



PERFORMING SHAKESPEAREAN APPROPRIATIONS

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF CHRISTY DESMET

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Chapter 9

Transgender Theory and Global Shakespeare

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Even though Shakespeare's plays were initially performed by all-male casts, they were designed to appeal to diverse audiences. Many modern adaptations reimagine those plays as expressions of gender nonconformity. Over the past decades, prominent films and theater works have fostered new public conversations about the politics of appropriating gender identities in Shakespeare's plays around the world. Since drama gains efficacy through the act of embodiment, Shakespeare's plays accrue new cultural meanings as they move through time and space, offering venues where embodied differences play out. When actors embody a role, their own identities—perceived or self-claimed—enrich the meanings of the performance.

Gender is one of the most important vectors bearing diagnostic significance in performance, but transgender performances remain marginal even to feminist scholarship. This chapter makes an intervention in both transgender and Shakespeare studies by reading traditionally binary characters as transgender to shed new light on performances of gender practices in a global context.

As we will see, gender variance is more than just a dramatic device derived from the early modern practice of cross-gender casting. Our understanding of the comedies and romance plays would change dramatically if some characters are interpreted as transgender or played by transgender performers, such as Viola who presents as pageboy Cesario in *Twelfth Night*, Falstaff as the Witch of Brainford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Rosalind as Ganymede in *As You Like It*, and Imogen as the boy Fidele in *Cymbeline*. Different kinds of trans practices, however, elicit contrasting reactions. While trans masculine acts, such as those staged by Viola's Cesario, are often performed in the vein of empowerment, trans feminine characters, such as Falstaff's Witch of Brainford, are ridiculed by other characters and by the audiences. Performance criticism has created hierarchical, evaluative models which

have not registered fully gender nonconformity. This chapter proposes new methods to read these characters. Viola as Cesario, for instance, is a trans masculine character, as he does not “dress up” for entertainment or mischief. He never recovers the so-called “maiden’s weeds” at the end of *Twelfth Night*. The assumed demise of his twin brother Sebastian is a pivotal moment for Viola not only to mourn him through impersonation but also to live an authentic life. This reading of Viola is inspired by Christy Desmet’s interrogation (or “prosecution”) of the motives of characters as they manifest themselves in the characters’ rhetoric. What is “true” in a fictional character can be determined by the rhetoric in various dramatic conventions such as trial scenes and formal debates.¹ By taking into consideration a character’s actions and choice of words we can deduce their personal truth in a performative context.

GENDERED PRONOUNS IN TRANSLATION: TWELFTH NIGHT AND THRONE OF BLOOD

Since gender variance is coded linguistically and culturally, performing Shakespeare in translation entails purposeful treatment of personal pronouns. *Twelfth Night* is a good example. When Viola, presenting as Cesario and finding himself pursued by the lovelorn Olivia, declares that “I am the man [of the hour] and a dream” in *Twelfth Night* (2.2.25–26), he traverses a transgender space.² On the early modern English stage, Viola would speak with double irony as a doubly cross-dressed boy actor. In modern times, Viola would challenge audiences’ normative assumptions when played by an adult male actor, as with Johnny Flynn in Mark Rylance’s all-male production at the Globe Theatre in London in 2012 (dir. Tim Carroll).

As an *otokoyaku* (male impersonator) in the all-female Broadway-style Takarazuka musical production (dir. Kimura Shinji, 1999; starring Yamato Yuga) derived from *shōjo* (teen girl) mangas, Viola embodies enticing gender fluidity when speaking Japanese, a language that often elides the subject. In addition to making the right choice of employing the familiar or the polite register based on the relation between the speaker and the addressee, male and female speakers of Japanese have to choose from gender-specific first-person pronouns. This grammatical feature makes it difficult to create a queer space. However, it can be rewarding to work with semantic ambiguity within syntactical restrictions. For example, former Takarazuka actress Kei Otozuki offered an intriguing doubling performance. She employed gendered code-switching to play the twins Viola and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* (Nissay Theatre, Tokyo, March 2015), the second Shakespeare production with a Japanese cast by John Caird, honorary associate director of the Royal

Shakespeare Company. Kei specializes in male roles in Takarazuka musicals. In *Twelfth Night*, she played Viola, Cesario, and Sebastian, thereby bringing new layers of gendered meanings to the narrative.

