

“Putting a girdle round the earth”

The Dissemination of Global Criticism of Shakespearean Adaptations

Keynote Speech

The International Translation and Circulation Of Shakespeare Criticism

Leuven, Belgium, 26-27 June 2023

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KU LEUVEN



Abstract of Alexa Alice Joubin's Keynote

The circulation of diverse forms of Shakespearean criticism may not be immediately obvious due to the diffuse nature of disseminating ideas on varied but connected cultural terrains. There are no singular, unitary centers and peripheries in the international circulation of Shakespeare criticism. Therefore, encountering intercultural Shakespeare criticism is an experience similar to listening to interweaving parts in a fugue, a contrapuntal musical piece that introduces a melody through one instrument and then develops that same melody through other instruments successively.

Global circulation of Shakespeare criticism is both an exercise in ethics and in cultural agency. We need to go beyond questions of mutual influence among only scholarly critics to consider how new audiences and new forms of criticism are shaping the Shakespeare industry.

This illustrated presentation considers such questions as:

- What are the ethics of cross-cultural criticism?
- How do we handle uneven valuation of Shakespeare?
- How might criticism become a practice of cultural reparation?

Conference Description

As one of the oldest and most widely practised forms of reflection on vernacular literatures, Shakespeare criticism has helped shape modern literary scholarship worldwide. The mutual influence between Shakespeare critics of different nations is well known and has in some cases been extensively studied and debated (see e.g. the controversy that has long surrounded Coleridge's debt to Schlegel).

Going beyond questions of influence, this conference aims to refocus the debate on the actual channels of transmission through which Shakespeare criticism has been circulated and received across linguistic and national boundaries, and on the various new audiences that it reached through that circulation.

<https://shakespearecriticism.wordpress.com/>



Criticism: “disinterested endeavor to learn the best that is known and thought of in the world.”

--Mathew Arnold



“Horizon of Expectation”:
conventions that govern how critics
decode texts

--Hans Robert Jauss

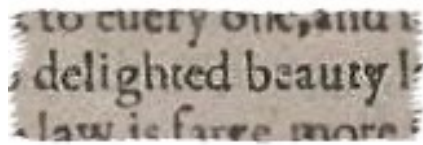
What Is Shakespeare Criticism?



Shakespearean Criticism

- Translations of plays and sonnets
- Adaptations
- Long-form scholarly writing
- Short-form journalism
- Practice-based research
- Paratextual materials, critical footnotes
- Bowdlerization
- Prefaces
- Reviews
- Video commentary
- Life writing

