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Shakespeare and Intermedial
Cross-Cultural Contacts

Guest Editors: Monica Matei-Chesnoiu
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Tom Clayton took his doctorate at Oxford in 1960, his dissertation was published as the Oxford English Text of *The Non-Dramatic Works of Sir John Suckling* (1971). Beginning in 1960, he taught at Yale and UCLA before returning to his native state and the University of Minnesota, from which he formally retired as a Regents Professor Emeritus in 2015. He published on *Hamlet* first in 1967 and last in 2018, between-times (1992) editing a collection of essays on *The 'Hamlet' First Published: Q1, 1603* (introd. '*Hamlet*'s Ghost'). He has published essays on seven of Shakespeare's tragedies including the major Roman plays, and on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, among others. He remains devoted to Shakespeare's plays as literary scripts for enlightenment, reading, performance, translation, and adaptation; and in particular to the playwright's designs, partly as conveyed by the means of meter's making meaning (semetrics).

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Lisa Hopkins is Professor of English at Sheffield Hallam University and co-edits *Shakespeare* (the journal of the British Shakespeare Association), *Marlowe Studies* and Arden Early Modern Drama Guides. She writes mainly on Shakespeare, Marlowe and Ford, but has also published on crime fiction and literature on screen. She is currently working on two books, *Burial Plots: Detective Fiction and the British Past* and *Early Modern Drama and the Edge of Christendom*.

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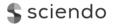
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Tom Clayton[*]

Foreword
What Is Shakespeare? Who Is He? And When Is Shakespeare Himself Again?

1

The accuracy and thoroughness of the editors' introduction leaves a foreword with little to do but say so and invite the reader attracted to the titular subject of this collection to move on at once to that introduction and the stimulating and insightful contents introduced, leaving the foreword to go its own Willful way, as loosely suggested by its own title and the concerns of the author with the Shakespeare that was and is, though less and less recognizable in what an aging few might see as his imperial new clothes, but others would say because he is less and less often to be seen.[1]

The existence of this collection and its origins in *Multicultural Shakespeare* are correlative with the history of 'Shakespeare' in the decades since the 1960s. The proliferation of new and ever more complex ways of doing, seeing, understanding, and expressing everything imaginable and a great deal not has perforce generated new dialects and vocabularies—academic and otherwise—according to the objects as apprehended at the time, and the more technical the objects and relations perceived/conceived, the more technical or otherwise exotic the language embodying them. Does it go without saying that that language is ever further from dramatic objects as heretofore conceived, like persons-in-action (Aristotle's and Greek's gender-neutral πράττωντες) and their dialogue? Those of course—not only the plays but the poems—where interest in Shakespeare begins and in significant degree ends. Before appropriation, which constitutes adaptation and discursive treatments of every kind, including criticism—without which, in the broad sense, Shakespeare would not be.

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[1] 'Richard's himself again' is, of course, the exultant declaration in *Richard III* that became Shakespeare's posthumously.

Persons who now concentrate primarily or prominently on Shakespeare's text are editors, linguists, literary critics, readers, and those connected with theatrical performance. Somewhat facetiously, these might be called Shakespeareans 'proper' for their concentration on Shakespeare's works. Shakespeareans otherwise concerned have a substantial part—if not all—of their interest in other fields, as is the case with most of the papers in the present collection. This is obvious from the titles, including the title of the collection, the keywords, and the sparsity of quotation. Among the forty-nine keywords (by my count), four play-titles occur: *Coriolanus, Hamlet* twice, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.

Nothing I say about any of these valuable contributions to knowledge should be construed as faulting any: they do what they do very well, and what they do has value.

Shakespeare the poet-playwright matters ultimately because his works have value in their expression and in what is expressed—first, last, and always in the texts, without which there would be no performance; and there is good reason to think that Shakespeare thought of his own plays as literature, too, not only as playscripts—at whatever stage they became either. Shakespeare's works need earnest and constant professing, and still are professed in many places, but less, perhaps, as time passes, not because the study of his works has less value but because equal or greater value is claimed and pressed for alternatives, whether in the corridors of power and utility or in the groves of academe where fashion holds sway as much as value almost always, and almost everywhere. Not unlike Real Life.

Shakespeare needs active professing everywhere, especially with students, to be kept visibly and efficaciously as much alive in reception and assimilation as he is in potentiality. One problem is that in higher-educational academe, teaching—or what I would call personal professing—necessarily takes second place to productivity, especially in universities, and productivity means one thing mainly if not only: publication. And publication demands contributions to knowledge and originality, sometimes of almost any kind. Which thought brought irresistibly to mind the following lines from a speech by the Duke in the Problem Play, or Dark Comedy (so-called), *Measure for Measure*, who is back in Vienna—or Ferrara, as Gary Taylor suggested and seems to have been the case—disguised as a friar to observe public life in the city and, at this point, speaking as the friar in context, as the Duke in disguise, for Shakespeare in part, and for the experience and reflection of the reading or hearing audience.

> **Escalus.** What news abroad i' th' world?
> **Duke (as friar).** None, but that there is so great a fever on goodness, that the dissolution of it must cure it: novelty is only in request; and it is as dangerous to

be aged in any kind of course, as it is virtuous to be constant in any undertaking. There is scarce truth enough alive to make societies secure; but security enough to make fellowships accurst: much upon this riddle runs the wisdom of the world. This news is old enough, yet it is every day's news. (3.2.215-224)[2]

It is obvious that the Duke's surrogate, Escalus, is being at once conversational, curious, thematically pointed, and the 'straight man' with 'What news abroad i' th' world?' asked of the Friar, who has been around and knows the world as an itinerant, confessor, and sage. At the end, the Friar, about to resume his identity as Duke, adds still as Friar, for good and witty measure,

> . . . the Duke
> Dare no more stretch this finger of mine than he
> Dare rack his own: his subject am I not,
> Nor here provincial. My business in this state
> Made me a looker on here in Vienna,
> Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'er-run the stew; laws for all faults,
> But faults so countenanced, that the strong statutes
> Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
> As much in mock as mark. (5.1.311-320)

2

Without going further into this speech—in a foreword, forsooth?!—starkly characterizing a corrupt city like the Chicago I saw in a recent film, *Widows* (2018), I give the next passage that came to mind at this juncture, from another Dark Comedy—and the talkingest, thinkingest, still ever-kinetic *Troilus and Cressida* 2.2, at the centre of which is the question of value and of reasons for taking action. The subject of discussion is Helen of Troy, and whether she should be returned to her husband Menelaus or kept at the cost of war with the Greeks. Hector says, 'She is not worth what she doth cost in the keeping' (2.2.52),[3] to which Troilus replies (Escalus-like), inaugurating and sounding the theme of the debate, 'What's ought but as 'tis valued?' To which Hector cogently replies,

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[2] References *to Measure for Measure* are to the Arden Shakespeare, edited by J. W. Lever (London: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

[3] References to *Troilus and Cressida* are to the Arden Shakespeare, edited by Kenneth Palmer (London: Methuen, 1982).

> But value dwells not in particular will;
> It holds his estimate and dignity
> As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
> As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry
> To make the service greater than the god;
> And the will dotes that is attributive
> To what infectiously itself affects,
> Without some image of the affected merit. (2.2.54-61)

The sound valuation followed by the rousingly advocated sell-out. Hector's passionate oration moves toward the—at first glance surprising—conclusion:

> Paris and Troilus, you have both said well,
> And on the cause and question now in hand
> Have glozed, but superficially. . . .
> If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,
> As it is known she is, these moral laws
> Of nature and of nations speak aloud
> To have her back return'd: thus to persist
> In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,
> But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion
> Is this in way of truth; yet ne'ertheless,
> My spritely brethren, I propend to you
> In resolution to keep Helen still,
> For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
> Upon our joint and several dignities. . . . (2.2.164-166; 184-194)

Dignities indeed. Brazenly keeping the booty and hoping to save face at the cost of hundreds of human lives. Now when and where (not) have we seen that before? On the literary side, it may be noted that equally eloquent speeches may be in prose (the Duke-Friar's) or in verse (Hector's), with notable differences, not least in the fact that verse dictates stress and scores meaning (what I call semetrics).

3

A third 'Dark' Comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*, brings me to a personal anecdote that says much about the profession in some places then—forty years ago—if not now. I submitted a revisionary essay called 'How Does *All's Well* End Well?' to a well-respected scholarly journal in which I had published. The essay received no fewer than five referees' readings, the first undecided, the second strongly negative, the third and fourth strongly positive, the fifth negative

with suggestions for drastic (and reductive) revision. The editor concluded his report to me, 'If you think you can alter it to meet the objections of two of our readers and wish to return it to us there remains a chance that it would gain acceptance (but no guarantee).' The history suggests that in the end, at least, the editor did not want to publish the essay, for whatever reasons.

The first negative report (#2) read,

> [27 April 1979. Reject.] An energetic, persistent close reading of the play that, finally, does not add up to very much. There is a great deal of sifting of nuance here, some of it to the point and illuminating, some of it over-subtle, some of it off the mark. The author's intentions are intelligent, his industry admirable, his idea promising; but his essay seems more of a rough draft of an idea than a final, polished exposition of it.

The first positive (#3),

> 1. [May 1979. Accept.] This is an important revisionary essay which demonstrates—I think quite strongly—that *AWTEW* can be considered a typical Shakespearean comedy rather than a problem play. The examination of Bertram, of Parolles, and especially of the bed-trick and of Bertram's relationship to Helena [sic; incomplete]. Then he can more simply account, as he does at the beginning and end of the essay, for the play's title and epilogue. The writing here is clear and straightforward [sic]; the scholarship apparently impeccable; the research comprehensive.

I conclude with this history because it reveals aspects of the academic literary profession, not with the radiance and illumination of dramatic art, but as through a glass darkly from anonymous but very real academics. It is obvious that the two evaluations cannot both be right. Which, if either is to be trusted, becomes a matter for scrutiny and judgment, but the predominance of abstractions vs specificity and detail speaks for itself, I think. After I read the editor's discouraging invitation to revise and resubmit, I shrugged and filed the essay, not submitting it again anywhere, the sadder but very much the wiser for my experience of the profession in the shade. The editor's decision now reminds me of Hector's: certainly, the editor preferred the expediency of deferring to his negative readers to showing the courage and principle to print a controversially novel reading of the play. So much for attempted truth vs 'our joint and several dignities'.

Monica Matei-Chesnoiu and Tianhu Hao[*]

Introduction: Sailing along Intermedial Rivers

When considering the differences between Shakespeare's *Othello* and Verdi's operatic restyling *Otello*, following Arrigo Boito's drastically-reduced libretto, scholars have asked how the opera was fully able to set to music Shakespeare's manipulation of words in the play-text. Examining how Verdi transforms Shakespeare's dramatic process into the medium of music, in "The Iagoization of Otello: A Study in Verdi's Musical Translation of Shakespeare's Linguistic Dramaturgy," Jeffrey Kurtzman explains that Verdi's solution was "to create a musical language for Iago, a different musical language for Otello, and then cause Iago's musical language to invade and transform that of Otello in a manner directly analogous to the way in which Shakespeare uses words" (72). Extrapolating this idea to the multiplicity of intermedial appropriations of Shakespeare's plays, we would say that a different language system is involved in representing the canonical plays and a different end-result is obtained. Bryan Reynolds describes this process in a unique manner in his Introduction to *Intermedial Theater: Performance, Philosophy, Transversal Poetics, and the Future of Affect* (2017):

> The becomings- and comings-to-be-other, together, and through intermedial theatre, force-multiplied by its indeterminate structural propensities for affective emergences that exceed the artistic design of the theatre-media processes themselves, stimulate cascades of feedback-loops givings-way to feedforward-flows goings-elsewhere wondrously achieving transversality over the rainbow of composability. (Reynolds 1)

While Reynolds uses the rainbow metaphor to express the "goings-elsewhere" of intermedial theatre, we would use the geographic metaphor of the river: just as a meandering river displays unexpected twists and turns, according to the geological structure of the terrain and, in our times, human intervention, intermedial adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are flowing along times and

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cultures. Along the course there are many tributaries and partial blocks but the flow is what matters, and this is constant and progressive.

Why do we need to think critically about Shakespeare and intermedial / cross-cultural contacts? Just as it is no longer possible to speak of the media—or even a particular medium, such as television—as a singular entity, it is important to bring more specificity to issues of place, difference and reception in studying critically the intermedial Shakespearean appropriations. The critical study of appropriations of Shakespeare in various media is a dynamic field shaped through specific historical, economic and geographic contexts. While scholars now study a dizzying range of transformations of Shakespeare's plays through various media objects (print, television, film, music, advertising brands, the Internet, digital games, mobile phone applications) from multiple methodological and theoretical perspectives, they share a concern with understanding not just media but their changing role in social and power relations. Thomas Cartelli, in *Reenacting Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath: The Intermedial Turn and Turn to Embodiment* (2019), uses the term "mapping" (3) to trace "the intermedial turn and turn to embodiment" (4) that inform the shift in Shakespeare adaptation studies toward recontextualization, reformatting and media convergence. The reformatting of Shakespeare in different cultural, technical, and performance configurations can lead to a deeper understanding of how cultures recontextualize Shakespeare and the ways in which various media are involved in negotiating these transactions.

This volume provides a toolbox for making sense of Shakespeare studies in relation to media culture by placing various intermedial representations as objects of critical inquiry. This is an attempt to situate the shifting concerns of media studies and Shakespeare within different historical, geographic, and cultural contexts. These contexts are the backdrop for distant (but overlapping) "types" of Shakespeare adaptations in various media, broadly characterized as print media (translations, for example), theatrical productions, practical applications of teaching Shakespeare through Digital Humanities, or movie and novelistic adaptations. We would take the different scholarly contributions to Shakespeare and intermedial adaptations (by scholars from Canada, the US, China, Italy, Slovakia, and Romania) as "discursive formations" (Spiegel 1213). Following Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Spiegel suggests that different ways of interpreting media critically constitute the "truths" available to scholars. Spiegel writes that these "discursive formations" are "limited groups of statements that are spoken at a specific historical moment" (Spiegel 1213). The specific historical moment of the 2020s brings into contact a heteroglossia of encounters concerning Shakespearean appropriations. Almost half of these essays are about Shakespeare in translation and performance in China, which suggests the surging interest in Shakespeare in Asia. Europe is also well-represented in this volume, as are Canada and the United States of America.

These essays are connection points emerging from the kind of scholarly geography that knows no borders or ideological constraints.

Many concerns of contemporary media and performance studies are actually addressed in Shakespeare's plays, among them the representation of reality, the role of the audience in creating meaning and the nature of dramatic illusion. Shakespeare creates an intriguing multiplicity of meta-theatrical devices, such as plays-within-the plays (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, or the Induction in *The Taming of the Shrew*), but also parodic roles of directors (such as Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who assigns roles, rehearses the cast and adapts from page to stage the play-text he has written; or Prospero in *The Tempest*, who manipulates the characters as a master puppeteer through the spirit Ariel). Moreover, there are even more complex ways in which Shakespeare inscribes the mechanism of textual transcendence and the three main steps of stage adaptation—conception, presentation, and reception—within the play-text itself. Shakespeare gives special attention to intra- and inter-medial procedures inscribed throughout the play-text, which anticipates a series of theoretical premises devised by contemporary media and performance studies. For example, in adapting intermedially Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare conflates stories and creates a hybridized dramatic space attuned to dynamic theatrical configurations. Shakespeare knew that any text, transposed into a new historical and geographic context, required transformation. Whenever he adapted an ancient verse narrative (such as Ovid), a story of his own or a foreign culture, or Holinshed's English history and Plutarch's *Lives*, Shakespeare introduced changes of perspective, ambience, atmosphere, plot, characterization, according to the demands of the theatre of his time. Moreover, Shakespeare also knew that the transposition of a play-text from page to stage (or from written text to playscript) is a complex intermedial transaction, involving acts of mediation, interpretation and representation.

The contributors to this special issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare* share a broad interest in theatrical practices and intermedial adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Essays range from pedagogical applications of Shakespeare in the new medium of Digital Humanities (Makaryk and Hemingway), to an interview with a theatre director who staged *Cry Havoc* and *She Wolf* (Pennacchia interviewing Stephan Wolfert), and analyses of theatrical productions (in Romania, Matei-Chesnoiu, and in China, Renfang Tang). Studies of cross-cultural and intermedial appropriations of Shakespeare's plays continue with an analysis of the translations of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* in China (Yun-fang Dai), the development of Marxist Shakespeare criticism in China (Wei Zhang), and Shakespeare in Taiwan (Yu Sun and Longhai Zhang). Dana Percec discusses the tension between Shakespeare's plays and narrative adaptations in contemporary novels and, finally, an analysis of recent filmic appropriations of Shakespeare's plays connects *The Tempest* with popular culture (Jana Wild).

In their opening paper Irena R. Makaryk and Ann Hemingway outline an archival-digital pilot launched in 2015 at the University of Ottawa, Canada. It situates the *Shakespeare in Canada* project, a productive collaboration between faculty, libraries, archival institutions, and museums, in its historical context; details its early offering and subsequent iterations; and surveys the assumptions, challenges, surprises, and pleasures of introducing students to archival sources and to acquiring digital literacy. Participating students form "their Canadian identities through the prism of Shakespeare" (10) and develop a personal—rather than universal—relationship with the Bard. As a fruit of their archival research, the digital-age students opened up a new field of inquiry, Shakespeare in the Arctic (11-12). The old "technology" of archives, museums, and libraries turns out to be "not only the impetus for creative and historical awakenings but also the rich medium with which students can still fall in love" (15).

Then Maddalena Pennacchia contributes an edited interview with Stephan Wolfert, American actor and playwright, who discusses his pluri-awarded play, *Cry Havoc*, a one-man show he has been performing since 2012, with a most recent performance hosted at the Roma Tre Palladium Theatre during the International Conference ESRA 2019 in July. Wolfert rewrites and performs the story of his life by re-enacting Shakespeare's many military veterans: from Richard III to Antony, from Coriolanus to Henry V, et al.; by doing so he promotes Shakespeare's role as a psychotherapist who treats post-traumatic stress in military veterans. For Wolfert, the theatre effects a therapeutic catharsis especially in the US veterans who find it difficult to readjust to civilian rules after returning home. In particular, Shakespeare's blank verse is written "in the natural human rhythm of heartbeat and breath" (5); "by speaking in the verse rhythm and using Shakespeare's texts, we begin to turn on parts of the brain that had gone offline due to trauma" (7). Wolfert's "communalization of trauma" (6) via the ancient medium of the theatre works physiologically as well as aesthetically.

Wolfert's interview is followed by a pair of papers on theatrical productions. Monica Matei-Chesnoiu analyses the 2001 Romanian production of *Hamlet* directed by Vlad Mugur at the Cluj National Theatre (Romania) from the perspective of geocriticism and spatial literary studies. After the vicissitudes of Communism, the belated production abbreviates the topic of death to its bare essence, just as a map condenses space, in the form of "literary cartography," exploring the exposed depth of human existence. The swan-song production examines the human condition and the artist's place in the world while everything happens on the edge of nothingness. The director's own death before the opening night of the production ties Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with existential issues in an even deeper way than the play itself. Renfang Tang's paper studies two *huaju* performances of Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (2007) and *King Lear* (2006), as cases of cultural exchange between East and West that integrate

Shakespeare into contemporary Chinese culture and politics. These Chinese *huaju* adaptations demonstrate how (intercultural) identity is constructed through the subjectivity and iconicity of Shakespeare's characters and the performativity of Shakespeare's texts.

The reception of Shakespeare in China is the focal interest of the next group of three papers. Yun-fang Dai explains why Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* was so popular before Shakespeare's original texts were translated. She investigates by citing archival materials how the Lambs' *Tales* might have reached China at the beginning of the nineteenth century through sinologist Thomas Manning's correspondence with Charles Lamb. Dai's work sheds light on a dark corner of the early cultural reception of Shakespeare in China. Wei Zhang traces the vicissitudes of Marxist Shakespearean criticism in China since the 1930s by chronicling the history in three periods and discussing the contributions of ten representative scholars including Mao Dun and Wang Yuanhua, who adopted the basic principles and methods of Marxism to elaborate on Shakespeare's works. Yu Sun and Longhai Zhang survey the intricate relationship in the history of Shakespeare studies in mainland China and Taiwan from a developmental perspective. Shakespeare studies in mainland China and Taiwan evolved from the same origin. A new performing medium, Shake-xiqu, a hybrid of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese theatre, enables theatrical practitioners on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to explore new possibilities of Chinese Shakespeares.

Dana Percec interprets three novels in the Shakespeare Re-told Hogarth series, namely Jeanette Winterson's *Gap of Time* (2016), Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* (2016), and Edward St. Aubyn's *Dunbar* (2018), as rewritings of Shakespeare in the new media environments, respectively of *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *King Lear*. Shakespeare's versatile uses, in video games, in alternative, unconventional educational environments and in the audio-visual, blend successfully particular elements of Anglo-American culture with universal and atemporal themes of love and loss, creation and destruction, death and rebirth. For Jana B. Wild, the blockbuster musical comedy *Mamma mia* can be seen as a soft and slightly ironical feminist rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Set on a small Greek island, idyllic and exotic, the film offers a contemporary romantic story with new/reversed roles in terms of gender, parenthood, sexuality, marriage and age, pointing to an entirely different cultural paradigm from the early modern one. Knowledge of Shakespeare enhances the appreciation of the feminist filmic adaptation.

Sailing along the intermedial rivers, our reader may enjoy various views of past and present, East and West. Even better, s/he might see reflections of her/himself in the rivers. Other than communal or individual enjoyment and reflection, what is the use of literature in this digital age of globalisation?

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Irena R. Makaryk and Ann Hemingway[*]

The Archive and the Digital Age: Field Notes from the Pedagogical Front

Abstract: The digital environment in which the humanities are now firmly immersed has opened the door to innovative ways for students to interact with traditional formats such as archival and print material, and to develop a deep and personal understanding of topics and issues. Libraries, museums and archives are in the unique position of facilitating the creation of digital initiatives in the classroom by offering up their collections as "learning laboratories," and by sharing their expertise in technology, information, and digital literacy as well as data management. Through active collaboration with course instructors, they can build bridges between their collections and the digital skills students need in order to embrace the new learning paradigm and to help lead them into the future. This paper outlines an archival-digital pilot launched in 2015 at the University of Ottawa, Canada. It situates the project in its historical context; details its early and subsequent iterations; and surveys the assumptions, challenges, surprises, and pleasures of introducing students to archival sources and to acquiring digital skills.

Keywords: Digital Humanities, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare reception, teaching Shakespeare, Shakespeare in Canada.

Shakespeare400

In the Fall of 2015, the University of Ottawa, situated in the nation's capital, was preparing for *Shakespeare400,* a nearly four-month celebration of Shakespeare's afterlife that was to begin in January 2016, and which encompassed scholarly, pedagogical, creative, and community outreach activities. Ranging from the serious to the whimsical, the celebrations involved extensive collaboration among the faculty, staff, and students of the University's Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences, Law, and Medicine. Forty separate events, many open to the public, were held at the University, among them, an opening gala, two concerts, lunch-time talks (on topics as various as dreams, the plague, and translation), an art

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exhibition, new musical works created by young composers, a sonnet competition, film festival, scholarly conference, and a reading of *Hamlet* in thirty-seven languages spoken by faculty and students. The diverse program was designed not only to honour Shakespeare and to highlight his rich and varied afterlife, but also to have fun, create a community spirit, and to inspire an engagement with Shakespeare's works on diverse levels and through various media. Nearly one thousand participants, presenters, performers, artists, collaborators, and volunteers took part in the project.[1]

The unusual circumstances of that anniversary celebration also seemed prime for experimentation in the classroom. Canada's oldest bilingual (French-English) university (established 1848), the University of Ottawa is built on unceded territory belonging to the Algonquians. Its bilingual and bi-cultural traditions, enshrined in its mission statement, both enrich and foreground the problematic position of Shakespeare in a multicultural and multilingual settler-invader nation. For First Nations, Shakespeare continues to remain either a peak to be scaled or, more frequently (especially through adaptation), to be upended. In the province of Quebec, Shakespeare was historically (and pointedly) neither part of the school curriculum nor part of the repertoire of local professional acting companies. Comfort with Shakespeare was only achieved in the latter part of the twentieth century.[2] How, then, to analyse the relationship between the global and the local? To examine the complexity of Shakespeare's reception in Canada, one which is deeply ensconced in the political and cultural history of this country? How to make students aware of the way in which their identities have been shaped by such processes and clashes?

Pedagogical challenges did not stop here. For many, if not most, Canadian students today, Shakespeare is a classic in Balz Engler's sense of that term: that is, a writer whose works have left the page, entering daily parlance through quotations, reference to characters, and stories (217-316). Although thus somewhat familiar, Shakespeare has nonetheless become more alien to students today than he was just a decade or two ago. He is separated from their daily reality by language; by time; by history; and by geography. The current "tweet"

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[1] Over four years in the making, the whole project was led and co-ordinated by Irena Makaryk, Department of English, with the able and energetic assistance of Kathryn Prince, Department of Theatre. Individual events involved other faculty members and volunteers. See the *Shakespeare400* website for details: http://artsites.uottawa.ca/shakespeare-celebrations/en/media/

[2] For a historical overview of Shakespeare in Canada see Irena R. Makaryk, "Introduction: Shakespeare in Canada: 'a world elsewhere'" (3-41). For Shakespeare in Quebec, see Annie Brisset, "Shakespeare, A Late Bloomer on the Quebec Stage" (127-56). On First Nations and Shakespeare, see Sarah Mackenzie, "Performing 'Indigenous Shakespeare' in Canada: *The Tempest* and *The Death of a Chief*," in Makaryk and Prince (111-25).

generation often finds Shakespeare's language remote, dense, difficult, and verbose.[3] For most of them, British history is—to borrow Viola's words to Duke Orsino—"a blank." The Ontario Ministry of Education's single compulsory requirement for the subject of History at the secondary-school level is one credit, to be taken in Canadian History in Grade 10. Thus, not only British but also world history is, regrettably, *terra incognita*. To follow up that metaphor, the only compulsory Geography requirement is Canadian geography. Few Canadian students have travelled to England or have even closely examined a map of it and, as a consequence, the reverberative place names of, say, Shakespeare's history plays, mean little or nothing to them. Lastly, Shakespeare's works are no longer a required element of the secondary school education curriculum, although a number of English teachers still choose to include one of his plays in their syllabi.[4] Whatever we may think of the decisions taken nearly fifteen years ago by the Canadian ministerial powers, the result is to create significant challenges for those of us teaching Shakespeare at the university level.

In the province of Ontario at the University of Ottawa, undergraduate Shakespeare courses are pegged at the third-year level and are divided into two separate sections, Elizabethan and Jacobean Shakespeare, each with enrolment capped at 45 students. Typically, students are required to submit three assignments per academic session, including a final essay of 10 to 12 pages.

With the enthusiastic support of the librarians and media specialists—Ann Hemingway, Nancy Lemay, and Roxanne Lafleur—the resident Shakespearean, Irena Makaryk, was encouraged to introduce a pilot archival-digital component into her undergraduate Shakespeare course. The project entailed Makaryk's setting aside her "initiate fears": fears of technology itself; of students taking on these projects just to avoid the work of writing and researching a formal research essay; and of letting go of total control over her course. Only twenty-one students were permitted to take part in this pilot. Its unexpected and overwhelming success and the satisfaction derived from it by students, librarians, and the instructor, led to continuing the project over the next four years; it also resulted in wider, positive consequences as well, as will be seen below.

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[3] For the first time in nearly four decades of teaching, Irena Makaryk encountered undergraduates who are reading modernized versions of the plays alongside their regular texts. She has also encountered graduate students coming to Ottawa from other universities who have never studied Shakespeare before. These students have specifically mentioned that they had avoided Shakespeare because were "afraid" to tackle his works.

[4] On Shakespeare in the Canadian educational curriculum see Dana M. Colarusso, "Rhyme and Reason: Shakespeare's Exceptional Status and Role in Canadian Education," in Makaryk and Prince (215-40).

Pedagogical Trends and Assumptions

In the past decade or so, three areas of pedagogical emphasis have emerged in Canada: 1) an emphasis on the importance of an early introduction to primary research; 2) a focus on developing digital humanities literacy; and 3) experiential learning as a replacement for traditional modes of discovery, research, and writing. Two generally-held views seem to underpin these relatively newly-promoted trends: that the current generation of undergraduates is more comfortable with visual material than with print; and that students are savvy in their use of the Internet and therefore would not only benefit from, but would also thrive, when working on digital humanities projects. Concurrently with these developing trends, the field of Information Studies has been undergoing considerable upheaval. With the rapidly expanding intersections among technology, pedagogy, learning, and the humanities, much debate has erupted concerning the benefits and drawbacks of the convergence of libraries, museums, and archives.[5] The pilot project was intended to respond to these new directions and debates.

Project Overview. Shakespeare in Canada: Exploring Cultural History through Digital Humanities

The overarching goal of the pilot project was to have students come to understand how deeply—and often problematically—Shakespeare is embedded in the cultural fabric of Canada. This embeddedness includes Shakespeare's presence in various media and reaches back into the pre-Confederation period (before 1867, when Canada was founded). Undertaken in lieu of a final research paper, the archival-digital project was an option made available to a limited group of students, supervision being one of the major constraints. Working in groups of three on specific themes, twenty-one students carried out primary research in Library and Archives Canada; our own institutional archives; and those of other major institutions (e.g. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). For this first group, the general themes assigned were as follows:

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[5] See Robert VanderBerg, "Converging Libraries, Archives and Museums: overcoming distinctions, but for what gain?" (136-146). This was also the subject of a panel, "Convergence of LAMs (Libraries, Archives, and Museums)," at the Library Association of Canada Forum Conference, 2 June 2016. On the role of libraries in digital humanities pedagogy see the following two articles: Francesca Giannetti, "Against the Grain: Reading for the Challenges of Collaborative Digital Humanities Pedagogy" (257-269). Melanie Griffin and Tomaro I. Taylor explore best practices in "Shifting Expectations: Revisiting Core Concepts of Academic Librarianship in Undergraduate Classes with a Digital Humanities Focus" (452-466).

1. Nineteenth-century political cartoons of Fathers of Confederation, depicted as Shakespearean characters, and featured in Canadian newspapers.
2. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio adaptations of Shakespeare plays from the 1930s and early 1940s.
3. Television parodies of Shakespearean works from the 1950s and 1960s by the comedy team of John Wayne and Frank Shuster.
4. Theatre critics writing about the early years of the creation of The Stratford Festival (Canada): Nathan Cohen (writing throughout the 1950s and 1960s) and Urjo Kareda (writing in the 1970s and early 1980s).
5. Student Shakespeare productions at the University of Ottawa by the French and the English theatre guilds.
6. Selected professional Shakespeare productions at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa.
7. Selected productions at The Stratford Festival, Ontario.

In subsequent years, these themes were changed annually and included such topics as First Nations adaptations; francophone Shakespeare; and amateur theatre productions of Shakespeare.

In the first two years, students set off for the archives accompanied by the librarians. There, they examined fonds pre-ordered by the course instructor, sifted through boxes, and selected their assets (photos, programs, newspaper clippings, drawings, playbills, etc.). Later, they scanned, uploaded, and catalogued them. Narrowing down their topic, they shaped the material into a narrative arc; augmented their archival findings with published scholarly sources; and then created digital exhibits which, when completed, they presented in a public forum attended by an audience of peers, friends, and other faculty members and guests.

In the process of creating their projects, the undergraduate students were given the opportunity to hone research and communication skills, learn new technologies, and develop marketable digital literacy skills. Omeka, a free open-source content-management system, was selected as the best platform to host the exhibits for multiple groups of students since it offered enhanced functionality and a relatively easy learning curve. The University of Ottawa Morisset Library hosts multiple instances of this application and has the in-house expertise to provide ongoing technical support. Omeka also proved an excellent teaching tool for introducing students to the various components of database development and for demonstrating the importance of the rigorous cataloguing of metadata.

In first iteration of the project, the software Shared Shelf, now JSTOR Forum, was used to add and catalogue data. Shared Shelf provided students with a robust platform to upload images and files, input descriptive metadata for their assets, and publish their content to the Omeka portal. The data management application also allowed the team of librarians and media specialists to develop

a detailed cataloguing scheme which was to serve a purpose beyond the classroom assignments. The data obtained by these undergraduates was augmented with documents and artefacts borrowed from the Stratford Festival Archives (Ontario) and from the Theatre Museum of Canada in order to form the basis of a physical and digital exhibition of Shakespeare in Canada which constituted part of the *Shakespeare400* festivities. Curated by three Information Studies graduate students, this exhibition was another collaborative endeavour creating new linkages; in this case, among undergraduates and graduates, library, archival, museum, theatre, and professorial staff. Highlights of the exhibition may be found here: http://216.48.92.16/omeka1/shakespeare400/. See "Featured Exhibit" at the bottom of the page.

In order to develop their exhibits, students used a variety of open source and free applications and employed high resolution scanners and cameras. They were given carte blanche to experiment with a variety of available plugins to build their exhibits, namely Tiki-Toki, Youtube and StoryMap JS. Many also customized their exhibits using a range of creative software including Photoshop to manipulate and enhance images: iMovie and Movie Maker to edit video footage; and GarageBand and Goldwave to add sound clips and music. The Library project team (Hemingway, Lafleur, Lemay) guided the students in the use of the equipment, plugins, and software, and directed them to the tools that would be best suited to their projects, all the while providing them with the technical support to embed their exhibits in Omeka.

The two best examples of this first group of undergraduate projects may be found here:
a. On the work of theatre critics Nathan Cohen and Urjo Kareda: https://s3. amazonaws.com/uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/d3f9d48d3a76c38aa06c2 6628705ee31/toronto-critic-map/index.html
b. On the comedy team of Wayne and Shuster and their parodies of Shakespeare: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnEC6AbD8Ew&feature=youtu.be

Sharing the Classroom

The pilot project was also conceived of as Community Service Learning (CSL), that is, as experiential learning since its raw data constituted a contribution to the *Shakespeare400* celebrations. CSL projects, which have proliferated at the University over the past decade, vary greatly in nature. Typically, they take up 30 hours of the student's time. Students are individually evaluated by a supervisor on a range of professional skills[6] and, if the project is successfully

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[6] The students were evaluated according to a well-defined set of criteria: attendance and punctuality, ability to follow guidelines and instructions, interactions with people with whom they worked, desire to learn and improve and to integrate feedback, level of

completed, they receive a special notation on their academic transcript. Upon submission of the final project, the student is required to submit a short paper reflecting on its challenges and opportunities. In this particular case, the students were evaluated by the course instructor after extensive discussions with the Library team. Following their public presentation, the student projects were posted on the web.

Participating in the pilot as an alternative to the traditional essay, students experienced a unique learning opportunity in which they themselves were knowledge creators, employing and analysing primary material. They were also part of a team. As in a professional workplace experience, they worked in close proximity with others: in this case, with archivists, librarians, and media specialists. Through the community service-learning model, they also acquired professional, transferable skills that could appear on their resumes. These included advanced research skills in the digital humanities; archival documentation skills (i.e., an achieved understanding of how archives work and how to work in archives; how to collect material, log information, correctly describe and evaluate it). Critical, analytic, and evaluative skills were honed through the decision-making process of selection and posting of material. Communications (written and oral) and team-building skills were also developed, since students were required to be in weekly contact with their librarian-mentors, as well as with the course instructor.

A number of students expressed enthusiastic interest in pursuing graduate studies in the domain of Information Studies, something they had never considered before. For some, the CSL component even resulted in immediate and tangible benefits. The students working on television parodies of Shakespeare were invited to speak about their archival findings on a daily radio program at our local CBC news station. A student from this same group later found a summer position with the City of Ottawa Archives because of the experience and skills she was able to demonstrate. One of the students in another group was hired for summer employment by a governmental agency as a concrete result of the project.

Library staff as well as students reaped significant benefits. Librarians rarely have the opportunity to accompany students through their academic arc of an entire semester. Normally, the only occasion in which librarians interact with students in the classroom is during the one-time research-skills workshop which they traditionally offer to undergraduates. In the course of the pilot project, librarians came to know all the students through their weekly, and sometimes daily, encounters. They provided timely and tailored instruction and support through the different stages of the project and developed a meaningful mentoring

initiative, successful completion of agreed upon responsibilities and benefit of service to organization.

relationship with them.[7] Embedding librarians and library specialists in the project also changed the students' perception of the library from a mere repository for books to a dynamic and responsive hub of resources, expertise, and services. After working together on this project, librarians also better understood the challenges professors face in the classroom.

Surprises

The pilot project brought many surprises for all. For the course instructor and library team, the first surprise was that those students who signed up for the archival-digital option were not savvy about the use of digital media nor were they skilled in thinking visually, despite the fact that they were constant users of the Internet. For the students who thought the project might be easier than writing an essay, the surprise was that most of the same requirements obtained: a thesis was needed; material had to be researched and winnowed, analysed, then edited to retain both a clear focus and a coherent narrative. Thus, the strongest projects emerged from the strongest, most disciplined, students.

Traditionally working alone on their essays, literature students found it challenging to adjust to working in groups.[8] Especially novel was the experience of working with three sets of professionals: the instructor, librarians/archivists, and media specialists. The usual trials of working in groups—not everyone contributing equal weight to the project—was compounded by communication issues. Students carried over their informal and sometimes erratic style of communication from other digital platforms (e.g., Twitter) into emails directed to professional staff at museums, archives, and other institutions. They often forgot to copy each other on emails and thus, occasionally, work was duplicated by these inadvertently closed-off communication channels.

On the plus side, as the students happily explained at project's end, in the process of undertaking archival and digital work they were discovering themselves—that is, the formation of their Canadian identities through the prism of Shakespeare. They were also discovering their own blind spots: their preconceptions and biases. For example, working from their own limited experience with Shakespeare, one group of students presumed that parodic versions of Shakespeare from the 1950s (such as those by Wayne and Shuster) had been created in order to make Shakespeare "relatable" and "less threatening"

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[7] See the latest iteration: https://uottawa.libguides.com/shakespeare-cdn
[8] In the last iteration (Winter 2019), two students strongly insisted on being the sole creators of their projects. Interestingly, these were not nearly as successful as the group undertakings. The idea of negotiating and sharing information with others, and working through the various elements seems to have been a key factor in the success of projects.

to their audiences, since this is what they believed were today's theatrical, cinematic, and even pedagogic, goals. It did not occur to them until prompted to review earlier educational curricula that, in fact, parody was only possible because a good swath of television-viewing audiences already knew their Shakespeare and enjoyed seeing his works being "sent up."

Unquestionably the greatest surprise of all was the fact that each and every one of the students in the first group became enraptured by work in the archives, that is, by dealing with analogue rather than digital material. Their reflective papers commented on the excitement of sifting through boxes of documents, making discoveries, and feeling great pleasure by literally touching scraps of Canadian history. One example will suffice here. Throughout their concluding public presentation, the theatre critics group continually referred to the subjects of their study by their first names: Nathan and Urjo. When queried about this, they explained that, through the process of sorting through documents from the most mundane to the significant, they felt that they had come to personally know Nathan Cohen and Urjo Kareda. Canadian history and Shakespeare's role in Canadian cultural life—they insisted—became "real" to them in a way in which no previous research essay had been able to achieve.

Another aspect of the project that was universally commented on was the opportunity to share their research and creativity with a broader audience, not just with one reader (the instructor), as is the case with a research paper. As Jennie Long, one of first group of students noted, "by learning to use online visualization platforms, such as StoryMapJS and Gigapixel.com, we were able to make our content more accessible to a broader public…. This exploratory way of learning makes my work more accessible—for the first time, I've been able to show my friends and family what I'm learning and working on in my studies at uOttawa" (2).