Generally speaking, limitations create linguistic and cultural opportunities in articulating anew some gender dynamics. Another example from *Twelfth Night* involves Orsino's comments about love from a masculinist perspective and Cesario's apology for a woman's love (2.4.78–125). Gendered discourses in *As You Like It* would also acquire new meanings, such as in the exchange between the aforementioned Rosalind in disguise as Ganymede and Oliver on her "lacking a man's heart" when she swoons, nearly giving herself away in the pastoral comedy *As You Like It* (4.3.164–176). In both cases, the character, if speaking in Japanese, need not specify the subject by using a gendered first-person pronoun, since it is common for Japanese speakers to omit or elide the subject. Without naming the subject in a sentence, Japanese speakers have room to present gender ambiguity in new ways.

Uses of pronouns are as important in the film as they are in theater. Gendered personal pronouns shape the dynamics in several scenes in Akira Kurosawa's film *Throne of Blood* (Toho Company, 1957), a *samurai* adaptation of *Macbeth*. While obscured by English subtitles, the uses of personal pronouns and salutations reflect moral and political agency or the lack thereof. When conversing with each other, Washizu (*Macbeth*) and Miki (*Banquo*) refer to each other with first names, deepen their voices, and use informal language and the informal, masculine "I" (*ore*). They often laugh things off, as in the scene when they are lost in the forest, as part of their performance of bravura. Singular first-person pronouns in Japanese serve important discursive functions, according to discourse and cognitive linguistics. In addition to *ore*, other first-person pronouns include the informal *boku*, typically used by young men, and the more formal but more feminine *watashi*, commonly used by women.³ Washizu and Miki eschew formality to build male camaraderie and assert their masculinity. The bravura around the pronoun *ore* buttresses their denial that they are lost in the woods in the opening scene. Yet even if they are, they remain brothers, lost together in the woods.

Washizu attempts to create a similarly intimate bond with his wife Lady Asaji (Lady *Macbeth*) in private, but she rejects his attempt and maintains verbal and physical distance. It is notable that when Washizu addresses Asaji, he does not use any honorific; he does not address her as *tsuma* (wife) or *okusan* (lady of the house). Meanwhile, Asaji uses the most formal, singular first-person pronoun *watakushi*, rather than the informal, feminine *atashi* (or *atakushi*), which would be what a private conversation between a husband and a wife normally entails. Moreover, she addresses Washizu with the general second-person pronoun *anata*. This word, though often used in television

commercials to refer to a general audience—that is, in the absence of information about the addressee's age, gender, or class—is also used by women to address their husbands. Asaji's combination of the formal *watakushi* and usually more casual *anata*—the latter here spoken in a register that conveys condescension and rejects intimacy—creates another layer of the uncanny beyond the atonal music. The use of these pronouns creates tension and conflicts between desired intimacy and rejected informality. Washizu is at a loss about how to respond. In contrast to Anglophone films of *Macbeth* that tend to build tensions through *mise-en-scène*, blocking, and lighting, *Throne of Blood* uses personal pronouns to convey subtle changes in interpersonal dynamics.

These layers of linguistically marked transgender meanings in the gendered interpersonal relationships are unfortunately lost in translation. Subtitles are as much filtering devices as they are heuristic tools. Indeed, “transgender and translational narratives flicker around the . . . divisions of language [and] the body . . . in ways that confound orderly linguistic categories.”⁴ These cases point to “regional production of trans meanings that negotiates between local subjectivities and globalized categories.”⁵ The next section turns to the question of gender presentation.

A TRANSGENDER OPHELIA

Gendered language and uses of pronouns play just as important roles in recent works. One example is the acclaimed South Korean film *The King and the Clown* (dir. Lee Joon-ik, Eagle Pictures, 2005).⁶ Based on Kim Tae-wong's 2000 play, *Yi (The Clowns)*, the tragicomic film chronicles the life of a masculine and a trans-feminine vagabond performers—Jang-saeng and Gong-gil—in the fifteenth-century Joseon Dynasty during the reign of King Yeon-san (1494-1506).⁷ The traveling actors, always performing on a tight rope, stage multiple plays-within-a-film using the conventions of the historical all-male vagabond theater with masks, or *namsadang nori* (a UN Intangible Cultural Heritage). The feminine jester Gong-gil's sexuality is deliberately kept ambiguous throughout the film. When the two “clowns” are recruited as the king's jesters in court, the narrative evolves to echo several themes and characters of Shakespeare's plays including the revenge plot in *Hamlet*, the device of a bawdy play-within-a-play in *Taming of the Shrew*, and the love triangle (among the king, Gong-gil, and Jang-saeng) in *Twelfth Night*.⁸ After the king hires the traveling players to help him appeal to the conscience of corrupt court officials, the film's version of the “mousetrap” play (the play-within-a-play that Hamlet designs to “catch the conscience of the king” who murders Hamlet's father) becomes the primary narrative.

