Multicultural Shakespeare:

TRANSLATION, APPROPRIATION AND PERFORMANCE

WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU ŁÓDZKIEGO

COPE
Member since 2021
JM14947

Multicultural Shakespeare:

TRANSLATION, APPROPRIATION AND PERFORMANCE

Vol. 30 (45)

(formerly: Shakespeare Worldwide since 1972)

Thematic volume:

Local / Global Shakespeare

Guest editor:

Yoshiko Kawachi

WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

Łódź 2024

COPE
Member since 2021
JM14947

REVIEWERS

The anonymous referees who contributed to the double-peer review process for this issue

GUEST EDITOR

Yoshiko Kawachi

INITIATING EDITOR

Agnieszka Kałowska-Majchrowicz

TECHNICAL EDITOR

Zdzisław Gralka

COVER

Design concept: *Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik*
Design production: *Anna Prusiewicz*, DoLasu Graphic Studio
The cover design uses an illustration by *Alicja Habisiak Matczak*

Printed directly from camera-ready materials provided to the Lodz University Press

Published by Lodz University Press

First Edition W.11664.25.0.C

Printing sheets 13.5

ISSN 2083-8530
e-ISSN 2300-7605

Lodz University Press
90-237 Łódź, Matejki 34a
www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
phone +48 42 635 55 77

Contents

Book Reviews

Theatre Reviews

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.00

Contributors

Hemang Ashwinkumar, Ph.D. in English, is a poet, fiction writer, translator, editor and critic who writes in Gujarati and English. His works have been translated into Greek, Italian and other Indian languages. Penguin Random House, India has published his translation of Gujarati Dalit writer Dalpat Chauhan's novel *Vultures* (2022), and edited collection of short stories titled *Fear and Other Stories* (2023). His Gujarati translations of Arun Kolatkar's poetry collections Kala *Ghoda Poems* (2020), *Sarpa Satra* (2021) and *Jejuri* (2024) have been critically acclaimed. His scholarly monograph *Translating the Translated: Poetics and Politics of Literary Translation in India* will be published by Orient Blackswan in 2024. His translation of eminent painter-poet Gulammohammed Sheikh's collection of autobiographical essays *Gher Jatan (On the Way Home)* will be published by Seagull Books, Kolkata.

Cong Cong is Chair Professor of Nanjing University Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (IAS), and Co-Director of Nanjing-Birmingham-Phoenix Shakespeare Centre, China. She is a member of the International Shakespeare Association and Council Member of the Chinese Shakespeare Association. Her recent interests are the "spatial turn" and source study of Shakespeare.

Bradin Cormack is Professor of English at Princeton University. He is author of *A Power to Do Justice: Jurisdiction, English Literature, and the Rise of Common Law, 1509-1625* and, with Carla Mazzio, co-author of the analytical catalogue *Book Use, Book Theory*. He is completing three related books: on action in Shakespeare's drama; on grammar and logic in Shakespeare's sonnets; and on exemplary thinking in the long sixteenth century.

Penelope Geng is Associate Professor of English at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. She works at the intersection of law and literature, disability studies, and performance. She is the author of *Communal Justice in Shakespeare's England* (Toronto, 2021), and of articles and chapters on Shakespeare and magistracy, staging disability in Shakespearean performance, Bacon's legal aphorisms, and historical costuming by costumers of color as a practice of political resistance. Currently, she is writing a second monograph provisionally titled "Disabled by Law," co-editing a special issue on "Disability and Racial Capitalism" with Andrew Bozio, and editing Shakespeare's *Richard II* for Cambridge Shakespeare Editions.

Hao Tianhu, Ph.D., Columbia University, is Qiushi Distinguished Professor and director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Zhejiang University, China. Harvard-Yenching Institute Visiting Scholar (2023-2024). He specializes mainly

in early modern English literature and comparative literature. In addition to many Chinese articles and several translations, his publications include three Chinese monographs (2014, 2020, 2022) and a number of English essays. His English monograph *Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England and Beyond* has just been published by Routledge (2024). He has served on the Executive Committee of the Milton Society of America. He is the editorial board member of *Milton Quarterly* and *Multicultural Shakespeare* and the editor of *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. He also edits two book series for Zhejiang University Press.

Paul Innes graduated from the Universities of Glasgow and Stirling and is now Professor of English Literature and Language at the United Arab Emirates University at Al Ain in Abu Dhabi. He has previously worked at the Universities of Warsaw, Edinburgh, Strathclyde, Glasgow and Gloucestershire. He has published widely on Shakespeare and Critical Theory, including *Shakespeare and the English Renaissance Sonnet: Verses of Feigning Love* (Macmillan and St Martin's Press 1997); *Shakespeare: The Barriers Removed* (Studymates Textbooks 2005); *Class and Society in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (Continuum 2007); *Epic* (Routledge 2013); and *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015).

Yoshiko Kawachi, Ph.D. was Professor of English at Kyorin University. She is the author of *Calendar of English Renaissance Drama 1558-1642* (1986), *Shakespeare and Cultural Exchange* (1995), *Shakespeare's Idea of Time* (1998), *Shakespeare's World* (2007), and *Shakespeare: A World Traveler* (2018). She is the editor of *Shakespeare Worldwide, Japanese Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, and co-editor of *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*. Her publications include: "Transvestism in English and Japanese Theatre" in *Shakespeare's Universe* (1996), "Gender, Class, and Race in Japanese Translations of Shakespeare" in *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century* (1998), "Rewriting Shakespeare in a Japanese Context for the Page and the Stage" in *Shakespeare's World/World Shakespeares* (2008), "Shakespeare's Long Journey to Japan" in *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys* (2017) and "Enter the First Shakespearean Actress on the Japanese Stage: Her Contribution to the Theatre World, Cultural Exchange and Feminism" in *English Without Boundaries* (2017).

Shoichiro Kawai received his Ph.Ds from the University of Cambridge and the University of Tokyo. He is Professor of English at the University of Tokyo and the former President of the Shakespeare Society of Japan. He has translated 17 of Shakespeare's plays and worked with notable directors such as Greg Doran, Simon Godwin, Jonathan Kent, and Yukio Ninagawa. He has adapted Shakespeare's plays into Kyogen and Bunraku. He also directed and produced *Much Ado*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, and *King Lear*. His publications include chapters in *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Interface* (2022), *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare* (2016), *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare* (2008) and articles in *Shakespeare Survey* 62 (2009) and *Shakespeare Survey* 64 (2011).

Takehito Mitsui is a critic and adjunct lecturer in the Department of Informatics at Kindai University, Japan. As a board member of the International Association of Theatre Critics Japan Centre, he consistently publishes theatre reviews in both English and Japanese.

Ted Motohashi is Professor of Cultural Studies at the Tokyo University of Economics. He received his D.Phil. in Literature from the University of York, UK. His publications include several books on drama, cultural and postcolonial studies, and most recently he published '"Our Perdita is found': The Politics of Trust and Risk in *The Winter's Tale* Directed by Satoshi Miyagi" in *Shakespeare and the Political: Elizabethan Politics and Asian Exigencies* (Bloomsbury, 2024). He is a leading translator into Japanese of works by Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Rey Chow, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky and others.

Duluo Nie is currently a research fellow at Sun Yat-sen University. His teaching and research interests include classical studies, specifically the history of ancient rhetoric and ideas, and Shakespeare's reception of classical antiquity. Aside from a monograph on pseudo-Longinus' *On the Sublime*, he has published articles and translations on subjects like Greek historiography, lyric poetry, and drama.

Kazuki Sasaki holds a Master of Arts degree in Literature from Hokkaido University. Currently, he is Professor Emeritus at Akita University in Japan. His research interests include early modern English drama, with a particular focus on Shakespeare. He has published numerous articles and edited several books, including *The Companion to the Restoration Drama* (Shōhakusha, 2009) and *Measure for Measure* (Taishūkan, 2023). His current research project examines the emergence of Shakespeare worship during the long eighteenth century in relation to the theatrical culture of the period.

Poonam Trivedi taught at Indraprastha College, University of Delhi. She has co-edited books on Indian and Asian Shakespeare: *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare: 'All the World's His Stage'* (2020), *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: 'Local Habitations'* (2018) and *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel* (2017), *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* (2010) and *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance* (2005) and has authored a CD "King Lear *in India*" (2006). Her latest articles are in the *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Screen* and in *Cahiers Elizabethans.* She is on the editorial board of the Shakespeare on Screen series.

Tomoka Tsukamoto is a theatre critic and a member of IATC (International Association of Theatre Critics). She received her MA in Drama Studies from Nihon University in 1996. Her publications include a book on Miyagi Satoshi's theatre, and most recently an essay on Miyagi's works, "Gender, Ecology, and Theatre of Catastrophe: The Apocalyptic Vision and the Deconstruction of Western Modernity in Satoshi Miyagi's *Demon Lake*," *Critical Stages* 26 (2022).

Guixia Xie is Associate Professor at the School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China. Her research interests cover Shakespeare translation, adaptation, reception in China and literary translation studies. Her recent publications on Shakespeare include the chapter "'Dis'covering Hamlet in China: a Case Analysis of Book Covers of the Chinese *Hamlet*" in *Multimodal Approaches to Chinese-English Translation and Interpreting* (Routledge, 2021), *Rhetorical Devices and Style of* Hamlet (Sun Yat-sen University Press, 2020), and journal article "The Adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* into Chao Zhou Opera the *Rebirth of the Queen*" (2020). She is also a practising translator. Her recent translation is *The Change of Narrative Modes in Chinese Fiction* (Springer, 2022).

Wu Yarong, Ph.D., Zhejiang University, is a lecturer at the School of Foreign Studies, Anhui University (Hefei, China). Her research focuses on early modern English literature.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.01

Yoshiko Kawachi*

Introduction: Local/Global Shakespeare

Shakespeare, alias the Bard of Avon, is the poet and playwright of the English Renaissance, but we sense that he is still now alive around the globe. He is accepted by the non-English-speaking people, and his drama and poetry are translated into a lot of different languages, adapted, performed and appropriated in many corners of the world. Therefore, he is not only the possession of the West but that of the East. In other words, he is a cultural icon traveling the globe, as well as a national hero in England.

The First Folio, the earliest edition of Shakespeare's plays, is the world's most famous book. The year 2023 was our 400th anniversary of the first edition of the First Folio which was entered into the Stationers' Register on November 8 in 1623. When it was displayed at the Guildhall Library in London only one day on April 24 in 2023, a long line of people were waiting to see it. Moreover, an original copy of the First Folio known as the Ashburnham Folio was exhibited at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon from April to November. Furthermore, the Senate House Library in London digitized the First Folios, the Durning-Lawrence copy and the Sterling Library copy so that these digital copies may allow scholars to consult the Folios remotely.

The First Folio was produced by John Heminges and Henry Condell, Shakespeare's friends and fellow actors in the King's Men. The volume contained 36 plays, half of which had not been published before. Without the First Folio, we could not have read some of the masterpieces we read today. In 1623, there were probably more than 750 copies printed, and each copy was offered for sale at a price of 1 pound. They say that only 233 copies are extant now, but each copy is excessively expensive. I hear a copy of the First Folio was sold at auction in New York for 9,970,000 dollars in October, 2020. Probably the price is the highest in the history of literary works.

* Kyorin University, Japan. kawachiyh@mtf.biglobe.ne.jp

In the First Folio, Heminges and Condell wrote their epistle, "To the Great Variety of Readers," in which they said Shakespeare was a happy imitator of Nature and a most gentle expresser of it and that his mind and hand went together. They said, "Read him, therefore; and again, and again: And if you do not like him, surely you are in manifest danger, and not to understand him." In addition, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's rival poet and friend, prefixed the encomium, "To the memories of my beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us," in which he said, "He was not of his age, but for all time!" In this way, Shakespeare's universality and timelessness were expected by his professional colleagues several years after he passed away in 1616.

It is noteworthy that Shoyo Tsubouchi also referred to Shakespeare's universality and timelessness in nineteenth-century Japan. Tsubouchi is a dramatist and novelist called "the father of Japanese literature," and the first translator of Shakespeare's complete works into Japanese as well. He wrote in his essay, "Shakespeare at Random," as follows:

> Shakespeare, you wrote for the general public. You must live longer than other modern dramatists, for you didn't write as a slave to the thought, problem and ideology of times, but wrote as an excellent authority of unchangeable and everlasting truths of human nature and its law of causality. (372-373, trans. Kawachi)

Shakespeare obviously wrote about human beings, human nature and the universe. But he always looked upon them with detachment. Therefore, we should receive his subliminal message. In 1978, Iris Murdoch said in "Literature and Philosophy, "Think how much original thought is in Shakespeare, and how divinely inconspicuous it is" (171). I consider this is one of the key points to capture the essence of Shakespeare's works.

Shakespeare, a man of the theatre, has made a strong impact on the page and the stage all over the world. Nowadays, there are tendencies among practitioners to rewrite his drama in order to adapt to the changing contexts of society, culture and even politics. Moreover, his drama is successfully adapted to the traditional stage of each country in Asia. It is frequently fused with Noh, Kabuki, Kyōgen and Bunraku in Japan, Peking Opera in China, Pansori in Korea, Kathakali in India and so forth. In Europe, Shakespeare is sometimes utilized to promote nationalism. In Germany, for instance, Beltolt Brecht founded the Berliner Ensamble and appropriated Shakespearean drama for political purposes. Under his influence, Heiner Müller performed his subversive text, *Hamletmachine,* in 1977.

Why can Shakespeare be so startlingly transformed? In *Prospero's Staff*, Charles Marowitz said, "Classical reinterpretation, particularly in Europe, has become something of a trickster's art" (39). If so, Asian practitioners must

become shrewder tricksters because they have to try to fill the linguistic and cultural gaps between the East and the West. They should reinterpret Shakespeare's original texts as classics in diverse cultural and social contexts and adapt them skillfully for the Oriental stage, while probing Asian psyche.

Translating and adapting is rewriting the original text and transforming it into another text. In addition, translation and adaptation afford an opportunity for the non-English-speaking people to discover the limitless possibility of performing Shakespeare's playtexts. Therefore, practitioners attempt various experiments and propose their unique methods of staging his plays; besides, they are exerting every possible effort to remake them. As the result, today's audience can enjoy looking at "new Shakespeare" as the hybrid of source culture and target culture.

It is still fresh in our memory that 37 Shakespearean plays were performed in 37 different languages at the Globe's Globe Festival in London in 2012—the Olympic year. The audience must have understood the possibility of cultural transformation of his drama. I believe the Festival produced the most conclusive proof that his playtext is a global text and that he is a local/global icon.

Shakespeare's playtexts are elastic and flexible enough for staging intercultural performances. It is notable that three Directors of the Shakespeare Institute at Stratford-upon-Avon approve of the interculturalism of Shakespearean drama. The late Professor Philip Brockbank, who attended the Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986, wrote in his essay, "I enjoyed what I have come to think of a Shakespearean renaissance in China, remarkable for the scale, plenitude, and variety, distinctively Chinese and yet lucidly in touch with the England of Elizabeth and James" (195).

Even in the United Kingdom, there have been many adaptations and offshoots of Shakespeare since the Restoration. The pioneer of adaptation was Sir William Davenant, and one of his most successful followers was John Dryden. Moreover, Naham Tate, Colly Cibber, and David Garrick rewrote Shakespeare. It is worthy of attention that Ruby Cohn examined modern dramatic offshoots in English, French, and German in *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*.

Sir Stanley Wells, the former Director of the Shakespeare Institute, says:

> Yet in a sense the plays have constantly shown themselves amenable to cultural translation every time they have been performed, even in English, since Shakespeare's time, and it may be felt that geographical difference poses no greater obstacles to translation into foreign cultures than the passage of time to their performance in England. (10)

Recently Professor Michael Dobson, the present Director, says, "[…] in Asia there is another world of Shakespeares coming into being" in an afterword to *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare* (230).

In my view, intercultural performances will contribute toward changing Shakespeare's play-text into a global text and making him survive around the world. We should fully realize that interculturalism helps considerably in promoting one's native culture overseas as well as mutual understanding between the nations.

I am vitally interested in the reason why Shakespeare has become a local/global icon as well as a cultural icon. Therefore, I have arranged a plan to collect the articles discussing this issue extensively. Luckily, domestic and foreign scholars supported my project and contributed their essays on Shakespearean translation, stage adaptation, film adaptation, political and ideological appropriation, cultural transformation and so forth to this special volume. I deeply appreciate the hearty cooperation of the article contributors.

In "New Interpretation and Adaptation of Shakespeare's Plays in Japan from 2020 to 2023," Shoichiro Kawai, a scholar, translator, adapter, and director, gives up-to-date information on Shakespeare performances in Japan. He describes in detail how *Hamlet* was staged in March, 2023 by Mansai Nomura, a Kyōgen player. Kyōgen is a short farce giving light relief to the audience within Noh plays which have been built on Zen techniques of suggestion and stylized implication. Kawai has worked in close collaboration with Nomura in the development of the project of Japanizing Shakespeare. His article supports Nomura's re-examination of the original text of *Hamlet* and his new interpretation of the relationships among Claudius, Gertrude and Hamlet.

The author also writes on "Kawai Project" initiated in 2014. He tells about the difficulties in acting plays during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and his own production of *Villainous Company*. This is an adaptation of Shakespeare's history plays, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, which represents the disastrous state of Ukrainian civilians during the war. Kawai's aim must be to reflect his opinion on today's international situation.

Moreover, he writes about Shakespearean stage adaptations recently presented in Japan, and he discusses how the original text is transformed. To sum up, his essay covers the two different types of Japanizing Shakespeare, that is, to fuse Shakespeare with Japanese traditional drama and to modernize Shakespeare to an extreme extent. Furthermore, he points out that Koki Mitani's TV drama, *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*, is under the influence of Shakespeare.

Hamlet is one of the most popular plays in Japan, and it has been performed in different styles since the nineteenth century. Miyagi Satoshi's production of *Hamlet* is absolutely unique and experimental in particular. In "Hamlet (Un-) Masked: SPAC's *Hamlet* under the COVID-19 Restrictions," Tomoka Tsukamoto and Ted Motohashi thoroughly discuss Miyagi's production of *Hamlet* mounted at the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center in 2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide.

Calling the play "COVID-19 *Hamlet*," the authors write about the dramatic effect of the colourful masks which players wore on the stage. They say, "The masked Hamlet made us acutely aware of our existence as linguistic animals that were controlled by the use of voices, words and narratives." From this fresh perspective, they argue about what Miyagi tried to add to the original text and how he succeeded in using his artful and clever device. For instance, Miyagi, who was inspired by John Dower's book *Embracing Defeat* describing the Japanese reactions to American occupation, added the voice of Emperor Hirohito to the final scene of the play in which Hershey's bars of chocolate dropped from the ceiling. In this manner, Miyagi attempted to re-examine and revaluate Japan through his radical adaptation of a Western classical play.

The authors' viewpoint is that Miyagi's presentation of *Hamlet* "revealed the decline of Western modern hegemonies to fix the history of the victors as the official discourse, while erasing the history of the defeated; but, on the other hand, the politic, economic, military and cultural institutions were maintained by the surviving populace." In their opinion, the final image of this drama suggests that the theatre's eternal capacity is to embrace the pandemic. It is worth noticing that they discuss how the theatre can react in the face of a crisis.

In 2015 the Royal Shakespeare Company launched "Shakespeare Folio Translation Project" aiming to produce new "theatrically viable, actor friendly and audience accesible" translations of Shakespeare for the present-day stage. Li Jianming, the translator of *Hamlet 1990* directed by Lin Zhaohua, got the commission from the RSC to translate *Hamlet* for the Chinese stage. His version was performed under the direction of Li Liuyi in 2018. Cong Cong argues about the RSC's Chinese *Hamlet* in her paper, "'Words, Words, Words.—Between Who?:' Alterations and Interpolations in the RSC Chinese Translation of *Hamlet*."

Recognizing the value of Li Jianming's version which contributes to the diversity and acculturation of Shakespeare for a special intellectual community in a different culture in the first two decades of twenty-first century China, Cong demonstrates textual interpolations and alterations of plot, cuts of scenes and roles, lines and words translated in an "audience friendly" way into an alleged Chinese context.

To translate a text into another language involves creating another text written in the target language. It is a translator who can vitalize the source text in the new linguistic, cultural, and social context. Interestingly, Cong poses these questions: "What is translation?," "What is adaptation?," and "Are we reading the true original Shakespeare?." In her view, every translation and every adaptation is original, and it is a "dialogue" with Shakespeare's original play in a new historical and cultural space. In addition, she asserts that a variorum approach should be encouraged in translation and rewriting and that textual

notes and explanatory notes should be made accompanying the translation and displaying the differences between the translated text and the base text to give a full picture of the "original Shakespeare."

The author considers the RSC's Chinese translation of *Hamlet* is "far gone" from such the First Folio as the RSC advertised "loyal" to the "original copy." She proposes this version should be entitled the "RSC's Chinese stage *Hamlet*" rather than the "RSC's Chinese Folio *Hamlet*" so as to help avoid the possible misconception of "acknowledged authority" that Chinese readers and audiences may conceive under the halo of the RSC and the misleading tag of "Commissioned Folio Translation."

Paul Innes' essay, "Rank Intersectionality and *Othello*," argues about the importance of an approach to intersectionality that integrates concerns of race and gender in *Othello* with social rank in Shakespearean Venice and Cyprus. He asserts that this approach is helpful for understanding the social dynamics and characters of the play. Borrowing Toni Morrison's idea, he discusses the structured interplay among gender, rank and race. Morrison, a black novelist and the Nobel Prize winner for Literature in 1993, published *Desdemona* in 2012, in which Barbary, her mother's maid who was envisaged as an African woman, gave Desdemona an emotional connection with African people. Adopting Morrison's term, "Africanism," Innes regards Othello as "Africanist."

The author attempts a critical analysis of *Othello* through various perspectives which include postcolonialism, psychological interpretation, cultural materialism, and other theoretical perspectives, but he does not carry out a psychological analysis of character; he insists on the primacy of social definitions available to the characters in the play instead. Treating the characters as constructs that reflect pre-modern structures and ideologies, he regards Othello and Desdemona as ideological constructs. In his opinion, Othello is "made" to enact the fundamental tragic dilemma.

Innes' approach is grounded on Louis Pierre Althusser's idea of "interpellation." In his view, ideologies—our attitudes toward gender, class and race—should be thought of more as social processes. Innes declares his concept of interpellation helps to examine how Othello and Desdemona are positioned within the societal frameworks of gender, rank and race.

The author considers an intersectional methodology needs to incorporate the politics of rank. His viewpoint is that the reason why so much destruction is wrought in the tragedy is the social standing of Desdemona as an upper-class heiress and that of Othello as the necessary outsider needed by the Venetian state because of his prowess. He regards Othello as a more powerful military commander since he is not Venetian.

Moreover, Innes underlines that intersectionality allows for an awareness of the historical and cultural location of the audience as different from the moment of the production of the play and that intersectionality satisfies

a need within global Shakespeare reception studies. He says, "The reason for this is the way it permits cross-currents between conceptions of race and gender in particular; it also allows for an awareness of the historical and cultural location of the audience or reader as distinct from the moment of the production of a particular play."

Guixia Xie's article entitled "To Go 'into' My 'Dialect:' Jane Lai's Translation of *King Lear* and the Historical Context of Its Performance in Hong Kong," provides a comprehensive context of Shakespeare translation in China, and it conducts a comparative analysis of Cantonese translation with its English source text and the corresponding Mandarin translation. Cantonese is one of the Chinese dialects that is spoken by people in Hong Kong and the southern region of Guangdong province. In the 1970s and the 1980s, Cantonese translations and adaptations increased in number. Jane Lai is a translator, professor and native of Hong Kong. She translated *King Lear* into Cantonese specifically for theatrical performance. Xie discusses the social and historical factors that exerted a significant influence upon the performance of Lai's Cantonese *King Lear* in Hong Kong in the 1980s.

Showing examples selected from the source text and Lai's translation which achieved its theatrical success on the stage, Xie carefully analyzes the translation strategies and techniques employed by Lai in her Cantonese version. She also makes a close examination on how these strategies ensure the acceptability of the play to local culture, and how they help the translation to resonate with local sentiment. She reaches the conclusion that "the rise of Cantonese-translated plays has demonstrated how vernacular rendition of Shakespeare could gain acceptance in both academia and theatre, how Shakespearean plays could foster local appreciation and how their translation and appropriation contributed to elevating the status of the Cantonese dialect during the pivotal period in Hong Kong's history."

In "Indian Supplements to Shakespeare: *The Hungry* and *We That Are Young*," Poonam Trivedi poses a serious problem about the survival of Shakespeare as a local/global icon freely and rationally. Her article proposes, as a theoretical framework, the critical perspective of "supplementarity" as enunciated by Jacque Derrida. She considers supplement is "a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude," "a proposition which seems to approximate the global traffic in Shakespeare and provide us with a critical perspective of supplementarity as an intervention in the debate on the proliferating versioning of Shakespeare." From this point of view, she discusses lucidly the issue of the interventions made to globalize Shakespeare for the contemporary audience.

India is a multilingual country. There are hundreds of translations and adaptations in various languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Kannada and so forth. Practitioners have changed drastically Shakespeare's plots and themes in order to adapt them to the social, cultural and political conditions in

India. *The Hungry* (2017) is a film adaptation directed by Bornila Chatterjee, of *Titus Andronicus*, and *We That Are Young* (2017) by Preti Taneja is a novel based on *King Lear*. Applying her own theory to these Indian adaptations, Trivedi revets her attention on how they offer fresh perspectives and engage with contemporary issues in Indian society, especially concerning themes like patriarchy, corruption and feminism. She says these two versions from India fulfil the function of supplementarity and add to the plenitude of Shakespeare and that they make his works and ideas come alive and resonate with the young by their relocations in a new time and space. Moreover, she asserts that reduction/versioning of Shakespeare from all over the world is performing a vital function and that it brings him up to date for the modern audience.

In the Victorian age, Shakespeare and the Bible were taught in the classroom in India as one of the colonial policies, but, on the other hand, there were the challengers trying to reject the imperial policy. In "Historicizing the Bard of Avon: Shapeshifting Shakespeare and the Constitution of Gujarati Literary Culture," Hemang Ashwinkumar writes about Shakespeare reception, translation, adaptation, performance, and transformation in India. After discussing the Hindu theatre and the Parsi stage company which performed Shakespearean drama in the nineteenth century, the author traces the histories of Gujarati theatre and literature.

Gujarati is Mahatma Gandhi's hometown; besides, it is the cradle of the Indian nationalist movement. The author considers how the histories of Gujarati theatre and literature reflect the evolution of Gujarati literary culture along caste, ethnic, and communal lines, and he explains that they have been a witness to the Bard's localization as well as his non-localization. In addition, he points out that they have engendered the elitist and monolithic ideas, and identities that Gujarati literary culture suffers from still now. As he discusses both colonial Shakespeare and postcolonial Shakespeare, readers may collect a lot of information on Indianized Shakespeares and know how and why the Bard has been transformed in India as well.

Aeschylus is an Athenian tragic poet. He was hardly known in England before Thomas Stanley's edition of the plays in 1663. His true popularity dates from the nineteenth century when Romantic writers were interested in his play, *Prometheus Bound*. Although there is no evidence that Shakespeare borrowed dramatic techniques from Aeschylus, it is well-known that Gilbert Murray wrote *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types.* Interestingly, Duluo Nie argues about the connection between Shakespeare and Aeschylus in "Blood and Revenge: Animal Metaphors and Nature in *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*."

The *Oresteia* is a trilogy of plays, *Agamemnon, Choephoroe*, and *Eumenides*. The author considers there is much affinity between the *Oresteia*, especially *Agamemnon*, and *Macbeth*. He asserts that both plays feature spectacular representations of animals, both bestial and avian, in displaying the

necessity of violence in human nature. Examining the theme of blood-shedding, the perpetual cycle of violence and revenge and the strong presence of animal symbolism in both plays, he suggests that Shakespeare borrowed multiple dramatic techniques from Aeschylus. Nie tries to reveal *Macbeth* as a play fundamentally concerned with the classical theme of blood-shedding and revenge and assumes that *Macbeth* is a purposeful "translation" and "revision" of the great theatrical tradition of Attic tragedy to some extent.

The author asserts that the animal metaphors seen in both plays contribute effectively to the consistency of plot development and that they significantly deepen the process of revealing the affinity and conflicts between the world of human beings and the world beyond it. In his view, the natural world functions as a mirror of the human activities. He states that the transformation from docility to savagery demonstrates the ultimate area of interest of *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* and that the striking resemblance should offer essential clues on their reliance on the same subject of how nature, human nature and human beings work.

In "Shakespeare Engraved: Frontispiece and Bardolatry," Kazuki Sasaki tries to show a link between the publishing business of Shakespeare's works in eighteenth-century England and the evolution of the worship of Shakespeare. Taking *The Tempest* as an example, he examines each engraved frontispiece printed in Nicholas Rowe's first edition (1709), his second edition (1714), Thomas Hanmer's edition (1742-1743), John Bell's edition (1774) and Alexander Chalmer's edition (1805). Consequently, he notices that there is a marked difference in the artistic design of the engraved frontispieces inserted in these editions. Moreover, he observes the process of making a change in describing several scenes of the play.

Shakespeare is sometimes called the Bard of Avon. In 1769 David Garrick held the Jubilee, his pioneering festival of bardolatory at Stratford-upon-Avon. Bardolatory is a term for the uncritical worship of Shakespeare's genius, particularly in its Romantic and nineteenth-century variants. This term was allegedly coined by George Bernard Show. Sasaki points out that Bardolatory should be reinterpreted as a product that was created by various theatrical cultures of eighteenth-century England.

In *Discoveries* Ben Jonson remarked that he loved Shakespeare and honored his memory "on this side idolatry as much as any" (5-6), but on the other hand he described Shakespeare as having 'small Latin, less Greek' in his verse prefixed to the First Folio. Shakespeare, however, wrote Roman plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* in which Rome is much of the scene. His "classical" drama is Roman and not Greek because the English Renaissance theatre knew Greek drama second-hand through Roman adaptations. But Wu Yarong and Hao Tianhu suggest to justify the addition of "Greek plays"

as a subgenre to classify his works in their article, "Greece Reinvented: Shakespeare's 'Greek Plays' as a Subgenre."

It is worthy of attention that the authors bring this neglected subgenre "Greek Plays" into the discussion and highlight the importance of the Greek elements in Shakespeare and that they focus not only on the revival of ancient Greek culture in England but also on the interactions between early modern England and the East Mediterranean. They conduct a comprehensive survey of the six Greek plays, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, within their historical context. They consider these plays are defined as the adaptations of ancient Greek literature, staged in Greek or closely related settings, and featuring characters from Greek mythology and history.

Geographically, Greece serves as a "threshold" connecting the East and the West. The authors' viewpoint is that Greece is caught in the dilemma of "between" and that it is regarded as a land of ambiguity in Shakespeare's Greek plays. Examining the ambiguity of Greece through the perspectives of translation, trade and travel, and exploring the features of several Greek or pertinent cities, for instance, Athens, Ephesus, Tyre, Troy and so forth, they conceive that Greece is a multifaceted entity, a confluence of Eastern and Western influences, classical and contemporary elements, and pagan and Christian aspects.

The authors declare Shakespeare reinvents a Greece characterized by its liminality and hybridity. They state that "he characterizes it by a mixture of humanistic admiration for the grandeur of ancient Greek civilization, a cautious respect for and alertness to its pagan origins, a profound desire for commercial benefits in the Eastern Mediterranean, and apprehensions and anxieties in Englishmen's encounters with the Turks." In addition, they assert that Shakespeare juxtaposes ancient Greece with its early modern counterpart, a territory of difference and of the Other, on the very edge of Europe penetrated by the alien East and Islamic cultures. Their proposal will be helpful in not only enhancing our understanding of Shakespeare's portrayal of "a world elsewhere" from different cultural perspectives but also expanding our scope of Shakespeare studies.

I heartily hope these articles will provide a valuable opportunity for readers to catch diverse aspects of Shakespearean acceptance, appropriation and transformation on the earth. Moreover, I wish this volume will give them a good chance to see Shakespeare's "rough magic" performed in different languages and cultures and to contemplate the future of his dramatic art. Furthermore, I am expecting that readers will understand the reason why the Bard of Avon and his message to human beings are timeless and universal. The query, "Why can Shakespeare be astonishingly transformed?," may be connected with another question, "Why can Shakespeare be alive today?"

WORKS CITED

Brockbank, Philip J. “Shakespeare Renaissance in China.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38.2 (1988): 195-203.

Cohn, Ruby. *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Dobson, Michael. “All the World’s His Stage.” Afterword. *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare ‘All the World’s His Stage.’* Eds. Poonam Trivedi, Paramita Chakravarti, and Ted Motohashi. New York and London: Routledge, 2020. 230.

Jonson, Ben. “Timber: or, Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter.” *Shakespeare Criticism: A Selection 1623-1840*. Ed. D. Nichol Smith. London: Oxford University Press, 1964. 5-6.

Marowitz, Charles. “Experiment.” *The Encore Reader: A Chronicle of the New Drama*. Eds. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne and Owen Hale. London: Methuen, 1965. 241-245.

Murdoch, Iris. “Literature and Philosophy.” *After Shakespeare: Writing Inspired by World’s Greatest Author.* Ed. John Gross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 171.

Tsubouchi, Shoyo. “Shakespeare at Random.” *Shoyo Senshu Bessatsu* [*The Supplement to the Selected Works of Shoyo*]. Ed. Shoyo Kyokai. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Dai-ichi Shobo, 1978.

Wells, Stanley. “Shakespeare around the Globe.” *International Shakespeare Association Occasional Paper* 6 (1988): 10.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.02

Shoichiro Kawai*

New Interpretations and Adaptations of Shakespeare's Plays in Japan from 2020 to 2023

Abstract: This essay examines some notable Shakespearean productions and adaptations in Japan from 2020 to 2023. The main focus is on a *Hamlet* production by Mansai Nomura, a Kyogen performer, in March 2023; it was an amalgamation of the traditional Japanese theatres, such as Kyogen, Nô, Kabuki, and Bunraku. Mansai's aspiration to produce *Hamlet*, utilizing all the elements of traditional Japanese art forms, began twenty years ago, when he played Hamlet in Jonathan Kent's production in London and in Tokyo. He re-examined the text and offered a completely new interpretation of a scene, giving the play a fresh dimension. Moreover, this essay examines other recent Shakespeare productions and adaptations, including my two new plays based on Shakespeare, as well as Kôki Mitani's *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*, a serial historical TV drama, broadcast by NHK (Japan's version of the BBC).

Keywords: Shakespeare, adaptation, Kyogen, Nô, Kabuki, Bunraku, Hamlet, Falstaff, traditional Japanese theatre, Mansai Nomura, Kôki Mitani, *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*.

The "Japanese" *Hamlet*

Mansai Nomura had long cherished the idea of producing a *Hamlet* utilizing various traditional Japanese theatrical techniques. Through his long career as a Kyogen performer since the age of three, he had been involved in many Shakespearean productions and was convinced of the affinity between Shakespeare and Kyogen.

At the age of seventeen, he played the blind flutist Tsuru-maru in Akira Kurosawa's film *Ran* (1985), an adaptation of *King Lear*. Five years later, he played the title role in *Hamlet*, directed by Moriaki Watanabe, at the Tokyo Globe.

* University of Tokyo, Japan. kawai@g.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp

He played Ariel in Robert Rupage's *The Tempest* (1993) at the Tokyo Globe; he directed and performed in *The Kyogen of Errors*, an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* by Yasunari Takahashi, which was performed at Shakespeare's Globe in London in 2001.

In 2003, he played Hamlet, directed by Jonathan Kent, in Tokyo and in London. For this production, Mansai asked me to create a new translation of *Hamlet*, and as the new artistic director of the Setagaya Public Theatre in 2002, he supervised, or rather co-created, my translation of *Hamlet*. He had examined every line of the play, spending tremendous time with me, voicing every single line, and exploring the meaning of the play and the proper modes of Japanese to express it.

Since then, our collaboration has commenced. In 2007, he directed and starred in *The Country Stealer*, my adaptation of *Richard III*, which was revived in 2009. In 2010, he directed and starred in my translation of *Macbeth*, which toured worldwide (New York and Seoul in 2013; Paris and Sibiu in 2014). This collaboration was motivated by our understanding of the striking similarities between Kyogen and Elizabethan theatre.[1]

Through all these years, Mansai had never lost sight of his desire to produce a "Japanese" *Hamlet*, composed of Kyogen, Nô, Kabuki, Bunraku and Nihon Buyô (traditional Japanese dance). In 2022, he terminated his artistic directorship of the Setagaya Public Theatre, which he had held for twenty years. He directed a reading of *Hamlet* in February 2022 for his last project as an artistic director. Mansai cast his twenty-three-year-old son, Yuki, as Hamlet. Yuki has been a Kyogen performer since the age of three, and this was his first challenge to perform in theatres other than Kyogen, but he admirably met his father's expectations. This reading was a stepping stone to Mansai's "Japanese" *Hamlet*, produced in March 2023.

In this production, Mansai himself played both Claudius and the Ghost, and when he played the Ghost, he put on a Nô-mask and moved and danced in the Nô fashion, accompanied by the Nô music. As Nô is a genre of drama that mainly features the spirit of the dead, Mansai's Ghost was quite effective in producing a frightening atmosphere of the wraith.

The dumb show is often played by different actors from those in the play-within-the-play, as in Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film, in which the dumb show is presented by mimers while the Play King and the Player Queen are

[1] For the similarities between the Nô stage and the Elizabethan thrust stage both in their structure and theatrical usage, see my Chapter 20 "Shakespeare through the Bare Thrust Stage Interface" in Paul Budra and Clifford Werier, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Interface*, and also my section, "Part XX: Changing Technologies of Stage Performance" in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, ed. Bruce R. Smith, 2016, 1417-1482.

performed by Charlton Heston and Rosemary Harris respectively. Similarly, Mansai made the dumb show into a puppet play, a droll version of Bunraku, to stress Hamlet's point that "they do but jest, poison in jest" (*Hamlet* 3.2.234),[2] and in the play-within-the-play, Kunitaro Kawarasaki, a Kabuki female impersonator, played both the Player King and Player Queen simultaneously, transforming himself from the King in men's kimono to the Queen in women's kimono instantaneously and dexterously, and back again, changing his voice and body between the male and female accordingly. Another Kabuki actor played Lucianus, nephew to the Player King, in a Kabuki fashion to emphasize the theatricality of the play-within-the-play.

Kabuki is composed of acting and dancing, and when the dancing element is extracted from Kabuki, it is called Nihon Buyô (literary meaning: "Japanese dance"). Ophelia was performed by Sawako Fujima, a young Grand Master of a Fujima school of Nihon Buyô. Thus, Ophelia's madness and death were depicted by her gracious and exquisite movements, characteristic of Kabuki dancing.

As the director, Mansai gave a fresh look at the text and asked me why Hamlet did not inherit the throne when his father died. I explained to him that in the play Denmark does not adopt primogeniture, but that as Claudius' reference to Gertrude as "our sometime sister, now our queen, / Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state" (1.2.8-9) indicates, Gertrude possesses a legal jointure. In other words, the right to reign the country rests with her, and Claudius, who becomes her partner, shares that right.

Mansai then decided that the play should revolve around Gertrude, who he understood as the centre of the play, that is, the centre of politics and of love. She stands just between Claudius and Hamlet, who both love her affectionately, and she should be authoritative and dignified as the one who holds the legal right to govern.

Because she loves both her son and her new husband, she functions as a pivot in balancing the equilibrium. Her presence is as crucial to Hamlet as to Claudius, who says that "She is so conjunctive to [his] life and soul, / That, as the star moves not but in his sphere, / [he] could not but by her" (4.7.14-16). Mansai asked Mayumi Wakamura, who played Gertrude, to stand occasionally above the stage as an image conceived by Claudius, so that the audience could visually perceive her significant presence.

The play is curiously reticent about the cognisance of her own circumstances. She is obviously ignorant of Claudius murdering her previous husband. Moreover, it seems that she does not know of Claudius' intention to kill Hamlet in the last act. However, the play allows for different interpretations; for example, in Laurence Olivier's film *Hamlet*, Gertrude gazes at the poisoned

[2] Quotations from Shakespeare refer to the Riverside 2nd edition.

cup for some time before she drinks from it, as if to suggest that she deliberately does so to save her son's life. The play does not indicate how much she knows about Claudius' intentions, and Gertrude in the last act is usually performed as an innocent loving mother without a glimpse of understanding of political complications that the play depicts. Nevertheless, Gertrude is not simply a mother—this is not a family play—but the imperial jointress with supreme political power. Her death signifies "Treachery" (5.2.312) to the throne, as Hamlet puts it. It is imperative to characterize Gertrude as a reigning queen who knows what is going on between Hamlet and Claudius. However, does the play offer a hint for her to perceive that?

Mansai solved this problem, when he found a clue while rehearsing Act 4 Scene 7, in which Claudius explains to Laertes that all the grievances were caused by Hamlet. Then, the messenger enters and the scene continues as follows:

> KING How now? What news?
> MESSENGER Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
> These to your Majesty, this to the Queen.
> KING From Hamlet? Who brought them?
> MESSENGER Sailors, my lord, they say. I saw them not.
> They were given me by Claudio. He receiv'd them
> Of him that brought them.
> KING Laertes, you shall hear them.
> —Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*]
> [*Reads.*] "High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.
> Hamlet."
> What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
> Or is it some abuse, and no such thing? (4.7.36-50)

Claudius is bewildered because, according to his plan, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (here referred as "all the rest") should have carried his secret command to England, according to which Hamlet should have been beheaded there. However, Claudius is quite agile in responding to this new situation and quickly conceives of a second plan to kill Hamlet. He proposes that Laertes engage in a match of swords with Hamlet, in which Laertes can kill him by pretending that it is an accident. Laertes proposes the use of a poisoned sword, and Claudius further suggests preparing a poisoned cup. During this secret conversation, Gertrude enters to report that Ophelia has drowned. The scene ends as follows.

LAERTES Alas, then she is drown'd?
QUEEN Drown'd, drown'd.
LAERTES Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears; but yet
It is our trick. Nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will; when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord,
I have a speech a' fire that fain would blaze,
But that this folly drowns it. *Exit.*
KING Let's follow, Gertrude.
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again.
Therefore let's follow. *Exeunt.* (4.7.183-194)

Act 4 ends here. Here we pose the question of what became of a letter addressed to the Queen. The messenger carries several letters and says, "These to your Majesty, this to the Queen." In some productions, the messenger keeps "the letter to the Queen" to himself and exits with it, but will the sly Claudius let him do that?

Mansai's Claudius grabs all the letters and begins reading the one addressed to him, while casually placing the other letter on the bench on which he sits. At the end of the scene, Claudius exits, urging Gertrude to follow. In the rehearsal, it so happened that Mansai's gown touched the letter on the bench as he went out and let it drop, and Wakamura/Gertrude noted the dropped letter, picked it up, and read it silently. The audience is not told what is written in it, but one may rightly imagine that Hamlet informs his mother of the fact that Claudius has contrived to kill him.

This was a breakthrough in the field. Mansai added a small sequence at the end of Act 4, where Gertrude picks up the letter addressed to her and reads it silently. This enables the new interpretation that Gertrude, in the last Act, knows Claudius' intention to kill her son.

Nevertheless, one may not accept Olivier's interpretation that she drinks the poisoned cup deliberately. Even though she may be aware of Claudius's malice, she does not know what has been actually planned against Hamlet. Drinking the poisoned cup should be an accident; however, due to Mansai's direction, Wakamura/Gertrude became quite an intelligent, dignified, and gracious queen. Gertrude dies not simply as an innocent mother but as a dignified queen, betrayed by a treachery, for which Claudius must be punished.

Supported by this new interpretation, Mansai's *Hamlet* production was an enormous success. Mansai's understanding of human being's existence as nothingness may have derived from Japan's oldest treatise on drama, *Fushi-kaden* (*The Book of Transmission of the Flower*), written in the early fifteenth

century by Zeami, a performer and critic of Nô, whose important concept is *Mu* (nothingness, or non-being), and it is not dissimilar to Shakespearean *Memento Mori*. That is why the ending was spectacular, in which the dead Hamlet ascends to heaven and becomes one of the brilliant stars in the sky.

Kawai Project

Apart from writing Shakespearean adaptations for Kyogen (*The Country Stealer*, 2007, 2009) and Bunraku (*Falstaff*, 2014), and offering my translations of Shakespeare's plays to directors such as Yukio Ninagawa, Gregory Doran, and Simon Godwin, I started the "Kawai Project" in 2014 to produce and direct Shakespearean plays using my translations. I have produced and directed *Much Ado About Nothing* (2014), *The Comedy of Errors* (2016), *As You Like It* (2018), and *King Lear* (2020).

In 2020-2021 Japanese theatres suffered immensely due to the influence of the pandemic; theatres were closed, and many productions had to shift their venue of performances from theatres to online platforms. Later, when the restrictions were somewhat alleviated, they performed without an audience and distributed them over the Internet. However, earlier in the period, actors were not allowed to get together. They were able to be connected to each other only on the Internet; therefore, each actor, remaining in one's own space, joined other actors on the screen to create a drama. This was called "Remote Theatre" in Japanese, a new genre of theatre, which the Kawai Project experimented with. *King Lear* in 2020 and *Parts 1 and 2 of Henry IV* in 2021 were produced in this form. Nevertheless, it lacked the direct contact between actors, and the presence of the audience, which is vital to theatre. Five months after our online performance of *King Lear*, we received the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's "Cheers for Art" Subsidies and recreated *King Lear* in a playhouse and admitted a limited audience of fifteen per performance. Regardless of the audience size, we found that their presence was essential.

In 2016, in response to a special request from the famous actor Daijiro Harada, I translated and directed Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (2016) to cast him as Vladimir. Takahide Tashiro, a Shakespearean actor, saw it and was so intrigued by it that he suggested that two actors waiting for William Shakespeare while quoting his famous lines would make an interesting spin-off. As suggested by him, I wrote a new play, *Waiting for Will*, and produced it in 2018 and 2021. The play is composed of famous lines from all the forty plays of Shakespeare and explores the essence of Shakespearean drama in a Beckettian manner. It was written specifically for Takahide Tashiro and Haruo Takayama, two older Japanese Shakespearean actors, and the scene where they recalled their performances in various Shakespearean plays on stage is written based on

their private facts. Thus, it merges real life and fiction, based on a Shakespearean motif, *theatrum mundi*, or "life is a play."

In this play, the two older actors continue rehearsing a scene from *King Lear* (Act 4 Scene 6), in which Edgar makes his father, Gloucester, imagine that he is jumping from a cliff. As Gloucester simulates his death, Tashiro who plays Gloucester simulates many deaths. The actor Tashiro dies in this play, but he resurrects in Takayama's memory, and they resume playing the Edgar-Gloucester scene which they have played so many times. It dramatizes the Shakespearean concept of *memento mori* as well. The play ends with the two actors reciting Prospero's lines, referring to the transience of the world, that everything must fade, vanish, and dissolve, just as the two older actors would disappear and remain only in the audience's memories. The play was well received and it was mentioned as one of the significant theatre performances in the year 2018 by *The Nikkei Newspaper*, one of the major Japanese newspapers.[3] It was summoned to the Sibiu International Theatre Festival; however, owing to the outbreak of the COVID-19, our participation in the festival was delayed until 2022, when the performance received a standing ovation.

In July 2023, I wrote and directed *Villainous Company*,[4] an adaptation based on *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, motivated by the disastrous state of Ukrainian civilians. As a Shakespearean scholar and director, I believed I should act against warfare by utilizing Shakespeare's plays. In *Henry V* there is a brilliant scene (Act 4 Scene 1) in which three private soldiers and the disguised Henry V debate whether the king is responsible for the war. The topic is resonant to us, as the Japanese have long discussed whether the emperor was responsible for the last war which devastated Japan. The question has never been answered, but it is worth asking again, since the current Japanese government is planning the largest military budget ever.

In response to the current English tendency to cast female actors in the male roles in Shakespeare's plays to challenge gender inequity, I changed the gender of two soldiers, turning Private Michael Williams into Private Michelle Williams and Private Alexander Court into Private Alexandra Court. I distributed Falstaff's famous lines against fighting (*1 Henry IV* 5.1.131-40) among the three soldiers as follows:

> WILLIAMS What do we fight for? For honor? Can honor set to a leg?
> COURT No.

[3] Youichi Uchida, "Theatre Retrospective 2018," *The Nikkei Newspaper*, 24 December 2018.

[4] The title derives from Falstaff's line, "Company, villainous company, hath been the spoil of me" (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.10-11). There is a play of the same title by Amlin Gray, published in 1981. Tashiro, who once performed it in Japanese with Kôtarou Yoshida and Tetsu Watanabe, suggested it to me, but I decided to create a totally new adaptation.

WILLIAMS Or an arm?
BATES No.
WILLIAMS Or take away the grief of a wound?
COURT No.
WILLIAMS What is honor?
Nobody answers.
WILLIAMS Doth he feel it?
BATES No.
WILLIAMS Doth he hear it?
COURT No.
WILLIAMS 'Tis insensible, then. Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living?
COURT No.
WILLIAMS Why?
Nobody answers.
WILLIAMS Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it.

Then Michelle Williams casually voices her opinion that if the King suddenly dies, the war will stop, and everyone can go home. The disguised Hal, who is still the Prince of Wales in my play, hearing this, is enraged and challenges her, and they agree to fight after the battle the next day. In the original text, they exchange their gloves, but I changed it to make the Prince of Wales say that he will wear leeks, the national symbol of Wales, on his hat for the identification. This merges one fighting scene with another in *Henry V*, as there is also a scene in which Captain Fluellen fights with Ancient Pistol and forces him to eat his leeks. In my play, Hal asks Fluellen to wear not his glove but leeks to act as his replacement. After that, Michelle Williams notices the leeks in Fluellen's hat, and they start fighting using martial arts, *Karate* and *Shôrinji Kempô*. Ultimately, Williams surrenders and bites the leeks. Hal enters and reveals the fact that he was the one who had accepted his challenge. Williams performs the same protest as in the original and Hal orders Fluellen to give her money. In the original, Williams exits as he cries "I will none of your money" (*Henry V* 4.8.67), but in my play she cries "That will not efface the bitterness of the leeks!" which causes laughter in the audience.

I was greatly influenced by Max Weber's *Henry V*, streamed by National Theatre Live 2022, with Kit Harington in the title role. It was produced in modern costumes with all the actors trained by a modern military trainer; therefore, the fighting scenes became modern and reminiscent of Russia's war on Ukraine. The production had many elements of adaptation from the original. It incorporated scenes from *Henry IV*; French scenes were performed in French while ignoring Shakespeare's English, and the text was tampered with. Fluellen cries, "Kill the poys [i.e. boys] and the luggage! 'Tis expressly against the law of arms" (4.7.1-2), to indicate the French atrocity; however, Max Weber

relocated this line to make it mean Henry V's atrocity. I quite understand that from a modern perspective, the former hero, Henry V, should be depicted as a warmonger; nevertheless, if one tampers with the text, one should admit that it is an adaptation.

The heroic Henry V, as Laurence Olivier portrayed in his 1944 film or as Kenneth Branagh did in his 1989 film, now seems to be outdated. I believe that an increasing number of people now tend to perceive danger in Henry V's rhetorical eloquence in encouraging his soldiers to fight. His speeches are eloquent and moving. However, if examined carefully, we can see a crucial discrepancy between them. In the St. Crispin's Day speech, he says:

> He that shall see this day, and live old age,
> Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,
> And say, "To-morrow is Saint Crispian."
> Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
> [And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."]
> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day.
> [. . . . . .]
> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
> From this day to the ending of the world,
> But we in it shall be remembered—
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
> For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
> Shall be my brother. (4.3.44-62)

This speech apparently encourages his soldiers to think that they are "a few" who can boast of their old scars and their feats that they did that day. However, after the battle is won, he prohibits such boasting as follows:

> Come, go we in procession to the village,
> And be it death proclaimed through our host
> To boast of this, or take that praise from God
> Which is His only. (4.8.113-116)

This is a negation of the St. Crispin's Day speech. Henry V's glorious success blurs what he says and does. In the Harfleur speech in Act 3 Scene 3, he threatens the city with monstrous violence, rape, and slaughter. This is unacceptable to modern ears. It is significant to notice that Shakespeare portrays Henry's ambivalence or his equivocality, and it is up to the audience to understand its meaning.

In my adaptation, I attempt to resonate with the current international situation. I added an outer frame in which an older corpulent francophone soldier

is on guard, juxtaposed with a young Korean guard across the border, to avoid any specific reference to a current situation in the real world, but at the same time to indicate that a conflict may happen unexpectedly in unexpected regions. In the next scene the former turns to be Falstaff and the latter Prince Hal. This is to suggest that any two enemies who are staring at each other across the border could have lived in another world, sharing the same Shakespearean fantasy.

In Japan, the term "the war" has long signified World War II, and the Japanese strongly wish that there will be no more wars and are convinced that Japan will never be involved in wars. However, as the Ukraine war suggests, no one is free from the threats of wars. Countries are now living with wars, regardless of whether they are physically threatened. Even in seemingly peaceful Japan, there is a threat of warfare without the citizens being aware of it. To prove this point, I started the play with the Korean soldier singing a popular song "J'ai perdu le do de ma clarinette (I have lost the A in my clarinet)," which all the Japanese children learn in elementary schools. The song is sung in Japanese as follows:

> I have a clarinet that I love.
> The clarinet that Papa gave me.
> Though I cherished it so much,
> There is a note it has lost.
> What shall I do? What shall I do?
> Au pas camarade, au pas camarade, au pas, au pas, au pas!
> Au pas camarade, au pas camarade, au pas, au pas, au pas!