For the course instructor and the librarians, yet another surprise was students' sustained engagement. Although each group project was designed to take up 30 hours of students' time, in each case it ate up considerably more; in at least two cases (according to students' own estimates), over 100 hours. They attributed some of the extra hours to the learning of new platforms and programs, to solving technical challenges, and to correcting errors. But the overwhelming number of hours was, astonishingly, freely given over to archival work above and beyond the requirements of the project. Not only did students appear not to resent the extra time spent but they enthusiastically revelled in its challenges. They were discovering Shakespeare for themselves. In carrying out this research, they learned about Canada's history—their history, their selves—and the many roles that Shakespeare played in it. As their final reports indicated, they claimed that they would do it all over again. This claim was subsequently borne out when some of the students did indeed take up similar projects in the next few years.

Enthusiastic about expanding their skills in a digital environment, they came out of this project with a passion for working with archives which some have already taken further, to the graduate level. The energizing factor of the project thus seems to have been not the digital but rather the reciprocal relationship between analogue and digital. We may conceive of this connection as a Moebius strip: the archival documents they discovered spurred on their research which, in turn made them think creatively (How to transfer this information into a visual form? How to create a narrative arc from these documents?); and then technologically (What platforms, what data management systems would be needed to make this work?). The opportunity and ability to reach a wider audience—one which could both appreciate and also critique their work—added further stimulus to ambition.

The success experienced with this first cohort of students was inspiring and resulted in the decision to carry on the project for another four years. It also led to the initiation of a new collaborative research project, *Shakespeare in Canada: A Cultural Map*, an online interactive cultural map and timeline of Shakespeare's presence in Canada which will eventually be made available in an open-access format to researchers around the globe. For the course instructor, it opened up the pleasures of working and teaching in a new way. It also opened up a new field of inquiry—Shakespeare in the Arctic—the result of the students' discovery in Library and Archives Canada of an 1853 playbill of *The Taming of the Shrew* onboard the *HMS Resolute* searching for the lost Franklin expedition.

Challenges and Obstacles

Despite its many successes and pleasures, the pilot project did not come without challenges. The obstacles encountered provided an opportunity in the following years to refine the pedagogical approach and improve the students' learning experience. As already suggested above, communication presented one of the more significant challenges. Because students required more support than was expected, mandatory weekly meetings were introduced to provide a venue to give and receive feedback on their projects. The weekly meetings held outside of class time were well attended but scheduling of many different timetables proved to be problematic. In a further iteration, to alleviate such scheduling issues, weekly meetings were replaced by the addition of workshops and troubleshooting sessions during class time. In 2019, Discord, a free, open online voice- and text- chat application that enabled real time communication between the students, the instructor, and the library team was also added. Discord allowed participants to communicate with each other and share links, images and text files. It is accessed through a web browser or by downloading the desktop or

mobile application. The class Discord community was also used as the main course communication method by the instructor. Despite a slow start, students eventually embraced this mode of communication. Its possibility of rapid feedback was particularly helpful in responding to questions about cataloguing and software troubleshooting.

Another significant challenge was student time management of the projects. To underscore the importance of responsibility and accountability as an essential part of any collaborative endeavour, students in the second iteration of the project were required to submit a detailed work plan with deadlines and deliverables. This approach produced mixed results and highlighted the difficulty students experienced when tasked with scaling their projects. The work plan was subsequently removed as a requirement and replaced by more restrictive assignment guidelines. These included the simplification of metadata requirements (cataloguing now occurring directly in Omeka using a simple Dublin Core schema); fewer and more pointed project themes and fewer choices of archival collections; and a restricted number of plugins. The new prescriptive project parameters allowed students to experiment with archival material and digital tools, and stretch their creativity while reducing the anxiety they had experienced, which was associated with a steep learning curve and with the logistical components of the project.

The librarians, in consultation with the course instructor, produced an extensive, detailed online manual for the students, guiding them every step of the way in the project, specifying dates and deadlines; contact numbers and people; providing cataloguing information and numerous examples; correct citation format, and so forth. Ironically and unexpectedly, most students kept forgetting to consult the online guide. As a result, in the last two iterations of the project, a printed manual was provided which the students did indeed consult.

In the early iterations of the project, librarians and research assistants were able to take the students to visit the archives (the teaching and administrative schedules of the course instructor prevented her from doing so). In the last three iterations, however, the archival-digital component was thoroughly embedded in well-spaced out three-hour seminars. This opened up the opportunity for the instructor to oversee and participate in every aspect their projects: from the classroom, where they studied theories of adaptations, translation, and archival research; to the archives; and the workshops, where they were assisted in researching their topics and shaping the narrative of their exhibits.

A final challenge should be mentioned. The organizational effort of introducing an archival-digital component into course work is time-consuming. The collaborative team of archivists, librarians, and media specialists must be set up well in advance; project themes, articulated; fonds pre-ordered; workshops scheduled; a step-by-step manual, written; and, of course, the material for

theoretical, historical, and textual study in the classroom must be prepared. Yet, as has been suggested above, the massive preparation required was amply compensated by the response of the students. Here are some of the most recent reflections about the project from students in a graduate seminar, Shakespeare in Canada:

> Shakespeare is a way to define who we are and where we are going. This vivacity that Shakespeare has in adaptation has really stood out to me this semester. I think that this is in part because of this project and witnessing first-hand the ways that every theatre production opens up to so many personal interpretations. This is true of the project itself too. …To me, this collaborative effort feels very true to the spirit of theatre as well, as the nature of this project reflects the infinite versions of Shakespeare born out of so many individual factors, wills, and circumstances…. This semester has really driven home for me a personal, not universal Shakespeare…. This course and this project for me, have been steps in discovering my own Shakespeare, and I have been reminded throughout the semester of why finding that relationship is so meaningful. Thank you to everyone involved for this opportunity. I have really enjoyed and appreciated it. (Evonne Downer)

> One of my favourite parts of working on this project was the element that was necessarily collaborative. Any digital humanities project is inherently interdisciplinary, meaning that people undertaking such work will have the opportunity to learn new skills and work with people that they might not encounter in the normal research. (Kaitlyn Arsenault)

> This project was a big learning curve in many ways, as I had to adjust my expectations of what was normally expected of me in a literature class to something entirely new. Without the standard critical essays as assignments, I was able to "stretch" different scholarly "muscles" and learn how to work within a new context of theatre and digital humanities. I was also excited to learn about archival work and to be able to visit the archives both at the University of Ottawa and the National Arts Centre. This class has now made me strongly consider a future career in information technology or as an archivist and I am excited to learn more about the fields. Working on digital platforms such as Omeka and StoryMap was also an adjustment, but it was interesting to learn the technology and create something for the public eye. The use of this technology also allowed for us to work with our archival sources and research in creative and interpretive ways, which resulted in an eye-catching and informative visual project. This project and class ultimately demonstrated that there are thousands of possibilities and opportunities for scholarship when working with Shakespeare, especially in today's modern technological age. (Kristyna Frenken-Francis)[9]

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[9] Students cited in this article have given permission to have their comments used in this article.

Conclusion

The sustained enthusiasm of the participating students demonstrates the visual and tactile appeal of teaching with collections. As digital humanities programs continue to gain momentum both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, initiatives such as the *Shakespeare in Canada* project will become more common in humanities classrooms. As such, it is essential to continue to seek out and develop new and unexpected collaboration between faculty, libraries, archival institutions, and museums. These partnerships offer students access to a wealth of artefact collections and create innovative learning opportunities that emphasize personal connections with the humanities.

A concluding but, by no means, final note on this topic: In the institutional rush toward embracing the digital and transforming our humanities programs, we might wish to rethink some of our assumptions about what students need and from what they might derive most satisfaction. The digital world does open up various doors; it breaks down barriers between instructors, archivists, librarians, and students. It enriches the students' experience of university. It challenges them to talk to and seek help both from each other and from others. Yet, as the results of this pilot project and its subsequent iterations have also suggested, the old "technology"—archives, museums, libraries—can be not only the impetus for creative and historical awakenings but also the rich medium with which students can still fall in love.

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Theatre Strikes Back in the Digital Era:
An Interview with Stephan Wolfert[*]
The interview has been conducted
by Maddalena Pennacchia (Roma Tre University)

Abstract: In this edited interview, Stephan Wolfert, American actor and playwright, talks about his pluri-awarded play, *Cry Havoc*, a one-man show he has been performing since 2012 with several variations through the years; the play is autobiographical but it is also the exemplary story of many US veterans who cannot find a way to readjust to civilian rules once they come back home. The play tells of Wolfert's struggle with Shakespeare's words in order to find his own voice to speak what could not be said differently: his own trauma. By bringing to the fore a number of veterans in Shakespeare's plays, starting from Richard III to Hotspur, Henry V, Coriolanus and many others, Wolfert fascinatingly lights up corners of the Shakespearean macro-text which we knew were there without really seeing them. Wolfert's approach, in his show as well as in the use of Shakespeare within the DE-CRUIT Veterans Programme he founded, highlights the importance of human interaction through the mediation of the most ancient among media: theatre. Shakespeare's writing for the theatre, with its characteristic intermedial quality (as it is suspended between page and stage) and cross-cultural inclination (as it has travelled the world), reactivates a holistic sense of the body and, in so doing, it channels powerful and deep physical emotions that can be expressed and shared with mutual benefit by actors and audience alike within the safe communication environment of theatre. Wolfert's work makes the most of all this and even puts Shakespeare's language to a therapeutic use for US veterans.

Keywords: *Cry Havoc*, trauma, DE-CRUIT Veterans Programme, Stephan Wolfert.

Introduction

Born in the period of early print culture, when there still was a strong residual orality, Shakespeare's writing is ontologically suspended between page and stage and thanks to this 'intermedial quality' it has easily adapted to each new analogic medium that has appeared on the communication scene: from popular

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[*] Stephan Wolfert is an American actor, writer, and director; founding Artistic Director of Shakespeare & Veterans and creator of the DE-CRUIT Programme.

press, to cinema, to the radio and television. But it was with the digital turn, at the end of the last Millennium, that Shakespeare's writing started to freely circulate across the whole communication circuit; a circuit whose junctions were made of media that only then could speak the same binary language, thus enabling any message to be digitally remediated and consequently transmitted globally within a network of interrelated platforms (Pennacchia 2012, 13-51).

Within this digital scenario, where screens have increasingly become the principal mediators of Shakespeare's language, Stephan Wolfert's work appears as extremely innovative for getting back to the medium-specificity of theatre. In fact, theatre *is* a medium (and probably one of the most ancient at that) firstly because it always re-presents human experience as mediated, but also because it has developed its own representational techniques and communicative technologies, as well as its privileged channels, that is the *loci* where actors and the audience meet. True as it might be that the word "theatre" comes from the Greek *theaomai* (to behold), communication in theatre does not limit itself, for those who attend, to "seeing" what the actor is doing on stage: the space of performance expands beyond the stage to include the audience who is there, a group of sentient bodies ready to react with all senses to what psychologists call "emotional contagion". Bruce McConachie explains this phenomenon from an anthropological standpoint maintaining that: "[w]e evolved from creatures that traveled in groups, and the need for solidarity forged through emotional contagion to enable everyday cooperation and defense against predators remains a strong part of our evolutionary heritage" (67-68). In fact, a theatre audience not only experiences feeling, which is a bodily response that can be triggered and enhanced by closeness, but emotion, that is what Erin Hurley defines as "an act of interpretation of bodily response," which is largely cultural and therefore extremely variable (19); more importantly, emotions possess a relational quality, as Hurley contends: "if emotion is made in the relationship between stage and audience (the stimulus and the receiver, if you will), it cannot simply be projected by actors and caught as the same emotion by the audience. The theatre's emotional labour, then, is, in part, a negotiation" (20). And it is exactly this emotional negotiation, via Shakespeare's language, that stands at the core of Wolfert's work.

Stephan Wolfert, American actor, writer and director, was in the US Army from 1986 to 1993 as a Medic and Infantry Officer, and left his military career after attending a performance of *Richard III*, as he himself tells us in his autobiographical one-man show, *Cry Havoc*. A journey into the author's heart and mind, looking for the human being behind the trained soldier, *Cry Havoc* follows a thread of Shakespearean words leading to the re-opening of shut alleys in the brain: and it does so by way of emotional negotiation and bodily closeness. Wolfert rewrites and performs the story of his life by re-enacting Shakespeare's many veterans: from Richard III to Antony, from Coriolanus to

Henry V and many others, and he thus discloses for his audience a completely unknown world; at least unknown to those who are not familiar with actual war and the military; so, it aims at building a community of spectators who, as human beings, social actors and political subjects, will hopefully become more mindful and attentive to the condition of veterans.

The beneficial effects of the arts, and in particular of theatre, in the treatment of stress disorders have long been acknowledged, but not only is *Cry Havoc* a show that affects as deeply its spectators as it does the artist that each time performs it; thanks to Stephan Wolfert's indefatigable energy and vibrant devotedness to the veterans' cause, *Cry Havoc* has also been turned into a "method" to be transmitted to other veterans in order to help them out of their trauma via the DE-CRUIT Programme https://www.decruit.org/about/.

I had the privilege to attend Stephen Wolfert's play on January 21st 2019, during the first edition of the *OnStage! Festival* in Rome (produced by KIT Italia, i.e. Laura Caparrotti and Donatella Codonesu) at the Off/Off Theatre http://onstagefestival.it/festival-2019-2/. Struck by his performance, which has been defined as "a militant show, at the end of which Wolfert took serious responsibility for his theater and for the emotional pain he might have caused" (Compagnoni), I invited him to deliver a talk to students at Roma Tre University and on that occasion I asked him to be interviewed; he accepted and I here report the edited version of that deeply engaging conversation, which has helped me seeing theatre in a new perspective. After that, Stephan Wolfert featured as special guest of the International Conference ESRA 2019 (European Shakespeare Research Association), held at Roma Tre (co-convenors: Maria Del Sapio Garbero and Maddalena Pennacchia) http://esra2019.it/; his much acclaimed performance of *Cry Havoc* was hosted at the Roma Tre Palladium Theatre on July 10th 2019.

I would like to express here my heartfelt gratitude to Stephan Wolfert for his extraordinary generosity in sharing his thoughts and experiences.

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Maddalena Pennacchia (later as MP): *Let's start from the title of your play:* Cry Havoc*. It is a quote from Shakespeare's* Julius Caesar*; why did you decide to use it? What does this phrase mean to you?*

Stephan Wolfert (later as SW): The phrase is lifted from one of Mark Antony's speeches in *Julius Caesar*: "Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war" (2:1:275). Most people, even people who don't know Shakespeare, recognize it, and especially veterans. It is an ancient military order: "cry" meaning "yell," and the word "havoc" meaning "devastation," or "the rules of war no longer apply." There are many phrases and words on different continents and in different

cultures that mean the same; in spite of what the actual words are, when you cry to break the rules of war the implication is that *there are* rules of war in the first place, and that there have always been, even in ancient warfare. I think that's something that's lost for the average modern person; today people think rules of war have been established only at a certain point, say from World War I, but they have always existed.

MP: *So, you say that there have always been rules of war, but at the same time those rules have often been transgressed. Can you further explain why it is so important for you to make people aware of such a dynamic?*

SW: The reason is that we should bring war closer to people who don't experience it first hand; especially in the United States. Other than 9/11, we've not had any hostility in our country either in our time, or in our parents' or our grandparents' time; actually, not since the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. So, we're in some way distant from it. The question is: how do we bring war closer to people? Theatre helps to do that.

MP: *I agree. Pragmatically speaking, theatre can play a crucial role in today's fragmented society, because no other medium can engage to such a degree participants in political contents as a group of people who, by sharing an aesthetic and knowledge experience in the same place and at the same time, are turned into a community of interrelated and interacting bodies; while I contend this, I am also aware of the on-going debate on the definition of presence and live-ness (especially in relation to the audience) in the challenging context of the digital and social media culture (Purcell). Notwithstanding the remediation drive which has affected theatrical practices—as, for instance, the filming, registration and/or broadcasting of live or quasi-live productions—(Pennacchia 2017), however, I believe that theatre as a medium 'in presence' still best contributes to realize Aristotle's ideal of the human being as* zoon politikon*, a being that is capable of feeling as well as reflecting on his/her own actions, laws, and habits together with his/her fellow creatures; and for what I've seen of your approach, in your show you enhance both the tendency to create a community and the interactive characteristics which are intrinsic to this medium by entering into a direct dialogue with your audience.*

SW: Yes, this happens before the show and in the talkback afterward, when I nudge the audience into making questions and being involved. And people often ask "what does 'cry havoc' mean?" Then we can discuss what it means to throw out the rules of war; what it means to rape, pillage and burn. That is, what happens when civilians are no longer treated as civilians. What does it mean to give certain orders and send men and women, even men and women who train for war, to do that and then ask them to come back into society: that's a lot! In fact, the original title I had chosen was *Cry Havoc and Now What?*: "we've gone

to do this; and then? What the hell do we do?" Actually, I don't even know if there are rules of war anymore; I mean, we establish them but then … drones, bombs, as I say in the play, are havoc themselves; they don't discriminate between combatant and non-combatant, they just kill everyone on their path indiscriminately. So, isn't that havoc? And every time we drop a bomb, what were the rules of engagement for that? Well, it turns out—and I say it as someone who was in the military—there are different rules of engagement, different determining factors as when to use a missile vs when to send a squad of rangers or a SEAL team. And who decides that? It's not the civilians, it's the military. I want this stuff out in the light, I bring it up so that we can all have this conversation and involve at a deeper level everyone that should be making that decision.

MP: *It seems that Shakespeare was well aware of who was making the decisions with respect to the rules of war.*

SW: Even though it's most famous for being quoted by Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*, "cry havoc" is a phrase that is used directly or implied almost in all of his history plays and some of the tragedies as well. In *Henry V*, that's what Henry V is actually saying outside at Harfleur: "you know, you have two options: surrender now or I'll cry havoc." He doesn't say the phrase, but he says "I will let my men do whatever they want, as soon as we get into the gates—and we will get into the gates"; he says: "[I will let my soldiers d]efile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters; / Your fathers taken by the silver beards, / And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls, / Your naked infants spitted upon pikes, / Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused / Do break the clouds" (3:3:35-40); that's havoc, that's throwing out the rules of war. It's in many of Shakespeare's plays, wherever there's combat, either formal or informal.

MP: *Yes, and the moment in your show when you perform these words is almost frightening: it is in that precise moment that you break more evidently the fourth wall by physically invading the audience's space [see Figure 1]; moreover, by dangerously approximating your body—vibrating with the prospective devastation pictured in Henry's words—to those of the audience, you produce what Bruce McConachie calls "emotional contagion" or "the millisecond triggering of mirror neurons in many spectator brains interacting together" (67); there and then spectators are brought to understand, through the experience of so many men and women in the military you represent, that the horror of "havoc" can happen any time in real war depending more on the convergence of heterogeneous factors than on the decision of single leaders; so, while we are there participating in your performance, crying and laughing with you, we are prevented from just enjoying a well written piece of drama which*

Figure 1. Stephan Wolfert. *Cry Havoc*. Rome. OnStage! Festival. January 2019.
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draws inspiration from Shakespeare! Through the engrafting of Shakespeare's words into real military experience we, as audiences, are exposed to the naked truth that the rules of war have been established at the beginning of human history and since the beginning of human history have also been disregarded. We are shocked by a truth so terrible that we would prefer to shun it, we would rather not to look at it but, in the end, we are forced to experience that truth at a deeper psychological level. To this purpose I'd like to point out that, in the article by Alisha Ali and yourself (2019), there is a very effective use of psychologist Keith Oatley's theory of "imaginative simulation"; I was particularly struck by Oately's definition, in one of his articles, of Shakespeare's plays as "simulations of the interactions of people in their predicaments so that the deep structure of selfhood and social interaction becomes clearer. […] As we run such simulations on our minds, we not only experience the emotions and hence the urgency of the human vicissitudes and dilemmas that cause them, but we are enabled to reflect on them in such a way as to create deeper level mental models of ourselves and others" (Oatley 33). I think your show urges the audience to build new "mental models" out of sheer emotion; in other words, not only do we, a freshly built community of spectators, put ourselves in the shoes of veterans from a deeply emotional standpoint, but we also start to

speculate at a higher intellectual and ethical level: "what would I do in the same situation? Is there a right way or a wrong way to behave, and how do I decide between them?" What interests me here is, of course, that your privileged tool to achieve such an ambitious result in your spectatorship is Shakespeare. Why Shakespeare?

SW: There are so many reasons. Reason number one is history; at the time when Shakespeare was writing his plays about war, we learn that Elizabethan England was in two wars: one in Ireland, a nine-year unconventional warfare that was similar, I'd say, to Americans' *guerilla* with Vietnam and Afghanistan; and one with Spain, a conventional 'On-Again Off-Again' war of the kind we've had, for example, in Iraq. In his book *1599* James Shapiro describes how, as England was preparing to fight the Spanish Armada, working-class men had to leave their trades—the yeomen, the farmers, the blacksmiths—to be part of the military. So, Shakespeare could actually meet many veterans in his own time and he wrote about them perfectly! The best example of Shakespeare really understanding the veteran experience is Lady Percy's speech to her husband in *Henry IV, Part I* (2:3:32-59); Hotspur has just come home from combat and is leaving the very next morning, and she starts asking him a series of questions. Jonathan Shay, a famous psychologist who worked for many years with Vietnam veterans, wrote a book called *Achilles in Vietnam* (1994), where he takes those lines, puts them in a grid, and next to each question made by Lady Percy to her husband lists symptoms out of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) describing the PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder): why don't you sleep? Why don't you eat? Why are you melancholy? Why do you curse? Why do you stare all night looking out of the window? Why do you start for all those loud noises when you're sitting all alone? Four hundred years ago, Shakespeare laid out in verse what veterans are still going through today! So, here's the second reason: veterans get it that Shakespeare is writing about their experience.

MP: *I see your point: Shakespeare lived in times of war and, since he is a matchless playwright at inventing characters with complex feelings and thoughts, he is also peerless at representing the psychology of veterans he could actually observe around himself in Elizabethan England and thus, to put it in your own words, he creates a "resonant trauma-infused language" (Ali and Wolfert: 61) which can be used effectively in therapeutic practices by today's veterans.*

SW: Precisely, and on this I will say more in a moment. Another reason to choose Shakespeare is verse itself: the [blank] verse is written in the natural human rhythm of heartbeat and breath: there are five important stresses in each line and roughly five heartbeats per line, and then we take a breath. Now, if we look at military training we see that the "manipulation" of breath (if I can use

this word for the sake of argument) is done basically in the same way: when they train us to fire a weapon—of course, they take people who've never fired a weapon before—they teach us to breathe in and then breathe out, stay empty, squeeze the trigger in between our heartbeats... pop... breathe in, exhale, acquire the target, squeeze the trigger between heartbeats… pop… it's that… precisely! Look at when we run or march together, we're in a rhythm just like the [blank] verse, we all breathe in together at the same time and we all sing together in a verse format. In the DE-CRUIT Programme we're teaching veterans to breathe together, which is something that's familiar to them, but now they're doing it with poetic lines describing their experience.

MP: *So, what happens when you teach veterans how to "manipulate" their breath to deliver Shakespearean lines instead of firing a weapon?*

SW: There are a couple of things that happen here: when veterans are using Shakespeare's verse to voice their experience, they are provided with enough aesthetic distance from their trauma, especially in the case of severe trauma, to actually allow themselves to speak it: "it's not me, it's Hamlet asking 'to be or not to be'; sure, secretly, I may have been suicidal and wondered these same questions, but I've never set these out loud." So, Shakespeare's character works as an avatar, it allows a barrier between the person who speaks and the people who might judge him or her. When veterans say the line, they can see people responding and also accepting the character who speaks, because that's what happens in theatre—the communalization of trauma: a person sharing a deep personal truth directly to a room full of strangers…which, by the way, is what Shakespeare's soliloquies were: these characters went out in front of a group of strangers and worked out their problems; they didn't say I've got all the solutions, they were asking "what do I do?" Here is Claudius, for example: "And like a man to double business bound / I stand in pause where I shall first begin, / And both neglect" (*Hamlet*, 3:3:41-3); Claudius is asking: "What do I do? I can't pray and I can't forgive myself, what do I do?" So, veterans get to do this through one of Shakespeare's characters, but with that buffer; at the same time, Shakespeare's poetry puts them in a heightened state—by which I mean that it puts them in a state that feels like life or death but it isn't; we know the binary in the military—kill/ don't kill, life/ death; here it feels like that, but it is not, so we learn to live in between that binary, where heart exists. That place where "it feels like it, but all I do is to follow the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse and I'll be okay." Shakespeare provides the form for veterans to share their experience, to be in that heightened state, to be received and yet survive it.

MP: *It feels like a very powerful method!*

SW: Yes, you just have to follow the format; while it may be very traumatic at the beginning, because sometimes the verse stirs so much stuff that veterans—

we—want to follow our usual coping mechanism (close off, crunch up and stop breathing), the verse forces us to breathe in and speak the next line, and go to the end of that soliloquy in *Hamlet* or of Sonnet 35 ("No more be grieved at that which thou hast done"), and by the end we've purged the poison, as Yvette Nolan has taught me; we get rid of everything, we've spoken the unspeakable, as Tina Packer says; the taboo is out there and now I see that the audience receives me. But most importantly, and that's the final thing, because of that breath and rhythm that Shakespeare provides, the body is forced physiologically to stay in association or regulation, we are not allowed to disconnect from ourselves, we are forced to stay in coherence, which also then teaches the body: "Oh, I *can* talk about this and survive; Oh, I *can* remember these intense emotions and feel them fully and survive and not let them determine how I'm going to behave, but just share it." Does this make sense?

MP: *Yes, it makes a lot of sense! That's exactly how Aristotle's catharsis works. But I am very interested in the fact that you said you've learnt it from Native Americans (you were talking about Yvette Nolan, one of the founders of Indigenous Theatre in Canada). Did I get it well?*

SW: Yes, I've been lucky enough to be mentored by Yvette Nolan up in Canada, she's from the Algonquin Nation, and Randy Reinholz, who's Choctaw from modern day Oklahoma but he is in Los Angeles now. I have been working for more than a decade with two Native Americans theatre companies: Native Earth in Toronto (Nolan) and Native Voices in Los Angeles (Reinholz). Just being in the room with them and seeing them embrace theatre as a medicine was a privilege; I mean, in Art School I heard it all the time: "theatre is therapeutic but not therapy"; but what the Native American community says is "yes, it is therapy!" We would work on incredibly horrific stories: there's one play called *Tombs of the Vanishing Indian* by Marie Clements and even remembering that play just breaks my heart, and makes me so emotional; but after working on that for eight hours or more, what they did was—in their tradition—going around the fire in circle; and each nation went in a different direction, in a rhythm, while singing a song—I don't even know what we were singing or in which native language, it turned out it was a kids' song—but, when we got done, I felt better. We went through something horrific for about eight hours and then in three to five minutes, by just doing the song with the dance and the circular movement, I felt better, not just better, but better than when I had entered the room. That's just one example of how I was able to watch those people embrace theatre as a form of medicine and how I tried to glean as much as I could from them without taking—everything that I use is with permission, because my ancestors did nothing but genocide and stealing from their ancestors; I asked if I could use the term "medicine wheel," because we circle a lot, and the Native American community gave me permission to do so; I wanted to make sure that everything I did was with their blessing.

MP: *This kind of ritual can indeed be medicinal, and it seems to me that such a respectful borrowing from the Native Americans' heritage has allowed you to create a fascinating cross-cultural practice, embracing the local tradition of medicinal performance to make it dialogue with the European theatrical tradition of Shakespeare, who inherited, thanks to the resurgence of* humanae litterae *in Elizabethan England, the tradition of the Ancient Roman theatre, and the Greek cathartic theatre before that; so, what you are describing is a beautiful interaction between different heritages and traditions, all aiming, from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and beyond, at experiencing theatre as a meaningful social tool, as catharsis or medicine or therapy. From what I've read about recent developments of the DE-CRUIT Programme (Ali et al.), hard sciences have also recently entered the picture in order to try and measure the effectiveness of the method you've been elaborating once you started your collaboration with the Department of Applied Psychology at New York University.*

SW: Actually, one of the best books to begin to understand what's going on with the veterans I'm working with is Bessel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*. He somehow convinced a number of people who were severe PTSDs to volunteer and have CT scans and FMRIs (real-time, three-dimension pictures of the brain) while they were re-experiencing their trauma. The pictures showed that their brain didn't realize that they were here and now, safely in a hospital room and in a machine—it's a scary machine, but it's not life or death. This means that the brain shuts off, relives that experience, and takes back the body to that place: the heartbeat is the same as when that happened—the respiration; the chemical distress hormones, adrenalin—everything that happened at that time is now pulsing again through their body. So, how do we stop that? There are a lot of practices like chi-gong or yoga that ask us to ground and breathe, plant our feet on the floor, realign our spine, get our body back in the position in which it works best, which is its natural position. So, we're not doing anything really new: these are ancient practices and they do work, they do begin to calm the brain, the heart and the body down, but they don't bring the body back to "coherence" or back into regulation. With the DE-CRUIT method, however, by speaking in the verse rhythm and using Shakespeare's texts, we begin to turn on parts of the brain that had gone offline due to trauma, for example Wernicke's and Broca's areas—these are the areas that are linked to the production and comprehension of speech; that's why yelling to someone with PTSD "Calm down!" doesn't work, because their brain is not even registering the sound of those words. But breathing by the verse rhythm and speaking Shakespeare's texts (which is a foreign text even for an English native speaker) force these areas to come online, to try and understand "what is that? What does that mean?" And then to speak it out loud requires a different part of the brain. So, slowly, just by speaking a Shakespearean monologue, we see that the brain

comes at least relatively back online, at least enough to be here and now and not living in the past; or, in worse cases—which is not a bad thing—here and now and *also* there and then.

MP: *The areas of the brain you have mentioned, if I understand well, are areas that have suffered damages from trauma, and they are actually linked to the production and understanding of both spoken and written language. What I find of extreme interest is the fact that, in the wake of your practical experimentation with Shakespeare and grass-root work with veterans all over the US and, later on, through the collaboration with applied psychology academicians at New York University, you have developed a theatre-based therapy for veterans that uses Shakespeare's 'trauma-resonant' monologues to reactivate their capacity to speak their own trauma in a group (and so listening to and being listened by others) and then re-write the monologue 'in their own words' (thus producing a text that will be read and then spoken by another member of the group). In combining theatre-therapy with self-narrative written activities, you work on the four linguistic abilities: speaking and listening, reading and writing. I was struck by the fact that veterans gradually learn to use a figurative language that they apprehend from Shakespeare (not only from reading silently but from speaking Shakespeare's words aloud) and thanks to the use of metaphors and symbols they can articulate what they feel and cannot literally say, and that's how they start to improve (Ali et al.: 10). This takes us back to your own use of Shakespeare in* Cry Havoc*; would you say that you adapted his texts to your own life-story when you wrote the show?*

SW: It's not a direct adaptation but a borrowing of his brilliant words in the way I think, feel and see them and generally always have, even in graduate school: in the play, I talk about how in graduate school I was different from my classmates because I responded differently to certain stimuli; but something I don't talk about in the play is that I saw most of the texts differently from my classmates: we worked on *Henry V* and what I saw was them responding the way most Americans do, "yes, we're right to invade this country"; even with progressives and liberals, and even though they're not imperialistic by nature, they got into that excitement of thinking that in order to lead a bunch of men and women into war all you got to do is being motivated enough. But that's not what the text was for me, the text was very personal: in the Feast of Crispin's speech, when Henry's saying "look, it's really unlikely we're going to survive this and those who do will carry the scars and in the scars the memories of each person here." And that, as you can see now, did resonate very deeply with me; it wasn't a rousing speech, it was much more sombre, it was: "if there's anyone I'm going to die with, it's this group here. We may not have chosen the fight we're in, but we're here and I'm glad I'm experiencing it with this batch … we few, we happy few, we band of brothers (*Henry V*, 4:3:60)". That's how it resonated with me.

MP: *You also reprise* Coriolanus *in your show, and you see the eponymous protagonist of the play as a* berserker*, someone who is easily possessed by a frenzy of combat.*

SW: I have seen *Coriolanus* done so archetypical, with Coriolanus as this guy that hated civilians and civilians hated him, and the politicians hated him, and the civilians hated politicians; but what I saw was someone who was sixteen years old when he was placed in a combat. What does that do to someone who's developing at sixteen? And in that first battle against Tarquin's army, he's cut three times (potentially mortal wounds), meets Tarquin himself face to face and, by the way, had to kill three people with a sword, and now is facing this demi-demon of Tarquin and kills him. That's at sixteen years of age, then he goes on to fight seventeen more years of combat. He doesn't sound like somebody who's going to be able to come home and adjust. Even in classrooms or rehearsal rooms I don't see Coriolanus examined as a human being, as a young boy who lost his innocence. But then when Vietnam veterans, who were thrown from the age of seventeen or nineteen into combat, read his speeches, they get it; they seem to say: "I know what that is like. I know what that 'I banish you' speech is about"; because Vietnam veterans came home and were treated horribly and got the double moral injury of combat and being banished by their countrymen and countrywomen. And then there's the part when Coriolanus goes to Aufidius, his enemy: when I'm working with civilians and other actors, they don't see what I see; what I see is two men who fought each other, hated each other's guts, but understand each other more than any other living human being including their wives. By the way, there are studies on this behaviour saying that men and women who fought in the military have a deeper connection with the men and women they fought with than their own siblings or their own spouses. There's something that happens in those extreme conditions of war and training, for war creates a closer bond; Shakespeare got this, but people in the rehearsing room don't seem to get it from the text. Think also of Othello and Iago; I did this play in graduate school and we did a lot of talkbacks, and in every talkback that I can recall civilians would ask: "I don't understand how Othello believes Iago." But when I started experimenting with veterans who didn't know Shakespeare at all, I gave them extracts of the play and said "read it out loud to each other, what do you think it means? What are the relationships? Who is who?" By the third time they had read the extracts, they got it; they figured out that these are comrades: Othello and Iago, who fought in at least four campaigns together (Iago says so); and they see that Othello cannot but believe his comrade-in-arms, when he says "are you sure about your brand new, younger wife that you don't know very well?"

MP: *Actually, you are right: Othello is a soldier to the bone, how can he not believe Iago who is the comrade that shared life/ death situations with him on*

the battlefield? This might indeed be a new perspective to shed light on features of Shakespeare's characters that have so far been read differently or even neglected...

SW: … as I told you, Shakespeare was surrounded by veterans and he understands them perfectly!

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Hamlet, or about Death: A Romanian *Hamlet* directed by Vlad Mugur (2001)

Abstract: This essay looks at the 2001 Romanian production of *Hamlet* directed by Vlad Mugur at the Cluj National Theatre (Romania) from the perspective of geocriticism and spatial literary studies, analysing the stage space opened in front of the audiences. While the bare stage suggests asceticism and alienation, the production distances the twenty-first century audiences from what might have seemed difficult to understand from their postmodern perspectives. The production abbreviates the topic to its bare essence, just as a map condenses space, in the form of "literary cartography" (Tally 20). There is no room in this production for baroque ornaments and theatrical flourishing; instead, the production explores the exposed depth of human existence. The production is an exploration of theatre and art, of what dramatists and directors can do with artful language, of the theatre as an exploration of human experience and potential. It is about the human condition and the artist's place in the world, about old and new, about life and death, while everything happens on the edge of nothingness. The director's own death before the opening night of the production ties Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with existential issues in an even deeper way than the play itself allows us to expose.

Keywords: geocriticism, *Hamlet*, Vlad Mugur, Shakespeare production, Shakespeare in Romania, spatial manipulation.

Looking at the cover illustration of *Shakespeare Quarterly*, representing Arnold Schwarzenegger as Hamlet in John McTiernan's 1993 film *Last Action Hero*, one cannot help thinking about the unusual elasticity of this play and the possible representations of its hero in intermedial contexts. It has become a commonplace by now to argue that the play's theatrical illustrations serve as a mirror powerfully reflecting contemporary concerns, be they social, political, scientific, or moral. According to what Manfred Pfister has called "the law of diminishing returns" (296), the more information scholars gather concerning

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a certain play or theme in Shakespeare, the less insight is offered into the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. I intend to take a step further along this alienating path of diminishing returns, regarding productions this time, and focus on the director rather than on the increasingly nebulous subject, "Shakespeare," or the even more problematic *Hamlet*. As William B. Worthen states, the director is perceived as anchoring the slippery text somewhere between "fidelity" and "creativity" (48). Since it is a common fact that the director's understanding of the play's meaning is hermeneutically shifting on a continual basis, this essay follows the virtual adoption of this particular play and its production on a personal level by a Romanian director.

I take this distinct production of *Hamlet* by Vlad Mugur[1] as an example of "literary cartography" (Tally 20)—a form of dramatic mapping that has a specific impact on the audiences in different periods because of the spatiality represented on stage in a condensed manner. Robert Tally explains that "adventure stories illustrate and enact the project of narrative mapping by foregrounding in their own aesthetic projects the exploratory, representational, and projective or speculative modes of cartographic theories and practice" (20). Extrapolating this statement from narrative to drama, I see productions of Shakespeare's plays as dramatically re-enacting and re-mapping the specific modes of the production of culture at a certain time, in a certain place, and even by a particular director. Besides exploring, representing and foregrounding the aesthetic characteristics of a specific culture, each Shakespeare production displays the potential to reconstruct—in an abstract manner—the metaphoric space of the play in such a way as the audiences perceive it as if they were in the middle of that particular space. Rather than simply rendering the metaphoric space of the play in different cultures and languages, each particular production re-creates a form of literary cartography in which Shakespeare's and Hamlet's names have become abstractions necessarily attached to the cartographic space of that production. For this reason, I see each Shakespeare production as a form of intermedial literary cartography: the representation moves from the "original" Shakespeare playscript to the first level of abstraction, achieved through the translation in the language of a particular production; then to a second level of abstraction introduced by the director's personal choices in point of setting and

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[1] The 2001 production of *Hamlet*, directed by Vlad Mugur at the Cluj National Theatre had the following cast: Hamlet (Sorin Leoveanu); Claudius (Bogdán Zsolt); Polonius, Lord (Anton Tauf); Horatio (Emanuel Petran); Laertes (Radu Brânzaru); Rosencrantz (Stelian Roşian); Guildenstern (Dan Chiorean); Osric (Petre Băcioiu); A Priest (Maria Seleş); Marcellus (Melania Ursu); Player King (Melania Ursu); Player Queen (Miriam Cuibus); Old Player (Ion Marian); Prologue, Lucianus (Ruslan Bârlea); Two Clowns Gravediggers (Miriam Cuibus and Ruslan Bârlea); Fortinbras (Mihai Costiug); Gertrude (Elena Ivanca); Ophelia (Luiza Cocora); Old Hamlet's Ghost (Liviu Matei).

acting. The theatrical space represented through the newly-devised mapping of a Shakespeare play exposes these levels of abstraction and, as I suggest, a third additional element: personal events in a director's life may be added to the specific mapping in a production.

The appropriation of *Hamlet* for subversive ideological purposes under communism and after was a common practice among Romanian directors.[2] Similarly, directors of the 1990s and the 2000s refused to replicate the romantic nineteenth-century interpretations of the hero, except for contrastive representations of theatrical practices. However, *Hamlet* has never been taken to mean so personally to a director as in this production directed by Vlad Mugur at the Cluj National Theatre in 2001. Mugur knew that he was dying and he chose to direct *Hamlet* as a final celebration of his artistic activity and a theatrical statement of continuance. Apart from taking over a new interpretation of *Hamlet* (in 2001) as a remake of his own version of 1971; apart from devising a new Romanian version of the play compiled from various extant translations, plus his own; and, finally, apart from entering his last energies as a director in shaping this production—a kind of Romanian Prospero whose every third thought was his grave—Vlad Mugur remapped the space of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the specific conditions that suited the trajectory of his life. Even the fact that he produced this last swan-song play at the Cluj National Theatre—the place of the first Shakespeare rehearsals during his youth—was an eloquent document in this personal reconfiguring of Shakespeare's emblematic play.