I would like to note my use of pronouns for the key character. I use gender-neutral pronouns to refer to Gong-gil out of respect for who the character is.⁹ Unlike most transgender films, *The King and the Clown* takes Gong-gil's identity at face value without question or scare quotes. Most characters accept the Gong-gil as a feminine person and do not question their gender identity. Only two characters, a eunuch and a consort, attack Gong-gil's gender expression in scenes in the royal court. Unlike other trans films such as Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night* (Renaissance Films, 1996) that probe questions of being and becoming, *The King and the Clown* does not feature gender transformation scenes or dramatize the pains of transition. The film codes Gong-gil's relationship with the king as erotic, and shrouds Gong-gil's relationship with the brother-like fellow jester in ambiguous terms. However, the director and actors repeatedly refer to Gong-gil with masculine pronouns during interviews. Reviews and studies in English and Korean, to the best of my knowledge, also misgender Gong-gil via masculine pronouns.

As a catalyst for the twists and turns of the plot, Gong-gil is an Ophelia figure. They are unable to express themselves and lack inner direction, and their path in life is determined by the men around them. The innocence of Gong-gil/Ophelia contrasts with the calculations and intrigues of other characters, such as the consort Nok-su who frames them for the crime of defaming the king and the courtier who conspires to kill Gong-gil during an imperial hunt in the woods. Like Ophelia, Gong-gil is objectified by the male gaze as a love interest. Similar to Ophelia, Gong-gil remains innocent of sexuality and court politics. In one scene Gong-gil wears an opera headdress ornately decorated with flowers, similar to Ophelia's garland. In another scene, Gong-gil is found lying in a pool of their blood after a suicide attempt.

Notably the trans protagonist is neither in flamboyant drag nor struggling with gender transition. They present as female throughout the entire film. There is no gender crossing to speak of. They are not moving between different identities. They appear to simply live in their social role without questions. *The King and the Clown* enables its central trans-feminine character to simply exist as themselves without being compelled to justify their existence.

The film opens with Jang-saeng and Gong-gil performing lewd banter on a tightrope. Alluding to *The Taming of the Shrew*, Gong-gil plays a rude coquette while Jang-saeng's character attempts to tame her. Walking on a tight rope to the drumbeats of the musicians, the shrewish character taunts her would-be lover with lewd and provocative postures and language. The transgression of ideal femininity onstage gives way to Gong-gil's feminine identity as a restorative force off stage. There is a stark contrast between Gong-gil's on-stage persona and off-stage personality. On stage, Gong-gil's character lifts her skirt, opens her legs, and speaks of checking out the

manhood of Jang-saeng for size. Offstage, Gong-gil is reserved, traditionally feminine, and exploited sexually.

Gong-gil's trans femininity is expressed in the context of the culture of flower boys. The term flower boy, or *kkonminam*, refers to an effeminate singer or actor whose gender is fluidly androgynous. Above all else, the subculture highlights the youthful beauty of these singers. The factor of age is part of the positive stereotypes that connect youthfulness to femininity. In contemporary Japanese and South Korean subcultures of flower boys, heterosexual female fans live vicariously through beautiful, often androgynous characters without fear of being stigmatized as being promiscuous.¹⁰ The figure of the flower boy fulfills female fans' fantasies about idealized male partners. The desire and sexuality of the female fans are complex. The fans may have lesbian tendencies, or they may desire ideal heterosexual men who only exist in flower boy narratives. Jeeyoung Shin has identified these subcultures as "an alternative to the patriarchal mainstream culture," where homosexuality remains controversial and where female sexuality is confined to "the biological function of reproduction within marriage."¹¹ Two weeks before the film's release, a promotional interview with Lee Joon-gi highlighted his feminine beauty and androgyny, which Jeeyoung Shin sees as a "conscious effort to attract female audiences . . . who would willingly consume a . . . film with a stunning *kkonminam* character."¹² *The King and the Clown* emerged from such subcultures and used its connection with *kkonminam* to market itself to young female audiences.

