SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMA: APPROPRIATION ON PAGE, STAGE, AND CELLULOID

It is no mere coincidence that our call for papers under the headline "Shakespeare's drama: translation–appropriation–performance" produced contributions that in their majority can easily be read as exploring, in their respective contexts, the central problem of appropriation: the question of how, why and why not, a rewriting has established a fruitful dialogue with its aesthetic source text and source culture. Within this context, we may ask whether the current attitude towards the appropriation of Shakespeare's playtexts reflects one more attempt to render "the Bard" our contemporary and thus use a renewed Shakespeare to answer our own questions. A few essays herein suggest such an appreciation for Shakespeare as being at the heart of the appropriative impulse. Through such a motivation, an appropriation would try to take part in Shakespeare's allegedly universal value, possibly mobilising this value against the grain of the appropriation's historical context. This need not be a politically conservative project, as those articles that analyse appropriations from socialist Eastern Europe make clear. Used for tactical reasons, Shakespeare's alleged universal value often takes on the function of a cultural mask and can serve politically liberating forces.

A historically differentiated look may clarify some characteristics in contemporary appropriative tactics of Shakespeare's playtexts. Let us

first look back to modernist appropriative strategies. In a comment on Ben Jonson, T. S. Eliot offers his view on what it means to appropriate cultural icons for his present. He remarks that "to see him [Jonson] as a contemporary does not so much require the power of putting ourselves into seventeenth-century London as it requires the power of setting Jonson in our London" (67). In this proposal, Eliot shows himself aware of the remoteness and historical difference of the Elizabethan period. Yet, what he suggests is a necessity, and hence a license, to bridge this historical gap and violate historical accuracy in order to create a "contemporary" Jonsonian (or, for our matter, Shakespearean) playtext whose contemporaneity lies exactly in its capacity to respond meaningfully and provocatively to the needs and urgencies of the writer's own cultural presence. Insofar as Eliot viewed this process primarily as one that rejuvenates Elizabethan playtexts and saves them from the stiffening approaches of late nineteenth-century historicism, he creates an approach that acknowledges the existence of tradition and received meanings, while at the same time trying to liberate Elizabethan texts from the weight of such tradition (and his own present time from the weight of history).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, contemporary appropriative interests in Shakespeare on page and stage, although they share with the modernist approach promoted by Eliot an interest in manipulating received meanings of Shakespeare's plays, are more critical of the possibility of using Shakespeare's "timeless" and "universal" values, often in order to escape or overcome the confining pressures of history and the human suffering contained it it. A good case in point is Shakespeare's body of texts within the framework of post-colonial theory, in which the work's status as cultural capital, frequently associated with repressive political and economic power, strongly informs textual readings. As a number of essays in this collection show, appropriating Shakespeare's plays from a post-colonial point of view might well mean to acknowledge the unsurmountable weight of colonial, imperialist traditions and to start a process in which Shakespeare is not rejuvenated, but gradually left behind, in order to free the present from the freezing, oppressive forces of history.

How a cultural community treats Shakespeare's playtexts, how it tries to rewrite his works, depends largely on historical and local interests that are at stake in a given context of reception. None of the following essays would doubt this insight. Instead of defending or attacking this appropriating impulse, the vast majority of the writings printed here maps out the sometimes conflicting, sometimes simply heterogeneous forces that turn this impulse into a complex negotiation of, on the one hand, received meanings and reception strategies and, on the other, present interests to intervene in both. Analyses of such negotiations allow critical insights into the contexts of reception, and understand how textual and theatrical interventions were and are meant to change not only our way of looking at Shakespeare, but of looking at ourselves, either through welcoming Shakespeare anew or saying good-bye to the Bard.