Unusually for Romanian directors and theatres, this particular production is exceptionally documented. There is a documentary book about this production, entitled *Vlad Mugur: spectacolul morţii* [*Vlad Mugur: The Spectacle of Death*], edited by Marta Petreu and Ion Vartic (the manager of the Cluj National Theatre), and a video recording of the rehearsals. In a discussion with his assistant director Roxana Croitoru, documented in the book, Vlad Mugur says, "When you have reached my age, you will have known that nothing is for ever! You are not allowed to by-pass *Hamlet*; it is a chance in a lifetime for you. It is a challenge for me too. I *had to* do this production" (Mugur qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 143).[3] In this particular case, we see that "Shakespeare" was needed, not as a banner to legitimise contemporary cultural or political debate, but as an ontological support to justify a director's life dedicated to the theatre. Mugur perceived *Hamlet* as a self-identifying concept and the existential marker of an aporetical limit. Thus, in this particular case, the true Shakespeare exists, not like a Platonic Ideal Form, as an accepted but ultimately arbitrary hypothesis of no fixed habitation, and not even as an example of what others think Shakespeare

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[2] For various Shakespeare productions in communist Romania, see Matei-Chesnoiu, *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory* (70-90).

[3] All English translations from Romanian are mine.

is. In Mugur's case, *Hamlet* comes to represent the vehicle for an individual's intimate relationship with his selfhood, his private existence, and his immediate death. It is as if Hamlet knew he would be dying and he staged the Mousetrap as a symbolic theatrical ceremony of his own death. Who can say it might not be so?

Vlad Mugur (1927-2001) was a Romanian-born director who worked most of his life in the German Theatre. Vlad Mugur's career as a director started in the fifties in Romania, when he directed at the Bucharest, Craiova, and Cluj National Theatres. In 1965 he became the director of the National Theatre in Cluj and he held this position until 1971, when he defected to Italy, and then he went to Munich, Germany. In 1971, when he wanted to direct *Hamlet* at the Cluj National Theatre, the communist authorities proscribed the rehearsals because the production was too politically revealing and subversively critical of the regime. In a seditious phase, Mugur emigrated to Italy and then to Germany, directing plays produced at the theatres of Munich, Konstanz, Hanover, Esslingen, Münster, and Bern. After the fall of communism in 1989, he returned to Romania and directed plays in Bucharest (The Odeon Theatre), Craiova, and Cluj. In March 2001, at the Cluj National Theatre, in an attempt to bridge a thirty-year gap, Mugur decided to approach *Hamlet* once more, in a symbolic gesture of theatrical self-reflexivity. The *avant-première* of this production was on 22 June 2001, on his 74th birthday, and Mugur died exactly one month after that, on 22 July 2001, at his home in Munich. When, in October 2001, the Cluj National Theatre inaugurated the official opening night, the director's presence was only symbolic, a disembodied spirit hovering over an empty seat. He might have appeared as a ghost haunting the theatre, together with Old Hamlet's Ghost, and joined by the ghosts of all *Hamlet*s produced at this theatre and elsewhere, viewed or created by this director or others.

Considering that there is no stable text for his production of *Hamlet*, Mugur generated a collated script, combining the seven extant Romanian translations and even forging some phrases in his own version. When his assistant director presented him with a revised translation of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, combined from the extant Romanian translations by Nina Cassian, Ion Vinea, Vladimir Streinu, Leon Leviţchi and Dan Duţescu, Mugur was not completely satisfied with it. Roxana Croitoru admitted she had viewed the Shakespeare text from the philological perspective, focusing on grammatical and lexical accuracy, while the director looked at the scenic script from the theatrical viewpoint. Looking at *Hamlet* in this light, as Shakespeare might have done, he said he needed to decontaminate the script of all the heavy metaphors, leaving space for the direct theatrical expression and the text's dramatic "nerve" (Mugur qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 109). Mugur said to Roxana Croitoru that he was in need of a more recent translation because the latest one dated from the 1970s and was done by Alexandru Pop especially for Mugur's *Hamlet* of that time (1971). However, according to the director, that particular translation was

a romantic Romanian version, and "romantic" productions do not work for audiences these days (Mugur qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 109). Therefore, though the script revised by Mugur was an accurate translation in blank verse, the parts of the Shakespearean play were severely cut and concentrated, so that, at some points, the dramatic exchange takes the form of light repartee. For instance, Polonius' line "For this defect effective comes by cause" (2:2:103)[4] becomes, in Mugur's Romanian script, just "*Efect–defect*" [Effect–defect] (Mugur 45).

The script mentioned above, in a translation by Vlad Mugur and Roxana Croitoru, is composed of two parts; part one has eight scenes, and part two has seven scenes. The "To be" soliloquy, for instance, is a multiple dialogue initiated by a contemplative character, Lucianus, the Prologue, who acts as Hamlet's *alter ego*. Positioned at Part 1, scene 6, after Hamlet's "Hecuba" speech, the "to be" exchange was a lesson in reflection and endurance served to a disconcerted Hamlet by Lucianus, Second Player, First Player, Horatio, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz and, ultimately, Polonius. As in a sophisticated golf game—and golf was another hidden theme suggesting psychological tension and release— these characters took over the stroke-play in turn. They informed Hamlet of the potentially lethal dimension of human existence, of the dangers of to die, to sleep, and the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns. The Players' intimations about death were friendly, almost parental, spoken in a soft voice, and they were read from the production's play script. The shuffled pages suggested the transition from play-text and script to actor, director and, finally, theatrical performance. Moreover, the First Player who spoke these weighty verses (Melania Ursu, an actress) was wearing a nondescript raincoat, as most characters associated with Hamlet did, but this particular player sported the long white scarf that had come to symbolise the director's distinctive costume as a theatrical prop. While the actor-director-substitute in the play lectured Hamlet about death, sustained by a variety of actors interpreting other characters in the play, and while Hamlet played the director in staging the Mousetrap, the real-life director, Vlad Mugur, staged a representative Shakespeare play that anticipated symbolically his own death.

The sets were a construction site, a world that was being built and rebuilt continuously before the audience's eyes. This was the only symbolic section in the production that might be interpreted as having a contemporary cultural and political connotation, since Romania in the transition phase of the 1990s was a place where old institutions had been demolished and many were under construction. At the beginning of the play, the curtain was up and some actors were among the audience. The first scenes were played against a white screen (suggesting all possible film adaptations of *Hamlet*) and the actors were

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[4] References to *Hamlet* are to the *Arden Shakespeare*, edited by Harold Jenkins (1993).

sitting at a long table on stage, reading their parts from the play script. The Shakespeare text was conceived initially as the blank reading of a script and the director saw this activity as a form of therapy with the audience, to whom an important message was being communicated (Mugur qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 113). At one moment during the production, however, after the ghost scene, the script matured into performance: the written text became theatre. Before this crucial moment, the actors had been on stage or among the audience as actors interpreting a script. The reading came alive gradually, as the actors became characters in performance, an action triggered by the Ghost's entrance.

The Ghost's apparition was the ghoulish image of a semi-decomposed cadaver, whose head exposed a strange system of pipes, revealing an outlandish human anatomy. Old Hamlet's ghost appeared from a construction scaffolding on the left of the stage, emerging in a cloud of plaster debris, cement dust, and fumes, and exited through an improvised workers' elevator within the same structure. Everything is under construction, in real life and in the world of the play, and each character is reclaiming another Eden. Cement, dust and lime were the main symbols in this production, and Mugur said that the white powder was almost as dramatically suggestive as blood because it assaulted the audience's senses, irritating their nostrils and throat, and making them feel empathy with Hamlet's drama. Indeed, when sitting in the first row (as I did when experiencing this production in February 2002), the stingy smell of cement dust was really irritating and I felt revolted at this aggressive mise-en-scène. I even started coughing because of so much cement dust, which reminded me of the ordeals suffered during the process of having recently renovated my apartment. Thus, the experience of my life was added to the tragedy of Hamlet's history.

In the rehearsal notes, Mugur said he would not focus on the philosophical aspect of the play because, in any case, the tragedy breathed metaphysically and the contemplative area was evident (Mugur, qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 119). Moreover, the director wanted to avoid the temptation of producing the play in the romantic-philosophical mode and thus he focused on the "situations" (Mugur, qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 120). As regards the text, this situation-oriented form of acting needed to preserve the rhythm of the verse, its cadence, and not its fluency. Therefore, the actors were instructed to act the script by breaking the verse into short utterable units, thus departing from iambic pentameter verse. By avoiding the cadence of the original verse-form, Mugur said, the actors would learn to circumvent the text and evade the risk of giving the impression that they were over-dramatizing an obsolete spectacle in the romanticised mode. This "running away from the traditional verse-form" (Mugur, qtd. in Petreu and Vartic 121) was, in Mugur's perception, a valid means of asserting the spectacle's modernity, by showing a break with the convention of the romantic-mode interpretation of *Hamlet*. Mugur has coined the traditional declamatory interpretation of former times as "tăirist" (Mugur, qtd. in

Petreu and Vartic 126),[5] a term that suggests the notion of larger-than-life acting meant to impress the audience with emphatic tones. By contrast, his Hamlet (Sorin Leoveanu) spoke with the intimacy of normal conversational flow but had the effect to hit the audience in the solar plexus.

The space of the stage was of maximum ascesis, the "bare stage" (Ichicawa 86) of the public playhouse in the original staging of plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as documented by Mariko Ichicawa in *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (2013). Ichicawa focuses on "the relation between onstage and offstage spaces and on the audience's awareness both of the imaginative world created by the play and the wood, lath and plaster reality of the playhouse itself—that is to say, the balance between fiction and the theatre" (Ichicawa 1). This is similar to the abstract space of the *The Tempest*, in which the bare island symbolized the bare stage, which was then gradually peopled by characters created by the actor/playwright/stage manager; this production's director was, like Prospero, managing everything and making exciting things happen. In this Romanian production, however, we were in the baroque-style National Theatre of the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca, with its red-velvet seats and carpeting and the gilded-plaster ornaments on the balconies. However, the red plush carpets were covered with dirty plastic foils reeking of paint, so the impression of an unfinished project-in-the-making was overwhelming, though disagreeable. These are the trappings of creation—in playwrighting as well as in directing—when the unfinished business of the theatre must pass through intermediate stages of refashioning before it becomes the apparently coherent object that we think we have: the playscript. Yet this seemingly completed artefact is in continual rehearsal, until what we think to be the finished production emerges.

The nunnery scene was a dynamic duo exchange in which Hamlet played the aggressive ego trying to subdue the girlish Ophelia, who had just discarded her virginity veil and tutu ballet skirt and tried to defend herself from Hamlet's dart-words. The tutu symbolized the romantic theatrical interpretations of Ophelia and her innocence, while in this scene she discarded these romantic appropriations and lay frightened and defenceless among the debris of the construction site. Ophelia also lay prone among the scattered pages of the playscript, while the book from which Hamlet had been reading his "Words, words, words" (2:2:192) was the much-annotated play-text of *Hamlet*, marked

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[5] "Trăirism" [philosophy of living] was an inter-war literary trend in Romanian criticism, mainly promoted by philosopher Nicolae C. Ionescu (1890-1940), which professed an attitude inspired by the so-called "life philosophy" (from philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Spengler, Bergson, etc.). The critical trend focused on proclaiming the primacy of living over the intellect. The term was coined by Romanian critic Şerban Cioculescu, who translated from German the term "Lebensphilosophie" (philosophy of living) (Călinescu 915; 953).

with yellow sticky notes at the significant passages (probably the actor's annotations for the role of Hamlet). This self-reflexivity highlighted, once more, the transition from the so-called "Shakespeare" text and the infinite variants of its production, as manifested through acting and directing. The ladders and incomplete scaffolding in the background created the unfinished and potential space of performance, while the two classically-designed columns on the left of the stage reminded that the book about the "satirical rogue" (2:2:196) that Hamlet was reading might have been the Greek philosopher Aristotle, or the Latin poet Horace, or none of them. Yet all could see that Hamlet's audacity and cynical philosophy was rooted in classical thought.

Sorin Leoveanu as *Hamlet* and Luiza Cocora as Ophelia in the 2001 Production of *Hamlet* directed by Vlad Mugur at the Cluj National Theatre.
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In distinguishing between text and performance and showing how the script was turned into theatre, Mugur warned about the hybrid nature of drama, which since the nineteenth century had created inconclusive debates in the separate fields of performance and text, viewed in an intermedial context. Through this production, Vlad Mugur indirectly commented on how Shakespeare was evoked to authorise the critic, or the director, or received notions of theatrical practice. According to his notes, Mugur wanted audiences

to infer from this spectacle the state of alienating insanity we would all reach if confronted with exceptional circumstances, blurring the border between normality and the pathological. The basic premise in this production was no longer that of the author at work, but that each theatrical text was always already contextually (re)constructed. Mugur's production of *Hamlet* discriminated between page- and stage-views of the play, each claiming a unique fidelity to the elusive "Shakespeare," whose plays had been reconfigured in various media. Mugur exploded the naïveté of both views, which were misleading for readers and audiences alike. There is no clear answer as to Mugur's response regarding the validity of one view or another, but the explanation lies in the director's choice of the author and play. In choosing Shakespeare and *Hamlet*[6] as the ultimate theatrical statement of a lifetime dedicated to the stage, Mugur deftly choreographed the semantic slippage that resulted from all these definitions and re-definitions of what others thought Shakespeare was. He tied up the dialogic uncertainty with a final conclusive category: death, his own. Like life and the theatre, death just is.

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[6] For online Romanian reviews of this production of *Hamlet* see Marina Constantinescu, "Hamlet sau despre moarte," *România Literară* 27 (2001), https://arhiva.romlit.ro/index.pl/hamlet_sau_despre_moarte; Bedros Horasganian, "Julieta, Ofelia, Romeo şi Hamlet," *Observator cultural* 93 (December 2001), https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/julieta-ofelia-romeo-si-hamlet/.

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Renfang Tang[*]

East Meets West: Identity and Intercultural Discourse in Chinese *huaju* Shakespeares

Abstract: This article examines two *huaju* performances of Shakespeare—*The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (2007) and *King Lear* (2006), which are good examples of cultural exchanges between East and West, integrating Shakespeare into contemporary Chinese culture and politics. The two works provide distinctive approaches to the issues of identity in intercultural discourse. At the core of both productions lies the fundamental question: "Who am I?" At stake are the artists' personal and cultural identities as processes of globalisation intensify. These performances not only exemplify the intercultural productivity of Shakespearean texts, but more critically, illustrate how Shakespeare and intercultural discourses are internalized and reconfigured by the nation and culture that consume and re-produce them. Chinese adaptations of *Coriolanus* and *King Lear* demonstrate how (intercultural) identity is constructed through the subjectivity and iconicity of Shakespeare's characters and the performativity of Shakespeare's texts.

Keywords: *huaju*, Chinese Shakespeare adaptations, *Coriolanus*, *King Lear*, intercultural performance, identity, politics.

Foreign Shakespeare performances in different cultures offer new perspectives on the understanding and interpretation of the plays, and illustrate the on-going cultural exchanges between the playwright and the indigenous theatres as well as their audiences. In China, the majority of Shakespeare productions have been in the form of *huaju* 话剧 (spoken drama), a genre that developed in the early twentieth century on the model of contemporary Western theatre (Chen 1-55). *Hua* simply means "dialogue" and *ju*, "drama." The term *huaju* emphasized dialogue as the primary artistic medium—a language of colloquial, everyday speeches that could comprehensively portray contemporary life and express modern ideas, as opposed to the ornate poetic language of verse and song in *xiqu*

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戏 曲 (sung-drama/traditional opera). *Huaju* was performed in vernacular Chinese and thus accessible to the masses, and had immediate political application. A genre born from the intercultural discourse between China and the West, *huaju* is an interesting field to explore the encounter of Western and Chinese cultures, ideology, conceptions, and aesthetics. Shakespeare is one of the major influences on the *huaju* theatre. During the twentieth century, Chinese practitioners accorded Shakespeare a special status among foreign playwrights.

This article will bring together intercultural theory and practice to make a close analysis of two *huaju* performances of Shakespeare, *Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan* (*The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 2007), a Mandarin adaptation by Lin Zhaohua for the Beijing People's Art Theatre, and *King Lear* (2006)*, a Mandarin-English bilingual production by Chinese-British director David Tse Ka-shing. The two productions premiered at approximately the same time, and later toured China and the UK. They are good examples of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, integrating Shakespeare into contemporary Chinese culture and politics. Of more importance is that the two works provide distinctive approaches to the issues of identity in intercultural discourse. At the core of both productions lies the fundamental question: "Who am I?" At stake are the artists' personal and cultural identities as the processes of globalisation intensify. The question is as urgent for contemporary translators, directors, and audiences as it is for the protagonists in *Coriolanus* and *King Lear*. The study of these *huaju* adaptations allows us to re-examine and interrogate the dynamic intercultural relationship between Shakespeare and specific historical, cultural, socio-political, and dramatic contexts, and enables us to investigate the current condition of globalised Shakespeare. Chinese adaptations of *Coriolanus* and *King Lear* demonstrate how (intercultural) identity is constructed through the subjectivity and iconicity of Shakespeare's characters and the performativity of Shakespeare's texts.

"I play the man I am":[1] *Coriolanus* with Chinese Characteristics

Coriolanus has received large critical attention in the West, especially in relation to its politics and the psychological complexity of the protagonist. Performances of the play have demonstrated similar concerns. By contrast, Chinese study on the play is scant, and rarely has *Coriolanus* been produced in the PRC. So far, there has been only one stage version (the 2007 adaptation titled *Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan* 大将军寇流兰 [*The Great General Coriolanus*] by Director Lin Zhaohua for the Beijing People's Art Theatre). *Coriolanus* was performed on the 20th and 21st of August in the Edinburgh Playhouse as part of the 2013

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[1] The quotation is from *The Tragedy of Coriolanus,* 3.2.13-14.

Edinburgh International Festival.[2] What is attractive and modern is that two heavy metal bands—*Zhixi* 窒息 (Suffocated) and *Tongyang* 痛仰 (Miserable Faith)—are integrated into the performance. The production in Beijing and Edinburgh is not just about a Chinese director and a group of Chinese actors celebrating a particular love of Shakespeare. As an intercultural adaptation, it is about bridging cultures through mutual identification. For instance, the huge crowd scenes in *Coriolanus* are something with which many Chinese people would identify. The idea of a noble hero and the sacrifices of the individual for the betterment of a society are familiar to the Chinese audience, since there are many analogous figures in Chinese history. In addition, the motif of a dominant mother and her obedient son is also very Chinese, because in Chinese culture, filial duty is so important and audiences would certainly relate to Coriolanus's devotion to his mother—the only person who appears to have any real influence upon his decisions. In spite of the affinities, the elitism of Coriolanus and Volumnia, and the view of the masses as ignorant, selfish, corrupt, and easily manipulated are contrary to Mainland China's political ideology. What in *Coriolanus* attracted the director Lin was the alienated relations between the hero and the common citizens, which led to his downfall. Lin said to Andrew Dickson of *The Guardian* in an interview, "In ancient Rome, people admired

Figure 1. Pu Cunxin (Coriolanus) and Li Zhen (Volumnia) in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. (Courtsey of Beijing People's Art Theatre)

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[2] Programme notes.

heroes. From my point of view, Coriolanus is a hero" (Dickson, 2013). The director had no purpose of pushing the common people onto the centre stage, as Bertolt Brecht did in the 1950s. What the production focused on was its tragic personae. The Chinese title of the production "Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan," literally meaning "The Great General Coriolanus," refers to the Roman hero and conveys respect for the protagonist. Although it was set in ancient Rome, Lin agreed with Dickson that the play has a resonance with contemporary China, "It is a good phenomenon if the play refers to current events. Those in power like to control citizens, and some common citizens are foolish" (Dickson, 2013).

The Shifting Politics

Known as Shakespeare's most political play, *Coriolanus*, like the Chinese historical play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* emerging in mid-twentieth century China,[3] is always politically sensitive and has strong echoes of contemporary society. At its core are the questions of authority, democratic franchise, freedom and submission that are of eternal relevance to the discussion of political ideals. The play's themes of popular discontent with government are dangerously contemporary. In Communist China, the resonances of the play can easily become explicit. Lin, however, has claimed not to be interested in politics or applying any particular agenda to his production. Lin prefers to embody his innermost personal world and aesthetics via various theatrical methods rather than to attempt to reflect political problems. Yet *Coriolanus* is an interesting choice for a director who repeatedly insists that he is not political, especially if viewed as part of the triptych of his other Shakespeare appropriations, his *Hamlet* (1989), and *Richard III* (2001). As scholars Li Ruru (2003) and Alexa [formerly Alex] Huang (2009) have explored in relation to Shakespeare in Mainland China, and Dennis Kennedy (1993) has explored in relation to

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[3] Hai Rui (1514-87) was a Chinese official of the Ming Dynasty. In China he has been remembered as a model of honesty and integrity in office. A play based on his career, *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, gained political importance in the 1960s, during the Cultural Revolution. An article entitled "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office" was written by Communist Party official Wu Han in 1959 and later made into a Peking Opera play. Wu's play was interpreted by the Gang of Four member Yao Wenyuan as an allegorical work, in which the honest moral official Hai Rui representing the disgraced communist marshal Peng Dehuai, who was purged by Mao after criticizing the Great Leap Forward. According to Yao, the corrupt emperor in Wu's play represented Mao Zedong. On November 10, 1965, an article in a prominent Shanghai newspaper, "评新编历史剧《海瑞罢官》" [A Criticism of the Historical Drama "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office"], written by Yao, began a propaganda campaign that eventually led to the Cultural Revolution. Yao's campaign led to the persecution and death of Wu Han.

political Shakespeare behind the Iron Curtain, sometimes simply the act of putting on a particular play is the political comment and metaphor.

What parallels can be drawn between Shakespeare's Rome and contemporary China? A reviewer of the performance at the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival found that there were "echoes of the Cultural Revolution in this Chinese company's Shakespeare" (Hoylewith, 2013). The programme notes for the Edinburgh run told audiences that the translator Ying Ruocheng's and the director Lin Zhaohua's shared interest in this play, about a leader devoured by the masses he arrogantly believes he is leading, could be attributed to their personal experiences in the Cultural Revolution—during which numerous short-lived demagogues from different factions were destroyed. The patrician ruling class both courts and despises volatile masses prone in their turn equally to street celebration and angry violence. The production thus emphasized the rise and fall of demagogues. While some spectators readily identified the tribunes with wretched and meddling functionaries in work clothes, the older generation saw in their diction and demeanour unmistakable references to the radical Revolutionary Committee members during the Cultural Revolution.

The production opened with hungry plebeians rising up against the Roman patricians for the mounting price of grain. In the performances in China, Lin recruited a hundred migrant workers, including plasterers, cooks, guards, and so on, to play the plebeians, clearly placing Roman history in the context of China today. The migrant workers, wearing sack-cloth tunics that could barely cover their work clothes, struck audiences as the most authentic *people*. With their shy, embarrassed, flabbergasted expressions, the migrant workers did not mean to be dramatic. These non-professionals stand for commonality not to be ignored. The hybridity of classic and modern struck the audience immediately as the rioting Roman plebeians were accompanied by three guitarists rocking and rolling onto the stage (Figure 2). The noisy music was not only a signification of rebellion, but also a symbolic voice of the angry crowds. Into this confrontation strode the arrogant martial hero Caius Martius (Pu Cunxin). The conflict between the plebeians and Caius Martius started from his first entrance, where he greeted the plebeians as "dissentious rogues, / That rubbing the poor itch of your opinion / Make yourselves scabs" (1.1.164-66). The opening scene made conspicuous the conflicting relationship between Coriolanus and the common people. The latter called Coriolanus the "chief enemy to the people" (1.1.5-6), thought it a threat for their life to have Coriolanus in their country and resolved to get rid of him. Although they recognised his merit on wars, they could not bear his pride any longer. The protagonist stood aloof against the citizens, which showed his alienation and foretold his downfall. Dramatic tension was sustained as to what would become of this riot and how the avant-garde application of band music by the director would fit into the performance.

Figure 2. *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* by the Beijing People's Art Theatre

In presenting the confrontation between the citizens and Coriolanus, it was perhaps not difficult for the Chinese migrant workers to play the plebeians of Rome *en masse*, as they were presenting their own identities on the Chinese stage, in other words, playing the men they were. Like the seventeenth-century England, in today's rural urbanization in China, millions of farm labourers have been forced off their farms, flooding into cities and becoming the so-called migrant workers. They make a living in the cities by working long hours but getting low wages. A new industrial working class, transformed from agrarian labourers, has therefore come into being in Chinese society.

In China today, practitioners of pure art profess to be independent from everything they place under the rubric of politics. However, this loudly expressed desire for freedom from a defunct ideology is just a facile ploy to cover their inability to commit to any cause, or to make any intellectual impact. To compensate for an ineffectuality of mind, they emphasize aesthetic appeal. While the Chinese *Coriolanus* is a conventional interpretation in the eyes of many Western critics, its *mise-en-scène* has been influenced by traditional Chinese theatre, which did not come across adequately to the Western audience.

Simplicity of the Stage

Designed by Yi Liming, the stage presenting the Roman tragedy was very simple. With white lighting, a bare stage stretched all the way to the brick walls at the rear, beside which leaned several scattered ladders. The climbing up and

falling of men at the backdrop enacted an imagination of soldiers launching attacks onto the city wall. The design had absorbed not only Western aesthetics, but also the essence of traditional Chinese theatre, specifically the assumptive nature of the stage. In traditional Chinese theatre, as well as in Western spoken drama, actors are the emphasized centre of the stage, whose performance should be integrated with setting and music. Jerzy Grotowski defines the theatre as: "what takes place between spectator and actor," so that "all the other things are supplementary—perhaps necessary, but nevertheless supplementary" (Grotowski 982). Peter Brook also defines theatre as the interaction between actor and spectator: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across his empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (Brook 7). He further develops his idea in *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* and puts forward the notion that if a theatre director wants to compete with a film director, he has to adopt empty space instead of a realist setting (Brook 39). Lin's simple stage, in a way, bears resemblance with Grotovski's "poor theatre" or Peter Brook's "empty space," whose stage, unlike the realistic stage, which attempts to create an illusion of life, is often bare of decorations. However, the idea of Yi Liming's design, I believe, did not derive from Grotowski or Peter Brook, but from the tradition of Chinese theatre. For *Coriolanus*, Yi divided the stage space into three parts: the apron stage, the centre and the back stairs. On the apron stage (see Figure 3), there was a long wooden table with seven chairs behind and two

Figure 3. The Apron Stage in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*

on both sides, all facing the audience. This arrangement was adopted twice to set the capitol of either Rome or Volsce. When the table and chairs lowered and became invisible to the audience, the apron stage joined the main stage and the spot before it then turned into a battlefield to hide the Roman soldiers. Above the centre stage, a five-column movable frame could rise up to symbolise either the city wall of Corioles or the Roman capitol in the scene of Coriolanus's triumphant return. On the back stage, there were several ladders leaning against the backdrop, suggesting the inside of Corioles or the market place where citizens gather. Lin's simple stage, similar to the empty stage of traditional Chinese theatre, ensured flexibility in narration. It projected an ensemble of theatrical codes, open to interpretation. The stage space was at the same time the icon of a given social or socio-cultural space and a set of signs aesthetically constructed in the manner of abstract painting (Ubersfeld 101). While leaving room for the audience to reflect upon what they perceived, the assumptive nature of Lin's stage produced spatial metaphors to serve the purposes of his adaptation.

Estrangement Effect in Acting

In the Chinese *Coriolanus*, instead of creating the illusion of the war scene, Lin chose to demonstrate it by means of the Brechtian estrangement effect. The estrangement effect (German: *Verfremdungseffekt*, or simply V-effect), more commonly known (earlier) through John Willett's 1964 translation as "the alienation effect," is a performing arts concept developed by Bertolt Brecht. To alienate an event or character, in Brecht's view, means to strip the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and create instead a sense of astonishment and curiosity about events, so as to show at once their present contradictory nature and their historical cause or social motivation (Brooker 215). In 1935, Brecht saw a Peking Opera performance in Moscow by famous female impersonator Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), and ultimately confirmed the realization of his theories of *Verfremdungseffekt* taking the example of Chinese performance art. In a famous essay on "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" published in 1936, he described the effect as "playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious" (Willett 91). Thus, the Brechtian theory of *Verfremdungseffekt* owes much *to xiqu*戏曲 (Chinese opera), to which Lin Zhaohua has also paid tribute. For Brecht, Chinese opera seemed so unrealistic that he assumed that both the actor and the audience were distanced from emotional involvement and freed for critical, rational analysis (his major interest). However, what seemed

strange and unemotional to Brecht was moving and believable to the Chinese. Many Chinese theatre artists and theorists advocate a frontal, presentational acting style, episodic structure, the dialectical juxtaposition of disparate ideas and elements, and a clear awareness of theatre as theatre (manifest in such strategies as stylised gestures, mime, on stage musicians, direct address to the audience, song). Highly influenced by the theatrical traditions of *xiqu*, Lin Zhaohua required actors in *Coriolanus* to "be" the characters they play and at the same time to keep a distance from them (Lin 55). While seeing the performance, audiences could obviously notice traces of the characters' acting. In the battle scene at the city of Corioles, Coriolanus delivered his encouragement or rather his threats to his Roman soldiers in a carelessly detached manner. He calmly watched his soldiers rushing into the battlefield and stood with his back to them. Likewise, his counterpart, the Roman general Titus Lartius remained in silence, stage left. The battle started without their active participation. Five Volscian senators, who stood on the platform hanging above centre stage to indicate the city gate of Corioles, shook their heads and bodies as reactions to the seeming attack. When the Romans began to retreat out of fear, Coriolanus cursed them even more severely than before, calling them curs, "souls of geese/ [t]hat bear the shapes of men" (1.4.34-35). However, the actor Pu spoke these lines quickly but not angrily as Shakespeare's text indicates, as if he was not really offended by the coward crowd. Coriolanus then led another charge, was shut into the city, and fought all alone. Upstage, audience members witnessed his slowed-down

Figure 4. The war scene in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. Photo credit: Huang Zhe / Xinhua

combat with the Volscians. Through making strange the performance, the director therefore provoked, in his audiences, reflections on what they would in Naturalistic theatrical conditions have normally taken for granted. Inspired by the stylised acting of *xiqu* performance, Lin's production did not create the illusion of the war full of blood and danger, but held the attention of audiences upon the actors in performance, rather than commenting on the war itself.

Heavy Metal as Soundtrack

The most discussed innovation was Lin Zhaohua's incorporation of two heavy metal bands, Miserable Faith and Suffocated, into the production, used not only as incidental music but as a metaphorical battle of the bands between Coriolanus/the Romans and Aufidius/the Volscians. The two bands were pulled on and off stage on bare metal platforms, creating a visual battle of the bands, representing the tension between the common people of Rome and the reigning nobility who must ultimately work for the voices of the powerful masses. The metal score created punctuation for the battles and the bloody politics of *Coriolanus*, interjecting riffs to create drama and tension.

Both in its performances in China and at the Edinburgh International Festival, the use of two heavy metal bands in this Shakespeare production received much critical attention and many voices were heard. Dominic

Figure 5. Pu Cunxin (Martius) and Jing Hao (Aufidius) combat with microphone
in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*

Cavendish of *The Telegraph* found it an "arresting concept" evoking "China's tumultuous embrace of Western influences" (Cavendish, 2013). However, Brian G. Cooper of *The Stage* complained that in Lin's *Coriolanus*, a production transferred from Beijing (unlike the National Theatre of China's *Richard III* devised for 2013 Globe to Globe), the "uniquely Chinese theatrical influences are conspicuously absent throughout (Cooper, 2013). These rock bands reminded me of the musicians in Peking Opera, who often sit on stage left, wearing normal street clothes. Chinese audiences are quite familiar with seeing the musicians appearing on the stage together with the actors. While lutes and flutes often accompany Shakespeare, musicians of Peking Opera play *jinghu*, a small, high-pitched, two-string spike fiddle, to accompany performers during songs, and they clash cymbals whenever a general or king enters the scene. Therefore, this supposedly Western-style production is rather more Chinese than some critics give it credit for.

To sum up, Lin appropriated Shakespeare's Roman play on modern Chinese stage to cater for local audiences' understanding. Not only did all the characters speak Mandarin as an identity of Chinese Shakespeare, but also there were obvious Chinese characteristics: the images of migrant workers as citizens and the influence of traditional Chinese theatre on its *mise en scène*, which familiarize the Chinese audience with the Western other. The irony of the plebeians who have a power that they have no power to claim for can be identified from the migrant workers who in a people's republic are still living marginalized lives. The simplicity in the stage design emulated that of the traditional Chinese opera stage. Modern acoustic techniques, i.e. heavy metal, brought about the effect of disharmony. The ancient Shakespearean setting mirrored modern globalising society. The old philosophical question of "who am I" is re-enquired repeatedly when individuals are struggling for a clear identity. Lin's presentation of Coriolanus's titular-self projects a common dilemma in modern society, in which there is a duality between what might be considered by any given individual as ideal and what is politically and socially expedient and practical. Coriolanus's failure in "authoring the self" reveals the stupidity of modern man as an existential being, who believes in the freedom of the construction of identity by the individual, unhampered by the constraints of the political ideologies and power structures within which his existence is embedded. For the director, it was a successful endeavour to appropriate this less-performed Shakespearean play for the modern Chinese stage. Lin's production not only enriches Shakespearean scholarship in China; providing a Chinese vernacular in the global market of Shakespearean performances, it also sets an inspiring example for intercultural theatre practice in the future.

"Tell me who I am":[4] Searching for Identity in a Bilingual *King Lear*

Bilingual and multilingual theatre is a new form of Shakespeare performance that has emerged in the past few decades. As directors and theatre companies move ever more freely across national boundaries, linguistic difference is called upon to be the marker of the contentious space between cultures. As a play about the emptiness of words and the failure of language to express the existential angst of naked human existence, *King Lear* is a useful platform for experiments with multilingual theatre. The problematic nature of cultural re-inflection, marked through strategies of linguistic deferral, continues to resonate in British-Chinese director David Tse's 2006 Mandarin-English production of *King Lear*. Co-produced by Tse's London-based Yellow Earth Theatre[5] and the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, it was an exhilarating but challenging collaboration between artists from completely different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Following Shakespeare's text with a modern twist, interwoven with Chinese lines based on Zhu Shenghao's translation, it brought together a mixed cast of Chinese and British actors to perform in their native tongues and explore the question of the translatability of cultures. Tse relocates Lear's story to a futuristic Shanghai of 2020, which is set as one of the world's business and financial centres. Lear is a wealthy and powerful Chinese tycoon whose business empire spans continents. In his Shanghai penthouse on the 188th floor, Lear calls a video conference to decide how his global business empire will be divided among his three daughters. While justifying their inheritance, the two elder sisters flatter their father in elegant Chinese but English-educated Cordelia, no longer fluent in her father's tongue, says "Nothing." The loss of face sends Lear into a spiral of fury and madness. Hence, the story of Lear became one of both domestic struggles and international corporate wars. The audiences were led into a vicious and visceral world where greed and ambition turn sister against sister, and child against parent. The supposedly more civilized world that is closer in time to the world of the audience than either Shakespeare's England or his historical setting for *Lear* is still just as haunted by betrayal, lust and murder as Shakespeare's.

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4 The quotation is from *King Lear* (1.4.34).

5 A touring theatre company, established in 1995 by five British East Asian performers to raise the profile of British East Asian theatre. The company tours nationally and internationally, and produces quality ensemble physical work, using performing traditions of east and west and to celebrate the meeting of different cultures. It has become the UK's only revenue-funded British East Asian touring theatre.

Figure 6. The love test scene in *King Lear*, dir. by David Tse, 2006

Such a version of *King Lear* attaches importance to the issues of cultural identity for diasporic communities in the increasingly globalised world today. Tse explains, "Set in a future Shanghai and London, when those with power and money live above the law, the play is in many ways an exploration of Chinese and British identities" (Baxter, 2006). The production reframes the gap between a Chinese Lear and an English-educated Cordelia in terms of linguistic difference and highlights the difficulties of intercultural and intergenerational exchange. Providing a challenging cross-cultural interpretation, East meets West in this exploration of Chinese and British identities, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, spiritual and financial wealth, family loyalty, and generational divides.

The Macaronic Stage

Tse's bilingual *King Lear* is the type of macaronic performance defined by Marvin Carlson. Regarding the definition of a "macaronic stage," Carlson explains,

> The model of a monolinguistic congruence between play and audience, requiring translation into a parallel language when the target audience changes, is so familiar that it might appear almost universal, but in fact nearly every

period of theatre history offers examples of plays that utilize more than one language, and our own era is particularly rich in the number and variety of multilanguage performances. Such plays might be called "macaronic," a term first coined to characterize Renaissance texts that mixed Latin with vernacular languages, but later used for any text employing more than one language. (Carlson 16)

Settling the story in an intercultural context, with actors performing in Mandarin Chinese and English (with surtitles) and creating a cosmopolitan atmosphere,[6] Tse's *King Lear* represents a new breed of Asian-European Shakespeare in what might be called the "post-national" global Shakespeare industry. As a bilingual and bicultural performance, it provides a different experience than those more traditionally defined foreign Shakespeares.

Using a mixed cast of Chinese and British (including British Asian) actors, Tse explores the promise and perils of globalisation in the context of local conditions of translation, highlighting the themes of miscommunication and intergenerational conflict. Half of the cast members were native English-speakers while the other half mainly spoke Mandarin Chinese. Lear is played by the distinguished Shanghai actor Zhou Yemang. The British-born actor David Yip—whose family roots are from Southern China—doubles up as Gloucester and Albany. From the beginning to the end, Zhou Yemang's Lear commanded a powerful presence on stage, but other actors had some rough moments because they were required to switch back and forth constantly between their native tongue and a foreign language. Some dialogues could be challenging to follow because actors switched between the two languages in the same block of lines or even mid-sentence. The performance embodies the tensions between different linguistic spaces marked off by the bilingual dialogues and the bilingual surtitles. The dialogues and surtitles compete for the audience's attention and often intrude into each other's processes of signification. Tse's arrangement of linguistic texts prominently highlighted the felt pressure of cultural difference and displacement. The actors' performances of alternating speech patterns, rhythms and cadences actively embodied such anxieties, particularly because none of them was bilingual actor in this demanding bilingual production that required British and Chinese actors with training to share the same stage.

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[6] The bilingual feature became a major source of complaints for some reviewers. See, for instance, Huang's reviews in *Shakespeare* 3.2 (August 2007): 239-42, and in *Theatre Journal* 59.3 (2006): 494-95, and Claire Conceison, "Huang Zuolin Festival (Review)," *Theatre Journal* 59.3 (2006): 491-93. At the same time, the style of the Chinese translation of *Lear*—a version that was translated by Zhu Shenghao in 1943 and was popular in China—was criticized by Conceison (492) for its "jarring contrast to the poetic English version."

The play opened with an updated division-of-the-assets scene. Set in the Shanghai penthouse office of the modern Lear's transnational corporation, the scene involved a creative re-interpretation of the miscommunication in Lear's famous test of love. The opening scene immediately set up an intercultural scenario, where elements from different cultures were juxtaposed and different languages used. Lear is a Shanghai-based business tycoon who solicits confessions of love from his three daughters. Lear, Regan and Goneril spoke fluent Mandarin Chinese, but the English-educated Cordelia, a member of the Chinese diaspora living in London, was no longer proficient in her father's language. Joining the conversation from behind a semi-transparent screen that represented a video link from London (Figure 7), she is both physically and culturally remote from the rest of the characters at the meeting in which family affairs and business coalesce. As Goneril and Regan carried on their confession of love, Chinese fonts projected onto the screen panels and onto Cordelia's face. Immersed in oppressing Confucian values that implicate family roles into the social hierarchy, Lear insisted upon patriarchal authority and respect from his children. The test of love becomes a process of reaffirmation of one of the key Confucian virtues: filial piety.

Figure 7. *King Lear*, dir. by David Tse, 2006: Cordelia (Nina Kwok) replies to King Lear

As the love test scene exemplifies, bilingualism onstage is deployed as a symbol of the failure of assimilative Westernisation as the dominant form of globalisation, sensitising the audience to various assumptions of Anglo-

universalism. Throughout the performance, the majority of the audience could only follow one part of the dialogue with ease and had to switch between the action onstage and the surtitles. Translation thus acted in this production as both a metaphor and a plot device, such a multilingual Shakespeare being no less effective than plot parody in laying bare the process of relocating meaning within local theatrical cultures.