Over time, King Yeon-san, a composite of Hamlet and Claudius, becomes fond of Gong-gil. The king is clearly drawn to Gong-gil's appearance as an exotic object, while Gong-gil seems to have sympathy for the unhappy king. King Yeon-san frequently asks Gong-gil to put on private finger-puppet shows in his chamber. As the king goes back and forth between Gong-gil and his consort Nok-su, his emotional needs are unclear. In one scene, Nok-su storms in on the king and Gong-gil in an intimate scene and taunts Gong-gil about their "real" gender. She tries to undress Gong-gil in front of the king, creating a great deal of tension. Presumably, Nok-su's dramatic act of "gender reveal" is to expose Gong-gil as an abject subject with alleged physical deficiencies and thereby dissuade the king from bestowing further favors on Gong-gil. Gong-gil does not say a word and seems rather docile in this moment when they are expected to respond to Jang Nok-su's pent-up anger. The king freezes in shock. Jang Nok-su is as frustrated by Gong-gil's version of femininity as she is jealous of the newcomer who is replacing her as the king's favorite subject. The act of peeling the dress off Gong-gil is symbolic of her desire to authenticate embodied identities, as if to up the ante in the competition. It also reveals Jang Nok-su's anxiety about the king's sexuality.

The king eventually uses brute force to throw her out of the room in order to protect Gong-gil.

Such revelation scenes are a familiar trope in transgender narratives. The scene peels back the clean sutures of cinema—however briefly—to reveal what Timothy Murray calls “cinematic dirt,” grainy details that are best left to audiences’ imaginations.¹³ These scenes are part of what is known as the reveal in trans cinema, a device of exposure and a “cinematic shock device [about a] bodily truth.”¹⁴ Such scenes subject trans characters to “the pressures of a pervasive gender/sex system that seeks to make public the ‘truth’ of the trans person’s gendered and sexed body.”¹⁵ Such revelation scenes reenact struggles over the body’s meanings.

Gendered pronouns emerge as the focal point in another scene. In Nok-su’s chamber, a eunuch tells her that the king “is with her, my lady,” alluding to sex as a perennial subtext in court politics. The consort is surprised by the use of feminine pronoun to describe Gong-gil. She asks “Her?” When forced to clarify, the eunuch slips into biological essentialism: “That clown . . . ah . . . she’s a man, pardon me.” Nok-su angrily presses: “What is the king doing with that girly man [*sic*]?” It would seem Nok-su already knows the answer but wants to hear the eunuch say it. The eunuch resorts to euphemism for the king’s intimate affairs as he looks down and says: “That . . . you know, ahem.” In an aside, the eunuch muses: “Man? . . . look at what he’s wearing. Man, woman, it’s so damn confusing.” The royal court’s assumption that Gong-gil may not be cis-gendered would come from troupe members’ uses of pronouns and the court’s knowledge of the conventional setup of all-male vagabond troupes. The eunuch and the consort put Gong-gil in a double bind as an “illusory” figure.¹⁶ If Gong-gil is visibly trans, they are a pretender. If they “pass” as female, they risk forced disclosure. The aforementioned undressing scene and this scene of confusion over personal pronouns reveal that trans bodies on screen—in comparison to cis and normative bodies—bear the additional stress of authentication processes based on assumed indexicality of anatomical features.

In untangling the love triangle in its denouement, the film does not privilege, as *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, Universal Pictures, 1998) does, heterosexual norms in romantic love as reparative of queer desires. Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow)—in the guise of the boy actor Thomas Kent—and actor-playwright Will (Joseph Fiennes)—who cross-dresses as de Lesseps’ female cousin in one scene—fall in love with each other when both present as male, and they are cast in cross-gender roles during rehearsals of *Romeo and Juliet*. They eventually stop cross-dressing and are “straightened up” onstage and off.¹⁷ In contrast, *The King and the Clown* suggests no corrective is needed for trans bodies. Gong-gil—despite their position as the king’s new favorite subject—abandons the king in the chamber to join Jang-saeng on the tight

rope in the final scene. Their final performance morphs into mutual confessions in which they renew their commitment to each other. As the king's army approaches the inner court to kill the traitors, Jang-saeng and Gong-gil—standing at opposite ends of the tight rope—prepare to die by asking each other what they would like to be in their next life. Gong-gil vows to be reborn in exactly the same body. The film concludes with a freeze frame of the two jesters jumping up simultaneously on the tight rope, a trope known as the Bolivian army ending which suggests but does not show the characters' ultimate doom. As such, *The King and the Clown* does not fall into the trap of what Sara Ahmed has called "a queer politics of unhappiness," a tendency among queer films to fetishize or aestheticize the suffering of sexual minorities who are forced to "live with the consequences of being an unhappiness-cause for others."¹⁸ Ahmed has theorized that the *de rigueur* unhappy endings of queer narratives—a result of social imposition and self-censorship—are tolerated by queer communities for the sake of increased visibility, because "more important was the fact there was a new book about us."¹⁹ In this light, the tragicomic *King and the Clown* succeeds as an atypical trans narrative by sustaining the queer space.

