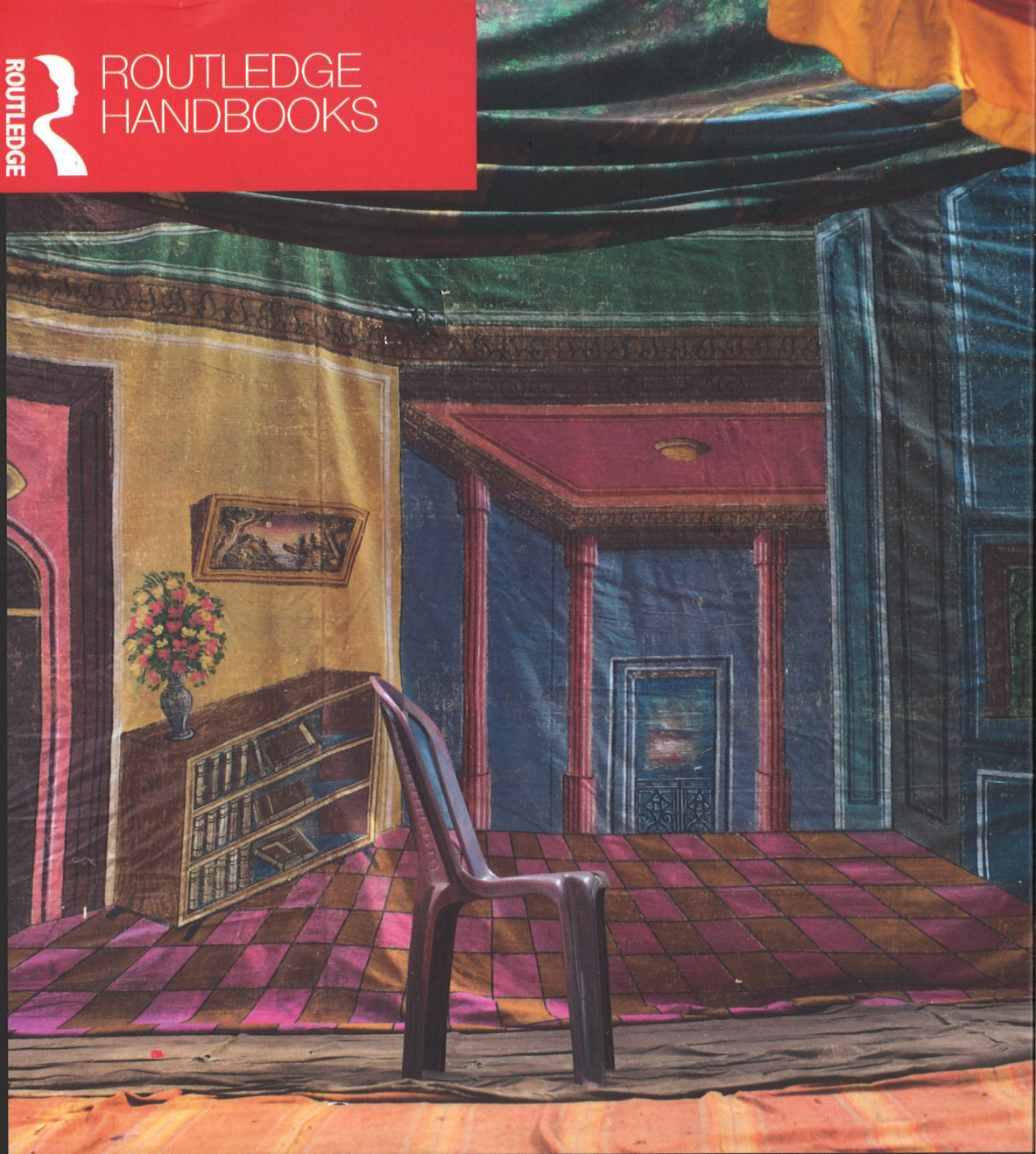




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OTHERS WITHIN

Ethics in the age of Global Shakespeare

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Shakespeare is a proper noun naming a collection of privileged signifiers, but to perform and study Shakespeare is to engage with the notion of “others within.” Historically, Shakespeare’s name and works have been integrated as the “other” within many significant world cinematic and theatrical traditions. Shakespeare has become something that is both part of a local performance tradition and at the same time a usefully alien presence to inspire new works, as evidenced by James Ivory’s 1965 film *Shakespeare Wallah*, which follows a traveling troupe of English actors performing Shakespeare in India. Shakespeare is both an icon that is familiar enough in local contexts for dramaturgical purposes and a stubbornly foreign presence that can be called upon for political agendas. Another example is Shakespeare in Germany. As Andreas Höfele’s latest book shows, there has been a strong identification of the German “national character” with Hamlet since the 1840s (2016: ix). Yet the vitality of this recurring motif depends crucially on the fact that Shakespeare remains a non-German voice, an other within. The “split between the official German and its discontents” constantly points to Hamlet as a foreign ghost that stalks and aids the battlements of the formation of German identity (Höfele 2016: 2).