Juxtaposition of Eastern-Western Cultures

Tse's *Lear* is not only bilingual but also bicultural, which enables it to explore the question of the translatability of cultures through juxtaposition of cultural references and a mixture of traditional and modern elements. The adaptation employed Buddhist-themed music, future–retro costumes with both Western and Chinese features, an ensemble cast with significant doubling and cross gender casting, mobile phones, text-messaging, aerial work, multimedia elements, and *jingju* 京剧 (Peking Opera) percussion patterns and movements to embody the performative anxieties of diasporic artists as well as the uneasy coalition between radically different cultures. A scene capitalising on the presence of two cultures was the duel between Edgar and Edmund. Following the rhythms of Peking Opera percussion beats, the actors engaged in a highly stylised ritualistic

Figure 8. Edmund (Matt McCooey) and Edgar (Daniel York) duel in the Mandarin-English *King Lear*, directed by David Tse, 2006. (Courtesy of Yin Xuefeng and Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre)

fight using flick knives. Their movements evoked both English sword-fighting and the combat styles seen in Peking Opera.

Tse's *King Lear* foregrounded intercultural discourse not only through hybrid performance idioms and uses of two languages, but also through scenography and costumes. The set and costume designs were influenced by Taoist concepts of *yin* and *yang*, masculine and feminine, hard and soft, light and dark. Performed in the Cube at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, an innovative makeshift black-box theatre constructed in the auditorium while the RST was undergoing renovation, Tse's *King Lear* took advantage of the intimate stage. Entering the theatre, the audience saw a brightly lit open stage with sparse scenery within close proximity of the seats. At centre stage stood three interlaced floor-to-ceiling screens made of rectangular reflective panels. Most of the actions took place in front of the screens, which were transformed through lighting from a regal façade to a semi-transparent video screen to the wilderness for the storm scene. The Buddhist notion of redemption and reincarnation informed some of the design elements and presentational styles. The production opens and closes with video footage, projected onto the three interlaced floor-to-ceiling reflective panels, that hints at both the beginning of a new life and life as endless suffering. Images of the faces of suffering men and women dissolve to show a crying new-born baby held upside down. If the stage design suggested Taoist simplicity and postmodern minimalism, the costumes evoked a fusion of Chinese and Western elements, inspired by both Western high-fashion styles as well as garments from Peking Opera.

Thematic Problematics

One of the main emphases in Tse's *King Lear* is the problem of communication between generations, a topic exacerbated by the older generation's belief in the father as a kind of "king," i.e. an absolute authority of the family. Set in an intercultural context, *King Lear* offered a good opportunity for Tse to explore "the potential for misunderstanding between a Chinese Lear, with his Confucian values, and an English-educated Cordelia no longer fluent in her father's tongue and reduced to saying 'nothing'" (Jones, 2006). The production therefore highlighted different values between generations reflected in the father-daughter relationships, and revolved tightly around the financial wars later mounted by Goneril and Regan against their father.

This production was not only about miscommunication, but also celebrated a longing for contemporary universality, filtered through a particular cultural experience, which could then be applied to more universal experience. Tse's efforts to employ a wide array of cultural references in order to portray an intercultural scenario might seem to evoke a term from Gilbert and Lo—

"cultural cosmopolitanism"—a disposition marked by "openness to divergent cultural influences *as well as* practices of navigating across cultural boundaries" (Gilbert and Lo 8). It provided a chance for the East Asian actors to perform the classics, a chance to be heard. The play is close to the heart of the British-Chinese director David Tse, who believes that Lear speaks strongly of diaspora artists and audiences who maintain links, but are unable fully to communicate, with their families residing in their home countries. In an interview, Tse says, "There are misunderstandings in a family of immigrants where the elder immigrants have difficulties in communicating with their children" (Liang 289-297). One of the barriers within the immigrant families, such as the overseas Chinese ones, is perhaps language. While the younger generation are fluent in English, their parents, the first-generation immigrants, usually have problems. Tse's approach in directing King *Lear* was informed by his own personal relationship with his parents. In particular, his experiences of growing up in an immigrant Chinese family in Britain were pivotal for his individual connection to *King Lear*. Drawing from his own family's circumstances, Tse felt an affinity to Cordelia, who chooses to bite her tongue and say nothing. He also saw parallels between Lear and his father. Using the experience inherited from his family, David Tse wished to communicate to his British audience about the East.

Nevertheless, amid the intended themes there was one dimension that was ostensibly missing—namely, the potential political associations of the original play. The direction of the opening love-test scene is illustrative in this aspect. Terence Hawkes suggests that the "emblematic force" of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is witnessed during the staged map-reading and the accompanying territorial partition of the kingdom in the opening scene (Hawkes 121). And, in the context of Chinese politics, as Rossella Ferrari comments, such issues in *Lear* can be taken as inadvertent "allegories of inter-Chinese power balances" that are fraught with internal conflicts as well as the risk of dissolution (Ferrari 61). However, the political theme of territorial division and the disintegration of a kingdom was not made clear in Tse's *King Lear*. The result, as discussed above, was an interpretation of the *Lear* story in terms of family events and financial wars. Gone were the idiom of national territories and the famous map-reading scene. Instead, sibling rivalries and intergenerational gaps were presented against the backdrop of stiff competition in profit-driven capitalism. Goneril and Regan were credited with Chinese *renminbi* and US dollars at the end of their love tests, while British pounds were taken out from Cordelia's bank account in London. Near the end of the production, the final battlefield was changed from Dover to the Shanghai Stock Exchange Centre, where a spectacular financial war was being waged between "Lear International" led by Cordelia, and the joint force of the "Goneril Group" and "Regan Regina."

To sum up, Director David Tse's *King Lear* was initially informed by his personal experiences as well as by his belief in the "universal aspects" of the

Lear story. The bilingual feature of Tse's *King Lear*, and the free use of diverse cultural references helped to construct a cosmopolitan atmosphere that allowed the story of a Chinese Lear to unfold in a globalised city. By engaging in such intercultural evocation, the production challenged the viewer to reconsider the conventionally accepted boundaries between cultures and successfully settled the story of Lear into a context that appeared receptive to cultural diversity. Nevertheless, such a portrayal is not without its own blindness. As I have demonstrated, a kind of depoliticization can be perceived in the omission of the scene of territorial division, important thematically in Shakespeare's play, and the substitution of the story of a disintegrating *business* empire. Such an adaptation not only pointed towards what a Chinese Lear may have meant for the director personally, but also highlighted constraints that perhaps have to surround attempts to stage a play such as *King Lear* in contemporary China.

Conclusion

Although Shakespeare does not rank as the most important playwright in shaping modern Chinese theatre, *huaju* is undoubtedly the most popular form of Shakespeare performance in China. As Li Ruru says, "the story of Shakespeare in China is more about China than Shakespeare" (Li, "Millennium *Shashibiya*" 185). Shakespeare in China has shifted and transfigured according to China's changing political and cultural circumstances. Chinese Shakespeare presents a very interesting example of how the study of intercultural Shakespeare performances in Asia cannot be removed from history, as China's transformation from a monarchy in the Qing Dynasty, to a Republic, and later to a Communist state has impacted the many re-presentations of Shakespeare in the past and influences the Shakespeare that China knows today. This reminds us that the change in theatre and the attitudes towards Shakespeare appropriations are always tied to political ideologies and cultural agendas, and do not represent straightforward examples of artistic progression.

Lin Zhaohua's *Coriolanus* and David Tse's bilingual *King Lear* illustrate the cultural encounter between the East and the West and inspire questions about individuals and their wider cultural identities. Incorporating resources from both Western and traditional Chinese theatre, Lin's *Coriolanus* shows that the intersection where the East meets the West can bring out an extraordinarily new form of performance. The bilingual production of *King Lear* exemplifies how Chinese heritage can create Shakespeare in a way that enables both Chinese and British audiences to explore possibilities for the Western canon to reflect upon a foreign culture that is now integrated with the UK. Both productions explore the issue of personal and wider social and political identity through relating Shakespeare with contemporary life. Tse saw the question of

identity in an age of linguistic globalisation as one without fixed answers; while Lin's *Coriolanus* told the tale of a lonely individual alienated by modern society. The two productions not only demonstrate the opportunities afforded by the hundred-year development of Chinese spoken drama, but also point towards the new direction of contemporary China and Chinese modern theatre.

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Yun-fang Dai[*]

"I should like to have my name talked of in China": Charles Lamb, China, and Shakespeare

Abstract: Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* played an essential role in Chinese reception history of Shakespeare. The first two adaptations in China, *Xiewai qitan* 澥外奇譚 and *Yinbian yanyu* 吟邊燕語, chose *Tales* as the source text. To figure out why the Lambs' *Tales* was received in China even earlier than Shakespeare's original texts, this paper first focuses on Lamb's relationship with China. Based on archival materials, it then assumes that the Lambs' *Tales* might have had a chance to reach China at the beginning of the nineteenth century through Thomas Manning. Finally, it argues that the decision to first bring Shakespeare to China by *Tales* was made under the consideration of the Lambs' writing style, the genre choice, the similarity of the Lambs' and Chinese audiences, and the marketability of *Tales*. Tracing back to the first encounter between *Tales* and China throws considerable light on the reception history of Shakespeare in China. It makes sense that nothing is coincidental in the history of cultural reception and the encounters have always been fundamentally influenced by efforts from both the addresser and the receptor.

Keywords: Shakespeare; tales; Charles Lamb; *Yinbian yanyu*; Thomas Manning.

In 1806 Charles Lamb wrote a letter to Thomas Manning, expressing "I should like to have my name talked of in China" (Radcliffe 349).[1] His wish is finally realized through the publication of *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), a collaborative work with his sister Mary Lamb, and its subsequent translation into Chinese.[2] The success of this work was so huge that when discussing Shakespeare's initial reception in China, the first name that comes to mind, rather than the translations by Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 or Zhu Shenghao 朱生豪, is *Yinbian Yanyu* 吟邊燕語,

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[1] The letter was sent on May 10th 1806.
[2] The paragraph involving this sentence was added into David Hill Radcliffe's new edition of *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* online, which is noticeably different from E. V. Lucas' old edition in 1905 and Percy Fitzgerald's edition in 1971.

a collaborative translation by Lin Shu 林紓 and Wei Yi 魏易, based on the Lambs' *Tales*.[3] This naturally leads to the questions of why the Lambs' *Tales* came into China even earlier than Shakespeare's own works and why it exerted a much greater influence than the translations of the original works in promoting the Bard's fame in China at the turn of the twentieth century.

        In response to these questions, I will trace back to the beginning point of the journey, where Charles Lamb, rather than a remote author of the source text, was more relegated to the target culture. This essay aims to re-evaluate the relationship between Lamb and China through investigating *Tales,* his letters, and essays. It will focus on Lamb's conception of China, an ancient and exotic oriental country, in order to illustrate the link between *Tales* and its influence on China.

"The farthest ends of the world": China, the Stealer and the Other

As Peter J. Kitson points out, "Recent Lamb criticism has rightly shifted the focus of enquiry from the biographical and metropolitan to the global networks of the periodical culture in which Lamb's work is situated" (170). In this extensive landscape of the networks, China undoubtedly occupies a position. When tracing the connection between Lamb and China, Thomas Manning is one that cannot be ignored. Manning, a Sinologist and also "the first Englishman to enter Lhasa and receive an audience with the ninth Dalai Lama in 1811," is "regarded by many as the preeminent expert on China in the Romantic period" (Kitson 174). Manning grew interested in the Chinese language when he was studying at Cambridge, where he met Lamb and they became each other's good friend.[4] He later studied Mandarin in Paris for three years, after which he followed a native Chinese speaker to London. In order to master the Chinese language, Manning planned to venture to China.

        However, the decision is met with strong resistance from Lamb. He writes to William Hazlitt, their mutual friend, talking about Manning's plan to China: "Manning is not gone to China, but talks of going this Spring. God forbid" (Fitzgerald 258). In an attempt to persuade his friend from adventuring out to China, Lamb begins to describe this remote country in his letters to Manning. The following is an extract from one of the letters:

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[3] The name of *Yinbian yanyu* is the shorthand of its original full title *Yingguo shiren yinbian yanyu* ("An English Poet Reciting from Afar" rendered by Alexa Huang/ "Familiar Stories Recited from Afar" rendered by César Guarde-Paz). Romanization of Chinese names and words follow the Hanyu Pinyin system, except in cases where a proper name or common usage is in another system.

[4] The year that they met was 1799, when Lamb was at his twenty-four and Manning was two years older.

> I heard that you were going to China, with a commission from the Wedgwoods to collect hints for their pottery, and to teach the Chinese *perspective*; but I did not know that London lay in your way to Pekin. I am seriously glad of it, for I shall trouble you with a small present for the Emperor of Usbeck Tartary, as you go by his territories: it is a fragment of a "Dissertation on the state of political parties in England at the end of the eighteenth century," which will no doubt be very interesting to his Imperial Majesty. (Fitzgerald 202)

Several details about China in this letter are worth discussing. Kitson, for example, argues that "to collect hints for their pottery" and "to teach Chinese *perspective*" are twin concerns of his two China essays, "Old China" and "Dissertation upon Roast Pig" (173). However, my attention is drawn to Lamb's mentioning of "Tartary," which was closely associated with the image of China in Western literary works during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Among these works, Voltaire's *L'Orphelin de la Chine* may have been relevant to Lamb. The book depicts the resistance of a gentle and civilized Chinese woman against a militaristic and barbaric Tartar man. Voltaire's story is based on Joseph de Prémare's translation of the Chinese story, *Zhaoshi Gu'er* 趙氏孤兒 [The Orphan of Zhao], first written when China fell to the Tartars in the thirteenth century.[5] The war was led by Genghis-Khan, who might be the base figure of the Tartary Emperor earlier mentioned by Lamb.[6] The following extract from Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth in 1814 offers a piece of evidence that Lamb reads Voltaire.

> That Objection which M. Burney had imbibed from him about Voltaire I explained to M.B. (or tried) exactly on your principle of its being a characteristic speech. That it was no settled comparative estimate of Voltaire with any of his own tribe of buffoons—no injustice, even if you spoke it, for I dared say you never could relish *Candide*. (Fitzgerald 92-93)

Lamb expresses his negative feeling about Voltaire. The situation is made even more complicated by the relationship between Voltaire and China, as Lamb's thoughts on Voltaire might reflect his attitude towards China. Voltaire is famous for his appreciation of Chinese culture, particularly of Confucius. As Rosalind Ballaster points out, "according to Voltaire, the French encounter and identification with Chinese values may enable progress from a state of primitive submission to the authority of Church and State, of primitive submission to

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[5] For more discussions on Prémare's translation, see Tu Hsin-hsin, "Literature, Translation, and the Critics: On Prémare's Translation of *Le Petit Or-phelin de la Maison de Tchao*."

[6] Genghis-Khan is also the base figure for Elkanah Settle's *The Conquest of China, by the Tartars*, a story about a Chinese princess and a Tartary prince.

Enlightenment values of curiosity and openness" (214). Voltaire is fascinated with Chinese culture and values, which might inspire his Enlightenment ideas. When involving China into consideration, it is easy to build a link between Lamb's hatred to Voltaire and Voltaire's enthusiasm of China. However, the reason for Lamb's negative thoughts to Voltaire can be attributed to sophisticated reasons. We cannot rashly deduce Lamb's views on China from such a slight clue. Conversely, Lamb's feeling towards China is far more confusing than simple hatred or disgust. The image of China presented and instituted in Lamb's words explains what China is perceived in his mind.

The first point worth mentioning is that Lamb expresses curiosity about China. For example, in one of his letters to Manning he mentions China's Great Wall: "How the paper grows less and less! In less than two minutes I shall cease to talk to you, and you may rave to the great Wall of China" (Fitzgerald 230). Then he questions of its existence: "Is there such a wall? Is it as big as Old London Wall, by Bedlam" (230)? Lamb obviously has got some information about China from somewhere, but he is eager to know more, such as the human beings living in China: "How do you like the Mandarinesses? Are you on some little footing with any of them" (Fitzgerald 238)? In the next letter, informing Manning of his new address, he goes on to invite guests from China, saying "I am now in chambers, No.4, Inner Temple Lane, where I should be happy to see you any evening. Bring any of your friends, the Mandarins, with you" (Fitzgerald 238-39). In light of the above evidence, it may well be said that China stimulates Lamb's curiosity.[7]

Besides curiosity and very limited knowledge of China, Lamb's imagination of this faraway country is also intertwined with his personal feelings for Manning. Lamb's letters regarding China are mostly sent to Manning or their mutual friend, discussing Manning's trip to China. Kitson states: "throughout these letters, Lamb's register and tone remain at the level of gossip, whimsy, and often melancholy" (173). Lamb's melancholy stems mostly from the "going away" of Manning, one of his lifelong friends. Lamb cherishes their friendship so much that, even when they are widely parted, he manages to keep

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[7] In a certain sense it may be said that Lamb's awareness of China was in tandem with a trend from eighteenth-century to Romantic orientalism as marked by an increase in the direct knowledge of the East. For example, as a popular type of literature, travel books about the East gained great popularity in the period, 1775-1825. The materials and interpretations in these books captured the imagination of numerous writers in England. It is clearly indicated by the continuous attention given them in contemporary magazines. See Wallace Cable Brown. Nigel Leask gives another explanation for this trend, tracing it back to its earlier origin: "The writers of the Romantic age had interests in the 'Orient' to a degree which went far beyond their Augustan and mid-eighteenth-century forebears" (see Leask 18).

correspondence with Manning. In the letters, Lamb repeatedly mentions a man named Samuel Ball, who is Lamb's India House acquaintance and school friend, asking "Have you met with a friend of mine, named Ball, at Canton" (Fitzgerald 230)?[8] As Kitson analyses, the reason Lamb encourages Manning to seek out Ball's company might be that he thinks "it will be good to be the subject of a conversation in that part of world" (173). However, Lamb's attempt to avoid losing communication with Manning is, unfortunately, to no avail.

As a result of the huge distance in between, they could no longer keep in close touch, neither regularly meeting each other, nor sharing social information or details of private life through letters. Hence, in a letter written to Manning in 1806, Lamb complains: "You will be so sorry, that you will not think the best of me for my detail; but news is news at Canton" (Fitzgerald 227). China is naturally set in the position opposite to London. In other words, it becomes quite like Lamb's enemy, who steals his friend and brings him away from his life. In still another letter, Lamb writes:

> I understand there are dramatic exhibitions in China. One would not like to be forestalled. Do you find in all this stuff I have written anything like those feelings which one should send my old adventuring friend, that is gone to wander among Tartars and may never come again? I don't; but your going away, and all about you, is a threadbare topic. I have worn it out with thinking: it has come to me when I have been dull with any thing, till my sadness has seemed more to have come from it than to have introduced it. I want you, you don't know how much; but if I had you here in my European garret, we should but talk over such stuff as I have written – so. (Fitzgerald 229)[9]

In this letter, Lamb expresses an understanding of Manning's choice to China, though he does not conceal his sadness. He is filled with the fear of losing his "old adventuring friend" and of the need to have his companionship. This sadness is further intensified by the otherness of China, the nation where Manning is residing.

The otherness of China consists of various elements. The first is the huge geographical distance between Britain and China, the country that is located at "the farthest ends of the world" (Fitzgerald 230), noticeably emphasized by Lamb. The distance is embodied as "a five months' voyage," causing Lamb to fall into panic as he writes to Manning: "China! Canton! Bless

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[8] Manning met Ball in Canton. His first impression of Ball may be interpreted, presumably, as meaning: "Mr. Ball is a puppy"; but later Ball returned to England, at much the same time as Manning, and they remained friendly throughout their lives, visiting Italy together, in 1827-8 (see Anderson 99).

[9] In this letter, Lamb confuses Chinese people with the Tartars again.

us—how it strains the imagination and make it ache!" (Fitzgerald 224). This feeling could never be dispelled, and it develops into a sense of otherness in Lamb's thoughts, as he says: "Nothing puzzles me more than time and space; and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think about them…. The distance you are at cuts up tenses by the root" (Fitzgerald 240-41).

On the other hand, the remoteness of the space is associated with the gulf between the two cultures. One aspect of the cultural difference is the linguistic diversity, as Lamb says: "albeit unknown to the Chinese inquirer" (Fitzgerald 256). Another lies in the religious discrepancy between the two countries. Lamb once threatens Manning that "you are gone to plant the cross of Christ among barbarous pagan anthropophagi, you'll get murdered" (Fitzgerald 223).[10] Again, in a letter written on Christmas day 1815, Lamb childishly complains: "You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam, instead of the savoury grand Norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment from a thousand firesides" (Fitzgerald 243). The cultural differences build up Lamb's "European garret," which is set in contrast with an assumptive "Chinese garret." Thinking of the cultural barrier in this way, Lamb writes another letter to Manning, saying, "I sent you a parcel of books by my last, to give you some idea of European literature" (Fitzgerald 239). Lamb's sarcasm actually indicates his intensified anxiety towards Manning's preoccupation with Chinese culture, so much so that he has to constantly remind him to look back to Europe. On a deeper level, the other represented by China is intensively diffused over a wider area, the Orient, as Lamb teases: "'Tis all about Eastern manners; it would just suit you" (Fitzgerald 233). The gap between the self and the other is as well a barrier meant to maintain Lamb's distance from the Orient.

Furthermore, as an area of consumption and production—the assemblage, demolition and reconstitution of otherness—orientalism had undergone important transformations in the Romantic period. The personal connections of Romantic writers to the Orient were strengthened, as Nigel Leask enumerates: "Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Peacock, Moore, De Quincey and Scott all had personal and/or professional stakes in Britain's oriental empire" (19). Among them, Lamb is deeply associated with the oriental empire. As an employee of the East India Company in London for some thirty years, he is called the "Lamb of the India house" (Anderson 102). Though his life might have been deeply shaped by the East India Company, Lamb recalls the experience as one "with cursed India House work" (Fitzgerald 93), lamenting that it is like "to waste the

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[10] According to T. H. Barrett, Manning's nominal purpose to the study of Chinese is in a search for confirmation of certain ideas concerning Greek particles, not to spread Christianity, as Lamb suggests (see Barrett 58).

golden years of thy life—thy shining youth—in the irksome confinement of an office" ("The Superannuated Man" 193). As for what he does at work, he claims resolutely: "I scarce know what I do" (Fitzgerald 93). However, it is revealed that "his employment intimately bound up with the tea and opium trades" (Kitson 169). This working experience has left traces in his life, as Kitson mentions, "The nexus of China, consumption, commerce, and global expansion is clearly present in Lamb's writings" (171). From these words, we can see that he apparently recognizes what happened in China, and knows "how very serious the attainment of the Chinese language was to British understandings of China and its crucial purpose in commerce" (Kitson 174). Having a chance to touch the other part of the world, Lamb sharply observes the changes appeared in the world, accounting: "Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the Western world quite changed" (Fitzgerald 244). Changes in the empires were inextricably bound up with the outward expansion of the Great Britain, which took an important role in the forced participation of China in the Global consumption.

The image of China, as Lamb portrays in the essays published in *London Magazine*, has been widely discussed by critics. They particularly focus on Elia, the protagonist of Lamb's series of essays. As Karen Fang mentions, "'Old China' illustrates that for Elia porcelain is unrivalled by other exotic commodities as literary subject" (822). Elia's interest in Chinese commodities is associated with England's commercial relations with China, which brings about considerable debate from a cultural consumptive perspective. Fang states that in the essay "Old China," widely acknowledged as a literary simulation of imperial commodity, Lamb "shows how second-generation romantics could attain visionary experiences through the visual pleasures of contemporary consumer culture" (827). In this way, scholars often concentrate on the commodity objects in Lamb's essays when discussing his thoughts on China, arguing the prominent porcelain symbol in "Old China" is one such example. Fang also points out that Lamb is "embracing China through porcelain—China's miniature form" and "the very noun 'china' names the commodity as a material synecdoche for its country of origin" (822). Her conclusion, "'Old China' is literary chinoserie for an age shaped by the new imperial industry" (837), again connects Lamb's discourse of China with an imperial consciousness. Indeed, thirty-six years of working at the East India Company builds Lamb as a key witness to the rise of the imperial consumptive culture of the time, but also helps construct the otherness of China through the exotic features of Chinese commodities and their potential threat to the imperial markets.

"*You should have sent your* Tales from Shakespeare": *A Presumption of the Arrival of* Tales *in China*

In 1806, William Godwin, an English political philosopher, and his second wife asked Mary Lamb to make a children's book of stories from Shakespeare's plays. Charles Lamb offered to help undertake half of the work, writing all the tragic stories in the book. In a letter to Wordsworth in 1807, Lamb described his work: "I will try to abstract the load of teasing circumstances from the stories and tell you that I am answerable for *Lear, Macbeth, Timon, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello*, for occasionally a tail-piece or correction of grammar, for none of the cuts and all of the spelling. The rest is my Sister's" (Fitzgerald 87). Joan Coldwell analyses the reason for Lamb's involvement in the book, as "perhaps because of the nervous stain the task might impose on his sister" (81). Whatever reason caused him to start the project, Lamb admirably engaged in writing this book and had high hopes for it, as he told Wordsworth: "We think *Pericles* of hers the best, and *Othello* of mine; but I hope all have some good" (Fitzgerald 87). Actually, the Lambs' *Tales* is a far better work than merely having "some good." "Lamb, together with his sister," as Coldwell comments, "did pioneering work and, in this case, it has not been better editor" (14).

Notably, in the process of writing *Tales*, Lamb continuously shared information about this book with Manning through letters. When he began the work, he wrote to Manning, informing him of the work's details: "[Mary] is doing for Godwin's bookseller twenty of Shakespeare's plays, to be made into children's tales. Six are already done by her; to wit, the *Tempest*, the *Winter's Tale*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Cymbeline. The Merchant of Venice* is in forwardness. I have done *Othello* and *Macbeth*, and mean to do all the tragedies" (Fitzgerald 223). Later, when he was about to complete the book in 1806, he informed Manning: "Those *Tales from Shakespeare* are near coming out" (Fitzgerald 229). In response, Manning paid close attention to this book. For example, when the book was first published in 1807, only the name of Charles Lamb appeared on the title page. Manning immediately wrote to Lamb, asking: "I have seen the Advertisement of your *Tales from Shakespeare*. Why not Mary's?" (Anderson 100).

A detail, which has largely escaped the attention of previous critics, emerges from Manning's letters to Lamb and becomes the crux of the matter in the discussion. From 1807, the year *Tales* was published, Manning constantly asked Lamb to send him a copy of the book during the next three years. Manning first sent out his request in 1807, when he was informed that the book was published: "You send me a copy, no doubt, by the direct fleet. How strange & unsocial it seems to be at such a distance" (Anderson 100). However, the request was ignored by Lamb, leading Manning to angrily write to him in

the next letter in 1808, saying: "You don't deserve a line from me—why did you not write by the Direct fleet? Why did you not send your Shakespeare's tales?" (Anderson 105). Then, from a later letter in 1809, Manning once again referred to the book, interrogating Lamb that "You *should* have sent your *Tales from Shakespeare*" (Anderson 114). Obviously, Manning's wish to have a copy of the book was not satisfied until then. In the same year Lamb wrote back to Manning, finally mentioning that he would send him some books, saying "Dear Manny, I sent you a long letter by the ships which sailed the beginning of last month, accompanied with books, &c […] if you have received my books, you will have enough to do to read them" (Fitzgerald 236). We are not actually told whether the Lambs' *Tales* was included in this shipment of books sent to China. But we can ascertain that it is only after this letter that Manning finally stopped asking for *Tales*. Hence, we can infer from this evidence that the Lambs' *Tales* was probably sent to Manning around 1809. In light of this assumption, it is possible to trace the arrival of Shakespeare in China back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Lambs' *Tales* first reached there. This was even earlier than 1839, when the Bard's name first appeared in China in Lin Zexu's 林則徐 *Sizhouzhi* 四洲誌 [Geography of the Four Continents].

Moreover, though the appearance of *Tales* in China seemed accidental, it might be related to the topic of cultivating Chinese people. In a letter to Manning, Lamb wrote: "*The Shakespeare Tales* suggested the doing of it. […] You have seen 'Beauties of Shakespeare'? so have many people that never saw any beauties in Shakespeare" (Fitzgerald 232). In the same letter, Lamb turned his attention to Chinese people, who also belonged to the group that "never saw any beauties in Shakespeare," asking "Does anyone read at Canton?" He further suggested Manning to become a president of any "similar institution" of the Westminster Library. He thought that this kind of enlightenment institution should be set up in Canton, arguing: "I think public reading-rooms the best mode of educating young men. Solitary reading is apt to give the headache" (Fitzgerald 235). It is possible to speculate that Lamb might suggest bringing Shakespeare to young men in China. In actuality, his concern in cultivating Chinese young people deeply corresponded to his initial purpose of writing *Tales*, wchich was designed to popularize the Bard among Lamb's contemporary youth in England, making the stories of Shakespeare's plays familiar to them.

For further investigation, I will discuss the role Manning might have played in promoting the Lambs' *Tales*. Though Manning had learned Chinese for years before he went to China, it was after he finally reached China that "the veil'd Mysteries of the Chinese language gradually were opening to his view" (Anderson 16). G. A. Anderson, the editor of *The Letters of Thomas Manning to Charles Lamb* points out that "we hear of him as being always ready to assist the translators of works from the Chinese, and as drawing up a report on the

consumption of tea" (16).[11] It corroborates a fact that Manning was competent to translate between English and Chinese. Based on this information, a piece of evidence draws my attention: in one of the letters to Lamb, Manning wrote: "I have long been working my brain to do something for you. I would not have you laugh at my interest…" (Anderson 101). Here, Manning's "interest" might be his enthusiasm in learning Chinese, for Lamb had complained of his spending too much time on pursuing the Chinese language. Kitson makes a similar statement: "Lamb comically chastises his friend for his time-consuming efforts in learning the Chinese language, while the familiar world of London and his friendships slowly but inevitably decays" (173-74). A follow-up question is what Manning meant when he stated that he wanted to do something for Lamb, as he then said: "*You told* me there was nothing to be done for you. I am sure that cannot be literally true" (Anderson 101). One possibility, what I will boldly assume, is that Manning might want to translate *Tales* (maybe parts) once he got the book from Lamb. Though it is only an assumption, and needs further documented evidence to validate, it still sheds some light on the first encounter between Shakespeare and China through the Lambs' *Tales*.

"All China will ring of it by and by": Translating Tales *in China*[12]

The first documented translation concerning Shakespeare in China is *Xiewai qitan*, which is selectively translated from the Lambs' *Tales* by an anonymous author in 1903.[13] The book was published one year ahead of the publication of *Yinbian yanyu,* which gained massive success in the publishing market. *Yinbian* is also a translation from the Lambs' *Tales,* published by the Commercial Press in 1904. It was extremely popular among Chinese readers, so much so that between 1905 and 1935 it was reprinted eleven times in three different editions. The work's immense popularity corresponded to its profound influence. Cao Yu 曹禺, one of China's most important playwrights of the twentieth century, said in an interview: "One of my favorite Western playwrights is Shakespeare, and my fondness of the Master's plays started from reading Lin Shu's *Yinbian yanyu*

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[11] Among Lamb's two famous Elia essays on China, "Dissertation upon Roast Pig" was claimed to be based on the translation of a Chinese manuscript that was obtained from his friend M. (Manning).

[12] The original context of the sentence exaggeratedly describes Lamb's imagination of the moment when his letter to Manning finally would have achieved China: "And only think how hard upon me it is that the ship is dispatched to-morrow, and my triumph cannot be ascertained till the Wednesday after; but all China will ring of it by and by" (Fitzgerald ed. 228).

[13] It is important to note that in 1903 three lines of Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* were translated into Chinese from a Japanese translation of *Self-Help* (see Hao 45-46).

when I was a little boy. As soon as I was able to read in English, I was eager to get hold of a Shakespeare play, because Lin's translation of the Bard's fantasy world was so fresh in my young mind" (see Li Ruru's personal interview with Cao, Li 16).[14] Other than Cao, many contemporary Chinese authors expressed how they were attracted to and influenced by *Yinbian.* Big names such as Lu Xun 魯迅, Hu Shih 胡適, Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, and Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 were known to have discussed this book. *Yinbian* served to arouse their interest in reading Western literatures. Even when they had a chance to obtain Shakespeare's original texts, Lin and Wei's collaborative translation of the Lambs' *Tales* was still appealing to them. The widely circulated translation of *Tales* exerted enormous influence on Chinese Shakespeare reception. It helped to spread the name of the Master throughout the country, and even made a significant impact on the modernization of Chinese literature, culture, and society.

With the expansion of the notion of translation process, the selection of the source text is included into discussion. As the first two Chinese receptions concerning Shakespeare, *Xiewai qitan* and *Yinbian yanyu* are both translated from the Lambs' *Tales*, a crucial question arises: why the Lambs' *Tales* rather than the Bard's original texts? To answer this question, an important point to note is that the authors of the source texts, as Hanne Jansen and Anne Wegener argue, "can also have 'a finger in the pie' if he or she engages with the translator's work" (20). Though there is no possibility for Lambs to actually work with the Chinese translators, as the year 1903 when Lin and Wei began their work on *Yinbian* was decades after the Lambs' deaths. They did make efforts on this translation activity. In what follows, I will argue how Lambs influenced Chinese translators' choice in two aspects.

First, the translators' choice was made in the consideration of the marketability. With the development of the publishing market in early modern China, the market was of such importance that it greatly influenced the choice of texts selected for translation. To ensure the translation would be saleable, the source text must be popular in its original culture. The warm welcome *Tales* received in the West undoubtedly laid the foundation for the translators' choice. At the beginning of starting *Tales*, Lamb wrote to Manning: "I think it will be popular among the little people, besides money" (Fitzgerald 223). The success of *Tales* proved to be much greater than merely "popular among the little people." It was the first book concerning the works of Shakespeare, as A. H. Thompson evaluates, "appealing to a general audience" (Coldwell 15). The success of *Tales* in the Western culture was pertinent to the way in which Lambs organized and presented Shakespeare's stories. Their fairy-tale style renditions, as Thomas

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[14] Enthroned as China's Shakespeare, Cao is one of the founders and early advocates of Chinese modern drama.

Talfourd argues, established a fit counterpoise, not only bringing the outlines of the Bard's plots "within the apprehension of children," but also preserving his language "wherever it was possible to retain it" (66). In a similar manner, Coldwell comments, "The *Tales from Shakespeare* are clear and forceful narrative condensations of the plays, which do not talk down to their young audience but show, in their skilful paraphrasing, a firm mastery of Shakespeare's complex language and thoughts" (14). In this light, the Lambs' *Tales,* the adaptation for British children and women, was widely read in Western countries outside Britain, and multiple editions of the work have been published, including many translations into foreign languages.

When choosing a text to translate, another essential point for Chinese translators at the turn of the twentieth century to consider was whether the text had the potential to be popular among the target audience. Accordingly, translators laid much emphasis on the reading level of average Chinese readers. They had to, as Wong Wang-chi argues, "take the tastes of the readers into serious consideration" (23). In the case of *Yinbian,* their target readers were the group of people, as Lamb earlier mentioned, who never saw any beauties in the Bard before. Coincidently, the target readers of *Tales* were also, as Alexander Huang mentions, "children and women who would otherwise not meet with Shakespeare's work" (60). On the other side, the Lambs' *Tales,* as Andrew Shoenbaum argues, was not only "used to bring Shakespeare to a wider audience" who did not know Shakespeare before, but also used "as a text of higher education for those who could afford that education" (102). Shoenbaum then concludes: "They served this function in China as well" (102). Indeed, the contemporary readers of *Yinbian* also belonged to the elite group with higher education in China. Thus, though the target readers of *Tales* were changed from the children and women in the West to the male elites in China, they still have a lot in common.

Other than the similarities of the target audience, the Lambs' writing style and genre choice also played an important role in Chinese translators' decision-making process. Contemporary Chinese translators were, as Wong addresses, "very cautious not to import too alien a form to confront the readers" (34). As André Lefevere argues, if the translated work "does not conform to the demands of the genre that dominates the target culture, its reception is likely to be rendered more difficult" (92). At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was difficult for Chinese audience to understand Shakespeare's dramatic form rooted in the Western cultural context, which was largely different from the concept of opera in China. Therefore, Chinese translators at that time found that rather than introducing a new genre, *Tales* might be easier for their readers to accept when they came into contact with Shakespeare for the first time. Moreover, as Walter Benjamin argues, "what is selected is usually what could also be written in the translator's own language" (250-51). The Lambs' prose,

with "simple, unambiguous, and definitive narratives" (Marovitz 475), seemed more possible to be translated into Chinese than the Bard's original. Ultimately, the translators' choice turned out to be a wise decision, particularly as evidenced by the success of *Yinbian* contributing to the spread of *Tales* in China.

Conclusion

In discussing Lamb's "Old China," Kitson says metaphorically: "Like the texts of Chinese translations, the cup is thus a product of global exchange and commerce" (171). Translating the Lambs' *Tales* into Chinese is also a case of global exchange. At the turn of the twentieth century, China was forced into the international world and inevitably drawn into the globalization. It was a time full of major intellectual and social shifts in China. Needless to say, the field of literature also experienced an unprecedented influx of new concepts, formulations, approaches, and practices. In the given circumstances, *Yinbian yanyu* opened a window to a world's classic, such as Shakespeare, and thus opened the door to the massive importation of Western literature.

The reason why the Lambs' *Tales* was chosen as the source text to translate instead of Shakespeare's original works should be considered from both angles of the addresser and the receptor respectively, for the cultural encounters are possibly made by efforts from both sides. As I have argued, the Lambs' *Tales* might have had a chance to reach China in the beginning of the nineteenth century through the Sinologist Thomas Manning. One century later, *Tales* exerted a great impact on Chinese literary history with the wide circulation of its translation, *Yinbian yanyu*. In fact, nothing is coincidental in the history of cultural reception. Tracing back to the origins of the first encounter between Shakespeare's tales and China may throw considerable light on the history of Chinese Shakespeare reception.

Admittedly, Charles Lamb did not conceal his ambition for gaining honour and leaving a mark on literary history. In one letter to Manning he candidly expressed: "we shall die in our beds with a fair literary reputation" (Fitzgerald 223). *Tales,* undoubtedly, contributes to Lamb's reputation, as Thompson comments: "It is fortunate that the work of popularizing Shakespeare was done upon so solid a foundation of knowledge and poetic sensitivity as Lamb possessed" (Coldwell 15). The reputation Lamb was pursuing goes beyond the Western world. Fang also quotes Lamb's wish to have his name "talked of in China," saying that "such a wish illustrates how China figured for Lamb as an index of fame, as well as how imperial careers such as Manning's might achieve such fame" (827). Indeed, Lamb once said to Manning that he wished to have his name joined with the name of Manning, who was regarded as "possibly one of the greatest China scholars of the age" (Kitson 170). Lamb's

success with *Tales* and its translations of in Chinese has finally left a legacy on the literary histories of both the West and China.[15]

Through the spread of *Tales* among Chinese people, the beauties of the Bard have been brought into the trend of globalization and also involved China in the establishment of the global Shakespeare. As Lefevere claims, "rewritings seem to be a vital factor in determining whether a writing does or does not secure the label of greatness" (138). The success of *Tales,* a rewriting of Shakespeare's plays, is undoubtedly a well-known case in the world literary history.

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[15] Lamb claimed in his letter that Manning's name affected him "like a legacy" (Fitzgerald 224).