Almost all the Japanese take the last two lines to be a joyous set of nonsensical syllables for humming a refrain, like "hey nonny nonny," signifying nothing. Nevertheless, the refrain comes from "La Chanson de l'Oignon (The Song of the Onion)," a military marching song, which, according to a legend, originated among the Old Guard Grenadiers of Napoleon's Imperial Guard. In the final scene, the older corpulent soldier (who has the memory that he once lived as Falstaff) shoots the young Korean soldier (whom the older soldier takes for Hal). Then the older soldier takes out his transceiver and reports that the mission is complete. As he exits, the Song of the Onion is played loudly, whose lyrics and their translations are projected onto the back wall of the stage as follows:

> J'aime l'oignon frit à l'huile, (I like fried onions,)
> J'aime l'oignon car il est bon. (I like them 'cause they are good.)
> J'aime l'oignon frit à l'huile, (I like fried onions,)
> J'aime l'oignon, J'aime l'oignon. (I like onions, I like onions,)
>
> Au pas camarade, au pas camarade, (March on, comrades, march on, comrades)
> Au pas, au pas, au pas! (March on, on, on!)

Au pas camarade, au pas camarade, (March on, comrades, march on, comrades)
Au pas, au pas, au pas! (March on, on, on!)

It is astonishing that a refrain in a children's song comes from a military marching song, but this is a good indication of how unawares we are immersed in things related to warfare. After every performance, I spoke with the audience, and they were all frightened to know that this seemingly innocent song was partly composed of a military song.

The play was well received with several reviews in newspapers, and Yukihiro Takahashi, a theatre critic, chose it as one of the best three plays in July 2023.[5]

Appropriated and metamorphosed Shakespeare

After Yukio Ninagawa, the director, died in 2016, the directorship of the Sainokuni Shakespeare Series was succeeded by Kôtarou Yoshida the actor/director, who successfully directed *Timon of Athens* in 2017 and *Henry V* in 2019. However, his *Henry VIII*, which opened on 14 February 2020, was suspended on 28 February, owing to the governmental regulations to contain COVID-19. His *King John*, scheduled for June 2020, was cancelled. The theatre reopened in May 2021 with his *All's Well That Ends Well*, which concluded the series. The suspended *Henry VIII* was reproduced in September 2022 and the skipped *King John* was produced in December 2022, with Shun Oguri as Philip the bastard. Oguri had completed his magnificent and overwhelming performance of the lead role in NHK's serial historical TV drama, *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*, which as I shall later explain is full of Shakespearean elements.

After theatres reopened in 2021, we had many more Shakespearean productions. I will give further examples, one for each year. In October 2021, Parco produced an all-female *Julius Caesar*, directed by Shintaro Mori. It was a tense and taut stage, every actor assuming masculinity. Yô Yoshida as Brutus was awarded a Kinokuniya Theatre Award, and the director was awarded a Kikuta Theatre Award.

In 2022, Shochiku produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, using my translation. Kabuki actor Shikan Nakamura, as Oberon and Theseus, added grandeur to the production. It was directed by Takaaki Inoue, who follows Ninagawa's footsteps.

In 2023, the New National Theatre produced *Measure for Measure*, directed by Hitoshi Uyama. This production was epoch-making, largely because

[5] Yukihiro Takahashi, "The best three in this month," *Teatro* 10 (2023): 5-7.

of Sonim's performance as Isabella. This has been a difficult play to perform in modern times, as Isabella's sense of values, which puts her virginity high above life, is now difficult to appreciate. Yet Sonim's Isabella so sincerely took it for granted that her brother Claudio (Kenji Urai) understands that "were it [her] life, / [she]'d throw it down for [his] deliverance / As frankly as a pin" (*Measure for Measure* 3.1.103-105), but *NEVER HER VIRGINITY*, so much so that when Urai's Claudio, desperate for life, hung on to her for his life, it was so hilariously comical and serious at the same time that she kicked him away, crying "Die, perish" (3.1.143). The audience laughed a lot in this production; I have seen many productions of *Measure for Measure*, but this was the most enjoyable and most convincing.

As for adaptations, the Theatre Company Shinkansen's *A Pure Heart at Seaport: Othello*, written by Go Aoi and premiered in 2011, was recreated in 2023. It reset *Othello* in the world of *Yakuza* (Japanese gangsters). The original 2011 version featured three men as in the original: Iago expects his boss, Othello, to make him a sub-leader, but Othello chooses another, who is handsome but incompetent. The recreated 2023 version was very different: Iago is now a woman. It is the story of Aiko (Shoko Takada), the widow of the late gang-leader. She expects young Othello (Ken Miyake) to be the next gang-leader, but he marries a young girl and decides to leave the gang. Betrayed, Aiko suspects that Othello did not protect the late gang-leader when he was killed, and she decides to ruin Othello's life through various tricks. It is a quite well-written female version of Iago, and her resentment and grudge are expressively delineated, shedding light on Iago's psychology in Shakespeare's original work.

Singing Shylock, written and directed by Wishing Chong, a Korean Japanese, premiered in 2014 and revived in 2017 and 2023, is set in the Kansai district of Japan in the post-war period. Although the actors speak in Kansai dialect, the characters' European names are all preserved. Songs and dances have been added, but the story remains true to the original. I contributed an article to the production brochure and stated that Japanese racial prejudice against Koreans in that period was quite similar to the Elizabethan prejudice against the Jews.[6]

The film *Shylock's Children*, directed by Katsuhide Motoki, was released in 2023. It was based on Jun Ikeido's mystery book of the same title. The book sold 680,000 copies, and it was televised in 2022. It features avarice in the banking business: a loss of a million yen in a bank branch leads to the revelation of a billion-yen fraud. It depicts many men obsessed with money, and one of the key phrases, "Returning the money doesn't make everything square," is what Shylock might have said against Antonio the merchant. However, this is not an adaptation, as the story itself has nothing to do with *The Merchant of*

[6] Shoichiro Kawai, "From where comes that hatred?", *Singing Shylock* (the brochure), (Shochiku, 2023), no pages given.

Venice; it merely utilizes the motif of obsessed avarice. One may take the title, *Shylock's Children*, to mean "the descendants of Shylock" or "the likes of Shylock," but the word "children" suggests otherwise. I contributed an article[7] to the brochure for this film and made the following points: Shylock's child, Jessica, runs away from his money-obsessed father. One cannot deny the importance of money, but she does not want a life swayed by money. The film depicts many people trying to evade the curse of money. After seeing the film, the viewer realizes that the title actually signifies those who try to respect their own life as Jessica does rather than those who are obsessed with money.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Kôki Mitani, the celebrated playwright, wrote *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*, as NHK's serial historical TV drama featuring the Kamakura Shogun family, with surprisingly numerous resemblances to Shakespearean plays. The most remarkable one is in Episode 25: the first Shogun Yoritomo and his father-in-law, Regent Tokimasa Hôjo, are happily exchanging sake cups with no ambition to fight against the imperial court at Kyoto. Then, enters Maki-no-Kata, Tokimasa's second wife, who scolds them for their lack of courage and instigates them to be bold, à la Lady Macbeth. She says, "you are as timid as a dog which would chase deer in hills but would not soil its legs." This is resonant with the following lines of Lady Macbeth, who encourages her husband to be a king:

> Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
> Like the poor cat i' th' adage? (*Macbeth* 1.7.41-45)

The poor cat in the adage (proverb) means the cat which wants to eat fish but would not wet its legs. Mitani admits that he portrayed Maki-no-Kata as a Lady Macbeth, but says that the correspondence between a timid dog and a timid cat is no more than a coincidence.[8]

There are many other Shakespearean references in the drama. The first Shogun's daughter Ôhime is betrothed to Yoshitaka, the eldest son of Yoshinaka, who later turns out to be the Shogun's enemy. Ôhime and Yoshitaka loved each other so passionately like Romeo and Juliet, and when Ôhime comes to know that her father is planning to assassin her fiancé, she secretly lets him run away. In the end, he is murdered, and the deplored Ôhime cries herself to death.

---

[7] Shoichiro Kawai, "On Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Shylock the Jewish money-monger," *Shylock's Children* (the brochure), Shochiku, 2023, no pages given.

[8] A conversation in a Zoom meeting between Mr. Kouki Mitani and myself, 3 December 2023.

After the first Shogun passes away, Yoriie, his eldest son, becomes the second Shogun. However, he familiarizes himself too much with the powerful Hiki clan, a rival to the Hôjo clan, so much so that the Hôjo clan deposes the Shogun and sends him to a temple, and make his younger brother Sanetomo the third Shogun. This young Shogun places much confidence in the good-humoured, huge warrior Yoshimori Wada, much like Falstaff. Mitani admits that he portrayed their relationship based on the one between Prince Hal and Falstaff.

The deposed Yoriie's affliction in custody is portrayed in the fashion of Richard II; both were ultimately assassinated. In this drama, when Yoriie's son, Kôgyo, grows up, he is pricked on by Iago-like Yoshimura Miura, the cunning samurai. Miura protests that he cannot reveal the truth of Yoriie's death, and thus deliberately stimulates Kôgyo's curiosity and instigates him to be vengeful against the third Shogun, who is as innocent as Desdemona. Kôgyo is agonized like Othello, and eventually, like Hamlet, avenges his father. In the heavy snow of 27 January 1219, Kôgyo assassinates the third Shogun.

At the centre of this historical drama is Yoshitoki Hôjo (the first Shogun's brother-in-law, performed by Oguri), who conquered the Imperial Court and unified Japan in 1221. At the end of the drama, after completing his task, he is poisoned to death like Hamlet.

In a conversation with me, Mitani said that, in creating this drama, he was greatly influenced by Shakespeare's historical plays, and especially by *The Hollow Crown*, the British television film adaptation of Shakespeare's historical plays. He said that he wanted to use a crown that is handed down from Shogun to Shogun, but the Shoguns were not kings and had nothing to do with crowns. Therefore, he introduced the legendary (fictional) skull of the first Shogun's father, which was passed down by Shoguns from generation to generation. I told him that in Elizabethan period, the word "crown" also signified "the top part of the skull" (*OED* III.19.a.) and that therefore his choice of "skull" is most apposite.

We find so many similarities to Shakespeare's motifs in *Thirteen Vassals of Kamakura Shogun*, which is true to the history of Japan. The talent of Mitani, who so wisely holds a Shakespearean mirror up to the history, is deserving of praise.

Conclusion

In the 2010s, Japanese Shakespearean productions increased in number and flourished in various Japanese styles; this trend continues, but the early 2020s also marked a tendency to treat Shakespeare's plays as if they belonged to the Japan culture. An assumption that Shakespeare no longer belongs to the western culture, accelerated by post-colonialism and cultural relativism, makes it easy

for us to assimilate Shakespeare more directly into the Japanese culture. Mitani's depiction of Japanese history, utilizing various motifs of Shakespeare's plays, is one example, and Mansai's amalgamation of *Hamlet* and traditional Japanese theatres is another.

WORKS CITED

Budra, Paul, and Clifford Werier, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Interface.* London: Routledge, 2022.

Gray, Amlin. *Villainous Company: A play for three actors, adapted from Henry IV and other plays of Shakespeare*. New York: Dramatist's Play Service, 1981.

Kawai, Shoichiro. "From where comes that hatred?" *Singing Shylock* (the brochure). Shochiku, 2023.

Kawai, Shoichiro. "On Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* and Shylock the Jewish money-monger," *Shylock's Children* (the brochure), Shochiku, 2023.

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Eds. G. Blakemore Evans, et al. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Smith, Bruce R., ed. *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Takahashi, Yukihiro. "The best three in this month." *Teatro* 10. September 2023.

Uchida, Youichi. "Theatre Retrospective 2018." *The Nikkei Newspaper*. 24 December 2018.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.03

Tomoka Tsukamoto*
Ted Motohashi**

Hamlet (Un-)Masked: SPAC's *Hamlet* under COVID-19 Restrictions

Abstract: One of the reasons why Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as a play representing the essential problematics of Western Modernity, is still relevant today, is that it contains the cultural dynamics that ranges over issues around colonialism, patriarchy, and individual identities, all of which have been causes and consequences of the Western Modernity. More specifically, in the current context of the declining Western hegemony, symbolized by regional military conflicts and environmental degradation, among other crises, the urgency to freshly produce and interpret this play seems to be increasing. This essay attempts to question the significance of staging *Hamlet* today by examining Satoshi Miyagi's version of the play at the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and through its analysis, we aim to reflect how *Hamlet*, while characterizing Western Modernity, harbors the potential to critique its essence.

Keywords: *Hamlet*, COVID-19 pandemic, sisterhood, orality and aurality, historical temporalities, *Embracing Defeat*.

Introduction: *Hamlet* and Western Modernity

Hamlet has continually been renovated by Western Modernity, posing questions to actors, directors, audiences, and societies at large, and thereby retaining its allure as a contemporary work across all epochs. In this sense, the protagonist's final words, "the rest is silence" (5.2.363)[1] have been heard not as the resignation of the departing, but rather as an invitation to those left behind, urging them to

* International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC), Japan. tomokatsuka@gmail.com
** Tokyo University of Economics, Japan. tedtedm@hotmail.com

[1] All quotations from *Hamlet* are taken from the Arden Edition of the play, edited by Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), and henceforth referred to Act, Scene, Line numbers only in brackets.

undertake the challenges entrusted not only by the protagonist but by the entirety of the play, and this invitation remains relevant today. At the same time, however, as each era enacts its own *Hamlet*, or as Hamlet himself suggests, because the purpose of playing is to hold "the mirror up to nature" (3.2.22), this play inevitably reflects the cultural dynamics of a specific period in which it is performed. Consequently, *Hamlet* as a performative text lends itself to exploration within the specific political, economic, and social contexts of that era, especially in the current "post-modern" settings where Western Modernity is revealing its limitations in various aspects. The dramaturgy of interpreting *Hamlet* thus provides an opportunity to relativize the ideological apparatuses of "the West," which are not necessarily geographically confined.

In the current context of globalization, regional military conflicts, environmental degradation, climate change, worsening food crises, and recurrent infectious diseases, all of which pose existential threats to the planet itself, as Western Modernity exhibits symptoms of decline, one should duly ask, "What is the significance of staging *Hamlet* today?" One distinguished answer to this question could be found in the production of *Hamlet* directed by Satoshi Miyagi at the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in Japan from January to February 2021. This paper aims to examine this production, which was performed with a double cast under severe restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and through its analysis, consider how *Hamlet*, while characterizing Western Modernity, also harbors the potential to critique it from its core. Our analysis of the production will center upon two aspects, both of which are critical in terms of the critique of Western Modernity: one, the possible sisterhood or female solidarity between Ophelia and Gertrude; and two, its resonance to the local politics and history of post-war Japan with references to Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur.

Japanese Theater Performances and the COVID-19 Pandemic

This article attempts to analyze SPAC's *Hamlet* during the recent COVID-19 pandemic which tremendously disrupted public stage performances all over the world. The reason for our taking up this particular production is that it not only typically highlighted the conditions in which stage performances became available during the pandemic but also successfully revealed some deep-seated themes of *Hamlet* by excavating the subliminal impulses of the main characters. We would argue that Miyagi and his team, under the forceful restrictions on the performers as well as on audience members, took advantage of them to indicate the hitherto undermined relationship among the characters of the play.

First, let us briefly summarize the social circumstances that surrounded the stage arts in Japan during the pandemic. In Japan, stage performances were

not prohibited by law but there was no public financial help for the stage artists who were severely affected by the pandemic through the loss of performing opportunities. The public performances were controlled by the Ministry of Culture's "Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of Infections in the Cultural Institutions," which stipulated that if one actor was infected, the performance should be cancelled altogether unless there was an understudy to take up the role. Most of the companies performed without any understudy because of the financial restrictions, and as a result a number of performances had to be cancelled for the whole run. Most companies carried out daily COVID-19 tests for their members, and even if the results were negative, the actors avoided speaking their lines in proximity on the stage. In the auditorium, the audience members were also asked to wear masks and to be seated with enough space in between to keep the so-called "social distance."

Hamlet as a "Masked" Play

SPAC's *Hamlet* also followed these guidelines, but as a theatrical company relatively affluent in terms of finance and personnel (as it was a public company under the aegis of Shizuoka Prefecture), it could afford to set up two separate squads to perform before the different audience.[2] The abiding dramaturgy of this particular *Hamlet* was that it inspired and was inspired by the idea of "masque." First of all, the playing area that was set in the middle of the stage was a square covered with a white cloth whose four corners were hung from the ceiling, which gave an impression that this playing podium was a stage within the stage specifically concocted for a masque as a play within a play.

This version of *Hamlet* had a limited number of characters only, Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes, Horatio and three travelling players. The radical condensation not only made the play short (less than 2 hours) but also highlighted the issues surrounding the families under enormous political pressures from the inside as well as from the outside.

All characters on the stage wore masks covering their mouths, but they were not medical ones but beautifully crafted theatrical ones that could have been considered as a part of the specific costume. Here the masks individually worn by each player asserted his or her artistic as well as social status. If, generally speaking, the masque play tends to fix characters by employing masks,

[2] The cast-list called the two teams T and D respectively, and in this article we mainly discuss the D team performance, one of the reasons of which is that we have already discussed the T team performance in detail which was premiered well before the pandemic. See Tomoka Tsukamoto and Tetsuya Motohashi, *The Theater of Miyagi Satoshi* (Tokyo, Seikyusha, 2016), 162-175.

this particular masked *Hamlet* made them more complex and ambiguous. We would further argue that if Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play that problematizes the complexity and ambiguity involved with humanity through theatrical means, this masked *Hamlet* made us acutely aware of our existence as linguistic animals that controlled and were controlled by the vocal capacities.

Miyagi's rendition of *Hamlet* constituted an attempt to counter and relativize the overwhelming emphasis historically placed on the actions and psyche of the protagonist Hamlet throughout the over 400-year performance and critical history of the play. This assertion will be examined by scrutinizing six key scenes—Hamlet's encounter with the "Ghost of his father," the "play within the play" scene with the travelling players, the "nunnery" scene with Ophelia, the "bedroom" scene with Gertrude, Hamlet's "lamentation" over Ophelia's death, and the "final duel" scene where the main characters met their demise.

"Remember Me": Orality and Aurality within Hamlet's Selfhood

One of the distinctive features of Miyagi's version of *Hamlet* was the awareness of the distance between the body and language, resulting in a transformation of interpersonal communications, which inherently involved contemplation of the relationship between selfhood and otherness. A typical example illustrating this was the manner in which the apparition of Hamlet's deceased father appeared in this production. In other words, the ghost served as both an icon that prompted Hamlet (Yuya Daidomumon) to question his own words and a transformative event that fundamentally altered Hamlet's relationships with other characters.

Following Hamlet's soliloquy lamenting his father's death and his mother's remarriage to his uncle, he received a visit from Horatio and they reminisced about the former king Hamlet's greatness. At that moment, suddenly a shadow appeared on the stage and approached Hamlet. The two shadows overlapped, and Hamlet alternately voiced the words of the Ghost and responded to them with his own voice. While it was not uncommon for the past productions of the play to have Hamlet speak the words of the Ghost which did not physically manifest itself, what set Miyagi's direction apart was the immense size of the two shadows that enveloped the stage, emphasizing the isolation of the dialogue between Hamlet and the Ghost. The presence of Horatio, at the margin of these shadows, was insignificant, and throughout this scene and others, the depth of friendship between Horatio and Hamlet was not highlighted. This reduction (further emphasized by the absence of the soldiers) not only reflected the lack of male bonding surrounding Hamlet but also suggested his affinity towards femininity, as we will discuss his relationship with Ophelia and Gertrude.

One notable aspect of Hamlet's monologue, where he also spoke the Ghost's words, was that it embodied the interdependence between listening

(auditory perception) and speaking (verbal expression) within Hamlet's body. Typically, we consider these two activities as separate entities and use them to infer relationships between self and others. This is the fate of human beings as linguistic creatures and is a core tenet of Miyagi's dramaturgy. As Miyagi stated in the "Director's Notes" for this production (Miyagi, 2):

> […] humans, upon acquiring "language" during their growth, become the loneliest creatures on earth. Only humans don't understand what their parents, companions and neighbors are truly thinking. No other creature is as lonely as humans.

The production maintained this skepticism towards language that severely inhibited communication among the characters and exacerbated their loneliness. Although the characters' words and actions appeared aligned with each other, the viewers were constantly invited to suspect that there was an unbridgeable gap between them. As Hamlet's voice overlapped with the voice of the Ghost, indistinguishable dialogues were delivered, with Hamlet's sole body visible on stage. This scene vividly illustrated the destiny of humans who, having acquired "language," become "lonely."

Photo 1. Hamlet and Ghost: Hamlet (Yuya Daidomumon).
© SPAC photo by Nakao Eiji

In *Hamlet*, the issue of separation between language and body cannot be divorced from issues such as the succession of sovereignty in modern states, gender discrimination, and the hegemonic structures of patriarchy. On one hand, while Claudius resorts to the pre-modern method of seizing power through regicide, his governance, utilizing his sexual relationship with the queen and bureaucratic control over the courtiers, is remarkably modern and efficient. For such modern governance systems, Hamlet's struggles with the distance and alienation between language and body must seem luxurious and philosophical concerns to be ignored. Thus, in the Danish court, which boasts of modern kingship, governed by such efficient administration, Hamlet's existence further deepens his isolation. It was quite obvious that Hamlet was isolated from everyone else in the Court, but in this production, his solitude seemed aggravated by the fact that he wore a mask, as the audience was not certain to whom his voice belonged since we were unable to see his mouth. Throughout this "masked" *Hamlet*, we were unable to certify the interlocutory body as the source of utterance, as we could not witness the very moment of enunciation because of the mask, which in turn leads us to not only realize but also doubt that our human existence was defined and controlled by linguistic communication.

The Pandemic and the Social Distance

One of the new vocabulary introduced into our daily lives during the COVID-19 pandemic was a "social distance." In order to decrease the risk of infection, we were all urged to keep the physical distance between one another. Hamlet can be regarded as a prototype of the person who cannot deal with issues surrounding human communication and the distance between self and others, and this production took advantage of the regulated distancing under the pandemic. First of all, the stage was distanced from the auditorium by a translucent curtain as a precaution against the infection. This curtain, as a kind of the fourth wall, was invisible to the audience's eyesight due to the lighting effect, and its invisible presence made us more aware of the distance between the audience and the performer. This distancing effect created by the curtain had a critical function that not only foregrounded the uncertainty surrounding human communication but also raised the fundamental question about our involvement and collusion with what we witness before our eyes.

The issues associated with social distance were also highlighted by the central performance of the protagonist played by Yuya Daidomumon. His performance was, probably against an image of the mentally brooding and psychologically troubled prince, characterized by sincerity and truthfulness with

a secure, calm and relaxed physicality. Even his clownish behavior was a frank invitation to others for some genuine fun that transcended the duality between sanity and madness. In the following, we examine the effects of his fresh representation of Hamlet in a few key scenes.

"What's Hecuba to him"—The Intersection of Three Histories

The visit of the travelling players (Momoyo Tateno, Fuyuko Moriyama, Mariko Suzuki) not only provided Hamlet with a means to explore the truth behind his father's death through theatrical representations but also taught him the potential of building relationships between past and present, self and others, by assuming dramatic characters with whom he had no actual connection. However, what is crucial when considering the dynamics of historical representation in *Hamlet* is the revelation of three aspects of history through the performance of the travelling players.

Hamlet requested the travelling players who had arrived at the court to perform a scene of "Priam's slaughter" (2.2.444). According to Hamlet, this was from a play that "pleased not the million, t'was caviar to the general" but was "an excellent play" (2.2.432-433, 435). We might wonder why this particular play was an excellent one for Hamlet who regarded players as "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time" (2.2.520). Reflecting on this question becomes the key to Hamlet's discovery of others, as this particular scene enacted by the players was akin to the famous monologue of Hecuba from Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (Euripides 57), which manifests her meta-dramatic and transcendent sense of history, as evidenced by the following lines:

> the gods … they do not care for anything except my suffering,
> and they despise Troy more than any other city.
> And so our sacrifices to them have been useless.
> However, if some god had not turned things
> upside down and thrown us beneath the earth, no one would know about us, and the Muses could never celebrate us in their songs for future generations to remember.

Here, Euripides' sense of history indicates that events such as the destruction of Troy brought about by the gods become history only when recognized by "songs for future generations," that is, as art that subsequent people create. Thus, in this statement by Hecuba, three different temporalities intersect: the historical time of the Greek invasion of Troy, the artistic time of Euripides' representations of the Trojan War, and the dramatic time of Hecuba's re-representing these events on stage. From these perspectives of the intersection of plural historical

temporalities, what made the Hecuba scene within Shakespeare's *Hamlet* particularly intriguing was that the protagonist Hamlet, in his soliloquy after the departure of these travelling players, amusedly imitated a similar sense of temporal discrepancy:

> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wann'd,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
> For Hecuba!
> What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
> That he should weep for her? (2.2.545-554)

Here, Hamlet inadvertently suggested that by immersing themselves in "a fiction, in a dream of passion," theatrical performances could transcend temporal discrepancies and actually reveal historical truths. Hamlet's reflection had a reverse vector from the previous sequence of events. First, there was the current temporal space of the stage where actors assumed the role of present characters ("For Hecuba!"); then there was the movement of actors delving into the temporal space of the characters in this play ("What's Hecuba to him"), and finally, there was the moment when the victims of the Trojan War, represented by Hecuba, became the subject of the actor's performance ("or he to her"). As hinted in the earlier scene of Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost, the relationship between listener and speaker inherent in the theatrical performance inevitably transformed two subjects that logically had no connection, from a relationship between self and other into the one between self and self, or between other and other.

Faced with a series of unexpected and unbearable events—his father's sudden death, his mother's hasty remarriage, and his uncle's ascension to the throne, Hamlet within the Danish court was plagued by an absolute sense of isolation where nothing he said would be communicated to others, leading to a situation where only the Ghost became a communication partner. The exit from this desperate situation was provided by the travelling players, as their theatrical representations indicated historical interconnections between past and present. The theatrical body forcibly created an irrational yet crucial connection between "him" and "Hecuba." *Hamlet*, heralding the dawn of Western Modernity, revealed the essence of drama in the figure of an old woman who should have been destroyed and buried in the darkness of history, but instead was commemorated in a song for future generations. And in Miyagi's version of

the play, these otherwise forgotten voices of the vanquished, comparable to those of Hecuba and the Trojan Women, were emanated from none other than Ophelia and Gertrude.

"Get thee to a nunnery": The Bond Between Mother and Daughter

In the four-hundred-year history of performances and critiques of the play, *Hamlet* has overwhelmingly been interpreted and performed with the psyche, motives, and actions of the protagonist Hamlet at its core. Other characters have only served to embellish his actions, or have been noticed only when confronted by him, including the two female characters, Gertrude his mother and Ophelia his lover. As a corrective to this play that has been so focused on Hamlet as a distinctive individual, the Miyagi version of *Hamlet* attempted to impress upon us the voices and bodies of Ophelia and Gertrude.

For instance, as we mentioned, in the opening scene, Ophelia broke away from the crowd celebrating the coronation of the new king Claudius to address Hamlet. Although Hamlet did not accept her gaze, he did not reject it either. It was also notable that, as we will analyze in detail below, when Hamlet said to Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery" in Act 3, Scene 1, his statement sounded like a sincere plea asking her to take refuge in a safe haven. He seemed to have predicted tragedies that would engulf the Court as if the entire kingdom would be infected with the virus of conspiracies and violence. In this Hamlet, there was nothing cynically self-derogatory and ironic: instead, his sincerity was accompanied by heart-rending sorrowfulness. For another instance, when he asked Ophelia if it was all right to "lie in your lap" (3.2.110-111) in the play-within-the-play scene, his request manifested a genuine friendship rather than a cynical gesture pretending insanity.

Then, what about Ophelia who had to confront this Hamlet as an epitome of sincerity? Probably the word which would best describe Yamamoto's Ophelia was serenity. In the "madness" scene, for example, she did not sing but quietly narrated her lines sitting on the floor without any movement. We sensed that her poetic expressions were not caused by madness but transparent grief from the one who understood the situation very clearly to the extent that she would be victimized by a political maneuver. We were invited to wonder if her poetry was the only means to resist the political discourses manipulated by Claudius and his followers.

These freshly cut figures of Ophelia and Gertrude (Haruyo Suzuki) made us wonder why these women characters had been marginalized and characterized by the male characters as those who were devoid of poetic and political agencies. There was a definite sense of "sisterhood" between Gertrude and Ophelia, but their bond was a result of politically independent actions against the

male dominancy rather than of their being essentially "women." In this production, it was indicated that Ophelia was secretly assassinated by Claudius' order because he sensed the danger posed by these politically regenerated women. We could further argue that there could have been a definite possibility of a coup d'état spearheaded by Ophelia and Laertes supported by the incensed populace, which was prematurely annihilated by Claudius.

In this context of the coexistence of poetry and politics, it is important to remember these words of Ophelia seemed to reach the heart of Gertrude as an observer of this scene. Suzuki's Gertrude had a kind of solemnity as if she were a character from a Greek tragedy: being the Queen who bore the destiny of the country in crisis, she looked as tragic as Hecuba. Her decision to marry the former King's brother Claudius was suggested to be the only viable political choice to keep the turbulent country secure. Gertrude's tragic figure made a stark contrast to the mafia-like Machiavellian Claudius, who in a business suit made no secret to his sexual desire and political ambition, revealing no sense of remorse even in the contrition scene (Act 3, Scene 3).

As a prelude to the "nunnery scene," Gertrude addressed Ophelia as follows:

> Queen. And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
> That your good beauties be the happy cause
> Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues
> Will bring him to his wonted way again,
> To both your honours.
> Oph. Madam, I wish it may. (3.1.38-42)

In this production, this dialogue between Gertrude and Ophelia was performed with such genuine passion that the audience sensed that there was truthful affability between the two women as if they could have been a mother and a daughter, causing Claudius and Polonius, upon hearing these bold words, to openly show agitation and consternation. As Polonius stated, the marriage between a prince and a minister's daughter was not something to be condoned, and for Claudius, Hamlet's marrying and obtaining an heir posed an obstacle to the continuation of his own reign. However, despite the concerns of such men, the bond of trust between these two women forged in this scene, left a strong impression on us, which Claudius would plot to violently sever. One of the reasons why *Hamlet* has been so male-centered and power-centric is that we, as the audience, have only heard the voices of women as lamentation or remorse, ascribed to their "Frailty" (1.2.146). If we were to listen to their voices as those of politically viable individuals, albeit fragile and vulnerable, attempting to fulfill responsibilities in building progressive solidarity between self and others, then, as Hamlet himself would do, we would find a path to escape from the modern male-centric power structures.

Through such signs of female solidarity, Ophelia gained confidence and confronted Hamlet boldly. Encouraged by her demeanor, Hamlet, spotting Ophelia alone, let down his guard, and spoke to her affectionately. When he told Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery" (3.1.121), his remark sounded so sincere that we understood that he was trying to share with her his own feeling of solitude as to how unfortunate it was to live in such a courtly environment, and that the nunnery alone provided a secure refuge in such circumstances. However, when Hamlet, illuminated by the flickering light, realized that Polonius, hiding behind the curtain, overheard their conversation, he was driven by astonishment and despair to repeat, "Get thee to a nunnery, farewell" (3.1.138-139).

Photo 2. Hamlet and Ophelia (Nunnery Scene): Hamlet (Yuya Daidomumon), Ophelia (Miyuki Yamamoto). © SPAC photo by Nakao Eiji

As we have indicated, one characteristic of the Miyagi version of *Hamlet* was that it gave voices to female characters who had previously been overshadowed by Hamlet, asserting their own political and poetic agencies. Therefore, the lines of Ophelia after Hamlet's departure resonated with us as a poignant protest against the court's power dynamics:

> O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
> Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,

> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> Th'observ'd of all observers, quite, quite, down! (3.1.152-156)

After the death of her father Polonius, Ophelia fell into "madness," seemingly imitating Hamlet, but here again, the Miyagi version of *Hamlet* revealed that her "fractured sound" had both societal ramifications and personal justification. Ophelia learned the efficacy of feigning madness from Hamlet, realizing that in this "rotten" world, it was an effective strategy for survival. However, her "insanity," like Hamlet's, posed a serious political threat to Claudius. Therefore, the king secretly ordered Osric (performed by Yoichi Wakamiya who also played Polonius) to assassinate Ophelia. As far as Claudius was concerned, Ophelia's conspicuous presence, as someone who might reveal inconvenient truths, would interfere with his plans, and if Laertes' grief could be turned into anger toward Hamlet, it would be killing two birds with one stone. As if to hint at such machinations by the ruling factions, it was Osric in this production, not Gertrude as in the original, who announced and described Ophelia's death. Thus, the male-centric power system, by cruelly severing the bonds between Ophelia and those around her, sought to further push Hamlet into isolation. However, this production identified Gertrude with the one who ultimately resisted such power structures.

"Breath of Life": Imitating Actions

As previously suggested, the distinctive feature of the Miyagi version of *Hamlet* lay in its ability to resurrect the voices of those we may have heard about but never truly listened to, especially the voices of women such as Ophelia and Gertrude. This was starkly evident in the pivotal encounter between Hamlet and Gertrude in the latter's bedroom. What marked a turning point in this scene was Hamlet's lines appealing to Gertrude's "feeling":

> Hamlet Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
> Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
> Or but a sickly part of one true sense
> Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush?
> …
> Queen O, Hamlet, speak no more.
> Though turn'st my eyes into my very soul,
> And there I see such black and grained spots
> As will not leave their tinct. (3.4.78-81, 88-91)

What was noteworthy in this production is that while Hamlet criticized his mother by aligning her senses with the concrete parts of her body, Gertrude

articulated a reflection that combined "eyes" and "soul" in response, which led her visualizing "black and grained spots" on her part. Reminiscent of the dialogue between Hamlet and the Ghost at the beginning of the play, in which an eerie black shadow indicated the eternal presence of Hamlet the father within the psyche of Hamlet the son, here in this bedroom scene the shadow of Hamlet the husband was transformed into a "black and grained spots" within Gertrude's soul. In other words, a circuit of oral transmission and aural perception was active between Hamlet and Gertrude too, with these visual images, which were manifested by these spots, being foregrounded as both the cause and consequence of the strained relationship between the mother and the son.

However, it was equally intriguing that immediately afterward, when Hamlet confronted the Ghost again, Gertrude did not share Hamlet's vision of the Ghost. In many interpretations of *Hamlet*, the fact that Gertrude did not see the Ghost, had been considered as evidence of Hamlet's fixation on his deceased father and Gertrude's betrayal of her former husband. The insight of the Miyagi version lay not in judging this apparent difference in visual ability between mother and son, but rather in evolving it into a confirmation of the affection between mother and son. As if to prove this, after this conversation, Gertrude never again succumbed to Claudius' dominance and seduction. And as a precursor to this transformation, in response to Hamlet's assertion that his madness was only feigned, she manifestly declared:

> Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,
> And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
> What thou hast said to me. (3.4.199-201)

Hearing these affectionate and sincere words from his mother, Hamlet's stubborn heart finally relaxed its guard, and from a sense of reassurance and trust, his body literally collapsed at Gertrude's feet. Thus, what began as Hamlet's accusation of severing "feeling" from "sight" culminated in Gertrude's declaration that combined "breath" and "life," completing the circuit between the inner sense and the outer existence. Condemnation was redeemed by trust, "life" supported by "breath," and doubt was transcended by love. And Gertrude, from then on until the final moments of her life in Act 5, Scene 2, raising the poisoned cup (apparently knowing it to be poisoned), never abandoned Hamlet.

Photo 3. Hamlet and Gertrude (Bedroom Scene): Hamlet (Yuya Daidomumon), Gertrude (Haruyo Suzuki). © SPAC photo by Nakao Eiji

Immediately after the bedroom scene, Gertrude recounted what had happened to Claudius, but her theatrically feigned delivery was reminiscent of the lamentations by the travelling player. Thus, the strategy of "acting as mimicking" as a means to survive in this "rotten" world was also inherited by Gertrude. However, against such acting, infiltrated by the modern power system, Claudius sought to marginalize these women and maintain his sovereignty. We will next consider Hamlet's solitary resistance to such power politics in his silent and despairing mourning of Ophelia.

Vulnerability and Euphoria

As we examined Gertrude's bedroom scene, the "breath" as the source of human lives transcended not only the linguistic content but also their relationship within the family. We felt that if Hamlet here pretended to be "mad," Gertrude too feigned someone who was beyond the "Queen" or "Mother." Despite the aggressive tone of their exchanges, this pair realized a harmony based on each other's "breath," which was another notable effect accomplished by their respective masks that hid the moment of utterance.

This reunion through the breath was further strengthened by the scene in which Hamlet was confronted with the dead body of Ophelia laid upon a white sheet. Hamlet tried to move her body, but being weak and devastated by sadness, he was unable to do so. In the previous productions before the COVID-19 pandemic, this scene was strikingly accompanied by Hamlet's animal-like roar, but to lessen the risk of infection, that roar was replaced by the song "Euphoria" (composed and sung by the German-born, Netherlands-based singer-songwriter bülow, Megan Bulow). Due to concerns about infection, Miyagi decided to change the staging of this scene so that Hamlet would not vocalize at all. Instead, replacing Hamlet's lament, this high-volume song enveloped the stage throughout this scene. Here, our general conditions under the pandemic where we were prohibited from voicing loudly our feeling of loss were theatrically redeemed non-verbally by this song, strongly suggesting a lost possibility of "euphoria" between those lovers. Here, Daidomumon's Hamlet looked so weak and dejected, echoing sorrow over the lost happiness. This song was a poignant symbol of "what could have been"—the precise feeling so many of us had during the pandemic—, and the weight of Ophelia's body barely carried by the vulnerable Hamlet was exactly a sign of the limitless distance between the two human beings.

The lyrics of this song (Bulow), which fluctuate between rap and rock, with ambiguous pronunciation and meaning, murmured in a nasal voice, went as follows:

You give me, you give me a-a-adrenaline
I give you, I give you d-d-d-dopamine
This euphoria-a-a-a-a-a
This euphoria-a-a-a-a-a
You give me, you give me a-a-adrenaline
I give you, I give you d-d-d-dopamine
But I should warn ya, I should warn ya
This euphoria don't last forever

Here, the "euphoria" (intoxication), induced with the help of drugs, could be seen as a metaphor for the "madness" adopted by Hamlet, Ophelia, and Gertrude as a self-defence mechanism. Whether Hamlet knew about Ophelia's murder or not was unclear, but his profound sense of powerlessness and anger towards society causing her sudden death seemed undeniable, and the following lyrics could be seen as expressing his despair:

With you, it's never an invasion.
I like you all up in my space, oh
About to toy with your emotions
You're about to cry me an ocean

Photo 4. Hamlet Lamenting Over Ophelia: Hamlet (Yuya Daidomumon), Ophelia (Miyuki Yamamoto). © SPAC photo by Nakao Eiji

For the two lovers, trapped in the conspiratorial space of the Danish court and unable to find a space of their own, "cry me an ocean" became the only evidence of their bond. For the lovers in this play, such euphoria was fleeting, and as if to prove this point, Miyagi's *Hamlet* in the end would present a vision of history played out by the victors that reminded us of the postwar origins of the contradictions currently plaguing the Japanese state.

Embraced Silence within the Mask

After the fleeting euphoria faded and tranquility returned to the stage, Osric reappeared to convey the King's proposal to Hamlet for a "trial" by swords with Laertes. Unlike the original text, Horatio did not intervene, and Hamlet immediately accepted the proposal. Hamlet and Laertes started to play promptly, and in this final scene, the Miyagi version prepared a surprising new twist to astonish the audience. Midway through the trial between Hamlet and Laertes, sounds reminiscent of bomber planes reverberated, and the stage began to be tinged with red. Then, Gertrude took the poisoned cup Claudius had arranged, and as if to seek revenge on Claudius who tried to stop her, she raised the cup triumphantly and drank. After the duel, both Claudius and Laertes perished, and Osric was also killed by Horatio, and Hamlet died with the words "the rest is silence" (5.2.363).

Here, it was again Hamlet's mask that phenomenally emphasized the silence. Then, the last question posed by this "masked" Hamlet was critically related to what we should take this silence for. Miyagi's ending of the play was so unique to the extent that it questioned the whole meaning of silence in a particular political and historical context. On Hamlet's death with this silence, Horatio, being absolutely static, did not attempt to drink the poisoned cup, nor did he offer any eulogy to Hamlet. Then, a piece of jazz music and the sound of a stopping jeep were heard, and a shadow with a corn pipe in his mouth covered the whole stage. Then, an English voice that sounded like General MacArthur announced the following message which reminded us of an unforgettable image of the American military occupation of Japan at the end of the Asia Pacific War:

> This quarry cries on havoc.
> For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
> I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
> Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me. (5.2.369, 393-395)

Miyagi mentioned in his "Director's Note" (Miyagi 3) that he was inspired by John Dower's book *Embracing Defeat*, that graphically described the Japanese people's reactions to American occupation. When the speech was completed,

all of sudden, a box filled with Hershey's chocolate bars (another symbolic image of American affluence to the eyes of poverty-stricken Japanese people) dropped from the ceiling. Miyagi, whose constant project had been the revaluation and reexamination of Japanese Modernity through his radical adaptation of Western classical plays, resorted to these historical memories to refer to the people's inferiority complex toward the United States after the War.

Photo 5. Hershey's Falling (Last Scene). © SPAC photo by Nakao Eiji

Conclusion: Embracing the Pandemic

Up to this point, the staging was almost identical to the previous performances before the COVID-19 pandemic, with the dubious thinness of the American voices intact. However, in this masked performance, to further accentuate the dubiousness of this scene, instead of Horatio's voice as in the previous productions, a Japanese voice imitating Emperor Hirohito's responded as follows:

> Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
> And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more. (5.2.396-397)
> Of course, the opinions of the majority of the people will follow suit.

The added last line was invented by Miyagi, which had a definite resonance with Emperor Hirohito's deal with General MacArthur that defined the political shape of the postwar Japan under the American occupation with the preservation of the Emperor system.[3] This moment of closure graphically reflected the outcome of the Japanese nation at the end of the Asia Pacific War in 1945, when Hirohito and the Emperor System surviving the defeat, sought a surrogate father, MacArthur, and the ending of this play presented an intriguing caricature of Japan's postwar history, constructed through the political, economic and military collaboration with the United States through the US Japan Security Pact.

However, the play did not finish with that image only: just before the blackout, we were able to glimpse at the travelling players, now impersonating the destitute Japanese population, slowly climbing up the stage from the back and approaching toward the scattered chocolate bars. Hamlet died, his country was defeated and would be governed by the occupying forces; but the players survived by eating the thrown-away chocolates, transmitting Hamlet's stories. They would continue to survive the postwar era shrewdly, whether following the ruler's conspiracies or not, by eating the food they scavenged. Thus, on one hand, Miyagi's version of *Hamlet* under the pandemic revealed the desire of Western modern hegemonies to fix the history of the victors as the official discourse, while erasing the history of the defeated; but on the other hand, this production covertly suggested that the political and cultural institutions were maintained by the surviving populace, here symbolized by the travelling players as the "abstract and brief chronicles of the times." And in the present context of the pandemic, the theater survived against the infection and viruses, with the players wearing masks observing the "social distances," who represented the stories of our own and others. The final image of Miyagi's COVID-19 *Hamlet* suggested the theater's eternal and indefatigable capacity of "embracing the pandemic."

WORKS CITED

Bulow, Megan. *Euphoria*. https://www.shazam.com/song/1457759950/euphoria. Accessed 10 June 2024.

Dower, John. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: Norton & Company, 1999.

[3] As the newly devised Japanese Constitution during the period of American occupation clearly indicated in Article 1 (on the "Symbolic Emperor System") and Article 9 (on the "Renunciation of War"), the deal was a kind of barter between the Emperorship and pacification under the American occupation which largely constructed the political, economic, military and social regimes in the post-war Japan.

Euripides. *The Trojan Women.* Trans. Ian Johnston. https://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/euripides/womenoftroy.pdf. Accessed 29 February 2024.

Miyagi, Satoshi. “That is the question,” *Theatre Culture*, SPAC Autumn~Spring Season, 2020-2021 #3.

Motohashi, Tetsuya and Tomoka Tsukamoto. *The Theater of Miyagi Satoshi*. Tokyo, Seikyusha, 2016.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Harold Jenkins. London and New York: Methuen, 1982.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.04

Cong Cong*

"Words, Words, Words.—Between Who?": Alterations and Interpolations in the RSC Chinese Translation of *Hamlet*[1]

Abstract: This article is a case study examining the Royal Shakespeare Company's Chinese translation of *Hamlet*, which is part of its "Shakespeare Folio Translation Project" that was launched in 2015. Textual interpolations and alterations of the plot in this version are demonstrated, ranging from cuts of critical scenes and roles to lines and single words rendered in an "audience-friendly" way into an alleged Chinese context. Based on an analysis of the translator's edits, textual transpositions, and choices of Chinese wording, this paper recognizes this version's contribution to the diversity and acculturation of Shakespeare for a special intellectual community in a different culture in twenty-first-century China. Nevertheless, it proposes that this edition be more accurately entitled "RSC *Hamlet* for the Chinese Stage" rather than the officially designated "RSC Chinese Folio *Hamlet*" in order to avoid possible misconceptions of "acknowledged authority" that Chinese readers and audience may conceive under the halo of RSC and the misleading label of "Commissioned Folio Translation."

Keywords: *Hamlet*, First Folio, Chinese translation, community.

Introduction

The opening exchange in *Hamlet*—"Who's there?"—evokes more questions than it answers. It is the first line uttered by the first character who enters the stage. It is not only asked of the soldier's rival in the assumed darkness, but it

* Nanjing University, China. congcong@nju.edu.cn

[1] This article is a reworked paper which was partly presented at the University of Birmingham Li Siguang Lecture on 6 February 2024, and at the 39th ISC in Stratford-upon-Avon on 25 July 2024. This work is supported by the National Major Project "Shakespeare Source Studies" led by Li Weifang, granted by National Social Science Foundation of China (19ZDA294).

also raises a question to the audience who are watching the play around the stage and the readers around the world. Who are they, and of what community, of what time period? Readers and audience, as well as Shakespeare the playwright himself, are in the hands of the editors, translators and directors. The shaping of Shakespeare has always been an interplay among authority, politics and communities. In her book *Shakespeare and East Asia*, Alexa Alice Joubin points out that translations and adaptations are "strangers at home" because "they defamiliarize canonical works and everyday utterances while offering something recognizable through a new language and form" (Joubin, *Shakespeare and East* 1). Are we reading the "true original" Shakespeare? Who is the editor? Who is the censor? Who is the translator? Who is the director? For which readers or audience, in what cultural context? All of these factors matter in the translation and reception of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's works have now been appearing in China for more than a century. After Lin Shu's translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* in 1904, the translation, teaching, performing and studying of Shakespeare had some periods of flourishing in mainland China: 1920s to mid-1940s, mid-1950s to early 1960s, late 1970s to 1990s, and 2000 to 2010s (Meng 12-98, Sun 20-44). The Mandarin translation of *Hamlet* has had the same trajectory. Simon Chau (1981), He Qixin (1986), Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang (1989), Meng Xianqiang (1994), Zhang Xiaoyang (1996), Li Weimin (2002), Li Ruru (2003), Yang Lingui (2003), Murray J. Levith (2004), Alexa Alice Joubin (2009, 2021, 2022), Sun Yanna (2010), Li Weifang (2011), Li Jun (2013), Hiroshi Seto (2016), and Jenny Wong (2017, 2018), among others have done extensive research on the making of Shakespeare in China and the shaping of Chinese culture with Shakespeare. In her *Sinophone Adaptations of Shakespeare*, Joubin has identified a number of recurring themes in Chinese-language translations and adaptations, including localization of the plays and dramatic situations and attempts to preserve Shakespeare's politically useful "foreign-ness" (Joubin, *Sinophone Adaptations* 16-18).

The basic work for any translation is to decide the "base text" from which to start. This is especially so for *Hamlet*, which was printed in two different quarto versions in Shakespeare's lifetime, the First Quarto (Q1, 1603) and the Second Quarto (Q2, 1604), and a folio (F) version edited by Shakespeare's friends and Globe shareholders John Heminge and Henry Condell, in 1623, seven years after his death. Each edition claims in its title page either "as it has been different times acted" (Q1), or "according to the true and perfect copy" (Q2), or "according to the true original copies" (F). Modern editions also have such claims as "offers authoritative texts from leading scholars in editions" (Oxford, Stanley Wells as general editor), "the definitive edition of Shakespeare's work" (Arden the 3rd series), and "loyal to the First Folio," "simultaneously authentic and modern" (RSC, eds, Jonathan Bate and

Eric Rasmussen). But as a matter of fact, besides correcting obvious mistakes and modernizing the spelling and capitalization, most of the additions or cuts are not accompanied by explanatory notes. On some occasions, the translator indicates the "original copy" he/she draws upon: Q2, or F, or Q1, or as Philip Edwards does, to "move between the two (Q2 and F)" (Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor 517).

In 2015, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) set about sponsoring a new Chinese translation of Shakespeare's plays, designed to offer "more theatrically viable, actor friendly, and audience accessible scripts" than had its precursors. Li Jianming, the translator of *Hamlet 1990,* which was directed by Lin Zhaohua, got the commission from RSC to translate *Hamlet* for the Chinese stage. It was subsequently staged under the direction of Li Liuyi in 2018.

This paper considers which community was actually served by RSC project's *Hamlet*. How far does this translation follow the RSC's advertised commitment to the Folio text? What does it subtract and what does it add, and how does it reconcile an alleged fidelity to the Folio with a determination to transpose the action of *Hamlet* and to choose certain Chinese words for the interests of local comprehensibility of a community of intellectuals "here and now" in the first two decades of the 21st century? By examining details of the translator's alterations from her earlier version translated in the last decade of the 20th century for Lin Zhaohua's *Hamlet 1990* and the interpolations she made to the RSC Folio edition, it is shown that both her adapted version based on Zhu Shenghao's widely respected 1940s translation and this RSC commissioned Chinese *Hamlet* look somewhat "far gone" from the "original copies" she based, but "there is method in't." This paper takes Li Jianming's 2018 version as a case study, in comparison with her 1990 translation, to show a different community she was intending to serve with different strategies.

"The Trick to See't": Workaround and Alterations from the Base Texts of *Hamlet 1990* and RSC Folio *Hamlet*

Shakespeare's First Folio was edited and printed in the Jacobean era, in which an "Act to Restrain Abuses of Players" was passed in 1606 to prohibit profanities from being spoken in public places such as theatres. Janet Clare (1990), Michael Dobson (2007) and Hugh Gazzard (2010) have written full-length analyses of the historical context, contents and consequences of this act. One of the consequences is that the First Folio was made "tongue-tied." As a result, F made significant changes in the wording of "God" in Q1 and Q2 to the workaround expressions of "Heaven" or the pagan plural "gods."

In the migration of Shakespeare's text to China, this kind of workaround has frequently been seen in translations of Shakespeare. Jenny

Wong's analysis of Lin Shu's translation of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* is illuminating. The same strategies of "picking and choosing what to domesticate in the translated work to suit his ideology, and how a society's expectations and ideologies shape the translation product" (Wong 389-404) are apparent in the two versions of Li Jianming's *Hamlet*, one translated in the last decade of the 20th century, the other in the second decade of the 21st century. The following examples illustrate how thoughtfully her careful omissions and alterations have been used to reach communities separated by three decades.

Zhu Shenghao's translation, which was based on the collated Oxford Shakespeare and completed in 1943, presenting itself in a very decent and elegant Chinese language, was composed for an intellectually sophisticated readership. References to the Christian context were not unfamiliar to the educated Chinese readership of the 1930s and 1940s. The 39 "上帝" (*Shangdi*, indicating Christian "God") in his version reveal the translator's intentions. Li's *Hamlet 1990* is an edited or adapted version of Zhu's translation. Echoing the depressing social atmosphere of late 1989 and early 1990s, Li's translation and stage director Lin's stage production appeared restrained, suppressed, and conservative with their stage text, though it is regarded as a "rebel against the classics" by Li Ruru (83-99). Almost all Christian references were omitted or skillfully rendered in a roundabout way. In *Hamlet 1990*, "*Shangdi*" appears a mere five times. The other mentions of "God" were either carefully omitted, along with words or lines in the immediate contexts, or converted into traditional Chinese or pagan expressions. While no evidence points at the absence of "God" in *Hamlet 1990* as a consequence of official censorship, it is highly plausible that the careful filter applied was an intentional choice by Li and Lin. By minimalizing references to "God," they adhered to their guiding philosophy: "Everyone is Hamlet" in the special political and cultural context in late 20th century China when few people would make religious utterings of the Christian God publicly.