In Anglophone cultures, Shakespeare has also been colored by other accents in terms of increasingly hybrid performance styles, multilingual and multinational casts, and international networks of funding and marketing partners at festivals. In recent years, many English-speaking film studios, theatre companies and festivals have amplified and taken advantage of the theme of Shakespeare as an “other within,” something that is both familiar and exotic – and by implication worth seeing again.

Examples abound. Set in London but frequently commenting on Indian diasporic communities in Britain, Sangeeta Datta’s 2009 film *Life Goes On* retells the tragedy of *King Lear* within a British-Asian culturescape by drawing on Bollywood conventions. The ambitious Globe to Globe festival in 2012 saw thirty-seven plays performed in thirty-seven languages by international companies to mark the occasion of the London Olympics (Bird 2013). The events provide not only festive cosmopolitanism but also what seems to be a moral high ground amid anxieties about globalization. Stories told by visiting companies helped to sell performances of war zones to audiences in a carnival zone. As an iconic playhouse that bills itself as a reconstructed early modern space, the architecture and symbolic significance of the London Globe – host of the festival – play a key role in framing the performance events. Theatre buildings have become a part of the mediation and meaning-making process (McAuley 1999), and in my theory, the

playhouse provides quotation marks – signaling linkage and distance – around both the stage utterance and embodiment. In 2014, the Royal Shakespeare Company announced a £1.5m government-backed initiative to commission a new Mandarin translation of the *Complete Works*. Along a similar axis, in 2015, Oregon Shakespeare Festival commissioned projects to translate the plays into modern English, an initiative that has sparked much debate.

There are plenty of examples of political uses of Shakespeare as a convenient other within. In October 2015, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Britain, he quoted *The Tempest*, "what's past is prologue" (FTLN 0973), to British Prime Minister David Cameron, and urged the two countries to "join hands and move forward" despite the antagonistic history between them including the Opium Wars, glossing over criticism of Chinese human rights issues. Significantly, Xi received a collection of Shakespeare's sonnets from Queen Elizabeth II as a gift during the state banquet, perhaps as a hint that art could transcend the different values each government holds.¹

In 2016, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival produced Desdemona Chiang's *Winter's Tale* with an Asian American cast, an adaptation that set the romance in pre-modern China and America's Old West, combining both Asian and Asian American perspectives. Meanwhile, from 2014–2016, the London Globe toured Dominic Dromgoole's production of *Hamlet* through some 200 countries and territories (Dromgoole 2017). Writing for the *Economist*, journalist Jasper Rees observes with enthusiasm that Global Shakespeare shows us that while "cultures may find reasons to be at one another's throats, there is something primordial that binds all of us: the human need to stand up and tell stories of love and death." When Dromgoole's twelve-actor *Hamlet* toured through Africa, Annastacia, a 16-year old girl, traveled 60 kilometers to Kasane, Botswana, with her school group to see the show. The message she took was this: "In our culture when somebody marries his brother's wife this is dangerous because children end up doing mistakes in life" (Rees 2015). Both the journalist and the audience saw ethical messages in Global Shakespeare performances.

In 2018, the independent film company Shanty Productions debuted their film, *Twelfth Night*, with a multiethnic cast (Smethurst 2018). Sheila Atim's black Viola is one of several refugees washed ashore on a pebbled beach in the film. Film director Adam Smethurst drew on the idea of using Shakespeare as an other within during an interview: "With the widespread rise of anti-immigrant populism and governments actively encouraging a hostile environment for refugees, telling the story of the outsider surviving in an alien world on her wit, charm and ingenuity became and remains compellingly urgent" ("Olivier Award winner" 2018).

There are high moral expectations for high art. Everywhere we look, there are signs that Shakespeare is taken as a spokesperson for the human in many parts of the world. Global Shakespeare seems to be the answer to competing demands from both conservative and neoliberal societies – namely, the demands that we become more transnational in outlook while simultaneously sustaining traditional canons. Recent journalistic discourses reflect these two intertwined threads (Dickson 2015). For both conservatives and innovators, the genre of Global Shakespeare is politically expedient in a neoliberal economy.