It has been our decision to maintain the wide range of attitudes towards appropriation as expressed in the contributions. This includes diversity as far as the more or less implicit socio-political goals of appropriation are concerned. Some of the articles reflect in detail on the socio-political dimensions of the specific appropriations they analyse, usually because such appropriations were originally meant to be received as political. Other articles are not explicitly concerned with establishing an analytical relationship between aesthetic structures and their respective socio-political contexts. The relations between aesthetics and ethics, between aesthetic form and political content, between the work of art as an autonomous entity and its contexts of production and reception have continuously formed controversial subject matter. As far as textual and theatrical appropriations are concerned, they can be read as either expressing a strong need for self-affirmation and identity-building directed against the norms and values of a received past, or as a transformative integration of "foreign" aesthetic elements into an apparently stale local target culture. In both cases, it is licit to assume that a choice of appropriation as intertextual relationship points at a moment of crisis, or at least at a however reluctant recognition of instability within the dominant cultural forces of the target culture. From

this point of view, we can affirm that the specific response to our call for papers not only attests to the current academic interest in Shakespeare as an unstable cultural icon, but is indicative of a notion of culture as a site of political struggle. We leave it to our readers to evaluate each article's position towards this struggle.

Given the variety of topics and appropriative interests, we have organized the eighteen articles colleced in this volume according to three semiotic contexts: page, stage, and celluloid. This division does not imply fundamentally different appropriative strategies. It would take a volume of its own to explore systematically the peculiarities in the various appropriative procedures, such as from drama to drama, drama to narrative, or drama to performance. "Appropriations on page and stage" allows as a structurally functional criterion to give the diversity of appropriations and appropriative interests a managable form.

Appropriations on the page: translations, editions and narrative revisions

As illustrated by the pieces collected here, appropriation of Shakespeare's drama on the page includes, first of all, translation issues, insofar as the translation analyses focus mainly on the necessity to allocate a positive, culturally illuminating meaning to linguistic dislocations encountered in the target languages. Through the comparison of two rival translations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Guillermo McPherson's *Hámlet, príncipe de Dinamarca* and Jaime Clark's *Hamlet*), Laura Campillo Arnaiz describes how two translational strategies (bowdlerization and maximizing) of Shakespeare's bawdy language into nineteenth-century Spain reveal underlying erotic assumptions regarding identity in the Spanish target culture. M. Gomes da Torre's essay discusses cultural appropriation as a form of fidelity to the source text. He justifies the possible necessity to root the target text–in this case his own translation of *Henry V*–firmly in the linguistic features of the target culture, i.e., Portugal, in order to recreate linguistic and cultural characteristics of the source text. And Miguel Montezanti

analyses the effect that the end of the military dictatorship in Argentina had on translational choices of Shakespeare's bawdy language. Such choices reflect a central interest in Argentinian literature after the end of the military regime, namely to produce Shakespeare's consecrated texts as a site of textual (and indirectly of cultural) liberty, and to use this liberty as a means to interrogate the immediate past from a politically committed, yet culturally accepted, point of view.

Another activity of appropriating Shakespeare's texts to the needs of a specific historical period consists in editing the playtexts. Peter Holland provides a reflection on the extent to which awareness of performance characteristics influenced Dr. Johnson's editorial remarks in his edition of Shakespeare's works. In the light of performance considerations, an analysis of Johnson's edition and of two other editions of the time, namely Edward Capell's and Bell's, reveals that a widely purported opposition in editing Shakespeare's plays, that is, between scholarship (and its supposed interest in a true version of the text) and performance interests (with its roots in historically specific acting and performing conventions) all too often collapses into hybrid commentaries, in which performance considerations lead to scholarly emendations. Appropriative impulses impose themselves in a clandestine way on the historicist search for textual truth. Striking points in Dr. Johnson's case would be his extensive comments to justify the needs of a five-act structure and his exclusion of actor-manager David Garrick from the *Preface to Shakespeare*. Both are best understood as an expression of Dr. Johnson's attempt to establish the superiority of editing Shakespeare's plays over acting them.

A rather different form of appropriation on the page is presented in the contributions by Ruth Morse and Caroline Cakebread. If the contributions to the fields of translation studies and editing draw on examples that maintain the *fabula* of the source text, Morse and Cakebread work with texts that take up selected motives of a Shakespeare play and introduce them into their own narrative, thus using the history of Shakespeare reception to highlight its own re-writing of these motives. It is basically a process of revising

Shakespearean motives. What is central to these appropriations is how the authors distance their present reality from the Shakespearean universe. Morse discusses Margaret Laurence's and Gloria Naylor's appropriations, respectively, of Shakespeare's *Tempest,* with a special interest in how these twentieth-century authors rewrite in their novels the humanist predicament that aesthetic beauty is both an allegory of harmonious human order on divine premises, and thus linked to universal friendship, as well as a result of (self-)education as domination, and thus linked to the experience of loneliness, as evinced in the reception history of Prospero's position as both political ruler and stage director on the island.