Due to the Act of 1606, the base text F mentions "God" far less frequently, whereas the RSC Chinese *Hamlet* has 30 occurrences of "*Shangdi*." The restoration of the wording of "God" in this 2018 version indicates that the translator believed that intellectuals of 21st-century China were now more open to and more willing to accept Western ideas. For example, in 1.2,[2] after Horatio

[2] Scene and line references of *Hamlet* follow the RSC Folio Shakespeare, 2nd ed., edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, 2022. Lines from Q1 are spelt as they are in the original copy of 1603 in the Huntington Library facsimile, with line references in *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, 2015, while line references to Q2 follows their Arden 3 *Hamlet*, 2020. The old spelling of F follows the British Library's 2023 edition published on the 400th anniversary of first publication in 1623.

told Hamlet that he and the sentinels had seen the ghost of Hamlet's father, Hamlet asked Horatio to let him hear it. In Q1, it is "For God loue let me hear it." (2.109), and in Q2, "For God's love let me hear" (1.2.194), while in F, it is changed to "For Heaven's love let me hear." (198) RSC *Hamlet* follows the F version. Zhu's translation of Oxford's wording "For God's love let me hear" is "看在上帝的份上, 讲给我听" meaning "For God's sake, let me hear." Li's 1990 version turned it into a line without "God": "怎么回事？怎么回事，快讲给我听!" which literally means "What's the matter? What's the matter? Let me hear!" In the RSC *Hamlet* translated and staged in 2018, Li reinserted the word "*Shangdi*" in Zhu's version "看在上帝的份上, 告诉我" meaning "For God's sake, tell me," though in F and RSC F the wording is "Heaven," a word deeply rooted in the Chinese mindset for thousands of years, and which would be more "friendly" and "accessible" to the common Chinese audience.

Another example is in the ghost scene in 1.5. Between the ghost's two lines—"If thou didst ever thy dear father love" (1.5.27) and "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.29)—is Hamlet's exclamation "O God" in Q1 (5.19) and Q2 (1.5.24), and "O heaven" in F (1.5.28). Zhu translated it into "上帝啊!" ("*Shangdi* oh", meaning "God, oh!"). Hamlet's line here was quietly cut in Li's 1990 version, while she rendered "O Heaven" into "啊，上帝" ("O *Shangdi*," meaning "O God") in her RSC version, instead of the ready-made Chinese word "上天" ("*Shangtian*," meaning "Lord Heaven").

For some Christian references where there is no literal "God" in the original lines, Li used the same strategy. For example, based on Zhu's translation, "上帝的恩惠和慈悲保佑着你们, 宣誓吧 (God (*Shangdi*) blessing you with grace and mercy. Swear.)" for "So grace and mercy at your most need help you, / Swear" (1.5.197), Li worked it into a Chinese oath: "上天作证, 宣誓!" in *Hamlet 1990*, meaning to swear with the witness of Lord Heaven (*Shangtian*), while in her RSC version the word "*Shangdi* (God)" comes back "你们要发誓, 上帝的恩赐会保佑你们！/发誓。 (If you swear, God will bless you with his mercy. Swear)."

It is worth noting that as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, Pu Cunxin, who played in both Lin's 1990 and Li Liuyi's 2018 productions, directed a Mandarin *Hamlet* cast by the Tibetan students of Shanghai Theater Academy (STA) in 2021. Interestingly, Pu chose Li's translation of *Hamlet 1990* as his base text, not the new version for the new century, which he played two years ago, in 2018 and 2019. This might be a further workaround balance when an ethnic minority with their own "God" engaged, for Shakespeare "[…] was from an age, and the timelessness of some of his utterances must be balanced by the contemporary rootedness of others." (Tiffany Stern 160). This case affirms Joubin's statement when she comments on a STA previous Tibetan *Hamlet* based on the cast's film version, *The Prince of the Himalayas*: "These works, in turn, enriched the interpretive possibilities of Shakespeare […] The transformation

of cultural forms and values operates in both directions, thus informing and giving voice to the individual interpretations" (*Chinese Shakespeares* 35).

Li's intention to serve the Chinese intellectuals of the 21st century who had been more widely and intensively exposed to the Western modern and contemporary philosophers can be illustrated with her rendering of the following two lines into philosophical terms. In her *Hamlet 1990*, she simply followed the exact words of Zhu's famous translation for "To be or not to be" (3.1.62) with "生存还是毁灭 (to live or to die, to survive or to be destroyed)" which had almost become cliché in the language of all walks of life in China. She added a repetition of these words in the same line with the two verbs reversed. In her RSC translation, she smartly and adeptly translated it into "在还是不在," literally equivalent to "to be or not to be." This is an everyday Chinese interlocution meaning "Are you here or not / at home or not / present or absent?" But to the educated audience who by "now" in the second decade of the 21st century and "here" in China, the philosophical implications of Martin Heidegger's ontological term "being," or "Dasein" in German, will immediately come to mind when reading or hearing this sentence. With her educational background and research work experience in Germany, and her conscious efforts to add a philosophical air and the pleasure of thinking to Chinese academia and theatre (2019) (235-245), this sophisticated wording can be taken as a signpost to evaluate Li's translation. The translation of "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" (1.2.133) is another example. The surface meaning of her translation "如此地恶心、空洞、乏味和毫无意义" is "disgusting, decaying, boring, uninteresting," but all the four words are deliberately selected from Jean-Paul Sartre's vocabulary, which equals to the existentialist notions "nausea, void, banality, and nothing."

There are some other "disloyal" changes in Li's RSC *Hamlet* translation, where the RSC Folio *Hamlet* is found not faithful to its base text, the F. One example is in the line "O, treble woe, / Fall ten times treble, on that cursed head" (5.1.189-190), in which the RSC Folio *Hamlet* takes the word "woe" from Q2's wording "O treble woe, / Fall tenne times double, on that cursed head" (5.1.235-236), while taking the "ten times of treble" from F and neglecting the "woer" in F: "Oh terrible woer, / Fall ten times trebble, on that cursed head." In Li's 2018 translation, she goes back to the original F and uses "woer" in her translation, neglecting the "woe" in the RSC *Hamlet*. Other inauthentic cases could be found in the translator's decision in her use of plural or single forms, such as to include Hamlet's aside at the presence of Corambis/Polonius "Olde doating foole" (7.233) in Q1, rather than the line in her base text RSC F or the old "original copies" of F (2.2.216) and Q2 (2.2.214) "These tedious old fools." With a "trick to see't" the remarkable craftsmanship and deeply rooted philosophical and political concerns in them could be easily identified.

Other than the changes and alterations here and there in Li's editing and translating, there is one more point which looks not "loyal" to her English base text of the RSC *Hamlet*. RSC's version has copious footnotes stipulating the actors' imagination in and acting on the "country matters" because of its editing guideline to be "theatrically viable and actors friendly." However, Li's 2018 version remains "loyal" to its Chinese base text Zhu's translation as she did in her *Hamlet 1990* in this regard. No obscene language is found anywhere in her two translations of *Hamlet*, though the sexual expressions are no longer taboos in the Chinese mindset or in publications and stage productions.

In terms of discovering nuances in the original meaning and locating a closer or roundabout expression in the target language, the practice of the RSC Shakespeare Chinese Translation Project is exemplary. Greg Doran points out in his introduction to this project that: "One of the first things to recognize about the play is that there can be no such things as a definitive production as there is no definitive text" (qtd. in Li Jianming 3). Thus, they invited the translators of the commissioned plays and the RSC playhouse directors to work in depth together at lengthy stage readings and workshops with the target actors and audience for an actor-friendly and audience-accessible text. This kind of textual and theatrical "proofreading" is very constructive and effective for the benefit of the target communities, as well as for Shakespeare's original text and the originality of the creative work of the rewriters (Cong "Shakespeare's Plays").

"There Is Method in't": Major Interpolations, Subtractions and Additions in RSC Chinese Folio *Hamlet*

One of the most striking identifiable features of the First Folio is the four o's of Hamlet's very last line before he dies: "The rest is silence. O, o, o, o" (5.2.305). The Second Folio, printed in 1632, has the same dying line. The Third Folio, printed in 1663, and the Fourth Folio, printed in 1685, have three o's left. Q2 ends with "The rest is silence" (5.2.342) with no "o", while Q1 has a different last line for Hamlet: "Farewel Horatio, heauen receiue my soule" (17.111). Most modern editions delete these o's, perhaps for the same consideration of the editor of the new Oxford *Hamlet* G. R. Hibbard who follows the suggestion of E. A. J. Honigmann who, in turn, categorizes them as one of Shakespeare's "crypto-directions" which should be replaced with an "appropriate equivalent" stage direction such as "with a long sigh" (Hibbard 352, Honigmann 123). However, this may not be an "appropriate" strategy for editing Shakespeare, for Shakespeare's dramatic language speaks for itself, though the stage directions are scarce in F.

Li Jianming and Li Liuyi's version is the only stage production in China that officially claims being a production based on F. They advertised this

on every occasion, as well as printing "Royal Shakespeare Company Folio Translation Project" on the playbill and "RSC First Folio Text" on the book cover of the preview text officially printed by the Chinese publisher. But this translation ends with "The rest is silence" without the four hallmark o's. Other than the minor and major subtractions and additions, Li's translation has the "Q2 only" soliloquy, "How all occasions do inform against me" (4.4.31). With this evidence, we can safely say this is a "pick and mix" version, actually more a quarto than a folio. Or, it can rightly be called a collated adaptation, a new artistic creation by the translator and the director, especially when we consider the end of this version:

HAMLET:
I die. Thou shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.
The rest is silence.
HORATIO:
Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince.
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
(Exeunt marching, carrying the bodies. Cannon is fired.)
(Finis)

This ending looks abrupt. Lines about news from England and the prophecy for Denmark, together with the English Ambassador and Fortinbras, are put to silence. But it does not clash with Doran's guidelines when he initiated the RSC translation project. A passage from his "Call for Translators" for the project specifies: "They will draw upon the RSC's extensive archive of different production edits (including cuts, textual transpositions, and doubling or combining of characters) going back well over the last half-century. This long history of theatre-making, and the RSC's deep understanding of the challenges arising from performing these 400-year-old plays, will form the bedrock of the translations' 'theatrical viability.'"

On the bedrock of this principle, RSC has a long tradition of making cuts and interpolations in their productions. One example of such a cut was by John Caird, erstwhile associate director of RSC. In an interview, he said: "In any event, it seemed to me that Fortinbras has absolutely no moral right to say what has been written for him. We don't know him, we don't care about him, […] So I cut Fortinbras and all that goes with him, ending the play with Horatio's lines" (217-218). However, he was not the first director who cut the part of Fortinbras to make Shakespeare's work "maimed and deformed", to quote from "To the Great Variety of Readers" Heminge and Condell put in the First Folio before

Shakespeare's plays. Dobson's account for Fortinbras having been "on the endangered list for more than three centuries" is exhaustive and informative (Dobson, "Cutting, Interruption" 269-275). Among such practices, the generation of Li Jianming must know Laurence Olivier's cut. He not only cut Fortinbras but also left Rosencrantz and Guildenstern out of his 1948 film version. This film was the first movie version of *Hamlet* introduced to China in the 1950s, which was censored from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s during the Cultural Revolution, then revived in the 1980s. It was a cultural icon of two or three generations in China, which must be part of the cultural memory of Li Jianming and Li Liuyi.

Along with Fortinbras, Li also cut the ambassador from England who is among Hamlet's chief concerns before he dies, which is obviously a chief concern of Shakespeare the playwright himself, for Fortinbras and the ambassador(s) from England enter the stage in the last scene in all the three versions of Q1, Q2 and F.

An investigation of the spelling of the word "struck" and its variants might be helpful to identify the irony that the editors of F sophisticatedly and adeptly put into the role of Fortinbras and the end of the whole play. Throughout the play according to the original printing of 1623 F, there are seven places with the word "struck" or its old spelling "strook/strooke/stroke":

1.1.7 Barnardo: 'Tis now strook twelue.
1.4.5 Marcellus: No, it is strooke.
2.2.510 Hamlet: Bene strooke so to the soule
3.2.226 Hamlet: Why, let the strucken deere go weepe
3.2.269 Rosencrantz: Then thus she sayes: your behauior hath stroke her into amazement, and admiration.
5.2.26 Hamlet: My head shoud be struck off.
5.2.315 Fortinbras: So bloodily hast strooke.

Unfortunately, the ingenuity of the "textual logic" (Kastan 8) created by the First Folio editors is completely erased by the modernization of the spelling of this word by RSC Folio *Hamlet*, as well as other modern editions, in which they were all spelt as "struck/stricken," perhaps with an assumption that the variants were made by Jaggard's compositors' mistakes and that all spelling must be "modernized". More disastrous is the "silent change" by Bate and Rasmussen to give Marcellus's line in 1.4 to Hamlet (2007, 2008, 2022), a misprint which could be regarded as a blunder that has the humanistic and artistic value of the First Folio *Hamlet* greatly diminished. Of all the seven uses of "struck," only two are in the regular modern form in the original printing of the First Folio, both when Hamlet addresses others. Three are "strook/strooke/stroke" spoken by the "baser nature" (to quote from Hamlet

when he talks to Horatio about how he sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death): Barnardo, Marcellus, Rosencrantz. Of the two "strooke"s left, one is by Hamlet when he soliloquizes. He does not use "struck" as he does when talking to others. He is using his own sociolect to speak to himself. As a matter of fact, what Rosencrantz passes on to Hamlet in 3.2 is from Hamlet's mother's tongue, which could be inferred as Hamlet's native sociolect. The last one is by Fortinbras, with "strooke" instead of the modern "struck". With a pun "I am now, sir, mudded in Fortune's mood" from *All's Well That Ends Well* (1.2.4), Appleton Morgan illustrates how Shakespeare might be heard when his English was pronounced in London, with "brook" heard as "bruck" (Morgan 397) and "muddy" sounding similar to "moody" (419). Thus, we could logically infer that "strook/strooke/stroke" was pronounced "struk" in the Warwickshire dialect in Shakespeare's time. The seven places in Q2 are all spelt with "oo" as "strooke" or "strooken". The deliberate editing of changing two of them into "u" in F should not be ignored by later editors. In the 400 years history of editing Shakespeare's works, "although none of these announced any editorial changes, each in fact took small steps to update language usage and correct obvious errors. Each also inadvertently added its own mistakes or mistranscriptions in the process of resetting the nine hundred pages of type" (Smith 183). To use Shakespeare's hometown dialect pronunciation might be an effective "trick" to zoom in on the "rustic" playwright and the upstart of another "rustic crow" to the throne of Denmark, and to lay the tragic irony with Fortinbras at the very end of the whole play. It is somewhat a pity that Li's translation also turns awry by giving Marcellus' line to Hamlet, a point which may mislead the Chinese readers and theatre workers.

The rediscovery of Q1 shows that all three extant versions end with the Norway Prince Fortinbras taking the Danish throne without any effort. This is also a strong point that can help justify that the role of Fortinbras should not be cut. This is the irony and absurdity that Shakespeare so carefully infused into the play: Hamlet, committed to the great cause of revenge, dies in a duel that is not his choice, though he reluctantly claims that "readiness is all." The four o's were added by the First Folio editors to show the inner frustration and helplessness of Hamlet—the rest seems not yet silence. Its significance is much more than a stage direction for the actor to give a long sigh. "There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves" (3.4.208). They must be "translated" (3.4.209), for the readers and audience should "understand them" (3.4.209). This is one of the "very necessary" (Johnson 54) tasks fulfilled by Heminge and Condell as the editors, whose duty, is to "have before him all possibilities of meaning, with all possibilities of expression" (Johnson 55).

In fact, the two mature versions, Q2 and F, have brilliant foreshadowing ironic lines such as "Long live the King" in the opening of the whole play. Even in the "bad quarto" Q1, such effort can be found in the

opening lines of Claudius, which are not those with which we are familiar in Q2 and F about the death of Old Hamlet and his "sometime sister now our queen," but rather the words to the two ambassadors whom he is sending to Norway to show his chief concern—Fortinbras. The stage directions of the last scene in Q1 doubly emphasize the role of Fortinbras. There are two stage entries, one for "Voltemar and the Ambassadors from England," the other, in a separate line, "enter Fortenbrasse with his traine." Fortinbras is deliberately not placed in the same line as the others. He enters distinctively, strikingly, not only in the last scene but also in this world of absurdity that the whole play of *Hamlet* illustrates. The triumph of the upstart Fortinbras from Norway at the end of the tragedy of the Prince of Denmark is a masterful magic touch for the plot of the play, which highlights Shakespeare's deep thinking on the absurd reality of human life as a humanist thinker. Shakespeare would be "cut short" with this kind of "abridgements of humanity" (Shaaber 382) if Fortinbras and the relevant plot were omitted.

With the cutting of Fortinbras in Li's translation, the most valuable part of the play and the gist of this great work of Renaissance are lost. Another major textual interpolation of Li's text is the position of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (3.1.62-96) and Ophelia's "What a noble mind" (3.1.144-154). Li moved this "nunnery scene" to 2.2 immediately after Polonius declaring he has found the "very cause of Hamlet's lunacy" (2.2.52) and offering to "loose" Ophelia to meet Hamlet. Thus Hamlet's first encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players, his speeches about "prison", "nutshell" (2.2.232-245), and "What a piece of work is a man" all appear in a later position, so does Hamlet's decision to use the "Mousetrap" and his 58 line soliloquy "Now I am alone […] catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.467-524) as well. Psychologically and dramatically, this sequence of actions, dialogues and soliloquies seems broken, though it might be convenient for the stage movement of the "lawful espials" (3.1.35) and Hamlet. As noted by S. L. Riep, the translator who translated *Hamlet 1990* back to English that, "Lin Zhaohua's *Hamlet* is an adaptation rather than a straightforward translation of the original Shakespeare play" (qtd. in Joubin *Sinophone Adaptations* 23). This kind of adaptation is tolerable when considering that the target audience is not the general public but intellectuals who are quite familiar with the "original" *Hamlet* and who do not lack humanistic education, since *Hamlet* has long been included in the reading list of required literary classics by China's Ministry of Education for high schools and colleges (Cong "The 1964 Shakespeare Jubilee" 378). But for the sake of ordinary readers and theatregoers, it is crucial that the translator and the team of the stage production clearly make known that this is an adaptation or appropriation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, not the "original" *Hamlet* produced in the time of English Renaissance, though the base text has a tag of "Royal Shakespeare Company First Folio Edition." Actually, as Li Ruru observes,

because of Lin's devise of role-switching, "even those from the intellectual elite found the production more fascinating than accessible… Seeing this performance, audiences were too busy trying to work out who was who, and why, to keep track of the plot or fully appreciate the lines" (97). Li Liuyi in his 2018 production took a step further. He had the same actress play Ophelia and Gertrude who intentionally offers no obvious cues in costume, speech voice and body movement to distinguish between the two characters on the stage. Once again, "the play lost its basic power of communication" (Li Ruru 97).

We do not know whose hand is heavier, who is more responsible for the translated text, Li Jianming as the translator, or Lin and Li Liuyi as the director? Graham Watts argues in his *Shakespeare's Authentic Performance Texts: The Case for Staging from the First Folio* that what is set out on the page is not Shakespeare's text but an editor's or director's script, and that in some cases this script differs so greatly from the First Folio that it should rightly be called an adaptation (3-29, 213-218). Such creative scripts of translation and stage production undoubtedly have played their own, different roles in the cultural accumulation and the acculturation in China in the 20th and the 21st century. However, in a picture that the significance of Shakespeare in China as part of humanistic education in the current special historical context is profound, the "true original Shakespeare" should not be distorted and misrepresented when there is a remarkable demand in contemporary China for the access to Shakespeare. For instance, on August 3, 2024 *Sleep No More* in-residence in Shanghai completed its 2000th performance since the British company Punchdrunk first introduced it to China in 2016. In the past seven and a half years, 600,000 people have had the immersive theater experiences with this dance adaptation of *Macbeth*. Based on the observation of the audience practice in *Sleep No More*, D. J. Hopkins discusses the "slippery" discourse of Shakespeare performances: "[…] a performance of a play by Shakespeare will mean different things to different audience members." The audience would most probably fail to appreciate the essence of this play if they had not read any text faithful to the original play. In contemporary China where there is an urgent need for intellectual enlightening, for the understanding of the fundamental human values and the dignity of all human beings, the efforts to increase access to the "true original" Shakespeare matter a lot.

Conclusion

The RSC *Hamlet* is somewhat "gone" from the First Folio as they advertised being "loyal" to the "original copy." The RSC Chinese translation is "gone" from the commissioned base text "RSC Folio Edition", and "far gone" (2.2.194) from the First Folio. As Dobson noted in his book review for the RSC Folio:

"There is no suggestion that the RSC has ever performed Shakespeare's plays in the versions given here, or that they ever intend to do so" (Dobson, "For His Nose"). The examples displayed in this paper illustrate that since there is no "perfect original text," it is impossible to achieve a perfect Chinese translation. Without "perfect" translations, perfect stage-texts are also out of the question. Each version has its merits. Every text edition, every translation, and every adaptation is original. It is a value-added "dialogue" with Shakespeare's "spirit" (Kastan 136) in a new historical context and cultural space, provided that the "true original" is accessible to the communities concerned.

Alexa Alice Joubin's theorizing of the ethics and the "pleasures of (in)fidelity" is enlightening and stimulating. She indicates that ethics is "an essential" but "often missed term in discussion of Shakespeare and appropriation" (Joubin and Rivlin 2). Though "the interplay between Shakespeare and China thus reveals the plurality and the referential instability of these discursive entities" (Joubin, *Chinese Shakespeares* 32), there is the possibility to secure one certainty amongst so many uncertainties, that is the humanity, the tragic pity and fear, and the beauty and rhythm of Shakespeare's original artistic creation, to capture the inner power of humanity in Shakespeare which can enlighten human beings of all times. It is vitally important and valuable to produce a faithful translation of either F, Q2 or even Q1 here in China aimed at a community, including the educated and the elites, who are not quite familiar with the original texts either. And more specific clarification and acknowledgement should be required for print editions and stage scripts in research documentations, book publications and stage productions. The pluralistic intertextuality of adaptations should be encouraged in the endeavors of "owning Chinese Shakespeares" or "disowning Shakespeare" (Joubin, *Chinese Shakespeares* 23-43, 195-227). Translations could be enhanced by a variorum approach. Copious textual notes and lengthy explanatory notes should accompany the translation and re-scripting of each line, displaying the differences between the translated text and the base text(s) to give a full picture of the "original Shakespeare," rather than "quietly" picking and mixing non-transparently. This could convey a full range of information and help build an understanding equal to the original text in its original cultural and historical context. Otherwise, it is unfair to deprive the Chinese audience of access to the full range of meanings of the English text. A hypertext (Kastan 124-133) of facsimiles of extant old spelling copies and all existing English and translated texts, including literary or stage and screen adaptations, might provide a textual utopia which will be helpful for different communities with different needs. As to the Chinese text discussed in this paper, I would propose it be entitled "RSC *Hamlet* for the Chinese Stage" rather than the officially designated "RSC Chinese Folio *Hamlet*" if the project could be resumed and further implemented in the post-pandemic era, to help avoid the possible misconception of

"acknowledged authority" that Chinese readers and audience may conceive under the halo of RSC and the misleading label of "Commissioned Folio Translation". After all, the initiating idea for this project is simply to produce as many plays as possible in the catalogue of the First Folio in a viable way on the Chinese stage rather than committed to providing faithful translations with the Folio copies as the base texts.

WORKS CITED

Caird, John. "*Hamlet* in Performance: The RSC and Beyond." RSC *Hamlet.* Eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, Macmillan, 2008. 217-218.

Cao, Shujun and Sun Fuliang. *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*. Haerbin: Haerbin Press, 1989.

Chau, Simon (Zhou Zhaoxiang). *A Critical Study of the Chinese Translations of* "*Hamlet*." Hong Kong: CUHK Press, 1981.

Clare, Janet. *Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority: Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd ed., 1999.

Cong, Cong. "The 1964 Shakespeare Jubilee in China: Its Aftermath and Its Echoes." *Shakespeare Jubilees: 1769-2014*. Eds. Christa Jansohn and Dieter Mehl. Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2015. 371-383.

Cong, Cong. "Shakespeare's Plays in China: Translation, Adaptation, and Editions." *China Reading Weekly*, 8 November 2023. https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/bsveE6yl0OeuwUKueBpf2w. Accessed 10 August 2024.

Dobson, Michael. "For His Nose Was as Sharpe as a Pen, and a Table of Greene Fields." *London Review of Books*, 10 May 2007.

Dobson, Michael. "Cutting, Interruption, and the End of *Hamlet.*" *New Theatre Quarterly* 32.3 (2016): 269-275.

Fernie, Ewan. "Shakespeare and the Prospects of Presentism." *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005): 169-184.

Gazzard, Hugh. "An Act to Restrain Abuses of Players (1606)." *The Review of English Studies* 61.251 (2010): 495-528.

He, Qixin. "China's Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.2 (1986): 149-159.

Hibbard, G. R., ed. *Hamlet*. General Editor, Stanley Wells. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Honigmann, E. A. J. "Re-enter the Stage Direction: Shakespeare and Some Contemporaries." *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976): 117-126.

Johnson, Samuel. *Preface*. In *The Dramatick Works of William Shakespeare*. Vol. 1. Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1802.

Joubin, Alexa Alice. *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Joubin, Alexa Alice, ed. *Sinophone Adaptations of Shakespeare: An Anthology, 1987-2007*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Joubin, Alexa Alice. *Shakespeare and East Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Joubin, Alexa Alice and Elizabeth Rivlin, "Introduction: Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation." *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation.* Eds. Alexa Alice Joubin and Elizabeth Rivlin. New York: Palgrave, 2014. 1-20.

Kastan, David. *Shakespeare and the Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Levith, Murray. *Shakespeare in China*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

Li, Jianming, trans. *Hamlet 1990*. Stage text. Beijing: Lin Zhaohua Workshop, 2008.

Li, Jianming, trans. Preview book for RSC *Hamlet*. Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2019.

Li, Jun. *Popular Shakespeare in China: 1993-2008*. Diss, CUHK, 2013. https://repository.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/item/cuhk-327651.

Li, Ruru. *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*. Hong Kong: HKU Press, 2003

Li, Weifang. *A Critical Study of Liang Shiqiu's Work on Shakespeare*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2011.

Li, Weimin. *Glory and Dream: Shakespeare in China*. Hong Kong: Tianma Press, 2002.

Meng, Xianqiang. *A Brief History of Shakespeare in China*. Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, 1994.

Morgan, Appleton. *A Study in the Warwickshire Dialect.* New York: The Shakespeare Press, 1899.

Seto, Hiroshi. *Shakespeare in China.* Trans. Chen Linghong. Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Press, 2016.

Shaaber, M. A. "A Note on Hamlet's 'Abridgement'." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3.4 (1952): 381-382.

Smith, Emma. *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book*. Oxford: OUP, 2016.

Stern, Tiffany. *Making Shakespeare: The Pressures of Stage to Page*. London, New York: Routledge, 2004.

Sun, Yanna. *Shakespeare in China*. Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2010.

Thompson, Ann and Neil Taylor, eds. *Hamlet*. Arden Third Series. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Watts, Graham. *Shakespeare's Authentic Performance Texts: The Case for Staging from the First Folio*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2015.

Wong, Jenny. "Lin Shu: Translation and the Making of the Chinese Culture." *Studies in Church History* 53 (2017): 389-404.

Yang, Lingui. *Materialist Shakespeare and Modern China*. Diss. Texas A&M University, 2003.

Zhang, Xiaoyang. *Shakespeare in China*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.

Zhu, Shenghao, trans. *Hamlet* in *Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Vol. 9. Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1978.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.05

Paul Innes*

Rank Intersectionality and *Othello*

Abstract: As a crucial concept in critical theory, intersectionality satisfies a need within global Shakespeare reception studies. The reason for this is the way it permits cross-currents between conceptions of race and gender in particular; it also allows for an awareness of the historical and cultural location of the audience or reader as distinct from the moment of the production of a particular play. It is therefore fundamentally dynamic and can be further extended via discussions of rank, sexuality or religion. This essay argues for the importance of a lively approach to intersectionality that integrates concerns of race and gender in *Othello* with social rank in Shakespearean Venice and Cyprus. The article deliberately eschews a psychological analysis of character, insisting that a sense of inwardness, that these stage figures should somehow be treated as though they were real people, is a much later, modern preoccupation. Instead, the play is treated as not only early modern but pre-modern. This is also why there is no treatment of class as such; that too is a much later modern category that carries all sorts of baggage, anachronistic and otherwise. Class is not a sophisticated enough notion to account adequately for the permutations in a society that was obsessed with tiny gradations in rank, dignity and honour. Beginning with reference to Toni Morrison's conceptualization of modern American literature as predicated on a constructed whiteness, the essay moves by analogy back towards Shakespeare's drama to the structured interplay between gender, rank and race that is this play. Althusser's sense of interpellation is revived in order adequately to describe how these positions work to emplace Othello and Desdemona in order to open up the play to a global perspective that accounts for multiple possibilities. The article therefore goes well beyond the old familiar groupings so beloved of character-based criticism, instead insisting on the primacy of social definitions of the positions available to the personages in the play.

Keywords: colour, Desdemona, Othello, Toni Morrison, rank, whiteness.

* United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates. paul.innes@uaeu.ac.ae

Shakespeare Studies seems to attract waves of critical attention that relate to the interests of a group or school of writers. It might seem this has been true at least since the "theory wars" of the 1980s, as theorists inflected forms of Marxism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, feminism and more. Another way to look at it, however, is that "Shakespeare" has always been a centre of gravity for critical writing, theorised or otherwise. The only other area of English literary study that perhaps approaches his weight—and the weight of tradition associated with him—might be Romanticism. This is not to reduce the importance of studies that concentrate on modernism or contemporary writing, but instead to point to the central, indeed ideological importance, of the bard and also the Romantic tradition that helped cement his prominence. The confluence is salutary; it is certainly not accidental.

Perhaps one of the most important and longer-lasting effects of the ferment of the 1980s has been the postcolonial turn in Shakespeare Studies, literary theory, and critical theory more generally. In Britain, the moment produced *Alternative Shakespeares* (Drakakis 1985) and *Political Shakespeare* (Dollimore and Sinfield 1985), with both being published at almost exactly the same time. These collections each included an important early foray into a recognisably postcolonial Shakespearean subject, essays concentrating on *The Tempest*. Paul Brown's essay in *Political Shakespeare* (Brown 1985) is less well known than that by Francis Barker and Peter Hulme in *Alternative Shakespeares* (Barker and Hulme 1985), but his title echoes Prospero's discursive and ideological positioning of Caliban as "mine." There is a reason for going over this relatively recent history: Kim F. Hall's subsequent development of this work itself echoes Brown's title, and her book has been critical for post-colonial Shakespeare Studies especially because, as indeed is signalled in her sub-title ("economies of race and gender in early modern England"), she elaborates upon the conjunction of race and gender in the period—inaugurating what we might recognise now as intersectional studies (Hall 1995).

Almost contemporaneous with Kim Hall's work is a trilogy of essays on the whiteness of the American literary imagination by Toni Morrison, published slightly earlier in 1993. The book is a version of three lectures in which she investigates the symbolically central role of blackness to American literature even and especially when its creative texts are resolutely white. Now of course this is a much later cultural formation than that of Shakespearean drama and one would not wish to elide, obfuscate or erase historical specificity. However, the discourses by which the emerging British Empire begins to define itself over and against other cultures mark plays such as *Othello* as inevitably racially charged; so much, so obvious. In effect, then, Morrison treats the play as a notionally foundational text. More precisely, however, the mechanism by which the empire completely refuses to acknowledge that other cultures do exist, especially in supposedly "undiscovered" lands, is the ancestral ideology for the literary

manoeuvres discussed by Morrison. In a long but crucial paragraph, she includes a comment on the process of differentiation that lies behind the establishment of the American literary canon. Unlike the European experience, she writes that in America:

> There was a very theatrical difference underfoot. Writers were able to celebrate or deplore an identity already existing or rapidly taking a form that was elaborated through racial difference. That difference provided a huge payout of sign, symbol, and agency in the process of organizing, separating, and consolidating identity along culturally valuable lines of interest. (Morrison 39)

There is an enormous amount of information here, modulated by means of a subtle, writerly vocabulary, style and choice of words. The later American experience has an added element that was not so certain in Shakespeare's time: the large black "underfoot" population. In this respect, another resource is ready to hand in addition to the inheritance of European discourses of empire and Morrison is exceptionally careful to show that the result is a deliberately constructed set of racial differences. She uses a vocabulary, almost itself an invisible undertone, of capitalist financial imperatives to drive home her point; as her final sentence suggests, there comes a "huge payout […] along culturally viable lines of interest." American literature is therefore whitened in concert with the power practices of American commerce in its relentless drive to profit.

It might seem odd at this juncture to relate her points back to Shakespeare, perverse even, in a way that would probably appeal to the topsy-turvy carnivalesque pre-modern world of Shakespearean drama. However, what is perhaps even more telling is Morrison's strategic use of the term "theatrical": why does she incorporate a gesture towards theatrics in an essay on literature? Perhaps the ghost of Arthur Miller can be glimpsed, since she is dealing with the literary imagination that lies behind (and lies about) the constitution of the American Dream, a bare whiteness that leads to tragedy because it is everyone else's nightmare. Especially if one comes from any of the resolutely excluded categories: the indigenous nations; black people; women; immigrant Poles, Irish, Chinese, or Italians for sure; the planet—the list is almost endless. Morrison is too sophisticated a writer for the allusion to drama to be incidental or accidental. What she is doing, therefore, is characterising the process of what she names "Africanism," with its attendant echoes of Orientalism, as a dynamic that is structurally tragic because it is socially produced.

Her analysis demonstrates why American literature is assumed somehow to be white, male and (mostly) middle class. Universities run courses in African-American, Chinese-American, Latin-American, Latina-American, or native-American literature, to name just a few—and one only has to peruse the

jobs lists on sites like the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to see the variations.[1] But does anyone run courses on White Male American Literature? That is the default setting and because it is white it is invisible. Or, rather, it has been constructed as invisible because it is assumed to be "natural;" Morrison's whole book is an exercise in demonstrating how it came into existence as a historically and culturally specific entity.[2]

Silencing the Canon

In the abstract, it is possible to take a step back from the historical moment for which Morrison is writing to note that she is interrogating the formation of the literary canon. Her focus is of course on the systematic uses and abuses of colour as opposed to, say, a denigration of supposedly minor genres or genders. The paragraph quoted above begins by questioning the moves made by literary critics and their colonisation of the curriculum in the universities has been a crucial factor in deciding what is somehow "good" literature, in both senses of the word. At the pinnacle is the constructed edifice of the Bard of Avon, wee Willie Shakespeare, whose prominence bears no resemblance to his fortunes during his own lifetime and silently passes over the fact that he seems to have made a fortune of his own. By analogy, therefore, critical race studies on Shakespeare adopt some of the same strategies as Morrison does in relation to the later American canon. Revealingly, they encounter many of the same fundamental structural problems (Smith 2016).

In her Introduction to the recently published Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race, Ayanna Thompson describes changes that have occurred in the representation of Cleopatra. She concentrates on the Queen of Egypt as a touchstone for attitudes towards racially aware study amongst academic Shakespeareans, and this clears the way for her to describe her volume:

> Challenging the usefulness of the generic category of "Other" through the book's disaggregated chapters on Moors, Turks, and Jews, it presents an intersectional approach with other chapters that focus on the concepts of sexuality, lineage, nationality, and globalization. (Thomson 4)

The topics opened up by the intersectional moment allow for a multiplicity of interpretations and ideological investigations that go well beyond the purview

[1] Faculty Positions jobs (chronicle.com). Accessed 31 August 2024.

[2] The foundational position ascribed to Shakespeare's play sees appropriate creative development in Morrison's play *Desdemona* in which she gives a voice to the marginalised nurse Barbary (Morrison).

of a traditional criticism that purports to speak for all, but which in fact closes down the play of meaning and the powerful operations that lie behind it. As Alan Sinfield writes, "It is essentialist humanism, not cultural materialism, that has the narrow view of human potential" (Sinfield 79). A form of criticism that claims to be universal but which in its actual practice polices meaning and interpretation is at best an ideological fiction.

In a somewhat different context, Ato Quayson provides a similar history of postcolonial developments in Shakespeare studies. At the beginning of a chapter on *Othello* in his book *Tragedy and Postcolonial Literature*, Quayson turns quotations from *Shakespeare Reproduced* and *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* into epigraphs for what he is about to say. Not only does this position his writing in relation to earlier theorised criticism, it also enables him to negotiate between the Renaissance past and the postmodern present:

> As the two epigraphs to this chapter show, whether from a popular cultural or theoretical perspective, the return to Shakespeare is never only about the Elizabethan contexts in which his plays were first produced. It is also about the familiarity of Shakespeare in terms set by the worlds in which he is being reread. But what might it mean to turn to Shakespeare for some clues about cosmopolitanism? It is now perhaps not controversial to state that multiethnicity has been a central part of the human experience since the historical inception of cities. But the concomitant observation that multiethnicity does not signify the social acceptance of strangers would also be completely in order. (Quayson 44-45)

Quayson's project in this particular chapter, entitled "Ethical Cosmopolitanism and Shakespeare's *Othello*", places the play firmly within the cross-cultural milieu of the premodern city. Venice operates almost as a test case, a city limit which is for Europeans in the period the metropolis *par excellence* for relations of ethnicity and, in Quayson's formulation, many more cross-currents including rank, gender and sexuality. He therefore identifies this play, together with *The Merchant of Venice*, as a crucible not only for contemporary Renaissance representations, but also for subsequent cultures and periods. *Othello* holds a position of peculiar importance for a popular playwright who will later be canonised as the ultimate literary figure. In this respect, his use of the word "reread," seemingly unimportant, takes on an extra significance in its own right. Shakespeare needs to be remade into the canonical literary figure by means of a process that removes him from his roots in premodern performance culture. It is this procedure that, in effect, Quayson wishes to interrogate by means of two of the most important plays that have been used to re-place Shakespeare.

Such was my Process

The figure of Othello is therefore best understood as an ideological fiction, a dramatic construct, rather than somehow a fully coherent, realised character with individualised psychology. He is not and cannot be a real person, at least on his own stage. Shakespeare's period predates the full rise of individualism, so in historical terms, it simply makes no sense to define him in accordance with its dictates. The old question about Iago's motivations is an extremely obvious case in point but another way of dealing with the absurdity of psychological characterisation on that stage is to ask a different question: what about Othello's motivation?

The passage often referenced to show Othello's command of poetic discourse early in the play comes at: 1.3.129-147.[3] It is completely contradicted by his later collapse but there are far more compelling reasons to rethink it. First of all, there is the performance premise: the speech is (obviously!) designed to be delivered on the Renaissance stage. That was not the same situation as in a modern proscenium setup. Surrounded by the audience and members of the cast, the figure of Othello is not only the centre of attention and the centre of the gaze, he is envisioned from multiple perspectives: a plurality of differentiated gazes. This formation is about to be repeated when Desdemona arrives, in effect putting them on trial one at a time. Othello's performance is, therefore, precisely that: a performance. But it is performed for the ears of his peers, both onstage and offstage audience, and his speech clearly references a performative, rhetorical purpose that he calls a "process":

> It was my hint to speak—such was my process—
> And of the cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
> Would Desdemona seriously incline. (1.3.129-147)

In semantic terms it is not clear which aspect of his performance is in process: was it the prior progress of his life story or is it the moment at which he elaborates on that story to Brabantio and Desdemona? This doubled possibility shows a theatrical self-referentiality of exactly the kind that can be found in countless plays from the period: these actors are well aware of the dramatic fictions being created and the words they use draw attention to the process of representation. To treat Othello for a moment as if he were a real person, the question would be whether he is telling the truth or not. Looking at him in

[3] All references to the plays are taken from Proudfoot et al (2021).

the stage moment of reiterating his retelling to the high council of Venice, another question arises: is he telling people what he knows they want to hear?

Taking his speech as a deliberately contrived process of embellishment permits a recognition that nothing in it is at all original. So why should we assume that his earlier utterances are somehow more fundamentally truthful than the language associated with his later descent into madness? Othello is inhabiting a pre-conceived discourse, one that is familiar to Shakespeare's contemporaries in the form of the so-called "discoveries." As long ago as 1934, J. Milton French noted the discursive roots of Othello's discourse, listing correspondences between the play and contemporary writings about the discoveries in rather exhaustive detail. Not only is there a long tradition of this sort of writing stretching all the way back to Pliny the Elder, but as French realises, there is a renewed geographical interest for Shakespeare's contemporaries (French 807). In other words, to return to a more modern language, the figure of Othello always already inhabits a pre-existing Western discourse, one which Toni Morrison would certainly recognise as 'Africanist'. So it is once again worth asking whether Othello's speech is truly truthful. Perhaps he is instead seizing the moment and telling these people what he knows they want to hear, couching it in terms they will find instantly recognisable even as they romanticise them. He finishes by saying "This to hear / Would Desdemona seriously incline" (1.3.146-147) and then admits that he responded by redoubling his efforts to gain and keep her attention. In other words, it is possible to reconfigure Othello as a dramatic persona who has an agenda, much like the other characters on that stage—he functions to embody a certain kind of discourse. Rather than seeing his poetic utterance as somehow truly authentic, then, it must be possible at least to imagine him as inhabiting a rhetorical subject position. This variation points to ways in which Othello makes use of the colonialist imagination.[4]

It is worth remembering in this context that performing Othello can be an extremely difficult task if the basis for it is coherent character psychology and subjectivity (as opposed to the Renaissance subject). If Othello must be performed as sympathetically truthful both when he is in complete control and when he loses the plot, then there is a serious issue for enacting that role on a modern stage for which it was never designed. Actors need to be good at both sides of his "personality," and it is not easy to find a "classically" trained modern Shakespearean actor who can do both to the audience's satisfaction. This is not the end result of some difficulty with the character's psychology. It is

[4] These points could be further elaborated with reference to Othello's final speech at 5.2.338-356. As Sinfield realises, Othello here resituates himself within an imperially constructed discourse as he reworks an Orientalist vocabulary. The terms of the language pre-exist any sense of his individuality.

a symptom of the extreme difficulty of rendering this figuration in terms that make sense for a much later culture obsessed with the supposed truthfulness inherent in effective characterisation. Shakespeare's characters predate method acting and the caricature acting question "What is my motivation?" is indeed most irrelevant.

The play can be difficult to reproduce satisfactorily on the modern stage for these reasons, so a production that takes Othello's role seriously has to find a way around the central problems posed by this play for the modern audience's (and actors') common obsession with character psychology. This could be accomplished by means of displacement, shifting the burden onto the figure of Iago. The modern proscenium stage does not easily lend itself to the kinds of interaction with the audience that are so common in Renaissance drama, but if Iago can be made to manipulate the audience just as he manipulates Othello, then his position as a crucial go-between extends to the audience's relationship with the onstage action.

In a somewhat different context Arthur Little has investigated the anxieties of performance in relation to the complex stagecraft required by this play:

> Othello is made to create the ocular proof that legitimizes an audience's guarded response to his blackness. Like the fictions about bestiality or homosexuality evoked or generated by the play, blackness is never literal in *Othello*. If anything, blackness figures as the ocular sign of a cultural need to create and destroy monsters: create them so that they may not create themselves; destroy them so that they may not procreate or multiply. In the nascent imperialism of early-seventeenth-century England, this process is not merely birth control but ideology control. (Little 86)

There is a great deal of tragic theory behind this passage. First of all, Little places Othello into the passive—he is "made," he does not somehow exist as a fully realised individual. In other words, he is constructed and positioned. He functions to figure forth meaning, which is why Little is able to write that blackness is never literal: not only is it performed, it is coded to enact a whole series of culturally specific expectations. His next sentence is in fact an exceptional definition of the role of tragedy: as a social form it creates monsters in order that they might be expunged from the body politic—the ancient scapegoat model of tragic form. He even uses the term "process", exactly the same word Othello utilizes to describe how he himself inhabits ideology. In the next few pages Little builds on these observations as he discusses the "blackface" tradition, noting that the various choices of skin colour available to productions are always inevitably overdetermined. In a sense, there is no way out regardless of the skin colour choices made by a production of the play, a succinct definition of the power of ideology.

Ideological Fictions

Desdemona is also an ideological construct that functions to figure forth an exceptionally precise location and subject position. The mechanistic language here is deliberate because, as with Othello earlier, it helps to defamiliarize subjectivity, depersonalising her to denote her alienation from modern assumptions about psychology. It is well worth thinking about the way "she" works on stage and in the text by abstracting the process of her composition. She constitutes a classic moment for an intersectional discussion, so much so indeed that it is possible to move beyond this particular play to a wider, more rounded consideration of just how many of Shakespeare's plays can be reworked via intersectionality (Thompson 4). In *Faultlines*, Alan Sinfield makes a similar postcolonial move when he rehearses an Althusserian interpellation of the figure of Othello:

> So, in the last lines of the play, when he wants to reassert himself, Othello "recognizes" himself as what Venetian culture has really believed him to be: an ignorant, barbaric outsider—like, he says, the "base Indian" who threw away a pearl. Virtually, this is what Althusser means by "interpellation": Venice hails Othello as a barbarian, and he acknowledges that it is he they mean. (Sinfield 31)

As noted previously, Othello inhabits the nascent discourses of Western imperialism, even and perhaps especially when he is at his most commanding. It is very tempting to suggest that he is powerful and effective precisely when he accords most closely with the dictates of the colonialist enterprise, when he "recognizes" his position within it, identifying with it. This provides another way around the problem posed by his characterisation: he is a subject of Western imperialism both when he is in control and when he is not, two sides of the same mercantilist coin. The contradictory difficulties posed for modern performance by this stage persona are therefore not at all rooted in psychology. Instead, they are symptoms of an epistemological break, to use a vocabulary associated with theorists such as Althusser and the ways Sinfield references him. In terms that would be familiar to Shakespeare's culture, there is in fact no contradiction at all in the roots of Othello's behaviour because both major elements of his performance are already catered for by the dominant discourse. He is positioned—"made" to repeat Arthur Little's suggestive term—in order to enact a fundamental tragic dilemma. Since tragedy is ineluctably social and not psychological for at least several more centuries, this play sets up what Sinfield would call a fundamental faultline in Western imperialist ideology: Othello figures as a manifestation of that faultline. He must be represented as *both* necessary to the functioning of the Venetian war machine *and also* an untamed

savage at heart; he has to be civilised and uncivilised.[5] In other words, what the play does in classic Aristotelian manner is to put these two contradictory requirements of the social order in conflict with each other. This is a far cry from sympathetic character criticism, but it does a far better job of accounting for the problems posed by *Othello* in particular in modern performance: this pre-modern play is predicated upon a historically and socially precise set of premises. It is not centred on the individual.[6]

It would of course be eminently possible and reasonable—in at least two senses of the word—to use this observation as a starting point for a wide-ranging investigation of the acceptance of such a process of subjugation across Shakespeare's output. However, that is not the intention in the present essay. By remaining with *Othello*, the plan now is to suggest how an intersectional approach shows the ways in which the figure of Desdemona is positioned ("interpellated") in accordance with a powerful need to define what such a woman means, in effect as an operation of containing "her" propensity to independent, and thus unconstrained, action in "her" own right.

There is a reason for constantly putting references to Desdemona into inverted commas: "she" is not only a fiction, "she" is, of course, a man. To return temporarily to another man's incorporation (or personation, to use the suggestive Renaissance term) of a female role, the figure of Cleopatra raises

[5] Othello's doubled position can be related even to the origin of his name, about which there is still some debate. A cursory internet search throws up what seems to be a standard derivation, a kind of diminutive form of the name of the Emperor Otho; see Othello: names—The Bill / Shakespeare Project (thebillshakespeareproject.com), last accessed 15 June 2023. The similarity is explained by means of the two figures' suicides, although it is admittedly tenuous at best. The lack of determination for the name of Othello marks him as somewhat displaced or perhaps not fully defined. I am grateful to Professor Manfred Malzahn of the United Arab Emirates University for an observation that the name has possible Greek associations, from one of several verbs relating to desire. This is interesting because of course the Ottoman Empire had famously taken Constantinople in 1453, an event with far-reaching consequences not only for the Renaissance European imagination, but political and military history. For the importance of the island of Cyprus as itself a liminal space in the ongoing struggle between Venice and the Turks, see MacCrossan 2020.

[6] It seems to me that Western European cultures subsequent to Shakespeare's period, especially the elitist criticism that developed and was given its impetus in the Anglosphere by the Romantic conception of the great creative genius, depend for their force very much on individualism. A materialist criticism will point out that this ideological formulation post-dates Shakespeare's plays, and that to impose it wholesale on his works is obviously anachronistic. It is this conception of historical specificity that lies at the heart of the cultural materialist position adopted and constructed by critics such as Alan Sinfield. On issues of the misreading and complete misunderstanding of Aristotle, see Eagleton (77) and Liebler (20-22).

similar issues to those of Desdemona. Bill Worthen notes that the doubled perspective afforded by the contemporary male performance of such roles produces a multiplicity of potential meanings because of "[…] the representation of 'character' that his roleplaying seems to convey" (Worthen 295). I have discussed this operation elsewhere but it is worth reiterating here that Cleopatra is not just a doubled figure, but subsumes a range of performance possibilities (Innes 2015, 97-98). She encapsulates the Macedonian/Greek Ptolemaic Queen who performed the role of Egyptian ruler when required to do so. She also quite literally incorporates the misogynistic and racist "othering" operation of a long Western imperialist tradition that goes back to Virgil's *Aeneid*, which seeks to deflect attention away from Octavius Caesar's murderous civil war against other Romans by making it look as though the forces of Marcus Antonius were mostly foreigners from the east. Hence Shakespeare's inherited and coloured language about her. She is also, of course, embodied by a man, which activates multiple potentialities in performance: an awareness of her doubled bodily nature; a suspension of disbelief; a movement between both—and probably all three at various times.

The same could be said for Desdemona. She is defined several times by different men before she ever comes anywhere near the stage. What she means is multiply inflected in ways that depend on the perspective of whichever man is speaking at the time. Iago, Roderigo, Brabantio and Othello all act as though she is the centre of attention, and the only thing that seems to stop a wholesale descent into civil strife is the external threat posed to the mercantile and colonial interests of the Venetian state by the Turkish fleet. When he is accosted by Desdemona's splenetic father and his household, Othello comments wryly:

> How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
> Whose messengers are here about my side
> Upon some present business of the state. (1.2.88-90)

This leads in turn to the famous Desdemona "trial" scene in which she is almost arraigned before the Doge (Shakespeare calls him the "duke") in full council. As discussed previously, while the men are all waiting for her arrival, Othello is afforded an opportunity to give his side of the story after Brabantio splutters about charms and witchcraft because it is the only possible thing he can think would win over his daughter: "to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou" (1.3.70-71). Nobody present on the stage even thinks to comment on this racist dehumanising of Othello, which the audience already recognises as part of the same politics of definition already activated by Iago. True, this could be due to very few of the men present having enough confidence to contradict him due to Brabantio's high social status, but it obviously functions as an ingrained racist mode of behaviour. The Duke certainly says nothing in response. It is

also possible that an extra dimension of rank is provided by the olfactory connotations of the term (Steingass 40).

Othello and then Desdemona are permitted to speak before the highest authorities in the state; neither does so from anything other than the position of a subject. Desdemona's arrival punctuates her husband's delivery, operating on the level of theatrical performance as a stage interruption. An alert company will have been using the tensions dramatised in the first three scenes of the play to draw the audience's attention to what this woman might mean—or rather, be made to mean. A deconstructionist move here would be to note how her arrival is constantly deferred, so preparing the audience for her eventual entry. After all, if everyone is so engaged with what this woman represents for the various men who have been defining her, what is she actually going to be like in person?

Sinfield picks up the issue rather adroitly in *Faultlines* in a chapter entitled "When is a character not a character?" He is interested in what we might call an effect of characterisation: these roles consist of enough psychological material to be recognisable as people on the stage. But no more than that, because for Sinfield and other materialist critics, it is not enough simply to assume that such personae have the supposed coherence of real people. He notes that the powerful resonances produced by Desdemona early in the play do not sit at all easily with her insipid willingness to let herself be killed by her husband at the end; he sees a similar inconsistency with Lady Macbeth, and she doesn't even get the grace of an onstage death. By conceiving of both characters in effect as subject positions rather than as fully realised individuals, he suggests that: "Desdemona is a disjointed sequence of positions that women are conventionally supposed to occupy" (Sinfield 53). The subtext here, of course, is that once again a later culture's assumption of individuation is historically dubious when it comes to these dramatic fictions from an earlier age. Also, although he does not state the case in quite these terms, the implication is that for a Shakespearean play, the plotline has priority, not the characterisation. This makes Shakespeare's drama resolutely Aristotelian in its logic, because Aristotle has almost no time at all for ideas of characterisation in Book VI of the *Poetics*, regardless of what a bunch of poorly educated Shakespeare critics might like to think; character is subordinate to plot in these instances. Aristotle even goes so far as effectively to suggest that characterisation is irrelevant. In his Preface to the version on Project Gutenberg, Gilbert Murray writes:

> The fact is that much misunderstanding is often caused by our modern attempts to limit too strictly the meaning of a Greek word. Greek was very much a live language, and a language still unconscious of grammar, not, like ours, dominated by definitions and trained upon dictionaries. An instance is provided by Aristotle's famous saying that the typical tragic hero is one who falls from high state or fame, not through vice or depravity, but by some great *hamartia*.

> *Hamartia* means originally a "bad shot" or "error," but is currently used for "offence" or "sin." Aristotle clearly means that the typical hero is a great man with "something wrong" in his life or character; but I think it is a mistake of method to argue whether he means "an intellectual error" or "a moral flaw." The word is not so precise. (Aristotle)

The Greek term carries associations that are akin to "pollution," understood much more as a socially produced ritualistic definition, than some sort of "sin" or "stain" pertaining to an individual. The fact that Murray knew this over a hundred years ago now makes one wonder why Shakespeareans can still assume differently: classical scholars must think we are all mad, or at least appallingly educated; for Aristotle, the plot's the thing.