But what does it mean to *do* Shakespeare while black? What does it mean for a white director to borrow from African traditions and Asian theatrical styles (Orkin and Joubin 2019)? What does it entail for the media to judge productions by minority directors and actors who may look exotic but are in fact part of the local theatre scene? How much should artists be expected to participate in and be judged by cultural conflict in the neoliberal economic era? The answers to these questions change according to the cultural contexts. British directors working in London face different challenges from non-Anglophone directors touring their works to New York. Renowned for his multilingual and transnational *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a production that

showcased the rich diversity of India (commissioned by the British Council, 2006–2008; tours to India, the U.K., Australia, North America) and a former artistic director of the Young Vic (1993–2000), Tim Supple is currently director of Dash Arts. As a white British director, Supple occupies a position of power when borrowing from Indian performance traditions, which means the intercultural exchange is not innocent or always on equal footing regardless of the artist's intentions. What is the role of colonial dialogue here? Should it take over the intercultural conversation? Supple sees as his mission to share concrete understanding of other cultures with his audiences in order to combat the tendency to “see the elsewhere as a generality.” As for producing plays with a multinational, multilingual cast, he believes it is “not just about us, but rather about the actors whom we are working with. About their stories. Their lives” (Supple 2015).

Performances that frame Shakespeare as the other within raise an important question about the role of language in performances of classics. Language is often granted more significance than the materiality of performance, leading to the tendency to privilege certain modernized and editorialized versions of Shakespearean scripts in English and their accurate reproduction in both English and foreign-language performances. There is an ideological investment in completeness and fidelity to Shakespeare's text, as if it is an ethical burden of Shakespeare's modern collaborators. Smethurst's 165-minute film *Twelfth Night*, for example, insists on reproducing Shakespeare's full script. The textual fidelity might be an attempt to quell the filmmaker's or his audiences' anxiety about the production value of Shakespeare in modern dress. The slow pace of the film, however, took away the momentum and vitality of the cinematic narrative itself. Kenneth Branagh's 242-minute film *Hamlet* (Castle Rock Entertainment 1996), too, is tethered to a fantasy of textual fidelity. The studio advertises the film as a complete *Hamlet*, while in reality the filmmaker uses a conflated text drawing on several versions of the tragedy including the First Folio, the Second Quarto (for additions), and emendations from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1988), edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor.

Further, the tendency to privilege Shakespeare's English-language text (even in heavily editorialized and modernized forms) creates a problem, making us blind to many other aspects of Global Shakespeare in performance, reflecting the saying, often attributed to Henri Bergson, that “the eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.” Performances of Shakespeare have always borrowed other accents (as Kent says in *Lear*: “If but as well I other accents borrow [FTLN 0577]).

I propose that we theorize Global Shakespeare through two interrelated concepts: performance as an act of citation and the ethics of citation. To bring the concept of performance as citation and the ethics of citation together, I draw on Elizabeth Rivlin's and my theory that acts of appropriation carry with them strong ethical implications. In our book *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, we argued that a crucial, ethical component of appropriation is one's willingness to listen to and be subjected to the demands of others. These metaphorical citations create moments of “self and mutual recognition” (Joubin and Rivlin 2014: 17). Seeing the others within is the first step toward seeing oneself in others' eyes. The act of citation is founded upon the premise of one's subjectivity, the subject who speaks, and the other's voice that one is channeling, misrepresenting, or appropriating.

Appropriation as citation

To translate, appropriate, and interpret drama and literature is an act of citation. Here I speak of quotation in a metaphorical sense. As Christy Desmet theorizes, quotation is a form of *écriture* that espouses “the paradoxes of verbal replication as a dialectic between the arbitrary marks of print convention and the aural illusion of ventriloquism” (Desmet 2018: 231). One simple way

to identify a quotation is obviously the verbatim reproduction, in writing or orally, of someone else's words. There are many other ways, however, to allude to Shakespeare in embodied performances (think of a man holding up a skull without saying a word) as well as out-of-context political uses of Shakespeare's words. As Derrida has pointed out, the relation between signifiers and the signified involves an endless chain of deferral. The image of a man holding up a skull would be construed to refer to Hamlet's dialogue (on Yorick's skull and mortality) with the gravedigger in Shakespeare as well as to typical gestures of actors playing Hamlet that have been popularized since the Victorian period.

Quotation in the most straightforward sense is an act of replicating someone else's words, an act of deferring an idea through the reproduction of others' words. Quoting or misquoting lines from Shakespeare carries with it the burden of previous uses of those lines, thus creating irony or solidarity as the case may be. Citation, by contrast, refers to the larger culture of quoting others, whether verbatim or in a metaphorical manner. A culture of citation would allude not only to Shakespeare but also to other widely circulated interpretations of Shakespeare. Along the way, local cultures that sustain a performance might also be quoted to create new contexts for a narrative.