Whereas Margaret Laurence, inventing for her heroine a subject position similar to Miranda's, discusses the necessity to model a female self in post-colonial Canada on the male power to speak out, Gloria Naylor creates a Miranda figure who, in her nineties and overlooking a basically matriarchal society full of allusions to Shakespeare's island, can allow other figures to speak without losing her own voice, be it delighted or mournful. Cakebread analyses Margaret Atwood's novel *Cat's Eye* with a focus on how the author reworks the problematics of female identity through her revision of the three daughters of *King Lear*. If Lear, in his search for identity, hopes to be able to count on the support of his daughters, then Elaine, Atwood's central character, experiences from the beginning that the three female friends named after Lear's daughters have little to offer but humiliation and a sense of hapless emulation of the cultural standards of the motherland England. Relating Cakebread's essay with Morse's, we can see that Atwood's appropriation shares with the work of authors such Laurence and Naylor an interest in the ways in which motifs from Shakespeare's plays can be turned into empowering icons for emerging cultures. This goal involves in all three cases a re-definition of these motifs that wrests them out of the hands of the English tradition of Shakespeare and aligns them with local interests.

A reading of isolated motifs in order to align them and Shakespeare with local interests is a procedure also followed by Yoshio Arai, albeit without political objectives. In his essay on the relation between Zen

Philosophy and the absence of a fixed moral frame in Shakespeare's plays, Arai involves the reader in various readings of singular scenes whose overall thrust expresses Shakespeare's submission to the archetypal forces of life and death. At the heart of Shakespeare's characters, Arai finds a complete acceptance of their course of life that encompasses their personal delusions and imaginative wanderings as well as their objective suffering under forces beyond their control. It is this mystic submissive potential that allows for Shakespeare's success and veneration within traditional Japanese culture, so heavily indebted to the Zen attitude of "non-action" as a moment of true spiritual realisation in human form.

Based on thematic analogies that center on the vengeance motif, and on the themes of madness and pretence, Carla Dente's essay analyses similarities and differences between Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Pirandello's *Enrico IV*. Dente expounds on how Pirandello takes these motifs to construct his historic figure—the medieval Roman emperor of German origin Henry IV—as a modern character that has to face a world whose structural qualities make it increasingly impossible for him to distinguish between private fantasy and intersubjective knowledge, between life and art.

Appropriations on and through the stage

How does Shakespeare's drama on stage fit into contexts that are geographically, politically and temporally distant from the source text and its culture? Or asked more poignantly: how is the dramatic text reformulated, both textually and visually, in order to fit (more or less critically) its new context? Such questions can be said to suggest the main interest of the articles presented under this headline.

Michael Mangan's essay discusses the possibility and adequacy of subverting audiences' traditional moral view on Shakespearean comedy by confronting them with the notion of Shakespearean theatricality as a fetishistic scenario. In his case study of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the tension between the historicity of the playtext and

contemporary performance approaches could result in heightened and critical awareness of the audience as to its own socio-historical specifity, the contingency of its own moral attitudes. Mangan argues that even if a fetishistic interpretation of the relation between Petruchio and Kate as based on consensual sado-masochist practices does miss the specific textual and historical context of the play in Elizabethan books of conduct, it manages to make a relevant and provocative use of the playtext for contemporary audiences. The provocation concerns not only the cultural mores of such audiences, but also the apparent adequacy of such a reading to the genre conventions of comedy. The fetishistic scenario then proves that contemporizing strategies can confuse the sterile opposition between historicism or presentism as two mutually exclusive interpretative strategies.

Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, taking two productions of *Twelfth Night* (1957 and 1998) as cases in point, shows how Shakespeare's drama helped directors to familiarize the Portuguese public with European avantgarde theatre practices. The author analyses how two directors, Francisco Ribeiro in 1957 and Ricardo Pais in 1998, situate their work as mediations between inherited and contemporary concepts of what it means to be a director, of *mise en scène*, of stage meanings and their relations to the playtext. Shakespeare as an acknowledged cultural icon helps to rejuvenate the local theatrical culture–a process in which rejuvenation is presented as catching up with what is considered the most contemporary theatrical practices in the heart of Europe; in other words,"updating" Portuguese theatrical practices reveals a socio-political side effect of integrating a marginalised Portugal closer into a Pan-European theatrical practice.