A properly Aristotelian approach to a figure like Desdemona therefore helps draw attention to the ways in which her position is constructed. Indeed, she notes this herself when she says: "I do perceive here a divided duty" (1.3.181). This is pretty much the first thing she says when she finally appears on the stage and has the opportunity to speak, after 459 lines of frenetic business about her, conducted entirely between men. It is difficult to imagine a more precise definition of Aristotelian *hamartia*, as she specifies in her first utterance in the play that she is caught between two impossibilities. Since there is in Aristotle no such thing as the supposed internalised tragic flaw so beloved of traditional Shakespearean criticism, she denotes with exceptional precision a socially produced dilemma that is extrinsic to her; it is enacted upon her. In this respect, it is tempting to say that there is no such thing as the tragic flaw at all in Shakespearean characterisation, properly understood.

So much so, indeed, that the play goes to extraordinary lengths to position her both discursively and performatively at this critical juncture. Althusser notes in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" that: "[…] you and I are *always already* subjects, and as such practice the rituals of ideological recognition" (Althusser 263). The position ascribed to us, and which we recognise implicitly, is in fact designed for us prior to our own material existence. In other words, it is a preconstructed subject position and this is exactly what is recognised in the almost judicial dramatization of Desdemona's dilemma in *Othello* 1.3. Althusser's reference to ritual makes his theorising of the operation of ideology especially useful to the discussion of that most socially ritualistic of forms, tragedy. In fact, it is possible to be even more precise in performative terms, because this problematic fiction is rigorously interpellated by the law of the father, indeed the law of the state. Yes, Desdemona does speak about the reason she has "revolted," to use a term that is applied to her twice during the play by men: Roderigo at 1.1.132 and Othello at 3.3.191. However, she is given permission to do so by the head of the state, in a situation that earlier was characterised almost as an arraignment. Visually, this woman is on

her own, entirely surrounded by men, and is being required to defend herself. She has violated the pre-existing economies of race and gender (to recall Kim Hall's phrasing) because not only has she chosen for herself, she has chosen an outsider with a different skin colour. In other words, the woman's role is central, and not only to the business of the stage, but to contemporary society as a whole.[7]

The preceding argument demonstrates why intersectional study is crucial. It allows us to recover some of the meanings that, as Ayanna Thompson suggests in her Introduction mentioned above, have been at least occluded, but much more likely utterly suppressed, by a long-standing critical tradition.[8] There is more to be said, however, because inflecting intersectionality via Althusser requires us to think of other major elements that go into the construction of such a subject position. If we are going to avoid a too easy, and in fact rather facile, "reading" of character as somehow constituted in accordance with what Althusser would call the bourgeois subject, then it follows that we need to identify the elements that constitute a materially conceived English Renaissance subject position. The obvious thing to do would be to bring in categories of class; however, that term is difficult because not only does it have its own loaded associations—its ideological baggage, if you like—from a later period, it is also too blunt a term to help us manage the precise intricacies of the operation of Renaissance subjection. As Ulysses is made to say in a well-known speech in *Troilus and Cressida*, this is a society that conceives of degrees of order, hierarchy and rank in exceptional detail, and it goes without saying that his rhetoric is not exactly neutral (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.83-137); as a king in his own right, his speech is predicated upon the requirements of an aristocratic conception of right order. Couched as a statement, it is in fact an ideological imposition. All this comes in a play famous for its axiomatic rendering of the feminine subject as: "This is and is not Cressid" (5.2.153) and one might as well say, this is and is not Desdemona—or Lady Macbeth, for that matter. Because "she" both is and is not. Desdemona must accordingly be considered in terms of social rank as well as the intersection between gender and race; she operates as

[7] There is not the space in this article to delve in detail into the documentation that survives from the period regarding the social stratification of gender roles, and of course this is not a history essay. Historians such as Susan Amussen in her book on gender and class in Early Modern England have investigated these topics in great detail, by making use of contemporary documents (Amussen). In a chapter on the gender order in families and villages, she discusses multiple legal cases that showcase gendered familial anxiety regarding the position of women (95-133) in terms that we would now recognise as intersectional.

[8] For a fuller discussion, see Loomba, especially the Introduction. She elaborates on the case of Blake Modisane's experience of South African apartheid. She relates the experience of this writer and actor directly to *Othello*.

a site of contradictory interplay between different discourses, including the performative, as noted above.

Given the seductive euphoria of the intersectional moment, it is easy to forget, or perhaps marginalise, the sheer importance of rank to people in Shakespeare's period. We need to remind ourselves that these various possibilities function to define the subject position of this woman on the stage. A fundamental faultline, to repeat Alan Sinfield's useful term, runs through Shakespeare's plays—comedies and tragedies—because he keeps harping on heiresses. Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, Katherina and Bianca, Cordelia, Goneril and Regan, Juliet, Hero, Beatrice, Olivia, Portia and Portia (to name but a few) all have this one thing in common: they are upper-class heiresses. The intersectional needs rank and this fundamental faultline is what is enacted in the arraignment of Desdemona. She is surrounded by men and she is also enacted by a man; it is difficult to imagine a more precise rendering not only of the masculine or male gaze, but of the process of subjection itself. This is why her father reacts with such vitriol to his inability to keep her under control; he fails in his social duty as an aristocratic patriarch.

Conclusion: Liminal Spaces and The Intersectional Subject

It is worth remembering in such fraught circumstances that when Desdemona explains her position to the assembled nobility of Venice, not a single woman is actually present on that stage. The same can be said of another figure who transgresses masculine authority, but this time in a supposedly comedic trial scene: Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. Her very name is redolent of the masculine subjection of women, in that it defines her as a liminal space. She is the doorway or gateway to wealth for Bassanio, and it is worth imagining ways that she can be played as a positive possibility for women as she probably manipulates him into marriage in the casket scene. Perhaps she spots a husband she can control.

Venice is something of a vexed case on the English Renaissance stage, because of course the playwrights' versions of the city are inflected by English concerns and assumptions about an Italian city they basically considered to be the ultimate cesspit of corruption, in every sense of the word.[9] In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia is inevitably enmeshed in this web of associations and it must

[9] In this respect it is worth recalling Richard Dutton's analysis of the social world of the Venice of *Volpone* (Dutton 94-108), with its attendant details of glass-blowing, ball games and handkerchiefs—which directly relates to *Othello*. Dutton focuses on the ways in which sexual behaviour is central to Jonson's representation of Venice and the same can be said of Shakespeare's Venetian plays.

be remembered that she is the one who reinforces that play's resolution of the Shylock plot in another famous trial scene equivalent to the "trial" of Desdemona in *Othello*. There is not the space here to continue with this line of reasoning, since it would require a full essay-length treatment in its own right, but it is worth repeating that an intersectional methodology needs to incorporate a politics of rank. The reason why so much destruction is wrought in the tragedy is the social standing of Desdemona as an upper-class heiress. As Brabantio's vitriolic rhetoric demonstrates, the patriarchal economy dictates that she be controlled, subjected, but it is the liminal figure of Othello who actually—but only temporarily—gains the prize. He is the necessary outsider, needed by the Venetian state because of his prowess and who is, indeed, a more powerful military commander since he is not Venetian. His structural location is similar to that of Macbeth, the great warrior from the margins who does all the dirty work while the king resides safe and sound in his court: in that play, Duncan never leads an army and neither does the Doge of Othello's Venice. The difference is that as a nobleman in his own right, Macbeth achieves an internally strong position in ways that are unavailable to Othello (Innes 2011). The Scot's position is intrinsic to the social fabric, while Othello's is extrinsic.

WORKS CITED

(99+) Academia.edu | Search | intersectionality and class. Accessed 19 June 2024.

Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*. Trans. G. M. Goshgarian. London: Verso, 2014.

Amussen, Susan Dwyer. *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*. New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Aristotle. "On The Art Of Poetry." *Gutenberg.org.* https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6763/6763-h/6763-h.htm. Accessed 19 July 2024.

Barker, Francis and Peter Hulme. "'Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish:' The Discursive con-texts of *The Tempest.*" *Alternative Shakespeares*. Ed. John Drakakis. London: Routledge, 1985. 191-205.

Brown, Paul. "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine:' *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism." *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism.* Eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985. 48-71.

Dollimore, Jonathan and Alan Sinfield, eds. *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.

Drakakis, John, ed. *Alternative Shakespeares*. London: Routledge, 1985.

Dutton, Richard. *Ben Jonson, Volpone and the Gunpowder Plot*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Faculty Positions jobs (chronicle.com). Accessed 19 June 2024.

French, J. Milton. "Othello Among the Anthropophagi." PMLA 49.3 (1934): 807-809.

Hall, Kim F. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Cornell University Press, 1995.

Howard, Jean E. and Marion F. O'Conner, eds. *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Innes, Paul. "Harming Macbeth: A British Translation" in Liz Oakley-Brown ed. *Shakespeare and the Translation of Identity in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011. 103-130.

Innes, Paul. *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Liebler, Naomi. *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Tragedy*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Little, Arthur L. *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice*. California: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Loomba, Ania. *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

MacCrossan, Colm. "'What, in a Town of War… to Manage Private and Domestic Quarrel?:' Othello and the Tragedy of Cyprus." *Shakespeare* 16.3 (2020): 239-257.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Penguin Random House, 1993.

Oakley-Brown, Liz, ed. *Shakespeare and the Translation of Identity in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011.

Othello: names—The Bill / Shakespeare Project (thebillshakespeareproject.com). Accessed 19 June 2024.

Parker, Patricia and Geoffrey Hartman, eds. *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. London: Rutledge, 1993.

Proudfoot, Richard, et al., eds. *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021.

Quayson, Ato. *Tragedy and Postcolonial Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Sinfield, Alan. *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Steingass, Benjamin. "Othello-dor: Racialized Odor In and On Othello." *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* 22 (37) (2022): 37-49.

Thomson, Ayanna, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Vaughan, Virginia Mason. *Othello: A Contextual History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Worthen, W. B. "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' *Antony and Cleopatra.*" *Studies in English Literature* 26 (1986): 295-308.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.06

Guixia Xie*

"To Go 'Into' My Dialect": Jane Lai's Cantonese Translation of *King Lear* and the Historical Context of its Performances in Hong Kong

Abstract: The English performance of Shakespeare in Hong Kong during the early colonial governance period served partly to support the cultural security of the British expatriates, and partly the edification of the locals. However, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed an increase in Cantonese translations and adaptations of Shakespeare, which marked a new way of leveraging Shakespeare to resonate with the local culture and its sentiments. Within this wave of Cantonese productions, the translations by Jane Lai, a translator, professor, and native of Hong Kong, have garnered widespread acclaim within both theatrical and translation spheres. This article will focus on Lai's Cantonese translation of *King Lear*, produced in the 1980s for stage performance, and conduct a comparative textual analysis of the Cantonese translation with its English source text and the corresponding Mandarin translations, with an aim to explore the translation strategies employed by Lai to ensure the Cantonese *King Lear's* acceptability to the local culture on the page and stage. Moreover, the article will delve into the historical context of the play's performance to unravel the elements that contributed to the success of the Cantonese *King Lear* on the stage during that specific period.

Keywords: *King Lear*, Cantonese translation, performance, Hong Kong, Jane Lai.

Introduction

In *King Lear*, when the disguised Earl of Kent, who is bravely loyal to King Lear as his subject and one-time councillor, confronts the Duke of Cornwall and explains his vigorous reaction to Goneril's steward Oswald, he uses the phrase

* Sun Yat-sen University, China. xiegx@mail.sysu.edu.cn

"to go out of my dialect" (2.2.103),[1] indicating a shift in his manner of speech. In this article, I borrow and adapt this line to the form, "to go 'into' my dialect," to refer to the translation of Shakespeare's play into Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese spoken by people in Hong Kong and in the southern region of Guangdong province, China. While Kent's shift in dialect and direct speech fails to gain Cornwall's trust and subsequently leads to his punishment of being placed in the stocks, the *King Lear* translated into Cantonese dialect by Lai in the 1980s has managed to win the confidence of both the academia and the local audience. This article conducts a textual analysis of the translation strategies and techniques employed by Lai in her Cantonese version, and explores the historical context of its performance, in the hope of uncovering the factors underlying its success as a Shakespeare transplantation.

Shakespeare's name first appears in China in *Accounts of Four Continents*, compiled by Lin Zexu between 1839 and 1840 (Hao 14). During the late Qing dynasty, missionaries such as William Muirhead, Davelle Sheffield, and Timothy Richard, in the course of their work, also spread the name of Shakespeare as a literary master. Around the early 20th century, various esteemed Chinese literati referenced Shakespeare's name as that of a literary master in many articles. Despite Shakespeare's renown during this period, none of his plays were translated in full into Chinese until 1922, when the first full-text Chinese translation of *Hamlet* was made by Tian Han. Regarding *King Lear*, the story of the play was first made known to Chinese readers through Lin Shu and Wei Yi's translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* in 1904, entitled "The Transformation of the Lady." In 1931, Sun Dayu published a translation of 3.2 of the play in the second issue of *Poetry Journal*. In 1936, the first full-text Chinese version of *King Lear* was published by Liang Shiqiu. This pioneering effort was followed by another 11 translations from Cao Weifeng (1946), Zhu Shenghao (1947), Sun Dayu (1948), Bian Zhilin (1988), Fang Ping (1991), Daniel Shih-P'eng Yang (1993), Jane Lai (2015), Perng Ching-hsi (2015), Xu Yuanchong (2016), Fu Guangming (2019) and Li Qijin (2020).[2] Some of these full translations had a long time lag between their completion and initial publication: Sun Dayu's version was finished in 1935 but

[1] Act and scene numbers and all line references are based on the conflated text of *King Lear* in *The Norton Shakespeare* (2nd edition), ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, New York and London: Norton Company, 2008.

[2] The years used here refer to the first publication year of the translations. Some of the translations have been reprinted many times, such as Zhu Shenghao and Bian Zhilin's versions. Li Cai also published a translation of *King Lear* in his *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Comedies* (Beijing: Qunyan Press, 2017); but this version is a revision based on Zhu Shenghao's translation.

not officially published until 1948 due to the war and the shift in his scholarly interests (Sun, "Translating Shakespeare" 236); Bian Zhilin's version was completed in 1977, but only first published in 1988, in a collection entitled *Shakespearean Tragedies*; Jane Lai's version was finished in 1982 as the script for performance and was officially published in 2015. Moreover, most of these translations were primarily intended for reading. Although a few of them, such as Zhu Shenghao's, also include stage directions which suggest some consideration of the stage effect, performance does not seem to have been the translators' main concern. Lai's and Daniel Shih-P'eng Yang's versions, however, were both commissioned for performance from the outset. Specifically, Lai's translation, which is rendered directly into demotic Cantonese, exhibits significant differences in diction and rhythm when compared to other renditions.

This article focuses on Jane Lai's Cantonese translation of *King Lear*, a vernacular Chinese version of the Shakespearean play in China. While vernacular renderings and performances of Shakespearean plays are not rare in China, most of them have taken the form of operatic adaptations. Examples include the Chinese Yue opera versions of *Romeo and Juliet* (1942) and *King Lear* (1946); the Cantonese opera version of *The Merchant of Venice* (1983) (Cao and Sun 140-148); the Chaozhou (Teochew) opera version of *The Winter's Tale* (1989) (Xie 2020); and more. Most of these renderings tend to veer from translations in the strict sense, since certain characters are omitted and textual alterations or truncations are made to meet the demands of operatic performance. Lai distinguishes her version from these vernacular renderings by aiming to "use Cantonese to convey Shakespeare's original meaning," and ensuring that it would "not let the source text suffer from injustice since it is a well-written play" ("Jane Lai" 113). This translation objective earned praise from both audiences and scholars after they watched the performance. Her Cantonese *King Lear* was described as "[capturing] every nuance that Shakespeare had in mind" in a letter from the headmaster of the Hong Kong Diocesan Girl's School. Vicki Ooi, director of the Cantonese *King Lear*, also praises Lai's translations, noting that it "reads as though they were original texts written in Cantonese" (23). With an aim to examine the acceptability of the translated play on the page and how it resonates with local sentiment as to achieve its theatrical success on the stage, this article will first provide an overview of Shakespeare's translation in Hong Kong. Going on from there, it will introduce matters related to the production of the Cantonese *King Lear*, and then in the following section, concentrate on Lai's version of *King Lear* by conducting a comparative textual analysis of the Cantonese translation with its English source text and the corresponding Mandarin translations. As "translation cannot be separated from power relations, social setting, political context, and cultural paradigm" (Sun 92), the article will also discuss other possible political and historical factors that influenced the successful acceptance of the play in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s.

Shakespeare Translation and Performance in Hong Kong

As in other regions that were once under the colonial governance of Britain, the early introduction and performance of Shakespearean plays in Hong Kong served to reinforce the cultural security of the British expatriates. "Doing Shakespeare" was an integral facet of British colonial life (Brandon 3). These performances were orchestrated either by local amateur groups or by visiting professional companies from Britain. According to Wong, a number of Shakespearean plays were staged by the Hong Kong Amateur Theatrical Society, Dramatic Club, and Mummers group in the late 19th century (*Shakespeare in Hong Kong* 46-47), with the first traceable play performed being *The Merchant of Venice* in 1867 (Wong, "Translating Theatre" 163). Primarily burlesque in nature, these performances provide a glimpse into Shakespeare's initial role as entertainment upon his arrival in Hong Kong. However, for the purpose of colonial governance, the early exposure to and staging of Shakespeare swiftly shifted to a role of edifying the local populace. After 1882, Shakespeare gradually assumed an important position within the school curriculum and became a topic tested in college entrance examinations (Wong, "Domination by Consent" 46, 49). In the realm of local education, unlike within the British settlement, Shakespeare was deemed representative of "Western elite learning" (Levith 94). Studying and performing Shakespeare and other Western plays was a way for students to improve their English language proficiency and understand Western culture. As Lai states, "The primary purpose of performance was to improve students' English, with the performance aspect being subsidiary" ("Jane Lai" 111). It can be asserted that the inclusion of Shakespearean performances on campuses before the 1950s served mainly as a mechanism for acclimating the locals to colonial governance, rather than fostering cultural exchanges between the West and the East.

Cantonese adaptations and performances of Shakespeare emerged in the mid-1950s, and their development was intricately related to the political and social climate in Hong Kong. Following World War II, there was a recovery of the theatre in Hong Kong. However, in contrast to the 1940s, when the majority of the staged plays carried strong social and political inclinations, a new directive emerged. This directive stated that "drama should no longer be related to politics," and "plays from the mainland and Taiwan were prohibited from public performance" (Cheung and Hoyan 209). This unspoken directive by the then government led to a sharp decline in the number of local playwrights, as many were forced to abandon their craft or seek alternative forms of expression. In response to this cautious political atmosphere and the populace's post-war yearning for theatrical experiences, English performances and translated drama began to thrive in the early 1950s. Among these alternatives, the archaic

Shakespeare and other non-politically themed playwrights emerged as the most popular choice.

The resurgence of theatre in Hong Kong also spurred a wave of Cantonese adaptations of Shakespearean works. On April 23, 1954, the Sino-British Club organized the first Shakespeare Festival, a tribute to the Bard's 390th anniversary. On the same day, *Sing Tao Daily* published two articles, one by Ma Jian and the other by Chan Yao Hou, both extolling Shakespeare's plays as exemplary models for Hong Kong's theatre community. During this first festival, a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* was performed in Cantonese, marking the inception of the Cantonese adaptation and translation of Shakespeare in Hong Kong. In 1964, during the second Shakespeare Festival, the Drama Club of the United College of the Hong Kong Chinese University staged a complete production of *The Merchant of Venice* in Cantonese. In 1974, the Youth Art Amateur Drama Group presented Cantonese *The Taming of the Shrew*. Subsequently, in 1977, the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, the first professional drama company in Hong Kong, was founded under the auspices of the Urban Council. The company quickly assumed a pivotal role in bringing translated and adapted Shakespeare plays to the forefront, a legacy that persisted until 1997. Their repertoire included productions such as *Hamlet* (1977), *Macbeth* (1979), *Romeo and Juliet* (1980), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1982), *The Merchant of Venice* (1984), *Measure for Measure* (1986), *Othello* (1986), *Twelfth Night* (1988), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1990), *King Lear* (1993), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1997) (Luk 228-247). Beyond the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre and the aforementioned drama clubs, ten other campus drama societies, amateur theatre companies, or groups collectively staged around 19 productions of Shakespearean plays during this period (Wong, *Shakespeare in Hong Kong* 73-75; Luk 255-319).

The Cantonese Shakespeare plays produced during these decades were more akin to transplantations than translations. Some of them were intralingual translations that drew upon or were derived from Mandarin translations. Examples of this approach are evident in works like Ying Ruocheng's *Measure for Measure*, staged by the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 1986, and Daniel Shih-p'eng Yang's *King Lear* in 1993. The wording in these Cantonese versions remained largely congruent with their Mandarin counterparts, with only essential vernacular modifications to align with Cantonese linguistic norms. In addition, there were Cantonese versions that adopted the method of abridgement, such as Grace Liu and Julia Wan's *The Tempest* in 1989, produced by The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. This version retained the sense of the lines, rather than their exact meaning, in colloquial Cantonese. Besides linguistic transplantation, certain adaptations took domestication a step further by incorporating Cantonese operatic conventions. One example is Rupert Chan's *Twelfth Night* (re-titled as *Yuanxiao*), staged by the Chung Ying Theatre Company in 1986. This

production recontextualized the play within the Lantern Festival in Tang Dynasty Guangzhou (AD 618-907), and added elements such as Chinese costume and music into the play. In this version, the Tang Chinese seven-character poetic form was used for the versification, and singing sections were integrated to evoke the ambiance of Cantonese opera. However, even with these traditional Chinese elements, these Shakespearean productions strove to maintain a distinct separation from traditional Chinese theatre practices. So in the *Twelfth Night*, a curtain was used on the stage to create a dual-space effect, which is never seen on traditional stage. Similarly, in another of Chan's Cantonese adaptations, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the stage design adopted a more abstract aesthetic, featuring white walls adorned with irregular black lines, even though the setting was supposed to be the late Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1840-1912). These unconventional stage designs aimed to induce a sense of hyper-realism and foster the potential for free association among the spectators (Wong, *Shakespeare in Hong Kong* 93-94). In other words, these productions bore the hallmarks of experimental theatre in the guise of Shakespearean works. Such a divergence from Shakespeare's original received divided response. Take Chan's *Twelfth Night* as an example, although being considered "successful" (Levith 103) and enjoying numerous performances, it was also criticized for not representing Shakespeare's classic lines. To enjoy this kind of drama, "one has to forget that it is a Shakespearean play" (Lai, "Jane Lai" 115).

In contrast to these adaptations, Lai's approach focused on using Cantonese to convey Shakespeare's inherent meaning, rather than merely encapsulating the play's plot and general themes.

Jane Lai's Translation Activity at the Seals Theatre Company

Jane Lai Chui Chun is a local Cantonese born in Hong Kong. She completed her secondary education at the Diocesan Girls' School and pursued her under-graduate education at the University of Hong Kong. Following her graduation, she spent a few years working at the University of Hong Kong before going to the University of Bristol for her master's degree in literature in 1967. She then returned to the University of Hong Kong to continue her career as a teacher. In 1990, Lai joined the English Department of the Hong Kong Baptist University, where she served as a professor of translation until her retirement.

At the University of Hong Kong, Lai collaborated closely with Vicki Ooi in teaching English and performance and started to translate drama for students in the Drama Club. However, it was the founding of the Seals Theatre Company (hereinafter as "Seals") in 1979 that truly ignited her prolific production of translations. This semi-professional theatre was dedicated to staging well-known Western plays in Cantonese translation. Unlike other

companies performing Cantonese translations of Western plays, Seals prioritized a faithful rendering of the source text's language. Ooi elaborates such a mission as follows:

> It was to attract actors and translators who wanted to work with words, as well as the audience who loved to hear the words spoken with consideration, meaning and aesthetic tone. (19)

Driven by this mission to be a theatre of words and to introduce good-quality plays to audiences, Seals adopted a style rooted in the integrity of language and rhythm found in the source texts and required its actors and actresses to master the right intonations, pitch, and rhythm during their performance. Throughout its 14-year existence (1979-1993), Seals delivered 56 translated plays, covering playwrights such as Neil Simon, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, Tennessee Williams, Samuel Beckett, and William Shakespeare, among others. This rich array demonstrates the group's versatility in performing different genres and styles, and contributes significantly to the theatrical scene of Hong Kong at the time.

Out of these 56 plays by Seals, 13 were translated by Lai. In addition to her work with Seals, Lai also translated plays for The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. In 2015, a collection of 18 plays she had translated was compiled and published as the "Jane Lai Drama Translation Series." Her translation of *King Lear* stood out as one of Seals' "great productions" (Che 8) and remains one of her masterworks. In 1983, the play was staged at both the Hong Kong City Hall and Tsuen Wan Town Hall and received positive comments on its production. Dominic Cheung, as the prompter for the performance, marvelled at Shakespeare's lines, saying, "Shakespeare is sharp indeed. He is not just a playwright; he is a psychologist with an insightful grasp of human nature and psychology" (Cheung 86). This affirmation of the Cantonese performance is only possible when the translated version faithfully represents the linguistic features of the source text and allows Shakespeare's wit to transcend from English to Cantonese, maintaining its impact on the audience. In fact, Lai's faithful representation of Shakespearean texts has been widely acknowledged among her colleagues. According to Vicki Ooi, "[Jane's] translations never read like translations." Ooi says,

> She [Lai] not only translated with a deep insight the cultural background of the play she was working on, working with expert knowledge of the language she was translating from and into, but she also breathed life into every line she translated. (23)

In her own reflection on the working experiences at Seals, Lai also shows that her linguistic considerations in drama translation are a conscious behavior:

> When translating drama, I always read the script several times to experience the sound of the words—the sound of the words spoken by different characters in the drama. I also pay attention to the rhythm, syntactical structures and word choice in order to understand the mood, thoughts and situations of the characters. ("Drama, Translation, Seals" 61)

It can be seen that Lai is meticulous about the pace, rhythm, and word choice, both in the translated texts and in performances. While working with players at Seals, Lai insisted that the players strictly follow her translation during performances. Even altering the final modal particles of the lines was forbidden, as even the rising or falling tone of these particles was thoughtfully considered by Lai to align with the actors' gestures and movements. Because of this unwavering commitment to linguistic details, Lai's translations have also received positive comments from players. Lynn Yao, the then-actress with Seals, comments on Lai's translation with the following:

> The best translated scripts, which are hers, covertly support the actor in learning lines: the vocabulary, the rhythm of the lines, the punctuation, the ability to reveal the playwright's subtexts, and yes, for Cantonese plays, the particles at the end of each line can either make or break an actor, the director and the play altogether, in that order. (77)

This comment from the player, as well as other comments from Lai herself, the audience or colleagues, highlights Lai as a drama translator who possesses a deep understanding of both Western and Chinese cultures and who is sensitive to the most nuanced linguistic features of both languages. These qualities are the preconditions for her to produce a play linguistically faithful to the source text, performable to the actors, and accessible to the local Cantonese audience. In the next section, I will take a textual approach and analyze how Lai has achieved these effects on the page.

Translation Strategies of the Cantonese *King Lear*

Shakespeare is known for his "unparalleled command of his verbal medium," and it is "his control of language—more than plot, characterization, theme—[that]gives his work distinctive qualities and underwrites his demonstrated theatrical sovereignty" (McDonald 1). Written during his mature period, *King Lear* forms part of "an astounding succession of tragic masterpieces" (Greenblatt 2326). The play exemplifies Shakespeare's artistic control of language to convey the extremes of physical and mental anguish. Committed to convey Shakespeare's original meaning, Lai consciously and meticulously adhered to the linguistic essence of this play. At the same time, sharing the aim with Seals to "make good

plays accessible to them [the people of Hong Kong] in their own language" (Ooi 17), Lai also confronted the task of "localizing" the foreignness intrinsic to the original play for the local audience. In other words, translating Shakespearean plays means to balance the inherent tension between globalization and localization. Schleiermacher once proposed a solution to such a tension in textual translation, stating that "either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him" (56). However, drama translation is far more complex than textual translation. As Lai once stated,

> It is a more complex process of transposition from the page to a different sort of page with its own semantic and linguistic rules and then to a different sort of stage which opens on to an audience with its own different sort of cultural stage background. (Lai, "Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage" 145)

To make Shakespeare's linguistic essence accessible to the local audience means to allow the playwright's work to resonate with the local culture while simultaneously placing that local culture within a global context. Therefore, rather than simply domesticating *King Lear*, i.e. "invisibly inscrib[ing] foreign text with [local] values" (Venuti 15), Lai adopts a localization strategy. This strategy, as Sun argues, "entails a more systematic, conceptual, dynamic interaction and exchange between two cultural systems compassing values, conceptions, and experiences" (96). In this specific case, Lai needed to consider the interaction and exchange of three groups of people: the playwright, who writes within another cultural context, the actors and the audience, who are from the local context and hold different values, conceptions and experiences. The goal is to ensure that the translated play can retain the prosodic patterns of Shakespeare to enrich the target culture, is performable and readable for the actors, and is instantly comprehensible to the audience. The fact is that the English Shakespeare used was considerably denser and more succinct than contemporary English. His audiences, compared with the modern ones, were "much more used than we are to listening to long and (to us) demanding passages of speech" (McEvoy 13). To reproduce such dense and concise English in Chinese, the translator must find a language that is characterised by succinctness and that is able to render the original meaning with similar prosodic patterns. At the same time, this language must also be performable for the actors and aurally comprehensible to the audience. To achieve the appropriate succinctness and comprehensibility of language, Lai turned to Traditional Chinese opera as a source of inspiration.

The style of Traditional Chinese opera Lai used to localize Shakespeare is Cantonese opera. This indigenous operatic form features two linguistic modes: vernacular prose and classical Chinese. Vernacular prose is characterized by

modal particles positioned within or at the end of a clause, which deftly expresses the speakers' different types of emotions, such as "*ge*" (嘅), "*tim*" (添), or "*laa*" (嘞).[3] The classical Chinese used in Cantonese opera is basically built on groupings of two to seven syllables, similar to Chinese classical poetry and lyrical compositions, which creates a highly rhythmical effect for Chinese readers and audiences. The classical style of the language can also evoke a sense of the archaic, similar to that found in *King Lear*. Meanwhile, classical Chinese is also not restricted by excessive grammatical rules. This allows for flexibility, conciseness, and density lacking in contemporary spoken Chinese. Moreover, as Traditional Chinese opera is still performed on stages in China during festive occasions, its linguistic style remains aurally familiar to native Chinese ears. In her Cantonese translation of *King Lear*, Lai skillfully exploited these qualities of Chinese Traditional opera to produce a script that met the requisite demands of faithfulness, performability, and comprehensibility.

Faithfulness to Shakespeare's language requires accurate representation of his prose and verse, along with their role in character development. To represent these two forms of language in the Cantonese translation, Lai employs vernacular prose for Shakespeare's prose and classical Chinese for his blank verse. For example, in the opening of 1.1, the conversation between Kent and Gloucester, which is presented in prose, is rendered in vernacular Cantonese replete with modal particles to resemble daily conversations among Cantonese people. On the other hand, Lear's first formal speech in verse, on dividing up the kingdom, along with Goneril and Regan's responses, are elegantly translated into classical Chinese. In this translation, each clause in the passage has about seven syllables, organised into groupings of two to four; the words used in these lines are of high register and archaic style, so the passage, when spoken aloud, creates a rhythmical and ceremonious effect. In particular, in Goneril's passage eulogising Lear, Lai adopts an intentional overuse of rhythmically parallel structures in classical Chinese. This technique replicates the formal yet embellished style of the original text, revealing Goneril's insincerity and factitious enthusiasm to the audience. As seen in Example (1), the passage is organised with groupings of two to four characters/syllables.[4] The second and third clauses have groupings of 4/2/4, and the fourth and fifth clauses 3/5/2 and 3/6/4. Both of these two pairs share identical grammatical structures, generating a rhythmic effect in sound and an antithesis effect in meaning. Apart

[3] All the transcriptions of Cantonese sounds are based on *Correct Pronunciations of Cantonese Vocabularies*, ed. Ho Man Wui and Chu Kwok Fan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co., 2012).

[4] As each Chinese character has only one syllable, the number of characters equals that of the syllables. To focus on the form or pronunciation of the text, I will not translate the Chinese back into English but use slashes to indicate the groupings and rhythm of each clause.

from Fu Guangming's translation, which subtly incorporates parallel structures to render this passage, the other Mandarin translations only remain faithful to the source text in terms of content.

Example (1):
葛：父王，我之/爱父王/非言语/能宣，
贵则贵于/双目、/天下自由，
重则重于/一切，/稀世珍宝，
不亚于/福寿荣荣/嘅生命，
不下于/天下至孝儿郎/之孝严亲。
儿臣/厚爱/显得/辩才薄，
禀于/父王/表我心。(Shakespeare 4-5)[5]

Vernacular prose and classical Chinese are also used by Lai to hint to the audience about Lear's genuine dementia and Edgar's feigned madness. In 3.2, when Lear is at the point of descending into madness, he rages at the storm denouncing his two daughters' conduct. At this point, his language maintains its structure in refined classical Chinese, marked by precise groupings of 2/3/2. Likewise, when Edgar adopts the guise of "poor Tom," his pretense is revealed through his use of structured classical Chinese, aligned in a pattern of 2/2/4. When it comes to depicting Lear's loss of sense in 3.6, Lai shifts to use demotic Cantonese to render Lear's utterances, despite the fact that Shakespeare still uses verse at this point. In 3.6, Lear's line, "To have a thousand with red burning spits/Come hissing in upon'em—" (3.6.13-14), is translated into "千百妖魔拎住火红铁叉嗷追佢地—" (72), literally meaning "thousands of monsters with red burning spits chasing them," wherein the modal particle "*gam*" (嗷) and the colloquial pronoun of "them," "*keoi dei*" (佢地), rather than its Mandarin equivalent "*ta men*" (他们), are used to convey the colloquial feature of the language. Furthermore, "*zeoi*" (追), a verb meaning "chasing after," is used to render "come upon." In this way, the Cantonese lines impart a childlike tone to the audience, conjuring an image of monsters playfully chasing one another. Compared to other Mandarin translations, such as Fu Guangming's "a thousand monsters spit fire to their bodies" or Zhu Shenghao's "a thousand tongues of fire roll up their bodies with hissing sound," Lai's version more effectively conveys Lear's deteriorating mental state. By rendering the line as an action using the verbal phrase "chasing after", rather than as a description of state, as the other two translators did, Lai's version is also easier for the actor to enact on the stage.

[5] The original translation here is in prose in format. To highlight the rhythm and parallelism in the structures of the clauses, I have organized the passage into a verse format, and added slants to indicate the groupings. I have done the same in other examples in Chinese.

Attention to pace and rhythm is another hallmark of Shakespeare's language. Plain and loosely structured language is used to create a sense of bliss when Lear regains his wits and recognizes Cordelia (4.7.60-71). In contrast, clusters of coarse nouns are densely packed to mimic the rapid tempo of the quarrel scene between Kent and Oswald (2.2.13-21). To replicate this swiftness, Lai skillfully uses a string of local bawdy terms while omitting the superfluous articles like "a" and "an" found in the source text. For Lai, these articles, when translated into Cantonese, would slow down the speech and dampen the original pace ("Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage" 164). By condensing the passage into 116 Chinese characters/syllables, Lai closely mirrors the 132 syllables and the pace in Shakespeare's original text. In contrast, other translations, with Sun Dayu's 223 characters being the highest, average around 150 characters for this passage. Compared to these translations, Lai's version stands out for its brevity and nominal density. The pace of language is also affected by the syllable groupings. In Lai's version, most syllables are organized into groups ranging from two to eight syllables, with one clause containing 11 syllables being the longest. Xu Yuanchong, despite translating the passage with a similar total word count, organizes the passage into groups with an average of six syllables, with the longest clause consisting of 19 syllables. These lengthy clauses would certainly reduce the gusto in the hurling of abuse in this scene, and consequently hamper the actor's expression of rage. They also pose challenges for the audience to grasp the meaning aurally and potentially impede their understanding.

In addition to his rhythmical arrangement of the language, Shakespeare also employs the auditory qualities of his lexicon to create consonance within the play. The recurrent use of "Nothing" is particularly notable in this regard. After the word is first uttered by Cordelia, it is immediately echoed by Lear (1.1.86-88, 201), and then again later by the Fool in one of his jests (1.4.112-114). This creates an aural motif that contributes to the themes of this play—its sense of "emptiness, loss of respect, the extinction of identity" (Greenblatt 2328). Therefore, maintaining this aural motif is essential for preserving the stylistic effect intended by Shakespeare. In her translation, Lai shows her understanding of this by using "*mou jau*" (无有) to render "nothing" and repeating it throughout the text, wherever this word appears. While other translators, such as Sun Dayu, Zhu Shenghao, Fang Ping, and Perng Ching-hsi, also use similar methods to maintain repetition, but the words they select are not as aurally recognizable as "*mou jau*," making the aural motif less apparent. The stylistic use of sound can also be found in the case of the word, "howl" (5.3.258). The word "howl" is significant not only for its meaning but also for its onomatopoeic quality that captures Lear's cry of anguish after losing Cordelia. Lai translates "howl" into "*bei hou*" (悲号), recreating a sonic resonance similar to the sound of wailing. Other translators use words such as "*nu hou*" (怒吼) and "*ai hao*" (哀号) to capture the auditory effect. However, some, like Zhu Shenghao, Fang

Ping, and Xu Yuanchong, add the modal particle "*ba*" (吧) after "howl" and, regretfully, dilute the phonological impact of the word. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the soft modal particle "*ba*" with the repeated "howls" also places an undue strain on the actor to maintain emotional and vocal harmony.

Beyond concerns about the prosodic patterns of Shakespeare's source text and performability for the actors, the language of a drama translation must also be aurally comprehensible and semantically accessible to the audience, so they can take in the new material without undue distraction. In this regard, Lai localizes modes of address. For instance, she lets Lear refer to himself as *zhen* (朕), a royal "I" reserved for kings in ancient China. The daughters address Lear as "father king" (父王), a typical form of address from children to their king father. Kent and Gloucester refer to themselves as *chen* (臣), a self-reference used by court officials when addressing themselves to the king or other members of the royal family. These modes of address are familiar to Chinese audiences from watching court-theme operas. Besides using the traditional way of address, Lai also uses pairs of antithetic lines to signal scene transitions or character exits; a practice common in Traditional Chinese opera and akin to Shakespeare's use of couplets to conclude specific scenes. For example, Edmund's final two lines in 5.1, "for my state/stands on me to defend, not to debate" (5.1.58-59), are rendered into two clauses with syllable groupings of 2/2/3, with the last two characters rhyming with the "o" sound, as in Example (2). When spoken in a relatively slow and rhythmic manner, these lines can signal the quick exit of Edmund and the shift in scene.

Example (2):
文：河山/图谋/尽在我(*ngo*)
　　天下/怨言/奈我何(*ho*) (Shakespeare 112)

Besides incorporating Traditional Chinese opera elements into the translation of *King Lear* to make the translation accessible to the audience, Lai also localizes foreign or unusual images or concepts in the play, ensuring that they would not become sources of distraction to the audience during the performance. When Lear and Kent swear by Apollo (1.1.159-160) or refer to "the barbarous Scythian" (1.1.116), these culturally specific names, if literally translated, could be obscure to a Chinese audience unfamiliar with Western mythology and culture. To avoid this, Lai opts for more general terms like "deity" and "barbarian" to replace these culturally specific names so as to facilitate audience engagement. Similarly, other images, such as the "hemlock" and "nettles" that Lear is crowned with are medicinal herbs to a Chinese audience. To mitigate any confusion arising from the mention of herbal medicines, Lai substitutes them with commonplace wild herbs from Hong Kong. Alongside this strategy of substituting local imagery for the original one, Lai also deletes some unfamiliar and unnecessary words.

A case in this point is Kent's verbal abuse of Oswald, where Lai deletes "three-suited" and "hundred pound" (2.2.14) to prevent potential confusion for the audience.

Another noteworthy aspect of Lai's strategy lies in her translation of puns. When Gloucester introduces his relation with Edmund, his son out of wedlock, to Kent in an indirect manner, Ken replies, "I cannot conceive you" (1.1.11), using "conceive" to mean "comprehension." Gloucester then exploits the word's polysemous nature by replying "Sir, this young fellow's mother could [conceive];" (1.1.12), a pun on biological conception. Lai translates Kent's word using "*m ming*" (唔明), meaning unable to comprehend, and Gloucester's word as "*sam zi tou ming*" (心知肚明), which idiomatically means "knowing it," or, when taken literally, word by word, means "her heart and belly can comprehend." Through the use of the four-character Chinese phrase, Lai creatively maintains the punning effect of the source text and the witticism of Shakespeare.

Translators are often likened to dancers constrained with chains. The textual analysis and comparison of Lai's translation demonstrate that, in her role as a theatre translator, Lai manages to dance elegantly within the restraints of those chains. By skillfully using the localization strategy to translate Shakespeare, she balances the semantic and prosodic constraints of the source text, the performance capabilities of the actors, and the need for comprehensibility from the audience.

The Historical Context of Cantonese Translated Plays

Lai's translation has demonstrated that her strategies enhance the acceptability of *King Lear*, both on the page and the stage. However, the confluence of cultural, social and historical factors also contribute to the success of this Cantonese version in the early 1980s.

Under the British colonial governance, the English language held a prestigious status in Hong Kong's official sphere, while Cantonese, though dominant in everyday life, remained on the outskirts of formal institutions and was rarely considered as a language for publication. Despite this, a convergence of factors in the late 1970s and early 1980s catalyzed a surge in Cantonese-translated dramas and performances, as exemplified by plays staged by Seals and the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre.[6]

[6] According to Luk's statistics, Seals produced 60 dramas with 51 of them were translated ones (Luk 25); the Hong Kong Repertory Theater produced a total of 59 plays between 1977 and 1985, with 37 being translated plays, accounting for 63% of the total (Luk 22).

On an international level, the development of post-war drama in the West had had an impact on Hong Kong theatre through educational channels since the 1950s. Students at universities and colleges performed Western plays for the annual drama competitions of the Federation of Students; professors or directors with Western education backgrounds also initiated the staging of these Western plays. For instance, Vicki Ooi, associated with the University of Bristol, primarily staged productions of European playwrights, including Tom Stoppard's *After Magritte*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, and Harold Pinter's *Old Times*. Chung King Fai, from Yale University, staged American plays such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*, and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. These instances constitute only a fraction of this trend. The collective endeavors of students, professors, and directors helped to nurture a local passion and enthusiasm for Western drama.

Hong Kong's evolving cultural policies and its escalating economic importance in the global setting also fueled the performance of translated Cantonese drama. During the 1960s, especially after the June 7th Riot in 1967, in which the locals raised to revolt the British colonial governance, the then Hong Kong government started to shift its governance approach. One change was to prioritize culture and arts and to legitimate Chinese (albeit without distinction between Cantonese and Mandarin) as an official language in 1974. This shift was accompanied by the construction of public cultural spaces, such as the Hong Kong City Hall, and the implementation of a "non-inference" policy towards cultural activities (qtd. in Luk 17). As the 1970s dawned, alongside economic achievements, subsidized theatre tickets were provided to make the art form more accessible to and more popular among citizens (Tian and Fong 135). In 1977, the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre was established with government funding to improve the quality of productions and popularize drama among the public (Tian and Fong 135). This helped to legitimize drama as a profession and endow it with the status of high culture. These policies and government actions effectively fostered artistic creativity and the development of a distinctive Hong Kong culture. As Cantonese represented the main dialect of the Hong Kong populace, reflecting their lifestyle and identity, it was gradually embraced as an emblem of Hong Kong culture. This trend was further underscored as Cantonese permeated newspapers, television, films and popular songs, coinciding with the city's growing economic influence across the Asian region. Together with the then-developing but demanding theatrical scene in Hong Kong, it seems quite natural for Cantonese to play a key role in importing Western plays to enrich the local cultural landscape.

The changing political environment in Hong Kong also contributed to the rising status of Cantonese. As the British government and China were discussing the signing of the *Sino–British Joint Declaration*, Hong Kong residents found themselves confronted with the challenge of self-identification beyond their previous status. This led them to navigate the process of "seeking

the self, affirming the self, and defining the self" (Fong 5). In this context, Cantonese, a shared dialect within the community, emerged as a symbol of Hong Kong's distinctive identity. Though people in Hong Kong were well aware that the market for Cantonese theatre would be confined to Hong Kong and a few other Cantonese-speaking areas, and was destined to "gain no exposure at all except for ephemeral performances" (Lai, "What do We Put" 250), yet, "[A]n assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage" (Said 174) was much stronger than ever before. This motivated the establishment of a communal language, irrespective of the extent to which this dialect was prevalent. Translation, which is recognized as having the function of "identity formation in cultural context" (Sun 93), started to serve as the avenue to showcase the capabilities of this dialect. When Lai translated into Cantonese, one of her purposes was to rebut the viewpoint that "Cantonese cannot convey anything of substance" ("Jane Lai" 113), and to demonstrate that Cantonese was fully capable of "meeting the new market demands and new fashion" (Zhang 175). Through the efforts of Lai and other translators, Cantonese transcended its status as a marginalized spoken dialect and was gradually accepted as a legitimate written language, even deemed capable of capturing the complexity of Shakespeare.

In a broad sense, the excitement surrounding post-war Western drama, coupled with Hong Kong's evolving cultural policy, economic growth, and the urge to forge a distinct identity in the lead-up to 1997, collectively contributed to the rise of Cantonese translation and performance in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Within this social and historical context, the Cantonese renderings of Shakespeare are just an inevitable phenomenon.

Conclusion

Translation is not performed in a vacuum, but rather emerges from social and individual choices. Therefore, besides focusing on the text of Lai's Cantonese translation of *King Lear*, this article also discusses issues related to the production of this specific play, including the vernacular translation of Shakespeare in China, the production of Seals Theatre Company, and the historical milieu which witnessed the rise of Cantonese-translated plays in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It has demonstrated how vernacular rendition of Shakespeare could gain acceptance in both academia and theatre, how Shakespearean plays could foster local appreciation, and how their translation and appropriation contributed to elevating the status of the Cantonese dialect during a pivotal period in Hong Kong's history. This inherent malleability allows Shakespearean plays to be localized by skilled translators such as Jane Lai, and thus, ultimately, globalized.

WORKS CITED

Brandon, James. "Some Shakespeare(s) in Some Asia(s)." *Asian Studies Review* 20.3 (1997): 1-26.

Cao, Shujun and Sun Fuliang. *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*. Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, 2014.

Che, Raphael. "A Personal Tribute to Jane, Vicki and Seals." *Reflections: Seals Players Foundation, 1979-1993*. Ed. Lynn Yao. Hong Kong: Encounter Enterprise Hong Kong Ltd., 2005. 6-8.

Cheung, Dominic. "The Unforgettable Seals." *Reflections: Seals Players Foundation, 1979-1993*. Ed. Lynn Yao. Hong Kong: Encounter Enterprise Hong Kong Ltd., 2005. 85-87.

Cheung, Ping Kuen and Hoyan Hang Fung. *Oral History of Hong Kong Drama (1930s-1960s)*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Theatre Project, 2001.

Fong, Chee Fun. "The Suspended Self Identity: Behind the Drama Translation in Hong Kong." *Hong Kong Drama Review*. Ed. Jessica Yeung. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2007. 1-14.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *King Lear. The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York, London: Norton Company, 2008. 2335-2355.

Hao, Tianhu. *Milton in China*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2020.

Lai, Jane. "What do We Put Centre Stage?." *Theatre Research International* 8.3 (1983): 246-251.

Lai, Jane. "Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage with Reference to *King Lear*." *Page to Stage: Theatre as Translation*. Ed. Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984. 145-153.

Lai, Jane. "Drama, Translation, Seals." *Reflections: Seals Players Foundation, 1979-1993*. Ed. Lynn Yao. Hong Kong: Encounter Enterprise Hong Kong Ltd., 2005. 59-63.

Lai, Jane and Fong Chee Fun. "Jane Lai." *Collection of Interviews on Hong Kong Drama*. Ed. Fong Chee Fun. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Theatre Project, 2000. 110-117.

Levith, Murray. *Shakespeare in China*. London: Continuum, 2004.

Luk, Yun-Tong. *Development of Western Plays in Hong Kong: From Words to Stage*. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2007.

McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

McEvoy, Sean. *Shakespeare the Basics*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Ooi, Vicki. "Seals: Twenty Years After." *Reflections: Seals Players Foundation, 1979-1993*. Ed. Lynn Yao. Hong Kong: Encounter Enterprise Hong Kong Ltd., 2005. 14-31.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "On the Different Methods of Translating." *The Translation Studies Reader*. 4th ed. Trans. Susan Bernofsky. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. New York: Routledge, 2021. 51-71.

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Trans. Jane Lai. Hong Kong: Co-published by Centre for Translation, Hong Kong Baptist University and International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong), 2005.

Sun, Dayu. "Miscellaneous Thoughts on Translating Shakespeare." *Poetry and Poetic Criticism*. Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing Press, 2014. 233-242.

Sun, Yifeng. "Cultural Translation in the Context of Globalization." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 40 (2009): 89-110.

Tian, Benxiang and Fong Chee Fun, eds. *History Draft of Hong Kong Drama*. Shenyang: Liaoning Education Press, 2009.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Wong, Dorothy. "Shakespeare in Hong Kong: Transplantation and Transposition." MA Diss. The Hong Kong Baptist University, 1995.

Wong, Dorothy. "'Domination by Consent:' A Study of Shakespeare in Hong Kong." *Colonizer and Colonized*. Eds. Theo D'haen and Patricia Krüs. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. 43-56.

Wong, Dorothy. "Translation Theatre and Theatre Translation: Discourses of Shakespearean Plays in Hong Kong." *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* 3.2 (2016): 161-174.

Xie, Guixia. "The Adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* into Chao Zhou Opera the *Rebirth of the Queen*." *Shakespeare Study in China* 2 (2020): 111-121.

Yao, Lynn. "A Journey with Seals." *Reflections: Seals Players Foundation, 1979-1993*. Ed. Lynn Yao. Hong Kong: Encounter Enterprise Hong Kong Ltd., 2005. 75-79.

Zhang, Meifang, Zhang Xiaoyu and Qin Jianbin. "Efforts Seen in Nuances—Prof. Jane Lai on Drama Translation." *Journal of Translation History* 1 (2021): 168-188, 202.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.07

Poonam Trivedi*

Indian Supplements to Shakespeare: *The Hungry* and *We That Are Young*

Abstract: While there is no longer any debate about Shakespeare's position as a global author, the rapidly expanding worldwide archive of the versioning of his works continues to pose a critical challenge. Questions like how far and to what extent can this be seen as Shakespeare or not Shakespeare are raised. Estimation of value is vexed, too: does it reside mainly in the local, or can it also extrapolate meaning globally? Methodologies, too, are debated: is archiving the starting or the endpoint of reception? Or is the construction of networks of analyses around and between them the mode towards negotiating appreciation?

Taking a leaf out of Derrida's "That Dangerous Supplement," this paper will propose a critical perspective of *supplementarity* as an intervention in the debate on the proliferating versioning of Shakespeare. This sees the traffic in Shakespeare as both a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude and also a substitute filling a void. It considers translation, adaptation, appropriation, and even performance of Shakespeare as additions which enhance and complete making good an insufficiency. It will locate this discussion on two much-acclaimed adaptations to emerge out of India: the film *The Hungry* (2017), directed by Bornila Chatterjee, of *Titus Andronicus*, and the novel *We That Are Young* (2017) by Preti Taneja, based on *King Lear*.

Keywords: global, local, versioning, supplement, substitute, surplus.

While there is no longer any debate about Shakespeare's position as a global author, the rapidly expanding worldwide archive of renditions and redactions of his works on page, stage and screen does continue to pose a critical challenge. Intercultural versions especially (I am using "versions" as a shorthand for full-scale translations, performances, and re-writings that attempt to re-present the works of Shakespeare), while being welcomed at the performative centres like the Globe London, have disturbed the status quo: questions like how far and to

* Retired, University of Delhi. poonamtrivedi2@gmail.com

what extent can these be seen as Shakespeare or not Shakespeare are raised frequently. Estimation of their value too is vexed: does it reside mainly in the local, or can it also extrapolate meaning globally? Or, as is sometimes held, has the intercultural become "glocal," especially with regard to the Shakespeare film from different parts of the world, where the local is seen as collapsed into the "global"? Issues of the accessibility, transportability and vulnerability of cross-cultural Shakespeare have been voiced, foregrounding seemingly apologetic constructs like the "uninformed spectator" or the "dis-orientated spectator," which the cross-cultural Shakespeare regularly throws up. The major critical issues today, it seems, are neither exposure nor experience *per se*, particularly after the Globe 2 Globe festival of 2012, where 37 plays were performed in 37 languages, and before that, the World Shakespeare Festival at the Globe (2001) and at RSC too (2006), but the critical processing, the estimation and the pleasure in the cross-cultural Shakespeare. That is, "professing" the inter/cross-cultural.