We invoke Shakespeare or a particular cultural tradition for all sorts of reasons under many different guises. Global citations of Shakespeare – whether in performances or by politicians – demonstrate a spectral quality across cultures, media, and histories. These works are full of echoes and cross-references to other genres, events, and works. Our experience of the plays is ghosted by our prior investments in select aspects of the play and in previous performances. These ghosts, as Marvin Carlson puts it, “are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection” (Carlson 2003: 2).

A smuggled copy of the 1970 edition of *The Alexander Text of the Complete Works of Shakespeare* inspired Nelson Mandela while he was in the Robben Island jail. The South African prisoners there signed their names next to passages that were important to them. The passage Mandela chose on December 16, 1977, came from *Julius Caesar*, just before the Roman statesman leaves for the senate on the Ides of March in act 2, scene 2:

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.

FTLN 0980–0985

These lines supposedly taught Mandela how to dream and how to rise from the ashes. Interestingly the story about the “Robben Island Bible” has gained much more traction outside South Africa, particularly in London, thanks to the British Museum's exhibition during the 2012 London Olympics and an exhibition at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC in 2013. Many political prisoners who signed their names in that *Complete Works* could not recall their choice of passage or its significance during interviews. For the individuals directly involved, the political purchase of these citations was no longer relevant. This is an instance of “ethical impact” in the eyes of beholders.

In *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* (Wendkos 1969), a film about the rescue of a Mexican peasant revolutionary leader, Chris (George Kennedy) quotes this same passage from *Julius Caesar* to a peasant. At the end of the film, the peasant is heard quoting the same passage to a boy after they

have been liberated by the Magnificent Seven. Political quotations of Shakespeare are ubiquitous, whether from Egyptian intellectuals quoting *Hamlet*, a play that became “near-ubiquitous” there in the mid-1960s (Litvin 2011: 91), or the former U.S. Secretary of State George Schulz referring to the United States as “the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond” to terrorism in the 1980s (Johnson 1992: 421n.129). The ramifications of quoting Shakespeare in these contexts are far-reaching.

Here is a more recent example of performative quotation of Shakespeare. During the 2012 London Olympics, actors quoted, in several significant venues, Caliban’s eloquent description to newcomers of his world, an “isle . . . full of noises” (*The Tempest*, FTLN 1518–26). It was recited by Kenneth Branagh dressed as Isambard Kingdom Brunel during the opening ceremony (directed by Danny Boyle). While this event might not have been aesthetically coherent or interesting (Prescott 2015), it bears statistical significance as an instance of global citation of Shakespeare because, along with other sport and cultural events, Branagh’s performance was broadcast live, taped, and presented in 3D on television, radio, and the internet with subtitles or voiceover to an estimated 4.8 billion viewers and listeners in more than 200 countries and territories (International Olympic Committee 2012). Several athletes recited Caliban’s speech in video commercials for the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival. The closing ceremony again echoed the “Isles of Wonder” theme. Timothy Spall’s Winston Churchill recited the same passage Branagh had spoken earlier.

These quotations are taken out of context. The enchanted isle full of noises refers to the British Isles that are gearing up to welcome guests from afar. Caliban has been recruited to represent Britain’s cultural others as well as the others within Greater London. Branagh and Spall’s use of Caliban’s speech is a clever but ethically dubious repossession of a colonial narrative and figure. Multilingual and Global Shakespeare performances represented a step toward consolidating the underdefined postimperial British identity and creating new international identities for touring companies from outside the U.K. The choice of center-staging Caliban may be inspired by the use of the name in popular culture. An albino character who has the ability to track mutants is named Caliban. The name evokes monstrosity and an abject subject. He first appears in 1981 in the *X-Men* comic books published by Marvel Comics. Caliban also appears in *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016), directed by Bryan Singer, and in *Logan* (2017), directed by James Mangold. He is not born Caliban. His abusive father gives him the name to ridicule his albino appearance and non-normative body.

One of the key features of Shakespearean performance in our times is cross-media and cross-cultural citations. Let’s take a look at intermedial modes of citation. An example of the spectral quality of performance is Polish director Piotr Lachmann’s *Hamlet gliwicki* (or *Hamlet from Gliwice*) with Videoteatr, a multimedia enhanced production in Gliwice in 2006 discussed at length by Aneta Mancewicz in her study of intermediality (2014). The adaptation combines live action with mediatized and live video footage. In one scene, recounts Mancewicz, Hamlet (played by Zbigniew Konopka) engages in a metaphysical conversation with Gertrude on a screen who speaks from a place of “eternal lightness and transparency” (Lachmann 2006). Gertrude is a product of Hamlet’s memory. Director Lachmann is present on stage, mixing videos. Gertrude urges Hamlet to verify her presence by touching her on screen: “Touch me. Touch me through the pane” (Lachmann 2006). She even offers her hand. Hamlet touches the screen, and their hands meet. The adaptation evokes ghosting in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* while it remembers Polish-German history. According to Mancewicz, such strategies of combining onscreen and onstage action are a staple of contemporary Shakespeare performance in Europe (2014: 1–3).