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The Development of Marxist Shakespearean Criticism in China[1]

Abstract: Chinese Shakespearean criticism from Marxist perspectives is highly original in Chinese Shakespeare studies. Scholars such as Mao Dun, Yang Hui, Zhao Li, Fang Ping, Yang Zhouhan, Bian Zhilin, Meng Xianqiang, Sun Jiaxiu, Zhang Siyang and Wang Yuanhua adopt the basic principles and methods of Marxism to elaborate on Shakespeare's works and have made great achievements. With ideas changed in different political climates, they have engaged in Shakespeare studies for over eight decades since the 1930s. At the beginning of the revolutionary age, they advocated revolutionary literature, followed Russian Shakespearean criticism from the Marxist perspective, and established the mode of class analysis and highlighted realism. Before and after the Cultural Revolution, they were concerned about class, reality and people. They also showed the "left-wing" inclination, taking literature as a tool to serve politics. Since the 1980s, they have been free from politics and entered the pure academic realm, analysing Shakespearean dramas with Marxist aesthetic theories and transforming from sociological criticism to literary criticism.

Keywords: China, Marxism, Shakespearean criticism.

Following the steps of the Soviet Union, China started Marxist Shakespeare study in the 1920s. There are ten representative scholars, namely Mao Dun, Yang Hui, Zhao Li, Fang Ping, Yang Zhouhan, Bian Zhilin, Meng Xianqiang, Sun Jiaxiu, Zhang Siyang and Wang Yuanhua. They held unequivocal political stands and developed China's own Marxist Shakespeare study depending on their enthusiasm for Shakespeare and persistent spirit of exploration. However,

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no one has ever made a systematic study on their theoretical achievements. Taking the theoretical achievements of the above ten scholars as the objects of study, this paper attempts to clarify the development of Marxist Shakespeare study in China, analyze the reasons and elaborate its contributions and inadequacy by comparing with Marxist Shakespeare studies of foreign countries.

The 1930s and 1940s: Highlighted "Revolutionary Nature"

Chinese Marxist Shakespeare criticism can be traced back to Mao Dun who published three important articles in the 1930s, "Shakespeare and Realism," "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" from *Translated Western Literary Classics*, and "The 375th Anniversary of the Birth of Shakespeare." And there was a minor mention about Shakespeare in the section "classicism" of Mao Dun's 1930 *A General Introduction to Western Literature*. "Shakespeare and Realism" was published under the name Wei Ming in *Studies of the Humanities* (Vol. 1, No. 2) on August 20, 1934. The real author was reportedly Mao Dun. The article only contains 1250 Chinese characters and covers three and a half pages. Strictly speaking, it was not a piece of Shakespeare criticism but an introduction of the views raised by the Soviet critic S. Dinamov in his article "More Shakespeareanism" published in *Literature and Art News* (Moscow, No. 12) on March 11, 1933. It was the first time that Marxist Shakespeare criticism had been introduced to the public: "Marx and Engels believed Shakespeare was a great realist" (Mao 316). Mao Dun also cited Dinamov's conclusions and explained Shakespearization with six straight parallel structures: (1) "we must find the image that's truly alive to represent the development and movement that's under way"; (2) "we must seize today and then look forward to tomorrow"; (3) "we must ascend the apex of modern thought and clarify the concepts of science, knowledge and culture, and the doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, so that our thinking won't dry up, so that our works are as clear and content-rich as a living language"; (4) "we must be daredevil fighters of our own class with art as our weapon"; (5) "we must stand at the forefront of life, fighting, creating, working and struggling"; and (6) "we must seek a more powerful new form of artistic creation and abandon the dazzling but empty Art Deco to create works of both ideological and artistic perfection" (Mao 317-318). This was the first emergence of "Shakespearization" in China, one of the most important concepts of the Marxist literary thought. Apparently, this concept had its special significance in the revolutionary period of the Soviet Union, in view of its reality view, developmental view, scientific nature, combativeness and perfection. In the revolutionary years, Mao Dun cited Dinamov's words because it was necessary at that time and because the concept was fully applicable to the revolutionary struggle in China. Shakespearization could therefore be used as

a programme guiding the Chinese revolutionary literature. However, Marx and Engels did not talk about combativeness in their discussion of "Shakespearization." The characteristic was later added by Dinamov and Mao Dun in consideration of the revolutionary situation in the 1930s, because realism means attention to the objective social reality, namely, the fast-growing revolutionary struggle. As we see, the term "Shakespearization" can produce a different meaning in a specific period and a specific environment. In the revolutionary years, combativeness was highlighted by Mao Dun in light of the situation; in this era of peace, perfection and richness prevailed in place of combativeness.

In 1944, Yang Hui, a modern literary theorist and playwright, translated and published *Timon of Athens* (Xin Di Press), and wrote the preamble "Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*." This long essay (over 10,000 words) was the first essay on Shakespeare study in light of Marxist theory in China. He pointed out that the play

> seems to be a philosophical treatise, or a political pamphlet, that uses the form of drama, to utter an angry call and throw a dead cat to the then society, at which point, Yang is no longer a performer showing the ways of the world on the stage, but an agitator running and preaching at the crossroads—he has become a fighter in the true modern sense. (Meng, *Selected* 70)

> This Athenian story had a deep impact on the British society. It was much like stripping and whipping. And what the story whipped was not some social scars but the society itself. (Meng, *Selected* 72)

By virtue of a series of smart metaphors, Yang Hui shed light upon Shakespeare's criticism of British society. Although not as speculative as Marx's philosophical theory, Yang's analysis also criticized the evil of money.

Both Mao Dun's and Yang Hui's essays were written in the age of revolution. They were deeply influenced by the Soviet Union's study. In that life-and-death wartime, everyone's nerves were on edge. When appreciating Shakespeare's works, they were sensitive to the parts about life struggle and fight and their articles were full of "the smell of gunpowder." It is consistent with the then revolutionary culture. In the course of the new democratic revolution, in order to build a new cultural system and establish new literary views and new creation methods for the revolution, some Chinese scholars tried to draw spirit and ideological essence from Shakespeare's works. By adopting indirect methods, they firstly introduced the Shakespeare study of the Soviet Union, and then made their own analyses and discussions for Chinese revolution and life.

Around the Cultural Revolution: Consideration about Class Nature, Reality and Popularity

Around the Cultural Revolution (the 1950s-1960s), class struggle was still serious in China. "Political situation decides the direction of Shakespeare study. The theories and practices of class struggle extension made most Shakespeare studies in this period focus on class" (Li Weimin 311). During the Cultural Revolution, Shakespeare was defined as a bourgeois writer, so that the publication of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* also halted. Fortunately, there was still some research left, mostly Zhao Li's articles. In the preface to the 1963 *Shakespeare* (Part I & Part II) of "Selected Foreign Literature Research Data (First Draft)," Zhao referred to Shakespeare as "an idealistic realist writer" and put him at "the position of advanced bourgeois humanism" (qtd. Li Weimin 312), giving him a class status. At the same time, Zhao also identified and criticized Shakespeare's bourgeois ideology, saying "Shakespeare's thought is based on the theory of human nature that often gets him into the absurdity of moral instruction and moral forgiveness, into the kingdom of idealism faraway from reality, in the face of severe sharp social conflicts, so his thought has a contradiction and this contradiction exactly reflects that of reality" (qtd. Li Weimin 315). There was also a change in Zhao's understanding during his decades of Shakespeare studies. At first, he borrowed the Soviet model of Shakespeare criticism and mostly adopted sociological criticism to analyse the historical background to Shakespeare's plays. Later, he revised many of his early one-sided understandings in "Shakespeare's Characters and Characterization" and other papers. In them, Zhao gave objective judgments rather than subjective assumptions of Shakespeare's characters according to the stories and their artistic presentation. Little trace of the Soviet model was found in Zhao's late works.

In the Cultural Revolution, Shakespeare study basically had no progress in China. After the Cultural Revolution, literary studies revitalized. Some translators and scholars who love Shakespeare's works gradually got rid of the Soviet model and attempted to establish a Marxist Shakespeare study with Chinese characteristics.

Fang Ping, best remembered as the chief editor and translator of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, had been devoted to translating and researching Shakespeare's plays for 60 years. All his researches were included in his book *Our Friend Shakespeare* that contains 1978-1982 papers about realist ideas. One of these papers, "The Flavor of Life and Reality in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," began with words in the letter from Engels to Marx, in praise of the enormous flavour of life and reality that the play has compared with all other German literary works. Then with a neat twist, Fang exposed and criticized the slanderous comment "a pile of rubble" (Fang, *Our Friend* 2) that was made by the "Gang of Four" and particularly Yao Wenyuan about the "peaks" (Fang,

Our Friend 2) of Western literature including Shakespeare. Fang Ping added, this play is a most realistic one and only in this play, lively British citizens and their families appeared on the stage as the leading characters, to show the audience their active attitudes and their family stories.

> What the comedy exposed and satirized hasn't been actually gone. In our socialist society, for instance, arranged marriage and mercenary marriage should have long been a historical phenomenon. And yet we are still in a transition period of the new mingled with the old. As long as there is still the use of material and money as the cornerstone of marriage, as the first prerequisite for making friends and having a relationship, the nearly four hundred-year-old comedy hasn't actually lost its satirical and realistic significance. (Fang, *Our Friend* 22)

As we see, Fang Ping's literary criticism is carried out within the framework of Marxism, when the mission was still about the revolution, so literature was closely related with real life, which is also a typical paradigm of Marxist thought and research. Fang Ping consciously revealed the realistic significance of the play at the present time and displayed the aesthetic mirror of social function of literature.

In addition to Mao Dun's view of Shakespearization, Fang Ping also gave his explanation in his article "What is Shakespearization" with two arguments: first is the realistic creation (Fang, *Our Friend* 266), which is consistent with Mao's view; second is the integration of playwrights and their characters (Fang, *Our Friend* 275). According to Fang, Shakespearization should be regarded as an artistic technique, an artistic lever to balance the relationship between playwrights and their characters, so as to achieve a perfect integration between the two (Fang, *Our Friend* 278). Shakespeare's characters are not only inherently independent but inevitably with the marks of Shakespeare. The second argument was Fang's unique insight as a translator and poet. It has not been found in Marxist propositions. And it is different from Dinamov's interpretation of Shakespearization both in angle and content. Fang's contribution to Shakespeare studies is also reflected in his emphasis on the aesthetic education function of Shakespeare's works. Thanks to his work, Shakespeare's artistic charm has been lifted to the level of aesthetic education, the height of moral education (Fang, *Our Friend* 299). And this is in line with the Marxist view of aesthetic education that advocates aesthetic education, notes the relationship between aesthetic education and social progress, and underlines the huge role that aesthetic education plays in people's growth and quality optimization.

There was an ideological change in Fang Ping's Shakespeare studies. Unavoidably, his early studies were subject to the political environment. For this, Fang Ping said,

> Critics then didn't have the right to think independently in that climate of political repression, so we could only rest content with that external research model, framing each work with the same historical background. Instead of making a specific analysis, we made explaining the forms of class struggle a top priority in literary criticism. (Fang, "The Explorer," 109)

The Cultural Revolution also left a lasting aftertaste in Fang's early concepts, words and sentences. Later, after the 80s, he broke away from the political context and the class struggle theory, and interpreted Shakespeare's works from a human and aesthetic point of view. He also reflected, "I had some of my views expressed in the article 'On Shylock,' but I wrote it in a wrong way. I failed to discuss Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of the plays. Many of my discussions were based on political concepts…. I should stop writing such articles as 'On Shylock'" (Fang, *Our Friend* 354-356). These words demonstrate Fang's serious attitude as a scholar as well as his courage to reflect on himself and seek the truth.

The biggest contribution that Yang Zhouhan made to Shakespeare studies was his compilation of *The Corpus of Shakespeare Criticism* (Part I and Part II), which contains six articles on Marxist Shakespeare criticism by Caudwell, Brecht, Lukacs and Anikst. According to Yang, the Soviet studies had yielded the highest results since the beginning of Marxist Shakespeare criticism in the 1920s and 1930s, but there was a "left-leaning" and "exaggerating" tendency in the Soviet Shakespeare criticism. In this regard, he approved the views of the American scholar Annette Rubinstein

> We should study Shakespeare's works by associating them with the social and political struggle of Shakespeare's time, with Shakespeare's objection to feudal civil war and support for national unity, and with Shakespeare's political and social philosophies on the monarch's duties and inheritance, relationship between personal ambition and politics, relationship between religion and politics, etc. (Yang, *The Corpus* 15)

So Yang's views of Marxist Shakespeare criticism can be summarized as follows: (1) dialectical thought, e.g. colonialism is only one of the issues reflected in *The Tempest*; (2) objectivity and impartiality, e.g. Shakespeare cannot be seen as a pure optimist; (3) consistent use of the concept "people" (which refers to the working masses in Yang's view); (4) Shakespeare's plays are a combination of realism and romanticism; (5) restoration of the truth and adherence to the materialistic approach to research, rather than the use of some contemporary philosophical and political ideas in place of Shakespeare's (Yang, *The Corpus* 14). It is worth noting that after all these analyses, Yang also thought about the future of Shakespeare criticism: "Shakespeare studies have been flourishing and have yielded many results with tons of articles published,

but where it goes in the future remains to be solved" (Yang, *The Corpus* 17). His broad dialectical view provided a glimpse of "other Marxism-guided Shakespeare criticism than the Soviet one, which seems unfamiliar to us, but from which we may learn something, as rough rocks from other hills can be used for polishing jade" (Yang, *The Corpus* 17). And this is precisely why Yang decided to compile *The Corpus of Shakespeare Criticism*. Yang was also quite optimistic about Anglo-American Marxist Shakespeare criticism. He suggested we should introduce those exotic ideas since they broke the monopoly of bourgeois Shakespeare criticism that had lasted two or three centuries. The Anglo-American Marxist Shakespeare criticism has many new perspectives, approaches and discoveries for us to look out the window into a wider Shakespearean world. Yang's suggestion showed a new development path for Chinese Shakespeare studies.

Another influential translator and critic of Shakespeare's plays is Bian Zhilin, who also underwent a change in thinking. In Li Weimin's words, "There was actually a change in Bian's overall view of Shakespeare and his plays, namely, his Shakespeare thought and concept, but what remained unchanged was his belief that Shakespeare's plays reflected the classes and their struggle to a considerable extent" (Li Weimin 267). Bian's masterpiece *Towards a New Appraisal of Shakespearean Tragedy* brings together all the papers, preambles and translation criticism published from 1955 to 1985. The book bears the marks of all the periods due to a long-time span for writing. Its first article, "On *Hamlet*," begins:

> If we want to conduct scientific research by adopting the standpoints, views and approaches of dialectical and historical materialism, we need to first get a panoramic view.... In no case will we metaphysically turn a typical living character created by a classical writer into a dead image pinned to a textbook. Such a typical character can be creatively understood in a panoramic view with its initiative by people of all ages for them to learn its everlasting educational meaning. (Bian 8; 9)

In Bian's eyes, typicality, popularity and realism are the three most critical things in *Hamlet*. In terms of popularity, Shakespeare came from a rural town and retired to his hometown living his later life as an ordinary citizen; his contact with people from all social strata, including apprentices, sailors, young students and nobles, during his stay in London, and his apparent subjective efforts, eventually contributed to his deeply popular and realistic creation. Shakespeare demonstrated his love of people in his works as well as his knowledge of their power, but he did not trust their collective action due to class and historical restrictions. The ideal of harmony cannot be achieved by means of collective action because it can easily become blind and violent action at the

hand of a few careerists. Here, Bian's "people" shares the same meaning as Yang's, namely, the working masses. Against Shakespeare, however, Bian Zhilin advocated mass rebellion and people's revolution for the ideal of harmony.

Zhao Li, Fang Ping, Yang Zhouhan and Bian Zhilin elaborated class nature, realism and affinity to the people in their works and articles from time to time. It is because of the then political ideology deep in their minds. On the one hand, the ideology helped the scholars make deep reflections on the perspective of social significance. On the other hand, it confined the scholars' thoughts. Just like a kite, the scholars were drawn by an invisible political line. As a result, they could not fly their artistic imaginations freely.

Since the Reform and Opening-up: Aesthetic and Literary Interpretation

After a radical, one-sided and extreme era, Chinese Marxist Shakespeare criticism came to a mild and fair stage. Aesthetics and literature and art were the key words of China's Marxist Shakespeare study during this time. The scholars started to collect relevant materials and made aesthetic analysis. Their studies gradually moved from outside of Shakespeare's works (historical background) to inside. Sun Jiaxiu, Meng Xianqiang and Zhang Siyang were the representatives of rational Shakespeare study.

Among the outstanding works of the reform and opening-up period were Sun Jiaxiu's 1981 *Marx, Engels and Shakespeare's Plays* and Meng Xianqiang's 1984 *Marx, Engels and Shakespeare*. It was really not easy for the two to find out the words about Shakespeare in the myriad of works of Marx and Engels. According to their statistics, there are a total of 189 references to Shakespeare in their writings. The largest difference between the two books is that Sun only excerpted relevant words without comment while Meng added the original stories and characters of Shakespeare's plays as well as historical backgrounds and meanings of the references made by Marx and Engels after each quote from their writings. The latter's work has greatly helped with readers' understanding. But the two scholars both have provided a significant introduction to Marx's and Engels' Shakespeare criticism.

Sun Jiaxiu, who had studied drama at an American university, suffered a lot during the Cultural Revolution, but her love for Shakespeare studies never changed. Sun Jiaxiu "closely combined pure academic literature study with study of stage performance of Shakespeare's plays" (Li Weimin 220). She was also noted for "Opinions on 'Shakespeare's Plays and Peking Opera,'" "Criticism on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," "Investigation of Four Tragedies by Shakespeare," "Shakespeare's Glossary," and "Shakespeare and Modern

Western Plays." She held that taking Marxism as the guidance does not mean simply interpreting the works with several words and sentences of Marx, but analysing Shakespeare's plays with Marxist principles of aesthetics. She paid close attention to the relation between Shakespeare's plays and background of the age, and "tried to find deep-seated, essential or general significances from main ideas, figures, historical background and other elements of the plays and elaborate the root causes of the change of Shakespeare's creative thoughts dialectically and historically" (Meng, *Yearbook* 289). Sun Jiaxiu made a great contribution to the progress of China's Marxist Shakespeare study.

Meng Xianqiang was a productive writer. His Shakespeare criticism works include *Pansy*, *Shakespeare Studies in China: A Brief History*, *Selected Chinese Criticism of Shakespeare in China*, *Chinese Shakespeare Yearbook*, *Shakespeare's Triple Play*, *Shakespeare in Our Age*, and over 60 papers. Gu Zhengkun referred to him as "a rare noble master of Shakespeare studies" (Yang and Yin 22), and Yang Lingui hailed him as "guider of Chinese Shakespeare studies to the world" (Yang and Yin cover). Speaking of Meng Xianqiang's Marxist Shakespeare study, the most representative work must be *Pansies: Decoding Hamlet*. He clearly expressed his opinion in the introduction. "The author presents some new theoretical concepts in this book in light of the basic theories of Marxist aesthetics and traditional literary study with the guidance of epistemology and methodology of dialectical materialism" (Meng, *Pansies* 10). Yang Lingui pointed out that on his study of *Hamlet*, Meng "broke the role identity with his research object, went through the mists into the work, and then walked out of the work to examine the complexity of human nature in the context of the era" (Yang and Yin 10). Meng thought that firstly, the humanistic spirit in *Hamlet* was consistent with Marxist humanism (Meng, *Pansies* 79); secondly, the fighting spirit in this play reflected law of the unity of opposites. The true, the good and the beautiful represented by Hamlet made an arduous fight with the false, the bad and the ugly represented by Claudius (Meng, *Pansies* 79); thirdly, this play demonstrated suspicion and rationality, the philosophical spirits of the Renaissance. Hamlet can be said a thinker (Meng, *Pansies* 83-84); fourth, there are many monologues in this play, which reflected the spirit of introspection (Meng, *Pansies* 88-89); fifth, by making the essential attribute of the stage into "epitome of the time" (Meng, *Pansies* 92). Shakespeare highlighted realism of drama aesthetics in this play.

An Introduction to Shakespeare (Volumes 1 and 2) written by Zhang Siyang et al. was praised as "the first work in China making a systematic and comprehensive study of Shakespeare's works in light of Marxist views" by Meng Xianqiang (Meng, *Brief History* 211). A chapter specially discussed "Marx and Shakespeare" (Zhang, Xu, and Zhang 452-475). Focusing on topics like "money and Timon," "Shylock's pound of flesh," "human alienation and Falstaff," "Marxist quotation art," "Marxist Shakespeare criticism" and so on,

Zhang Siyang concisely and accurately summarized the harmonious and complementary relation between Marxism and Shakespeare's works. "Every sentence, even the most unimportant ones in Shakespeare's works will have their semantic scopes enlarged and meaning deepened after being quoted by Marx in relevant contexts. Moreover, the original words will be endowed with truthfulness. More importantly, Shakespeare provided examples of the history and early form and trend of capitalist society for Marx's theoretical works as well as lots of concrete arguments for his revolutionary theory. And this precisely epitomizes the combination of theory with practice, of reality with history, of abstraction with concreteness, of politics with literature, and of social science with literary art" (Zhang, Xu, and Zhang 452-453). In other words, Shakespeare and his plays are concrete examples in Marx's abstract philosophical discourse to shed light upon the profound truth. Such a combination is arguably the most perfect combination of literature with philosophy in human history, the highest convergence of the ideas of top masters in the two areas. In Zhang's eyes, Marx was a master of quoting Shakespeare's words to reflect reality. The clever use of those quotes was to sometimes portray the rival's image and sometimes reflect the current situation, as an allusion, metonymy, metaphor, analogy, contrast or reflection, in order to achieve the effects of sarcasm, irony, criticism, etc. This is the art of Marxist quotation. With these concrete examples, Marx saved many explanations. In his article "Reflections on Chinese Shakespeare Studies," Zhang Siyang said, "For Chinese Shakespeare criticism, we shouldn't simply confine Shakespeare's plays to the realist model; nor should we arbitrarily take them as annotations to our various doctrines" (Zhang 3-4). Through a comprehensive and serious study of Shakespeare's plays, Zhang called for intensive reading of the original works and accurate grasp of their implications. As a scholar of real knowledge and deep insight, Zhang Siyang gave an objective, impartial judgment of Shakespeare and his works, setting a good example in both epistemology and methodology and laying a solid foundation for the future development of Chinese Marxist Shakespeare criticism.

Wang Yuanhua had been a loyal Marxist since he joined the Party in 1938. In "Struggle and Pain with the Conscience: Impression of Comrade Zhou Yang," Li Ziyun wrote, "I have heard of Comrade Zhou Yang's praise of Comrade Wang Yuanhua as one of the few scholars in the Party with an intimate knowledge of Marxist literary theory" (3). Wang discovered that dogmatism was the epistemological cause of the Party's long-standing "left-leaning" problem, which substituted concreteness with abstraction, but rationality in its true sense meant going from abstract to concrete and analysing people in a specific historical context rather than just label them as "bourgeois" or "proletarians." As an advocate of intellectuality, he wrote such words in his article "Drafting an Article for Zhou Yang:" "Sensibility, intellectuality and rationality are not only concepts raised by German classical philosophers Kant and Hegel but terms

frequently used by Marx. Marx's 'from abstract to concrete' in his *Preface and Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* precisely clarifies the process of sensible, intellectual and rational knowledge and indicates that is the only correct scientific method" (Wang, *Self-Narration* 199). Wang was actually not satisfied with defining intellectuality with "the method of explanation" and "the method of presentation" from the postscript of *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* (2nd edition), for he believed that intellectuality worked when an analysing mind made some simple rules. And it is a process "from abstract to concrete." Take for example Marx's study of the capitalist economy: it starts from the abstract essential rule of surplus value and gradually goes into the concrete economic phenomena of profit, interest and rent, thus revealing the law for the operation of the capitalist mode of production as a whole. Wang also participated in Zhou's writing of "Investigation of Some Theoretical Issues of Marxism" and boldly pointed out the Party's "much emphasis on practice and little on theory" (Wang, *Self-Narration* 200). Later, he was unfortunately involved and wronged in the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign.

Wang Yuanhua studied Shakespeare from the Marxist point of view and his researches are concentrated in the 2008 *Interpreting Shakespeare*, a revision of *Interpretation of Shakespeare's Plays*. The book contains translations of articles by Shakespeare critics from Britain, Germany, France and other countries. The translation work was done by him and his wife Zhang Ke. Most of his *Speculations* essays on Shakespeare were also collected in the preface to and the translator's notes and postscript of *Interpreting Shakespeare*. In the preface, Wang reviewed his changing feeling for Shakespeare from resistance to admiration due to his changing literary and political views of different periods. Wang did not know about Shakespeare when he was a young man: "I couldn't accept his early modern language expression and I was almost blind to his deep insight into the human soul. But later, I got attracted to Shakespeare as I was inspired by Zhang Ke" (Wang, *Interpreting* 2).

I think that the best Marxist part with Wang's Shakespeare study is his adherence to Marxist critical spirit and introspective spirit. While criticizing problems with the society and the age, Wang had been inspecting and introspecting himself. "Marxist self-criticism refers to a spirit of self-criticism, self-perfection and self-development formed in the course of the emergence and development of Marxism. It is an important characteristic of Marxist theory that enables the theory to advance with the times and maintain enduring vigour and vitality" (Guo 36). Wang's self-reflection was most conspicuous in his understanding of *Hamlet*. He read Liang Shiqiu's translation of *Hamlet* in the early years of the Anti-Japanese War. He wrote an article about Hamlet in the early 1950s. And in the early 60s, Wang took that article as the first part of his *Analysis of the Four Tragedies by Shakespeare*, arguing "I don't think

Hamlet was hesitant because he was a coward. It should be because of a series of great changes in his life that came too abruptly to him. The king's sudden death, his mother's remarriage to his uncle, a suspected usurper, and his treacherous uncle's immediate seizure of the throne … all shattered his peace and quiet life. The fickleness of things, perils of the situation and betrayal of friends were enough to overwhelm a prince who had grown up in clover and yet now found himself beset by traps and could fall into any one of them at any moment. All these sudden changes forced him to suspect, to think. He had to hurry to find the truth behind each change and investigate the causes of them. So, Hamlet grew up into a real adult overnight from an enthusiastic innocent child" (Wang, *Interpreting* 3-4). But later Wang Yuanhua reflected that his article "Hamlet's Character" overly attributed Hamlet's hesitation to environmental changes out of sympathy for and defence of the character and that Hamlet's hesitation was also due to his internal factors. "In face of environmental challenges, each of us would give a different response partly under the influence of our own character" (Wang, *Interpreting* 4-5). We are shaped by the environment where we are, but we can go beyond it. In 1955, Wang Yuanhua was put under investigation in isolation as "a counterrevolutionary of Hu Feng's Gang" (Li Ziyun 3). It seemed a political joke to him, since he was so loyal to the Party and was yet slandered as an anti-Party person. "At that spiritual torture, my mind had a big twist. What I used to worship as the good, the sacred, just collapsed in a wink. I felt fear. My entire mind trembled with it. It seemed as if I were abandoned in the boundless wilderness. I was panicky not knowing what to do. It was the most horrible time I had ever had in my entire life" (Wang, *Interpreting* 14). Idealism suffered a devastating blow, and so did Wang's world view. The blow was given by the then social environment. Wang likened himself to Othello, whose world fell apart in despair at news of Desdemona's betrayal. In this regard, the Taiwan scholar Li Youcheng has a remarkable statement:

> We can even conclude an autobiographical interpretation from his preliminary analysis of *Hamlet* and *Othello*. It was based on the author's ideas and life experience to echo the reader's thoughts, feelings and state of mind in reading. Things that Wang encountered during his study of Shakespeare certainly reflect the life of frustrations of many Chinese intellectuals in some historical phase. (Li, Youcheng 227)

After all that had happened, Wang Yuanhua became increasingly sympathetic and intimate to Shakespeare. He was excited about Shakespeare's insight into the human soul and human nature:

> I no longer mind the early modern language of his plays: those over-elaborate lines of metaphors and puns, those exaggerated traces of dramatic techniques,

> those flaws in form resulting from historical limitations .... What matters is that he depicted the real people and their souls. Isn't that what most matters and what most deserves the reader's repeated appreciation? No one could ensure his work stays the best in form. The best form changes over time, but the best content glitters in the human soul throughout the ages. (Wang, *Interpreting* 15)

Wang Yuanhua's Marxist criticism is also embodied in his adherence to Marxist "reality view" as the author of *Toward the Reality*. He admired Shakespeare's superb realistic characterization, saying, "When I read his plays again, what first comes to my mind is his endless ocean of art. I've never seen a writer as energetic as Shakespeare. Shakespeare could present every corner of the world in his works when others could only show one. I have no idea what it takes for him to grasp people's inner secrets that they would never confide even when threatened with the world's severest punishment" (Wang, *Interpreting* 20). Macbeth, Richard III, Iago, Claudius, Shylock and Edmund are typical examples of Shakespeare's true and profound analysis of human nature. It was the realistic disclosure of the evil side of human nature that endowed his works with enlightening artistic effects.

Into the 90s, Wang Yuanhua came into what Xia Zhongyi called "ideological maturity and academic pureness" (Xia 57) period. As Wang says, "It was then when I started to break away with the longstanding preconceptions and think about things using my mind" (Wang, *Diary* 528). Looking at Shakespeare from the perspective of academic tradition and literary theory, Wang pointed out, "what *Coriolanus* said about ancient Roman democracy is still worth learning from today" (Wang, *Interpreting* 20), although the play was about system drawbacks in ancient Rome. He also argued, "*King Lear* depicts an imperious and wayward tyrant. Yet, when he surrendered the throne and experienced the sufferings of the world, the sense of human nature was gradually aroused in him" (Wang, *Interpreting* 21). Wang also compared *King Lear* with the Chinese play *Palace of Eternal Life*, as both plays are about one hero undergoing changes in different situations. He was also a fan of Falstaff, the Shakespeare comic character, exclaiming "how come the author could give the ugly, the weak artistic charm and then turn the acid, the bitter into witty humour!" (Wang, *Interpreting* 303) These words are consistent with Marxist aesthetic view. Marx sang praise to British drama for its "bizarre blend of the noble and humble, the horrible and funny, and the heroic and witty" (Marx 215). Falstaff is the epitome of the humble, funny and witty. Wang's preface to and translator's notes and postscript of *Interpreting Shakespeare* were completed in a very rational, objective and quiet state, so his Shakespearean thought was concentrated in these writings. The pity is that those are informal essays. Strictly speaking, Wang's Shakespeare critiques cannot be regarded as academic papers.

If he had some academic papers, Wang would undoubtedly leave us greater results in Shakespeare criticism.

Overall, Wang Yuanhua had made unremitting efforts in Marxist Shakespeare criticism on the levels of realism, idealism, critical spirit, human nature, and reality. His deep reflections amidst the turbulence of different times demonstrated the quality of "being independent of the spiritual order constructed by the situation as modern intellectuals" (Xia 58).
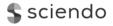

Conclusion

The aforesaid scholars are just a small share of Chinese Marxist Shakespeare critics. There are also Sun Dayu, Gu Shouchang, Li Funing, Chen Jia, Wu Xinghua, Fang Zhong, Wang Zuoliang, Dai Liuling, Zhu Weizhi, Liu Bingshan and many other influential critics. As the space is limited, I only selected the ten most representative ones. Though they already passed away, their valuable works are the starting points of studies of the after generations. After a deep consideration, I summarized features of China's Marxist Shakespeare study into "two turns" and "three trends." "Two turns" refer to first, gradually turning from relying on the Soviet Union model to independent study and building Marxist Shakespeare study with Chinese characteristics, and second, turning studying from political perspective to the perspectives of aesthetics and literary and art. The studies get more rational, with slavish, fanatical and illiberal components greatly reduced. Shakespeare study marched on the path of academic theory. "Three trends" are first, paying attention to realistic achievements in Shakespeare's plays; and second, highlighting the literary tool theory. Some scholars used sociological critical methods to mainly study the historical background of Shakespeare's plays and the social conflicts and class relations. Their studies reflected and emphasized class and class struggle. Moreover, they regarded Shakespeare's plays as tools serving for politics. And third, studying Shakespeare from the perspective of Marxist theory of literature and art, they pertinently analyse the thoughts and art skills in Shakespeare's plays.

Chinese Marxist Shakespeare criticism focuses on revolutionary, popular, class, humanist, typical, realistic, real and critical levels. The early criticism was simplified and politicized. The later criticism achieved remarkable results with lots of academic theories and books. We should push forward with our Shakespeare studies on the basis of these previous achievements and take the initiative to absorb the quintessence of foreign Marxist Shakespeare studies in order to win a place in the international Marxist Shakespeare criticism.

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Shakespeare across the Taiwan Strait:
A Developmental Perspective[1]

Abstract: Shakespeare studies in Mainland China and Taiwan evolved from the same origin during the two centuries after Shakespeare being introduced into China in the early nineteenth century. Although Shakespeare was first seen on the Taiwan stage in the Japanese language during the colonial period, it was after Kuomintang moved to Taiwan in 1949 that Shakespeare studies began to flourish when scholars and theatrical experts from mainland China, such as Liang Shih-Chiu, Yu Er-Chang, Wang Sheng-shan and others brought Chinese Shakespeare to Taiwan. Since the 1980s, mainland Shakespeareans began to communicate actively with their colleagues in Taiwan. With the continuous efforts of Cao Yu, Fang Ping, Meng Xianqiang, Gu Zhengkun, Yang Lingui and many other scholars in mainland China and Chu Li-Min, Yen Yuan-shu, Perng Ching-Hsi and other scholars in Taiwan, communications and conversations on Shakespeare studies across the Taiwan Strait were gradually enhanced in recent years. Meanwhile, innovations in Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare have resulted in a new performing medium, Shake-xiqu, through which theatrical practitioners on both sides explore possibilities of a union of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese theatre. This paper studies some intricate relationship in the history of Shakespeare studies in mainland China and Taiwan from a developmental perspective and suggests opportunities for positive and effective co-operations and interactions in the future.

Keywords: Shakespeare Studies, China, Mainland, Taiwan, Shake-xiqu.

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In recent years, the cross-cultural adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Asia have gradually become a focus of international Shakespeare studies. The achievements of Shakespeare studies in Chinese context have greatly enriched international Shakespeare studies. Chinese translations of Shakespeare's plays have facilitated Shakespeare performances and studies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan Shakespeare studies, as an important part in the field of foreign literature and theatre studies, shares the same origin with the ones in mainland China. However, the different tracks of development in Shakespeare studies in mainland China and Taiwan reflect different social and political conditions. In the process of cultural appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, mutual understanding and communications on both sides can help to elevate Chinese traditional operas to a new stage and realize the maximum dissemination of Chinese culture in the age of globalization.

The development of Shakespeare studies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait witnesses the social changes and historical evolution and shows the alternation and intersection of the powers of discourse. In Taiwan, particularly, the relations between drama and politics are always intertwined. The reception history of Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan can be divided into four phases: Japanese Colonial Period, Kuomintang Martial Law Period, the period between the end of Martial Law and the end of twentieth century, and the period of the beginning of the twenty-first century to the present. Meanwhile, adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into various *xiqu* (traditional Chinese opera) forms, namely Shake-Xiqu, have strengthened ties in cultural traditions between the two sides.

Common Origins of Mainland China
and Taiwan Shakespeare Studies

Shakespeare's name was already heard in Chinese in various versions in the 1800s, and his Chinese name was standardized in the early twentieth century. In 1839, the English Bard's name first appeared as 沙士比阿(Sha-shi-bi-a) in a Chinese book, *Sizhou zhi*, translation of Hugh Murray's *The Encyclopaedia of Geography*, a project organized by Lin Zexu (1785-1850). In 1856, William Muirhead, a British Protestant missionary, also mentioned the name of Shakespeare in his Chinese translation of Thomas Milner's *The History of England*. Among almost a dozen of his Chinese names, one remains as the standard accepted on both sides of the Taiwan Straits till now, and that is 莎士比亚(Sha-shi-bi-ya). This is a coinage by Liang Qichao in his *Critique on Poetry in Icy Drinks Room* published in 1902, when he acclaimed that "among poets of recent times, Shakespeare (Shashibiya), Milton and Tennyson were very great, as their poems amounted to thousands of words" (qtd. in Meng 5).

The early twentieth century saw Shakespeare's works in Chinese characters. However, the first Chinese publications under Shakespeare's name were not translations of his works but their adaptations. In 1903, Da Wen Press in Shanghai published a booklet entitled *Xie Wai Qi Tan* (*Exotic Tales*), in which 10 Shakespearean stories were translated by an anonymous translator. In the following year, Lin Shu and Wei Yi collaborated *Yin Bian Yan Yu* (*Chitchat of an English Poet*), which was published by Shanghai Commercial Press, including the translation of 20 stories from *Tales from Shakespeare* written by Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb. Lin Shu's translation made Shakespeare's plays popular among common Chinese readers and exerted a great influence on both sides of Taiwan Strait. In June and July 1906, in the Chinese version of *Taiwan Daily News*, three short stories written in ancient style by an author with the penname of Shao Chao were considered as the rewritings of Lin Shu's translation of stories of Shakespeare's plays (Xu "Research" 251). The three short stories were entitled *Danish Prince*, *Edge Glass* and *Jade Toad*, which were respectively adapted from *Hamlet*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *A Collection of Bizarre Stories* by Pu Songling of Qing Dynasty, and *As You Like It*, according to Xu Junya, a scholar in Taiwan Normal University, who made a detailed research on the spread of *Chitchat of an English Poet* in Taiwan. Her research showed that during the period of Japanese colonization, the Chinese literary circle in Taiwan was influenced by Lin Shu's translation of *Tales from Shakespeare*, thus gaining an initial understanding of Shakespeare's plays (Xu "Early Propagation" 42). In addition to the translation of the tales, Lin Shu also collaborated with Chen Jialin and translated four historical plays, *Richard Ⅱ, Henry Ⅳ, Henry Ⅵ, Henry Ⅴ* and *Julius Caesar* from *Historical Tales from Shakespeare* written by A. T. Quiller-Couch, according to Tarumoto Teruo in *The Book on the Unjust Case of Lin Shu* (2008).[2]

In 1931, Liang Shih-chiu (1903-1987), a professor in National Qingdao University, began to translate Shakespeare's plays with the advocacy and encouragement of Hu Shih (1891-1962), a great scholar, thinker, poet, historian and writer of modern China. Liang Shih-chiu finished the translation of ten Shakespeare's plays in the mainland and had seven of them published by the Commercial Press before he left for Taiwan in 1949 and taught in Taiwan Normal University. In 1967, he completed the translation of thirty-seven Shakespeare's plays with painstaking efforts. Until now he is still the only one that has completed the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's plays solely on one's own. Liang Shih-chiu had a great influence on Taiwan Shakespeare studies during the period of the martial law (1949-1987).

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[2] The book tries to justify Lin Shu and his translation by examining the various sources and changes of evaluations on Lin Shu's translation. It was translated into Chinese in 2018 and published by Commercial Press in Shanghai.

Along with Liang's *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Zhu Shenghao's translation, as edited by Yu Erchang, has been well received in Taiwan since its publication in 1957. Zhu Shenghao (1912-1944), a poet and graduate from Hangchow Christian College (now Zhejiang University), was a crucial figure in the history of Chinese translation of Shakespeare's plays. He began to translate Shakespeare's plays in 1935. During the Sino-Japanese War, he translated 31 and half Shakespeare's plays (previously considered as 27 and half) until his death. His translation was first published by World Publishing House in Shanghai in 1947. His translation of Shakespeare's plays is highly acclaimed by the readers from both sides of the Taiwan Strait for its poetic rhythm and vivid expressions and is extensively used in various theatres.

To a certain extent, both Liang Shih-chiu's and Zhu Shenghao's translations have completed the process of Shakespeare's Chinese canonization through historical tests. Although Zhu Shenghao's translation is considered to be classic, he translated the poetic lines in prose, with too many omissions, modifications and obfuscations, which affect the plays' integrity. For instance, one of the concerns raised by translation critics is Zhu Shenghao's deleting of Shakespeare's bawdy expressions. "The act of purifying involves the translator's hard work, but it is not worth advocating if we correctly judge how to treat foreign classics" (Zhu Jungong 24). Liang Shih-chiu translated Shakespeare's original plays in prose style yet with the rhythm of a prose poem. Liang's translation makes up for the missing portions and intentional mistranslation of the sexually implied texts in Zhu's version, and restores the vivid Shakespearean world of the English Renaissance. As for the translation of sexual hints and vulgar language, that is confined within the social environment of the time and the translator's style. Although sexual hints are not deleted in Liang's translation, his prose is sometimes criticized to be too straightforward and lacks the poetic rhythm of the original lines.