There is no doubt that among the intercultural, "Asian Shakespeares" have played the premier role in the generation of traffic towards expanding the worldwide network of Global Shakespeare. The buzz around the experimental and creative productions of Suzuki Tadashi, Yukio Ninagawa, Wu Hsing Kuo and Ong Ken Sen, the Annette Leday Kathakali *King Lear*, to mention a few of the outstanding directors, from the late 1970s onwards, turned the critical spotlight on the potencies of Asian performativity. The publication of several collections of essays, both country-based or pan-Asian in their ambit, established a new and vibrant area of investigation. The setting up of archives in Singapore and MIT provided the visual, digital and live backup for many of these famed performances. And now films on Shakespeare have been the icing on the cake: Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Thai, and even Tibetan cinemas have turned out films which have been drawing audiences and winning plaudits. Yet Asian Shakespeare remains on the periphery: it did not command either a plenary or a panel at the World Shakespeare Congress of 2016 and only one related seminar with just 7 participants. At the Shakespeare Association of America 2018 annual conference, it was little or no better. Are we Asian Shakespeareans in danger of self-ventriloquising? Have we been providing merely a sprinkling of exotic colouration tolerated for the "internationalism" it garners? Or is there an active engagement with the Asian / global scene? Where is the frisson?[1]

[1] For the Asian "Global" see my essay, "Making Meaning between the Local and the Global: Performing Shakespeare in India Today" in *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare: 'All the World's his Stage'*, eds. Poonam Trivedi, Paromita Chakravarti and Ted Motohashi, New York: Routledge, 2021. 15-32.

On the other hand, Shakespeare's iconic place in Western, even British, culture and curriculum is not quite so solidly confirmed as it is usually assumed. Questions challenging the suitability and desirability of his continuance in the curriculum and the nature of the pedagogy deployed for promoting his works have become more insistent in recent times. Here, I would like to share with you an event I was involved in at Queen Mary's College, University of London, in late March 2018. An open debate titled "Kill Bill" or "This house proposes that the inclusion of Shakespeare in the higher education curriculum and theatre and arts programming obstructs decolonisation" was organised jointly by the English and Drama departments. Many, 12-15 students and faculty, spoke for and against the motion—I was also a speaker—and at the final vote, by secret ballot, there were as many as 16 votes or 38% for the motion, i.e. for killing Bill, as against 23 or 55% opposing it, with 7% abstentions. Shakespeare's position in the canon, in the curriculum, was being seriously contested and even sought to be subverted from within. Many reasons for the dissatisfaction and disaffection with Shakespeare were voiced: his popular identification with the elite and the nerdy was one, but the most repeated refrain was that his works are cumbersome—"Take too long and too much effort to get to grips with"—a time which could be better utilised, and finally the works do not provide the immediate answers the young of today are looking for. "He is boring," said a particularly angry young man. It reminded me of what, at another level, Jonathan Bate had said at the International Shakespeare Association plenary in 2010, warning the eminent audience that perhaps in a hundred years' time, Shakespeare will be remembered only for his quotations and *mot juste*, wise sayings and appropriate words, because few will have the patience to read his language.

I narrate this experience to argue for a long look at the state of English studies, the place and function of Shakespeare studies in it and the part played by international and Asian inputs in it. When the validity and valency of Shakespeare is being challenged on home ground, it will not be an over-statement to assert that the cross-cultural and inter-medial versioning of Shakespeare is neither a peripheral product of special pleading nor only a postcolonial "writing back" out to subvert or demolish the citadel of Shakespeare Studies. But instead, it is proving itself essential not only to the spread but also to the very survival of Shakespeare. The Shakespeare film, particularly, is fast becoming the first point of contact with the bard for the young today, and it plays a decisive role in determining future academic involvement.

This article will glance at some concepts put forward by Jacques Derrida in his essay "That Dangerous Supplement" to suggest a means of accounting for and estimating the worldwide growth of Shakespeares. Adaptation theory has evolved in response to this proliferation but is largely concerned with

categorisations and differentiations. Derrida's views on speech and writing, on supplements, on plenitude and différance provide clues to the inevitable upsurge of adaptation, change and growth in literary texts. For Derrida, writing is a supplement to speech, a mediated representation of thought. Supplement is that which adds, comes to the aid of, is itself a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, a proposition which seems to approximate the global traffic in Shakespeare and provide us with a critical perspective of *supplementarity* as an intervention in the debate on the proliferating versioning of Shakespeare. The supplement is also, according to Derrida, "the fullest measure of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence" (Attridge 83)… an observation which further seems to elucidate the processes of globalising Shakespeare. With this perspective, translation, adaptation, appropriation, even performance, of Shakespeare may be considered as additions or supplements, which, just as when writing supplements or adds to speech, rewritings of a classic author enhance and complete making good an implied insufficiency in how the plays speak to the moment of the day. Since the supplement simultaneously signifies and fills a void, it adds to replace (like writing on speech) and by so substituting and strengthening may supplant meanings, hence termed "dangerous supplements" (Attridge 83). We have to recall the fate of *King Lear*, which was almost cast into oblivion for over a hundred years by the popular adaptation of Nahum Tate.

The Derridian concept of "différance" which refers to the deferred meaning of the sign within the signifier and the signified, positing the possibility of the emergence of different and new meanings, may also help us to account for and frame the unending flow of new meanings and interpretations of Shakespeare which continue to proliferate.

Hence, it follows that redaction/versioning of Shakespeare from all over the world, including Asia, is performing a vital function: bringing him up to date for the modern audience, filling in gaps perceived by them, and to stretch the analogy, like health supplements, give him a shot in the arm to keep his audience and popularity going.

The essay locates this discussion on two much-acclaimed adaptations to emerge out of India and, by extrapolation, out of Asia: a film *The Hungry* (2017) directed by Bornila Chatterjee, based on *Titus Andronicus*, and the novel *We That Are Young* (2017) by Preti Taneja reprising *King Lear*. These two versions from India more than fulfil this function of supplementarity; they both add to the plenitude of Shakespeare and, by their relocations in a new time and space, make his works and ideas come alive and resonate with the young, like those who were protesting against the inclusion of Shakespeare in the curriculum debate.

Though produced independently and at some distance from each other, both *The Hungry* and *We That Are Young* show significant similarities. Both are by third-generation postcolonial authors, of Asian origins but based in

Western locations, young and female who have produced bold, out-of-the-box adaptations taking Shakespeare to another level of being, not merely to tell their own stories but also to re-formulate and distil the meanings and the essence of the plays for today in a manner which goes beyond the obviously national/native and ethnic. Both have won accolades in film festivals and literary fests around the world. They both reveal confidence and skill in their respective mediums of film and fiction to respond to and build on Shakespeare in their own very contemporary and strong, politically inflected terms, something not seen in Indian versions before. The non-Indian working base of both the authors influences the treatment of their re-locations, which, while being distinctly immersed in an Indian-ness, is also simultaneously abstracted from it, enabling a critically imbued distance creating a non-nationalised perspective.

Both redactions locate *Titus* and *Lear* in modern, urban India, largely in the capital, Delhi, focussing on what they see as the chief problem in Indian society: of corruption in business, politics and patriarchy, all woven together. Both Titus and Lear are re-imagined as ruthless patriarchs heading vast business empires, controlling inordinate amounts of wealth, land and people, whose power goes to their heads, leading them into horrendous acts of inhumanity. Both are thus a searing expose of the depravity the lust for money and power can lead to. These Shakespearean themes are dovetailed effortlessly into the contemporary Indian scenario and extended, particularly in their control and abuse of female sexuality. Topical themes of climate change and ecology are also woven in, but all the while maintaining strong and intricate parallels with the original Shakespearean text.

The female authorship of both these versions has engendered significant "feministic" re-tellings: *The Hungry* is more Tamora (Tulsi)'s film than Titus (Tathagat)'s; it recasts the whole story from her perspective, her need to revenge the uncalled-for murder of her elder son, Ankur. *We That Are Young* paints intense but sympathetic portraits of the three daughters, filling in their backstories in extensive detail, underlining and exposing the oppression, manipulation, control, use and abuse of them at home and at work by the patriarch father. Again, this infusion of feminism, stimulated by the academic feminist revisionism of these two plays, is not only a radical critique of the entrenched patriarchy of Indian society but also simultaneously aligns these versions to the internationalism of the "me-too" and other such movements. The links between the two plays: headstrong Titus as an early template for the irascible Lear, the sacrifice of the daughter, the violence and the venality, etc. have been noted variously in criticism; these two new versions by their relocation in a similar milieu, strengthen and expand these originary connections.

Power Hungry

Turning to examine these two versions individually is to track their differences which are also significant: *The Hungry*, directed by Bornila Chatterjee, was commissioned through a contest on adapting Shakespeare for the 400th anniversary held by the British Council in 2016. It was released at the Toronto Film Festival in October 2017 and later shown at the London and the Dharamsala Film Festivals. It was then released strategically on Amazon Prime Videos for public viewing because it may not have got past the Indian censor board. It skilfully edits Shakespeare's rough and rambling play into a suspenseful, dark thriller, filling in the turns and counter-turns of the narrative through flashbacks. It tells the story of two super-rich business families in Delhi, the Joshis and Ahujas, and their rivalries. It opens at the moment of a proposed amalgamation of the two businesses, by the wedding of the widow of Joshi–Tulsi (Tamora) with the only, much younger son of Tathagat Ahuja (Titus), the controlling patriarch. During the New Year's party, where this is announced amidst the popping of corks, Tamora's elder son is quietly put away for having disagreed with Tathagat on the corrupt methods of a business deal: openly bribing the politician who is to open the doors for them. The rest is a stealthy plot for revenge by Tulsi, doubly complicated by the fact that she is performing both as bride and butcher. All the key events of the play, the gratuitous killings, the ruthless counter-revenges, the mutilation of Lavinia, the banquet and the climax of feasting off kindred flesh are all deftly worked into the background of the wedding. Needless to add, the relocations resonate very strongly with the known machinations of several of the ultra-rich in north India, uncannily reflecting the then murderous decimation between the liquor and real estate barons Monty and Ponty Chadha. These relocations make Shakespeare's stomach-churning gruesome play palatable: by casting it into a noir horror film, haunting and full of edginess, the Roman play becomes believable to the contemporary imagination. As Naseeruddin Shah, the actor in the role of Titus, has observed, this film version of *Titus* "lets in the realities which most films in India, at least, shy away from" (Bhandari). Re-writings exploit and utilise the "deferred" meanings, creating a "supplement" which "intervenes or insinuates itself in the place"… (Attridge 83).

More significantly, *Titus*, which has seen only one film version to date, has long been held as the black sheep of the canon, a "not Shakespeare," consigned to the bottom rung of the works. When questioned about why she chose to adapt *Titus*, Shakespeare's most disturbing play, Bornila Chatterjee, the director, said that it is most relevant in today's society—exposing the irrepressible greed for power and the subsequent futility of revenge. The very names of the protagonists, "Tulsi," meaning sacred plant and "Tathagat," the enlightened one—one of the names of the Buddha—signal the inversions which are sought to be effected. The film adopts a quiet tone, working through visual

symbolism for its effect: the opening and closing shots, for instance, are of a bunch of goats hungrily nibbling at scraps on the trash mountain and then later invading the devastated wedding feast, humans and animals, both shown as victims of the power-hungry. Shot on location in Delhi, the wintry fog added to the mystery and murkiness. The challenge was "figuring out how to translate […] the beauty of the written language, […] cinematically, be it through costumes, or the set or music," said Bornila Chatterjee (244). With a smooth, silky subtlety, *The Hungry* persuasively restores and rehabilitates the play, endowing it with esteem and critical possibilities. The critical estimation of *Titus* has never been high: from being called "a heap of rubbish" (Ravenscroft 1687), a "Senecal exercise… quite unfelt… and cool" (M. C. Bradbrook 1935) to be seen as a "promising" early play (J. C. Maxwell 1961) and now a "daring experiment" (Katharine Eisaman Maus 1977).

The film also furthers the feminist revisioning of the play, as noted earlier, by a quiet foregrounding of the injustice done to Tamora (Tulsi); she carries her son's enforced suicide note, which he was made to write at the point of a gun, with her always. She is made less culpable of villainy, she does not order the cutting off of Lavinia's tongue or her rape, which just happens as a consequence of a fierce drunken squabble between Deepak, her younger son and Loveleen (Lavinia), and Tulsi is shown as horrified and grieved at the outcome. In an inadvertent giveaway irony, Tulsi lights the lamp = *deepak* (Hindi, also the name of Tulsi's son) in Loveleen (Lavinia)'s room, which forms a clue to Tathagat (Titus), indicating who committed the outrage on her. This remodelling of Tamora through the lead actress, Tisca Chopra's beauteous persona with a soft and subtilised voice, seems to ameliorate her lust for revenge so that the film becomes Tamora's tragedy and Titus, the unredeemable villain. So much so that Shakespeare's arch-female villain becomes the survivor, a kind of heroine, which resulted in the film being nominated for the Gender Equality Award.

The film's feminist feel and polemic goes further. Productions of *Titus* are challenged in their staging of Lavinia's rape and dismemberment: they have, on occasion, been critiqued for catering to sensationalism and voyeurism in the audience. *The Hungry* handles this sequence sensitively and suggestively: Lavinia is not "lopp'd and hew'd," and there is no "crimson river of warm blood… bubbling" (2.4.16, 22-23)[2] all over her. Instead, the muting is suggested by her dupatta/wrap, usually worn round the neck, now besmirched with blood and stuffed in her mouth. The Shakespearean overflow of verse on this occasion (often read as prolix and rhetorical) is transposed into telling cinematic imagery and visuality. In the play, Lavinia is found by Marcus, "fleeing… straying in the park, / Seeking to hide herself, as doth a deer / That hath receiv'd some recurring

[2] Citations from *Titus Andronicus* ed. J. C. Maxwell, the Arden Shakespeare, London: Methuen, 1968.

wound" (3.1.87-90). In the film, Loveleen runs and stumbles to bury herself in the huge trash mountain which borders the family's palatial estate. In fact, the film opens with a lingering shot of this same trash mountain with vultures flying overhead (evidence of Delhi's inability to manage its daily waste), an image of the actual and symbolic detritus of society—"a byproduct of greed" (Chatterji 258). Loveleen, with her tongue pulled out, is signalled as turned to trash, without human words and speechless and finds refuge and comfort in the garbage, a cinematic re-imaging which does not undermine the horror but rather sharpens the poignancy of the happenings.

However, there is yet more feminist redaction: the film interpolates a wife for Titus, old, bedridden, paralysed and muted with an oxygen mask strapped on her face, but who observes all and speaks with her eyes. Interestingly, Yamanote Jijosha's stage production of *Titus* (2009) also interpolates a wife for Titus, a gap felt by more than one creative producer. Here, she is a ghostly figure, unremarked by the other characters, but who occupies centre stage and conducts simple domestic actions, like folding laundry and making tea, functioning as a bridge figure between the past and the present. In the film, Titus' wife, too, acts as an observer registering and reacting to the happenings: at the climax, she is present at the family banquet, and the film ends with a closeup of her shocked eyes welling with tears when Tathagat (Titus), suddenly falls dead shot by Tulsi (Tamora), when he proposes to her immediately after he has stabbed his own son at the banquet. Tulsi survives but under the watchful gaze of Tathagat's wife, a mute female witness to the pointless carnage. The tears of the wife as the final image surprise one but supplement, though with ambiguity, the obligatory shedding of tears at the end of the play for Titus by his remaining son, grandson and brother. While the tears in the film seem gratuitous, they signal a touch of the tragic even though the final mood is sceptical of the 'tragic' asserting the pointlessness of the revenge with Tulsi staring stunned at the gun in her hand.

As is perhaps clear, *The Hungry* is not the typical Bollywood masala film. Much shorter in length, its controlled cinematography and aesthetics, combining beauty and horror, lift the film into the transnationalism of art cinema. Localised Indian cinema now incorporates shades of the global.

Power Brokers / Broken by Power

The novel *We That Are Young* by Preti Taneja was first published in the UK by the Galley Beggar Press, a small publisher of unusual writing, in 2017. It has received rave reviews, especially in the Western press. It was re-issued in seven editions, including one by Penguin Random House in India and one released in August 2018 in the US. It won the Desmond Elliot Prize, the UK's most

prestigious one for debut novelists and was short-listed for several others. It's a weighty tome, 553 pages long, epical and ambitious in its sweep: taking all India, its spiritualism, its history from the feudal past to independence and modernity, its growing economy, consumerism and corruption, its poverty, to its unremitting patriarchy and burgeoning ultra-nationalism. All this is interwoven into the story of King Lear with close equivalents of events and characters. It narrates the life of Devraj, or Bapuji, former minor royalty, now the founding father of The Company, a huge conglomerate of businesses that manage almost everything from construction, cars, apparel, hotels, real estate—you name it. It shows how he rises to eminence by shrewdly working the system, subverting laws and bribing politicians and other corporates. Suddenly, like Lear, one day, he decides to give up his untold millions to his three daughters, distributing them according to their declaration of love for him. Predictably, the youngest, Sita, his favourite, educated in the UK, refuses to play along and absconds. The rest of the story tracks the chaos that ensues when Devraj finds he cannot really stop controlling or interfering in the businesses. It is built up through multiple perspectives of the different main characters, including that of the sons, legitimate and bastard, of Devraj's right-hand man, Ranjit, the Gloucester figure. All the main characters, even the Fool (Nanu), Devraj's mother, grandmother to the daughters and Oswald, are worked in.

The novel is distinguished by its form and style, which is unlike much of the fast-growing Indian writing in English. Its experimental multiple narratives and flashbacks ventriloquise the back stories of the Shakespearean characters while the density and vividness of the descriptions and the inventiveness of the incidents make for a compelling and absorbing read, which takes even the Shakespeare-schooled reader by surprise. Its use of the English language, embossed with Hindi/Urdu slang and colloquialisms—not translated or glossed—ranges fluently over different registers of Indian English and pucca English accents, creating a mood both intensely localised, but since written in English, with an ironic distancing too. "I had to make many intricate decisions about register, tone, linguistic style and voice at the sentence level of my writing," says Taneja (254).

However, while the novel *We That Are Young* is a discomforting truth-teller, its vision is dystopic and pessimistic without any redeeming features expected from a Shakespearean tragedy spin-off. Devraj does not learn from his travails; unlike Lear, in the end, he is not the remorseful, fond and foolish old man but remains a venal egotist, reactionary and misogynist. The tragic frame it is structured on is almost stood on its head: "Bapuji" was the popular appellation for Mahatma Gandhi, also known as the Father of the Nation. Preti Taneja subtly plays on this word: her father-figure is not called "Babuji," the common word for father in Hindi, but "Bapuji," the honorific used for the Mahatma. Her Lear/Bapuji is the obverse of the Apostle of non-violence, liable to violent rages, frenzied beatings and sexual abuse. He propagates a spiritualism which

camouflages sordid business practices, and instead of an asceticism, he panders to rampant commercialisation. Hence, no tears are shed for him at his death by fire at the end.

If any shred of the Shakespearean "tragic" remains, it is in the accidental and unforeseen deaths of the three daughters: Gargi, the eldest controlling one, Radha, the beauty bartered and manipulated for the Company, and the youngest Sita, the radical who keeps disappearing. They revel in their wealth but are consumed by it too, not immune to the callousness bred in the super-rich. They chafe at the impositions but cannot escape the clutches of patriarchy and misogyny. Like Lear's daughters, they are conflicted, they compete for sexual satisfactions but are not against each other. What is remarkable is that while Preti Taneja, in her recasting, does not let any characters off the hook, including the daughters, exposing their viciousness—she has been called a "bad feminist"—in the narrativization of their backstories, there is a latent sympathy for the daughters, that seeps through in the quiet and controlled tone of the writing, and which prevents their flashes of anger, though presented as scathing irony, apt to be unnoticed.

King Lear is, of course, today seen as the acme of Shakespeare's achievement, and it has been subject to much versioning and re-writing. What is significant about this one is that it homes the play in India and, by implication, Asia, supplementing the Shakespearean traffic in the tropics for the young, by those that are themselves young. And that it is consciously political, as Preti Taneja has stated in an interview (*Indian Express*, April 10, 2018): "My role is to imbue my world with all of the weighted politics of our times and use my tools as sharp as I can." The novel boldly ventures into Kashmir, the hotspot of post-partition India, referencing the disaffections of the people mirrored in the riots in which Devraj's wife is burnt alive in her ancestral home. And where, in the end, in another conflagration, Devraj too dies. But startlingly not before he has strung up Sita, who was hiding with him, looped in her precious hand-embroidered pashmina shawl—one of his many investments in Kashmir. While this layered and intricate novel needs a fuller discussion to do it justice, its complex density precluding singling out any one of the many strands woven in, what is clear is that in Taneja's world as a whole, the possibilities of the Shakespearean tragic heroism are very limited: today's deracinated milieu has hollowed out the humanist possibilities of self-acknowledgement and redemption. The novel probes deeper, instigating discomforting fundamental questions: for instance, how far is Lear implicated in Cordelia's death, despite his loud protestations of grief? Or, how do we reconcile the blatant misogyny, the searing curses on women in the play? Do we continue to see them as the mad ranting of an egotistical old man or introspect for a shift in our reading practices? An adaptation of *Lear* entitled *Lear's Daughters* performed by students at my college (2010), which I happened to have directed, opened with female dancers who were inflicted with a barrage of Lear's curses from the play

flung out sharply, like bullets, at them and who winced and fell at the onslaught provoking the same disturbing questions challenging the critical status quo around the play.[3] The rewriting by the novel, which goes further than most in supplementing Shakespeare's play, becomes, in Derrida's words, "an adjunct, a subaltern instance" (Attridge 83) which threatens to replace or supplant, coming close to becoming a "dangerous supplement."

These two appropriations of Shakespeare, *The Hungry* and *We That Are Young*, have been critiqued by some in India, particularly the novel, for their dark and grim perspectives on Indian society, but together they weave a web of supplementarity, adding to, enriching, completing in an acutely local, but also multi vocal and global manner: the film in its aesthetics, tightness of form, and non-Bollywood features, and the novel, written in English, open to the global market, in its formal and stylistic experimentation, and its reach beyond native informancy. Both of these overturn the classic tragic arc: the film re-gendering it but signalling a sense of waste and the novel jettisoning it for a decidedly dystopic and bleak worldview. In their restructuring and rewriting, they generate and accumulate new meanings, creating a different kind of Shakespeare. The film *The Hungry* rehabilitates the play *Titus*, making good an oft-acknowledged Shakespearean lack and insufficiency, as indicated earlier, thereby adding to Shakespearean resilience. The novel, through its rewriting, unpicks the settled assumptions about the play, extending and complicating the discourse around it.

In conclusion, this discussion, through the adaptation and recasting of *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*, attempts to propose a perspective on the process of versioning through an analogy with Derrida's concept of supplementarity as the very condition of language. If writing is a supplement to speech, inevitably accruing other supplements in a chain of signifiers, emerging out of the deferred meanings conceived as différance, may we not see the worldwide proliferation of versions of Shakespeare as an intrinsic condition where supplements of differentiated meanings will necessarily emerge as the condition of writing creating a plenitude enriching another plenitude.

WORKS CITED

Attridge, Derek, ed. *Jaques Derrida, Acts of Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Bhandari, Arpita. "Indian Film based on Titus Andronicus is 'Monsoon Wedding' gone horribly wrong." 24 September 2017. https://scroll.in/reel/851696/indian-film-based-on-titus-andronicus-is-monsoon-wedding-gone-horribly-wrong. Accessed 10 December 2023.

[3] See Preti Taneja, "Lear's Indian Daughters." 28 March 2013, *Blogging Shakespeare*, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Chatterjee, Bornila. “Adapting Shakespeare: Directors and Practitioners in Conversation.” *Women and Indian Shakespeares*. Eds. Thea Buckley, Mark Thornton Burnett, Sangeeta Datta and Rosa Garcia-Periago. London: The Arden Shakespeare, Bloomsbury, 2022. 243-261.

Chatterjee, Bornila, dir. *The Hungry*. BFI. 2017.

Lei, Bi qi Beatrice. “The Fatal Attraction of Empress Americana: *Titus Andronicus* as Japan’s Post-colonial Allegory.” Forthcoming in *Shakespeare in the ‘Post’ Colonies*.

Maus, Katharine Eisaman, ed. “Introduction.” *Titus Andronicus*. *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katherine Eisaman Maus. New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1977.

Maxwell, J. C., ed. “Introduction.” *Titus Andronicus*. The Arden Shakespeare, London: Methuen, 1968.

Taneja, Preti. “Adapting Shakespeare: Directors and Practitioners in Conversation.” *Women and Indian Shakespeares*. Eds. Thea Buckley, Mark Thornton Burnett, Sangeeta Datta and Rosa Garcia-Periago. London: The Arden Shakespeare, Bloomsbury, 2022. 243-261.

Taneja, Preti. “Lear’s Indian Daughters.” 28 March 2013, *Blogging Shakespeare*, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Taneja, Preti. *We That Are Young*. Norwich: Galley Beggar Press, 2017.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.08

Hemang Ashwinkumar*

Historicizing the Bard of Avon: Shakeshifting Shakespeare and the Constitution of Guarati Literary Culture

Abstract: In a century and a half of his continuous presence in India, Shakespeare has shapeshifted into manifold textual and performative "avatars," from an agent of moral edification transforming into a subversive stick with which to beat the imperial culture. The "Bard" adapted to his immediate environs like a chameleon on the one hand, while standing tall on his native stage, on the other, asserting the imperial will and throwing the native cultural background in sharp relief. The Gujarati theatre and literary histories have borne witness to this ceaseless transformation. The present paper traces the high points in the histories of the "Bard's" localization—from Shakespeare to Sheikh Pir—as well as his "non-localizations," examining in the process how they reflect the evolution of the Gujarati literary culture along the caste, ethnic, and communal lines. An attempt is made in the paper to understand the role these histories could have played in engendering the essentialized, elitist, and monolithic ideas and identities that Gujarati literary culture still suffers from. Finally, the paper also points to the possible directions the translation and staging of Shakespeare's plays can take in the postcolonial era.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Gujarati Literary Culture, Parsi Theatre, translation, adaptation, literary historiography.

Introduction

The author of the famous dictum "What's in a name?" could have turned in his grave, either in righteous anger or in climactic delight when, in 1989, Radio Tehran announced Muammar Gaddafi's historical view of the Bard of Avon as Sheik Zubayr bin William, a man of Arab origin who lived in the sixteenth-

* Bilingual Poet, Translator, Independent Scholar, Central University of Gujarat. hemangde@gmail.com

century Britain.[1] As befits the "Occident," the British media laughed the idea off, coming as it did from the most strident and somewhat screwy, anti-imperial voice from the "Orient." Perhaps there was also selective amnesia at play in the reaction, as in the heyday of empire, none other but Sigmund Freud proclaimed, post his afternoon visit to National Portrait Gallery in London on 13 September 1908, that the Bard's face was "completely un-English" and that he could be a Frenchman with such a pre-lapsarian name as Jacques Pierre (Molnar 41). If the physiognomy does not constitute evidence enough, the Bard's unflattering characterization of the Jews, the Turks, and the Brits in his plays, his staggering knowledge of the history, language, politics, and culture of northern Africa, southwestern Asia, and southeastern Europe, the possibility of Dark Lady of the sonnets being an Arab woman and his apparent familiarity with the Latin translations of the eleventh-century Arab scientist Alhazen (Badawi, "Shakespeare and the Arabs" 182) have been marshalled by critics and historians to prove the Arab-origin hypothesis. In fact, the debate about the origins, not only of his works but also of the author himself, goes back to the nineteenth century. Contrary to the demi-god-like status Shakespeare has enjoyed in India, the classist Western analysis has deprived the author of moral superiority and sagehood, accorded to Dante, Goethe, and Tolstoy, for example.

Nearer home, in anticipation of Gaddafi's claim, Kannada scholars maintained that in the early phase of Kannada theatre (1880-1920), Shakespeare had indeed been popularly known in south India as Sekh Pir (Satyanath 45). The act of naming in intercultural contexts is anything but apolitical and value-neutral; it inheres a politics of cultural construction that has implications for deepening or neutralizing the asymmetrical power relationships between civilizations locked in historical antagonism. For example, it takes a moment of (un)naming Avicenna as Ibn-e-Sinna to unveil the politics of appropriations at the imperial heart of the European civilization. T. S. Satyanath sums it up beautifully:

> All projects of translation, be it translating the Bible into a native language as part of the missionary activity, or compilation and codification of law texts like the nyayasastra, or defining linguistically ordered power relationships through terminological categorizations such as donor-recipient, original-translated, etc., are activities in which the land, people and their representations were constructed through a process of inscribing, literally "writing over," existing concepts, categories and terms, often existing in oral tradition, by the concepts, categories and terminologies of the colonizers. (46)

[1] The controversy is neatly summarized in Margaret Litvin's blog entry Qadhafi: Shakespeare Was an Arab Named Shaykh Zubayr | Send Down the Basket! https://arabshakespeare.blogspot.com/2011/04/qadhafi-shakespeare-was-arab-named.html

Thus, the project of introducing Shakespeare as a literary authority in the classroom and an agent of moral edification on stage was a part of the ideological construction that sought to constitute the culture of the colonized as the other. Concomitantly, the colonized, too, translated the Bard within diverse frames of reception out of the desire to resist the colonial hegemony on the one hand and the compulsions of emergent vernacular public spheres on the other. What this led to in effect was the development of "[…] a wide range of attitudes to Shakespeare, and indeed to the English and England generally through him, (that) varies from eager adoption and assimilation on the one hand to what may be called literary subversions on the other, with many moderate political shades being represented in between" (Trivedi 16). Thus, in a century and a half since his arrival in India, Shakespeare has shapeshifted, in his manifold inscriptive and performative avatars in different Indian languages, from being "a moral yardstick, …a chastising rod by which to measure and reform defects of native character" (Trivedi 14) into a postcolonial stick to beat the culture of the colonizer with.

The present chapter will outline the history of Shakespeare in Gujarati translation on page as well as on stage and examine how it reflects the evolution of the Gujarati literary culture along caste, ethnic, and communal lines. Such an approach is largely in tune with the 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies, which has opened newer avenues for charting out the historiography of translation, aiming to unpack the interrelationship of translation with ideological projects, significant events, and movements in the literary field. What follows is a historical account of Gujarati's engagement with Shakespeare, split into three periodic segments, with a caveat that periodization often ends up being a problematic exercise, and temporal boundaries often tend to be porous and fluid.

Shakespeare on the Gujarati Stage

As a persecuted community that migrated from Persia around the tenth century and adapted to the new socio-cultural environs without ruffling too many feathers in the local power circles, the Parsis played a remarkable role as interpreters and translators in the centers of colonial trade and commerce like Surat and Bombay, translating the difficult terrain, unknown concepts and confusing epistemologies to the British imperialists. While negotiating an in-between space, they became the first community to get early exposure to colonial modernity and eventually to uphold and undercut its authority through such technologies of power as print media and the theatre in the nineteenth century. Naturally, the backdrop of English education, print modernity (newspapers like *Rast Goftar*), the establishment of societies and associations (*Gyan Prasarak Mandali*, etc.), and the access to stage performance

(Parsi Theatre) led the community elites to initiate a reform that would facilitate "a form of intra-group control and intergroup self-representation" (Nicholson 44). Accordingly, the Parsi Theatrical Committee, whose reformist founders were closely associated with *Rast Goftar*, began to stage plays in the 1850s that were based on Persian mythology to engender in the community secular, ritualistic, and customary transformation through a conscientious promotion of introspection before the juddins (non-Parsis/Hindus) pointed them out.

Though there was a tacit admission of the British cultural and civilizational superiority in the burgeoning Parsi public sphere, the initial plays, staged between 1853 and 1857, drew extensively on Persian myths and non-linear history to forge a stable community identity (Nicholson 49). These mythical plays were staged alongside farces that directed a critical, and semi-juridical gaze at the social ills prevalent in the contemporary Parsi society (Nicholson 50-53). Thus, the first plays to be staged at the Grant Road Theatre in Mumbai were *Rustom Zabuli ane Sohrab* [*Rustom Zabooli and Sohrab*] and *Dhanji Garak* [*Dhanji, the swallower*]: the first a mythical play, the other a farce. However, following severe criticism from the traditionalist Parsi establishment about the theatre's ploy to tarnish the community's reputation, the Parsi stage undertook a swift course correction and shifted its attention from Persian myths to English literature; this shift lasted until 1968 when the mythical gaze returned, under the patriotic instinct of the contemporary journalist and playwright Kaikhushro Navrojji Kabra. With this epistemic shift and through the decisive move from the cunning greed of Dhanji to the virtue and morality of Shakespeare, the Parsi theatre proclaimed its break with the precolonial religio-performative traditions and undertook a wholehearted, scientific engagement with the colonial modernity as a purveyor of reason and sophistication. To announce the arrival of a transformed stage, the theatre staged the first Gujarati translation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Nathari Phirangiz Thekane Avi* in 1857. This production was lavishly praised by *Rast Goftar* for providing a useful model for the moral and intellectual reformation of Parsi women (Kabraji 158). Within the next decades, the Grant Road Theatre in Bombay witnessed the performance of Gujarati adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Timon of Athens* and others.[2] What is noteworthy here in terms of the character of the incipient Parsi public sphere is the fact that while the reverence for Shakespeare on the Bombay stage implicitly served to assert the moral superiority of the colonizer's culture—thus concealing the material realities of the oppressive colonial rule—it was imaged

[2] There is little clarity among scholars about the exact dates. Nicholson and other scholars like Baradi and Mehta mention them without mentioning the years of production.

off-stage in the explicit validation of the desirability of the colonial rule by the Parsi intelligentsia after the first war of Indian independence in 1857.

Though the Parsi theatre came across as a unitary enterprise in its originary moment, its internal constitution and cultural politics highlighted a radical anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic stance. While it goes beyond the scope of this writing to offer here an exhaustive history of the translation of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati, I would like to trace the contours of this politics by focusing on (1) the cosmopolitan professional culture and linguistic pluralism that created a vibrant, dialogic literary culture in the second half of the nineteenth century (2) the transformative adaptations in Gujarati, Urdu, and Hindi that "escorted" the Bard "into the psyche of these audiences without them knowing that it was Shakespeare" (Trivedi 15).

Once the initial euphoria about Bard's cultural caliber died down, his plays were relentlessly localized, even professionalized, in a smorgasbord of the Victorian stagecraft, the raw and critical energies of folk theatre like *bhavai*, a diversity of popular and classical musical traditions, and finally, a subterranean strain of social criticism directed at the follies and the foibles of the elite. The success of the localized Shakespeare on the Bombay stage didn't owe anything to the Bard's poetic or dramatic genius; in fact, the adaptations became a rage with a heterogenous audience because they provided good stories, thrilling action, music, song, romantic situations and a surfeit of spectacle (Shah 485).

Before explicating this politics, let me touch upon an important issue regarding the opposite trajectories of translations of Shakespeare's plays in different regional languages. Following the institutionalization of English education, the colonial society split along class lines, a development that "had its consequences on the reception of Shakespeare too: there developed two mutually exclusive streams—of an 'academic' literary Shakespeare led by Anglicized Indian and a popular Shakespeare on stage, transformed and transmuted in translation" (Trivedi 15). Though this trend is historically witnessed in languages like Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, and Marathi, the watertight compartmentalization posited along class lines is problematic, at least in the case of the Parsi stage where arguably a large number of writers, translators, and even actors were the product of the colonial Anglicizing mission, but not completely so and even the audience represented a heterogeneous group comprising the English-educated elite and Gujarati and Urdu speakers of cutting across classes (Hansen 388; Isaka 87). What this scenario, in effect, suggests is that the rich polyglotism and cultural pluralism of the Parsi theatre—far from being an outcome of a pre-existing multilingual public—made conscious efforts towards a democratic reconstitution of the public sphere as well as a re-configuration of linguistic identities. In contrast to their Hindu counterparts, various Parsi drama companies—which produced mytho-historical plays, Shakespearean adaptations and original farces in English, Gujarati and Urdu—

represented the fluid nature of the emergent linguistic identities. The high incidence of multilingualism, the instability of "standard" forms of literary language, the divergence of idioms between prose and poetry, and the fluctuations in the choice of script—all were apparent in the Parsi theatre and its printed literature. In the period of its efflorescence between the 1870s and the 1890s, the companies aggressively commissioned plays/adaptations advertised them in multiple languages in print media, and even published them subsequently in book form with prefaces, stating the rationale for the choice of language, its bearing on the target audience, readership, etc. An astonishing feature of this heterogeneous creative practice was the presence of a sizable number of Urdu plays printed in Gujarati script; this corpus reflected the presence of a populace that resisted the incipient nationalistic sentiment, split along linguistic lines and religious communities like Hindus and Muslims. Such interlingual and intercommunal fluidity was affirmed by candid admissions of inaccuracy and error by translators like Behram Fardun Marzban, the Urdu translator of the celebrated Gujarati play *Sona na Mul ni Khorshed* [*Khorshed, worth her weight in gold*] and "Aram" who translated *Jahangir Shah ane Guahar* [*Jahangir Shah and Guahar*], both originally written by well-known Gujarati playwright Edalji Khori. The point is, despite the proverbial predilection of the Parsi theatre for profit and prestige, the stage evinced an unflinching commitment to the politics of accommodation, co-existence, and social coherence. Somanath Gupt has underlined the democratic, inclusive, and harmonious ethos of Parsi theatre by saying that it was: "Parsis, non-Parsis, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians who spread the art of theatre by founding theatrical companies, who built playhouses and encouraged drama, who became actors and popularized the art of acting, who composed innumerable dramas in Gujarati, Hindi, and Urdu, who composed songs and defended classical music, and who wrote descriptions of the Parsi stage and related matters" (Gupt qtd. in Hansen 43).

As a cultural institution, the Parsi theatre enabled the afterlife of texts and the renewal of literary cultures. Thus, it helped to shape Bombay into a site of confluence of cultures and communal harmony. Its tendencies like the incorporation of an inordinate number of songs in productions, though commercial in nature, collapsed the barriers between the notions of high and low arts by curating a diverse repertoire of texts in multiple folk-classical-local genres like *lavani*, *ghazal*, *hori*, *thumri*, etc. C. R. Shah reminds us that: "At the performances of these Urdu plays, the programs which were sold in the theatre for two or three annas were printed in Gujarati script and gave the cast, the synopsis of the action of the play, scene by scene, and the full text of the songs with the names of the persons who sang them" (484). Through its "publicly mediated hybridity of form" (Willmer 16), the Parsi theatre not only reflected the hybridity of social sphere but, more importantly, strove to underscore, assert,

and even sustain these fluid, unsure identities within the Gujarati public sphere that was rapidly advancing towards fashioning an overwhelmingly homogenous, monochromatic socio-cultural realm.

Drawing inspiration from the success of the Parsi theatre, several Hindu drama companies too began to adapt Shakespeare's plays in the late 1870s. The man in the vanguard was Ranchhodbhai Udayram Dave who established Gujarati Natak Mandali [Gujarati Theatre Company] in 1878 with the express purpose of putting an end to the reliance on Parsi stage for enacting Hindu religious plays and adaptations for Hindu-Gujarati audiences (Baradi). In the same year, another prominent director, Vaghji Oza, established Shri Arya Subodh Natak Mandali in Morbi, opening the floodgates for other Hindu drama companies with identical nomenclature and politics (Baradi). One look at the nomenclature of these new-fangled theatre companies—Arya Gujarat Natak Mandali [Aryan Gujarat Theatre Company], Arya Natakotkarsh Mandali [Aryan Company for the Rise of Theatre, Nitidarshak Natak Madali [Theatre Company for Moral Guidance Arya Gurjar Harishchandra Natak Mandali [Aryan Gujarat's Harishchandra Theatre Company, Arya Sangitottejak Mandali [Aryan Music-oriented Company]—would reveal that, by that time, the ideological fault lines defining who did and who did not belong to the freshly imagined national community had been drawn and the Bombay stage had transformed into a space for contestations over a homogeneous nationalist identity.

In the next three decades, Bombay's literary scene witnessed an unprecedented vibrancy and success, and the thirty translations/adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, both textual and performative, had no small part in it (Baradi 35). In tandem with the reigning discourse of the time, influential managers like Vaghji Oza placed a great premium on improving the literary taste and moral character of the audience. Marking a departure from the vulgarities and base attitudes, characterizing the folk genres and cheap productions, Oza staged three major adaptations of Shakespare's *Cymbeline* (1887), *The Winter's Tale* (1894), and *Merchant of Venice* (1895). Quite remarkably, he adapted *Cymbeline* into a historical play titled *Champraj Hado* (1887) by recasting it in the era of the Mughal King Akbar and making it almost unrecognizable as Shakespeare's play through a deft recontextualization of the action and intercommunal politics.

However, despite being conceptually and ideologically averse to each other, the textual and professional practices of Parsi and Hindu theatres both can be regarded as "hybrid" in so far as they rendered the generic colonial authority—and that of Shakespeare in particular—ambivalent, ultimately engaging into what in today's terms we could call subversive mimicry. Victoria Theatre Company's U-turn to the staging of Persian myth and history over and against the production of Shakespearean adaptations in 1868 was marked by a simultaneous rejection of the unthinking imitation of English ways of life. The debate on the

issue of colonial mimicry in pages after pages of *Rast Goftar* in 1868-1869 underscores how Parsi and Hindu companies were united in fore-fronting an anti-colonial resistance on stage:

> With the advent of the English Raj in this country, our people have begun to wear vests, trousers, and boots; roam in horse-drawn carriages, use tables, chairs, desks, and numerous fashionable objects… these are mere *nakal* [mimicry] of the English… these new trends are *jangli* [savage] and have nothing to do with the tradition of our ancestors. (qtd. in Nicholson 100)

The Gujarati adaptation of *Macbeth* by N. V. Thakkur, the author of several historical novels in Gujarati, such as *Vasundhara* or *Bedhari Talwar* (1900), is a case in point. Thakkur adapted the play for one of the Hindu theatrical ensembles called Nitidarshak Natak Madali, a conservative company subscribing to an identity-based nationalist politics and typically unsure of its negotiation of tradition and modernity (Shah). The opening scene of the adapted play unfolds in the military camp of Minketu (Macbeth), a victorious army commander, who is shown trying to humiliate the neighbouring king, Jayadhwaja, whom he has freshly defeated. Unvanquished and defiant, the captive king shrewdly gives it back to Minketu by calling him a slave of the old king Agnimitra (King Duncan). Stung by humiliation and jealousy, Minketu instantly kills him, but then the ring of bitter truth in his opponent's words disorients him. His wife, Vasundhara (Lady Macbeth), salts his wounds by encouraging him to kill the king and seize the royal throne. Thakkur's clever re-engineering of *Macbeth*'s opening scene not only makes it more plausible and interesting for the local audiences but also caters to the Indian audience's distrust of the supernatural on the stage (three witches do not figure in the adaptation at all). In another interesting twist, Minketu is provided with an accomplice in crime, Yakub, who later develops a conscience and plays a powerful foil to the beleaguered usurper. The character of Yakub embodies a familiar trope of shifting loyalties in Shakespearean plays and replaces the three witches as the agents of Minketu's ultimate fall. Minketu finds yet another nemesis in his own daughter Meenakshi, who, in deep love with Agnimitra's son Vikram (Malcolm), helps him slip away from her father's clutches. To cater to the romantic sensibilities of the audience, the play introduces several pairs of lovers and amorous situations. Finally, typical of the Bombay stage, the play introduces a farcical sub-plot, not even remotely connected to the main plot, that weaves in and out of the main action to facilitate comic relief as well as scathing social satire, directed at the lovelorn oldies from Bombay's posh world who would seek to trap young partners in marriage. The astutely deployed device of the subplot is a ruse to mock the ills of modernity like late marriages and widow remarriages from an orthodox standpoint; it also targets foreign returned "mimic men"—complete with their

coats, hats, and pipes—for their blind imitation of the English lifestyle. The subversive politics of colonial mimicry, fashioned through an act of translation here, simultaneously constitutes the acts of mimicry and resistance in the sense explicated by Bhabha (143-165).

Shakespeare in Interlingual Translation

Parallel with and in opposition to the vibrant, heterogenous publics constituted by the Parsi theatre, a Hindu Gujarati public sphere was also taking shape since the 1860s; its roots can be traced to the idea of Hindu theatre and Hindu literary tradition mooted first by William Jones and institutionalized later by dramatic companies from the Maharashtra state, south of Gujarat, that enacted narratives based on *Ramayana* and *Purana* in the Grant Road Theatre (Hansen 390). With its distinctive discourse, upholding an elite linguistic identity and high literary culture, this public sphere was to assume the canonical status and play a dominant role in the nationalist politics of twentieth-century Gujarat. The articulate elites of this emergent intellectual class, mostly the Brahmins who found habitus in this sphere, responded to colonial modernity and enlightenment rationality with acts of translation—just like their Parsi counterparts. Thus, Ranchodbhai Udayaram Dave, who wrote plays aimed at social reforms and later even formed a drama troupe to differentiate his poetics and politics from those of the Parsi theatre, translated Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* into Gujarati in 1867. Though the translations of *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *King Lear* had been serialized in the form of narratives in the prominent Gujarati magazine *Buddhiprakash* throughout the 1860s, the translation of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1871, done by Ratilal Desai, arguably remains the first translation proper in Gujarati. In the English preface of the play, Desai made a categorical statement about his politics of translation, i.e., the conviction to produce a faithful translation and a real Shakespeare for discriminating students of literature. Making no bones about his dissatisfaction with the localizing practices of the popular Parsi stage, he maintained that he felt it to be his desideratum "to make the translation as literal as possible" (ii). In a similar vein, Narayana Hemchandra qualified his translation of *All's Well That Ends Well* (1895) with an admission of the impossibility of rendering Shakespeare's poetic genius in Gujarati through translation (3).

It is important to note that the dominant note in these translatorial commentaries about the benchmark excellence of the source and the relative inferiority of the target language was played against the background of a synchronous literary movement calling for the standardization of the Gujarati language and literary culture. This project called for a (re)turn to Sanskrit and Western traditions and, simultaneously, advocated a purge of those from the

"polluting" Parsi and folk influences. Instructively, the Gujarat Vernacular Society (GVS), founded by British magistrate Alexander Kinloch Forbes with the support of English-educated, mostly upper-caste intellectuals, and writers in 1848, first promulgated this linguistic inadequacy-improvement theory and marked language as a site for defining community identity and forging a region. In the realization of this mission, the high-caste literati, who also played counselor to British officials, vehemently tried and fairly succeeded in entrenching a dichotomy between language and dialects; as a result, regional variations of Gujarati like Surati (South Gujarat variety), Kathiawadi (Saurashtra variety), Parsi and Muhammedan were posited as the other of a pure, standard Ahmedabadi (North Gujarat elite variety). A natural corollary of this linguistic apartheid was its extension into the literary and social realms; thus, artistic forms and human bodies using these dialects were considered inferior to the elite, upper-caste speakers of pure language. The otherness transferred to everything associated with Muslim identity was consolidated by forging racial (Aryan) and linguistic (Sanskrit) kinships with the colonial master. Several prominent writers and scholars echoed such linguistic and communal bias throughout the Pandit Era (1885-1915) and Gandhi Era (1915-1945) in Gujarati literary history. Interestingly, though the writers of the Pandit Era like Mansukhram Tripathi and Manilal Dwivedi, who led an orthodox movement to Sanskritize the Gujarati language, were ruthlessly mocked by Ramanbhai Nilkanth in his novel *Bhadrambhadra* (1900), the perception of Parsi language and theatre being inferior persisted. In his canonical history of Gujarati literature, K. M. Munshi verbalized this sentiment explicitly.

> The theatrical companies in Bombay, mainly controlled by the Parsis, staged plays full of gaudy and dazzling scenery with the help of actors who generally acted with vehement and unnatural emphasis. The traditions, however, of the Gujarati stage were different, the Morbi and Vankaner Nataka Samajas being the pioneers. Their plays followed the lines laid down by Ranchodbhai. (304)

As noted earlier, Ranchhodbhai Dave parted ways with Parsi theatre on account of his strong belief in the edifying function of theatre; edification, in his case, apart from being moral and literary, was interlaced with a strand of class-caste distinctions. Echoing the discursive note, dominant in the Hindu literary and intellectual circles, Dave (47) differentiated his plays not only from the gaudy, glitzy productions of Parsi theatre but also from the folk artform of *bhavai* which, to him, was a lowly genre used exclusively by lowly people. The Sanskritization extremists like Mahipatram went so far as to refine and reform the genre by purging it of its non-conformist content and stamina for social critique and published a sanitized volume of *bhavais* in 1874. If such a reconstruction reflected the emergence of an exclusivist nationalist sentiment,

it also seriously impinged upon the way translations of Shakespeare's plays were undertaken in the next hundred years.

The flamboyant, appropriative, and critical style of Parsi productions threw in sharp relief the textual and academic style of canonical and elitist translators like Narbheshankar Dave, as reflected in his *Shakespeare Mala* (1898-1917), a series of five translations of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati. Dave's translations belonged to the tradition inaugurated by the productions of Gujarat Natak Mandali that imitated the Bard in letter and spirit. A writer, critic, and a professor of English, Dave imparted an academic turn to the tradition of Shakespeare's translations by inflecting them with heavy introductions, combining Western critical thought with insights from Indian poetics and philosophy. Shoring up a non-localization model, Dave's translations followed a word-for-word trajectory, disregarding the differential theory of translation propounded by the eminent Gujarati writer Navalram Pandya (1836-1888). Borrowing the conceptual framework from the rasa theory of Sanskrit poetics, centred on the primary sentiment evoked by a text, Pandya (29-30) differentiated literary texts into the categories of the sublime literature (Kavya Sahitya) and the light literature (Mohan Sahitya). Accordingly, he classified translations into three broad categories,

> There are three types of translation: word-based (literal), meaning-based (semantic), and rasa-based (adaptation)… rasa-based can alternatively be called *deshkalanusari* as it is situated in the time (*kal*) and place (*desh*) of the target culture. This is a precondition to the translation of a text emanating from a non-native time and place into a native one. Shakespeare's plays are famous because he set them in his own time and place, and, by the same logic, their popularity in Hindustan depends upon the observance of the same doctrine. (29-30)

However, the incipient theory of translation in Gujarati at the turn of the century seemed to increasingly correspond to the Western theoretical models, undergirded by the notions of equivalence and fidelity. Not only did the emergent discourse in canonical journals like *Buddhiprakash* toe the line of Western translation theory with its hang-ups about the loyalty to the source, but it also subscribed to the colonial discourse that branded Gujarati literature and language as underdeveloped and in dire need of translations from superior European literature. A critic called Mohanlal Dave took issue with Navalram's designation of Shakespeare's play as light literature and pleaded for recategorizing the Bard's work as pure literature. His advice to the writers in Gujarati to stop their creative writing and strive to develop pure creativity through translation marked a logical culmination and full realization of Macaulay's dream:

> For the time being, Gujarati writers should drop the idea of creating original works at least until the time true creativity dawns upon us… instead, we should do the readers good by translating canonical works from other languages… such translations will be accessible to one and all, whether they are well-versed in languages like English or Sanskrit. (196)

One wonders if the apologetic and reverential tone of such theorization would have influenced the translation methodology in *Shakespeare Mala*, which was commissioned by the Princely State of Bhavnagar and closely monitored by the state's minister. Though Narbheshankar Dave didn't come clean on the extent to which the state patronage had constrained the translation process, it's not difficult to speculate that it substantially did because his rendering of *All's Well that Ends Well*, done independently of patronage, was an out-and-out adaptation without an introduction, even a dedication. The translator's self-contradictory attitude to his practice here goes to prove that the boundaries between the conceptions of a translation and an adaptation had been sealed and that a reconstitution of literary culture was underway. Partly on account of this devaluation of adaptation as well as due to the advent of cinema, the production of Shakespeare's plays took a serious beating on the Bombay stage by 1913. However, Dave's translation strategies tendentiously avoided extremes, producing texts that could be read as well as performed on the stage; the diction, too, was mediated between the high Sanskritized register and the low, colloquial one, boasting a judicious mix of Sanskrit and Persian words. This kind of conscious and constant negotiation between stageability and readability, high textuality and low textuality, obscurity and accessibility in the translation of Shakespeare's plays eventually wore off during the lull of three decades in Bard's visibility.

The next round of translations of the Bard's plays *Hamlet* (1942) and *Merchant of Venice* (1944) by Hansa Mehta was a natural progression of the literary culture that had struck root in the late nineteenth century. A veteran freedom fighter, a women's rights activist and a member of the Constituent Assembly, Hansa Mehta translated the plays in heavily Sanskritized Gujarati, using the famous classical metre called Anushtup in which Valmiki's *Ramayana* was set. In the preface to her verse translation of *Hamlet*, Mehta admitted to being stung by the observations of B. K. Thakore and R. V. Desai, who attributed the non-availability of proper translations of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati to the lethargy of the young poets and scholars. B. K. Thakore, a respected scholar and one of the pioneers of the Pandit Era, was greatly interested in the comparative approach to criticism and linguistic analysis; he himself had tried his hand at translating Kalidasa's plays, though without success. His preoccupation with the theoretical and linguistic issues involved in the process of translation led him to engage in rigorous study not only of the

works of Bana Bhatt, Bhavabhooti, Euripides, Shakespeare, and Milton but also multiple translations of the same text (Panchal 51-52). Thakore's take is worth quoting at length.

