—should be open to this diversity, behind which freedom and liberty are hidden.

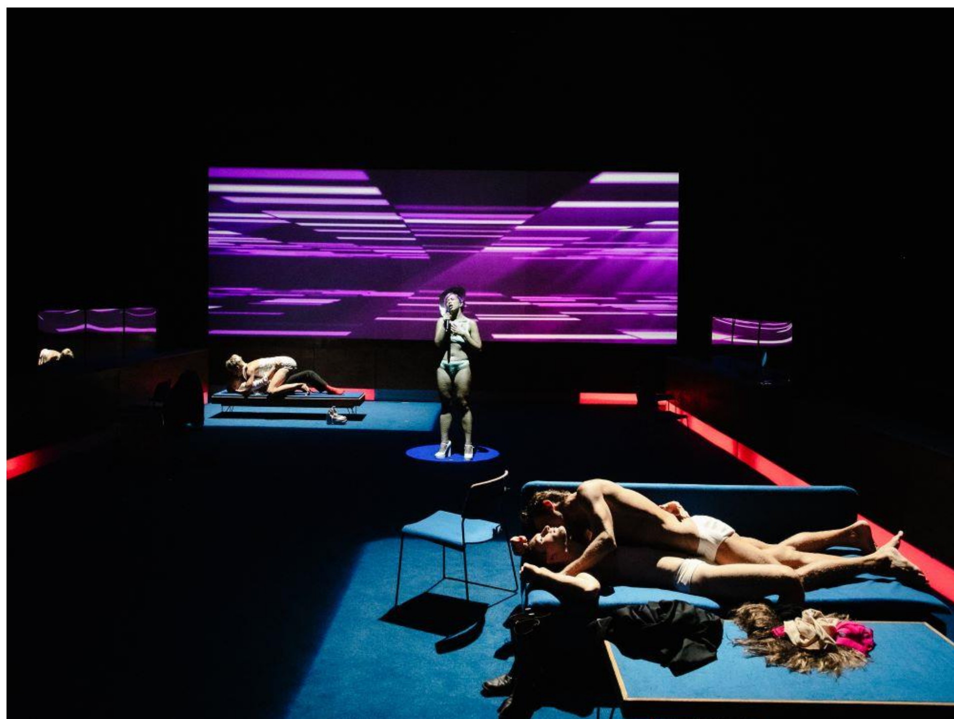
The second act is characterized by greater chaos. The characters are confused by the events of the previous night. Their costumes, designed by Anna Axer Fijałkowska, are shabby and sloppy. Their attitude and appearance make it unclear in which version of themselves—male or female—they are. Andrea and Tomassa, for example, still show a masculine attitude, which can be seen in the duel scene. Andrea and Tomassa are two mature women who, just like their Shakespearean counterparts [Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch], do not shy away from alcohol. They are having a great time in a luxury hotel, where champagne is always at hand. They comment ironically on the other characters' behaviour, and they feel comfortable assuming male roles at the party. These heroines are a charming backdrop for the other characters. The most comical scene in the play is the duel between Andrea and Cesario, in which the reluctant to fight Cesario easily, but also surprised by his own strength, defeats Andrea.

Appropriately composed melodies (by Marko Levanić and Ivana Starčević) provide a fantastic backdrop for the stage events. A backdrop that, along with the raw acting, creates a kind of mysterious tension. On the right side of the almost bare stage is Ivana Starčević's DJ station. Music is also important in the show because it is Feste's element. The mistress of ceremonies has many characteristics typical of a jester: she is cunning, often uses jibes against others, schemes how to earn the easiest way, keeps a distance from what is happening, is an unfulfilled singer, needs to shine. In the final scenes, she pairs up with Zoran (Toma Medvešek), a silent bartender–so opposites do attract after all. Feste has several musical moments, between events–she sings Sonnet VIII and Sonnet XXIII. Both poems are an apostrophe to a partner and are connected by themes of expressing feelings and loneliness. The show also includes a fragment of Sonnet XX about female nature, performed by Ivana Starčević. Olivia is listening to this music when Cesario appears at her place.

The set design is limited to a few pieces of furniture and a table in the second act, where the characters meet at night, after the party, already in their own character, not the adopted one. However, the fun, as planned by Feste and Mario, has given way to a different mood. In the finale, Orsina and Violix become a couple, and Olivio stops hiding his relationship with Mario. Malvolia, disgraced by the characters, decides to leave. The production ends with her emotional confession, motivated by a man's indifference to the feelings of another—something she has observed in recent events. In her speech, there is a motif of life as a theatre. This motif can be understood metaphorically, but also literally as a comment on various loud events from theatre life. Theatre as an institution is often a place where personalities and identities collide with each other, which was confirmed recently by various events. Malvolia leaves to look for true love–even if this looks like a chimera.

The entire story about possible personality variants, and consequent love stories, unfolds in dim light. The dominant color illuminating the world on the stage is blue. The appropriately designed lighting of the production is the final element that reveals Jarzyna's typical aesthetics. The spectacle seems to be consistent with the director's earlier, smaller productions, even though the stage is teeming with chimeric vibe.

Photograph by Marko Ercegović



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