<https://sites.google.com/site/delightedbeautyws>



to every one, and is
delighted beauty
law is farre more

Version Variation Visualisation

Multilingual crowd-sourcing of Shakespeare's Othello

2011-2020

An anthology of translations of two tricky lines from *Othello*

**If virtue no delighted beauty lack,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.**

The last words spoken by the Duke of Venice in Act 1, scene 3

<https://sites.google.com/site/delightedbeautyws>

Albanian

Arabic

Bulgarian

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Chinese: Mandarin

Danish

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Finnish

French

Frisian

French

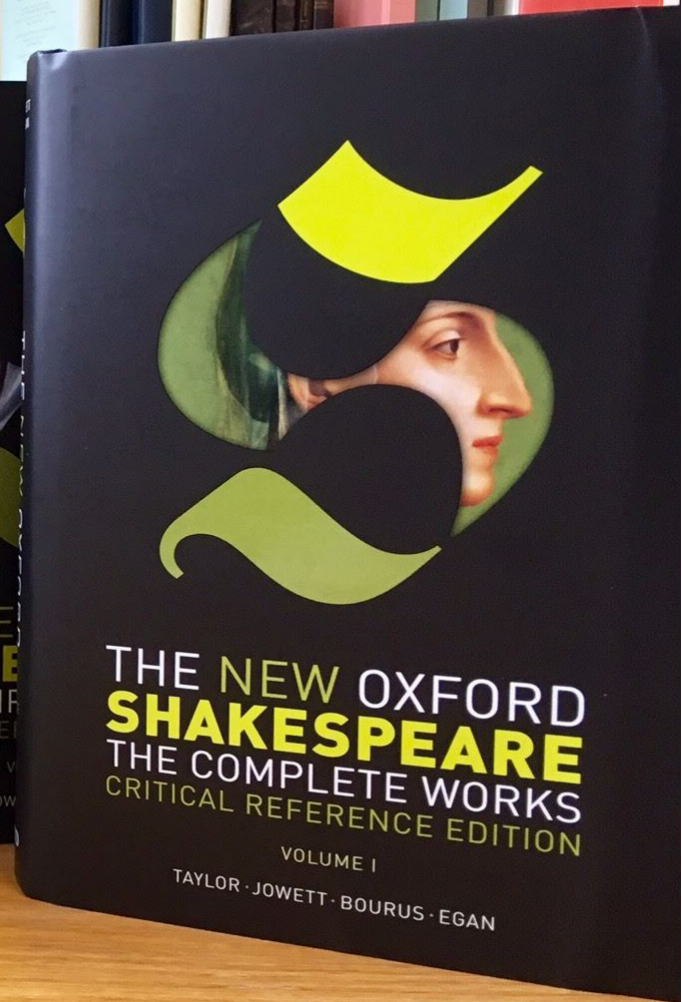
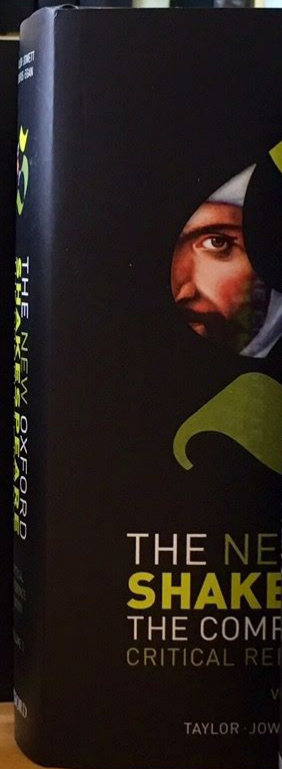
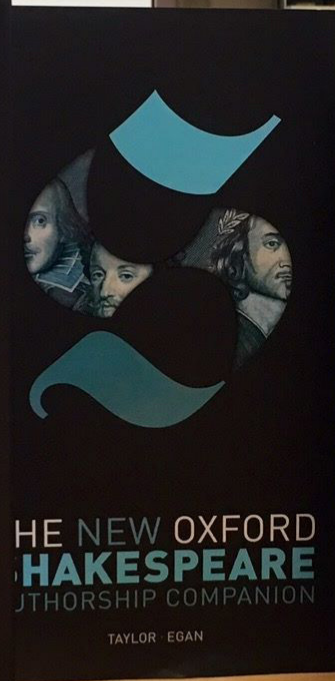
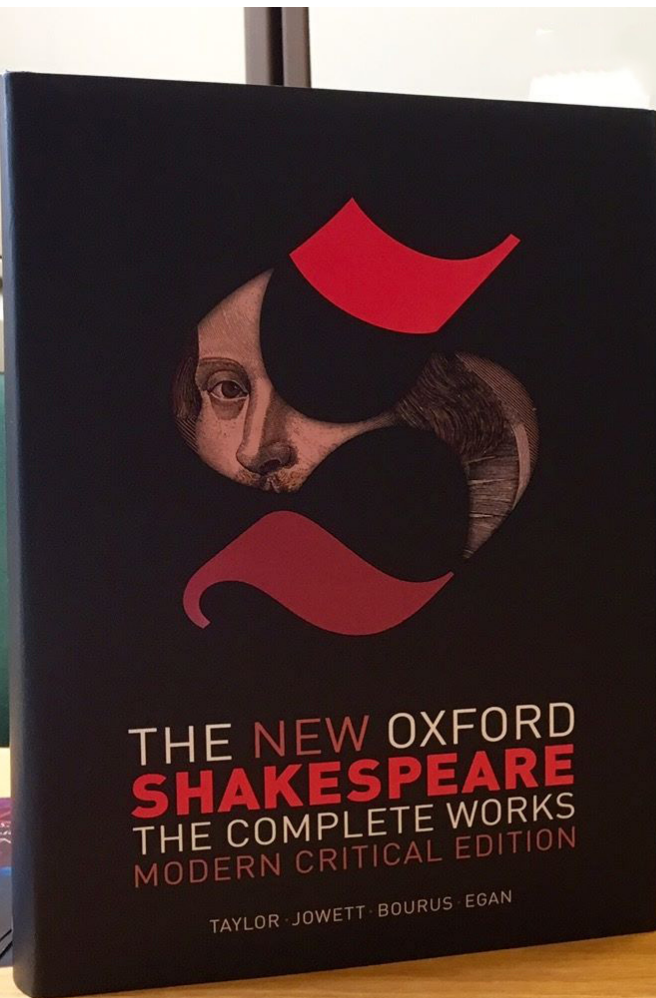
translation edition of 1882, p.60)

jamais sans un charme de beauté,

beau qu'il n'est noir.

er without a charm of beauty,

e beautiful than he is black.