> It should not be beyond our comprehension if our poets looked at Shakespeare with a sense of "*Door thi karu Vandana*" (Overwhelmed, I give him a wide berth). How will that vigour, that flow, that spring, that change, that flutter, that fierce pungency wedded to naturalness, that freshness in dialogues, that straightforwardness and depth of heart-searching, that love of nature in description, that lustre, that clash of sentiments, that dissection of fibres of heart, etc., be brought in our poetic composition marching with graceful rhythmic gait, dancing with ringing sounds of anklets of alliteration or moving like a decorated she-elephant on left and right. (qtd. in Joshi, *Studies in* 41)

It's also important to remember that Mehta took up the challenge of verse translation while acknowledging the poverty of the Gujarati language to accommodate the ring and zing of Shakespeare's world-class plays; the translations for her were tools of enrichment. Probing the politics of Mehta's translations would be pertinent as her work unfolded in the heyday of the anti-colonial movement as well as in the period that is known as the Gandhi Era in the history of Gujarati literature. It's tempting to speculate that Mehta's choice of a high, Sankritized register and the *anushtup* meter, drawn from the classical Sanskrit tradition, resulted from the general oriental, Brahminical ambition for a cultural kinship with the colonizer. However, her politics of translation was both due to and despite the Gandhian take on the language politics of the times. As a competent translator, sensitive to the roots of words and their potential political implications, if Gandhi was so wary of using words that could carry Sanskrit connotations (Yagnik and Sheth 163) and was committed to the promotion of Hindustani all his life, he was also deeply suspicious of and distressed by the forms of Parsi and Muslim Gujarati, and made a case for:

> That Gujarati which is spoken and written by hundreds of thousands of educated people who have their home in Gujarat… Having been derived from Sanskrit and being its daughter, Gujarati must necessarily lean on Sanskrit—no one can question that. (qtd. in CWMG XIX 507)

He appealed to the Gujarati literati and intelligentsia to use more straightforward language for easy comprehension but also asked Muslim, working-class readers of *Navjivan*, who requested him not to use difficult words, to take a keen interest and education in civilized language (Isaka 117). Suffice it to say that Gandhi's indirect, at times tacit, avowal of the high-caste politics of language supremacy served to promote and consolidate the Brahminical hold over the Gujarati literary sphere, and Shakespeare became the site for frontlining its hegemony.

Shakespeare's Postcolonial Contexts

The year that marked about a century of Shakespeare on the Gujarati literary scene was also the year that marked the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's global existence. To celebrate the historical moment, Umashankar Joshi, a towering figure on the Gujarati literary scene, decided to devote all twelve issues of *Sanskruti* (Culture), a monthly literary journal he edited, to the critical and creative evaluation of Shakespeare. With an entire battery of eminent Gujarati writers, translators, critics, and pedagogues contributing to issue after issue of *Sanskruti*, the journal ended up producing a veritable festschrift. Most of its literary criticism, being derivative, ended up eulogizing Shakespeare as the greatest interpreter of human nature. Joshi prevailed upon his fellow Gujarati writers like Nalin Rawal and Mansukhlal Jhaveri to undertake full-length translations of Bard's plays, and himself wrote a slim book of literary criticism titled *Shakespeare*, wherein he says:

> The colonizers have been generally disliked on account of their political and economic aggression. However, from a cultural point of view, their acceptance is almost unanimous and universal. When the life and consciousness of a people have been embodied in a great poet, their domination over the heart of the world is bound to remain perpetual. (3)

While Joshi somewhat confusingly believed that the t English language was "three parts Bible and one part Shakespeare" (*Studies in* 33) on account of the frenetic Bible retranslation enterprises in the history of the English language, he also tried to develop a substantial theory of *samshloki* translation (composed of similar or parallel verse in the same meter as the meter of the source text). While discussing its problematics, he came down heavily on Keshav Chandra Dhruv's (1859-1938) Gujarati translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit, criticizing them for their tendency to mix loan words from Sanskrit with local dialectal words. Condemning the use of rustic words as ridiculous, he also took issue with Dhruv's lexical choices in terms of his highly subjective typecasting of words into the categories of words that are anachronistic, "old bookish," and contemporary. Condemning Dhruv's translation of the Sanskrit play *Mrichchhakatic*, Joshi announces:

> Even the name "Mrichchhakatic" is rendered in children's speech as *Matee ni Gayee* in brackets in rustic Gujarati. Here is an example of how subtleties of scholarship get trapped in unnecessary trivialities and allows itself to be ridiculed (because the title of the play in the original is not in children's language). (*Studies in* 39-40)

Joshi's ideological position weaves together an unqualified endorsement of the cultural supremacy of the master race with a prescriptive and de-contextualized model of translation theory. Among the translations Joshi commissioned for *Sanskruti* as well as for *Kavita Sangam* (an anthology of fifteen translations he edited), he liked Mansukhlal Jhaveri's translation of *Othello* (1978) the most; in Jhaveri's prose, he said (*Isamu Shidaane* 158), he heard Shakespeare's voice. At the insistence of Joshi, Jhaveri also rendered *Hamlet* (1967) and *King Lear* (1983), largely following the non-localization or unIndianizing model of translation in vogue. In his construction of translation theory, Jhaveri (41) highlights the pitfalls of valorizing stageability over loyalty in the translation of "immortal" texts because the former invariably diminishes the intrinsic literary merit of the original through the compulsion to localize. In a gesture that reiterated his loyalty to the Bard and Western translation theory, Jhaveri crowned his translation with a Gujarati translation of J. Dover Wilson's famous essay on *Hamlet* as a paratextual device and followed it with an introduction consisting of predictable stock responses about Shakespeare's unparalleled greatness.

Conclusion

What the above historiographical sketch suggests is that, in his century-long functioning in Gujarati, the Bard remained largely aloof from the social realities of the (post)colony as if in a strict compliance with the imperial policy of non-interference. However, this politics of insularity was double-edged: on the one hand, the garb of Shakespeare's greatness helped translations to steer clear of the dangers of excessive nativization, thus helping Shakespeare in translation elide the social inequalities and differences (caste, community, gender, etc.), but on the other hand, Shakespeare became instrumental in forging and feeding the fault lines of literary and social cultures in the new nationalist realities of the 20th century, tipping the balance of power in favor of the Brahminical stronghold. To exemplify this point as well as by way of conclusion, let me turn to a personal, and extremely pertinent, anecdote.

Because of the language-mediated reconfiguration of the conceptions of region and religion over nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the socio-cultural sphere in Gujarat today thrives on the politics of *asmita*, a proud self-identity, that has rendered Islam and Muslims strange, inessential and external to the idea of Gujarat. Today, as a result, "it is becoming increasingly difficult to inhabit a Hindu religious identity that is not at the same time articulated in opposition to a Muslim Other in Gujarat… [and] for Muslims to represent themselves or advocate for their rights as *Muslim* and as Gujarati" (Chandrani 3). The communal carnage that the state witnessed in 2002 was a hideous exhibition of

the calcification of unitary identities along religious, but also caste and class, lines. (Shani) In the wake of the communal riots, instead of a collective expression of remorse and grief, what the state witnessed was a deepening of discursive fault lines and the forging of fragile identities of the self and the other, based on narrow identity markers (Kothari).

To intervene in the cultural climate, ensuing the post-Godhra pogrom, of selective amnesia and collusive silence, I rendered into Gujarati Arun Kolatkar's long poem *Sarpa Satra* (2004), a subversive retelling of the apocalyptic rite of snake sacrifice, the opening genocidal myth of *Mahabharata*, from the point of view of the victim, a mythical snake-woman Jaratkaru. Elsewhere I have discussed how the Gujarati avatar of *Sarpa Satra* (2021) aims at triggering mourning in a society that has slipped into deep and dangerous "Forgetting that thwarts all representation" (Lyotard), the subliminal and unreasonable denial of the humanity and life of the other. (Ashwinkumar *forthcoming*) In 2020, I sent the long epilogue to the book titled "Translation as Mourning" to a reputed, Mumbai-based Gujarati journal *Etad* for publication. The article began with an epigraph from Bilkis Bano, a brave gangrape survivor of the 2002 riots who had waged a long and lone legal battle against her assaulters and the politics of hatred gripping the state. The "controversial" content of the article drew an email response from the editor, Kirit Dudhat, condensed and reproduced below (personal communication, 15 September 2020):

> Translation as mourning is a figment that seems to have lodged in your imagination. The poem itself does not support the linkage of the poem to post-Godhra violence. The quote of Bilkis Bano, too, appears to be forcibly glutinated. You can include Kolatkar's or Chitre's verses in your political analysis of post-Godhra violence for magazines like *Nireekshak* and *Caravan* but can't selectively cite (Anjali) Nerliker and others who write about Kolatkar's poetry.

Nireekshak and *The Caravan*, the monthly magazines published in Gujarati and English, respectively, are famous in contemporary India for their commitment to socio-political critique and counterhegemonic stance. To get back at the editor, I translated Bengali writer Nabarun Bhattacharya's short story "Abba"—a gripping account of an orphaned Muslim kid caught in communal riots and saved by a disabled Hindu rioter—and shot it off to the journal for publication. Much to my surprise, they accepted the story but with a set of suggestions regarding the language of the translation. In translation, I used a language that had the lexis, the turn of phrase, and the idiom closer to Surati Gujarati, which has a distinct Parsi flavor; further, in sync with the setting of the story, I also used the lingo typical of Ahmedabad's walled city, giving feminine or neuter gender to masculine words, nominalizing actions that did not exist in the Ahmedabadi and naturalizing English words as in the Bangla version.

The Editor, who had found my language in the rejected article scholarly and inaccessible, did not have any acquaintance with the demotic language of the translation; he feared it would alienate the Gujarati readers, i.e. mainstream, upper-caste, upper-class readers from central Gujarat. After a fair bit of negotiation, the story did appear in that mainstream literary space, but only after subtly suggesting to me that the state's inherent multilingualism had been expunged from its literary culture, as also from its social fabric. The politics that charged the translation of *Sarpa Satra* was preciselythe politics that animated a number of Shakespeare's plays, i.e., the question of how autocratic, paranoid, and narcissistic rulers are able to arrogate supreme power to themselves and bring about destruction and desecration of laws, institutions, and even the moral character of people and polity. The Bard lived in times far more perilous, but he could imagine oblique ways to address the seminal issues that plagued his society. That a postcolonial, post-global Gujarati stage or literati has not found in Jack Cade (Henry VI), Richard III, Macbeth, or King Lear rich material "[…] to probe the psychological mechanisms that lead a nation to abandon its ideals and even its self-interest" (Greenblatt 07) speaks volumes about a shrinking literary culture and a fossilization of cultural outlook. I can only hope that the category of "enablers," Greenblatt describes in his book, would be reclaimed by well-meaning, disobedient, unfaithful (re)writers today in whose sinuous hands the Bard will shapeshift—the way Ariel does in *The Tempest*, assuming the form of an invisible water nymph to wake up Miranda—and set free the birds of literary and social imagination.

WORKS CITED

Badawi, Mustafa. "Shakespeare and the Arabs." *Cairo Studies in English* (1966): 181-196.

Baradi, Hasmukh. *History of Gujarati Theatre.* New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2001.

Bhabha, Homi. "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside New Delhi, May 1817." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 144-165.

Chandrani, Yogesh. *Legacies of Colonial History: Region, Religion, and Violence in Postcolonial Gujarat*. An unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 2013. https://anthropology.columbia.edu/content/colonial-religion-violence-india-gujarat.

Gandhi, Mahatma. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi [CWMG]*. New Delhi: The Publications Division, Government of India, 2000-2001.

Dave, Mohanlal. "Bhashantar athava Anuvadna Grantho" [Texts of Translation]. *Sahitya* 1.5 (1913): 193-204.

Dave, Ranchhodbhai. Natak no Prarambh [The Beginning of Drama]. *Ranchhodbhai Udayram Shatabdismarak Granth*. Ed. Shree Ranchhodbhai Udayram Shatabdi Samiti (SRUSS). Mumbai: SRUSS, 1938. 46-64.

Desai, Ratilal. "Preface." *Verona Shaher na Be Gruhastho* [Two Gentlemen of Verona]. Trans. Ratilal Desai. Bhavnagar: Unknown, 1871. i-ii.

Dudhat, Kirit. Re: Your article about translation. E-mail to Ashwinkumar, Hemang. Personal communication. 15 September 2020.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Gupt, Somnath. *Parsi Thiyetar: Udbhav aur Vikas* [Parsi Theatre: Origin and Development]. Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan, 1981.

Hansen, Kathryn. "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in the Nineteenth Century Parsi Theatre." *Modern Asian Studies* 37.2 (2003): 381-405.

Hemchandra, Narayan. "Preface." *Vaidhyakanya* [The Daughter of a Physician]. Ahmedabad, 1895. 01-05.

Isaka, Riho. *Language, Identity, and Power in Modern India Gujarat 1850-1960*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.

Jhaveri, Mansukhlal. Natyanirman, Natghar ane Natyakala [The Production of Drama, Theatre and the Art of Drama]. *Abhigam*. Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granthratna Karyalay, 1966.

Joshi, Umashankar. *Shakespeare*. Mumbai: Parichay Trust, 1964.

Joshi, Umashankar. Mansukhbhai. *Isamu Shidaane Anya*. Ed. Umashankar Joshi. Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1986. 22-37.

Joshi, Umashankar. "Problem of Translating Poetry." *Studies in Translation*. Ed. Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008. 33-44

Kabraji, K. N. Parsi Natak. [The Parsi Theatre]. *Rast Goftar*, 17 May 1857.

Kolatkar, Arun. *Sarpa Satra*. Trans. Ashwinkumar, Hemang. Mumbai: Kshitij Samshodhan Prakashan Kendra, 2021.

Kothari, Rita. Diffusing Polarizations: Language and Translation at the Time of the Gujarat Riots. *Transversal*. 2007. https://transversal.at/transversal/1107/kothari/en. Accessed 30 March 2024.

Litvin, Margaret. "Qadhafi: Shakespeare Was an Arab Named Shaykh Zubayr." https://margaretlitvin.com/2011/04/05/qadhafi-shakespeare-was-an-arab-named-shaykh-zubayr/. Accessed 18 October 2024.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *Heidegger and "the Jews."* Translated by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Mehta, Hansa. "Preface." *Hamlet*. Trans. Hansa Mehta. Mumbai: N. M. Tripathi and Company, 1942. i-vi.

Molnar, Michael. "Sigmund Freud's Notes on Faces and Men: National Portrait Gallery, September 13, 1908." *Freud: Conflict and Culture*. Ed. M. S. Roth. New York: Knopf 1998. 41–50.

Munshi, K. M. *Gujarat and Its Literature: A Survey from the Earliest Times*. Bombay: Longmans Green, 1935.

Nicholson, Rashna. *The Colonial Public and the Parsi Stage: The Making of the Theatre of Empire (1853-1893)*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Panchal, Shirish. *B. K. Thakore: Makers of Indian Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy, 1998.

Pandya, Navalram. Mithi Mithi Vaato [Sweet Talk]. *Navalgranthavali*. Ed. Narhari Dwarkadas Parikh. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Prakashan Mandir, 1937. 26-34.

Satyanath, T. S. "How Shakespeare became Sheikh Pir in Kannada." *Translation Today* 1 & 2 (2004): 44-102.

Shah, C. R. "Shakespearean Plays in Indian Languages." *The Aryan Path* XXVI (1955): 485-490.

Shani, Ornit. *Communalism, Caste, and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Trivedi, Harish. "Shakespeare in India and Colonial Contexts." *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995. 10-28.

Trivedi, Poonam. "Introduction." *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*. Eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz. New Delhi: Pearson, 2005. 13-41.

Willmer, David. *Theatricality, Mediation and Public Space: the Legacy of Parsi theatre in South Asian Cultural History*. Ph.D. thesis. Ashworth Centre for Social Theory, The University of Melbourne, 1999.

Yagnik, Achyut, and Suchitra Sheth. *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.09

Duluo Nie*

Blood and Revenge: Animal Metaphors and Nature in *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*

Abstract: Renowned classicist Gilbert Murray has made compelling arguments about the connection between Aeschylus and Shakespeare in his famous essay *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*. Through a close reading of the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, it is not difficult to find that the latter play, to some extent, is an intentioned "translation" and "rewriting" of the great theatrical tradition of the Attic tragedy, especially that represented by Aeschylus. The dramatic elements inviting such a comparative reading, among many other things, include the motif of bloodstained hands, masculine queens, sleeplessness and dream terrors, and most important of all, the mechanism of blood-shedding and revenge. This paper discusses their affinity through the lens of allusions to birds, and animals, inversion of the established order, and its final restoration to reveal *Macbeth* as a play that is fundamentally concerned with the classical theme of blood-shedding and revenge with its borrowing of multiple dramatic techniques.

Keywords: blood-shedding, animal metaphors, violence, Macbeth, the *Oresteia*, tragedy, revenge, human nature.

Introduction

Both Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, especially *Agamemnon*, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* feature spectacular representations of animals, both bestial and avian, in displaying the necessity of violence in human nature. The scholars studying the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth* have already fully recognized and explored the theme of blood-shedding, the perpetual cycle of violence, and the strong presence of animal symbolism in both texts. Barbara Fowler, for instance, concludes that "the power of the juxtaposition of the creatures and the blood throughout the *Oresteia* lies in the fact that it is not completely metaphorical. The human beings

* Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, China. nieduluo@gmail.com

who drink blood do, almost literally, become their own Erinyes. Just as the Erinyes, snake-women, are not entirely human, so the characters of the trilogy are in part animal" (Fowler 99). This discerning observation concerning the representation of the human through representative individuals, in this case, prominent kings and queens in Attic tragedy, is actually echoed in many ways in *Macbeth*, as several sharp-eyed scholars have already shown.

In terms of the common theme of blood revenge, both plays adhere to what is prescribed by Aristotle that "the best tragedies are written about a few families [...] incidents dreadful or rather pitiable must necessarily be the actions of friends to each other or of enemies or of people that are neither [...] when these calamities happen among friends, when for instance brother kills brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother—either kills or intends to kill, or does something of the kind, that is what we must look for" (*Poetics*, 1453a18-19, b12, b19-22). The *Oresteia* certainly serves as a model for the Aristotelian ideal of Attic tragedy that focuses on the conflicts within the household, that is that of Atreus; similarly, *Macbeth* is a play about regicide, like the theme of *Agamemnon*, that happens virtually within a household, if we take all the thanes as members of a single royal family, letting alone the fact that King Duncan calls Macbeth "worthiest cousin" (1.4.17) and "peerless kinsman" (1.4.65), with Macbeth recognizing himself as "his kinsman and his subject" (2.7.13). Even though "cousin" in Shakespeare does not necessarily indicate a blood relation, it shows at least their close relation as a subject and a king within a political community that could be logically considered as a whole. In this sense, both plays share the very same subject of internal conflict within kinship, embodied by the representations of blood-shedding and revenge. This common setting offers archetypal venues for the explorations of human nature and the human condition in the most tragic sense. In light of this, Adrian Poole concludes in *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* that "fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy" (Poole 15).

In this paper, my argument, resting upon such a common setting, will dwell upon the animal metaphors that are seen here and there in both plays and contribute to the consistency of plot development, and seek to significantly deepen the process of revealing the affinity and conflicts between the world of humans and the world beyond it, which could be tantalizingly called nature. Nevertheless, humans are an essential part of nature, if not positioned in the center of the Shakespearean world, and display the propensity to both good and evil, which constitutes human's free will and makes the drama fundamentally possible. In this sense, the natural world functions as a mirror of human activities, and at the same time provides the language and space where collisions may occur. Or, as John J. Peradotto has shrewdly observed, "Nature in the

Oresteia, both actual and as metaphor of internal states, appears in a pattern consonant with and asserting the movement of the entire trilogy. The progress of gods and men through time and suffering toward a more desirable state of being is not played out a static or neutral backdrop of nature, but rather one whose lineaments change in a pattern paralleling the moral development in the drama" (379). What makes humans unique and hence enables the dramatic tension lies in the irreconcilability between the law of nature and the law of humans, between nature as something that is synonymous with structural order and the nature that finds its basis in violence and dynamic chaos that constantly breaks down that order. This very fact leads us to consider both plays as symbolic representations of the condition of the cosmos, in which humans live and act.

Transgression and Inversion in *Macbeth*

Emphasis will be first placed upon Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The callbacks to nature functioning the way it should, and functioning the way it should not are seen throughout the play. A division of the whole world of nature represented in *Macbeth* into categories of beasts and birds, certainly without neglect of other creatures that are positioned in the much lower end of the great chain of beings, such as worms, should to a great extent facilitate out discussion, given the complex web of allusions of animals in the play. As a matter of fact, the division itself is explicitly seen in the classical traditions, such as Homeric epics and Attic tragedy, as we will soon reveal in the case of *Agamemnon*.

The play commences with the frequent paradox of what is both "foul and fair." As with the three witches that show up in the anomalous weather of lightning and rain, which leads Macbeth to proclaim that "so fair and foul a day I have not seen" (1.3.39), soon after victory over the rebels, with the company of thanes, Duncan visited the castle of Macbeth, only to be murdered thereafter by the couple. In retrospect, the old man reminded the audience of the horrifying incidents happening days before the murder, which point to things "unnatural."

OLD MAN
'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.
ROSS
And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain),
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
Make war with mankind.

OLD MAN
'Tis said they eat each
other.
ROSS
They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes
That looked upon't. (2.4.10-19)

The reference to the "unnatural" actually implies the shocking subjugation of the powerful predators by the weaklings that are traditionally understood as the objects of prey. Duncan's well-tended horses, naturally herbivorous, become unruly, escape from their stables, and turn carnivorous. A falcon, which has been domesticated by humans for hunting, is attacked and killed by an owl, a wild animal that is hunted by falcons in the wild. These domesticated animals, which lie in the ambiguous sphere between the wild and the human, as Elspeth Graham shows in her enlightening study concerning animals in Shakespeare, "reveals an early modern notion of the specifically domesticated animal, taken from nature into human culture through its training, housing, breeding, feeding, and use—as occupying a separate domain from that of the fully wild" (Graham 178). Admittedly, these animals embody a hierarchy in their domestication, but their innate wildness is not therefore demolished. Instead, it is evoked in *Macbeth*, which causes the breakdown of the natural order of things: human, animal, and even, as suggested in earlier lines, cosmographical. With the metaphorical blurring and transgression of boundaries of kinds, especially that within animals, the extreme violation of order represented by the murder of a king gets its proper chance to be reported. The "unnaturalness" of the domesticated animals gets echoed in the fifth scene, when a doctor comes into the chamber to observe the nightwalker Lady Macbeth who is deeply agonized by insomnia. His diagnosis points to the similar cosmic principle of "blood for blood" as we have seen in the *Agamemnon* repeatedly.

DOCTOR
Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divine than the physician. (5.1.75-78)

The principle that "unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles" should, as a matter of fact, be seen as a central theme that runs across the whole play, since it offers justification for the use of animal metaphors, both the domesticated and the wild. If we cast aside for a moment the prophesying words of the old Man alluding to the inverse of creatures in the food chain, the constant analogies between the heroic characters and predators may remind us of the ever-present

shadow of nature upon the world of the humans. When asked by Duncan about the morale of Macbeth and Banquo in the battle, for instance, the Captain replies, "As sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion" (1.2.39). And when later in the scene Macbeth confronts defiance against his rule, he cries out the words "they have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, But bear-like I must fight the course" (5.7.1-2). The primacy of lions and eagles over sparrows and hares certainly herein confirms the valour of these two thanes, but on the other hand, the innate propensity for violence of these predators, which is completely "natural," contributes to the "tragic" of the play. If we link this "naturalness" to the "unnaturalness" mentioned earlier, Macbeth, as a tame animal yet preserving to a great extent wildness, functions as a good example of someone who lies within an established order but at the same time shows strong intention and urge of overthrowing it. This symbolic existence, together with usurpation, blood-shedding, and restoration to order, provides a perfect space that leads its audience to mediate upon the cycle of human fortunes and the very nature of humans, even though meekness is deemed as a royal virtue in the play (cf. 2.7.16-19: "this Duncan / Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been So clear in his great office, that his virtues. / Will plead like angels;" 4.3.63-65: "black Macbeth Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state Esteem him as a lamb").

With regard to the double nature seen in Macbeth, Elspeth Graham aptly comments that "as the training relationship between human and nonhuman animals inevitably focuses on domesticated animals who occupy a threshold domain between the wild and the tame, nature and acculturation, the purely human and the purely animal" (Graham 179). In this sense, Man, placed between the God (i.e., what is above him/her) and animals (i.e., what is below him/her) is more explicitly explored through the animal-symbolism, in which creatures incessantly drift in the structured hierarchy, creating from time to time surprises. Birds inhabiting the space above the earth are frequently seen in *Macbeth* as well and possess a meaningful position in the author's representation of the animal world. Jeremy Lopez interprets the recurring presence of birds as a result of the fact that "the play is about attempting to see into the future, and many birds, in particular ravens, owls and magpies, have traditional associations with augury" (Lopez 115). The fact that birds live above humans, send forth signals about the future (ominous of good or evil) and could live either a domesticated or wildlife makes them perfect references of nearly all kinds suitable for the play: prophetic, symbolic, or even allegorical. Furthermore, the fact that a hierarchy exists within the community of birds also leads us back to the question of the double meaning of their existence. Paradoxes regarding birds are seen here and there. Birds can signify hospitality, as Banquo happily describes the castle of Macbeth that attracts the "martlets" to nest, even though it is soon to be revealed as a slaughterhouse.

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here. No jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle.
Where they most breed and haunt, I have
observed,
The air is delicate.(1.6.4-12)

The irony continues when the docile and sweet martlets are replaced by malicious ravens and owls. Upon receiving the message that Duncan shall visit the castle, Lady Macbeth declares "The raven himself is hoarse That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan Under my battlements" (1.5.45-47). On the night when the king gets murdered, Lady Macbeth hears the owl, "the fatal bellman", that shrieks after Duncan's murder (2.2.3), and Lennox hears during the same night the 'obscure bird' that "Clamored the livelong night" (2.3.67-68), together with horrifying events that "Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say, Lamentings heard i'th'air, strange screams of death, And prophesying, with accents terrible, Of dire combustion and confused events New hatched to th'woeful time" (2.2.61-66). Evil acts are always related by Macbeth to the crow that signals the onset of the night as it "Makes wing to th' rooky wood" (3.2.52), since "Augurs and understood relations have By maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth The secret'st man of blood" (3.4.154-157). As the play proceeds, all these allusions of predatory birds, however, like the omen revealed by the Old Man, are to be "unnaturally" inverted. Predators will become their own prey, or as Macbeth himself has prophesied that "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood" (2.4.151).

The dramatic paradox with regard to birds reaches its climax in the scene where Lady Macduff argues with Ross about her husband's much-suspected flight to England. Lady Macduff denounces her husband's lack of "natural" affection for his wife and children, on the ground that even the most "diminutive of birds" will bravely confront the birds of prey for the protection of nestlings.

LADY MACDUFF
Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;
He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear, and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason. (4.2.8-16)

It needs to be noted that the "wren" is actually not what Lady Macbeth refers to as a powerless bird. W. C. Hazlitt's *Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles* states that the wren is known as "little King" or simply "king" by the Greeks and Spaniards, respectively (Hazlitt 665-666). The Latins, Danes, and Italians also referred to the bird as "king," "owl king," and "little king" (Hazlitt 665-666). Macduff is undoubtedly a king or at least a noble figure to be the mate of a wren. The bird is named in Greek and Latin as follows: in Greek τροχίλος (cf. *Historia Animalium* 615a15-20: "the trochilus", i.e., wren), inhabits thickets and holes. It is difficult to catch and fugitive and weak-charactered, but it lives well and is ingenious. It is called "old man" and "king", and that is why, they say, the eagle is at war with it; it is also named as τύραννος ("king", cf *Historia Animalium* 592b23); in Latin regulus, the word itself is a dimunitive of rex, which literally means "little king." Hazlitt also states that the wren, despite its diminutive size, is a formidable opponent to the eagle, which reigns supreme over all other birds. This little bird is also revered as a king in many other cultures and even by the druids, the natives of the Isles, who consider it the "king of all birds." The bird, known for its small size, could pose a threat or even hold sway over other birds. In this sense, "the poor wren" echoes the demarcation drawn between the tame and the wild implied in the old man's formidable description of the bird's behaviour. Noticeably, Macbeth's bird, as with the statement by Lady Macbeth, changes from eagle to the bird of ill-omen owl, which Lady Macduff declares that she and her son will fight against.

Her complaint about the unfavourable use of wren is answered by Ross' emphasis on the instability of human fortunes under extreme circumstances. For him, a person's choice is not completely one's own, and humans as things "float upon a wild and violent sea each way and move" (4.2.35-36). Ironically, the allusion of birds is resumed by her son. The mood-lighting conversations between the mother and the son again point to the inverse.

LADY MACDUFF
Sirrah, your father's dead.
And what will you do now? How will you live?
SON
As birds do, mother.
LADY MACDUFF
What, with worms and flies?
SON
With what I get, I mean; and so do they.
LADY MACDUFF
Poor bird, thou 'dst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin.
SON
Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying. (4.2.35-43)

The son's reply, though brief, is rather meaningful, especially given the inserted episode that does not lie in the main narrative line. He believes that it is not at all a worrisome matter to be fatherless, since small birds will have their food, while the food will have theirs, but such a comforting belief in the natural law of food chain does not prevent him from being slaughtered by stronger forces. The juxtaposition of both weakness and power within the same kind of bird, together with the murder of Lady Macduff and her son and the final revenge by Macduff himself further reveals the tension in the ambiguous nature. The nature, as a mirror of human affairs, works in unpredictable ways as well. In the dialectics of both natural and human politics, ambitious creatures, like Macbeth and his wife, through the natural quest for power may rise against the dominant figure, but the meek ones, like Duncan and Macduff under Macbeth's tyranny, will counteract or even overpower them. In other words, the order is to be disrupted, but will eventually be restored. Such is the working of the cosmic principle stated by Macbeth that "blood will have blood." As Jeremy Lopez observes, "The old man's description of bird behaviour is intended to be read as a sign of the disposition of human events, and what it reveals is a world of ruthless violence where 'naturally' powerful figures (including the soon-to-be-crowned Macbeth) can never be certain of their place at the top of the food chain" (Lopez 116). Therefore, in this sense, *Macbeth* is a play about the order of things that is constantly violated on several levels, and it sees different exchanges between wildness and domestication and between natural and unnatural forms of the wild itself.

"Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair": Animal Nature in the *Agamemnon*

The *Oresteia* by Aeschylus, the classical parallel of *Macbeth* in our current discussion, dwells upon the same subject, that is, blood and revenge. Their resemblance has been noted by scholars decades ago. J. A. K. Thomson in his *Shakespeare and the Classics* concludes that "*Macbeth* is in many respects the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience" (Thomson 119), even though his emphasis lies in Shakespeare's reliance on classical sources like Seneca and Ovid. Kenneth Muir in *Shakespeare Survey Volume 19: Macbeth* writes that "Macbeth has long been considered one of Shakespeare's 'most sublime' plays, if only because of the analogues between it and Greek tragedies" (Muir 5). Lord Campbell notices "the innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and Aeschylus's style" (Campbell qtd. in Furness 480; qtd. in Showerman 206) while rejecting the possibility of direct

dependence on Aeschylus. Adrian Poole in *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* declares explicitly that "Fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy" (Poole 15).

Although no direct evidence has been established to confirm that Shakespeare borrows dramatic techniques from Aeschylus or that he has read extensively the classical dramatic works, and most scholars resort to "instinct" (Collins 87: "We must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy") or "consanguinity of nature" (Campbell, qtd. in Furness 480, qtd. in Showerman 38) for an explanation of the marked similarity between them, the use of animals and the references of their fluidity are what decidedly connect them to the same rein of dramatic tradition. And most importantly, as far as I see it, the same symbolic allusion to the fundamental human existence and cosmic order makes these techniques more pertinent. Earl Showerman's rather useful article "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*" offers a detailed review of the literature concerning this question. The emphasis in the following discussions will be primarily placed upon the *Agamemnon*, which ironically revolves around Clytemnestra, as J. Churton Collins has observed: "Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth" (Collins 73).

Like in *Macbeth*, the blurring of the boundary between the tameness and the inversion of established order features in a prominent way in the *Agamemnon*. Aside from the obvious double nature of Clytemnestra, nearly all characters in the play, including Agamemnon, Helen, Cassandra, and Aegisthus, are attributed with the qualities of both meekness and untamedness. And once again, like in *Macbeth*, the changed nature of creatures comes into display through the most extreme form of violence, that is, murder. The play begins with the loyal watchman who sees himself as the "dog" of the house of Atreus, waiting eagerly for the signal confirming a Greek victory in Troy and the return of the master of the house. Soon when Clytemnestra comes into the scene, she, informed of the recent triumph, responds to the chorus of Argive elders that like them she has always been acting as a faithful wife expecting the return of the noble lord Agamemnon.

> Let him come with all speed, his country's fond desire, come to find at home his wife faithful, even as he left her, a watchdog of his house, loyal to him (δωμάτων κύνα ἐσθλὴν ἐκείνῳ), a foe to those who wish him ill; yes, for the rest, unchanged in every part; in all this length of time never having broken any seal. (*Agamemnon* 605-611)

For the audience fully aware of the myth, these words certainly function as a mask for her long wrath to kill the husband for the sake of avenging the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon. The same image is repeated when Clytemnestra praises Agamemnon upon his return home "a watchdog of a herder's homestead" (*Agamemnon* 896: τῶν σταθμῶν κύνα). The "meek" wife, one of whose essential duties is to guard the house just as that of Agamemnon, is soon seen to embrace the voracious side of her existence as a "hateful bitch" (*Agamemnon* 1228: γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς). The phrase is used in reference to Clytemnestra as a murderer, and also her shamelessness in committing adultery with Aegisthus. The transformation from supposed docility to savageness is much more fully embodied in the well-known parable of the lion cub pronounced by the chorus in *Agamemnon* 717-736.

> Even so a man reared in his house a lion's whelp, robbed of its mother's milk yet still desiring the breast. Gentle it was in the prelude of its life, kindly to children, and a delight to the old. Much did it get, held in arms like a nursling child, with its bright eye turned toward his hand, and fawning under compulsion of its belly's need. But brought to full growth by time it showed the nature it had from its parents. Unbidden, as payment for its fostering, it prepared a feast with ruinous slaughter of the flocks; so that the house was defiled with blood, and whose who lived there could not control their anguish, and great was the carnage far and wide. A priest of ruin, by order of a god, it was reared in the house. (*Agamemnon* 717-736)

The lion is a gentle creature when it is a cub, but when it is fully grown, its feral nature reasserts itself. The parable ends with the lion transformed into "a priest of ruin," having utterly destroyed the household. The erosion of an established order and the transgression of hierarchy seen in *Macbeth* triggered by the prophetic language of unnatural images, in the case of *Agamemnon*, are realized through the same image juxtaposing "watchdog" and "bitch" in the same character. Like the conversations on the "wren" in *Macbeth*, the play *Agamemnon* tellingly uncovers through the constant use of animal metaphors the fact that humans exist as creatures swaying between docility and savagery. The hierarchy represented through the food chain has never been and will never be stable and permanent. Symbolically speaking, the reign of the Scottish royal household and the household of Atreus convey the same story, that is, the one of how nature works. Nature is dynamic, replete with discipline and resistance, both provoked by the creatures' urge for order and desire to rebel against the rulers.

The imagery of the lion cub incomparably incorporates the establishment of order through paternal care as well as the obedience of children and their final outburst of violent nature, which could reasonably be compared to the juxtaposition of both "foul and fair" in the same creature in *Macbeth*. As Bernard Knox notices, "the lion cub parable is equally 'official' in the surface,

Troy which took in Helen has got what it deserved, but below the surface, there is a conscious foreboding and unconscious prophecy of disaster to come" (Knox 18). As with the prophetic use of animals in *Macbeth*, the animal symbolism in *Agamemnon* is equally augural.

Noticeably, the parable of the Lion cub applies to nearly all the major characters in the play who are trapped in the web of revenge, that is the immediate family members of the house of Atreus and Thyestes. Macbeth and Banquo are equally valiant since they are named "eagle and lion" respectively. Likewise, in the context of *Agamemnon*, the lions represent violence and destruction, particularly the one directed against the household. In *Agamemnon*, the three main characters, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus, are all referred to as lions. In 1256-1260, in denouncing treacherous Clytemnestra as a "lioness" and Aegisthus as a "wolf," Cassandra calls Agamemnon "a noble lion". Aegisthus is also called a "lion" in the prophetic vision of the horrifying feast of Atreus and Clytemnestra's adultery with Aegisthus, who himself is a product of Thyestes' incestuous union with his own daughter.

More importantly for our present concern, each character who gets to be called a "lion" displays their once tenderness in the play. In 238-247, the chorus recalls the amiable scene of Iphigenia dining with his father in joy: "for she had often sung where men met at her father's hospitable table, and with her virgin voice would lovingly honour her dear father's prayer for blessing at the third libation." Nevertheless, "yoked by necessity," Agamemnon has no choice but to be iron-hearted, thus showing his cruelty as a lion. Through the link of Iphigenia, Clytemnestra's character is also illustrated in two opposite directions. On the one hand, her deep affection for Iphigenia indicates her motherliness as a lioness; on the other, the passion aroused by Iphigenia's murder transforms her into a predator ready to prey on "the victims stand by the central hearth awaiting the sacrifice" (1056-1057), which refers to Agamemnon. The inversion magnificently matches the previous analysis of the "most diminutive bird" in *Macbeth*. The pattern of domestic violence that has plagued the house of Atreus relies heavily on breaching the existent order by meek animals who transform themselves into revenging monstrosities. The blood-shedding created by powerful beings will soon be revenged by the seemingly less potent ones. This never-ending cycle constitutes the essence of what is "tragic" in the Aristotelian sense, of which *Agamemnon* and *Macbeth* are the most prototypical plays.

Conclusion: "Blood for Blood"

The transformation from docility to savagery demonstrates the ultimate area of interest of both plays, thus framing their comparative basis: the instability of human affairs, and its manifestation and realization through violence, with the

aid of symbolized animal imagery. The destructive nature of the cycle of revenge perpetuated by human's innate impulses of both good and evil brings about the final law that is explicitly endorsed in both plays. In parallel with Macbeth's pronouncement of the ancient law that "It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood" (3.4.120) and the Doctor's diagnosis that "Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles" (5.1.59-60), the chorus enunciates "a venerable utterance proclaimed of old" that "an old Hubris tends to bring forth in evil men, sooner or later, at the fated hour of birth, a young Hubris and that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy spirit, Recklessness, and for the household black Curses, which resemble their parents" (763-771: φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν Ὕβρις μὲν παλαιὰ νεάζουσαν ἐν κακοῖς βροτῶν ὕβριν). The striking resemblance, if not sufficient enough to lead us to the conclusion that *Macbeth* is fundamentally Aeschylean, should offer essential clues on their reliance on the same subject of how nature and the human world work. In this sense, each one of us could be Macbeth; or any character in *Agamemnon*, as Bernard Knox has shown:

> The lion cub is a symbol of reversal to type, of hybris that resembles its parent: and this connects the parable with the house of Pelops, where in each generation the evil strain in the race comes out… the lioncub is not only Helen, but Aegisthus, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra. (Knox 22)

At the end of *Macbeth*, Macduff, who according to Lady Macduff "wants the natural touch" (4.2.9), carries Macbeth's head onstage and thus accomplishes his natural obligation as a husband and a father. In the wake of the victory, Malcolm announces that order has been restored with the law of blood for blood being perfectly fulfilled. We cannot help but wonder that this peace is only temporary, since new transgressions will inevitably occur due to the mixed nature of humanity.

WORKS CITED

Aeschylus. *Aeschylus: With an English Translation by Herbert Weir Smyth. In 2 Volumes.* Ed. Herbert Weir Smyth. London: W. Heinemann G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.

Aristotle, *History of Animals. Aristotle in 23 volumes, Vol. 11*. Trans. D. M. Balme. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1932.

Aristotle, *Poetics. Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 23.* Trans. W. H. Fyfe. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1932.

Bernard M. W. Knox. "The Lion in the House (Agamemnon 717-736 [Murray])." *Classical Philology* 47.1 (1952): 17-25.

Collins, John Churton. *Studies in Shakespeare*. London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904.

Furness, H. H. [1893]. *Macbeth* Variorum Edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1903.

Graham, Elspeth. "The Training Relationship: Horses, Hawks, Dogs, Bears, and Humans." *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Animals*. Eds. Karen Raber, Holly Dugan. London: Routledge, 2021. 177-189.

Hazlitt, W. C. *Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles*. Vol. II. New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1965.

Lopez, Jeremy. *The Arden Introduction to Reading Shakespeare*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Muir, Kenneth. *Shakespeare Survey: Volume 19, Macbeth*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Peradotto, John J. "Some Patterns of Nature Imagery in the Oresteia." *The American Journal of Philology* 85.4 (1964): 378-393.

Poole, Adrian. *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1987.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. A. R. Braunmuller. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Showerman, Earl. "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*." *Brief Chronicles* 3.37 (2011): 37-70.

Thomson, J. A. K. *Shakespeare and the Classics*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.10

Kazuki Sasaki*

Shakespeare Engraved: Frontispiece and Bardolatry[1]

Abstract: The term Bardolatry has been used for over a century to describe the adoration of an Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare, but the causes of this phenomenon have not been fully elucidated. The study explores the nature of this worship produced and disseminated by various theatrical cultures during the long eighteenth century. To understand the formation of the phenomenon, this paper examines the shifts in the engraved frontispieces, taking *The Tempest* as an example.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Bardolatry, frontispiece, *The Tempest*, adaptation, the long eighteenth century, theatrical culture.

Introduction

It is not easy to imagine that there were only four complete editions of Shakespeare's works in the seventeenth century if we consider his status as a global cultural icon today. Moreover, all of them replicated the format of *The First Folio* (1623). In the eighteenth century, however, the publishing landscape changed dramatically. From Nicholas Rowe's first edition in 1709, at least "some fifty collected editions were published with London imprints" by the end of the century (Murphy, *Shakespeare in print* 131). This article examines the shift in the engraved frontispieces of *The Tempest*, one of the most popular plays throughout the long eighteenth century, to explore the growing enthusiasm for Shakespeare. It also aims to provide insight into the formation of what would later be called "Bardolatry" (Shaw xxxi), which was produced and disseminated by the various theatrical cultures during the long eighteenth century.

* Akita University, Akita, Japan. zsasaki0925@gmail.com

[1] This paper is a significantly modified version of the invited lecture at The Shakespeare Festival at Keio University on April 22, 2023. It also includes a section based on *New Perspective*, 215 (2022): 4-7, with substantial revisions.

Nicholas Rowe's First Edition (1709)

Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition was the first of Shakespeare's complete works to be published in the eighteenth century. The leading publisher, Jacob Tonson the Elder, introduced several innovative features to attract readers. First of all, the thick and heavy single-volume folio was replaced with a six-volume octavo. As a result, it became conveniently portable in exchange for "the loss of what had been a prestige format" (Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print* 59). In addition, the name of Nicholas Rowe, a renowned playwright and poet, was listed on the title page as the editor for the first time. Tonson also altered the content. Before this edition, spectators and readers were familiar with individual works of Shakespeare but they had limited information about the author himself (Dogus 130-131). Rowe's edition cut out the complimentary poems by Ben Jonson and others in the Folio edition and replaced them with a biography, "Some Account of the Life, &c., of Mr William Shakespear" written by the editor. Above all, the most notable was the addition of visually appealing frontispieces to each play, designed by François Boitard, a French artist, and engraved by Elisha Kirkall. The most well-known is the spectacular frontispiece of *The Tempest* at the beginning of Volume I (Fig. 1). In the center of this engraving is a ship about to be wrecked by a storm and its frenzied sailors and passengers. The artist Boitard most likely aimed to accurately capture the opening scene, which includes a conversation between Shipmaster and Boatswain:

> **Master** Boatswain!
> **Boatswain** Here master. What cheer?
> **Master** Good, speak to th'mariners. Fall to't yarely or
> We run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir! *Exit.* (1.1.1-4)[2]

But Boitard's inclusion of dragons and monsters flying through the air, which are absent from the original, may have been inspired by Thomas Shadwell's adaptation, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (1674). As evidence to support this conjecture, the following opening directions from Shadwell's version are worth noting:

> … Behind this is the Scene, which represents a thick cloudy Sky, a very Rocky Coast, and a Tempestuous Sea in perpetual Agitation. Tempest (suppos'd to be rais'd by Magick) has many dreadful Objects in it, as *several Spirits in horrid shapes flying down.* And when the Ship is sinking, the whole House is darken'd, and a shower of Fire falls upon 'em. This is accompanied with Lightning, and several Claps of Thunder, to the end of the Storm. (Shadwell II: 199) [Italics mine]

[2] References to *The Tempest* are from *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works.*

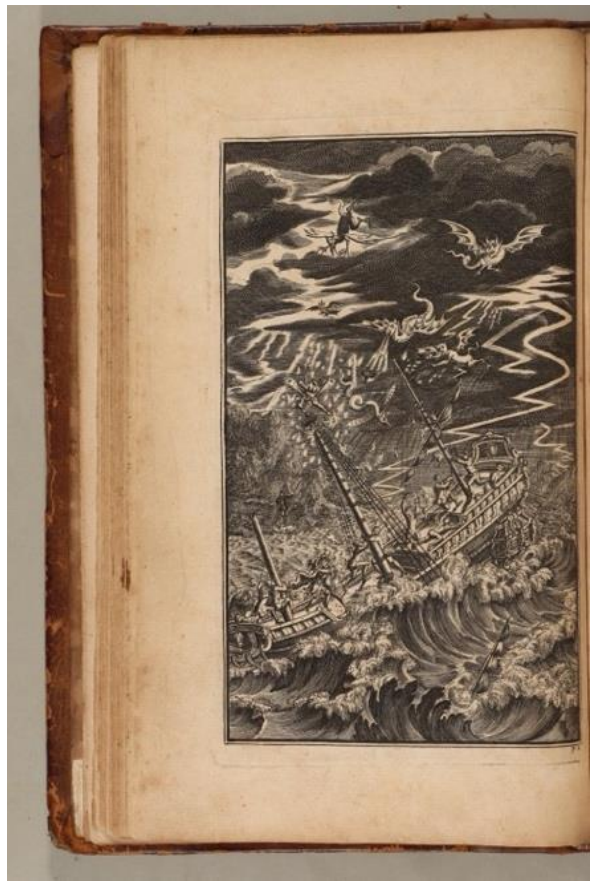

Fig. 1. Frontispiece to Nicholas Rowe's edition of *The Tempest* (1709) by François Boitard. 27 December 2023. https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2001?volumeid=129505088. By permission of Akita University Library

As these stage directions specify "several spirits in horrible shapes flying down," some scholar had already speculated that this was likely the source for Boitard (Merchant 49). However, it is unclear what prompted him to incorporate Shadwell's monsters into the frontispiece of Shakespeare's original.

To unravel this mystery, it is crucial to examine the performance history of *The Tempest*. In 1667, John Dryden and William Davenant presented their adaptation, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*, which newly included Dorinda, Miranda's sister, and her lover Hippolito, and transformed the play into a lively Restoration-style comedy. Seven years later, Shadwell added even more elaborate stage effects and music to this comedy, contributing to its great success. According to *The London Stage: 1660-1800*, it is evident that Shakespeare's original version of *The Tempest* was not performed from the

Restoration up until the mid-eighteenth century. In contrast, Shadwell's operatic version had been on the board at least 31 times before Rowe's first edition in 1709. In other words, it is probable that for Boitard, *The Tempest* most likely referred to Shadwell's adaptation. It can be, therefore, assumed that he chose for the frontispiece the most impressive scene from this operatic version that he had watched recently. The publisher Tonson may have been uncertain about the popularity of both Shakespeare, whose biographical information was newly presented in this edition, and *The Tempest,* which had not been performed in its original form at the time. This would explain why Boitard's confusing design was adopted. Tonson probably wanted to attract customers familiar with Shadwell's adaptation with flying monsters to increase sales of this new edition. In any case, this engraving suggests that the reputation of Shakespeare was not yet fully established at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Nicholas Rowe's Second Edition (1714)

In Rowe's second edition, most of the frontispieces were replaced. According to theater historians, this was likely due to the change in page size from octavo to duodecimo, in order to reduce paper costs (Milhous and Hume 237-238). This alteration required the frontispieces to be re-carved, but most of them "reveal Tonson's economy with time and costs by simply reproducing Boitard's designs of 1709" (Sillars 64). However, in the case of *The Tempest*, it was replaced by Louis Du Guernier's serene frontispiece (Fig. 2). Judging from the wand he is holding, the old man on the left is probably Prospero. Another old man on the right with whom he is conversing, is presumably King Alonzo of Naples, while their companion, the older bearded man, is identified as Gonzalo, the adviser. The other men standing behind Alonzo are likely Antonio and Sebastian. The couple in the background are undoubtedly Miranda and Ferdinand, who could be identified by the tiny chessboard they are holding. Therefore, this engraving correctly depicts the famous reconciliation scene at the end of the play. Below are the lines spoken by Prospero to Alonzo at that moment:

> My dukedom since you have given me again,
> I will requite you with as good a thing;
> At least bring forth a wonder, to content ye
> As much as me my dukedom.
> *Here Prospero discovers FERDINAND and MIRANDA, playing at chess.*
> (5.1.168-171)

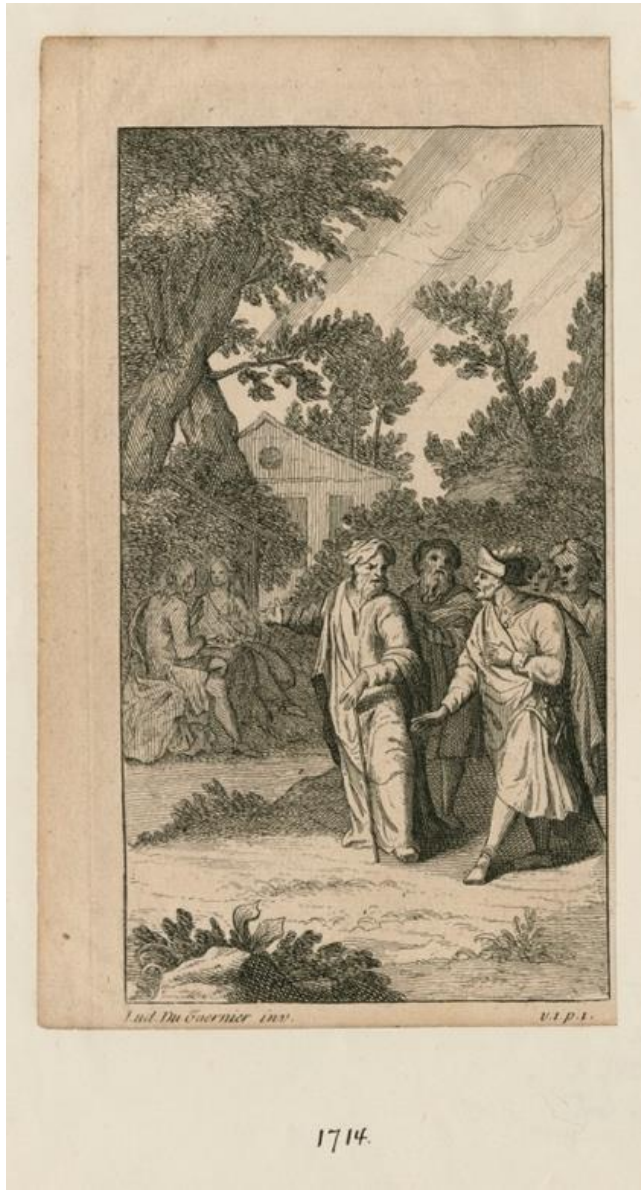

Fig. 2. Frontispiece to Nicholas Rowe's edition of *The Tempest* (1714) by Louis Du Guernier. 28 December 2023. https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/img27043. By courtesy of The Folger Shakespeare Library

Interestingly, Shadwell's version omits this crucial speech of Prospero and the chess game between Miranda and Ferdinand. Instead, Prospero suddenly comforts grieving Alonzo by saying, "Sir, I am glad kind Heaven decreed it

otherwise" (Shadwell II: 262), after which Alonzo finds Ferdinand alive. Most customers who were familiar with only Shadwell's version could not have recognized the scene depicted in the new frontispiece as that from *The Tempest*. Therefore, Tonson must have been aware that this replacement would entail considerable sales risk. It is possible that he was encouraged by the success of the first edition and decided that capitalizing on Shadwell's opening scene was not essential to the marketing of the second edition. Alternatively, he may have deemed Du Guernier's rococo engraving more attractive than Boitard's baroque one to new and sophisticated customers, for whom the second edition was reprinted in 2,500 copies (St. Clair 701).

The emergence of publishers like Tonson, who treated Shakespeare's works as commodities and deliberately replaced their frontispieces to meet and create new demands, undoubtedly contributed greatly to the establishment of Shakespeare's popularity and the rapid rise of his fame in the early eighteenth century.

Thomas Hanmer's Edition (1743-1744)

In the mid-eighteenth century, Shakespeare's reputation underwent a significant transformation. After the Tonson family's copyrights to Shakespeare's plays expired in 1731, fierce competition arose between Robert Walker and Jacob Tonson the Younger in 1733-1734. Walker attempted to break the monopoly by publishing individual works at a lower price, while Tonson offered greater discounts to protect his sales. As a result, inexpensive individual works of Shakespeare flooded the market (Milhous and Hume 239-240). The renewed interest in Shakespeare's romantic comedies may have been a by-product of this price war. Two of his famous comedies, *As You Like It* and *The Twelfth Night*, were revived in their original forms at Drury Lane in December 1740 and January 1741, respectively (Hogan 91 & 455). On October 19, 1741, David Garrick made his debut as Richard III at Goodman's Fields Theatre in London, immediately captivating the audience with his innovative performance. These coincidences made Shakespeare the most popular writer in print and on stage at the time.