Yu Er-chang (1904-1984), a schoolmate of Zhu Shenghao, came to Taiwan in 1949 and began to teach in the department of Foreign Languages in National Taiwan University and translated the remaining 10 Shakespearean historical plays that he thought Zhu had not finished. In 1957, the translation of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* collaborated by Zhu Shenghao and Yu Er-chang was published by World Publishing House in Taiwan. However, the two long poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were excluded from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.

The two versions of *Complete Shakespeare* translated by Liang Shih-chiu, Zhu Sheng-hao and Yu Er-chang have always been the main accesses for readers in Taiwan to appreciate Shakespeare's plays. The same origin of mainland China and Taiwan Shakespeare studies cannot be denied. In *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, Alex Huang approvingly recognizes the shared origin of Shakespeare studies in mainland China and

Taiwan by focusing on the sinicization of Shakespeare after his entering the Chinese world, discussing the different situations of Shakespeare's plays in various historical stages in mainland China and Taiwan, including the period of the Anti-Japanese War, the cultural revolution period in mainland China and the martial law period in Taiwan.

Shakespeare's Plays in Taiwan during Japanese Colonial Period and Early Post-War Period

The records of a few Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan during the period of Japanese colonization (1895-1945) show that they were equipment of the colonial rule. According to Wu Peichen, the Japanese Shakespeare's plays staged in Taiwan during the colonial years were for the entertainment of the conquerors or the Japanese speaking audiences ("The Peripheral Body of Empire" 235). There is no evidence about the reception of Japanese Shakespeare's plays by the native people in Taiwan, as during that period the audience was mainly Japanese who lived in Taiwan. The performances were based on Japanese translations by such translator as Shoyo Tsubouchi (1859-1935). As Chen Yilin notes, "Shakespeare's plays staged in Taiwan were sporadically performed by Japanese troupes" in the early stage of the colonial time (1895-1915) and later on the Japanese government "promoted English language and culture so that some of the common people could read Shakespeare's plays in Japanese and some elites could read the original Shakespeare's plays in English" (Chen Yilin 1). In "Japanese campaigns" (Chiu *A Study on Taiwan Theatre* 10) at the end of Japanese Colonial Period (1937-1945), traditional Chinese operas were banned, and performances in theatre were controlled. They were replaced by the imperial drama of Japanese militarism. During this period, British and American literature and culture were expelled out of the educational system. The campaigns nearly changed the inherent Chinese cultural traditions and national identity of the people in Taiwan.

There is, ironically, some Taiwanese element in the Japanese adaptations as a vehicle of discrimination against the colonized. In 1903, Kawakami Otojiro, who launched "Drama Movement"[3] in Japan, staged *Osero (Othello)*[4] in Tokyo, with its setting in Japan and Taiwan in Meiji era. Cyprus in the original play was changed into Penghu Islands. Othello, the Moor, was

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[3] It referred to "a new type of drama that is not traditional kabuki or borrows parts of its content and form" (Shi 78).

[4] Related research on the play may refer to Yukari Yoshihara, "Raw-Savage's Othello: The First-staged Japanese Adaptation of *Othello* (1903) and Japanese Colonialism," *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, 2014.

adapted into Muro Washiro, a tribal-born governor working for the Japanese emperor's colonial rule over Taiwan. Iago's Japanese name was Iya. Desdemona was adapted into the daughter of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Tomone. This role was performed by the wife of Kawakami, Sadayakko, the first modern actress in Japan (Hiroshi 277). In the play, after Muro Washiro killed his wife, he realized his blunder and said: "I abandoned my precious one. It's too late to regret. I'm a fool as an aborigine. I'm doomed to death" (qtd. in Wu "Japanese Adaptation of *Othello*" 41). This adaptation of *Othello* reflects the feudal ideas of race and class categorization in Japanese society at that time, as well as the racial discrimination against the indigenous people in Taiwan, when they were forced to accept the Japanese colonial rules.

According to the Japanese version of *Taiwan Daily Newspaper* published from 1895 to 1945, *Osero* was staged in Taiwan in 1905, in which "Masao Murata and Mohee Fukui performed as the protagonists" (Wu "Japanese Adaptation of *Othello*" 44). Wu Peichen also compared *Othello* 1905 with *The Tempest* 2004 staged by Wu Shing-kuo in the Contemporary Legend Theatre to show the social and political changes in Taiwan (Wu, *The Peripheral Body of Empire* 235). However, the relevant information about the reception of these Japanese Shakespeare's plays by the native people in Taiwan has not been found until now. It can be seen that Shakespeare's plays staged by Japanese troupes in Taiwan have not had any impact on the native people in Taiwan.

Upon the Japanese surrender in 1945 and till 1949, the Kuomintang government promoted the literature and art movement with fighting spirit. In terms of literary and art policies, the government aiming at "de-japanization" and "re-sinicization" (Huang Yingzhe *"De-japanization"* 17) in Taiwan, actively promoted the cultural construction by establishing a new cultural system that was centred on Chinese traditional culture, and re-integrated Taiwan into the Chinese cultural circle. It was in this period that Chen Dayu, a director from Zhangzhou, Fujian province went to Taiwan in 1946 to participate in the cultural construction in post-war Taiwan. After his arrival, Chen Dayu led the "Little Experimental Troupe" and launched his theatrical career in Taiwan in just two years and six months (1946.10-1949.4). The troupe had performed Molière's *Miser*, *Poor Figa* (co-performed with the Youth Art Drama Society) and Cao Yu's *The Field* in Yat-sen Hall of Taipei.[5] However, the February 28th Incident in 1947 made the atmosphere of white terror continue to envelop Taiwan society, which also seriously affected the development of post-war Taiwan theatre.

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[5] Yat-sen Hall, located in the western district of Taipei city, was built in 1932. It was one of the important construction projects of the colonial government to celebrate Japanese emperor Hirohito's accession to the throne. In 1945, Yat-sen Hall was the place where the Chinese government held a ceremony to celebrate Japan's defeat and surrender in Taiwan.

According to many written records, the first Chinese Shakespeare's play staged in Taiwan was *Clouds of Doubt* adapted from *Othello* directed by Chen Dayu.[6] He had established the Little Experimental Troupe in Zhangzhou. After arriving in Taipei, the theatre recruited many native players. Chen Dayu divided the cast into two groups: a group of mandarin speakers, mainly from other provinces of China and a group of Hokkien speakers, consisting of people from Fujian Province and native people in Taiwan. His play *Banana Fragrance*[7] was banned by the Kuomintang authorities in 1947, as it reflected the conflicts between the native people in Taiwan and the people who came to Taiwan with the retreat of Kuomintang, thus causing riots in auditorium. According to the newspaper *Taiwan New Life* and its supplement *The Bridge*, which were published during the years of 1947-1949, *Clouds of Doubt* was to be staged in Taipei. However, after a thorough research done by the author and Chiu Kun-liang, an expert in the history of Taiwan theatre, no strong evidence that the play *Clouds of Doubt* was staged in 1949 was found until now.

On *Taiwan New Life*[8] on 31st January 1949, a literary review on *Othello* written by Shoyo Tsubouchi was translated into Chinese, which served as an

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[6] Lv Su-shang, the first scholar who did research on post-war theatrical studies in Taiwan, recorded in his famous work *History of Film and Theatre in Taiwan*: "At the end of February 1949, a small experimental troupe will rehearse *Clouds of Doubt*, the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* (adapted and directed by Chen Dayu). The play will be staged at the auditorium of Taipei No. 1 middle school. Without public ticket sales, tickets will be distributed to the audience" (Lv 366). Jiao Tong, a writer and theatrical scholar, recorded in his work *The Early Postwar Theatre in Taiwan*: "At the end of February 1949, the 'Little Experimental Troupe' performed *Clouds of Doubt* in the auditorium of Taipei No. 1 middle school. It was adapted from Shakespeare's *Othello* by Chen Dayu" (Jiao 179).

[7] Prior to *Clouds of Doubt*, *Banana Fragrance* is a well-known play directed by Chen Dayu, which occupies an important position in Taiwan theatre. The play alludes to the most sensitive political and ethnic issues in the "Feb. 28th Incident," showing the serious conflicts between "natives" and "outsiders." On November 1st, 1947, *Banana Fragrance* was performed in Yat-sen Hall of Taipei at night, but caused a quarrel between the local audience and the audience from the other provinces, causing a sensation. It was scheduled to be performed for six times in three days. As the plot involved ethnic conflicts, after the first performance, the play was banned by the Taiwan news agency.

[8] Launched on August 1st, 1947, the newspaper supplement of *Taiwan New Life, The Bridge*, altogether published 223 issues until April 11th 1949, on which Chen Dayu published his main viewpoints on Taiwan drama and literature. On April 2nd, 1948, *The Bridge* published an article entitled "How to Build a Contemporary Drama Movement" written by Chen Dayu. In the article, Chen made a comprehensive analysis on the current situation of Taiwan's drama performance and gave specific suggestions on how to develop drama movement.

introduction to the upcoming play *Clouds of Doubt* and was released by the Advocacy Group of the Little Experimental Troupe. This is the only objective evidence that can be found during the early post-war period. In Alexa Huang's account of Shakespeare in China, *Clouds of Doubt* is also considered "the earliest documented Chinese-language Shakespeare performance in Taiwan" (10).

Beatrice Bi-qi Lei adds more details about the performance in an interview in Chinese:

> The play *Clouds of Doubt* adapted from *Othello* showed that the male and female protagonists with different colors of skin fell in love and got married, but led to a tragic ending. With the adaptation of Shakespeare's play, Chen Dayu, as an artist, expressed his pessimistic attitude towards Taiwan society and his desire for ethnic harmony through the platform of theatre in the early postwar period. (Chiu and Lei)

In the introduction to *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*, Poonam Trivedi reiterates that "the first production of Shakespeare in Taiwan was *Yi Yun* (Suspicion), an adaptation of *Othello* in 1949" (Trivedi 16). That "*Clouds of Doubt* was staged in Taiwan in 1949" seems to have become a convincing fact. Suspicion on it will only make the readers feel that there is no point in stirring up the trouble. However, in the paper "'I May Be Straight, Though They Themselves Be Bevel': Taiwan's Early Shakespeare" written by Beatrice Bi-qi Lei, she mentioned the play *The Story of Revenged Prince* adapted from *Hamlet* in 1962 and took the same play staged in 1964 as "the first public performance of Shakespearean masterpiece in Free China" (Lei 94). The contradictory statements on the first Chinese Shakespeare play staged in Taiwan are very confusing.

In 2006, the book *Drifting for Thousands of Miles: Chen Dayu* was published by the Cultural Construction Committee of the Executive Council of Taiwan. Written by Chiu Kun-liang, it was the only monograph on the life and theatrical works of the dramatist Chen Dayu. In order to write the book, Chiu Kun-liang went to Chen Dayu's hometown Zhangzhou and visited his family. After checking out *Min Nan Newspaper* on May 15th 1941, he found that *Clouds of Doubt* adapted from *Othello* had once been staged by Chen Dayu in Zhangzhou for the first time in May 1941. In the fifth chapter of the book, Chiu Kun-liang wrote:

> The works directed by Chen Dayu in his Taiwan period were produced from 1948 to the beginning of 1949. The performance plan of Chen Dayu's Little Experimental Troupe did not go smoothly, and the public performances of *Taipei Restaurant* and *Clouds of Doubt* (Shakespeare's *Othello*) were not staged as scheduled (Chiu, *Drifting* 142).

As Jiao Tong, a theatre scholar of post-war Taiwan drama, puts:

> Due to the long-term geographical and historical separation between Taiwan and the mainland, the political, economic, social upheaval caused the ethnic conflicts and misunderstandings. The friction caused by misunderstanding and conflicts directly caused the political environment to be more serious. Taiwan paid very high social and cultural costs in the early years of restoration. (Jiao 10)

In the historical torrent, Chen Dayu came to Taiwan from the mainland out of his personal choice and ambition. In a dangerous political situation, Chen Dayu went back to the mainland secretly in April 1949, but his persistence and enthusiasm for drama had given new hope to the distressing Taiwan theatre. Even if *Clouds of Doubt* was not performed as scheduled, it sowed seeds for the vigorous development of Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan. Inspired by Chen Dayu's unfulfilled ambition, directors and dramatists took over his unfinished work and continued to make efforts to create a free and open theatrical environment in Taiwan.

Nevertheless, it was definite that the experimental troupe had rehearsed *Clouds of Doubt* in Taiwan, even if there was no public performance. In the age of the white terror, some plays which targeted social ills could only be performed in the underground so as to avoid the authoritative censorship. There was practically no difference between rehearsal and public performance. Although there is no strong evidence, it is self-evident that *Clouds of Doubt* has exerted a significant influence on the Shakespeare circle in Taiwan. This play has also become a connecting point in the reception history of Shakespeare's plays on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Performances of Shakespeare's Plays in Taiwan during Kuomintang Martial Law Period

It was after 1949 that Shakespeare's plays began to be rooted in Taiwan, with the enthusiasm and efforts of the translators, scholars and theatrical directors, who moved to Taiwan from the mainland. On May 19th 1949, the Kuomintang officially declared Taiwan to be under the martial law. In the aspect of drama performance, it adhered to the principle of "drama serves the ruling power" (Shi 67) and made it subject to close scrutiny. During the period of martial law, Wang Shengshan, who laid foundation for directing drama in National Academy of Drama[9] in Jiang'an, a small town in Sichuan Province, taught in the drama

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[9] National Academy of Drama was founded in Nanjing in 1935. During the Anti-Japanese war, it was moved to Chongqing first, and then Jiang'an, the so-called cradle of Chinese Modern Drama.

department of Chinese Culture University after moving to Taiwan and staged at least ten Shakespeare plays as public graduating performance.[10]

If *Clouds of Doubt* was excluded, then the first Chinese Shakespeare play in Taiwan would be *The Story of the Prince's Revenge* staged in 1962. This adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was performed in Political Warfare College[11] of Taiwan. In the early 1960s, being a weapon of political struggle, theatres were completely controlled by the Kuomintang authorities after the martial law. The complete prohibition of mainland operas in Taiwan has become the main reason for Shakespeare's plays to appear on the military stage. In 1964, on the anniversary of the 400th birthday of William Shakespeare, the Political Warfare College was invited by the people in theatre circle to stage *The Story of the Prince's Revenge* for a whole week. Lee Man-gui, a director and the dean of the Department of Drama, positioned the play as the first formal performance of Shakespeare's plays in the post-war Taiwan theatre (Li 134).

After *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged by the Culture College in 1966, as the next Shakespeare play staged by the Culture College, *King Lear* was shown in the "National Gallery" of Taipei in 1967. Being staged again in 1968, the play should be the first Shakespeare play directed by Wang Shengshan.[12] Wang resorted to visual elements in the play by using coloured lights to create different atmosphere on stage and giving Chinese names to characters to make the performance acceptable to the audience in Taiwan. With the success of *King Lear* directed by Wang Shengshan in 1986, the Confucian concept of filial piety and loyalty was inherited in Taiwan. During the period of martial law, Shakespeare's plays performed on the stage were full of entertaining effects and educational significance, which catered to the ideology of the ruling class at that time.

In 1970, the Culture College held the annual Hua Gang Art Exhibition, in which the performance of the drama department was called Hua Gang Drama Exhibition.[13] From 1971 to 1979, Hua Gang Drama Exhibition produced nine

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[10] As for the detailed number and time of all the Shakespeare plays directed by Wang Shengshan, there are six versions with the interviews and investigation respectively done by Perng Ching-hsi, Jiang Longzhao, Chen Shu-fen, Li Kang-nian, Wang Shu-hua and Wang Wan-rong. The information on the time of his earliest Shakespeare play and the number of the Shakespeare plays he staged in all his life are not consistent and still need further research.

[11] Founded in 1951, Fu Hsing Kang College was a military college located in Taipei. In 2006, it was transferred to the National Defense University of Taiwan and named the Political Warfare College.

[12] In the book *Wang Shengshan* written by Li Kang-nian, there is a contradictory record that *King Lear* was staged respectively in 1967 and 1968 (100; 178).

[13] Chinese Culture College was also known as Hua Gang, and in 1980 it was changed into Chinese Culture University. As it was built on Yang Ming mountain, Chang Chi-

Shakespeare plays, eight of which were directed by Wang Shengshan, as the director of the drama department of the Culture College. Wang Shengshan required all students to participate in every detail of the theatre, such as stage design, performance, lighting, music, sound effect and costume design.

The political policies of the Kuomintang put emphasis on the interpretation of the Shakespeare's plays with the promotion of Confucianism, the revival of the inherent Chinese culture and the cultivation of loyalty and patriotism of the people. The central idea of Confucianism, self-cultivation, family planning, country governance and maintaining world peace also became the themes reflected in Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan during this period. Thus, it can be concluded that it was Chen Dayu, Liang Shih-chiu, Yu Er-chang, Wang Shengshan and other translators, scholars and theatrical directors who actually made Shakespeare's plays take root in Taiwan after the Kuomintang moved to Taiwan in 1949. It is under their joint efforts that the studies and performances of Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan gradually flourished and became popular among the public.

Exchanges of Shakespeare Studies across the Taiwan Strait and the Developmental Prospect

After the Reform and Opening-up, the Shakespeare Association of China was established in 1984, and two Chinese Shakespeare festivals were held respectively in 1986 and 1994. Shakespeare studies and performances in mainland China are greatly enhanced with the ever-lasting passion and painstaking efforts of several generations of the Chinese Shakespeareans. Leading members of the Association, such as Cao Yu, Yang Zhouhan, Li Funing, Fang Ping, Zhang Junchuan, Meng Xianqiang and many others, paved the way for the development of Shakespeare studies in China. Chinese scholars began to participate actively in international Shakespeare events in the 1990s.

In 1995, Sun Fuliang, one of the vice-presidents of the Shakespeare Association of China, visited Taiwan and was warmly welcomed by Chu Limin, Hu Yaoheng, Yang Maiyun, and many other Shakespeareans. Sun Fuliang gave a series of lectures on Shakespeare studies in mainland China at universities in Taiwan and proposed the establishment of Taiwan Shakespeare Association. This visit was reported on *United Daily News* of Taiwan with the title "The Whirlwind of Shakespeare from the Other Shore to Taiwan" on 22nd February,

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yun, the founder of the College, took the meaning of "In the beautiful China, phoenix is singing on high hills." And "Hua Gang" (Chinese hills) was chosen as the name for the site of the university.

1995. It greatly enhanced the exchanges and communications across the Taiwan Strait.[14]

In 1996, the Association organized a delegation of Chinese Shakespeareans for the first time, including Fang Ping, Meng Xianqiang, Cao Shujun, Sun Fuliang, Gu Zhengkun, Zhang Chong and Yang Lingui, to attend the 6th World Shakespeare Congress in Los Angeles. In 1997 Fang Ping was elected to be a member on the executive committee of the International Shakespeare Association (1997-2001). Currently on the Committee is Yang Lingui, who was first elected in the 9th World Shakespeare Congress in Prague in 2011 and has been serving his second term since 2016 when the 10th Congress was held in Stratford-upon-Avon and London.

When Shakespeareans in mainland China became active participants in exchanges with international circles of Shakespeare studies and more and more engaged themselves in Shakespearean events outside China in the early 1990s, they began to reach out to colleagues across the Taiwan Strait. After the 1992 consensus between the mainland China and Taiwan, cross-strait relations began to develop positively. Shakespeare scholars on both sides became willing to establish contact and participate in events organized on either side. For instance, some from Taiwan were invited and a few attended Shanghai Shakespeare festival held by the Shakespeare Association of China in 1994. A couple of papers from scholars in Taiwan were included in a collection of essays *Chinese Shakespeare Yearbook*, which was published in 1995 and edited by Meng Xianqiang. One festival attendant, Jiang Longzhao addressed the festival directly in his "Shanghai Shakespeare Festival, Eye-opener to a Veteran." Another piece in the collection contributed from across the Strait was Huang Meixu's "Comic Skills in *Romeo and Juliet*." The collection was a milestone of cooperation on Shakespeare studies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The editor, Meng Xianqiang once invited Huang Meixu and other Shakespeare scholars in Taiwan to participate in Shakespeare seminars held in mainland China and kept correspondences with Huang Meixu and others, including Chu Li-min, Yen Yuanshu, Perng Ching-Hsi and Ding Hongzhe. In a March 1995 letter to Meng, Huang stated that "no matter how politics is, we are all Chinese."[15] In 1997, Huang Meixu lectured in Nanjing University, Soochow University and Shanghai Theatre Academy, greatly promoting the exchanges on Shakespeare studies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. In recent years, more and more scholars have attended activities in mainland; for example, Wang Shuhua from Taiwan Normal

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[14] See Meng, Xianqiang, "A Great Gathering of Shakespeare Studies: International Symposium on Shakespeare in China" (6-9).

[15] The original letter was written in Chinese, collected in *Letters on Chinese Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Yang Lingui (Beijing: The Commercial Press, forthcoming). The sentence is translated by the author.

University, presenting at the 2011 Shanghai International Shakespeare Forum organized by Yang Lingui at Donghua University. In 2016, Wang I-chun from the College of Humanities of Kaohsiung Medical University attended the seminar on "Shakespeare and the (Re)Creation of Early Modern Geographies" organized and chaired by Hao Tianhu and Garrett Sullivan at the World Shakespeare Congress held in Britain.

Over the years, under the leadership of many Shakespeare experts such as Chu Li-min, Yen Yuanshu, Perng Ching-Hsi, Chiu Chin-jung, Beatrice Lei and Su Tsu-chung, Taiwan Shakespeare studies have become more and more prosperous and the exchanges with the circle of Chinese Shakespeare studies have gradually increased. Chu Limin, Yen Yuanshu and Perng Ching-hsi are the three Shakespeare experts who have returned to Taiwan after receiving doctoral education in the United States and have played decisive roles in the continuous promotion of Shakespeare studies in Taiwan in different periods. All of them value the communications and exchanges on Shakespeare studies with the academic field of mainland China very much.

When Chu Limin and Yen Yuanshu were in charge of the department of Foreign Language and Literature of Taiwan University, they were determined to carry out reforms, which had a profound impact on the development of British and American literature, comparative literature education and Shakespeare studies in Taiwan. In 1972, they established *Chung Wai Literary Monthly*, a journal on studies of Chinese and foreign literature, which is now still among the top journals of TSSCI index of Taiwan. Through the platform of the journal, scholars from the mainland participate in the exchange of Shakespeare studies with colleagues across the strait. For example, Zhang Chong of Fudan University was once invited to preside over the special issue of Shakespeare in the 4th issue of *Chung Wai Literary Monthly* in 2005, and published a paper "Timely Shakespeare," which exerted a great influence in Taiwan.

Of the invited speakers from Taiwan at Shakespeare events in the mainland, Perng Ching-Hsi is the most honoured and influential. As the leading Shakespeare expert in Taiwan now, he edited *The Discovery of Shakespeare: Selected Works on Shakespeare Studies in Taiwan* in 2000 and recalled the development of Shakespeare studies in Taiwan since Liang Shih-chiu edited *William Shakespeare: A Miscellany in Celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Poet's Birth* in 1966. He established NTU Shakespeare Forum in 2004. In the same year, his collected papers on Shakespeare studies, *Close Reading of Shakespeare*, was published. Up to now, he has translated 8 Shakespeare's plays and adapted 5 plays with Chen Fang, the proposer of the concept of Shake-xiqu. They adapted Yu opera *Bond* from *The Merchant of Venice* in 2009, *Measure, Measure!* from *Measure for Measure* in 2012, *Questioning Heaven* from *King Lear* in 2015 and adapted Peking opera and Hakka opera *Betrayal* from *Cardenio* in 2013 and 2014. Their adaptations of Shake-xiqu have been staged

in America, Britain and mainland China and made a sensation. They have also adapted Hakka opera *Waiting* from *As You Like It*, which was staged in October 2019.

It is worth noting that theatrical experts can adapt Shakespeare's plays into the lines of Shake-xiqu, but it is left to Geng Yuqing, the national first-class composer of Yu opera of Henan Province and his disciples to do the work of composing the music and arranging the traditional musical instruments of Yu opera. Geng Yuqing has formed a unique artistic musical style in the aspect of self-emotional expression, refinement, objectification and individuation in his operatic vocal creation. It can be seen that without the score of mainland composers, it will be very difficult to form high standard works for the adaptation and creation of Shake-xiqu. This further proves that only when Shakespeare researchers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait work together and draw on their strengths, can they produce truly distinctive Shakespeare operas with Chinese characteristics.

Beatrice Bi-qi Lei, whose ancestral home was at Zhangzhou, Fujian Province, established Taiwan Shakespeare Database. The establishment of this database can permanently preserve the data of stills, videos, and reviews of Shakespeare's plays adapted and staged in Taiwan, leaving a long-term available resource for teaching and research, greatly promoting the external exchanges and studies of adapted Shakespeare's plays and the future development of local cross-cultural theatrical research. Beatrice Bi-qi Lei had once been invited to present a paper on *Bond* (an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* by Perng Ching-hsi and Chen Fang) at the International Shakespeare Academic Forum and the Commemoration of 100th Anniversary of Zhu Shenghao's Birth held in Shanghai on October 28th 2012. As an associate professor in Taiwan University, she was inspired by the depth and scope of Chinese Shakespeare studies and decided to establish Taiwan Shakespeare Association in December 2012. With the founding of TSA, she also established Asian Shakespeare Association with the help of Shakespeare experts in mainland China in 2014. Now she is also a member of the executive committee of the International Shakespeare Association.

The Chinese Shakespeare English Education Society was founded in Taiwan in 2017. Under the leadership of Chu Ching-mei, a professor in the department of drama at Taiwan University, the society is dedicated to the in-depth education of Shakespeare on campus. The society has brought Shakespeare's plays to all levels of schools in Taiwan so that many students in primary and secondary schools can also have access to Shakespeare's plays, watch Shakespeare's plays performed by the students of Taiwan University, and participate in Shakespeare workshops. It is hoped that Shakespeare's plays can connect the essences of eastern and western cultures by promoting them to the next generation in basic education. The scholars of Shakespeare studies on both

sides of the Taiwan Strait hope to share Shakespeare's classic works with all Chinese-speaking people all over the world and let them appreciate the essence of world literature.

Along with the Shakespeare experts, directors of Shakespeare's plays in professional theatres are the main force of popularizing Shakespeare. In the field of performance of Shakespeare's plays, Contemporary Legend Theatre established by Wu Shing-kuo staged *The Kingdom of Desire* adapted from *Macbeth* in 1986, which marked the beginning of Shake-xiqu adaptation in Taiwan. Lee Kuo-Hsiu, Liang Zhimin, Lu Poshen, and many other leading theatrical directors in Taiwan, tried to adapt Shakespeare's plays into modern drama, musical drama, drama of glove puppetry and many other forms and staged their adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in mainland China and gained warm welcome and great success.

The performance of Shake-xiqu adapted in Taiwan also integrates elements of Chinese traditional opera in the process of innovation and breakthrough, contributing to the spread and development of Chinese opera on the world stage. Chen Fang, an expert on traditional Chinese opera and Shakespeare's plays in Taiwan, gave a clear definition of "Shake-xiqu" in her book *Shake-xiqu: Cross-cultural Adaptation and Interpretation*. It refers to "the Chinese traditional opera adapted from Shakespeare's plays, which is performed by real players" and "it is a case that cannot be ignored in the cross-cultural theatrical research of Asian Shakespeare's plays" (Chen Fang 16).

In 2004, Murray Levith, an American scholar, published *Shakespeare in China*. In the fifth chapter of the book, he made a detailed account of the reception of Shakespeare in Hong Kong and Taiwan, expanding the scope of the study of Shakespeare in China for the first time. However, in Murray Levith' account, he used the plural form when he mentioned China in the text for many times. For example, in the preface, he wrote: "Shakespeare in Chinas, as we shall see, is very much intertwined with Chinese politics, traditions, and societies" (Levith ix). His expression reflected the attitude of many in the west towards China at that time. The concept of "one China" was not recognized in the works of the Shakespeare researchers. It is obvious that Shakespeare in the globe, as we shall see, is very much intertwined with international politics, traditions, and societies. This phenomenon of not respecting the sovereignty of other countries should not appear in academic works. As we can see, this kind of odd expressions has gradually disappeared from academic works in recent years.

Therefore, to take a new look at Shakespeare in mainland China and Taiwan from a developmental perspective is very necessary and important. On 4th May 2019, the International Shakespeare Conference was held by the Taiwan Shakespeare Association in Taiwan Normal University, where Liang Shih-chiu had once worked until his retirement. Shakespeare scholars from mainland China and Taiwan gathered together to share their studies on Shakespeare's

plays eagerly. More communications and co-operations are believed to be carried out in the near future.

With the deepening of the internationalization of Taiwan Shakespeare studies, it is time to break down the cultural and academic barriers on both sides of the Taiwan strait and bring Taiwan Shakespeare studies back to the academic horizon of scholars in mainland China. Knowing the new trends of Shakespeare studies and adaptations on both sides can enhance the dialogues between the fields of Shakespeare studies in mainland China and Taiwan, strengthen the exchanges and cooperation, and contribute to jointly promoting the development of global Shakespeare studies and spreading traditional Chinese operas with the cultural appropriation of Shakespeare's plays.

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Dana Percec[*]

Revisiting the Classics and the New Media Environments: Shakespeare Re-Told by Jeanette Winterson, Margaret Atwood and Edward St. Aubyn

Abstract: The versatility of the appropriation of Shakespeare in recent years has been witnessed in a variety of registers and media, which range from special effects on the stage, music, cartoons, comics, advertisements, all the way to video games. This contribution looks at some of the novels in the Shakespeare Re-told Hogarth series as effigies of the contemporary process of adapting the Elizabethan plays to the environments in which the potential readers/viewers work, become informed, seek entertainment and adjust themselves culturally, being, ultimately, cognitive schemes which are validated by today's reception processes. The first novel in the series was Jeanette Winterson's *Gap of Time* (2016), in which the Shakespearean reference to the years that separate the two moments of *The Winter's Tale*'s plot becomes the title of a video game relying mainly on fantasy. Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* (2016) rewrites *The Tempest* as a parable of the theatrical performance and its avatars, as undisputable authority, on the one hand, and source of subversiveness, on the other. *Dunbar* (2018) is Edward St. Aubyn's response to the family saga of *King Lear*, where kingship, territorial division and military conflict are replaced by modern media wars, and the issues of public exposure in the original text are reinterpreted interpreted by resorting to the impact of the audio-visual on every-day life.

Keywords: adaptation, Hogarth Shakespeare, media, performance, video game.

Introduction

Desmet and Sawyer's book about Shakespeare and appropriation signalled, already in the 1990s, a radical shift in the study of literature, from text to context, resulting in the complete renunciation of reading the Bard's plays as independent aesthetic objects. The process of appropriating Shakespeare, carried either on a big scale, making him an institution of the establishment, or on

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a small scale, with individualized or local revisitations, started long before the concept of appropriation gained a theoretical standing. Big-scale Shakespeares are David Garrick's performances and the Stratford Jubilee, which presented the playwright as the most outstanding genius of British culture and the embodiment of the superior British spirit. The Romantic taste capitalized not only on the Shakespearean poetic language, but also on the visual representation of plots and characters, with great emphasis—seen in Henry Fuseli's art, for example—on the tension between light and darkness. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in painting scenes from Shakespeare, acknowledged the importance of décor and setting, displaying a recognizable Italian Renaissance architecture, well-liked by the British who took the Grand Tour to Mediterranean Europe to complete their education. Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* responded to the sensibilities of the Victorian middle class, with neither too much passion, nor too much violence, the story being often reduced to an unambiguous linearity and a reassuring effect on readers of all ages. Another written medium which transforms, sometimes beyond recognition, the Bard's text is the script: the farce and the burlesque in the silent films, is followed by the lavish, colourful mega cinema productions, the canonical TV series, suitable as teaching aids, or the popular spin-offs, in which the early modern plot is transported into a contemporary context. While some of these are rightly labelled as highbrow or lowbrow, a project at the crossroads between "big-time" and "small-time" Shakespeare, combining the missions of conservative ideology and the personal acts of discovery and survival via Shakespeare is the Hogarth Shakespeare project.

Postmodernism has taught us that there is no reading without rewriting and the problem of writing something new is a formidable challenge for all writers. One may argue that things were quite similar for Shakespeare, too, since most of his plots were borrowed from the Italian Renaissance, from French romances or from his contemporary Elizabethan playwrights, plus a touch of history from the English chronicles, for good measure. But today's inclusive, global, intertextual awareness has made the reading of one text against another compulsory, and thus the pressure for "originality" has become more dramatic, and the experience of reading and re-writing literature has become a pluridimensional act. The rewritings on Shakespeare's plays in the Hogarth project are, therefore, not "reimaginings," but "reactions" to Shakespeare, with a focus not on the story as such, but on the "twists" in the story (Gopnik) that articulated the major themes Shakespeare studies discuss today: gender roles and gender relations, racial intolerance and anti-Semitism, isolation and exploitation, authority and legitimacy. Reviews of these rewritings reiterate an aspect which is generally explained by studies in appropriation: "If Shakespeare is our contemporary, it is not because he shares our attitudes but because he shares our agonies" (Gopnik). The novels in the Hogarth series, like many spin-offs,

can make readers tick because they are effigies of the contemporary process of adapting the Elizabethan plays to the environments in which the potential readers/viewers work, get informed, seek entertainment and adjust themselves culturally, being, ultimately, cognitive schemes which are validated by today's reception processes.

Initiated by the prestigious London publishers Hogarth (established, in the interwar period, by none other than Virginia Woolf), Hogarth Shakespeare was meant to capitalize on the celebratory mood of the English-speaking world, which, in 2016, counted four centuries since the Bard had become a major cultural icon. The publishers commissioned several important British, American and Canadian writers to propose novels that would move the plot of some famous tragedies and comedies from the Elizabethan stage into the contemporary world. Jeanette Winterson opened the series, with the rewriting of *The Winter's Tale* as *The Gap of Time* (2015). She was followed by Howard Jacobson's *Shylock is My Name* (2016), an obvious modernization of *The Merchant of Venice*, by *Vinegar Girl* (2016), an original approach to *The Taming of the Shrew* offered by Anne Tyler, *Hag-Seed* (2016), in which Margaret Atwood rewrote *The Tempest*, Tracy Chevalier turning *Othello* into *New Boy* (2017), Edward St Aubyn responding to *King Lear* in *Dunbar* (2018), or Jo Nesbø, as an author of crime novels, rewriting *Macbeth* (2018). The three novels discussed in this paper are a successful example of the phenomenon described above because they make even the most artificial or mechanical aspects of the plays seem plausible by setting them in a familiar medium.

Angels and Avatars in an Interactive Medium

Jeanette Winterson, herself a "foundling," confesses having felt drawn from an early age to Perdita's plight and the wondrous family reunification at the end of *The Winter's Tale*. But this empathy did not help in trying to come up with a plausible, modern interpretation of the fantasy, which cast statues brought to life and other logically impossible twists and turns of the plot. King Leontes' inexplicable transformation from devoted husband into jealous despot and then, much later, back into a humane father, Perdita's extraordinary survival in the wilderness, the pastoral romance with Florizel, the coincidences of parentage and friendship, are all elements of a fairy tale plot, which have disappeared from contemporary narratives. So, Winterson retrieves the fantasy by inserting the weight of video games, a modern, technologized version of escapism into a world of magic—and a way to make lots of money and rule, without a crown or a sceptre, over a digital empire. Shakespeare's exotic Sicilia and Bohemia are present-day London and a provincial American town, New Bohemia; the good shepherd who raised Perdita is now an African-American; queen Hermione is

a French dancer and singer, etc. The absence of an atmosphere of fantasy is compensated by Winterson's preference for philosophy, the book being permeated with thoughts about love, innocence, and dreams. And, of course, about time, as the very title of the novel announces.

The gap of time is made up, in Shakespeare's romance, of the years that pass since King Leontes banished his child until he is reunited with his family, a respite to meditate about all that happened in the meantime. This gap is, thus, a chronological breach, which facilitates a mental time travel. The phrase appears in the name of the video game Xeno/Polixenes invents, based on the story of the Shakespearean heroes, and secures the link between three temporal levels (Elizabethan England, evoked by the original romance, contemporary London/New Bohemia, nineteenth-century Paris, in which the game takes its players) and three environments (the Shakespearean text and stage, the postmodern rewriting, the virtual world of the computer). This is further complicated by the fact that the author's avatar is present in the mixed-media story: on the one hand, Winterson herself announces her presence as spectator at the end of the story: "I was sitting at the back, waiting to see what would happen, and now I'm out on the street in the summer night, the rain tracing my face" (284). On the other hand, the creator of the video game is present in his virtual world; Xeno transmutes his real-life memories of his youth in Paris, when he courted MiMi for his friend Leo, into an epic battle taking place in the Paris of the nineteenth-century Boème, the atmosphere being spiced up with a touch of Steampunk.

In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, personified Time recites the prologue of Act 4, announcing technically that the story continues 16 years later, but, at the same time, reminding spectators and, in general, users of fiction, that art makes chronology flexible, freezing the moment or stretching it, moving easily back and forth on the temporal axis:

> I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
> Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
> Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
> To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage, that I slide
> O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom. (4:1:1-9)[1]

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[1] All quotations of Shakespeare are taken from David Bevington's edition.

This is what modernism discovers and illustrates with the stream of consciousness. Proust's time lost and regained is nothing but a temporal ambiguity and fluidity. Aware of this, Winterson goes even further, giving this subjective approach to time an oneiric touch in the evocation of French poet Gérard de Nerval. A late Romantic, a symbolist and a precursor of Surrealism, Nerval plays in his works with the thin line between imagination and reality, between the power of the artistic genius and mental instability. Suffering from hallucinations and severe depressions for long periods of time, being even admitted to asylums on several occasions, Nerval imbues his literary vision with this autobiographical note, leaving the impression that this tormented personal experience is verging on mysticism. Moreover, he identifies himself intensely —even desperately—with his fictional characters, the female ones being sublimated versions of a lost youthful love. One of the most powerful poems he wrote, "El Desdichado" (in Spanish, in the original, meaning "the unhappy, desperate one") in 1854, starts from the image provided by the Romantic writer Walter Scott in his black knight. While the medieval character proclaimed his despair at having been dispossessed of honour and noble title, Nerval's lyrical ego deplores the void he feels after the disappearance of his love, which renders any chance of consolation impossible. The gallery of figures he evokes is completed by Cupid, Phoebus, and Orpheus. The first two suggest the poet's oscillation between two major states of mind, consuming passion and stabilizing reason. This dilemma remains, though, unsolved, as Nerval cannot choose whether despair is to be treated emotionally or rationally, but an implied solution that might reconcile both is art, embodied by the lute player. Nevertheless, this aesthetic consolation is short-lived, as Orpheus' plight is tragic: going to Hades to take back his beloved, the poet loses her forever when he succumbs to his all too human weakness, the need to look back and make sure she is there, returning to the world of light. The evocation and memory of love is so vivid that it seems almost real, while, in fact, it is a mere illusion. The path chosen by Nerval to console himself with this realization is to push the imagery in his poetry and prose even further into the realm of the dream.