Further, adaptations refer to or echo one another across cultures and genres in addition to the Shakespearean pretext. Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 film version of *Romeo and Juliet* is a good example.

Mexico City is a stand-in for Verona Beach, and the film also cites MTV and global teen cultures. It brings both the melodramatic and tragic elements of the play into stark relief against modern media history. John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) features a stuttering prologue during a tense but amusing metatheatrical negotiation. As if to counter the overkill of quoting the prologue not once but three times in Lurhmann's film, *Shakespeare in Love* couldn't quite spit out the prologue in one go.

The intertextual links among these high production value adaptations compel us to relate them to one another. The Singaporean film *Chicken Rice War* (Cheah 2000) parodies Hollywood rhetoric and global celebrity culture by commenting on the popularity of Lurhmann's film. *Chicken Rice War*'s engagement with Shakespeare shows its director's desire to use a global icon to critique the Singaporean government's propaganda about the city-state's identity: "New Asia." In Lurhmann's film, Shakespeare's play and the cultural values associated with this work are a platform for formal experimentation and reflection on modern media culture. In *Chicken Rice War*, Lurhmann and Shakespeare provide material for a critique of the politics and ethics of recognition (recognizing *Romeo and Juliet*, recognizing Tiffany jewelry, recognizing "New Asia").

Along similar lines, the Finnish comedy film *8 Days to Premiere* (Leppä 2007) features the same passages from *Romeo and Juliet* throughout the movie in home and theatre rehearsals, and finally performed on stage at the end of the film. Like the Singaporean film, the Finnish comedy focuses on the redeeming power of love rather than the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*. Dramatic tension arises not through the Shakespearean pretext but through whether the actors playing the titular characters will overcome all sorts of obstacles to be together in the end, especially whether the actress playing Juliet will transcend her traumas and successfully deliver her final speech.

One of the ethical questions being raised by these works is that of reception. Compared to *Shakespeare in Love* and Lurhmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet gliwicki*, *Chicken Rice War*, and *8 Days to Premiere* do not have a full record of reception because they are not yet on the map. They are not considered worthy of a place in the historical record of globalization. Finnish critics objected to *8 Days to Premiere*'s failure to offer enough Shakespearean elements. Outside Finland, the film is virtually unknown because Finnish is a language that is neither part of the English-speaking or World Englishes communities nor part of cultures that are more diametrically opposed to the West. The invisibility of an artwork goes hand in hand with the invisibility of minority cultures. In short, the two interrelated modes of Global Shakespeare are contained within the metaphors of life and death: the rhizomatic growth of roots and networks of living artworks and the ghosting of past and present voices.

There are other kinds of echoes and citations across genres, sometimes across different cultures. Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa adapted *Macbeth* for the big screen in 1957. *Castle of the Spider's Web* (or *Throne of Blood*, as it is known in English) pioneered the techniques of defamiliarizing the quotidian by featuring ordinary daily objects writ large and by presenting human tableaux in stark contrast against nature. Set in the samurai world, the film opens with Macbeth and Banquo riding on horseback through a forest that is so dense that it resembles a maze and a spider's web. A mountain spirit spins cotton in the woods on a spinning wheel. This scene domesticates Nature and highlights the tension between culture and nature in Kurosawa's narrative. The scene simultaneously quotes the traditional Japanese cultural practice of weaving and Macbeth's struggle with the implications of his unnatural deeds that murder sleep. In later scenes we are introduced to castles that are constructed of the wood from the spider-web forest – a metaphor for desires and historical forces that ensnare the protagonist. Kurosawa's signature long shots frame the low-ceilinged castles as icons of impenetrable and inescapable social order.

In turn, Kurosawa influenced stage director Yukio Ninagawa through his techniques of quoting quotidian life writ-large. In 1985, Ninagawa produced a landmark production of the same play with a cinematically inspired visual vocabulary that echoes Kurosawa's. The Buddhist altar – a small wood cabinet containing images of Buddha and family ancestral tablets, commonly found in many Japanese homes – is enlarged and transformed by Ninagawa into a framework for the story of samurai warlords. Figures dance behind semi-transparent screen doors in the prologue. The altar serves as both a mundane symbol of the sacred and a secular interface between the present and the past. Additionally, two elderly women who are not part of the play sit by the outsized altar. Their presence reinforces both a sense of daily life and estrangement.