The publication of Thomas Hanmer's luxurious edition may be considered as a response to Shakespeare's growing reputation. The beautiful engravings by the famous painter Francis Hayman were well suited to Hanmer's folio edition. It consisted of six volumes, and Hanmer covered the cost of the frontispieces. However, at 210 shillings, this edition was affordable only to the wealthy (St. Clair 702-703). Unfortunately, due to the inaccuracy and arbitrariness of the textual emendation, this edition is now rarely referenced in connection with textual studies and is considered to be "one of the worst in the

eighteenth century" (Wells & Taylor 54). The thirty-one frontispieces are, however, often mentioned partly because of their high quality and partly because of the letters from Hanmer to Hayman that were discovered in the 1970s.

Here is a part of the editor's instruction to the artist regarding the frontispiece of *The Tempest* (Fig. 3):

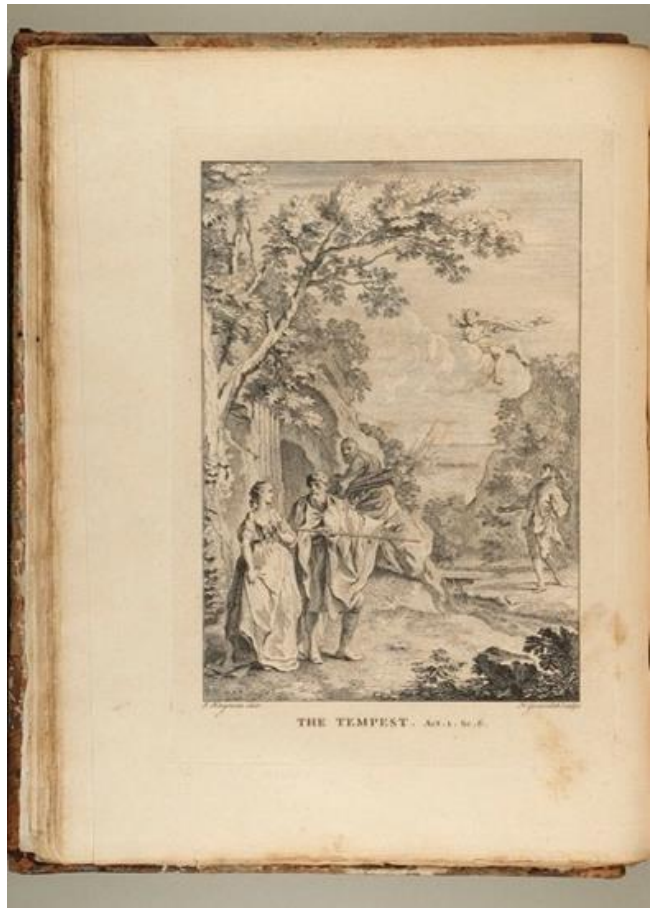

Fig. 3. Frontispiece to Thomas Hanmer's edition of *The Tempest* (1743-44) by Francis Hayman. 29 December 2023. https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2002?volumeid=129505094. By permission of Akita University Library

> … Prospero and Miranda are to stand as in conference together: He is an elderly man but not decrepid of broken with Age, clothed in a long garment and his head cover'd with a cap lined with Ermyn, holding a wand in his right hand. The daughter in the bloom of youth and beauty, and habited after the Italian or Spanish manner. At some distance from them, Ferdinand must appear… His Air and Mien to be that of a fine graceful youthful Prince and his dress after the

> Italian mañer with a sword by his side and his hat button'd up with a diamond. …The spirit Ariel to be sitting in the clouds with a pipe or flute in his hand. The Grotesque figure of Caliban to be coming from behind the Cave towards the mouth of it with a burden of wood on his Shoulders. (Allentuck 294-295)

Hanmer emphasizes the physical appearance of the three primary characters: Prospero, Miranda, and Ferdinand. By defining each character through details of costume, he aims to make it clear to the reader which social class they belong to and to contextualize the play within the eighteenth-century society, and Hayman is faithful to the instruction.

In the case of Caliban and Ariel, it is noteworthy that the painter complements the editor's description. Let us begin with a closer examination of Caliban. While Hanmer refers to him only as "the grotesque figure," Hayman's portrayal of Caliban is a darker-skinned and more shabbily dressed character who appears to be performing manual labor under the control of Caucasians. Hayman may intend to place Caliban within the historical context. Since the play is set on an island, readers would draw a comparison between Caliban and the black slaves who worked on the West Indies' plantations, which brought great wealth to Britain at the time. In addition, Hayman may also intend to make Caliban a major character in the play. Although critics suggest on this frontispiece that "Caliban lurks dimly… in the background" (Vaughn & Vaughn, *Shakespeare's Caliban* 218), he seems to be purposely placed in the center to attract the reader's attention as well as Prospero and Miranda.

As for Ariel, Hanmer refers to the character as "the spirit," but the shape of the wings and chubby infant appearance suggest that Hayman portrays Ariel as Cupid. This may explain why Hayman's Ariel looks down at Miranda, who appears captivated by Ferdinand, while he looks up at Ariel, creating a love triangle in the composition. In the 1740s, Hayman contributed to the decoration of the supper box at Vauxhall Gardens on the Thames (*DNB* 26: 53). His depiction of Ariel may reflect the atmosphere of this elegant and amorous pleasure garden.

Finally, the frontispiece of this edition is remarkable for its depiction of all the main characters in a single plane. This is a departure from Rowe's editions, where artists would cut out the most impressive scenes from the play. For the wealthy, this magnificent frontispiece would serve as a guide to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, providing clues as to how to read the play when Shadwell's opera version was still popular and the original was not yet revived (Hogan 432-437).

The availability of affordable single copies of Shakespeare's works in the 1730s made reading Shakespeare a popular form of entertainment for the public. However, the publication of this lavish and informative edition suggests that having Shakespeare's edition also became a status symbol for the wealthy in the 1740s.

John Bell's Acting Edition (1774)

John Bell's acting edition provides a unique perspective on the reception of Shakespeare in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Commonly known as *Bell's Shakespeare* after its publisher, John Bell, this edition differs from scholarly editions in that it collects prompter's books used for performances at Drury Lane, where David Garrick was the manager at the time. The text of Bell's acting edition has received little attention in the field of textual studies because it was edited for the convenience of the production or at the discretion of the actors. However, its smaller size (duodecimo) and lower price (15 shillings) would have made it widely available at the time. According to records, "no fewer than 8,000 were sold in one week" (St. Clair 705). This success indicates the broad appeal of this edition to the public in contrast to, for example, Samuel Johnson's first edition in 1765, which was published in only 1,000 copies (St. Clair 703).

Bell's acting edition, which was so popular at the time, suggests that two modes of Shakespeare reception coexisted. One of these modes is indicated in the advertisement that the editor Francis Gentleman placed at the beginning of the first volume:

> …why then should not noble monuments he had left us of unrivalled ability, be restored to due proportion and natural luster, by sweeping off those cobwebs, and the dust of depraved opinion, which Shakespeare was unfortunately forced to throw on them? …The above considerations first started the idea and induced the undertakings of this edition. (Bell I: 6)

As this quote indicates, Gentleman compiled this acting edition with the belief that a stage script for performance, edited to eliminate unnecessary "cobwebs, and the dust", was the ideal text that Shakespeare had originally intended. While this logic may sound strange to modern readers who feel that Shakespeare's text should not be arbitrarily altered, when his works were considered adaptable material, it was common practice to correct and improve his text according to the tastes of the time. In this regard, Bell's edition was one of many attempts to idealize Shakespeare out of reverence for him. The second half of the quotation also reveals a similar mode of reception:

> …it is our peculiar endeavor to render what we call the essence of Shakespeare more instructive and intelligible; especially to the ladies and to youth; glaring indecencies being removed, and intricate passages explained. (Bell I: 9-10)

In his seminal study, Michael Dobson suggests that Gentleman's approach involved cleansing Shakespeare's works to make them more respectable (Dobson 211).

However, Gentleman's attempt to make Shakespeare's work less bawdy and thereby more genteel was not entirely successful. This is evident from the two frontispieces of *The Tempest* in this edition. The first shows the comic trio of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano, portrayed by Edward Edwards (Fig. 4). The caption "Come on—down and swear" (2.2.149) indicates the scene takes place

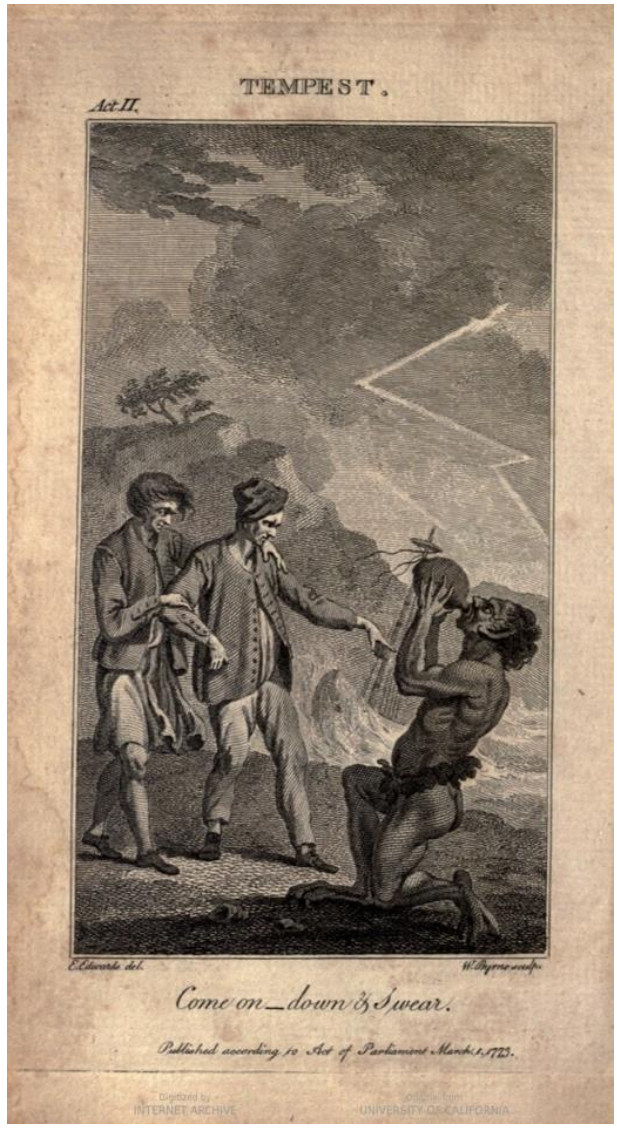

Fig. 4. Frontispiece to John Bell's edition of *The Tempest* (1774) by Edward Edwards. 29 December 2023. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3548571&seq=244. By courtesy of Hathi Trust

immediately after Caliban's drunken proclamation to Stephano to kiss his foot and to be his servant. Although this scene may not be significant or noteworthy, it is certainly ridiculously funny. The publisher's choice to include it may suggest, despite the editor's intentions, how the play was received and which aspects were favored by the general public at the time.

The second frontispiece likely supports this conjecture. This is one of the new extra series added to the third edition (1776) that portrayed "costumed actors in poses of significant action" (Burnim and Highfill 21). In *The Tempest*, Robert Baddeley in the role of Trinculo, was depicted by Thomas Parkinson (Fig. 5). He joined the Drury Lane company in the 1762-1763 season, and had already established his popularity as a comic actor at the time. (*DNB* 3: 193-194). As the caption "Ay, but to lose our bottles in the pool—" (4.1.208) shows, this engraving captures the scene where Trinculo, Caliban, and Stephano emerge from a polluted pool after being thrown in by Ariel. Trinculo's soaked hair and clothes are visible, adding to his comic effect. This frontispiece, as well as the first one, suggests that a considerable part of the audience came to see *The Tempest* as a light entertainment, much as Samuel Pepys had enjoyed it a century earlier. See, for example, his diary entry for Monday, February 3, 1668:

> At noon home to dinner; and thence after dinner to the Duke of York's house, to the play, *The Tempest*, which we have often seen; but yet I was pleased again, and shall be again to see it, it is so full of variety; and particularly, this day I took pleasure to learn <the tune of> the Seaman's dance—which I have much desired to be perfect in, and have made myself so. (Pepys IX: 48)

Thus, Gentleman's intention to idealize and sanitize Shakespeare's works is contradicted by the two frontispieces of *The Tempest*, which suggest a different mode of reception of Shakespeare by the general public. It can be assumed that they, too, would have appreciated Shakespeare, but their sentiment was probably not veneration for the National Poet, but rather an affectionate feeling for the author of delightful entertainment.

Shakespeare's popularity during the eighteenth century peaked at the Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769, which was presided over by David Garrick, and Bell's acting edition continued to be published throughout the 1770s. However, the publication ceased when Garrick, a rare presence who could unite two modes of reception of Shakespeare, passed away. At the turn of the century, another kind of the complete works of Shakespeare was published for new customers with different tastes.

Fig. 5. Frontispiece to Bell's edition of *The Tempest, Mr Baddeley in the Character of Trinculo* (1776) by T. Parkinson. 30 December 2023. https://www.rct.uk/collection/650369/mr-baddeleynbspin-the-character-ofnbsptrinculo. By permission of Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023

Alexander Chalmers' Edition (1805)

Finally, let's consider Alexander Chalmers' early nineteenth-century edition. Chalmers, a prolific Scottish journalist, combined the latest fifth edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1803) edited by George Steevens with frontispieces by Henry Fuseli, making his edition unique. It used Steevens' text but removed almost all of his extensive notes. Chalmers' goal was to provide a simplified scholarly edition for educated readers who wanted to enjoy Shakespeare with authorized and correct texts and minimal notes. The 1831 edition was advertised in newspapers at 96 shillings for the complete collection, with individual volumes available for 14 shillings each. Although the price was not low, Chalmers' edition hit the mark because it was published consecutively in 1811, 18, 23, 26, and 31 (St. Clair 710-711). His decision to hire Fuseli as the frontispiece artist would also be viewed as an attempt to lend authority to this edition and boost sales. Fuseli was then a prominent figure in the art world because he had been a professor at the Royal Academy since 1799.

Moreover, Fuseli was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare's works and the acting of David Garrick. John Knowles' biography describes Fuseli's first visit to England in 1764 as follows:

> At this time, Garrick was in the height of his reputation; and as Fuseli considered the theatre the best school for a foreigner to acquire the pronunciation of the English language, and Garrick's performance an excellent imitation of the passions, which would give him a lesson essential to historical designs; he never missed the opportunity of seeing him act, and he was generally to be found in the front row of the pit. (Knowles I: 39)

Inspired by his experiences at the theater, Fuseli made two superb sketches on paper. One depicts David Garrick and Hanna Prichard as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, while the other portrays Garrick in the role of Richard III (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 67). As a result of his talent, John Boydell, an eminent publisher, commissioned Fuseli to create large paintings based on Shakespeare's scenes for his gallery, which opened at 55 Pall Mall in 1789. Fuseli's works were stunning, and since then he became known as "Shakespeare's painter." This must have been another reason why Chalmers chose Fuseli as his illustrator.

The frontispiece of Fuseli's *The Tempest* (Fig. 6) is examined below. The caption reads as follows:

> *Miranda sleeps*
> **Prosp.** Come away, servant. I am ready now
> Approach my Ariel; come. (1.2.187-188)

Fig. 6. Frontispiece to Alexander Chalmers' edition of *The Tempest* (1805) by John Henry Fuseli. 30 December 2023. https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2005?volumeid=129505125. By permission of Akita University Library

This quote refers to the scene in which Ariel first appears after Miranda has fallen asleep. However, the engraving also shows Caliban, who appears later. Fuseli wants to contrast Ariel as an angel with Caliban as a devil on the same plane. Miranda is positioned behind Prospero, while her lover Ferdinand is missing from the frontispiece. In doing so, Fuseli deliberately erases the essential love-romance element of *The Tempest.* As a result, the frontispiece appears to reflect a Christian allegory, in which Prospero is depicted as God Almighty, surrounded by a heavenly messenger, a demonic figure, and a submissive woman with her eyes looking downward. Fuseli's portrayal of Prospero as a deity may be linked to his position in the cult of Shakespeare. During

the eighteenth century, it was common to find biographical details about Shakespeare in his works. It is then unsurprising that the character and speeches of Prospero, the powerful magician in Shakespeare's final masterpiece, were thought to reflect his state of mind when he retired (Vaughan & Vaughan, *A Critical Reader* 18-19). This would explain why Peter Sheemakers' statue of Shakespeare, placed in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey in 1741 (Fig. 7), points to Prospero's famous passage on the scroll without any explanation. It reads as follows, although it contains some errors (qtd. in Dobson 146):

> The Cloud cupt Tow'rs, The Gorgeous Palaces,
> The Great Globe itself
> Yea all which it Inherit, Shall Dissolve;
> And like the baseless Fabrick of a Vision
> Leave not a Wreck behind. (4.1.152-56)

Fig. 7. Statue of Shakespeare in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey (1741) by Peter Sheemakers. 30 December 2023. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Shakespeare_memorial%2C_Poets%27_Corner.jpg. By courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

In short, the statue was carved on the assumption that Prospero was a portrait of Shakespeare. This association became even stronger in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by Coleridge's passage in his famous *Shakespearean Criticism*, where he stated:

> Prospero, the mighty wizard, whose potent art could not only call up all the spirits of the deep, but the characters as they were and are and will be, seems a portrait of the bard himself. (Coleridge 2: 253)

Given that Prospero was widely recognized as Shakespeare's persona at the time, it is natural that Fuseli, a longtime Shakespeare enthusiast, would depict Prospero as a deity to express his ardent belief in the bard. Similarly, contemporary readers could quite likely have associated the godlike Prospero in the frontispiece with Shakespeare himself. If that is the case, then what we find here is a form of worship that goes beyond mere admiration: the deification of Shakespeare.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of Bardolatry, previously perceived as an outpouring of Shakespeare's genius, has recently been reinterpreted as a product that was created, transformed, and disseminated over a long time. However, the process by which this phenomenon was invented with various theatrical cultures has not yet been fully elucidated. This paper explores the evolution of the worship of Shakespeare through the study of frontispieces, taking *The Tempest* as an example. The examination indicates that they contributed to and reflected the rise of Shakespeare's popularity as a playwright, ultimately leading to his deification. In other words, they prove how the myth of Shakespeare, the National Poet, was born and nurtured throughout the long eighteenth century.

WORKS CITED

Allentuck, Marcia. "Sir Thomas Hanmer Instructs Francis Hayman: An Editor's Notes to his Illustrator (1744). " *Shakespeare Quarterly* 27 (1976): 288-315.

Avery, Emmet L., et al., eds. *The London Stage, 1660-1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-receipts and Contemporary Comment, Compiled from the Playbills, Newspapers and Theatrical Diaries of the Period.* 5 Parts. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961-1968.

Bell's edition of Shakespeare's plays: As They Are Now Performed at the Theatres Royal in London, regulated from the prompt books of each house by permission, With Notes Critical and Illustrative; by the authors of the Dramatic Censor. 9 vols. London: John Bell, 1774.

Burnim, Kalman A. and Philip H. Highfill Jr. *John Bell, Patron of British Theatrical Portraiture: A Catalog of the Theatrical Portraits in His Editions of* Bell's Shakespeare *and* Bell's British Theatre, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998.

Coleridge, S. T. *Shakespearean Criticism in two volumes*. Ed. Thomas M. Raysor. London: Dent, 1960.

Dobson, Michael. *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Dugas, Don-John. *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print, 1660-1740.* Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2006.

Hochholdinger-Reiterer, Beate. "'Shakespear's Painter:' Henry Fuseli and the London Stage." *Fuseli: Drama and Theatre.* Eds. Eva Reifert with Claudia Blank. Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2018. 59-76.

Hogan, Charles Beecher. *Shakespeare in the Theatre 1701-1800: A Record of Performance in London 1701-1750*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952.

Knowles, John. *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli*. 3 vols. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831.

Matthew, H. C. G. and Brian Harrison, eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: in association with the British Academy: from the earliest times to the year 2000*. 61 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004**.**

Merchant, W. Moelwyn. *Shakespeare and the Artist.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Milhous, Judith and Robert D. Hume. *The Publication of Plays in London 1660-1800: Playwrights, Publisher and the Market.* London: The British Library, 2015.

Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing,* Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Pepys, Samuel. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys.* 10 vols. Eds. R. C. Latham & W. Matthews. 1971. London: Harper Collins, 1995.

Shadwell, Thomas. *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell.* 5 vols. Ed. Montague Summers. London: Benjamin Blom, 1927.

Shakespeare, William. *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works.* Eds. Richard Proudfoot, et al. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.

Shaw, George Bernard. *Three Plays for Puritans: The Devil's Disciple, Cæsar and Cleopatra, & Captain Brassbound's Conversion.* London: G. Richards, 1901.

Sillars, Stuart. *The Illustrated Shakespeare 1709-1875*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period.* Cambridge UP, 2004.

Vaughan, Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Vaughan, Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds. *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Wells, Stanley and Gary Taylor, et al., eds. *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.11

Wu Yarong*
Hao Tianhu**

Greece Reinvented: Shakespeare's "Greek Plays" as a Subgenre[1]

Abstract: This article justifies the addition of "Greek Plays" as a subgenre to classify Shakespeare's works. The six plays (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, and *Troilus and Cressida*) in this subgenre are defined as adaptations of ancient Greek literature, staged in Greek or closely related settings, and featuring characters from Greek mythology and history. Through a review of the research history of Shakespeare's Greek plays and an exploration of interactions between Englishmen and Greeks, the authors provide a brief but comprehensive reading of his Greek plays and argue that Shakespeare juxtaposes ancient Greece with its early modern counterpart—a territory of difference and the Other—on the very edge of Europe, penetrated by the alien East and Islamic cultures. Greece is a land of ambiguity, reinvented by Shakespeare as a liminal space, and characterized by a mixture of humanist admiration for the grandeur of ancient Greek civilization, cautious respect for and alertness to its pagan origins, a profound desire for economic benefits in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Christian apprehensions and anxieties in Englishmen's encounters with the Turks. By introducing "Greek Plays" as a subgenre, this paper not only helps to enrich our understanding of Shakespeare's portrayal of "a world elsewhere" from multifaceted cultural perspectives but also attempts to expand the existing territory of Shakespearean studies.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Greece, Greek plays, subgenre, the Eastern Mediterranean, Other, cultural studies.

* Wu Yarong, Anhui University, Hefei, China. wuyarong@ahu.edu.cn
** Hao Tianhu, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China. haotianhu@zju.edu.cn
[1] Supported by Anhui Provincial Department of Education Humanities and Social Science Foundation, China (authorization: 2022AH050041).

Introduction

There is a general consensus among Shakespearean scholars about Shakespeare's deep indebtedness to the classical tradition and much scholarly focus has been directed towards the vivid presentation of ancient Rome in several of Shakespeare's plays, thereby establishing a recognized subgenre of "Roman plays." Despite its chronological priority, Greece is not treated as important as Rome (often, both are amalgamated under the overarching term "classical antiquity") in Shakespearean studies.

In fact, throughout Shakespeare's dramatic career, Greek settings serve as frequent backdrops across all genres of his plays. Athens, the capital city of Greece, provides the setting for three plays: *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and mythological and historical Greeks such as Theseus, Hippolyta, Timon and Alcibiades assume significant roles. *The Comedy of Errors* is set in Ephesus, a seaport situated between Greece and Asia. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* exhibits extensive geographical mobility as the protagonists embark on a journey that spans six seaports in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. *Troilus and Cressida*, with a backdrop of the Trojan War, is set in Troy, a city symbolizing both a nightmare and a triumph for the Greeks. Additionally, the renowned *Othello* initially unfolds in Venice, but it shifts to Cyprus, a location not geographically Greek but part of the Hellenic world, for the remaining acts. Even in his first narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare draws inspiration from pertinent Greek mythological tales.

In view of Shakespeare's fascination with Greek settings, tradition, and prominent Greeks, it is surprising that, over the years, scant attention has been devoted to collectively recognizing plays set in Greek (or closely related) settings as a distinct genre, though numerous endeavors have been made to explore Shakespeare's Greek literacy, his relationship with the classical tradition, and the presence of ancient Greek mythology and culture in his plays. Based on the existing literature, the authors justify the addition of "Greek Plays" as a subgenre to classify Shakespeare's works and take both the source materials and settings into consideration in redefining Shakespeare's "Greek plays" as plays that are adaptations of ancient Greek literature, with Greek or closely related settings, featuring characters from Greek mythology and history, and reflecting distinctive Greek cultural characteristics. Among the plays with Greek settings mentioned above, six plays of various genres fall within this category: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.[2]

[2] The six Greek plays are abbreviated as *Dream*, *Timon*, *Kinsmen*, *Errors*, *Pericles* and *Troilus* henceforward. It is noteworthy that the narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* is presently excluded from the purview of discussion. And *The Two Noble Kinsmen*,

In this essay, the authors seek to conduct a comprehensive survey of the six Greek plays within their historical context and explore the panorama of the Greek world and early modern England as portrayed in these works. The first section examines preliminary investigations into Shakespeare's Greek plays over the past century. Some scholars offer a generalized overview, highlighting relevant areas ripe for further research, while others conduct detailed analyses of each Greek play in their doctoral theses or monographs. The second section explores the ambiguity of Greece through the perspectives of translation, trade and travel. The authors focus not only on the revival of ancient Greek culture in England but also on the interactions between early modern England and the Eastern Mediterranean. After reconstructing the historical context in which Shakespeare wrote his Greek plays, the final section delves into the analysis of specific Greek plays according to their settings. By exploring the features of several Greek or pertinent cities, Greece emerges as a multifaceted entity, a confluence of Eastern and Western influences, classical and contemporary elements, and pagan and Christian aspects—a Greece characterized by its liminality and hybridity.

Preliminary Studies on a New and Neglected Subgenre

Among modern scholars, German scholar Elisabeth Wolffhardt is a pioneer in recognizing Shakespeare's portrayal of Greece as a subject deserving of comprehensive investigation. In her doctoral dissertation *Shakespeare und das Griechentum* (1919), she delves into the limited knowledge of early modern Englishmen about Greek tradition and their consistently unfavorable attitudes toward Greeks, spanning from ancient times to the Renaissance. Wolffhardt avoids explicitly using the term "Shakespeare's Greek plays" and provides a brief analysis of the Greek elements in his several plays. Although Wolffhardt's exploration of Greek plays is preliminary and fails to be full-scale,

a collaboration with John Fletcher, is "a Jacobean dramatization of a medieval English tale based on an Italian romance version of a Latin epic about one of the oldest and most tragic Greek legends" (Shakespeare, *Kinsmen*, Introduction 1). It has only relatively recently achieved recognition as a legitimate part of the Shakespeare canon, and scholars have long debated the extent of Shakespeare's contribution. Although classified as a "Greek play" by the authors, a detailed analysis of it is not provided in this article. Moreover, considering the sources, characters and settings of *Othello*, it cannot be strictly categorized as a Greek play (it is often classified as one of Shakespeare's "Italian plays"). Nonetheless, the unique geographical, political and cultural characteristics of Cyprus might prompt interpretations of *Othello* that move beyond the traditional focus on Italy (or Venice).

her work sheds light on the neglected Greek aspect in Shakespeare's plays, which had long been overshadowed by the Roman legacy.

In his monograph, *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays* (1940), James Emerson Phillips explores Shakespeare's concept of the state in his five plays based on Greek and Roman history. He analyzes *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens* in one chapter and argues that Greek social corruption results from the neglected vocation "in the upper degrees of the hierarchical structure" (112-113). While Phillips is one of the early scholars to use the term "Greek plays" (225, 228), it's important to note that he only adopts it twice in the index, and does not provide a precise definition or scope for this category. Instead, he generally refers to them as "Greek and Roman plays," recognizing their thematic connection to Greek culture while still grouping them together with the Roman plays.

T. J. B. Spencer has long demonstrated a strong interest in exploring the connections between English literature and the classical tradition. In *Fair Greece! Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (1954), he investigates the changing attitudes toward Greece from the fall of Constantinople to Byron's era as seen through the eyes of English poets, essayists, and travellers. Spencer observes that the conception of Greece was predominantly negative during Shakespeare's time, and began to take a favourable turn in the mid-18th century. Later, in another article, Spencer narrows the scope of discussion concerning "literary Philhellenism" and directs his focus toward the portrayal of Greece in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida* ("Greeks" 223-233). He concludes that early modern Englishmen held a rather disdainful attitude toward Greek national character and way of life, which was primarily rooted in the prevailing denigration of Greece in Latin literature and Christian texts.

It was not until the 1960s that Clifford Leech first articulated a categorization known as "Greek plays." In his essay "Shakespeare's Greeks," he deliberates upon the rationale behind this classification and defines "Greek plays" as those "that prominently make use of a Greek or Hellenistic setting," (4) which include *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale.* The categorization usefully broadens the scope compared with the prior studies of Wolffhardt, Phillips, and Spencer. Regrettably, however, due to the constraints of a relatively brief article, Leech still primarily concentrates on *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*, with only scant attention paid to other Greek plays he mentions. Still, he acknowledges that Shakespeare's portrayal of Greece is far from a mere replication of earlier negative assessments; rather, Greece emerges as a multifaceted and intricate representation in his plays.

A quite detailed discussion is provided by Sara Hanna in her doctoral dissertation "Shakespeare's Greek Plays" (1985). After studying Shakespeare's

knowledge of Greek culture, Hanna investigates the narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, which "reveal a fascinating conception of Greek culture," while *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, "could not be classified as Greek plays, since they do not attempt any sustained representation of Greek culture" (1). She concludes that Shakespeare's Greek plays "all present variations on the Merry-greek quest for sensual beauty and pleasure" (296), revealing the "Greek levity" in contrast to the "Roman gravity" found in his Roman plays. More than a decade later, in her article "Shakespeare's Greek World: The Temptations of the Sea," Hanna continues her exploration of Shakespeare's relationship with Greece and highlights the significance of the "sea" for the Greeks in terms of geography and culture.

Greek scholar Vassiliki Markidou's doctoral dissertation "Shakespeare's Greek Plays" (1998) is the most ambitious work written on this subject. Markidou offers quite a comprehensive survey of Shakespeare's seven Greek plays, and her outstanding contribution lies in her proposition of the significance of early modern Greece. "Shakespeare's contemporary Greece was equally, if not in some ways more important, than classical Greece as a moving force in the creation of the Shakespearean Greek plays" (ii). Decades later, she collaborated with Alison Findlay to co-edit and publish *Shakespeare and Greece* (2017). The editors claim in the Introduction that "To early modern England, Greece was an enigma. It was the origin and idealized pinnacle of Western philosophy, tragedy, democracy, heroic human endeavour and, at the same time, an example of decadence: a fallen state, currently under Ottoman control, and therefore an exotic, dangerous 'other' in the most disturbing sense of the word" (1). It is a comprehensive work with insightful interpretations of Shakespeare's significant Greek plays. As a collection, the diverse perspectives of the eight contributing authors demonstrate a broad scope but lack systematic cohesion. Markidou's perspective has inspired the authors to take both classical and early modern Greece into consideration when researching Shakespeare's Greek plays.

Peter Whitfield has also recently highlighted the importance of settings in Shakespeare's entire oeuvre. In his fully illustrated book *Mapping Shakespeare's World* (2015), which includes numerous maps, paintings, and geographical texts, he examines the associations and meanings the locations carried in Shakespeare's time and how Shakespeare and his contemporaries regarded the places. The book is organized geographically according to the settings of the plays, with the first chapter titled "Greece, Rome & the Mediterranean." It investigates the diverse settings in "The Greek plays," "The Roman plays," and "The Mediterranean plays," including a brief analysis of locations such as Troy, Ephesus, and Athens.

In summary, the Western scholarly understanding of and research on Shakespeare's Greek plays have continuously deepened: from initially denying

Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek, to recognizing the nourishment his plays received from the Greek literary tradition, and more recently, scholars tend to acknowledge that his Greek plays could constitute a distinct subgenre. The multifaceted and intricate Greece in Shakespeare is increasingly attracting scholars' attention to this topic.

The Ambiguity of Greece: Translation, Trade and Travel

Shakespeare's Greek plays were written against a background of intense English interest in the classical tradition and "a world elsewhere."[3] This interest manifested itself in teaching and learning the Greek language, translating and being influenced by Greek literature, and trade and travel in the Eastern Mediterranean. For early modern Englishmen, Greece was a familiar but also exotic place, a land of ambiguity: on the one hand, it was once the cradle of a brilliant civilization; on the other, it was then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, a territory inhabited by Turkish others.

In early modern England, people had various ways of approaching ancient Greek culture. Lazarus (433-458) systematically examines the educational system and finds that during the Elizabethan era, the study of Greek was no longer limited to a small group of specialists and elites. By the 1540s, Greek had already become widely taught in English universities, and by 1560, it had expanded from university education to grammar schools, becoming a compulsory subject for students. For those with Greek literacy, several Greek texts were available to them. According to Milne, during the Elizabethan era, at least 32 Greek texts were published, mostly in the 1580s and 1590s. These works included writings by ancient Greek authors such as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Herodotus, and Plutarch. Milne advocates that "The study of these books should encourage a reassessment of Greek as a live idiom among Elizabethan political and cultural elite, a language freighted with religious and political significance" (683).

However, proficiency in Greek was not a prerequisite for their understanding of Greek culture. Apart from learning Greek language textbooks and reading limited published Greek works, early modern readers had two more convenient ways to explore the philosophy, history, and literature of ancient Greece: one was by reading Latin translations, or vernacular translations in English, French, Italian, and other languages; another was imitations of and references to ancient Greek works by contemporary authors. Recent studies (Cummings and Gillespie 1-42) show that significant English translations include: Thucydides's *History of Peloponnesian War* translated by Thomas

[3] Quotations from Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (3.3.134).

Nicholls in 1550, Xenophon's *Cyropedia I-VI* by William Barker in 1552, Diodorus's *Bibliotheca Historica* by Thomas Stocker in 1569; Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (abbreviated as *Lives* henceforward) by Thomas North in 1579, selections of Homer's *Iliad* by George Chapman in 1598, and the complete translation was published in 1611. In addition to complete translations or selections from these works, there were also compilations that gathered aphorisms or excerpts from the major works of classical authors.

The publications and translations of ancient Greek works helped early modern Englishmen gain insights into the outstanding achievements of Greek civilization: they could delve into the grandeur of the Trojan War and exploits of heroes through Homer, explore the philosophical ideas of Aristotle, learn about the illustrious lives of Athenian politicians and military leaders through Plutarch, and also witness the rise and fall of Greek city-states through Thucydides. Edith Hamilton, in summarizing the Greek spirit, particularly emphasizes the vibrant vitality of ancient Greeks and their pursuit of reason and freedom: "Love of reason and of life, delight in the use of the mind and the body, distinguished the Greek way… The extraordinary flowering of the human spirit which resulted in Greek art shows the spiritual power there was in Greece" (31). This distinct tradition, different from the Hebrew one, became one of the spiritual sources for England and, indeed, the entire Western civilization.

Yet, sublimity and immortality constitute only a partial representation of Greece. The expansion of international trade, coupled with advancements in navigation and mapping technologies, provided the Englishmen with opportunities for interactions with Greece in reality. Whereas the English understanding of classical Greece primarily relied on translations, their knowledge of early modern Greece was predominantly molded by firsthand experiences in the Eastern Mediterranean. This was notably influenced by their trade with the Turks and travels on the Greek land.

From the early and middle 1570s, with the decline of the port of Antwerp, the Dutch war for independence, and Venice's war with Turkey, favorable circumstances emerged for English participation in the Mediterranean trade with the Ottoman Empire (Brenner 16). Although Elizabethan England actively engaged with the Turks, such involvement did not signify an embrace of religious and cultural differences between Christians and Muslims. Instead, suspicion, misunderstanding, and hostility often characterized their interactions. In the English apprehension of the other, early modern Greece functioned as a warning for England concerning faith and identity. Throughout antiquity, the medieval period, and into modern times, Greece had consistently stood as the easternmost outpost of European civilization, enduring and resisting the impact of Eastern civilizations. However, upon falling under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire, Greeks were initially forced to become subjects of the Turks,

and later, many willingly forsook their original beliefs. This transformation prompted Europe to confront the unsettling reality that its eastern defense line had been breached, necessitating constant vigilance against potential invasions from the eastern other. The apprehensions regarding the territorial expansion of the Turks into Western Europe, along with the anxiety of "turning Turks" also spread among the Englishmen.

As the Englishmen had more interactions with the early modern Greeks and Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean, Greece was increasingly marginalized in Western eyes. Culturally and religiously linked to the East, it stood in stark contrast to classical Greece revered as a spiritual wellspring of Western civilization. The travels of Englishmen across Greek territories further reinforced this evolving impression.

With the expansion of English international trade, an increasing number of Englishmen ventured beyond "this sceptred isle,"[4] embarking on extensive explorations of the world. Many of them documented their travel experiences, driven by diverse motivations such as seeking sponsorship for future voyages, providing practical maritime information, or simply for personal enjoyment. For most readers, travelogues not only offered thrilling tales of distant lands but also spared them the risks they might encounter in travel, particularly avoiding potential dangers like captivity, imprisonment, and religious persecution. During this period, a lot of travelogues were published, many of which documented the travels in Greece and Englishmen's encounters with the Greeks.

For example, in "In *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589), Richard Hakluyt cited all the English ships which traded in the Aegean, dating the first English factor at Chios in 1533" (Mitsi, "Painful Pilgrimage" 19). Regrettably, Hakluyt's narrative lacks a detailed portrayal of Greek customs and landscapes. In a similar vein, Fynes Moryson, motivated primarily by curiosity, embarked on his Mediterranean journey in 1596, arriving in Crete and subsequently traversing various Greek islands, including Chios, Naxos, Lesbos, among others. In his travelogue *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell* (1617), Moryson demonstrates limited interest in the Greek monuments, merely mentioning places in connection with Greek myths like the labyrinth of Crete (II: 80). Nevertheless, the deception, fraud, and discrimination he suffers during the travels leave Moryson with a distinctly negative impression of the Greeks, lamenting their miserable condition under Turkish rule, a plight he deems even worse than that of slaves.

[4] From *Richard II*, 2.1.40-50. Gaunt sings the praises of his country before he dies: "This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise, / This fortress built by Nature for herself... this England."

In his travelogue, William Biddulph, a priest appointed by the Levant Company, records his experiences in Athens, lamenting "This City was the mother and nurse of all liberall Arts and Sciences: but now there is nothing but Atheism and Barbarisme there: for it is gouerned by Turkes, and inhabited by ignorant Greekes" (10). His remarks on the character of the Greeks are notably unfavorable, portraying them as "superstitious, subtle and deceitful people" (79). What exacerbates his apprehension is that even good Christians are susceptible to corruption: as they "dwell long in wicked countries, and converse with wicked men, [they] are somewhat tainted with their sins" (81).

In 1615, George Sandys published his travelogue, recounting his extensive journey in 1610 through Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Jerusalem, and the Mediterranean islands. Renowned as a poet and translator endowed with profound classical knowledge, Sandys skillfully integrates classical references into his portrayal of Greece, purposefully accentuating the stark contrast between the splendor of ancient Greece and its contemporary condition. In the dedication to the Prince, Sandys mourns the widespread devastation that has befallen the Eastern Mediterranean:

> Which countries once so glorious, and famous for their happie estate, are now through vice and ingratitude, become the most deplored spectacle of extreme miserie: the wild beasts of mankind having broken in upon them, and rooted out all civilitie… to that lamentable distresse and servitude, under which (to the astonishment of the understanding beholders) it now faints and groneth. (sig. A2r)

Scottish traveller William Lithgow travelled through the Eastern Mediterranean from 1609 to 1612 and visited Corfu, Zante, Crete, Athens, the Corinthian Strait, the Peloponnesian Peninsula, and other Greek islands and cities. In keeping with the tradition of his predecessors, Lithgow continues to draw comparisons between past and present. While he expresses a modest appreciation for the hospitality extended by the residents of Athens, his overall assessment of the Greeks is marked by a pervasive sense of disdain and disappointment:

> In all this country of Greece I could finde nothing, to answer the famous relations, given by auncient Authors, of the excellency of that land, but the name onely; the barbarousness of Turkes and Time, having defaced all the Monuments of Antiquity… So deformed is the state of that once worthy Realme, and so miserable is the state of that once worthy people. (65)

This nuanced perspective encapsulates the complex interplay between the romanticized ideals of antiquity and the harsh realities encountered by travellers in their exploration of Greece. As Mitsi concludes: "The early travelers viewed

Greece as a paradox or even an irony, placing early Modern Greece in the Ottoman East rather than Europe" (*Greece* 139).

Through a succinct exploration of the translations and dissemination of ancient Greek works, the trade between England and the Ottoman Turks, and the cultural representations of the Greek world in travelogues, it becomes apparent that in Elizabethan England, Greece was perceived as a space of liminality, of "a transitional or indeterminate state."[5] The groundwork for defining liminality is laid by Arnold van Gennep, and then Victor Turner extends the concept of liminality to describe individuals in transitional stages, who find themselves "neither here nor there… betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonials" (95). In a similar vein, Greece is caught in the dilemma of "betwixt and between." Geographically, it serves as a "threshold" connecting the European West and the Asian East, and in terms of culture, it is both a heritage site and a fallen land, a colonized Other.

Greece stands as a region fraught with ambiguities, offering significant spiritual sources and economic benefits, yet simultaneously marked by conversion and devastation. The contradictory perspective of the English on Greece can perhaps be encapsulated by a quote from *Dream*, spoken by Hermia: "Methinks I see these things with parted eye / when everything seems double" (4.2.187-188). This duality is also echoed in Shakespeare's portrayal of Greece. The ensuing study will delve into his plays set in Greece, aiming to unravel both his and early modern Englishmen's nuanced understanding and reinvention of this enigmatic land.

Greek Settings: Athens, Ephesus, Pentapolis, and Troy

As previously underscored, Leech is credited as the first to define Shakespeare's "Greek plays" as those "that prominently make use of a Greek or Hellenistic setting" (4), a definition deemed concise yet insufficient. Recognizing the influence of Greek texts and the significance of the Eastern Mediterranean in early modern England, the authors have redefined the Greek plays and claimed that the six plays (*Dream*, *Timon*, *Kinsmen*, *Errors*, *Pericles*, and *Troilus*) in this subgenre are those adaptations of ancient Greek literature, staged in Greek or closely related settings, and featuring characters from Greek mythology and history. They unfold in diverse settings such as Athens, Ephesus, Pentapolis (and other Mediterranean seaports), and Troy.

[5] "Liminality, N." *Oxford English Dictionary.* https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8491381982. Accessed 26 January 2024.

Athens in Athenian Plays

As is evident from the travelogues, early modern English travellers lament over the decline and devastation of Athens, the once cultural and political center of Greece. This sentiment finds resonance in Shakespeare's *Dream* and *Timon*, which both unfold in Athens and a forest nearby, portraying the city as corrupted and the Greeks as miserable.

It is widely acknowledged that Plutarch's *Lives* served as a rich source of inspiration for Shakespeare, with the accounts of noble Romans providing primary materials for his Roman plays. Notably, Shakespeare's two Athenian plays also share a close relationship with this classical masterpiece. As Bullough argues, "Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* probably helped Shakespeare, since it gives stability and poise to its portrait of Theseus by historical verisimilitude and archaeological details. Moreover, its ethical material coloured Shakespeare's attitude" (368). Consequently, the myth of Theseus must be considered in the interpretation of the *Dream*.

Pearson systematically traces the evolution of the Theseus image from Ovid's era to the Renaissance (276-298). With the abundant emergence of Latin texts of classical works and translations into vernacular languages, along with the widespread classical references in the literary works of Shakespeare's era, Renaissance readers gained a more comprehensive understanding of the Greek hero: a noble founding father of Athens with many heroic exploits, but also an unfaithful and unkind lover. In the *Dream*, Shakespeare skillfully employs various textual details to demonstrate or imply Theseus's "unkindness," contributing to the complex perceptions of him. For instance, when Oberon accuses Titania of having an affair with Theseus, he enumerates a series of women abandoned by him (2.1.77-80). Moreover, the play begins with an anticipation of Theseus-Hippolyta's wedding and concludes with the presentation of the wedding ceremony, making the theme of marriage more significant than in Shakespeare's other comedies. In the final act, Oberon blesses the three Athenian couples, saying: "And the issue there create / Ever shall be fortunate. / So shall all the couples three / Ever true in loving be" (5.1.395-398). However, when placed in the context of the Theseus myth, this blessing becomes highly ironic, as audiences familiar with classical texts know that the son of Theseus and Hippolyta, Hippolytus, eventually meets a tragic fate.

In contrast to Plutarch's depiction of Athens as a city of democracy and equality, Athens in the play is now a city of patriarchy. Egeus,[6] based on

[6] In mythological tradition, Theseus's father is indeed named "Aegeus" (who gives his name to the Aegean Sea). It is noteworthy that in the *Errors*, the old father wandering through the Aegean Sea in search of his twin sons is "Egeon." In Shakespeare's Greek plays, "Egeus/Egeon" seems to bear a symbolic significance, consistently appearing as

"the ancient privilege of Athens" (1.1.40), makes demands regarding his daughter's marriage. Theseus, who historically enacted democratic reforms in Athens, is now portrayed as a representative of patriarchal authority, telling Hermia: "To fit your fancies to your father's will; / Or else, the law of Athens yields you up (which by no means we may extenuate) / To death, or to a vow of single life" (1.1.119-121). Titania's infatuation with the transformed Bottom, who becomes an ass, also draws a connection to the mythological monster Minotaur in the Theseus myth.

As Holland noted: "The mere presence of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* makes the whole of the Theseus myth available… Theseus leaves his shadow over the play" (151). Undoubtedly, the appropriation of the Theseus myth plays a pivotal role in infusing the *Dream* with a distinct Greek characteristic. By establishing this connection, one can unveil numerous unsettling and tragic elements beneath the surface of this seemingly light-hearted comedy.

In the case of the *Timon,* the story of this Athenian nobleman emerges as a digression in Plutarch's accounts of Mark Antony, who abandoned the city and his friends, and "as a man that banished himself from all men's company, saying that he would lead Timon's life because he had the like wrong offered him that was before offered unto Timon" (Spencer, *Shakespeare's Plutarch* 263). Plutarch dedicates several pages to introducing Timon's life, his close relationship with Alcibiades, his companionship with Apemantus, his cynical attitude towards the Athenians, and the epitaph, among other details. "The almost exact repetition of Timon's epitaph shows that Shakespeare had his copy of North's Plutarch open beside him as he wrote" (Spencer *Shakespeare's Plutarch* 16). Furthermore, the play features six minor roles whose names are directly borrowed from Plutarch, such as Lucius, Hortensius, Ventidius, Flavius, Lucilius, and Philotus. Antony's gullibility and generosity may have also contributed to shaping Timon's early character and lifestyle in the play. Another crucial figure Alcibiades, who imparts a political dimension to this play centered on themes of money, friendship, and betrayal, bears the mark of Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*.

Just as Venice is irreplaceable in *The Merchant of Venice*, Athens in the *Timon* also deserves special attention. Robert Miola provides an explicit and detailed analysis of the connection between Athens and the theme of the play. He argues that Shakespeare criticizes the disorder and chaos caused by Athenian democracy by portraying the Athenians as vain, ungrateful, and insatiable. The drawbacks of Athenian democracy are not only evident in scenes of extravagant banquets but also in the banishment of Alcibiades and Timon from Athens.

---

the embodiment of fatherhood and playing a crucial role in introducing the vital theme of parent-child relationships in the plays.

"Shakespeare deliberately links Timon's self-imposed exile with Alcibiades's banishment and associates it with the notorious Athenian practice" (28), namely, ostracism—the annual expulsion of the city's best and most powerful men to prevent the possible rise of demagogues. Apart from its political system, the downfall of Athens also manifests itself in intellectual pursuits. The Athenians, once known for their pursuit of art and wisdom, are now obsessed with money and commodify works of art with flattery and utilitarianism. Philosophers, represented by Apemantus, become cynics rather than engaging in intellectual exploration.

From the perspective of source study, Plutarch's *Lives* has provided significant nourishment to both the *Dream* and *Timon.* Geographically, the two Athenian plays share a similar setting: Athens—forest—Athens. Although Shakespeare's Athens is vague in terms of physical geography, his contemplation of Athenian democracy and the Athenian way of life can be discerned. In the former, Athens is portrayed as being under the sway of despotic laws and sexual coercion, while in the latter, it is filled with flattery, utilitarianism, cynicism, and unjust political treatment. The enchanted world of the forest, characterized by disorder, magic, and madness, serves as a refuge for Athenian youth fleeing patriarchal oppression and a place for Timon's escape from the selfish and dark side of human nature, creating a stark contrast to the established rules of Athens.

Ephesus and Pentapolis

Shakespeare's early comedy *Errors* and his late romance *Pericles* exhibit significant narrative parallels, most evident in the theme of familial separation followed by eventual recognition and reunion. The similarities are not coincidental but primarily stem from their shared source material: the Greek romance *Apollonius of Tyre*. Therefore, it is unsurprising that both plays are situated in the Greek cities of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Errors unfolds with a vast geographical scope, spanning cities such as Syracuse, Epidamnus, Corinth, Epidaurus, and Ephesus. Among them, Ephesus plays the most significant role, as all mistaken identities, chaos, and reunions occur in a single day within this city. Ephesus held exceptional renown in ancient times, serving as a melting pot of diverse nations, cultures, and religions due to its unique locality. The Ephesians worshipped Artemis, a goddess "incorporating aspects of Greek mythology as well as characteristics of ancient Near Eastern mother goddesses… Ephesian Artemis was associated also with magic, since her name is invoked in spells" (Brinks 779). Due to the dense religious atmosphere of Ephesus, in *Errors*, it is also suffused with a mist of Eastern pagan witchcraft. Upon arriving in Ephesus, Antipholus of Syracuse

finds himself ensnared in a comic yet terrifying situation, and he attributes all the confusion caused by the twins to the perennial notoriety of Ephesus, "they say this town is full of cozenage / As, nimble jugglers that deceive the eye, / Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind, / Soul-killing witches that deform the body, / Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks / And many such" (1.2.97-102). As the plot develops, the Syracusans even find themselves bewildered and transformed in the enchanting mist of sorcery.

However, the goddess Artemis, who presides over sorcery, never makes an appearance throughout the play. Her temple undergoes a transformation at the end of the play, turning into a priory, and the priestess becomes the abbess. Apart from its close association with magic and sorcery, the play is replete with rich Christian allusions. For those in Shakespeare's time, Ephesus was known from the Bible. *Acts* 19 provides detailed accounts of Paul's challenging missionary journey to Ephesus, and another biblical text closely associated is *Ephesians*, the epistles written by Paul to the Ephesian church. Many parallels can be found between *Errors* and Pauline Christianity. For example, Paul persuades Christians to lead a pure new life and outlines the responsibilities of husbands and wives (*Ephesians* 5.22-23), children and parents (6.1-4), as well as masters and servants (6.5-9), and the three types of relationship are also addressed in the play. In Shakespeare's portrayal, although Ephesus is shrouded in the mist of Eastern sorcery, all of it is mere delusion, the flourishing Christianity will eventually dispel all pagan beliefs.

In addition to its significance as a religious site, Ephesus's strategic geographical location establishes it as a flourishing commercial hub in the Mediterranean. Shakespeare intricately portrays Ephesus' bustling commercial ambiance, featuring a myriad of merchants, diverse commodities, and various commercial undertakings in the play. The trade with "Persia" (4.1.4), and the luxury goods such as "the oil, the balsamum and aqua-vitae" (4.1.89), "Turkish tapestry" (4.1.104), "silk" (4.3.8) are reminiscent of early modern English trade with the Eastern Mediterranean. Considering the historical context of Shakespeare's era, when numerous Greek and Anatolian city-states, Ephesus included, were under Ottoman rule, early modern Englishmen might have perceived Ephesus as a harbinger of their potential fate as they pursued the commercial interests of the Mediterranean. They had to be vigilant to shield themselves from various contamination, striving to avert the risk of "turning Turks."

Rather than being confined to Ephesus, *Pericles* exhibits rich geographical mobility as the protagonists embark on a journey that spans six seaport cities in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. Regarding the geography in the play, Lisa Hopkins comments that "What we find in *Pericles* is not so much a Greece of the atlas as a Greece of the mind," and that the play is characterized by "an indifference to the particularities of location and atmosphere" (228). However, upon careful examination of the geographical

details of the six cities, it is apparent that they are not homogeneous but possess distinctive cultural characteristics.

In Christian history, the cities of Antioch, Tyre, Tarsus, Mytilene, and Ephesus, where Pericles roams, easily evoke associations with the cities mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*, particularly with the missionary travels of Paul and other disciples in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, Shakespeare deliberately avoids linking them to Christianity and instead emphasizes their Eastern and pagan characteristics: despotism and incest in Antioch, political disorder in Tyre, famine and betrayal in Tarsus, indulgence in sensuality in Mytilene, and worship of pagan deities and mysterious magic in Ephesus. Pentapolis, with its precise geographical location being vague but explicitly representing "our Greece" (2.1.63), stands in contrast to the Asian cities. It serves as a mirror image to the dark Antioch; it possesses a more stable political order than Tyre; there is no famine, betrayal, murder, or corruption on its land as seen in Tarsus and Mytilene; it is filled with Christian references, with more sanctity than the pagan-believing Ephesus. Pentapolis appears more like a utopian portrayal of Greece, where every scene (2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 2.5) is imbued with goodwill, joy, and harmony.