King Lear

King Lear stands like a colossus at the centre of Shakespeare's achievement as the grandest effort of his imagination.

R. A. Foakes, 1997

Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute,
Betwixt Damnation and impassion'd clay
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
The bitter-sweet of this Shakesperean fruit.

John Keats, 1818 ('On Sitting Down to Read
King Lear Once Again')

Critics always introduce their thoughts on *King Lear* by confessing themselves dismayed, confused, appalled, out-matched—and wanting more.

Lori Anne Ferrell, 2011

I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.

Samuel Johnson, 1765

and Goneril are the only pictures of the unnatural in Shakespeare—the pure unnatural; and you will observe that Shakespeare has left their hideousness unsoftened or diversified by a single line of goodness or common human frailty.

S. T. Coleridge, 1811

In *King Lear* there is a dualism continually crying in vain to be resolved either by tragedy or comedy.

G. Wilson Knight, 1930

The fact that the work is a tragedy is, in my view, the most unimportant thing about *King Lear*. . . . Shakespeare gives no importance to verisimilitude/plausibility of type, he gives no importance to why Lear now says one thing and then another, or why his speech erupts into coarse jokes. For Shakespeare, *King Lear* is both an actor and a fool. . . . *King Lear* must be played as a punster and eccentric.

Victor Shklovsky, 1928

Peter Brook believed that place was more important

New Variorum Shakespeare



<https://newvariorumshakespeare.org>



NVS Digital Editions contain the complete text of each play along with a full collation of textual notes from the earliest editions to the present, including extensive previous commentary.

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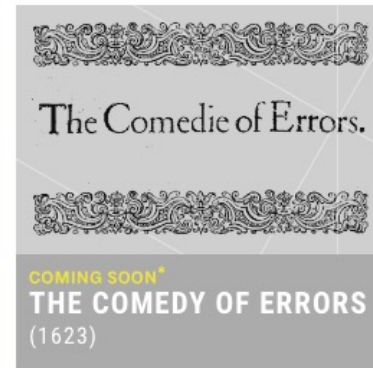
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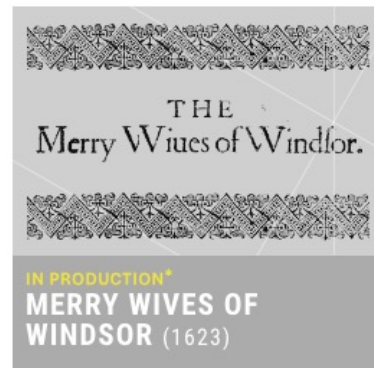
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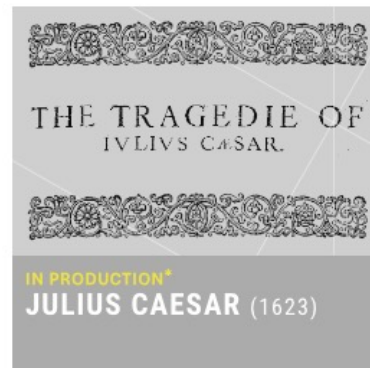
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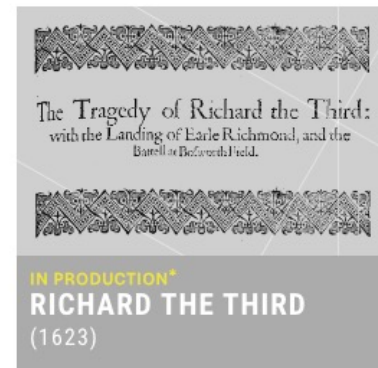
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Scope of the *NVS* since 1871

“Everything of significance known about the plays and poems,” including

- sources and influences
- textual evolution
- critical heritage
- stage history



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Linking original works to scholarship

**King Lear**

Author: William Shakespeare

Jump to... ▼

King Lear

ACT 1. SC. 1

LEAR

To thee and thine hereditary ever
 Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
 No less in space, validity, and pleasure
 Than that conferred on Goneril.—Now, our joy,
 Although our last and least, to whose young love
 [The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
 Strive to be interested,] what can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters'? Speak.

CORDELIA Nothing, my lord.

[LEAR Nothing?

CORDELIA Nothing.]

LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
 My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
 According to my bond, no more nor less.