Throne of Blood has influenced and inspired other works outside Japan in a rhizomatic network of cross-citations. In 1985, John R. Briggs combined both approaches when he brought the Scottish play, Kurosawa, and Asian America together in his *Shogun Macbeth*. Regarded as a “Kurosawa-lite adaptation,” in both the positive and negative senses of the phrase, the adaptation in English is interspersed with a great number of Shakespearean lines and set on the island of Honshu in twelfth-century Kamakura Japan (1192–1333). Just two years later, in 1987, Wu Hsing-kuo's Beijing opera *The Kingdom of Desire* redefined Beijing opera by paying tribute to and fine-tuning Kurosawa's visual language. Wu's *Macbeth* faces a similar fate to Shakespeare's, killed by his soldiers' arrows. Just a few years ago, Aleta Chappelle directed *Macbeth*, a Kurosawa-inspired film set in the Caribbean. It is “unabashedly Japanese [yet] profoundly Shakespearean” (Dawson 2008: 158). Kurosawa's approach of turning familiar artifacts into venues of estrangement has proven popular. In 2010, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival commissioned Ping Chong to adapt and direct an English-language stage version of *Throne of Blood*.

Ethics of citation

Behind these acts of quoting others lie some questions about ethics. Often, when Shakespeare is cited, the passages are given an ethical burden and curative quality. Ethics suggest mutually accepted guidelines on how human beings should act and treat one another and, in particular, what constitutes a good action. In our contemporary context, ethics are often interpreted specifically in terms of a responsibility to cultural otherness. We owe it to the people who make the culture, and we owe it to the artist who create the works that we study. We owe it to ourselves to listen intently for what they have to say. This is Emmanuel Levinas's idea of the priority of ethics over knowledge production. We are responsible for the preservation of the alterity of the Other, even as we make the obscure known by “freeing it of its otherness.” In other words, we are constantly striving against what Levinas calls “the imperialism of the same,” an assertive move of acquisition that forces unfamiliar things to “conform to what we already know” (Levinas, quoted in Davis 2015: 48).

There is another aspect of the problem:

Parallel to the assertive, acquisitive move in knowledge production is “knowledgeable ignorance,” which, according to Norman Daniel, is the tendency to insist on “knowing” something as one's own ideological construct. It is a form of laziness and [an] irresponsible act to know ‘people as something they are not, and could not possibly be, and maintaining these ideas even when the means exist to know differently.’

Daniel 1960: 12, quoted in Joubin 2017: 436

Appropriation does suggest an aggressive act of taking ownership of Shakespeare. Acts of appropriation turn Shakespeare into a signifier that can be seized and re-deployed against his will, as

it were. However, appropriation can also be therapeutic and politically reparative. The political agency that comes with appropriation can lead to ethical and political advocacy. Take *The Merchant of Venice*, for example. Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech is one of the most often appropriated and cited passages. Al Pacino's superb performance brought humanity to the character and highlighted the difficulty to wrestle with a complex speech that is simultaneously a human rights declaration and a demonstration of vindictiveness. The speech features prominently in a trailer for Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002). The pianist smuggles in a volume of the play when being taken away to the concentration camp. The film itself makes use of passages from *The Merchant of Venice*, which has become one of the most iconic works on anti-Semitism. The citation of multilayered histories and Shakespeare are powerful and moving.

Adaptations also cite Shakespeare and local music and cultures and bring them into a new, hybrid cultural landscape. In Ivan Lipkies's *Huapango* (2004), Otilio, the richest man of Huasteca Tamaulipeca, falls deeply in love with Julia, a happy and straightforward young woman who is the best ballerina of the Huapango troupe. Her dance partner is Santiago, a stocky, strong man who secretly loves her. In the final scene, before Otilio kills Julia, as the camera moves back and forth between private and public spaces and between dead silence and lively festive music, we find parallels to the *Othello* narrative and a slice of Mexican culture.

What does it entail to quote someone or a work? In the age of global performance culture, quotation can be a gesture of deferral or a demarcated space for reflection. Evoking Shakespeare creates a visually and rhetorically marked space, a rupture between contemporary artists' works and Shakespeare's words. A quotation, whether in translation or in some other appropriated forms, is an attempt at reproducing a predecessor's ideas, or what Marjorie Garber calls "cultural ventriloquism, a throwing of the voice that is an appropriation of authority" (2002: 16). While words are being repeated or embodied in a new context, two speakers (Shakespeare and the modern actor) cannot truly share the same words. As Christy Desmet points out in her study of Shakespeare quotation in contemporary poetry, one voice or the other must be suppressed in this process. While "quotation marks are the topographic signs of deference, quotation as ventriloquism is an aggressive act of appropriation that can put under erasure" both the person quoting a source and the one who is being quoted (Desmet 2018: 232). As a result, there are two possible outcomes of an act of citation. The contemporary living director or translator may be seen as channeling the voice of the dead (like the Ghost in *Hamlet*, a rhetorical figure speaking the words of another), or Shakespeare's authorial presence may be subsumed under the embodied presence of living, contemporary artists (which some journalists have seen as theft or infidelity to a classical author, an act of transgression).