Keith Gregor is also interested in intercultural negotiations of theatrical cultural capital. He starts by assessing the difficulties Spanish drama of the Golden Age faces when entering the British theatrical system, a system in which Shakespearean drama and dramaturgy still constitute the main horizon of expectation. Similarily, when Shakespeare's drama gets transferred to Spain, it has to overcome national standards modelled on the examples of the drama of the Golden

Age. However, whereas, for political reasons, Shakespeare's drama gained widely in reputation and esteem in post-Franco Spain, the same cannot be said of Spanish classical drama in contemporary Britain, despite some attempts by well-known companies, such as the RSC, to establish Spanish classical drama on the British stage. In this cross-cultural transaction, Shakespeare's drama imposes value as cultural capital, whereas Spanish classical drama seems increasingly relegated to a peculiar but marginal form of theatre on both British and Spanish stages. In the course of this negotiation, the established canon remains not only intact, but increases its influence.

Alexander Huang analyses the relationship that Chinese productions of Shakespeare establish towards Shakespeare as a main example of the Western canon. He detects an interest in some contemporary Chinese companies to acknowledge the universal value of Shakespeare's work, because they want to see their own work authenticated by the approval of Western critics. Huang shows that the belief in the universality of Shakespeare's values as well as their symbolic exemplarity of an excelling culture are a historical heritage that contemporary productions inherit form earlier ones, such as continental Chinese appropriations of *Hamlet* during World War II. In both cases, so distant in time, Shakespeare's cultural value is again and again conjured up by Chinese theatre practitioners to defend the cultural quality of their Chinese culture, both technically and spiritually. Huang examines how this impulse meets the financial interests of contemporary European venues to maintain Shakespeare as a financially profitable cultural icon.

Sonja Fielitz's article is interested in the extent to which nationally specific gender constructions influence stage versions of specific characters. She analyses how the national specifities in the cultural change from the one-sex to the two-sex gender model that took place from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth-century in England and Germany affected nationally marked stage representations of Lady Macbeth. Her article points out how, on the British stage, representations of Lady Macbeth changed from a devilish virago through a tender, yet

ambitious would-be queen to a flattering and coaxing domestic house-wife, thus accompanying dynamics in the gender system of that time. Drawing on various German translations and adaptions of the Scottish play, Fielitz shows that the representation of Lady Macbeth on the German-speaking stage follow an overall similar pattern. Whereas pre-romantic approaches focused on the Lady as a supernatural witch, German Romanticism framed her image with the newly found value of family life.

Manfred Draudt deals with another apparently pan-European pattern in appropriating Shakespearean characters and plots for local audiences, this time with a focus on the nineteenth-century: the travesty or burlesque. He describes some textual strategies that all burlesques have in common, namely strategies of localization and both moral and social debasement of the characters. Draudt attributes these similar principles of burlesque adaptation to the existence of a similar target public for these plays throughout Europe: middle-class audiences mixed with less educated lower classes. Ultimately, he compares twentieth-century adaptational strategies of Shakespeare's plays, especially those in the wake of what Wilhelm Hortmann has referred to as the director's iconoclastic approach to Shakespeare, against the principles of the nineteenth-century burlesque. For Draudt, if there is any difference detectable at all given the wide range of material, it can be found in a sceptic attitude towards trivializing structural complexity and foregrounding locality.

Appropriations of Shakespeare's plays and plots that have a foot in the burlesque but maintain a political edge originated very often in Eastern Socialist Europe–a time and space prolific for a dramaturgy that came to be known as absurd theatre. Two articles analyse the mixture of absurdity (both real and theatrical), entertainment, and political struggle through appropriations of Shakespeare's theatre.