8

6

3

6

6

8

26

30

30

3

65

26

49

40

Click to see articles & chapters
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King Lear

Author: William Shakespeare

<https://www.jstor.org/understand>

LEAR

To thee and thine
Remain this amp
No less in space,
Than that confer
Although our las
[The vines of Fr
Strive to be inter
A third more opu
CORDELIA Nothing
[LEAR Nothing?

CORDELIA Nothing
LEAR

Nothing will con
CORDELIA

Unhappy that I a
My heart into my
According to my

LEAR
How, how, Corde
Lest you may ma
CORDELIA

You have begot r
I return those dut
Obey you, love y
Why have my sis
They love you al
That lord whose
carry
Half my love wit
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,

30 articles quoting the selected passage

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King Lear and the Two Abysses

On King Lear, 1981, 16 pages

Late Middle Ages | Romantic literature | Dowries | Philosophy of religion | Utilitarianism

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... proportion; it is a confidence ironically reflected in that strange exchange with Edmund, when Edmund pre\u00ad tends to hide an ostensibly incriminating note from Edgar. The note, says Edmund, is \" **Nothing, my lord.**\" Yet Gloucester demands to see this Active nothing: \"The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles\" (1.2.31-35). By act...



The Discovery of Nature: Politics and Philosophy in King Lear

Of Philosophers and Kings, 2001, 79 pages

British history | Dowries | Late Middle Ages | Victorians | Utilitarianism

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... Cordelia, who throughout her older sisters' professions of love has been privately expressing anxiety at the prospect of having to put into words her feelings for her father, now replies, \" **Nothing, my lord.**\" Lear is clearly taken aback, and repeatedly invites her to try to do better lest she mar her fortunes. This only succeeds in eliciting from her a precise avowal that she loves him as she is...



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Key Questions

- **Raison d'être:** Why track global circulation of Shakespeare criticism?
- **Genre:** What type of writing counts as criticism?
- **Gatekeeping:** What is worthy of inclusion (a celebrity's tweet or a politicians' comment)?
- **Inclusiveness:** How do we expand the NVS's coverage in terms of form and scope?

Raison d'être of Shakespeare criticism



Philippe Torreton as Henry V à Avignon en 1999





Ibrahim al-Mazini

(1889-1949)

Regarded Shylock
emphatically despite
the fact that usury is
forbidden by Islamic law

Sulayman Al-Bassam's *Al-Hamlet Summit* (Arabic version), Zaoum Company, Tokyo, 2004



<https://newvariorumshakespeare.org/edition/mnd/>

TEXTUAL VARIANTS BY YEAR					PLAY TEXT		THIS PLAY	GO TO LINE #	COMMENTARY NOTES BY LINE		
1600	1700	1800	1900	2000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIGHLIGHT COMMENTARY REFERENCES	<input type="checkbox"/> FILTER LINES		TLN	NAV	ACT	SCN
								2204		DP	
								2205			
								2206		1.1	
								2207			
								2208		1.2	
								2209			
								2210		2.1	
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								2221		5.1	
								2222			
										TR	

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And the owner of it blest.	2204	DP	n. 2207–22: If . . . amends
Trippe away: make no stay:	2205		Gentleman (ed. 1774, p. 202): “ <i>Puck</i> ’s address to the Audience is a politic and plausible bait for applause; it contains too a modest sensible apology for the visionary circumstances which are frequently met with in this Dramatic Dream.” Hunter (1845, 1:298): “This simple epilogue forms a graceful close to this beautiful drama; . . . What the poet had put into the mouth of one of the characters in respect of the poor attempts of the Athenian clowns [TLN 2015–16], he now by the repetition of the word ‘shadows,’ in effect says for himself and his companions.” Fender (1968, p. 58): “But <i>Puck</i> ’s use of ‘shadows’ [is] an ironic reflection of Theseus’s. . . . Our attention is drawn not to the similarity, but to a potential difference, between our response and Theseus’s.” Cf. Holland (ed. 1994). Cecil (1957, p. 41): “ <i>Puck</i> remains to utter a final apostrophe to the audience on behalf of the play of which he, not rational Theseus, is the significant and
Meete me all, by breake of day. <i>Exeunt.</i>	2206		1.1
<i>Robin.</i> If we shadowes haue offended,	2207		1.2
Thinke but this (and all is mended)	2208		2.1
That you haue but slumbred here,	2209		2.2
While these visions did appeare.	2210		3.1
And this weake and idle theame,	2211		
No more yielding but a dreame,	2212		
Gentles, doe not reprehend.	2213		

<https://www.worldshakesbib.org>

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What's Unique about Shakespeare Criticism?