Ethics is an essential, but often missed, term in discussions of Shakespeare and appropriation. Shakespearean appropriations ultimately are confronted by ethical claims upon them. According to Levinas, there is profound reciprocity between notions of self and other. He emphasizes the moment of the "I"'s subordination to "You." He calls this state of subjectivity a "passivity undergone in proximity by the force of an alterity in me" and insists that "It is through the condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity – even the little there is, even the simple 'After you, sir'" (Levinas 1998: 112). If this condition of forcible subjection to the other is also the precondition for ethical action, then provocative implications follow for the study of appropriations.

Where Shakespeare is read and performed matters as much as the historical question of "when" and the dramaturgical question of "how" these plays are performed. For instance, when Juliet asks Romeo how he has made it to her balcony, Romeo says he is aided by "love's light wings" (FTLN 0894). This exchange is usually interpreted in a lighthearted manner, with an emphasis on the couple's youthful exuberance. In twenty-first-century Palestine, however,

Romeo and Juliet acquires a new sense of urgency. In the shadow of bombing and wars, the lovers' fleeting affair soon gives way to the danger they are in and the risk they take. Reading the play with his students in Abu Dis, Tom Sperlinger notes that what may be otherwise construed as a more innocent lover's complaint or "teenage hyperbole" (2014: 142) now acquires a far more earnest tone, especially when Juliet warns Romeo that "If they do see thee, they will murder thee" (FTLN 0898). Engaging with *Romeo and Juliet* in the context of modern military conflicts entails a deeper level of self-reflection and offers the potential to see the play in a new light.

Global Shakespeare today represents the lived experiences of people in diasporic communities, such as British expatriates in Hong Kong, African American theatre, and people of Asian decent living in London. Diasporic Shakespeares are distinct from national Shakespearean performances because they are designed for heterogeneous communities and incorporate elements from several cultures, as evidenced by works by British Indian, Asian American, Chinese Singaporean, Québécois (Francophone Canadian), and African and Caribbean Canadian artists. In Yves Sioui Durand's film *Mesnak*, a 2011 French and aboriginal Québécois adaptation of *Hamlet* that was shot in Canada, the Hamlet-figure struggles with his diasporic identity. Dave, an urban aboriginal in his early twenties, is a Montreal actor. His adoption at the age of three has erased all memory of his Native culture. When he receives his first-ever contact with his biological mother through a photo in the mail, Dave leaves for Kinogamish, the reserve where he was born. His soul-searching journey parallels Hamlet's, and throughout the film, we hear productive echoes of Hamlet's identity crisis.

White directors appropriating non-Western traditions face accusations of imperial imposition. Some of them seem to arrive on the scene with an original sin for simply being white and male. When this happens, I believe it presents a problem. Non-white artists face the challenge of being typecast. What if you are a minority and you are an aspiring stage director, artistic director, or actor, or you aspire to work in any capacity in theatre? What if you are interested in doing Shakespeare, Ibsen, and "canonical" and "mainstream" plays rather than being recruited to "do a black play" simply because you happen to be black (regardless of your cultural identification)? For minority actors, identity politics can be a double-edged sword. Black British actors are often associated with art forms that are considered ethnically authentic and that "match" their perceived identity and interests, such as jazz. British Indian actors are lined up with Bollywood routines. For artists who thrive to breach the racial line, they face a seemingly impossible choice of heeding the call for cultural assimilation or "preserving" ethnic cultural roots.

These works and life stories behind the scene are full of cultural ambivalence and contradictions. Like the artists who appropriate it, the Shakespearean canon has become a hybrid and heterogeneous subject. These subjects are defined not by purity but, in Stuart Hall's words, by "the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, by a conception of identity which lives . . . through difference" (Hall 1994: 402). The culture of citation transacts in repetitions with a difference.

Political citationality

"My angel!" In Vishal Bhardwaj's 2014 film *Haider*, a woman's voice is heard outside a hut in the snow in Kashmir in 1995, a landscape devoid of colors other than mostly black, white, and deep blue. Ghazala's son, Haider, a lone fighter, is hiding inside the severely damaged hut. Having sustained gun-shot wounds, he is surrounded by the soldiers led by his uncle Khurram who plans to kill him with a shoulder-launch rocket, but Ghazala, caught in between her lover and her son, who is intent on avenging his father's death, convinces Khurram to give her one last chance to persuade Haider to give up his revenge plan and surrender. Soft-spoken Ghazala might not

appear to be a particularly strong woman at first glance, but she is taking on the active role of a liaison, a negotiator, and now a game changer.