Winterson's idea to bring to the contemporary reader's attention Gérard de Nerval's personality and artistic creed appears, in these circumstances, less arbitrary. In the Parisian intermezzos, she imagines, as a counterpart of the Time prologue in Shakespeare's romance, Nerval is a domineering figure. MiMi, who is a famous and cultivated singer, uses lyrics inspired by Nerval's poetry, and Xeno invents a video game inspired by Nerval's fallen angel. This angel lives a dilemma as tragic as those of the French poet himself: falling one day from Heaven in the narrow yard of a house in the poorer neighbourhoods of Paris, his choice is extreme. His great wings trapped between the four grey walls of the building, if he wanted to escape, he would destroy the entire street; if he stayed, he would wither and die. The former option, while following a basic survival

instinct, is not possible, because it would kill the beautiful girl the angel befriended, the only human who keeps him company, day and night, as he is shrinking, the ultimate proof of kindness and love:

> When the angel became trapped his head was level with the upper floors of the houses and a little child used to come and talk to him. She sat on the windowsill, her knees drawn up against the cold, and she told the angel stories her mother had told her, so many stories of lost and found, and the angel loved her.
> At night, sometimes, she'd bring a candle to the window and sit with the angel because she knew he was lonely.
> Weeks passed and the angel began to die. As he died, he shrank, and the child went from window to window, zigzagging down the house, her small body by his great fallen head. (Winterson 204)

This beautiful story, in Winterson's vision, is a replica of a dream Nerval recounted having had a few days before his death. Feeling painfully lonely and separated by death from the young actress he once loved, the poet hanged himself one night from the bars of a window in one of those narrow and impoverished streets of Paris where his own dream had occurred.

Winterson borrows from Nerval the intensity of love and loss and bestows it upon her Shakespeare-replica tale and characters, concentrated in the game Xeno invents and which becomes a cameo of the main message of the story, gravitating around separation and reconciliation, guilt and longing. When Xeno creates the game, he exclaims: "Nerval didn't go beyond the trapped angel; that was his dream. My dream was the child and the promise" (Winterson 205). The oneiric universe is translated into the virtual reality of the computer, where a nineteenth-century Paris at night is covered in the feathers of fallen angels who want to conquer the city and the players' avatars are supposed to fight them with their own weapons—the feathers which can swell or combust. The game has nine levels and, the more advanced a player is, the more unusual his powers become. From level 4 on, time can be frozen, moved around, rewound, made to "unhappen" (Winterson 206). Xeno's wish corresponds to something similar nurtured by Leo, who remembers a movie he used to enjoy with his son, Milo, in which Superman flew so fast around the Earth's axis that he forced time to go back and saved Lois Lane from drowning in the waters of a broken dam.

In Xeno's game, the love triangle from Shakespeare's romance becomes a projection of avatars whose agency has various degrees of limitation. The most limited and passive is MiMi, a mere object in this virtual medium. While Xeno suspects that she is still alive and lives in complete seclusion in Paris, being rarely seen outside the house, he can never be too certain and so he designs her, in the "Gap of Time," as a ghost:

> She was as she was. Lying like a tomb knight in a chapel. White and made of stone. The room with the double windows that overlooked Notre Dame was a tiny white world where nothing moved or changed. She was Sleeping Beauty who wouldn't wake up. There was no kiss.
> She was always here but she could be elsewhere. Walking like a statue through a statue garden. Alive and not alive. Sleeping and not sleeping. She is by the river sometimes. They say it's her. (Winterson 219)

This image rewrites the original version, in which Hermione is kept in hiding for 16 years by loyal Paulina. Her habitat, while being a sanctuary against King Leontes' initial rage, gradually transforms into a prison—uncomfortable and impersonal, this is a place she cannot leave, where she cannot be seen or heard for a long time. When Paulina invites the king to visit it, she presents it as a chapel, therefore a chamber in which the queen must have found spiritual comfort, the strength conveyed by Christian teachings to forgive her husband and to bear the loss of her two children. Hermione is returned to her family under the pretence of a statue, proof that art not only imitates reality, but offers an improved version of it. Xeno's game copies the literal reference to the statue and processes the scarce original information about the queen's place, enriching it with details: a frozen, claustral universe filled with sadness and loneliness, but sheltered. Outside MiMi's window, both the men she loved long to be let in, but in vain—Xeno, fluttering like a moth, Leo, "hurl[ing] himself at the glass that would not break" (Winterson 209). The male players' agency is less limited, even if their ability to move around only gives them the illusion they can act. Their plea to be admitted back into MiMi's life is in accordance with their temperament: Xeno, shy and discreet, Leo, demanding and aggressive.

Winterson's imagining the video game as one in which time could be manipulated to the players' best interest is a side comment on how tragic tension is actually created in Shakespeare's text, with the careful dosage of information the playwright offers at various stages in the plot development. While there are several (sad) certainties about the events of the past—Mamillius' death, Perdita's abandoning and rescuing the shepherd—there are also developments deliberately left unclarified: Hermione's fate and King Leontes' change of heart. In the novel, Winterson chooses to freeze time differently, reassuring us about Perdita's fortunate adoption and giving us hope about MiMi, but leaving young Milo's disappearance unexplained. It takes 16 years before the readers learn that, running away from the check-in desk at the airport, the child was run over by a luggage van and died.

In fact, it is thanks to Jeanette Winterson that we become sensitive to the very use of time, alternatively contracted and dilated, in creating the suspense of the original Shakespearean plot. Additionally, this realization helps contemporary readers and viewers of Shakespeare grow more aware about the importance of

the medium in the appropriation of this type of literature. While initially meant only for the live stage, the plays were confiscated by the nineteenth-century literary criticism, the development of the cinema and television seeing the plays swallowed by the audio-visual media. Given the growing number of video games which announce an affinity of sorts with the Bard, we can assume that the twenty-first century is the age of virtual Shakespeare. Xeno's invented game, while quoting from Shakespeare in the title, is concentrated on a battle, as most video games are fuelled by the epic substance of some battle or other—here, the clash between the fallen angels and the Parisians. As the film industry has constantly sought a source of inspiration in Shakespeare in order to gain credibility and cultural authority, the video-game industry seems to follow a similar path, in search for aesthetic validation. Thus, the battles fought on the screen, between the players' avatars and graphically designed characters, announce a larger, more abstract battle, the one fought by the medium for its own upgrade. A quality of the video-game format, which Winterson acknowledges, is its interactive nature, more interactive than even the original Elizabethan stage was, with all the cheering and booing and throwing coming from the stalls. Never before the virtual era has the reader or viewer been taken out of a mainly passive, contemplative attitude and hurled straight into the action.

The Play within the Novel

Margaret Atwood's response to *The Tempest* seems to be "so much like something Atwood would have written anyway" (Groskop). It is true that most of the books or films which are adaptations of Shakespeare's last play filter the reception of Prospero's and Caliban's stories in the postcolonial context. In the 1980s, scholars were already summing up interpretations of *The Tempest* in these terms: "It has long been recognized that *The Tempest* bears traces of the contemporary British investment in colonial expansion" (Dollimore and Sinfield 48). This was enough to legitimize interpretations of *The Tempest* as a piece of imperialistic ideology, with a British colonizer imagining himself a member of the superior race, and primitive subjects following the pattern of the good savage and the bad savage. Prospero, rather than a magus, is a usurper, Ariel is not a spirit, but an expert in adaptability, while Caliban is not a monster, but a victimized native. A more classical and atemporal reading of the play interprets it as the Bard's testament: at the end, Prospero buries his books, saying good-bye to magic, to the island and, of course, to the Jacobean stage.

In *Hag-Seed*, Margaret Atwood leaves aside the most predictable interpretations, enabling readers to view the story as a parable of theatrical performance, concomitantly a mainstream manifestation and a source of

subversion. Exploiting the potential of the "farewell to the stage" interpretive version, Atwood comes up with an equally metatextual scenario. Shakespeare's Prospero went through a retirement in two phases, the first one in which he was exiled from his European dukedom on a deserted island and the second one in which he renounced his passion for magic in order to take up the political career he had avoided in the first place. Atwood offers her new Prospero, now called Felix Philips, artistic director of a Canadian drama festival, a retreat which is not far from what she gave her first heroine, in the 1972 novel, *Surfacing*. Felix goes down literally after his assistant plots against him and takes his job while he is busy staging the performance of a lifetime, the most daring version of *The Tempest*. His retreat, rather than an exotic island in the Caribbean, is a wooden cabin which looks as if it had not been inhabited since the pioneering days of the Western frontier. Just like in these old days, the place is far from civilization, accessible from the main road in the summer but totally isolated in winter. This is the perfect escape for Felix, who must heal two severe wounds: the loss of his social position and, more tragically, the death of his three-year-old daughter, killed by meningitis and called Miranda. The rustic décor is reminiscent both of Prospero's cave, a sheer contrast with the court life the duke left behind and an improper place to raise a daughter like a lady, and of the wilderness in *Surfacing*. Atwood's early novel featured a heroine who travelled to the Canadian interior in order to be symbolically reunited with her father, a scientist who had lost his life exploring the natural life. While carrying out this investigation, the heroine is more and more seduced by the wilderness, with its bare truths and lack of sophistication. Protesting against consumerism, mass tourism, male domination, pollution and the destruction of wildlife, the heroine gradually rejects all forms of civilization, from processed food and clothes to articulated speech, choosing to live and give birth to a child in the depths of a forest. The novel is open-ended, the final scene showing the same heroine standing in between the two worlds, the forest on the one hand and the boat carrying her fiancé and friends on the other.

For Margaret Atwood, victimization is one of the major tropes of Canadian literature, regarded in a progressive manner, as an evolution in four steps: from anger, through resignation, to experimentation and creativity. In the fourth position of the victim, the subject becomes aware that this is not a passive status, but an attitude with a highly dynamic potential (Atwood 38). Faced with the challenge of survival—which can be physical, moral or aesthetic—the victim can turn adversity into her own advantage. This trajectory, sketched theoretically in the 1970s, is revisited in *Hag-Seed*, where Felix disappears from public life for some years before resurfacing in the most unexpected manner. In the wood cabin, he fights both the aggression of wild nature and the pressure of his melancholy and depression, repeating, symbolically, the path taken by Atwood's pioneer, in an early poem. "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer," initially

published in the collection *The Animals in That Country,* was conceived as a reaction against the standard image of the pioneer, inherited from the nineteenth century, as a heroic, exemplary figure, and as an illustration of Atwood's enthusiastic embrace of ecocriticism. The pioneer starts with the self-confidence and self-sufficiency of the colonizer, but ends up being defeated by the vast open space which he cannot control and understand. Felix's retreat implies complete isolation and the life of a hermit. For years, he grows a beard and eats only in order to stay alive, being haunted by the image of his daughter. Rather than spiritual revelation, he finally emerges with the need to get back in contact with the real world and his old profession, manifested in his acceptance of a job as drama teacher in a prison. Calling himself Mr. Duke in honour of the rightful Duke of Milan in Shakespeare's play, Felix prepares a gathering storm with the help of theatrical magic. When his lessons become a success, and he receives the visit of high officials, none other than the two men who sabotaged him at the Makeshiweg Festival in the past, this becomes Felix's chance for payback.

If the original Prospero prospered on the island because he had his books and his daughter with him, Felix's happiness (as his Latin name implies) is harder to achieve, though not impossible, and his satisfaction comes from the most unexpected details. His new and menial job soon turns out to please him more than he would have expected: in the absence of his past fame, professional esteem and large amounts of money invested in his projects, Mr. Duke is happy to realize, while training inmates, how little it actually takes for someone to be happy. He is deeply moved by the criminals' child-like joy in seeing themselves acting, on the closed-circuit television available at the Fletcher County Correctional Institute. Now comes the real *coup de théatre,* the device of the play within the play or within the novel, which Shakespeare, while not using in *The Tempest*, resorted to quite frequently. The larger frame is that of Felix's life and work, implicitly reminiscent of Prospero's failed politics and successful magic. At the core of the framed story, there are the two main adaptations of *The Tempest*, the lavish, very expensive performance prepared by Felix just before he is fired, and the lesson taught to the prisoners, many years later. If many connections can be identified at the level of the plot, structurally the novel is also a replica of the Shakespearean play. *Hag-Seed*'s chapters are arranged in five parts, similar with the five-act organization, the titles alluding either to Atwood's earlier theories (*Dark Backward*), or to the Shakespeare Concordance (*A Brave Kingdom, These Our Actors, Rough Magic, This Thing of Darkness*), "hag-seed" being also one phrase in the long list of invectives Shakespeare uses in this play and others. The use of curse words capitalizes on the educational and therapeutic potential of teaching Shakespeare to the inmates: no matter how rough or dangerous these men are, they know they cannot swear unless they use the Bard's words. Any play will do at first, but as the students become more

advanced, their selection narrows down to the play they are learning at that moment. The most imaginative quoters are given cigarettes, smuggled in the prison by their teacher. During a rehearsal for *Macbeth,* two inmates may call each other names saying: "The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon" (Atwood 6). And *The Tempest* comes with a long list of swearings:

> Born to be hanged. A pox o'your throat. Bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog. Whoreson. Insolent noisemaker. Wide-chapp'd rascal. Malignant thing. Blue-eyed hag. Freckled whelp hag-born. Thou earth. Thou tortoise. Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself. As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed. With raven's feather from unwholesome fen, Drop on you both. A south-west blow on ye, And blister you all o'er. Toads, beetles, bats light on you. Filth as thou art. Abhorr'ed slave. The red plague rid you. Hag-seed. All the infections that the sun sucks up, From bogs, fens, flats, fall on—add name here—and make him, By inch-meal a disease. Most scurvy monster. Most perfidious and drunken monster. Moon-calf. Pied ninny. Scurvy patch. A murrain on you. The devil take your fingers. The dropsy drown this fool. Demi-devil. Thing of darkness. (Atwood 91)

In this way, it can be easily argued that the play within the novel is an occasion, for writer and readers, to rediscover the hidden potentials of the Bard's last play, down to the most minute lexical details. Atwood's novel can also be read as a selection of the most eccentric stage adaptations of Shakespeare ever to have been recorded around the world. The friendly critics labelled Felix's performances at the Makeshiweg Festival daring, while the more aggressive ones went as far as to call the artistic director demented. His *Titus Andronicus* featured a naked, genuinely bleeding Lavinia, his *Pericles* took place on a spaceship invaded by aliens, in *The Winter's Tale* Hermione was not a moving statue but a vampire, while *Julius Caesar* was not set in ancient Rome but in Scotland, with the senators dressed in tartan. But these were the vanished days of theatre glory. Now, as Mr. Duke, the director, has no money to invest in artistic experiments and needs to follow a lot of safety rules: characters cannot fight on the stage because they would incite violence; they cannot use bad language because there is a strict behavioural code in prison; suicide cannot be mentioned because it happens all too frequently in the cells; while costumes, music or special effects would cost too much: "nothing sharp, nothing explosive, nothing you could smoke or inject" (Atwood 57). The effect of the performance on the audience cannot be checked either, because large crowds are banned for fear of a riot; so, neither cheering nor boos from the public can inform Felix about the success of his ideas. In the past, even the most severe criticism was gratifying, as he believed that "Where there are boos, there's life!" (Atwood 13) Now, his greatest motivation is to watch the men's pride in their fleeting celebrity, an experience which is more rewarding than all the public attention of bygone days.

Of all Felix's productions, *The Tempest* has always been his ultimate challenge. At the Makeshiweg Festival, the staging included Ariel as a transvestite on stilts, Caliban as a homeless African American, Miranda as a child gymnast, and Prospero dressed in animal skin made of plush toys which had been unstuffed and sewn together. At the Fletcher Correctional Facility, the cast is more predictable: a con artist with large eyes as Ferdinand; a slender, cool juvenile hacker as Ariel; Snake Eye, the real-estate fraudster, with his slanted left eye and lopsided mouth, as Antonio. For Miranda, Felix searches for the same gymnast, now a professional actress, who accepts the invitation with curiosity and excitement. Felix works with an abridged Shakespearean script, sprinkled with prison slang and collocations, full of local colour, which resonates, in its crudeness, with the interpreters' illiterate naivety. The prologue, announcing the storm at sea, includes the following lines:

> ANNOUNCER: What you're gonna see, is a storm at sea:
> Winds are howlin', sailors yowlin',
> Passengers cursin' 'em, 'cause it gettin' worse:
> Gonna hear screams, just like a ba-a-d dream,
> But not all here is what it seem,
> Just sayin'.
> *Grins.*
> Now we gonna start the playin'.
> (Atwood 3)

If we are to compare this with the original "Blow, till thou burst thy wind" (1:1:7), or "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" (1:1:16-17), it is hard to see a trace of the theatrical illusion that was one of the major assets of the Bard's story about magic as art. But the alteration of the poetic script, to the benefit of conmen and criminals, points at one direction of Shakespearean appropriation which has gained momentum in recent years. Indeed, as Marjorie Garber notices in her *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, the playwright's legacy and utility prove to be, today, perhaps more rewarding in unconventional environments (xviii). Rather than the regular classroom, lecture room, or theatrical stage, Shakespeare is employed for lessons in leadership, problem solving, and business success for corporate culture, for boosting the morale and improving self-image in therapy groups, or even for re-education.

Privacy, Public Exposure and the Audio-Visual

If *The Taming of the Shrew* is hard to digest by contemporary sensibilities trained in the climate of gender equality and equal opportunity, *King Lear* seems almost unbearably patriarchal. One of the most seminal studies about parental

and generational conflicts in this play and about masculine authority and prejudice presents it as such as early as 1986 (Coppélia Kahn's *The Absent Mother in King Lear*). The old king's response to the events of the tragedy in an intense combination of love and hatred, care and violence is interpreted by Stephen Greenblatt (qtd. in Kahn 253) as an illustration of a "deep gerontological bias" that, in Elizabethan literature as well as legal texts, was well-researched. Inter-generational transactions were common, and very strict and explicit contracts were signed between parents and children, in case the former decided to leave their earthly possessions to the latter. Some of these contracts, it seems, were clarifying to the point of stipulating the quantity and ration of food children should provide daily for the parents now in their care, this exactness seemingly compensating for or regulating the natural generosity or lack thereof. Therefore, the Shakespearean daughters' insensitivity and the father's frustration at witnessing it were not, in the seventeenth century, unheard of. What makes the story really hard to swallow is, besides the daughters' exaggerated cruelty (whose major victim is, in fact, not Lear, but his former dependants), Lear's equally exaggerated male self-centredness. *King Lear* seems to be the most masculine of Shakespeare's tragedies, because of the daughters' stereotypical maleness and despite their father's effemination. Goneril, in her fury and aggressiveness, kills a servant with a sword, an utterly male weapon, in contrast with Lear, who sheds "women's weapons, water-drops" (2:4:279) in his despair and frustration. The play's exclusive gravitation around the father's broken expectations and humiliation is justified, Kahn believes, by a social mutation that takes place in the early modern period, when, unlike earlier ages, the father's dominance in the family, especially in the upper classes, due to the rules of patrilineality and primogeniture, is at its most evident. Lording over a large number of people, the *pater familias* was a public figure even in the non-public, domestic environment of his home.

Against this background, we must observe Lear's gestures from the very beginning of the play, when he summons the entire court to witness what seems an exchange of affections between himself and his three daughters, to the very end, his rage against his elder daughters and his refusal to accept Cordelia's death being all played out in the presence of his dependants. Thus, even the most intimate workings of the nuclear family are exhibited in front of a group representative for an entire community, as privacy was an asset not yet acknowledged by Shakespeare's contemporaries. It is not far-fetched, then, that Edward St Aubyn transfers this excess of visibility and lack of privacy into his response to the play, the kingdom becoming a media corporation, where all the secrets of the protagonists are revealed for public consumption. Shakespeare's metaphor that all the world's a stage is given, in this novel, another dimension, which highlights the vulnerability of the modern individual through repeated exposure. A media mogul, Dunbar-Lear has ruled with an iron fist, making and

breaking destinies by naming and shaming important men and women in his newspapers and TV channels. In today's world, this is the ultimate form of power, stronger than that of state rulers, politicians, leading industrialists or bankers. "Nobody understood power better than your father" (St Aubyn 5), Charlie Wilson, aka Kent, tells Florence, aka Cordelia, a deliberately ambiguous characterization which can be a compliment as much as a reproach. This power is described as being operational on every continent, and the ability to get in touch with any leader, to "influence elections and destroy enemies" resulting from the ability "to spin or bury a story" (St Aubyn 55). That power in general may be ambiguous is true, but media power, it is implied, is the most duplicitous, dangerous and domineering of all, taking, at Dunbar's hands, the shape of "cheap debt and plummeting standards" (St Aubyn 96).

The audio-visual media of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries corresponds to the wooden O of early modern entertainment and the Renaissance processing of the concept of blind destiny borrowed from the Greek tragedy. For Shakespeare's audiences, the cynical randomness of human fate, puppeteered by the gods' whims, was softened by the Christian promise of redemption, cold comfort, as this was already in a world engaged on the path of secularization. In the fully technologized world in which Dunbar lives, the wheel of fortune is replaced by the ups and downs of public exposure. The notion that humans are mere actors on the stage of life is rendered by St Aubyn in his protagonist's sensation that his demise, orchestrated at a micro-level by his "pelican" daughters, is actually managed skilfully and offhandedly at a macro-level by an invisible demiurge, whose omnipotence can be likened only with that of a media tycoon:

> Organisation, disorganization: all these maddening words that treated him as their ventriloquist's dummy, not to mention the images of humanely slaughtered tigers that flickered across the deep grey screen of his television mind, because some bastard, some sadistic sky-god who owned all the channels to all the minds of all living creatures everywhere was playing with the programming and the remote control. (St Aubyn 145-6)

If the world is a stage, a consummate actor must be a welcome addition to the gallery of tragic characters, a living embodiment of the Shakespearean metaphor. Peter, locked up in the same retirement home as Dunbar, suffers from a professional deformation which makes him speak in many voices but which also causes him to fail to regain his own. A Harley Street consultant, Peter offers Dunbar psychological support. In the voice of a bishop, he delivers a sermon. More self-confident than a politician, he addresses an angry mob. But, when asked to be himself, he laments:

> Oh, I haven't got that one down yet, Henry. Give me someone easier to impersonate. How about John Wayne? […] We're goin' to bust out of this joint, Henry,' he drawled, 'and by sundown tomorrow we'll be walkin' into the Windermere Saloon and ordering a couple of drinks from the bartender, like a couple of real men in charge of our own destinies. (St Aubyn 7)

At the same time, taking the cue from Marjorie Garber's observation that it is mainly due to the modern media that Shakespeare today is a version of the original, we can argue that St Aubyn's transformation of Lear's medieval kingdom into a media empire is yet another *mise en abyme* of the Bard's assimilation by modern culture. Garber thinks that the Shakespeare cited, worshipped, invoked today is a "Shakespeare," in inverted commas, since what else can be a phrase like "a downfall of Shakespearean proportions," used to characterize a politician's or boxer's career (Garber 17)? In accordance with this parallel, the notion of appropriation used in Shakespeare reception studies should be replaced with other words from the vocabulary of the modern and postmodern media: disseminated, shared, sampled, texted. They are all interactive concepts—as seen above in the presentation of a Shakespeare plot deemed fit for video games—resulting from a "*dis*location from context" (Garber 18, italics in the original).

St Aubyn presents here not only power as perverted by the media, but also the simplest of emotions and the most natural of human relations. If, in the original tragedy, Lear is offended by the softness which transformed him into a hysterical woman when crying, Dunbar is irritated by his tears because genuine grief—like genuine love and hate—are the easiest to manipulate and to render hollow through mediatization. Feeling sorry and guilty for Simon, the vicar whose life and career Dunbar's corporation destroyed dispassionately in search of a juicy, money-winning story, the mogul meditates:

> He knew how the world worked: the fireman was an arsonist, the assassin came dressed as a physician, the devil was a bishop harvesting souls for his master, teachers entrusted with children filmed them in the shower and posted their naked bodies on the dark net; he had read the stories, he had read them every morning with his breakfast. Like a puppetmaster who pulls the strings but still has to do the voices for his puppets, Dunbar was partially, if superciliously, merged with his ideal reader. (St Aubyn 151)

In *King Lear*, the patriarchal patterns of the early modern family regulated an ideal of "distance, manipulation, and deference" (Kahn 253), which divided gender roles as they divided labour, advising men never to show powerful emotions other than anger. Conversely, in Dunbar's world, the emotions are no longer regulated by the law of the father, but by the pressures of visibility, publicity, and consumerism. While Lear's tragic story has been narrated in the

conspicuous "absence" of the mother, Edward St Aubyn rereads it by inserting not one, but three mothers in the narrative. For the early modern play, the fact that the *pater familias* was the only person of authority, sole progenitor and regulator, and thus, sole beneficiary of filial love and duty, was not exceptional. No queen mediated the familial connections, being supposedly dead or repudiated, as many queens had been indeed, during the Tudors' rule. The irony of this absence, Coppélia Kahn observes, lies in the fact that, eventually, the king seeks for nothing else but the mother, his plan to depend on his daughters, preferably the youngest (gentlest, most affable and most feminine) being, as he announces "I […] thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery." (1:1:123-4) This paradox becomes a part of Lear's tragic flaw: he dreams to have absolute control while being completely dependent, just as he wants to be treated as a king even after he has given up the crown.

St Aubyn's response comes after a century of psychoanalytical studies and decades of feminist thought, so he anchors the mother figure firmly in the background of the tragedy. First, there is the mother who was deemed absent in *King Lear*. Wilson remembers a neurotic woman, wearing tacky clothes, already drunk before noon, reluctantly engaging in a game of golf Dunbar wants to play with his entire family. Meghan and Abby, Dunbar's elder daughters, whose cruelty and promiscuousness shocks more than Shakespeare's originals because they are more explicit and detailed, blame their constant dissatisfaction and search for adrenalin on the mother's neglect and alcoholism. Second, there is Henry Dunbar's mother, in whose atmosphere of "punitive rages" (St Aubyn 128) he was forced to grow up, developing a deep sense of resignation, more suited to very old people than to little boys: "the experience […] belonged to a time when he couldn't imagine it ending" (St Aubyn 128). This continued abuse seems to have determined Dunbar to become obsessed with control and the need to subordinate everyone, from family and employees, to those who became the subject of his news. "Put them on the payroll" is a phrase he repeats endlessly, until it verges on absurdity. Third, there is Florence—Cordelia, an actual mother of two, happily married and leading a healthy, tranquil life on a ranch, after refusing to accept shares in her father's business. Her integrity, high moral standards and devotion to family life determine her to stay away from the power conveyed by media control, a position her sisters embrace because they see the news they sell primarily as "an instrument of revenge" (St Aubyn 87). If Cordelia was, in Kahn's interpretation of *King Lear*, a symbolic mother to her own father, Florence has the true experience of motherhood, which places her in antithesis with her barren sisters. Her choice to stay away from the media empire is justified by her desire to embrace domesticity and reject public life, while Abby and Meghan's desperate attempt to fully control the same media empire presents their life in the limelight as compensation for the absence of personal fulfilment.

Conclusion

The quality of these rewritings is, first and foremost, in my opinion, to be found in its versatility. It is close enough to the early modern playwright's intention to invite contemporaries to meditate on the valences of his stories, beyond the labels that have so frequently been applied to them by criticism. At the same time, it departs from the original plots and meanings enough to present some brilliant novels in their own right, which blend particular elements of Anglo-American culture with universal and atemporal themes of love and loss, creation and destruction, death and rebirth. Writing Shakespeare-inspired stories, in which modern mediums of communication play an important role, is a successful choice because it capitalizes on the process of validating and legitimizing the four-hundred-year-old plays for the contemporary public. Shakespeare's use in video games, in alternative, unconventional educational environments and in the audio-visual presents three of the most successful ways in which the Elizabethan author has been claimed, keeping the reception process dynamic and the general public alert and sensitive to the myriad of opportunities offered by the original text.

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On a Romantic Island: Shakespeare and *Mamma mia*

Abstract: The paper concerns the blockbuster musical film *Mamma mia*, loosely using some of Shakespearean patterns, topoi and plots. Set on a small Greek island, idylic and exotic, the film offers a contemporary romantic story with new/reversed roles in terms of gender, parenthood, sexuality, marriage and age, pointing to a different cultural paradigm. While the Shakespearean level is recast, remixed and probably less visible, the priority is given to the utopia of the 1970s and to the question of its outcome and transformation.

Keywords: *Mamma mia*, musical, popular culture, Shakespeare, *The Tempest*.

This paper concerns the blockbuster musical film *Mamma mia* (2008) which loosely uses some of Shakespearean patterns, topoi and plots. Set on a small Greek island, idyllic and exotic, the film offers a contemporary romantic story with reversed or reconsidered roles in terms of gender, parenthood, sexuality, marriage and age, pointing to a different cultural paradigm. The musical romantic comedy film *Mamma mia* is based on the stage musical (1999) with songs of the 1970s popular music group ABBA:

> The young Sophie, living with her single mother on a Greek island, is about to get married. She wishes her father would give her away though she never knew who it was. In her mother's diary she had found out that there were three men in question. Despite that she never saw them for they all live far away; she invites all three of them to her wedding without telling her mother Donna. Also, Donna's two girl-friends occur—decades earlier they were known as a girls' music band (singing ABBA songs). After an array of comic situations and unexpected appearances, before the wedding ceremony, all of the three men proclaim themselves Sophie's fathers. There is a wedding at the end—yet not Sophie, but her mother Donna is to be wed to one of the "fathers." Sophie, instead, prefers not to get married yet for she wants to explore the world first— she and her fiancé sail away.

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The pattern sounds Shakespearean, indeed: there are lovers or potential family members separated by the sea over many years; there is an exotic island serving as asylum for a single parent family; there is a crossing of the sea from far away to reveal the unknown; there is a young couple just about to marry; there are three competing suitors and three unwed women; there are mistaken, unknown identities; there are sub-plots mirroring the main story; there are many joyful comic situations; and there is a dance party similar to a masque, mixing up and confusing the identities up to the point of dizziness. And a happy reunion and a wedding at the end. Many of the pattern, topoi and plots bring to mind *The Tempest*. And yet, in *Mamma mia*, most of the topoi are reversed and rewritten, referring to a different social and cultural paradigm compared to the one of Shakespeare's time. The following essay will point out the reversals concerned with parenthood and gender, sexuality, marriage and age.

Single Mother

In Shakespeare's plays, mothers are marginalized and often absent; if mentioned at all, they are passive, rather objects or instrumentalized in terms of reproduction, representing wombs giving birth; often they are denied a voice or completely absent (Rose 292-294; Hyland 140; Lenker 43; Kahn 95; Orgel 99-112; Adelman 10). Mothers, definitely, have never an active position and are never at the centre of the play. In *The Tempest*, all of the three mothers (of Miranda, Caliban and Ferdinand) are physically absent.

In *Mamma mia*, the centre of the story turns on Donna, Sophie's mother. A single mother (!). In Shakespeare's days, single mothers were socially outcast, stigmatized and legally deprived (Cressy 74-75; Mitterauer 38, 42). There is only one single mother in the whole Shakespeare canon: Sycorax in *The Tempest*. And Sycorax, significantly, is absent from the play. She is referred to as "the foul witch" (1:2:259) practicing "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" (1:2:265); and she bore a monster "got by the devil himself" (1:2:321). Hence Sycorax embodies all the prejudices the society had towards single mothers—this is why she, her offspring and her potential partner, too, are cast negative.

In *Mamma mia*, Donna is not only a single mother withholding the identity of the child's father: in the incriminated time some twenty years ago, she had an affair with three men. In Shakespeare's time, women were not allowed sexual autonomy, mainly because it would undermine the patrilinearity and legitimity of their children (Stone *The Crisis* 662-664; Stone *The Family* 501-503). Female promiscuity, when lead to motherhood, was castigated. Illegitimate children were called bastards; they were legally deprived and cast negative, if not described as monsters (Cressy 74-75). Shakespeare, too, was

conform with this notion: both his characters of illegitimate sons—Caliban (*The Tempest*) and Edmund (*King Lear*)—are cast negative; and Perdita (*The Winter's Tale*), daughter of Hermione who was accused by her husband for adultery, has been abandoned in the wilderness. In *Measure for Measure*, pre-marital sexual relationship that had led to pregnancy is criminalized: Claudio, who made Juliet pregnant before they got married, is sentenced to death, and she is presented as a victim. In *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora's illegitimate new born child is called "shame and […] disgrace" (4:2:60) and even its mother orders to "christen it with […] dagger's point" (4:2:70).[1]

Yet in *Mamma mia*, Donna—dressed in blue like a *madonna*—is not cast negative at all, neither her daughter Sophie. The opposite is true: Donna is a radiant single mother; self-determined though slightly stressed, too; yet able to manage her life and to bring up her daughter without a man around; and supposedly free to live her sexuality upon her choice. The latter achievement, however, was rejected by her parents' generation and put to the proof: when Donna became pregnant, her mother disowned her. In the film, this fact is mentioned rather as a footnote, not of heavy relevance, yet it refers to the perusing clash of generations in the 1970s as far as the voluntary single parenthood was concerned. Donna is played by Meryl Streep, the ultimate Hollywood star and, at the same time, a rare *scandal-free* celebrity. Besides her girlish appearance and professional mastery, it might be worth considering that with Donna, cast by an *other* actress with a weaker moral reputation, the story would probably not work that iconically.

Fatherhood—Motherhood—Daughterhood

In Shakespeare's plays, fathers, contrary to rather absent or silenced mothers, are dominant and the chief source of identity for their children (Stone *The Family* 154ff; Stone *The Crisis* 592ff; Kahn 95-98). The father's role is to endow authority: even if obeying it is at stake, even when children oppose or deny it (as they often do), even if fathers are wrong or already dead, the paternal authority is a steady topos and a point of reference. As many social and cultural studies have shown, through the early modern period, with successive establishing of the nuclear family as the dominant social model, the father was given the uppermost moral and spiritual authority (Stone *Family* 151-217; Williamson 146; Orgel 108). The pyramidal patriarchal power structure, with the father at the top, has been derived both from nature and from the Bible and enhanced by numerous Protestant scriptures. The theologically justified authority of the father

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[1] Supposedly, mainly because it is dark-skinned; this fact further complicates the extramarital affair in the play.

within the family has been projected onto the political hierarchy—with King James I being the "natural father of his subjects" (King James I qtd. in Williamson, 117) and "*parens patriae*" (King James I qtd. in Stone *The Family* 152). Shakespeare, too, conformed to this notion. As proof per negationem, I have noted elsewhere (Bžochová-Wild *Začarovaný* 77-82) that none of his most vicious characters (Richard III, Iago, Claudius, Macbeth, Angelo, Edmund, Antonio) is cast as father;[2] thus, the paternal authority remains untouchable.

Prospero in *The Tempest* is not only a dominant father and almighty ruler of the island which provided him refuge after he had been exiled from home, but he turns out a politically powerful person, too, being the legal Duke of Milan; hence his daughter Miranda is supposed to mirror his identity of grandeur. While Prospero, the father, controls and possesses the island completely, including the life of his daughter; in *Mamma mia*, there is no explicit ruler nor proprietor of the island. Donna, the single mother, achieved a kind of economical independency and built up a decent life in close communion with nature and local rural people. Though the arrival of the three men in question triggers the plot, their importance for the daughter's identity is marginal—their fatherhood is never cleared and, at the end, each of the three men is happy to father at least "a third of her" (*Mamma mia*). Thus, the notion of patriarchal authority is completely abandoned, if not even mocked.

Obviously, Donna is not a female Prospera. The gender recast and update involved many other transpositions. Donna was not deposed from former authority; she does not control, neither manipulate the world by magic or howsoever; she did not subjugate the inhabitants; she does not patronize her daughter. Her life on the island is presented as harmonious, neither conquering nor possessive, as it is the case of Prospero. Her house and hotel Villa Donna is sunny and full of colours, though this romantic idyll is indulgently mocked by its technical imperfection (the building is on the brink of breakdown). Her exile seems rather deliberate than forced: Donna has no feelings of regret or bitterness being on the *island* itself; however, she *does* have this feeling, having been left by her lover once—which is a point to be discussed later. As far as the cultural topography is concerned, the remote green island is a perfect healthy place to live (yet opposed to Shakespeare: there is no such place as a *desert* island); the continental megapolises London and New York, where two of the three men come from, seem not to match up with the ideal of full personal happiness.

In *Mamma mia*, there is a strong mother–daughter bond, yet with a spark of rebellion on the part of the very young adult daughter. Sophie is far more active than Shakespeare's obedient and dependent Miranda: it is Sophie who

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2   Except for Aaron in the early play *Titus Andronicus*. Aaron, who is of African origin, an "irreligious Moor," in act 4 becomes father of the illegitimate black baby delivered by Tamora.

summons the three men from the past to come to the island in the hope to resolve the secret of the fatherhood. However, the purpose is purely formal: to fulfil the wedding ritual whereby the father traditionally "gives the daughter away"; not more. Thus, in *Mamma mia*, the father is not supposed to appear as a source of identity.

The intimate mother-daughter bond culminates with the song "Slipping through my fingers." Mourning the passing of time where the mother of a young adult discerns the "odd melancholy feeling" (Anderson and Ulvaeus, line 19) by relentlessly losing her child since its very first own steps to school may appeal quite moving for today's western audience for it captures the largely close relationship between children and parents and the emotional difficulty to launch them into independency. Neither such scenes nor emotions of parents towards their growing up off-springs are to be found in Shakespeare. The reason for this, as I have argued elsewhere (Bžochová-Wild 68-96), is his construction of families which mostly followed the older social pattern; and even if *The Tempest* could be understood as a transitive play shifting towards the closed domesticated nuclear family based upon "affective individualism," as Lawrence Stone put it (*The Family* 221-269), Prospero, the ruling almighty father is mourning rather his loss of "charms" (Epilogue: 1) than the loss of his daughter.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as in patriarchal societies, daughters (Miranda and Claribel) are transferred from father's hands to husband's as their possessions and have no autonomy (Stone *The Family* 271; Carlson 100; Jardine 115-116). In *Mamma mia*, however, the daughter makes the choices on her own, be it to decide on her future husband, on the right time to marry, or to question her origin. The most striking shift is Sophie's final decision *not* to marry yet and to explore the world instead: she and her fiancé sail away. This journey echoes the traditional Grand tour, known from the Renaissance and later, assigned for young wealthy *men* before they marry (Stone *The Family* 518; Locke §212 to 215; Rousseau 1738-1893). Young daughters, as opposed to young sons, were advised to stay at home and grow up in security and isolation (Stone *The Crisis* 683).

Significantly, as Pierre Bourdieu (25) showed, the Grand tour features the archaic pattern of rite de passage, accompanying the separation of the boy from his mother and his initiation into male adulthood. In *The Tempest*, too, it is the young male Ferdinand, not the young female Miranda, to undergo such a journey before getting betrothed. In *Mamma mia*, however, there is a substantial gender reversal, for it is Sophie who decides to cross the sea and—as a consequence—to separate herself from her mother to achieve adulthood. The female ambition to see and to explore the world before entering into marriage is definitely at odds with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as well as with the practice of his time.

Husbands and Wives

Concerning husband and wife, we remember from *The Taming of the Shrew*: "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign" (5:2:151-152). Prospero, although his wife is absent, is a sovereign of exactly that kind, which he shows in relation to his daughter, too. In *Mamma mia*, Donna, the single mother of a twenty-year-old daughter, claims that she does not need a husband. Eventually, she marries her old love, Sam. But who is Sam? The film does not go at great length to explain their previous attachment. Judged by the cast, Sam (Pierce Brosnan, the legendary multiple James Bond and at that time the "sexiest man alive"[3]) seems to be the epitome of masculinity and coolness; but is he really? First, we see him as a well-off architect in New York, who, as it comes to light later, nevertheless failed in building up a decent relationship (he is divorced). Then, on the island, he seems rather helpless, far from a superman or a cool professional. Instead, the supposed 007 is the most embarrassing suitor; singing the ABBA love song "SOS" in duet with Donna, he appears magnificently awkward and clumsy. The actor obviously cannot sing well; neither is he comfortable in the role of a suffering lover.

So, what does this cast suggest? Is it that behind the beloved man there is a superman, however awkward he may actually appear? Or is it the opposite—showing that any 007-look is just a plain facade? The film ingeniously pleases both these expectations. Sam in *Mamma mia* supposedly *is* James Bond, but at the same time he is *not*. Or should we read Donna's true love as a kind of parody of the Shakespearean three caskets choice? For there is an ironical note towards the self-determined woman Donna, who, having had her affairs with three men, ultimately loves that one who is a kind of 007. Yet there is no doubt that he will neither be Donna's lord, nor her keeper or sovereign. And most probably neither a clever superman (the only occupation he gets involved in is helping Donna to decorate the terrace). On the green island, neither his remote New York professional career nor his (intertextual) reputation as super-agent has a value; the only thing that counts is his bond to Donna.