While Shakespeare's Athens lacks specific physical details, the cities in *Errors* and *Pericles* are depicted in a more vibrant manner, demonstrating their distinct geographical and cultural features. This vivid representation serves to highlight the liminality of Greece, capturing its transitional and in-between nature. In *Errors*, the wonders that unfold in Ephesus reveal its exotic attributes and religious collision, along with British identity anxiety in the Mediterranean. In the liminal Ephesus, the binary oppositions and entanglements between comedy and tragedy, past and present, foreign and domestic, strangeness and familiarity, paganism and Christianity, Turks and Christians are all amply manifested. In *Pericles*, Shakespeare contrasts the fallen Asian cities with Pentapolis, portraying the latter as a pious and harmonious Christianized Greek city. It emerges as an idealized place in the eyes of Westerners, reflecting the strong inclination of early modern Europeans to completely Europeanize and Westernize the classical Greek world. And the five Asian cities serve as the "Other," destined either for destruction or redemption. By presenting the protagonists' geographical mobility, the romance delineates a panorama of both Asia and Greece and also reveals the underlying ideologies of Eurocentrism and Orientalism.

Troy and Trinovantum

Troilus and Cressida primarily unfolds the tragic tale of two lovers with the backdrop of the Trojan War, vividly portraying the Greeks and Trojans known to us from history and mythology, and terms like "Greeks" and "merry Greeks" are

repeatedly used, making it arguably Shakespeare's most deserving "Greek play." However, it is crucial to note that the main characters include not merely the well-known figures, but also the city of Troy itself.

In the 12th century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his historical work *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1139), recounted that Brutus, a descendant of the Trojan prince Aeneas, arrived at the banks of the Thames under the guidance of Diana and founded a new city named Trinovantum (New Troy), later known as London. Consequently, many Englishmen fervently believed themselves to be descendants of the Trojans, fueling a heightened interest in the Trojan legend among them. Besides, among various Greek cities visited by early modern Englishmen, Troy particularly stirred their enthusiasm for antiquity. This can be explained by the widespread popularity of the Trojan legend, the myth of London's foundation, and also the geographical advantage of the Troy ruins, as it was located on the travellers' way to Constantinople. Troy became the most popular secular pilgrimage destination, and many travellers documented their experiences there. However, "the site of ancient Troy, near ancient Abydos, was also the site of an Ottoman military garrison: both places were coextensive and equally present for early modern readers and travelers" (Jacobson 6). The travelers were pricked by the harsh reality that Troy had been under the control of the Turks, similar to the fate of other Mediterranean cities.

Therefore, Troy and the Trojans appeared particularly complex to English eyes. As London was referred to as "New Troy," the fate of Troy in ancient and early modern times served as a crucial mirror for Englishmen. On the one hand, it was linked to their ancestors and the founding myth of London, while on the other, it was closely associated with the Turks, the Other. The once steadfast pro-Troy stance, coupled with a disdain for the Greeks, was gradually wavering, and the distinction between "bad Greeks" and "good Trojans" became blurred. This attitude could also be discerned in Shakespeare's portrayal of Greeks, Trojans, and Troy in *Troilus.*

Contrary to the heroic figures full of valor and honour as depicted in Homer's narrative, in Shakespeare, it is "a demystification of the heroes of ancient Greece," "a sceptical deflation of Trojan honour and chivalry" (Shakespeare, *Troilus*, Introduction 19, 30). All male characters are portrayed as ludicrous fools, and all females as lascivious harlots, with no distinction between the Greeks and Trojans: Agamemnon and Priam, as leaders of the two parties, lack any virtue of leadership; Achilles, once a valiant warrior, now spends his days indulging in pleasure within his tent; Odysseus employs his intelligence solely to sow discord among his comrades. Even Hector, though initially depicted as brave, meets a ludicrous death at the end, making it challenging for the audience to sympathize with this heroic figure; Helen and Cressida are represented as frivolous and promiscuous. The blurry boundary between the

Greeks and Trojans is embodied in the character of Ajax, who is both Greek and Trojan: "Were thy commixion Greek and Trojan so / That thou couldst say, 'This hand is Grecian all, / and This is Trojan; the sinews of this leg / All Greek, and this all Troy'" (4.5.125-128). Therefore, the Trojans find it impossible to escape the base characteristics attributed to the Greeks, and in doing so, Shakespeare does not grant much favor to Englishmen's legendary ancestors.

Troy in Shakespeare's portrayal also differs from its representation in literary tradition. Unlike the traditional narrative of a city attacked and defiled by the Greeks, Shakespeare paints a picture of Troy that already harbors the seeds of corruption. This is evident in the abundant use of commercial metaphors and the language of commerce employed by the characters, featuring terms such as "price," "worth," "value," and "estimation."[7] Additionally, the play is saturated with images related to food and disease. If Troy were to meet its downfall, London as the new Troy would share a similar fate. Shakespeare integrates the anxiety of the Elizabethan era into his depiction of the Trojan War.

By subverting the literary traditions of the Trojan legend narrated by Homer and Chaucer, Shakespeare demonstrates his iconoclasm and turns his play into powerful tools of social critique. In the liminal Troy, Grecians and Trojans, myth and reality, history and present, nobility and decadence, self and other—the once clear binary oppositions have all dissolved, much like the mixed lineage of Ajax. Perhaps this is why some scholars label *Troilus* as a "problem play," where values and answers remain undetermined, leaving everything in suspense.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Shakespeare's Greek plays exemplify his profound understanding of Greece and the Mediterranean world. Acting as both the cradle of a past civilization and the contemporary "Other," Greece undoubtedly conveys lessons for more than characters in a play—English audiences and successive readers are also meant to be instructed. Greece is a land of ambiguity in Shakespeare's Greek plays. By the portrayal of several cities, Shakespeare reinvents Greece as a liminal space and characterizes it by a mixture of humanistic admiration for the grandeur of ancient Greek civilization, cautious respect for and alertness to its pagan origins, a profound desire for commercial benefits in the Eastern Mediterranean, and apprehensions and anxieties in Englishmen's encounters with the Turks.

[7] For detailed discussion on the language of commerce and parallels between Troy and London, see Bruster (1992: 97-117).

Though some scholars have conducted preliminary investigations into Shakespeare's Greek plays, this subgenre has not gained widespread recognition. In terms of acceptance and research activity, studies of Shakespeare's Greek plays are overshadowed by more acknowledged categories such as "History plays," "Roman plays," and even "Italian plays." These subgenres are also brought up by scholars based on the source materials and settings, as is the case with the Greek plays. Through the analyses presented in this article, the authors contend that in "Greek plays," the Greek elements are integral, and the Greek settings are irreplaceable, and intricately connected to the themes. Considering "Greek Plays" as a subgenre not only enhances our understanding of Shakespeare's depiction of "a world elsewhere" from diverse cultural perspectives but also broadens the existing scope of Shakespearean studies.

WORKS CITED

Biddulph, William. *The Travels of Certaine Englishmen into Africa, Asia, Troy, Bithnia, Thracia, and to the Blacke Sea.* London: Th. Haueland, 1609.

Brenner, Robert. *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Brinks, C. L. "'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians:' *Acts* 19: 23-41 in Light of Goddess Worship in Ephesus." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71.4 (2009): 776-794.

Bruster, Douglas. *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Bullough, Geoffrey, ed. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. Vol. 1. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957.

Cummings, Robert and Stuart Gillespie. "Translations from Greek and Latin Classics 1500-1700: A Revised Bibliography." *Translation and Literature* 18.1 (2009): 1-42.

Findlay, Alison and Vassiliki Markidou, eds. *Shakespeare and Greece*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Hamilton, Edith. *The Greek Way*. New York: Norton, 1994.

Hanna, Sara. "Shakespeare's Greek Plays." Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, 1985.

Hanna, Sara. "Shakespeare's Greek World: The Temptations of the Sea." *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*. Ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998. 107-128.

Holland, Peter. "Theseus's Shadows in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Shakespeare Survey*. Vol. 47. Ed. Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 139-152.

Hopkins, Lisa. "'The Shores of My Mortality:' Pericles' Greece of the Mind." Pericles: *Critical Essays*. Ed. David Skeele. New York: Routledge, 2000. 228-237.

Jacobson, Miriam. *Barbarous Antiquity: Reorienting the Past in the Poetry of Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Lazarus, Micha. "Greek Literacy in Sixteenth-Century England." *Renaissance Studies* 29.3 (2014): 433-458.

Leech, Clifford. "Shakespeare's Greeks." *Stratford Papers on Shakespeare*. Ed. B. W. Jackson. Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1964. 1-20.

"Liminality, N." *Oxford English Dictionary*. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8491381982. Accessed 26 January 2024.

Lithgow, William. *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures*. London, 1640. Reprinted. Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1906.

Markidou, Vasiliki. "Shakespeare's Greek Plays." Ph.D. diss. Lancaster University, 1998.

Milne, Kirsty. "The Forgotten Greek Books of Elizabethan England." *Literature Compass* 4 (2007): 677–687.

Miola, Robert S. "Timon in Shakespeare's Athens." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31.1 (1980): 21-30.

Mitsi, Efterpi. *Greece in Early English Travel Writing, 1596-1682*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Mitsi, Efterpi. "Painful Pilgrimage: Sixteenth-Century English Travellers to Greece." *Travels and Translations in the Sixteenth Century*. Ed. Mike Pincombe. New York: Routledge, 2016. 19-30.

Moryson, Fynes. *An Itinerary, Containing his Ten Yeeres Travell*. Vol. II. London, 1617. Reprinted. Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1907.

Pearson, D'Orsay W. "'Unkinde' Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography." *English Literary Renaissance* 4 (1974): 276-298.

Phillips, James Emerson. *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

Sandys, George. *A Relation of a Journey Begun An Dom 1610.* London: W. Barret, 1615.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard II*. Ed. Charles R. Forker. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002.

Shakespeare, William and George Wilkins. *Pericles*. Ed. Suzanne Gossett. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004.

Shakespeare, William and Thomas Middleton. *Timon of Athens*. Ed. Antony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008.

Shakespeare, William. *Coriolanus*. Ed. Peter Holland. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

Shakespeare, William. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Ed. Lois Potter. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

Shakespeare, William. *The Comedy of Errors*. Ed. Kent Cartwright. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.

Shakespeare, William. *Troilus and Cressida*. Ed. David Bevington. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri. Arden Shakespeare: Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Spencer, T. J. B. *Fair Greece! Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954.

Spencer, T. J. B. "'Greeks' and 'Merrygreeks:' A Background to *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida*." *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*. Ed. Richard Hosley. Columbia: Missouri University Press, 1962. 223-233.

Spencer, T. J. B., ed. *Shakespeare's Plutarch*. London: Penguin Books, 1964.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969.

Whitfield, Peter. *Mapping Shakespeare's World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Wolffhardt, Elisabeth. *Shakespeare und das Griechentum*. Ph.D. diss. Friedrich Wilhelms Universität zu Berlin, 1919. Weimar: G. Ushmann, 1920.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.12

Book Reviews

Stephen Orgel, *The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature*. Oxford Textual Perspectives. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 224.

Reviewed by ***Bradin Cormack****

In ways that will seem familiar to scholars and students of book history, the argument of Stephen Orgel's most recent monograph insists on the materiality and historicity of literary texts and the priority of process over product in the conceptualization of literature. It insists on the irreducible importance of mediation, including in the printing house but also across time, in the shaping and reshaping of the text in light of what publishers, editors, and readers want the literary text, the literary author, and the literary itself to be. And it insists on the importance of reading, therefore, not only for the reception of texts (as if there were a fully stable origin subtending that reception) but also for the constitution of the text as such.

Readers will notice also that, in his particular arguments, Orgel is revisiting topics that, over his long and distinguished career, he has made distinctively and decisively his own, including the always relational character of early modern genre; and the ways in which poems and plays participate in the cultural shaping of desire and relation along axes of sexual and gender difference as unsteady as desire itself; and the making of dramatic authorship as the relation among print and performance and the visual arts. Notable, too, is the fact that, even more particularly, this new monograph constitutes a bravura reflection on questions Orgel has been taking up in an outpouring of volumes across just the last decade: on the making of selves, often iconic selves, in textual, dramatic, and visual representation (*Spectacular Performances*, 2011); on readers and their ways of marking up the books they're using, reading,

* Princeton University, USA. bcormack@princeton.edu

and thinking with (*The Reader in the Book*, 2015); on the early modern conceptualization of the classical past and the very idea of the classic (*Wit's Treasury*, 2021); and on the making of Shakespeare in text and edition and performance and image (*The Invention of Shakespeare*, 2022). One happy effect of *The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature* will surely be to encourage readers, including Orgel's newer and younger readers, to go back to these companion volumes (and beyond), in order to reckon with the full complexity of Orgel's singular scholarly achievement.

The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature is, at its core, also an editor's book. From his earliest work on Jonson and the masque through his editing of Marlowe, Milton, and Shakespeare, including in the permanently important editions of *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, Orgel has been for the early modern field one of its most distinguished editors and thinkers about editing. Across its chapters, this book repeatedly comes to a basic question that has in part driven that editorial achievement, since it is the editor's question to ask what it is that's in front of them, and what are the implications for the editor's work of that which the object can be seen to be. This open but fundamentally empirical orientation might direct the editor, for example, to the gap between text and the performance indexed by the text but not really held there; it might direct their thinking to "paratextual" details that, as part of the book's performance of its meaning, are already managing the reader's apprehension of the text; it might direct their thinking to details of orthography and typography and punctuation that, on the page, carry the text's historicity in ways that can either facilitate understanding or hinder understanding; and it might direct their attention (and here we only seem to be leaving book history) to the contexts that once made the page legible and to the different contexts, therefore, that now, in the present, might make the page differently legible. Since editing is a practical art, noticing such details does not resolve the question of what to do with them; and one of Orgel's key insights has been to acknowledge and celebrate the fact that editing must always and *decisively* be a kind of translation, as indeed reading itself must be, if we return reading to the material contexts that make it possible without ever, of course, determining the reading's shape. So many parameters, so much freedom.

How does a material object create its effects? How does it make or, in the sense proposed in Orgel's title, create the quasi or apparently permanent forms the book might seem to have carried all along? In the individual chapters, Orgel's argument offers case histories in how books get to be the books they become; in how authors emerge as an effect of the textual representation of their persons and (take the case of drama) of their genres; and, centrally, in how the *book* might work, in a productive triangulation, to make a *text* into the *work*, now in the sense of the textual after-image we posit as literary or canonical or classic.

The force of the argument lies in its details, and the book ranges widely in its examples of how the material organization of the text shaped its status and reception. As an introductory gesture that seems also paradigmatic, there's a wonderful reading of George Herbert's "Easter Wings" and of the difference made when, orienting the original horizontal disposition of text into the more familiar vertical disposition, editors remade the text as one poem rather than as two. This is a story, for Orgel, less of error and of losing track of the original text than of shaping another text that gives us an adjusted Herbert: in light of the distortion, it is the translation that is of interest; in light of the translation, it is the original intention that is of interest. In a similar spirit, Orgel is fascinated by the changing norms for what counts in the book's self-representation (as, for example, in the ever evolving form of the title page and the information that seems to belong there). And when he asks what makes a book attractive to readers and potential buyers, those details are important not as marks either of an evolution or a decline in the medium's operation and efficacy, but because those details are material guides to the specificities of the elusive readerly engagement that, at any time in its reception, alone enlivens the book. It is not surprising, therefore, that Orgel is especially acute and playful about textual features that contribute to the book's status and its value, even when they have an only attenuated relation to their purported or posited function: the index that promises an access to the text that it fully or partially withholds; the illustration that works less as clarification than as pure entertainment; the elaborate decoration that brilliantly showcases and celebrates a text's value (Orgel's example is a gloriously elaborate Aristotle) but only by freezing it as an object to be admired and not otherwise used. We are not helped by thinking here of fetishism. So it goes, the argument goes: in the making and apprehension of material histories, one should not narrow in advance one's sense of what is going to matter.

The first major case study concerns the printing of plays. It starts with the familiar position, forcefully argued by Orgel himself, that the printed text of the play is not the play but only a guide to the performance. Taking as the analytic starting point that commonplace that "the book is not the play," Orgel notes, however, that "there is more of the book in the drama" than this would seem to imply, not least because, before the performance, drama begins always with a script, with the "book" and playbook that is the written whole made up of the individually scripted "parts" that the particular actors would have as their entry onto the coordinated thing they are making together. Avoiding a default binarism (and almost completely bypassing the question of dramatic vs. print authorship as it has often been explored), Orgel theorizes the primacy of performance by insisting that this primacy does not quite make writing secondary, including by noting just how often dramas turn to their own status precisely as writing, in the highly self-reflexive representation of writing on stage as prompt for action. If "the book is not the play," the complementary and

not contradictory thought is, yet, that "the life of the play is in its text" (40-41). In a fascinating reading of *Hamlet* and of Hamlet's pursuit of the efficacious performance and imitation (what is it to get Claudius to react? what is it Claudius is reacting to?), this tension registers as that between the energies of script and improvisation, with Hamlet playing both manager and, disorientingly, clown. The value of Orgel's so embedding the performance and play in the proto-plays underlying the performance rests in its nimbly allowing no version of the complex that the play is (as shuttle among script and performance and printed book) to be hypothesized into the merely authentic thing.

In a superb and brilliantly teachable chapter on "Some Works," Orgel considers what it takes for a text, in print, to become legible as a *work*, as having, in some emergent way to be sure, a permanent rather than ephemeral status, a value that makes it worthy of preservation. Focusing on the Jonson and Shakespeare folios, the chapter offers a concise account of Jonson's well known efforts to curate his writing career in the 1616 collection; and in so doing to make his texts, including the commercial plays and court masques, into the works they had not quite hitherto been. There is a compelling comparison with Daniel's 1601 *Works*, which, though a model for Jonson's collection, lacked as a volume the kind of unity which might penetrate the individual works and change their status *qua* works. So the details adduced by Orgel suggest not just that Jonson learned from "the defects in the production of Daniel's *Works*" (74) how to make his book more effective, but also that the "works" in the two volumes can't really refer to quite the same thing, since it is the shaping of the part towards a whole that holds the part in a new way that gave the individual work its new (and audacious and, for Jonson's irritated contemporaries, notorious) aspect. The chapter revels in the fact that Shakespeare's more famous Folio follows Jonson's innovations only haphazardly (in its design and organization and its act and scene divisions), which permits Orgel to track the rise of the volume's reputation as the fate instead of its details. The author portrait is important here. If Jonson excluded his portrait from the 1616 folio (as a way to amplify a textual authority and locate his authorship there), Orgel delights in noticing that, readers being readers, Jonson's portrait drifted into the book as a later supplement that, *because of Jonson's very success in making his book*, seemed then to be lacking: readers will determine what's needed. For the highly self-conscious construction of "Shakespeare" undertaken by his Company in the 1616 volume, Shakespeare's portrait on the title page is the most provocative innovation in that opening, though Orgel points us most to the effort in Jonson's poem on the opposite page to subordinate that authorial image to the author the reader will get by turning the page. The Shakespeare made even here is made by the reader, including the later editors who shaped the canon inaugurated in 1616 by adding the plays their Shakespeare needed and the genres their Shakespeare benefitted from. As with Jonson's failure to control his

readers' sense that an author portrait might be appropriate, the lesson for literary formation here (though it is not a proposition so much as a frame) is that the difficulty of predicting what creates the author and creates the work is surely the difficulty of knowing what the next reader desires.

In a chapter on "How to Be a Poet," the book extends these arguments by considering how poetic writing, especially for writers who are not professional poets, becomes recognizable as carrying the authority of a literary work, whether through generic affiliation or patronage culture, or, critically for Orgel, the idea of the classical, in which the vernacular adopts, absorbs, translates from antiquity a status that the antique is, as it were, allowed to carry in order to find it re-expressed in the present. The chapter nicely locates the quantitative metrical experiments through which Spenser, Sidney and others hoped to approximate English verse to its classical counterparts in the broader culture of translation and adaptation. Shakespeare is the key case here, and Orgel offers a marvelous account especially of how Shakespeare's writing, in the two narrative poems and in the Sonnets, makes its erotic arguments by restlessly testing an already restless Ovidianism, for example in the discovery of eroticism in the irreducibly ambiguous language of male friendship and patronage or, in *Venus and Adonis*, through the tracking of desire in Venus's relentless objectification of the male youth, which Orgel reads beautifully both as a playful overturning of gender conventions and, contrariwise, as the expression of a wholly conventional and misogynist norm, following as it does "the sexual objectification of women to its logical conclusion" by so defining Venus "by her libido" (136) The critical weighing of these energies unsteadies the reading of the poem in response to the shifting terms of the poem's own critique. As in the earlier chapters, Orgel's testing of how alternative interpretive trajectories might in fact be complements gives us a translation of the classical past and of classical erotics in which, again, the reader is primary, in their enlivening testing of how a "disorienting passion" (148) might be narratively oriented in the text.

These individual chapters are easily read on their own, even as they offer together a complex view onto the non-casual effects of the sometimes casual and sometimes intentional ways in which, materially, socially, and conceptually, early books were imagined, produced, received. Since *The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature* is available for download both as a single text and as individual chapters, its own format will, quite appropriately, be shaping its scholarly and pedagogical reception. This lovely book serves as a reminder of how powerfully Orgel's distinctive reading has animated the objects that have long drawn his attention to *their* animation of the culture; and it also serves as a prompt, always, to take up, again, maybe in Special Collections and maybe at your own desk, the reading of and in and around the book that allows texts which might otherwise be lost (to time or anachronism or presentism or just abstraction) to remain unpredictably and surprisingly *here*.

Hao Tianhu, *Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England and Beyond,* Material Readings in Early Modern Culture. London and New York: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 203.

Reviewed by ***Penelope Geng****

The seventeenth-century commonplace compiler, John Evans, was neither a famous poet nor a notorious celebrity. Not much is known about him. He was styled as a "Gentleman" (according to Evans's commissioning publisher Humphrey Moseley), and his extracts evince a distinctly "royalist and anti-rebellion" ethos (118-120). Evans might have been forgotten by literary historians but for his ambitious, yet never published, English commonplace book: *Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden*. Containing quotations of "no fewer than 365 titles" (103), *Hesperides* aids in the scholarly analysis of distinctly literary matters, including the development of the commonplace book tradition, the state of the dramatic canon in the seventeenth century, and even the degree to which the Renaissance commonplace book resembled the Chinese *leishu*. In *Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England and Beyond*, Hao Tianhu situates readers in the intellectual world of Evans, his publisher Moseley, and the anticipated (if ultimately unrealized) readers of *Hesperides*. This well-researched monograph on a truly remarkable manuscript commonplace book will appeal to those interested in seventeenth-century English literature, manuscript studies, book history, and comparative literary history.

The literary significance of *Hesperides* was intuited by scholars as early as the nineteenth century. One of the few manuscript copies of the book came into the possession of James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (b. 1820 – d. 1889). To aid his editing of Shakespeare, Halliwell-Phillipps did something that no scholar today would dream of doing: he cut the book into fragments to compile a Shakespeare scrapbook (2-5). Halliwell-Phillipps's scrapbook is now safely housed in the library of the Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, U.K. In 1973, Gunnar Sorelius discovered a second, uncut version of *Hesperides* in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., U.S.A. Interest in *Hesperides* has been steadily growing. The book is discussed in Peter Beal's influential *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (1980). To date, however, no publisher has commissioned a modern critical edition of Evans's vast project, which

* Macalester College, St. Paul, MN, USA. pgeng@macalester.edu

means that this commonplace book is still relatively unknown to the non-specialist. Readers are encouraged to explore the high resolution digital images of the book provided by the Folger: https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/node/53691/pages?display=grid (last accessed 12 July 2024).

Hao makes a strong case for the recovery of Evans's literary reputation and, by extension, his book. Evans is worthy of attention not least because his commonplacing exemplifies the phenomenon of the active and creative reader-editor; furthermore, the kinds of passages he extracted for his book offers a snapshot of the state of the literary canon in the mid- to late seventeenth century. Thus, Evans's manuscript book—specifically, the two distinct versions of it that survive (the subject of chapter 1)—offers a unique opportunity to study the intellectual, moral, and above all, literary concerns of a discerning "gentleman" reader (Evans) and the canon-formation ambitions of his publisher (Moseley).

The story of Evans, Moseley, and *Hesperides* is told in six chapters. *Chapter* 1 introduces readers to the two extant manuscript versions of *Hesperides*. Version 1, which Hao calls "*Halliwell*," refers to the aforementioned Halliwell-Phillipps's Shakespearean scrapbooks: "[t]hese bits and pieces constitute what we see today of a version of *Hesperides* (referred to as *Halliwell* henceforward), which was once whole and intact before Halliwell-Phillipps's scissor work in the nineteenth century" (5). Version 2, which Hao terms "*V.b.93*," refers to the Folger's copy MS V.b.93, a book of over 900 folio pages. After establishing the locations and state of the texts (and additional fragments), Hao engages in a rigorous round of fact-checking, correcting Sorelius's and Beal's "misdescription of what *Hesperides* is" (6). Hao's analysis makes good use of digital resources, including LION (Literature Online, a ProQuest subscription-based database), EEBO (Early English Books Online, another ProQuest subscription-based database), and ESTC (English Short-Title Catalogue, a free database formerly hosted by the British Library, but as of the time of this publication, down due to a cyber attack). Through a labor-intensive process of checking and double-checking quotations, Hao discovers a number of authors hitherto missed by Sorelius and Beal. Hao's major conclusion is that, pace Beal, the Folger's *V.b.93* "is not a duplicate or an enlarged version, but Evans's master copy of *Hesperides* on which *Halliwell* was based" (16). This first chapter is very detailed and, at times, overly technical. In his effort to fact-check others, Hao somewhat burdens the reader with bibliographical minutiae.

Chapters 2 through 6 are both easier to follow and of general interest to the non-expert reader. Chapter 2, "*Hesperides* in the Commonplace Book Tradition," situates *Hesperides* in the European commonplace book tradition. While this chapter covers familiar topics in book history and historical formalism, it offers an exceptionally well argued account of the manuscript book tradition dating back to Erasmus's *Adagia* (28). Hao concludes that Evans

"displays an Erasmian understanding and ambition for the range of his commonplace material" (35). That said, Evans also displays a distinctly English taste: "Evans's vernacular edition parts company with Erasmus's Latin allegiance and reveals its different understanding of its intended audience… Evans promotes vernacular literature, English vernacular literature, in his commonplace book, continuing the nationalistic emphasis of *England's Parnassus* and *The English Treasury of Wit and Language*, confident about the language, as well as the literature and the taste of a nation of readers" (36). In this chapter, we learn about popular print commonplace books, such as John Bodenham's "Wit" series: *Politeuphuia. Wits Common Wealth* (1597), *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* (1598), *Wits Theater of the Little World* (1599), and *Palladis Palatium: Wisedoms Palace* (1604) (38).

Chapter 3, "Commonplace Writing in Early Modern England," is thematically oriented around the topic of imitation versus plagiarism. Using a case study approach, Hao examines the "seeming plagiarism" of Joseph Browne and John Dunton (58). The payoff of this chapter is that "[t]he commonplace in the Renaissance is not just 'a universal possession,' but it is also a source of authority. By borrowing the commonplace authority wisely, the early modern writer invents his own authorship… We must take seriously Dunton's claims of originality and authorship" (61). While this reader-response inflected conclusion is familiar, it does affirm the distinctiveness of the Renaissance theory of invention: that invention arises from imitation.

Chapter 4, "*Hesperides* and Early Modern Reading Practice," elaborates on the topic of the active nature of early modern reading as captured by commonplacing. This chapter introduces the (helpful) concept of the "three kinds of quotations" through an analysis of Milton's commonplace book:

> …there are three kinds of quotation: the scholar's quotation, the writer's, and the commonplace book compiler's. The scholar has the responsibility to quote verbatim and accurately, with full respect for the content and form of the original. The writer often cites out of memory and without checking the original… productively transforming the original into something that is their own… The third kind, the commonplace book compiler's quotation, sits somewhere between the scholar's and the writer's, faithful to and deviating from the original at the same time, usually faithful to its language but creating a new context in which it will exist. (80)

Milton's commonplace book, "discovered in 1874 by Alfred J. Horwood among the papers of Sir Frederick Graham" (75), displays all three kinds of quotations. Through a close reading and comparison of source and quoted texts, Hao establishes that Milton's commonplace book is a veritable "storehouse of his reading" (77), and argues that Milton's quotations reveal the practice of "spontaneous editing as a way of reading" (80). (Hao builds on Ruth Mohl's and

William Poole's scholarship throughout this chapter.) Like Milton, Evans's commonplacing also shows a similar degree of intellectual engagement. Indeed, Hao documents "11 types of spontaneous editing" in Evans's commonplacing: "change of word order," "change of verb form," "change of diction," "paraphrase," "clarifying the reference," "slips of the pen, or rather, of the quill," "metrical revision," "expansion," "omission," "conversion of verse into prose," and "emendation" (81-85).

Chapter 5, "*Hesperides* and Early Modern Canon Formation," begins with a review of established facts about the two extant versions of this book (101-102). Having spent quite a bit time with the author, Evans, Hao now turns to a discussion of the publisher, Humphrey Moseley, a fascinating character in his own right. Moseley published *The English Treasury of Wit and Language* (1655), and had a hand in the shaping of the dramatic canon in the seventeenth century. Hao cites Pauline Kewes's important study on the importance of Moseley's production of play editions for the formation of a "canonical hierarchy of literary reputation and esteem" (Kewes, qtd. in Hao 107). Hao emphasizes that the "role of the commonplace book in canon formation has been underestimated… *Hesperides* demands to be recognized in the history of canon formation" (101).

Chapter 6, the final chapter, attempts an exciting comparative analysis of commonplacing in Elizabethan and Stuart England and Ming and early Qing China. We learn that "in East Asia… the long tradition of *leishu* 类书 embodies a certain species of commonplacing" (125). Although the *leishu* existed well before the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), it gained literary ascendency during this exceptionally flourishing period for literature and the arts. The late Ming *leishu* bears both a formal and ideological resemblance to the European commonplace book. Like the commonplace book, the *leishu* emphasized education and civil service, as well as the "*preservation* of books and texts, collation, recovering scattered or lost writings" (original emphasis, 130). This final chapter spotlights a project little known outside of China: Beijing Erudition Digital Technology Research Center's Database of Ancient Chinese Encyclopedias 中国类书库. This subscription-based database currently contains 300 *leishu* and will eventually house 1,000 (126).

In conclusion, Hao's book-length study immerses readers in the intellectual world of the late Renaissance. Hao sets the record straight on a number of bibliographical fronts. In his enthusiasm for the subject, Hao has favored the maximalist approach to the selection of evidence. Reading this book requires a concerted effort. This book is recommended to those who are curious about the cultural and intellectual history of early modern commonplace books. Those invested in authorship studies, the history of canon formation, manuscript studies, and comparative English-Chinese formalism will also learn much from this fine study.

Multicultural Shakespeare:
Translation, Appropriation and Performance vol. 30 (45), 2024
https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.30.13

Theatre Reviews

***Shin Titus Reborn*. Dir. Ryunosuke Kimura. OKS Campus, Kawaguchi, Japan.**

Reviewed by ***Takehito Mitsui****

Introduction[1]

Titus was finally reborn in an abandoned factory in Kawaguchi, a Japanese city just outside of Tokyo. This adaptation of *Titus Andronicus*[2] was presented by the Japanese theatre company Kakushinhan—meaning "a perpetrator"—and led by Japanese Shakespearean stage director Ryunosuke Kimura. As the title indicated, the production, staged between the 13th and 15th of October 2023, marked their third attempt, following the abandonment of the previous two due to the pandemic. It is worth noting that Kimura's speech prior to the performance highlighted the severe impact the pandemic had on their performing arts activities over the past few years and the difficulties that they had faced, which led them to choose this large factory for the production, which nearly created an open-air environment, thereby allowing for the avoidance of close contact.

Unlike the conventional productions, the performance began with a dialogue between two original characters: a young boy (Souta Matsushita) wearing headphones and a man (Daisuke Oyama, an opera singer) dressed in

* Kindai University, Japan. takehito.mitsui@kindai.ac.jp

[1] I would like to thank Ryunosuke Kimura for his generosity in graciously sharing the playtext and recorded video of the production. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to Tsunao Yamai for his insightful post-production lectures on Noh theatre at Engeki-no-gakko, a theatre school also run by Kimura. Without their kindness and support, it would not have been possible for me to write this review.

[2] This adaptation by director Ryunosuke Kimura himself is based on the Japanese translation by Kazuko Matsuoka.

a black, crow-like outfit. The man declared, "The world is filled with conflicts." The young boy tried to disengage, but the man continued, insisting that the boy shared the same blood as those who disrupt world peace. As the man waved his hands like a bird flapping its wings—as if preparing to soar into his narrative world with the boy to join the audience—the Romans, dancing to the Bon-odori tune, entered the stage through large sliding doors at the back of the stage. The two characters reappeared on stage between scenes, but their true significance in this production was revealed in the final part, which I will discuss later in this article.

Bon-odori

Bon-odori is a traditional Japanese summer dance festival that is dedicated to the memorials of ancestors. 'Odori' means 'dance', and it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors visit their family during a Bon period, typically in the middle of August. Although it sounds like a solemn religious ceremony, Bon-odori has largely lost its original meaning and has evolved into a festive dance event in modern times (Matida 28-29). The songs used for Bon-odori are often slow, but accompanied by merry, jolly tunes and lyrics, while the ritual meanings are barely noticeable.

However, in this production, the audience was reminded of Bon-odori's origins, as Kimura inserted cynical lyrics into the festive Bon-odori music, to which the ancient Romans joyfully danced, circling around the stage:

> If there had been no war in human history, the Atomic Bomb Dome in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial would have remained just an ordinary building with a dome. […] Nationalism, religions, numerous principles have divided us since the Roman period. The world has never changed. (Kimura 5)

Those lines, sung by the narrator (Yuukari Sanyutei), particularly emphasised the parallel consequences of wars across different time periods, narratives and historical events: the brutality of the Second World War, from which the Japanese suffered after waging a war against the world for their own greedy interest, and the Shakespearean tragedy triggered by the aggression led by the Roman aristocratic families. In this way, just as the young boy was told that he cannot remain a passive onlooker in bloody disputes, Bon-odori cleverly drew cultural and historical analogies to current human crises, such as the conflict in Ukraine. As well as this, it illustrated how people can joyfully dance to a happy tune while ignoring the lyrics that narrate the horrific consequences of wars. While the cheerful tune reflected our tranquil daily lives, the people enjoying

dancing highlighted our neglect of those struggling in wars happening elsewhere. As a result, Bon-odori served as an evoking introduction, drawing the audience into the Shakespearean tragedy unfolding in ancient Rome—a setting that may be unfamiliar to some—by establishing connections with historical and contemporary conflicts.

Rakugo

When the Bon-odori music ended, the narrator, having led the dancing procession, came to the centre of the stage and insisted, "This is Rome. So, no one can deny that we are in Rome!." Then, she continued with comically explaining the setting of the story, such as the death of the Roman Emperor and the rivalry of the two brothers: Saturninus (Yoshihiro Kurita) and Bassianus (Yudai Mark Iwasaki). The audience encountered one of the distinctive elements of this production, which also prompted me to write this review: the stage was animated by performers from diverse professional backgrounds, including an opera singer, a traditional storyteller, a Noh actor and seasoned Shakespearean actors. (For example, this may be apparent from the presence of audience members seated in front of me who, based on overhearing their conversation, seemed to be regular attendees of Noh theatre, likely drawn by Tsunao Yamai's appearance in this performance.)

In terms of diverse professional backgrounds, the narrator, Yuukari Sanyutei, is a classic, comedic storyteller known as a Rakugo-ka. Rakugo is a traditional form of Japanese verbal entertainment established around the seventeenth century during the Edo period. It consists of humorous storytelling by a single performer sitting alone on a small cushion in the centre of the stage. A performer usually narrates a story while distinctively playing several characters at once (Morioka & Sasaki 40). It is clear that the audience members readily recognised Yuukari Sanyutei as a traditional storyteller due to her Rakugo-styled, fast-paced narration technique, accompanied by a distinctive brisk intonation. (Not only in this scene but also several times throughout the show, she appeared as a comical TV news reporter and a party host to perform a similar narratorial role.) In the programme of the production Kimura argues that, by incorporating elements of Japanese traditional performing arts, one of Shakespeare's most violent plays can be seen as both an artistic endeavour and a form of entertainment. In line with Kimura's intention, Sanyutei's Rakugo-style introduction played a crucial role in making the Elizabethan tragedy more accessible to new audience members who might otherwise have perceived Shakespeare as exclusively highbrow.

Noh Theatre

The title character of *Shin Titus Reborn* was performed by Tsunao Yamai, a Noh-gakushi (Noh actor) from the Konparu school, the oldest of the five major Noh schools. (Noh is a traditional Japanese drama that combines elements of music and dance. Originating in the fourteenth century, it is one of Japan's oldest forms of performing arts. Noh performances, characterised by highly stylised movements preserved through Noh's long-established history, are often solemn and ritualistic.) As a Noh actor, Yamai portrayed Titus Andronicus as a solemn and loyal character who holds laws and customs in high regard, reflecting the reverence typical of protagonists in Noh theatre. On that account, his portrayal of Titus, who persistently and compellingly prioritised the order of Rome, seemed to intrinsically embody Bushido–the samurai's philosophy or moral code–, which places a high value on honour and the virtues of hierarchy. This ideological alignment in his performance was rooted in its strong ties with samurai culture. The samurai, who were the aristocratic members of the military class, learnt the art of Noh theatre as a symbol of their high social standing. This traditional form of performing art also flourished with their financial support during the Edo period (Yasuda 22-23).

Furthermore, Bushido is regarded as a central and esteemed element in Japanese folktales, serving as both a foundation and inspiration for Noh performances. Embraced by the aristocratic society in Japan, Bushido has long been associated with patriarchal values aimed at upholding the traditional family system, where only the eldest son inherits the household. This context vividly clarified for the audience why Titus, embodying samurai values, advocates for Saturninus, the elder son of the former Emperor, to be crowned as the next ruler.

On the other hand, Bushido, admired and dutifully practiced by the samurai, can also be a harsh instrument, often compelling Japanese folk heroes to make risky and occasionally tragic decisions in the name of justice, prioritising authority over the well-being of individuals or households. For instance, Minamoto no Yoshitsune, the main protagonist of the well-known Noh performance *Yashima*, is a famous historical figure who risks his life for his reputation by retrieving a bow he once dropped before his enemies during a brutal naval battle, exemplifying the spirit of the samurai.[3]

This aspect of Bushido was particularly crucial in Kimura's direction, as it conveyed effectively the Shakespearean narrative, which was occasionally marked by abrupt and imposing storylines, to a new audience. For example, this samurai protocol effectively captured Titus's mindset when he abruptly kills his son Mutius (Ryo Morimoto). This is because Titus, who deeply values the moral

[3] During his post-performance lectures, Yamai remarked that Yoshitsune in *Yashima* is possibly one of the most renowned characters embodying the principles of Bushido.

principles upheld by the Japanese knights, cannot ignore Mutius's disobedience, as it not only defies his authority but also disregards the hierarchical norms concerning the marriage of his daughter Lavinia (Fuka Haruna). Furthermore, Titus, in this production, appeared to show no regret for his irreversible punishment of Mutius, even when condemned by his eldest son, Lucius (Maya Asaba). Instead, he was utterly confused by the bitter treatment from his master, Saturninus, when he was not invited to accompany the Emperor and Queen Tamora (Tsuyoshi Kijima) to the Pantheon. Devastated by the rejection, he fell to his knees.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the stage, Titus's sons grieved over Mutius's death by his body. This scene powerfully illustrated the dramatic contrast: Titus is the only one strictly adhering to the protocols of the knights, while his other family members prioritise family values. It also emphasised that the character played by the Noh actor is the only one who truly embodies the samurai tradition among the other stage characters. Nevertheless, as the story progresses, Titus gradually begins to struggle with maintaining his faith in the Bushido spirit he so deeply admires.

Cross-gender Casting and Racial Diversity

Cross-gender casting has become a common practice in Shakespeare productions in the West, but it remains relatively uncommon in Japan. On the other hand, Japan has its own controversial tradition in theatrical forms like Kabuki, where female characters have historically been portrayed by male actors, known as onnagata, while women were excluded from the stage. Although this custom has begun to evolve, particularly in Noh theatre, it is still uncommon to see traditional stage performances of any kind featuring female performers on the main stages in Japan. In this production, Tsuyoshi Kijima, a male actor who frequently plays leading roles in productions directed by Miyagi Satoshi at the Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre, took on the role of Tamora. His portrayal of the Queen of the Goths appeared to draw inspiration from the onnagata tradition in Kabuki.

In this way, it was clear that Kimura had no intention of employing the gender-swapped Queen for comic relief—a stark contrast to some problematic all-male Shakespearean productions in Japan that often mock same-sex relationships by having male actors portray female characters. If not for comic relief, then what does the onnagata tradition represent in this production? I argue that the use of onnagata as a theatrical device serves as an antithesis to male dominance in traditional Japanese theatre.

> [...] the term "onnagata" inevitably entails connotations regarding the one who performs: male identity, maleness, masculinity, and so on. The concept of the term "onnagata" is ostentatiously composed of the enunciated femininity and the enunciating masculinity. (Isaka 112)

According to Isaka's argument, as quoted above, Tamora's persona can also be interpreted as that of a loyal traditionalist resistant to new female voices. In this sense, she is also categorised as a figure who aligns with Titus's ideology, adhering to Bushido-style male authority.

Meanwhile, two of the main characters, Lucius (Maya Asaba) and Aaron (Miki Takii, who also features frequently in the productions directed by Miyagi), as well as Demetrius (Rion Yanagimoto), were portrayed by female actors, further challenging traditional gender norms. Asaba's heroic portrayal of Lucius, who stands against his authoritative father, reflected discernment and solidarity within the Andronici, ultimately culminating in a resolve to seek revenge against the Roman political system that unjustly wronged his father.

Besides, Takii also brought Aaron to life as a bold yet pitiable villain, driven by a deep desire for vengeance against Rome. This characterisation was intensified by the addition of powerful lines by the director that highlighted Aaron's vivid emotions in the soliloquy at the end of the first scene:

> I am Aaron. My body is filled with blackness. As a Moor, I have faced discrimination and been used by Tamora as she pleases! I have no freedom! My will means nothing! There is nothing! But so what! (Kimura 33)

The remark quoted above is especially beneficial for new Shakespearean audiences in understanding Aaron's uniquely tragic personal history, since his racial difference is less apparent, given the ongoing challenge of casting Japanese-speaking actors with diverse racial backgrounds in Japan.[4] In the interview he gave to the Shakespearean scholar Sae Kitamura, Kimura also stresses the difficulties he often faces when staging performances including racial diversity:

> [I]t was difficult for Japanese companies to hire black actors. [...] [T]heatre was for minorities because it challenged the social norms, but that Japanese companies had to take different approaches from English-speaking theatre in order to encourage the audience to understand Shakespeare. (Kitamura 95)

In addition to this, Kitamura asserts that "Kimura cast actors with 'differences' in order to represent the racial 'Other' in Shakespeare plays" (95). These

[4] On this matter see Kitamura.

differences may include an actor's unique acting style or their ability to speak foreign languages.

In this production, such differences were cleverly employed to represent Aaron's racial distinction through cross-gender casting and Takii's impatiently fast-speaking acting style. I perceived that she portrayed Aaron as a character reminiscent of a typical Edokko—a merchant living in Tokyo during the Edo period (17^{th}-18^{th} centuries)—in contrast to Yamai's solemn portrayal of Titus. Edokko are known for their distinctive personalities, characterised by assertiveness, straightforwardness, short tempers, and impatience. They are regular protagonists in Rakugo (classic comedic stories) and, despite their flaws, are beloved by the audience for their unwavering determination to achieve their goals, often for the benefit of others. Of course, Takii's Aaron was not a comical character like those in Rakugo. However, despite his cruel deeds toward the members of the Andronici family, the discrimination and enslavement he endured at the hands of the Romans rendered him a barbaric yet pitiable and ultimately unhatable character in the eyes of the audience.

Furthermore, in analysing these two characters portrayed by female actors together, it becomes clear that, despite their opposing political stances, they share a common objective: to exact revenge against the decaying authority of the Roman political system. It is also worth noting that Rakugo, the traditional performing art practiced by Yuukari Sanyutei, who played the female narrator, is another male-dominated field. In this context, the cross-gender casting in the performance could be interpreted as both a comparison to and a subtle critique of the Japanese theatrical tradition, which has historically excluded women from the stage, as well as a commentary on the still male-dominated Japanese society, which is very slowly beginning to embrace sexual and racial diversity.

Noh Mask

After discovering that Demetrius (Rion Yanagimoto) and Chiron (Ikeda Naohiro) are responsible for the death of his two sons, and for raping and brutally wounding his daughter to conceal their crime, Titus, wearing a Noh mask (Noh-men) representing a demon (Hannya),[5] made a slow and eerie entrance on stage with her, evocative of a Noh performance. In the second half of a Noh performance, putting on or changing to a different mask typically signifies that a character is transformed into another being, such as a god, a ghost, or a demon. Those beings are often portrayed as tragic figures, cursed

[5] According to the programme, the mask used in this production was carved by Hisato Iwasaki, a distinguished Noh mask maker (Noh-menshi). The mask is named *Titus*, with the inscription (mei) "revenge."

by inevitable fates that led to their transformations. Similarly, in this adaptation, Titus, overwhelmed to madness by the profound agony he feels for his sons and daughter, is destined to become a brutal yet tragic figure. By using the Noh mask as a theatrical device, it was clearly depicted that his will is overtaken by a demonic spirit, leaving him with no choice but to abandon his long-standing commitment to Roman laws and customs in order to seek gruesome revenge against Tamora's family.

Yamai's traditional Noh vocalization, characterised by its distinctive slow, low tone, revealed his plan to turn the flesh of the two offenders into meat pies. His voice, which echoed and projected throughout the large factory building, sounded horrifying, but also sorrowful. The reason why demonised Titus expresses sorrow can be traced to the concept of evils in Noh theatre. Such non-human figures, including demons, are not merely malevolent characters; there are often tragic and unavoidable reasons behind their transformation.

When this aspect of Noh tradition is reflected in the Shakespearean tragedy, in addition to his deep anger, Titus's sorrow expresses his regret for being unable to prevent the series of tragedies resulting from the aggressive war he led, which connects to the violence described in Bon-odori at the opening scene. In doing so, this sorrowful voice also demonstrates the complexity of his feelings about his military achievements, to which he has devoted himself for both his country and his family.

While Titus remained in his Noh mask, Saturninus asked, "Why art thou attired, Andronicus?" when the queen and he arrived at the banquet. This question suggested that Saturninus failed to recognise that Titus has gone mad and transformed into a demon. However, for audiences familiar with Noh theatre, this remark may appear puzzling, as it is a well-known convention in Noh performances that wearing or changing a mask signifies a character's transformation. In this context, this remark served as a subtle critique, mocking Saturninus for his ignorance of Noh tradition. Moreover, it also revealed his failure to recognise that Titus has gone mad, which further highlighted his ineptitude as a ruler in understanding the gravity of his precarious political situation. This emphasised that not only was Saturninus, whom Titus endorsed as emperor, unfit for the role, but Titus himself also became the very person who disrupted the state's order through his choice of emperor. Thus, this discrepancy dramatically disclosed the gap between Titus's duly commitment to Roman order and the emperor's failure to uphold it.

Lavinia's Death

In the playtext there are scenes where Titus's impulsive and violent actions may cause the audience to question his true motives. However, Kimura's direction, skilfully connecting these moments to the concepts of Bushido and traditional

performances, brings coherence to the narrative. This technique is particularly evident in the final scene, where Titus kills his own daughter.

By referencing the story of Virginius's daughter to Saturninus, Titus believes he secures the emperor's tacit approval for his actions. Thus, in Titus's eyes, killing Lavinia becomes an act of martyrdom for the sake of justice, guided by the samurai's code of honour. At the same time, Titus's appeal to Saturninus can also be interpreted as his final plea for redemption from the emperor in order to prevent his daughter's death. This is because Titus, having transformed into a demon-like figure with the Noh mask, is in a state of madness. In other words, Titus is no longer capable of making a judgment about the legitimacy of his actions. Interestingly, this restricted perspective parallels the experience of an actor performing with a Noh mask; Yasuda, a Noh actor, explains the concept of vision while wearing such a mask:

> For the actor, the Noh mask is also an aid to mystical metamorphosis. Tied tightly to the actor's head, the mask has only tiny openings for the eyes, severely restricting the performer's field of vision. (At workshops for the general public, participants who put on masks are always surprised at how little they can see and how dark everything becomes.) Not being able to see much of their surroundings, actors naturally turn their attention inward. (Yasuda 38)

By expanding on Yasuda's explanation, the wearing of a Noh mask, which drastically limits one's field of vision, can also be viewed as a symbol of Titus's declining ability to perceive and assess the reality around him. In other words, this physical limitation caused by the transformation reflects his loss of sanity and rationality. Isolated and lost within his own mind (inward), he struggles with the moral dilemma of killing his daughter. Consequently, his inquiry to Saturninus can be seen as a plea for pardon from the emperor he has long respected, in the hope that this authority figure will intervene and prevent him from committing such a terrible and irreversible act.

On the other hand, aligning with her father, Lavinia also seemingly internalises the Bushido spirit, which marks her as a figure of defilement. Without resistance, she accepts her deadly fate. Namely, when this horrific event in ancient Rome is juxtaposed with the traditional samurai ethos, this intercultural integration appears to create a chilling justification for the murder of one's own daughter through the veneration of chastity. In doing so, the demon-transformed Titus is also seen as a pitiful figure, much like a character in a Noh narrative, driven by his solemn beliefs and tragic fate to kill his daughter and ultimately to die himself.

Okinagamae

After the massacre at the banquet, the boy and the black crow-like man reappeared on stage.

> The man called the black crow: From now on, you will continue to live. You will experience every emotional moment this world has to offer. There will be sights you wish you hadn't seen. There will be things you'll be able to change, while others you won't. I have written about all these aspects of being human—not to judge what is good or bad, but simply to describe them all. (Kimura 103)

The man subtly suggested that he may be the playwright, though he did not confirm this explicitly. Nevertheless, the boy expressed his gratitude for showing him the play and proceeded to perform a traditional Noh movement known as Okinagamae. In this movement, both arms are raised horizontally—the right hand representing the sky, the left the ground—symbolising peace and stability in the world.[6] Then he finally reunited with his father and mother at the back of the stage. This final gesture was perceived as a requiem, not only for the dead on the stage but also for those who continue to suffer from current conflicts, since the two characters blurred the lines between past and present, as well as between the narrative and the real world. While the man acknowledged that there are things one cannot change, the boy conveyed a hopeful message to the audience at the end of this brutal play: one can still wish or pray for peace, which might influence outcomes for the better.

Conclusion

This adaptation of *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Ryunosuke Kimura, blended traditional Japanese elements, such as Noh and Rakugo, with Shakespeare's tragedy to create a unique intercultural performance. The production employed cross-gender casting, with female actors portraying key male characters, challenging traditional gender norms. Kimura integrated Bushido, the samurai code, into Titus's character, highlighting his rigid adherence to authority, which ultimately leads to his tragic downfall. The use of the Noh mask and traditional vocalizations further enhanced the portrayal of Titus's descent into madness, transforming him into a demonic figure driven by sorrow and anger.

Finally, I believe that Kimura's primary directional intention in integrating the traditional Japanese moral philosophy of Bushido in the

[6] According to the programme, Okinagamae was incorporated into the final scene of the performance based on a suggestion by Yamai.

Shakespearean tragedy must have been to demonstrate how easily horrific acts of violence can be righteously justified through the moral codes that people believe in or once believed in. In other words, the performance served as a cautionary tale, reminding the audience that an atrocious military action involving many casualties can potentially be received as a success or triumph for many in the name of justice.

However, much like the inescapable and destructive fate of the characters in this tragedy, once a mortal event occurs, it rapidly spreads on a large scale and it is nearly impossible to prevent its course. In the end, what we can do would be to only pray for peace as the young boy does. Given that Okinagamae, symbolising the people's wish for world peace, has not been forgotten as a Noh movement throughout over four hundred years of the enduring history of the Japanese performing arts, it may be a depressing truth that the human conflicts will continue to exist preventing the world from becoming a peaceful place—just as the necessity for Noh actors to perform Okinagamae will persist.

Aaron (Miki Takii) captured by Lucius's men. Photograph by Masanori Ikeda

Lavinia (Fuka Haruna) and Titus (Tsunao Yamai) wearing a demon mask.
Photograph by Masanori Ikeda

Tamora (Tsuyoshi Kijima), Saturninus (Yoshihiro Kurita) and Lucius (Maya Asaba)
at the final banquet. Photograph by Masanori Ikeda

Okinagamae by the young boy (Souta Matsushita). Photograph by Masanori Ikeda

WORKS CITED

Isaka, Maki. *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theater*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016.

Kimura, Ryunosuke. *Shin Titus Reborn* (Playtext), 2023.

Kitamura, Sae. "How Should You Perform and Watch *Othello* and *Hairspray* in a Country Where You Could Never Hire Black Actors? Shakespeare and Casting in Japan." *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* 22 [37] (December 2020): 87-101.

Matida, Kasyo. *Odori: Japanese Dance*. London and New York: Kegan Paul, 2005.

Morioka, Heinz and Miyoko Sasaki. *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan*. Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. Trans. Kazuko Matsuoka. Tokyo: Chikuma-shobo, 2004.

Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. Ed. Jonathan Bate. The Arden Shakespeare. Revised Edition. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Yasuda, Noboru. *Noh as Living Art: Inside Japan's Oldest Theatrical Tradition*. Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2021.

Theatre Company Kakushinhan. *Shin Titus Reborn*. Production programme.

WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
(42) 635 55 77

ISSN 2083-8530