Family issues and personal identity are tragically entangled in terrorism, politics, and national identity when Haider responds to his mother's plea that "there is no greater pain than to see the corpse of your own child" by re-asserting that one cannot "die without avenging the murder of one's father." His moral compass is clearly pointing in a different direction from that of his mother, who does not believe politics should and can take precedence over love. His mother's love is apparent, but it is not enough to change Haider's mind. In her desperate last attempt to turn her son around, Ghazala spells out what is one of the most significant themes of the film: "revenge begets revenge; revenge does not set us free. True freedom lies beyond revenge." The clash between the mother's and her son's worldviews is tragic.

What follows is a moving scene in which a determined mother sacrifices her own life to save her son. Ghazala kisses Haider good-bye and walks out toward Khurram and his men. Standing in front of them, she opens her coat to reveal a suicide vest consisting of numerous hand grenades. As everyone runs away from her, Khurram and Haider rush towards Ghazala but are unable to stop her. Bhardwaj's choice of slow motion accentuates the impossible weight of Time. Khurram and Haider finally realize what is at stake, only too late. They race against time to save their lover and mother, respectively, but are up against time – linear time. Nothing could be turned back. Life can only be lived forward.

The blast kills everyone except Haider, who is spared because he is farther away, and Khurram, who loses his legs and is severely injured. For a brief moment, the flame over Ghazala's remains brings, in an eerie way, both warmth and despair to Haider's face as he stands over the carnage. He wastes no time to mourn his mother by picking up a pistol and walking towards Khurram, now crawling in the snow, to take his revenge. As the camera pans over the two blood-covered figures against a background of blood-stained snow, two competing voices are heard in the voice-over, namely, Haider's father's abomination: "Aim bullets at those cunning, deceiving eyes that entrapped your mother" followed by Haider's mother's plea for him to give up his revenge mission. Haider eventually spares Khurram's life and walks away, leaving him howling in the snow, begging for Haider to "finish him off." It is ambiguous whether Haider spares Khurram because his mother's death has shown him the path to love and peace, or because "finishing [Khurram] off" is a charitable act rather than revenge, considering Khurram's circumstances.

There are explicit and more subtle parallels and echoes among Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Indian history, and *Haider*: the figures of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can be seen in the video-store owners (Suman and Suman) in the film; the talented journalist Arshia finds herself on a path leading toward Ophelia's tragic life thanks to her father and brother. Like *Hamlet*, *Haider* explores dramatic ambiguity: how much does the Gertrude figure know about Claudius's plan to kill Hamlet? Does she consciously intervene to save Hamlet? If so, does her act of self-sacrifice give her more agency in a men's world? As Tony Howard points out, *Haider's* ending "poses uncomfortable contemporary questions about suicide and revenge – and the ability of Shakespeare's texts to help us answer them" (2015: 51). The ending of *Haider* is ambiguous, as we are not shown whether or how Haider finds a new path in life, but rather, we are shown rolling inter-titles bring us back to our contemporary reality. The information given here is largely positive and hints at the reconciliation between India and Pakistan over the territorial conflict:

In the last two decades, thousands of lives have been lost in the Kashmir conflict. The last few years of relative peace have renewed hope. With tourism growing from just 4.2 million tourists in 1995 to 140 million tourists in 2013.

Bhardwaj 2014

Self-conscious about the film's portrayal of the Indian soldiers, the filmmaker decides to provide a counterbalance and ethical disclaimer, inviting audiences to reflect on the linkage and disjunctions between the fictional world and reality:

In the recent devastating floods in Kashmir, the Indian army saved the lives of thousands of civilians. We salute their efforts and their valour. Principal photography for this film was entirely conducted in Kashmir without any disruptions.

Bhardwaj 2014

Conclusion

In conclusion, Global Shakespeare is a body of travelling cultural texts and a space where people and ideas meet. They meet in a space where differences are both visible and invisible in various forms of embodiment. When actors embody various characters they draw attention to their skin color, accents, and intentionally highlighted or concealed traces of cultural inscriptions in their life. Such meetings are facilitated by a culture of citation and political uses of Shakespeare as an other within.

Note

- 1 References to the works of Shakespeare come from Mowat et al. (n.d.) and are cited parenthetically within the text by Folio Through Line Number, FTLN.

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*We dedicate this volume to the memory of our late, beloved, and much-missed
friend and colleague, Christy Desmet – “a lass unparallel’d.”*

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The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation brings together a variety of different voices to examine the ways that Shakespeare has been adapted and appropriated onto stage, screen, page, and a variety of digital formats. The thirty-nine chapters address topics such as trans- and intermedia performances; Shakespearean utopias and dystopias; the ethics of appropriation; Shakespeare and global justice as guidance on how to approach the teaching of these topics.

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