Alexander Shurbanov is interested in how and to what end Shakespearean playtexts were used within Communist society in Bulgaria. The appropriation of Shakespeare's drama in late twentieth-century Bulgaria can look back to a tradition of adaptations and

appropriations since the nineteenth century. Shurbanov shows how Shakespeare's drama was subjected to basically two, albeit dialectic, interests: firstly, it provided fictional material for nationalistic appropriations with a clear local intervention in terms of transforming and rewriting genre (tragedy into tragic-comedy), and secondly, Shakespearean motifs as cultural capital helped to integrate Bulgarian literature into contemporary Western European contexts and standards. Under Communist rule, Shakespeare's drama was put to use both as an allegory of a successfully overcome feudal and bourgeois past and, in contrast with this pro-socialist attitude, as an example of the individual's right to satisfaction beyond the confines of socialist society, as Shurbanov makes clear in his analysis of three appropriations of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Anna Stegh Camati, in her analysis of Tom Stoppard's appropriation of the plot of *Macbeth*, provides us with a case study in the interconnectedness of features in the source text and the specific historical context that informs the appropriation. Briefly exploring Shakespeare's own appropriation of Holinshed's chronicles to create an ambiguous playtext, Camati provides textual ground to contrast Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with Pavel Kohout's Czech adaption of *Macbeth* in 1977 with his living-room theatre, whose repression during the Communist regime inspired Stoppard's playtext from 1979. In her description of how in all three versions an ambiguous political palimpsest is brought on stage, albeit through changing meta-theatrical allusions, Camati historicizes subversive political strategies in theatrical performance, especially through a growing (con)fusion of lived social reality and theatrical performance in the theatrical event itself.

Margarida Rauen discusses aspects of the process of theatrical appropriation not from the point of view of a literary critic, but of a professor of dramaturgy in a university program in Brazil. Her article addresses specifically the needs and difficulties of Brazilian drama students and high-school teachers whose proficiency in English cannot be taken for granted. For that reason, the piece appears in its original Portuguese version in this volume. The author's focus shares with other

contributions herein an emphasis on the empowering capacities of appropriations on local readers and spectators. She not only points out technical, emotional and didactic problems encountered in the classroom, but also presents a detailed description of an appropriation of Shakespeare's Ophelia which she realized in collaboration with students and other artists. If literary appropriation leads, among other issues, to a questioning of authorship in the formal structure of narrative, Rauen's example underlines how a process of theatrical appropriation questions the author and the director as ultimate anchors of theatrical meaning on the stage.

Appropriations on celluloid

Alfredo Modenessi is the only author included here who looks at filmic appropriation of Shakespearean motifs. He analyses an extreme case of de-historicizing and de-contextualizing Shakespeare's playtexts, namely the plundering attitude which the Disney studio adopted in its promotional campaign of *The Lion King* and other animated movies. What is more, his analysis shows that the depiction of the evil figures in *The Lion King* bears a striking resemblance to the aesthetic language used to describe Nazi Germans in Disney's war animation *Education for Death,* as well as other historical figures such as Khomeini. Against the affirmation that the movie promotes universal and humanist values, Modenessi's analysis reveals the movie's discourse on race and power as in line with an American cultural project, in which "us" includes not only merely noble individuals, but characterizes them as being not coloured, not Asian, not Arabian, not culturally underground, in short: being mainstream Americans. This ideological discourse shows how the purported influence of *Hamlet* and other Shakespeare plays can be seen as a strategic attempt by the Disney studios to hide and manipulate the ideological message of the movie and to benefit from Shakespeare's supposed universalism.

Modenessi's essay is certainly the one that urgently highlights the need to establish an ethic and political critique of appropriation that

does not simply attack its structure as a form of "abusive fidelity" (on a discussion of Philip Lewis's term within translation studies, see Venuti 23-24), but that concentrates on values according to which this "abuse" is being carried out and ultimately justified. Almost all appropriations presented and analysed in this volume show how impossible and stale it has become to transpose on stage, page and celluloid what was formerly understood as "the meaning of Shakespeare's words". Today, Hamlet's promise to his ghostly father—that "[…] thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain,/ Unmix'd with baser matter" (1.5.102-4)—has turned out to be an increasingly impossible solution to Shakespeare's artistic heirs at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The overall thrust of these essays on Shakespeare's drama in appropriation surmise that it is the growing importance of such formerly baser (local, individual, political) matter in contemporary approaches to Shakespeare's drama that allows his heirs to survive and thrive on the death of the author figure.

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