Shakespeare Criticism

- Global afterlife beyond textual criticism
- Boomerang circuitous routes of transmission

Shakespeare Criticism

- Global afterlife beyond textual criticism
- Adaptation, translation, and rewriting circulating as a form of criticism

Vol. I.

To face the title.



Prospero and Miranda.

TALES
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1807.



LIANG Shiqiu (1903-1987)


Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you
have frown'd,

Mindless of its just honours; with
this key

Shakespeare unlock'd his heart;
the melody

Of this small lute gave ease to
Petrarch's wound.

--William Wordsworth

A nighttime street scene in Beijing, China, showing a group of people, likely protesters, wearing face masks and holding papers. The scene is dimly lit with streetlights in the background. The text "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" is overlaid on the image.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Chinese protestor reciting Liang's translation of Sonnet 18 in Beijing, November 2022: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate ..."

Shakespeare Criticism

- Boomerang circuitous routes of transmission
- Global differentials in criticism



I'll put a girdle round
about the earth in
forty minutes ...

-- Puck

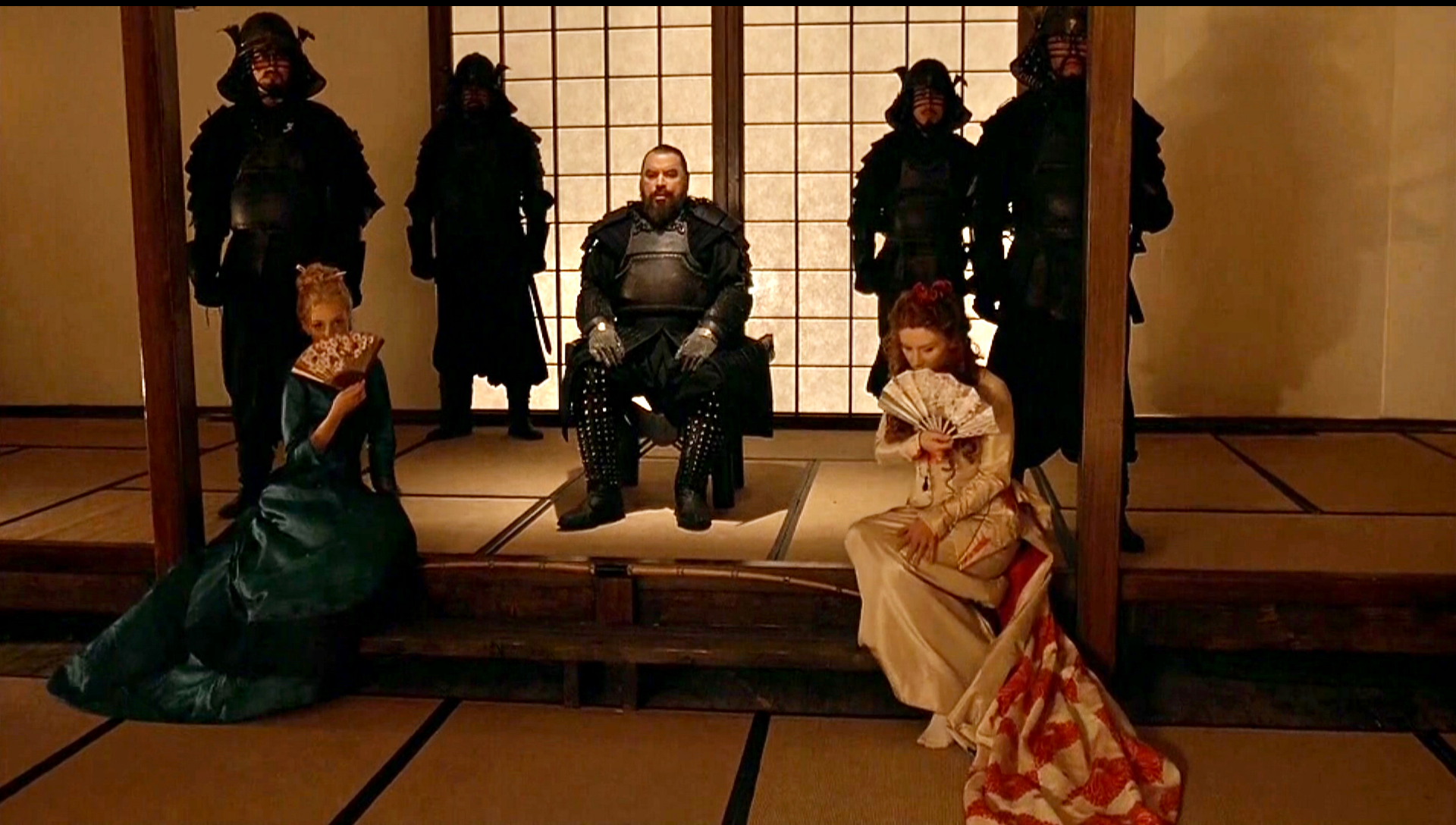
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Elizabeth McKie
A Shakespearean Atlas, 1934