The island in *Mamma mia* functions as a locus of metamorphosis, of purging relationships, maturing decisions, coming to oneself. The other two potential fathers undergo a change, too, by revealing their inner self. The lone wolf Bill (Stellan Skarsgård), an adventurer enjoying his lifelong freedom, may give up his celibacy, challenged by Donna's old friend Rosie, the go-getter, yet notoriously single. Harry (Colin Firth), the banker, finally unburdens himself as gay. Neither fatherhood nor social career is given weight: again, it is the human bond that makes these men worthwhile. The traditional masculine role model—father, governor, god—derived from patriarchy, is completely abandoned.

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[3] The annual feature of the USA *People* magazine (2001).

The three unwed women in their 40s or 50s, Donna and her two friends Rosie (Julie Walters) and Tanya (Christine Baranski), play out different self-determined models of life: a single parent mother (Donna), a happily multiple divorced (Tanya), a hyperactive intellectual single (Rosie). Obviously, they gained their gender autonomy during the feminist movement of the 1970s—while appearing on the stage as the music band "Donna and the Dynamos." Thus, *Mamma mia* may refer to a shift of social and cultural paradigm in terms of gender equality, be it marital or not.

Age

Though the happy ending of *Mamma mia* might look very much like a cliché, the marriage of Donna and Sam points to a shift of paradigm, too. In Shakespeare, as opposed to *Mamma mia*, fathers/parents of all young adults are rather old and belong, more or less, to the category of "senex"—known already from the classical antiquity: Prospero, Battista, Lear, Brabantio, Shylock, Polonius, Capulet, etc. Yet in *Mamma mia*, the eventual wedding unites singles of the parents' generation, not the young adults. Donna and Sam, a middle-aged couple, enter the institution of marriage—they do so definitely not because they are young (meaning capable to produce off-springs), as it is the standard topos in Shakespeare, as well as in his predecessors and contemporaries.

For the young adult Sophie, the marriage she was heading to proves to be too premature. As far as the middle adult woman, her mother, is concerned, the marriage is presented as a good option provided it is based upon mutual attachment and equality. In Shakespeare, we do not find a category of such vital middle adulthood. This, indeed, suggests a shift of paradigm. The parents in Shakespeare's plays use to step down from active life to clear the way for their children,[4] which might suggest a standard social pattern of that time. As opposed to the early modern practice, from the end of the twentieth century, in close connection with increased life expectancy, the Western middle adulthood (roughly the age between 40 and 60) developed to a distinct category. However, it still remains probably "the least studied period of the lifespan" (Overstreet). As some suggest, in our time, the middle adult years "are probably the best time of life" and "the golden age of adulthood" (Colarusso 163)—a status which is not to be found in Shakespeare. On the contrary, Prospero, father of a 15-year-old daughter, is going to spend "every third thought" on his "grave" (5.1.314). This is surely not the case of Donna & co. Thus, *Mamma mia* substantially

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[4] Yet to be concerned: Gertrude, "the matron" heavily accused by her son Hamlet for her sexual relationship with Claudius: "...Rebellious hell, / If thou canst mutine in a matrons' bones" (3.4.82). As if the son would see her older than she feels herself.

updates a Shakespearean story by introducing a new category of middle-age people, full of energy, joy and vitality and justifiable to marry or re-marry for love.

Significantly enough, the emphasis concerning the vitality of middle-age is laid on women. As far as the middle-aged men in *Mamma mia* are concerned, it is rather them who seem to undergo a midlife crisis with an urgent need to change their life. Yet these three male characters avoid the most common cliché, too, by being attached to women or a man of the same age. No doubt, a middle-aged man falling in love with a young girl or boy would destroy the whole refreshing charm of the *Mamma mia* story and relapse to the all-too-traditional social pattern.

The notion of still vivid, even explosive sexual energy of middle adult women is reinforced by the seducing dance scenes on the hot midday sunny beach. Here, Tanya challenges the young barkeeper Pepper who "is only a child" (*Mamma mia:* "Does your mother know"). Since Pepper is played by an Anglo-African actor (Philip Michael), the scene may recall the story of Shakespeare's Miranda sexually harassed by Caliban (1.2.349-353), the "other," who was often played by blacked up actors or by actors of African origin (Dymkowski 189; Vaughan and Vaughan 55; Griffith 197). Yet, in the film, the story is recast in terms of age and playfully distorted, stripped of any hint of violence, acknowledging the vital erotic appeal of both, a middle-aged woman and a young boy. Needless to say, the boy, as well as all the other young male dancers on the beach, eventually give up to Tanya's hot challenge and all of them faint at the end of the scene.

In *Mamma mia*, erotic energy is regarded as a vital positive power, no matter of which age. The sudden eruption of the Aphrodite's fountain immediately from beneath Donna's house—re-enacting a Shakespearean miracle and a celebration of love—adds an accomplishing romantic note to the happy end with a wedding. Yet important: the vivacity of middle adult women is praised not only at the end and not primarily in connection with men. In scene 3/10, Tanya and Rosie prompt Donna, feeling blue and desperately grown up, to "grow back down again." Singing the song "Dancing queen," their energy of "young and seventeen" spreads like wildfire and infects dozens of women of all ages around to forget the daily routine and to join the dance and joy of life.

1970s and after

To a great extent, the film's appeal is in its intertextual references. Besides the above-mentioned associations to the icon actors Meryl Streep and Pierce Brosnan, the film may especially address the middle-aged generation which grew up in the 1970s and 1980s with ABBA songs, bringing to their mind

a whole range of reminiscences of that time. While the 1970s temporal level is only present as memory, the film, set in our time, i.e. about the turn of the millennium, presents rather the outcome of some of the 1970s narratives with the then young adults grown up to middle adulthood.

Those 1970s narratives informing *Mamma mia* concern mainly gender and environment: 1) the utopias of escaping the capitalism and returning to nature, epitomized in a green island (see Garforth); 2) the second wave of feminism with its struggle for sexual freedom; 3) the highest increase of nonmarital births (USA figures, see Doherty et al. page); 4) the emerging ideal of gender and marital equality statutory in the international bill of rights for women;[5] 5) the new anti-authoritarian parenting practices (see Walters and Walters page); 6) the gay liberation movement. With the 1970s behind them, the three mature women Donna, Rosie and Tanya seem to be better off, self-determined, self-made, still true to themselves and, yes, still sexy. The men, on the other hand, either grew out of the 1970s ideals to become upper-class pretentious establishment (Sam, Harry) or got stuck in a forever-young-dream (Bill). On a romantic island, they undergo a change.

Conclusion

The romantic musical comedy headed by three female producers (director Phyllida Lloyd, screenplay Catherine Johnson, production Judy Craymer) can be seen as a soft and slightly ironical feminist rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This paper's aim was to argue that the contemporary romantic story in *Mamma mia* is embedded in a changed cultural paradigm which was widely launched in the 1970s, and questions its outcome around the turn of the millennium.

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[5] The international bill of rights for women—The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)—was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and came into force in September, 1981.

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Book Reviews

Balz Engler, *Constructing Shakespeares: Essays on the Making of a Great Author* **(Dozwil: Edition Signathur, 2019. Pp. 260).**

Reviewed by *Silvana Carotenuto*[*]

Constructing Shakespeares by Emeritus Professor Balz Engler offers an important critical contribution to Renaissance studies and, together, to performance studies. Consisting of five essays—"Construction," "Monumental Shakespeare," "Occasions: Status and Process," "*Hamlet*: Passages We Live By" and "Re-Productions," with an introduction which sets the book's "Premises" and its final "Coda"—the publication, supported by the Berta Hess-Cohn Foundation and the Max Geilinger Foundation of Zurich, is consistently interested in the Shakespearean *oeuvre* as a performative authority through history via the notion of the deconstruction of the text as a "classic," and in contemporary times through the "media" apparatus that makes it enjoyable and relevant still today, in the global world, among different and differentiated audiences.

The question of the "audience" is the focus of the "Premises," which deals with the modalities in which the Shakespearean text (the main reference goes to Prospero's Epilogue and its final invitation to the audience's indulgence, that is, its applause) inserts the notion of the "performance as process" (17), the play being "an occasion of which the audience is part" (18). Indeed, Engler's position is that the audience takes part, plays a central part in the performance, contributes to the success or failure of the play, and represents the oral/social agent of dramatic authority. "Sociality" and "communication," therefore, are to be considered as essential elements to the "making of a great author," and particularly to the magnitude of Shakespeare, thus advancing a benevolent criticism of the Romantic notion of his texts as "books to *read*" (the reference goes to Charles Lamb's appreciation of Shakespeare's soliloquies). The activity of reading, as Professor Engler maintains, is already and always part of

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Shakespeare's art, supporting his complex views on the status of dramatic texts, if, as an example among many others, Hamlet's appearance on stage "reading a book" realizes the overcoming of the distinction between the reader's isolation and the performance of theatrical reading, the specificity of the skill and its performativity, advocating the vision of reading as a performance that changes, with its own histories and practices, according to its historical authority and the status of the text itself.

Here what is interesting is Engler's reading of the history of criticism that constructed—and keeps constructing—itself around the historical and cultural changes of the value of literature. The scholars mentioned are, among others, Stephen Orgel, Peter Stallybrass and Roger Chartier, and especially Margreta de Grazia who, along her *Hamlet Without Hamlet* (2007), brings attention to the "modernity" of Shakespeare. In the economy of Engler's critical and performative interpretation, Shakespearean modernity finds its privileged locus in "The Media of *King Lear*," the chapter interested in the dramatic communication of the "book," the "stage" and the "video screen." Engler refers to the reading of the book as what promotes the interest in the psychology of a single figure, to the active participation in the dramatic action as what provokes the interest in social and political conflicts, simultaneously showing his fascination for the video's capacity for intimacy, the importance of the camera, the critical distance and the perspective it creates, the tensions and responses it calls for. If *King Lear* is, indeed, the Shakespearean classic that proves that the dramatic world cannot be reduced to a single perspective, the camera is strongly apt to realize such wisdom: as cinematic proofs, and pausing on the scene of the King's division of the kingdom to his daughters, and, finally, to the dialogue between Edgar and Gloucester, Engler refers to an early American *Lear* of 1916, to the BBC version of the tragedy, to Grigory Kosintsev and Peter Brook's films, both appearing in 1970, and to the Granada version of 1983—they all create the framework in which Shakespeare's power of complexity can be contextualized and communicated. "Context" and "communication": in the chapter devoted to "Construction," Engler is interested in European contextualization in terms of production and re-production (two notions that he distinguishes from *reception, influence* and *appropriation*), emphasizing the question of "genealogy" to mean the different European capacities of welcoming Shakespeare geographically and culturally, valuing the social practices that produced, and are still producing, Shakespeare in Europe[1] and also a certain European homogeneity in terms of popular culture, systems of education and lineages of theatrical performances. Here the critical claim goes to the necessity of producing a history of Shakespearean "reproduction" as part of the so-called European common

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[1] Engler quotes Pechter's *What was Shakespeare: Renaissance Plays and Changing Critical Practices,* appreciating his approach but somehow critical of its Americanism.

culture, a history that should follow different phases—*beyond the rules* (and its aristocratic and hierarchical poetics of the origin), *beyond criticism* (and its poetics of genius), *beyond the text* (and its uniformity of interpretation)—and be interested in setting Shakespeare in education, popular culture, contemporary media, authorship theories, comparison of cultures, and translation in various languages. Professor Engler claims that, in this area of intervention, still much needs to be done, calling for the necessity of important and urgent projects meant for the sake of Shakespearean studies, for the formation of the European "common culture" and, similarly, for the vitality of cultures in all parts of the world.

This is, indeed, "Shakespeare's Passport," which functions not in terms of a national identity but as a "consignment note" that belongs to the arena of international theatre, to its performative process, its theatrical traditions, cultural conditions and institutions, translations, adaptations and dramatic materials— "even without the authority of an author" (80) (which is, especially in the case of Shakespeare, a recent notion, largely, as Margreta de Grazia shows, a product of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that constructed the author as genius, the mythologized and authenticated "quasi-divine creator"). In this sense, the history of the Shakespearean plays evolves, changes, and adapts to new cultural and political situations, always and already in on-going processes. For Professor Engler, this means that Shakespeare's passport is, indeed, the magnificent license to travel through histories and worlds, the author himself being a ghostly presence that crosses borders and travels free and powerful everywhere. If this is the case, then the suggestion is to engage in "The Unmaking of a National Poet," producing a different notion of nationhood by considering three critical elements: narratives (and how they have served the aim of establishing "a sense of community with a shared past," 84), language (which was historically modernized and standardized in view of the adventures of the British Empire like a bond among the different colonies), and poetics (which, here too, served the role of forming a classical tradition tainted by imperial aspirations; Engler also pays attention to the specific context of the German possession of Shakespeare, which especially aimed at the establishment of the *Sturm und Drang* romantic tradition, 87-89). In truth, as Engler clearly states, Shakespeare does not belong to any single country, even if his *oeuvre* can prove, by representing the "free and multifarious spirit of a united Europe" (90), essential in defining a European cultural entity. In order to exploit such an opportunity, what is needed is to deconstruct the "monumentalizing" of Shakespeare, its "canonization" in England. You can follow Engler's own deconstruction of the question of pilgrimage to and tourism at Stratford-upon-Avon, in a section of the book which provides historical facts, notes from the archive of the town, plans and names of Shakespeare's sacred and sanctified "Birthplace" (103-117), in the United States (Chapter 9 is devoted to

"Shakespeare, Washington, Lincoln: The Folger Library and the American Appropriation of the Bard," 118-136), Germany (see the chapter "Weimar: Shakespeare among the German Classics," 137-154) and Italy (the reference is naturally to Juliet and Verona, 155-167), but what matters is that Professor Engler's analysis of the destinies of the Shakespearean text expands to cover the debate on the "politics of place" and the "cultural performance of space" 156).

Engler's deconstruction relies on the opening up of the status of Shakespeare as a public symbol and myth, and on a set of comparative perspectives that *Constructing Shakespeares* adopts in its reading, for example, of the Bard placed between England and Germany during the First World War ("Shakespeare in the Trenches," 168-181), in Post-Second World War Germany (with a reference to *Coriolanus* in the framework of American occupation after the collapse of the Third Reich and Nazi cultural policies, 182-191) and, especially, in the postcolonial world (a short but important chapter is devoted to "Shakespearean Passages" [192-198], that reads the interconnection of the textual passages and their journeys to the Caribbean world, specifically in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, or in Carriacou, Lesser Antilles, through the Shakespearean Mas, *carnival* or *masquerade*).

These readings are all connected to the digital project *HyperHamlet* that Professor Engler has established at the University of Basel, and which deals with "intertextuality," "citations," "metaphors," "phrases and passages" whose use allows the understanding of how Shakespeare lives on, influences and forms our language, while claiming the importance of the software (the program Tesserae) and the databank structure which selects, compares and contextualizes the collected material (the archive consists of an immense basin of almost 9000 references only for *Hamlet*). In *Constructing Shakespeares*, Engler is interested in how Shakespeare is alive in our minds and how this affects people's reception and experience of his plays. Stories, figures, the poetic genius, memories of different cultural communities, their perceptions and affections transform and feed the very discourse of the community, possibly, in the case of Shakespeare, of all communities existing in the world. The project *HyperHamlet* is at the core of Professor Engler's critical attention: Chapter 17 entitled "*HyperHamlet*—An Extended Personal Footnote" testifies the reasons why he devoted his practical, intellectual and critical engagement in the setting up and historical development of his project. Engler explains it as an essential part of his interest in anthropology (especially orality ad literacy) and in performance poetry, mentioning the public and academic occasions where he exposed himself to the necessity and complexity of the project (the beginning happening in a conference at the University of Murcia in 1999, then in Timisoara, Romania, in 2002, followed by a seminar with his students at Basel University, the whole project developing through the grant by the Swiss National Research Fund and

the Swiss Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences, to thank the various institutions and[2] scholars still working on it).

The book gradually unfolds and gathers its final momentum when dealing with "Re-productions" (consisting of "On Gottfried Keller's *A Village…*," 219-230, and *"*Language and Conflict: A Trilingual *Romeo and Juliet*," 231-240*,* two chapters which focus on examples of Shakespearean multilingual productions in multilingual Switzerland). Doing so, it reaches its "Coda. The Relevance of the Inconspicuous," (241-253), which is a word that Engler associates to grammar: comma, semicolon, colon, question, exclamation mark and … full stop. Engler's coda is a happy farewell to the book, to his own writing, to his readers and Shakespeare's audiences. The final stress is on "punctuation," which exists in individual and solitary reading but, especially, even more relevantly today than ever, in poetry reading and performance poetry. In accordance with his approach, Engler closes his important contribution to Renaissance studies and performance studies by mentioning the relevance of popular culture, be it in the forms of rapping or poetry slam, in order to re-claim the power of the voice, his own voice, the voice of theatre, the voices of all powerful and extraordinary Shakespeares.

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[2] See http://www.hyperhamlet.unibas.ch/

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Reviewed by *Maosheng Hu*[*]

Ariel Chu,[1] preferably spelt as Zhu Shenghao by Chinese mainland scholars today, achieves his posthumous success for the voluminous translation of Shakespeare's works into Chinese. He suffered severely from tuberculosis in the middle of translating *Henry the Fifth* in June 1944 and passed away in wartime China on St. Stephen's Day of the same year, at the age of 32. His decade-long efforts of translating the bard's complete works contribute to a Shakespeare legacy in different generations of Chinese readership and a "Shakespeare passport" that "enriches and enhances our lives,"[2] so much so that Zhu Shenghao, a translator of signal expertise in Chinese Shakespeare, rises to the height of a legend in this country, and Duan Zili defines his translation as "a live literary canon" (8).

In the fashion of the founder of New Shakespeare Society F. J. Furnivall's rigid metrical tests on Shakespeare's plays in 1877, or that of Dr. T. C. Mendenhall's graphic exhibitions on the same subject in his "A Mechanical Solution of a Literary Problem" (1901), Duan applies a most thoroughly statistical anatomy towards Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare, a union of "both quantitative and qualitative perspectives" (1) in understanding the canonisation of his works. To fulfill these purposes, on the one hand, Duan fathoms the innermost veins and textures of the translated works and unveils the implicit qualities of the Chinese texts by developing eight parallel corpuses, decoding the "internal factors" (4) under the light of essentialist canonisation theory; on the other, he is inspired by the constructionist canonisation theory that features a set of "external factors" (4) such as culture, poetics and politics. The author of the book demonstrates how exoteric as well as esoteric attributes work together towards the formation of

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[1] Ariel Chu is by far the only authorized English name by the translator and poet himself. The combination of Shakespeare's character name Ariel and the Wade-Giles Romanization Chu appears on the end matter of *A Dictionary of English Grammar and Composition.* Usage of the name is also found in the private correspondence between the translator and his then love and later wife Song Qingru, who proofreads all the translation manuscripts and finalizes the first publications of Zhu's work.

[2] See Gregory Doran's use of the terms in the 2016 Richard Dimbleby Lecture "Is Shakespeare Chinese?" at BBC: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b07474wx/the-richard-dimbleby-lecture-gregory-doran-is-shakespeare-chinese

a literary canon, and further proposes a supplement to canonisation theories with the example of Zhu Shenghao. In this increasingly nominalist life, we are inclined to measure and weigh the physical characteristics of the world with numeracy; in the study of Zhu Shenghao, this one is the first of its kind in size and gravity, and deserves to be placed on the must-read list for a serious study.

The layout of the book is of coherence and focus: it begins with an introduction elucidating the research, its history, methodology and significance. The second chapter discusses the external factors that account for the canon formation of Zhu's translation, such as circulation and reception. The following three chapters delineate three internal factors that are embodied in Zhu's works and constitute key elements in the making of a canon: musicality, interpersonal meanings at the cross-cultural level, and translation of images. The sixth chapter resolves the controversy revolving around translating foreignness by the yardsticks set up from the examination of Zhu's canonical works of Shakespeare translation. The end of the book features an instructive conclusion and an informative list of appendices related with questions at issue and handy for reference.

Chapter Two extracts the extrinsic qualities in the making of a canon from the circulation and reception databases over the past six decades. In this part Duan also attempts to answer the question as to why Zhu's translation of Shakespeare has excelled among various others and gained "a higher degree of canonisation" (26). The press, theatre and education create very favorable conditions for Zhu's works to disseminate knowledge and ideas about Shakespeare as well as the translator. The repute of Zhu grows immeasurably with that of Shakespeare in China and the two become heavily mingled in the reading public. A reader in praise of the 1950's publication wrote to Song Qingru afterwards in the 1980's equaling Zhu to the bard and declaring that "I fall in love with Zhu Shenghao for the love of Shakespeare…and I wonder, isn't he Shakespeare, the man who sacrifices himself for the translation of Shakespeare's works" (Zhu Shanggang 294)? Apart from popularity on the page and the stage, Zhu's translation has also been selected as scripts for Shakespeare on the screen and in the film. Furthermore, compilers of Chinese textbooks excerpt dramatic works of Shakespeare from Zhu's translation. Wide circulation feeds academic interpretation and re-creating of Shakespeare translation. Chinese scholars and translators do not simply rest upon the prevailing version from Zhu; they reread it to locate the errors or omissions and then refine it. The proofreading and patch-up strategy gives birth to "reformed" Shakespeare translations which are in essence Zhu's but revised anew. Proofreaders do not abandon Zhu's translation and replace it with brand new ones, as they do to other versions in Chinese history; instead, they would rather make amendments or additions within Zhu's work. Duan dubs this translation practice "a rare phenomenon in reception" (45). To articulate the rarity of this reception phenomenon, he dissects the erred and omitted parts in Zhu's rendering with

mathematical precision, not only in numerical counts, but scrutinizing contrast to denote how proofreading and patch-up help to promote and accelerate canonisation.

The next three chapters of the book are devoted to the internal factors conducive to the canonisation of Zhu's translation of Shakespeare. Among them is first of all the musicality Zhu infuses into his rendering of Shakespeare's blank verse. Another internal factor that the author apportions into his design of elaboration, among others, is the translator's "conscious construction of interpersonal meanings at the cross-cultural level" (181). Duan assigns the last internal factor in the canon formation of Zhu's works to his success in translating images. He develops statistical devices to calculate the percentage of images faithfully rendered, impressing readers with hard data and insightful observations.

Duan concludes the book with a chapter on how to reconcile the differences between source culture and target culture in translation. He proposes an effective mixture of creativity and fidelity in the pursuit of translation ethics. Achieving a good balance between the two, Zhu's translation has stood the test of time and been marmorealized in its symbiotic relationship with Shakespeare's collection of works.

Elizabethan England gave birth to a host of elite dramatists and poets, such as Christopher Marlowe, Michael Drayton, Robert Greene, George Peele, and others, who might have had the chance to replace the bard, the untimely "upstart crow" in the eyes of some peers. Like Shakespeare himself, Zhu struggled to make a living in metropolitan Shanghai, a celebrity-packed place where established intellectuals like Lu Hsün, Bakin and Lin Yutang were at the peak of their literary careers. One of his contemporaries, Cao Weifeng, had already started the translation of Shakespeare since 1931, and prepared to pay his homage to Shakespeare via Royal Leamington Spa on the way home to London from Oxford in the spring of 1939. Back in Shanghai in 1937, the devout disciple of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Zhang Min, debuted his sensational *Romeo and Juliet* at Carlton Theatre, which Zhu might be interested in after being hospitalized for scarlet fever. In two months' time, Shanghai would be caught in the blaze of world war, and Zhu's manuscripts of comedies, scheduled for press soon, were burnt in the fire at his residence. He fled to his aunt's place, barely able to save anything but his Oxford edition of Shakespeare and scanty documents only to restart from the scratch. Although readers have appreciated and adored Zhu Shenghao's works since their first publication in 1947, none but the author of this book has approached it on such a statistical and scientific scale.

Nevertheless, Duan seems to have overlooked certain historical facts about Shakespeare readership and translation in China. First and foremost is the reception of Shakespeare preceding Zhu's translation. He conveniently concludes that "to a large extent canonisation of Shakespeare in China is no more than that of Zhu's translation" (70), a very friendly pose towards his subject of interest but not a level playing field for the bard and other contributors to the Shakespeare

cause in this country. Ever since David Garrick's 1769 jubilee and the Victorian literati's zealous promotion, as that from Charles Dickens, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps and others, Shakespeare has become increasingly known and loved by people all across the globe. The canonical status of the bard has been shared for centuries among readers throughout the world and Chinese people are without exception part of this global Shakespeare canonisation. They studied Shakespeare in England, America or Japan and introduced him back to China. For example, recently I came across a list of presentations from the legendary Buddhist master, professor and artist (highly skilled in music, calligraphy, painting and drama) Li Shutong on the eve of his monasticism in 1918, and in the gifts bestowed upon his student Tse Ka Fong is "a collection of Shakespeare's complete works in the original tongue" (Chen Xing 159).

Besides, the author's narrative of critical inquiry would have been more convincing if the data collection is devoid of undercoverage. Although Duan is well aware of the fact that Zhu's translation has been in circulation for more than sixty years, he gives explicit priority to criticism in the 1980's, 1990's and the first decade of this century, while readers have responded enthusiastically since its publication in 1947. For instance, Guo Binhe, professor of English from National Central University had to purchase the books directly from the press via the widowed wife of Zhu in 1947, and he placed Zhu's translation high above others in a letter to her afterwards. When evaluating complimentary comments in Chapter Two, Duan begins somehow with the year 1981. Furthermore, the corpus data based on evaluation can be rather controversial and sometimes erroneous, which compromises the very principle of accuracy such a device pursues. In Appendix Six, the author views Zhu's translation of the name Helen (from *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*) into "美人" (beauty) as a case of image loss (270). The misconception does not perform a full analysis of the translator's intention and the effect he aims to achieve for the face of Helen speaks for beauty itself.

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Theatre Reviews

Macbeth. Dir. Paul Miller. Chichester Festival Theatre Main Auditorium, Chichester, UK.

Reviewed by **_Peter Billingham_**[*]

On Saturday 26 October 2019, I visited the penultimate (matinee) performance of _Macbeth_ at the Chichester Festival Theatre Main Auditorium, a thrust stage in the manner of the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford, Ontario and the Sheffield Crucible Theatre in West Yorkshire, UK. The production starred John Simm, who excelled in the central role of Macbeth, and the well-known British television actress Dervla Kerwan as Lady Macbeth. The play was directed by Paul Miller, and the production designer was Simon Daw.

There was a clear and consistent—if problematic—commitment to an "immersive" production, which sought to fuse striking visual imagery and appropriate stage effects with a contemporary music soundtrack by Max Pappenheim. Most of this barrage of images was projected onto a transparent screen, which served as the "backdrop" to the principal performance area of this iconic thrust stage.

Sometimes it felt to this reviewer, and many critics from the UK national press, that the intensity and scale of such images threatened to overwhelm what is surely the core of any distinctive production of Shakespeare's work: the muscular, theatrical poetry of the layered dramatic language. This felt particularly so when, early in the play, fragments of Shakespeare's text were projected amidst visual images of darkening mist and storm-laded skies. It possibly signalled a lack of trust on the part of the director in terms of the actors' projection and audibility.

The young actress Beatriz Romilly, cross-gender cast as Malcolm, struggled vocally and was hampered further by a tendency to speak the verse in an over-emphatic, metered manner, giving it an aural predictability that inhibited both performer and character. It was hard to see how the reversal of gender in this instance offered any radical re-illumining of the character and his/her

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conflicts and dilemmas. It was very difficult to "suspend disbelief" and believe that this passive character could possibly lead a successful victory by the English/Scottish military axis against Macbeth's regime. Michael Balogun's Macduff was strongly etched and characterised by the twin-tragic pain of witnessing Macbeth's descent into evil and the subsequent murdering of his wife and children.

In conclusion, there were undoubted strengths to this production, especially John Simm in the titular role and, latterly, Kerwan's Lady Macbeth consumed by madness and guilt: truly, desperately pitiful and existentially derelict.

The temptation towards an ill-defined and perhaps ill-judged need for the "immersive" in many contemporary British productions of Shakespeare threatens to anaesthetise and disempower the potent, dramatically linguistic core of Shakespeare's writing. Surely tragedy from its classical origins is "immersed" in and driven by a catharsis that doesn't need or rely upon additional technological strategies. Too often in this production the cast seemed to be in a conflict not only with the struggle against human evil, but more pragmatically against the oversaturation of an over-intrusive musical score and visual cacophony.

Photograph by Manuel Harlan

Photograph by Manuel Harlan

***Macbeth Underworld*. Dir Thomas Jolly. La Monnaie/De Mund, Brussels, Belgium.**

Reviewed by *Stephanie Mercier*[*]

The talented 37-year-old French director Thomas Jolly graduated from Rouen High School, in France, as a theatre major, then pursued his degree in performing arts at the University of Caen. In 2003, he joined the School of Dramatic Art of the National Theatre of Brittany in Rennes, while creating his own theatre company, "La Piccola Familia", in Rouen. He became famous in France, thanks to his 2014 version of *Henry VI* at the Avignon Festival, which won a Molière Award, considered the highest theatre honour in France. Jolly's *Henry VI* was set against the backdrop of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), between England and France, and the ensuing English civil war commonly known as the "Wars of the Roses" (1455-1485), which saw the royal houses of York and Lancaster rip each other apart. In Jolly's staging of the composer Pascal Dusapin and the librettist Frédéric Boyer's contemporary operatic version of *Macbeth*, with Alain Altinoglu as musical director, the director seems to have moved from staging characters fighting against each other onto themes of how they wrangle with their underworldly inner natures. In the opera we also see clearly the translation of the strengths and weaknesses of nature, human nature as well as nature in general, that prompts the question of which one is the biggest threat to the other. Strikingly, for example, what at first seemed to be alive vegetation on stage, due to the writhing bodies within it, became obviously dead trees that nonetheless occupied and then gradually invaded the stage; then, the trees moved in a pincer movement, like nature's suffocating revenge for the irresponsibly devastating and unnatural goings-on in performance.

　　Social responsibility and sustainability beyond performance itself also occupied the production. Since the start of his career, Jolly has considered himself a citizen activist; unsurprisingly, therefore, the opera was made freely available to audiences, via streaming, from 17 October to 27 November 2019. The presumably lower carbon footprint version of *Macbeth Underworld* I viewed, on 20 October 2019, was sung in English with French subtitles. It was hence clearly a hub of both creative and technological innovation that facilitated interaction between artistic, interpretive, human and non-human environments. In his evolving relationship with the Bard, Jolly developed our awareness of Shakespeare's work, not only as a global phenomenon but also as a practice that can serve to criticise damaging practices of mediation between the individual and society, when the inner workings of the individual are harmful to our

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environment. What may be termed Jolly's "cultural ecology of translation" hence signifies ideas of sustainability (e.g. political, nationalistic, environmental), whether it be questions of interpreting Shakespeare or ethical awareness in crisis situations (i.e. survival and extinction). Jolly's approach also means social responsibility with regard to the soft activism of theatre and its operatic offshoots, including productions such as *Macbeth Underworld*.

Macbeth Underworld's libretto contains all the recognisable emblems from *Macbeth*: Scotland, a Ghost (Kristinn Sigmundsson), murder, the Weird Sisters (Ekaterina Lekhina, Lilly Jorstad, Christel Loetzsch), the dagger, the blood stains that are impossible to remove from the hands of Lady Macbeth (Magdalena Kozena) and the Porter (Graham Clark). In sum, all the leitmotifs are the same as Shakespeare's, even if the story slightly differs in that, as the opera's subtitle suggests, it aims to explore the Shakespearean *Macbeth*'s underworld environments. More specifically, the operatic version of the play seeks to investigate the subterranean and infernal relationship between Lady Macbeth and her husband (Georg Nigl), as well as their shared monstrous, if unconscious, inner self. The association was made visible through all-white costume, and because both sported a long white plait of hair. Their commonly shared drive for power at all costs was further revealed when long white ribbons bound Macbeth to the Weird Sisters, while Lady Macbeth un-plaited herself and mimed strangling herself with her plait at the same moment she demanded to be unsexed (1:5:39). [1] Above all, the production focussed upon symbols of the couple's combined culpability within the framework of their loving relationship despite everything. The specificity of Frédéric Boyer's libretto was hence to avoid depicting Lady Macbeth as a monstrous manipulator of her ambitious, and easily swayed, husband and to employ lyrics that revealed a jointly responsible pair of murderers mutually possessed by ambition.

The couple in this production was also one that had been profoundly hurt by the loss of their Child (Naomi Tapiola), who is revealed by Shakespeare thanks to one single line in his play: "I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me" (1:7:54-55). Here, the ghost of the Macbeths' deceased child was first a silent observer in Jolly's staging. Nonetheless, the character sported tiny antlers to anticipate Ross's lines in Act 4 of the play: "Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes / Savagely slaughtered: to relate the manner / Were, on the quarry of these murdered deer / To add the death of you" (4:3:205-208). Then, Macbeth's "dagger of the mind" (2:1:38) was made physical for the audience when the child appeared, hands bloodied, to present the dagger with which Macbeth would kill Duncan/the Ghost. Poignantly, the Ghost was here depicted sleeping in the Child's room, complete with toys that appeared in silhouette form as the music rose crescendo

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[1] The references to the text follow the Norton Edition.

and then subsided, before siren sounds accompanied Lady Macbeth's wails at the sight of her husband's bloodied shirt-front after the murder. In Jolly's staging, we clearly saw how the couple were condemned to constantly relive their grief due to their dead child, and their murders (King Duncan, Banquo etc.), surrounded by ghosts into infinity.

Similarly, Shakespeare's presence was still felt all through; first, thanks to Frédéric Boyer, who is renowned in France as a writer and translator, notably of Shakespeare's Sonnets and *Richard II*. Next, there was a continuing interplay of the sublime and the ridiculous as witnessed in the characters, who were still imagined as comic as well as tragic. This was especially the case for the Porter, who appeared in a tartan robe and a ruff at the beginning of the production, perhaps to conjure up images of the ghost of Elizabeth I. Later, the Porter appeared still in tartan, but with clown make-up and a recognisable pantomime "Knock, knock. Who's there?" line. He contrasted to the obviously tragic, masked, and anonymously generic regal characters, who were only recognisable thanks to their crowns, and who sporadically crossed the stage. Indeed, the aim was clearly to tighten up Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and concentrate on the eponymous couple. When Lady Macbeth almost collapsed due to the seemingly unbearable weight of her usurped diadem during coronation, before images of crows and the night and then a totally blackened stage, Jolly also managed to engage audience responsiveness within this restricted framework by opening up opportunities to include spectators through close coherence with the original and symbiosis with its operatic adaptation.

Thomas Jolly, who has already directed two operas (Cavalli's *Heliogabalus* [1667] in 2016 and Offenbach's *Fantasio* [1872] in 2017) in cabaret style, reemployed the same bravura, with passionate and extravagant characters, to emphasise shared presence and humanity, and to reinterpret Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. As such, the idea of the Macbeths as a monstrous couple could also include the word's etymological notions of demonstration and a capacity for visual and interpretative creation; indeed, this Macbeth couple had the wider function of magnifying the failures of the whole of humanity, thanks notably to an intense use of light. For example, the Macbeths were often seen alone in, or sharing, a huge black-sheeted bed against a backdrop of white beams that progressively turned red, as the forest increasingly appeared to engulf them. This visual transformation symbolised the invisible transformation of Macbeth from a loyal soldier into that of a treasonous usurper. In other words, lighting, and even at times lightning, accompanied Macbeth on his journey from heaven to hell. At the end of his ego trip, refusing to yield, even to the supplications of his ghostly child, Macbeth was submerged backstage by undergrowth as a lit board with Macduff's words: "Here may you see the tyrant" (5:10:26) was displayed upstage. The board was a final announcement of how far ambition can

take a man, and the whole of mankind, and the environmental destruction that this ambition implies to humanity.

The specificity of *Macbeth Underworld* with regards to Jolly's two previous operatic or Shakespearean productions was that it was a new creation, theatrically inspired by Pascal Dusapin's composition. If some of Jolly's recurring motifs reappeared (e.g. recognisable red ribbons to signify blood, a huge bed centre stage to imply intimacy), he refused to comply to a controlling system and clearly enjoyed being kept creatively on the move to all the better be in contact with theatre or opera goers. His is, therefore, an evolving relationship with them that is in tune with his developing connection to Shakespeare. The impact of the non-linear adaptation of Shakespeare's play was to fragment, but also to highlight, important individual aspects of the original text thanks to its reworking and re-thinking with regards to today's and tomorrow's challenges. These challenges include the impact of our action on political and ecological order, which is here revealed through a process of mediation involving both human and digital technologies. Technology as a highly imaginative medium of exchange was also a recognition of the multiple forces that impact Shakespeare today, but that should also be impacted by the work of his interpreters, including Thomas Jolly.

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Photograph © Baus / De Munt La Monnaie

King John. Dir. Eleanor Rhode. The Royal Shakespeare Company. Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

Reviewed by **Lisa Hopkins**[*]

As it says in the title of the play to which Shakespeare was probably responding, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, King John was a problem—to himself, to England, and sometimes to theatre directors. Even I, a hardened theatre-goer of many years' standing, have to stop and think about whether I *really* want to go and see *King John*. But it is the only Shakespeare at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in the whole winter season, so I booked it even though I feared it was going to be troublesome to me too.

It wasn't. On the face of it, there are some odd decisions in this production: King John is a woman, the Dauphin of France has a strong Irish accent, and the Bastard, who keeps having to talk about his size, is played by the smallest adult actor. None of it matters, though, because the production is so consistently successful in finding out where the play's theatrical energies lie. Traditionally, *King John* has been famous for two set-pieces, which can almost be detached from the plot: Constance's lament for Arthur, beloved of Victorian actresses, and the Bastard's "if England to itself do rest but true" speech, something of a watchword in both world wars. Both are here and both are done well, but so too are lots of other bits. I have never heard such sheer power and confidence in John's declaration that he speaks as "England for itself", and I have certainly never seen such a brilliantly funny and anarchic celebration of the wedding between Blanche and the Dauphin, in which food goes flying and the gold balloons which spell out "Just Married" are punctured and rearranged until they read "Just Die". When the arrival of Cardinal Pandulph stops the fight, there is a splendid moment when King John, sobered, picks a fairy cake off the French king's crown and the French king pauses for a moment, looks at it, and says "Thank you". It is a small still moment of calm in the middle of the fraught negotiations.

The fraught negotiations in question being, of course, the Brexit ones. In the months before the 2016 referendum, the RSC warned us about the potential consequences in *Cymbeline*, set in an apocalyptic future, where we are living in caves in Wales. Now, at the latest minute of the hour, we see what happens if you cut yourself off from Europe. It might all be OK: a competent Italian lady cardinal with a Milanese fashion sense might come and bring us back into the fold. Or it might not: there is no mention here of John's successor Prince Henry, and the Bastard's only plan seems to be suicide.

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It is presumably in support of this sense of uncertainty that the production makes what I think is its one mistake. It is generally very helpful to audience members unfamiliar with the plot, particularly in the BBC radio announcer at the beginning, who reports on the coronation and introduces John, his mother (said to have worn Chanel for the occasion), and his niece Blanche. But it is not helpful in its presentation of the death of Arthur. This is brilliantly prepared for in a scene which uncannily couples the trappings of a modern doctor's or dentist's surgery with an iron circle of lit candles—a touch of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, but also a mediaevalising note which makes the proposed blinding comprehensible. What actually happens to Arthur is however totally unclear. He runs along a table with some people standing on either side, he comes to the end, goes over, and two of the people catch him; then next time we see him one side of his face is covered with blood in the eye area and the other is clean. My husband and son, experienced viewers of Shakespeare and not especially stupid, were both baffled, and while I take the point that the death of Arthur is mystified in the play, I did not think this worked. In every other respect, though, I was riveted by this production. And also of course terrified, as we wait to see whether the Hallowe'en horror of Brexit is really going to materialise.