Folger Library

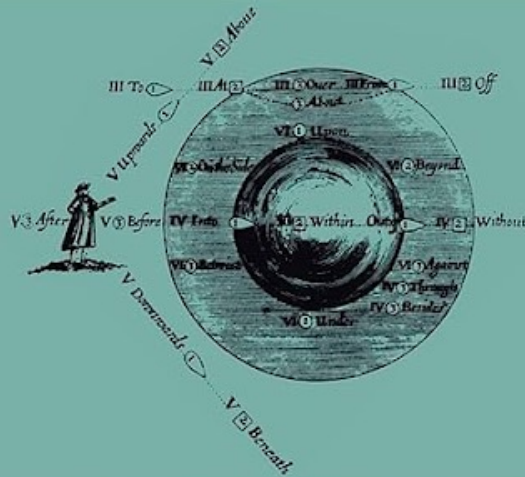


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UMBERTO ECO

aberrant decoding



THE LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION

New Questions

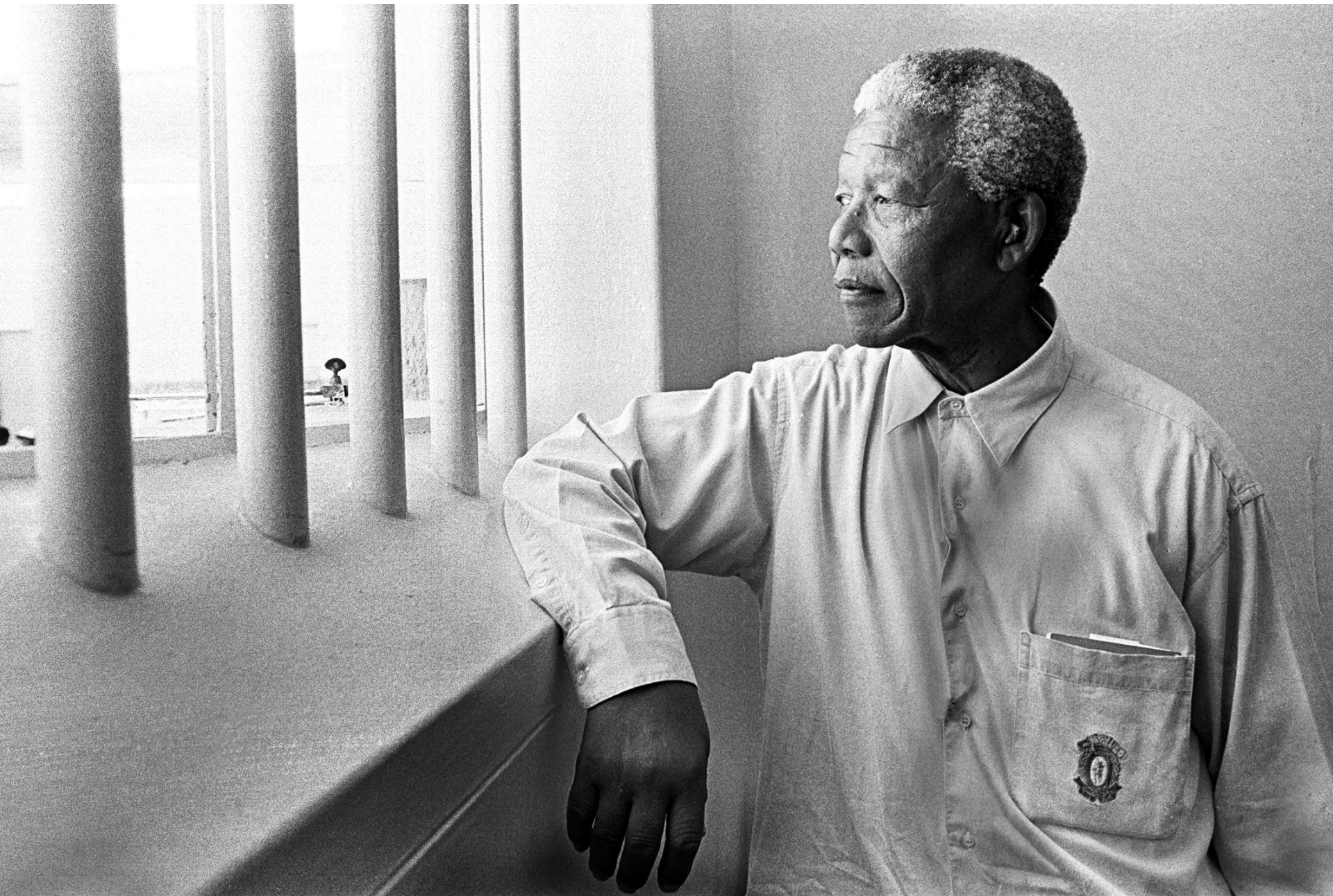


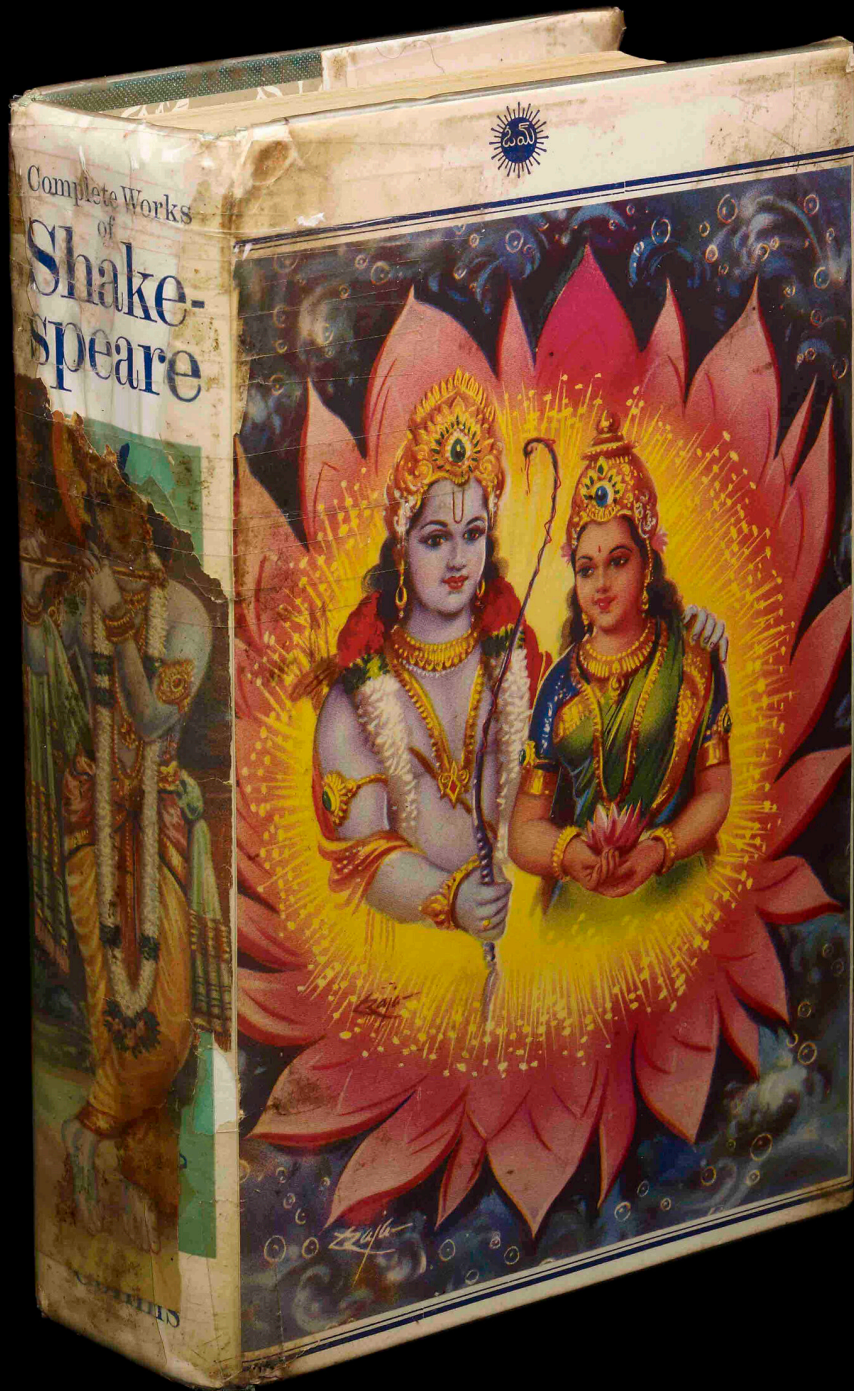
New Questions on the Circulation of Criticism

- Ethics – cross-cultural criticism
- Uneven valuation
- Cultural reparation

New Solutions

- Ethical relations between knowledge structures
- *How* one sees dictates *what* one sees
- Tackle epistemic exclusion of select critical perspectives





Cowards die many times before
their deaths;

The valiant never taste of death
but once.

Of all the wonders that I yet
have heard.

It seems to me most strange
that men should fear;

Seeing that death, a necessary
end,

Will come when it will come.

Julius Caesar 2.2.32-37



Theory of Polyphony



Theory of Polyphony

- Mikhail Bakhtin
- Differing and sometimes contradictory voices
- Produces uncanny echoes in global criticism
- Reveals readers' horizon of expectation (Jauss)

로미오와 줄리엣

ROMEO AND JULIET

번안·연출
오태석

BY William
Shakespeare



원작
윌리엄 셰익스피어

의상 예술부
조명 이영철
전무 김민지

출연
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최초일 상

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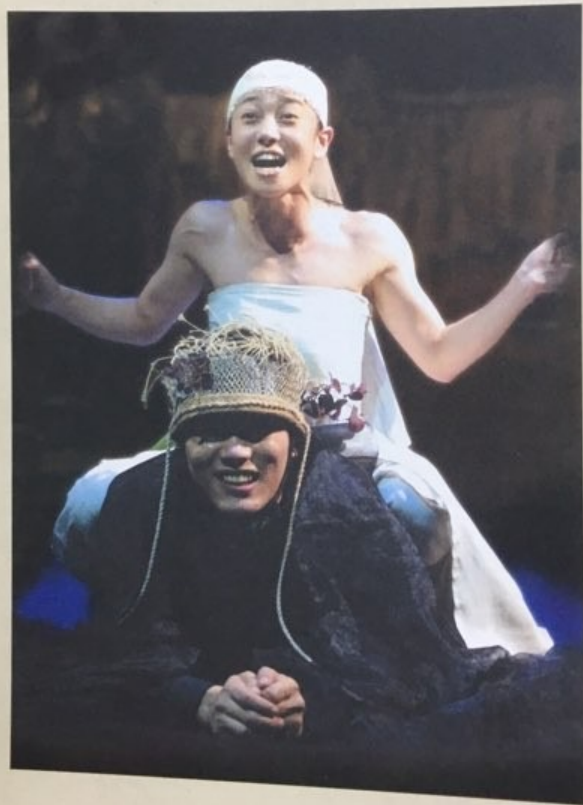






극단 木花의

로미오와 줄리엣



2002. 3. 29 ▶ 4.14

예술의전당 토월극장

Korean Critics

- Praised Oh's *Romeo and Juliet* for conquering "the Shakespeare kingdom," where it faced "the descendants of a Shakespearean audience."
- "A historical event in Korean theatre . . . and the zenith of the Shakespearean boom."

Hyon-u Lee

- “Meditative and transparent stage that evoked a limpid white porcelain bowl”
- Aesthetics of self-restraint (stillness over dramatic explosions of emotions)
- Expression of hostility without words

British Critics

- Sam Marlowe: “Comedy obliterated any sense of tragic power. Everything is lost in translation”
- Luke Jennings appreciated the “genuine tragedy that contrasted starkly with the comedic moments”
- Eve-Marie Oesterlen called it “comically grotesque”

British Critics

- Some critics unsure if Oh's production was a "convergence or collision of cultural traditions"
- Will Sharpe: the adaptation "reflects current political realities" in "Korea . . . a country at war with itself"
- Jason Best: "the bitter divisions between North and South Korea" informs the feuding clans

Contrasts

- Germany: visual aesthetics
- UK: comparison with other non-English productions
- South Korea: national pride (rather than the production itself)

Conclusion

Pedagogical Implications



Jean-Luc Nancy

- Community = space of “being-together”
- “Being-in-common” but not in universal sameness
- International circulation of Shakespearean criticism is a form of “being-in-common, the standing-in-relations between two texts”