The trans practice of Gong-gil has been overlooked by scholarship and deliberately repressed by Korean audiences who more readily accept heterosexuality—even if practiced between a cis and a trans character—than homosexuality. The strongest evidence of Gong-gil's trans identity comes from rehearsal notes. Lee Joon-gi, who played Gong-gil, identifies as a cis man, but has conceived his character as a trans woman. He recounted going with the film's director to "special bars" to "study the attitude of trans people." Lee remained in his role during recess since he adopted Method acting—an immersive, emotion-oriented technique derived from Konstantin Stanislavski in which an actor identifies fully with their character. This approach to "authentic" representation does not completely resolve the lack of trans self-representation. Lee is an able-bodied, cis actor. To prevent Lee from being separated from the role of Gong-gil, the film's director forbade him from interacting with other actors when not on the set. Lee went so far as to "shut himself in a ladies' room . . . to immerse himself in his role as Gong-gil" at the studio.²⁰ Lee's idea of transgender identity as "a man in women's space" is problematic, because transgender practices are not superficial, adoptable behaviors in a trans bar. However, *The King and the Clown* makes a contribution to world cinema by registering multiple ways in which "gender" is practiced.

A GENEALOGY OF TRANSGENDER THEORY

The works analyzed here reveal that transgender communities past and present have included a wide range of identities, many of which may be

inconvenient truth not only for conservatives but also, as the case may be, for activists who may selectively focus on identities that more directly support their causes.

At least a century of development was behind the concept we now regard as common sense, namely that gender is a social script on a continuum. In the twentieth century, transgender theory evolved historically from a binary toward a continuum model. In German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld's 1910 book, *Transvestites*, gender nonconformity was seen as an independent phenomenon from same-sex desires. He coined the word "transvestite" by combining the Latin words for crossing and clothing: *trans* and *vestis*. He observed individuals who experienced a "feeling of peace, security and exaltation, happiness and well-being . . . when in the clothing of the other sex."²¹ He found that "transvestites" could be asexual, bisexual, or have any given sexual orientation. Hirschfeld's conception of the transvestite overlaps with what we may call crossdressers today. Homosexual individuals were thought to be gender inverted, but Hirschfeld distinguished transvestism from what was then known as homosexuality.

With the endocrinological discovery of the universal presence of male and female sex hormones in humans in the 1930s, psychoanalysts and biochemists began developing a theory where humans have inherent features of both sexes. Following the discovery, Lewis Terman and Catherin Cox Miles proposed a seven-part scalar instrument for diagnosing sex psychology, and anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead laid the groundwork for relative gender norms. In 1953, Alfred Kinsey popularized his homosexual-heterosexual scale that was built on a continuum model.

The distinction of gender and sex was a major milestone in the 1950s. Based on his research of the condition of intersex, New Zealand-American sexologist John Money used gender to refer to a person's "outlook, demeanor, and orientation" in 1955. He further defined a gender role as "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman." Despite his contributions to the notion of gender as distinct from sex and to the increased acceptance of transgender individuals and gender affirmation surgery, Money's involvement in the involuntary surgery of David Reimer at eighteen months old has been controversial. Transsexualism was officially diagnosed in 1966 and treatment protocols were established by clinical endocrinologist Harry Benjamin. Mapping gender nonconformity across history, Benjamin distinguishes transsexualism which he sees as a medical condition, from transvestitism, a term coined by Magnus Hirschfeld to describe sartorial preferences. Benjamin writes with graphic specificity: "true transsexuals feel that they belong to the other sex, they want to be and function as members of the opposite sex, not only to appear as such. For them, their sex organs . . . are disgusting deformities

that must be changed by the surgeon's knife."²² Following the publication of Benjamin's *Transsexual Phenomenon*, the Johns Hopkins University opened the first gender identity clinic in the United States in 1966. Its hospital in Baltimore carried out the first gender affirmation surgery in the United States, and the first transsexual support group, Conversion Our Goal, emerged in San Francisco the following year.

In the 1990s, the critical consensus shifted away from a focus on anatomy to social articulations of gender practices. New theories began seeing transsexualism as a link to queer identities and spaces, such as Kate Bornstein's 1994 book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, which reveals unspoken assumptions behind earlier critiques of trans femininity as an "attack" on womanhood. The fusion of queer and trans theories was followed by calls to de-pathologize gender dysphoria in the twenty-first century. "Trans" has evolved recently into a capacious umbrella term covering a wide range of practices.

There are three approaches to understand the trans experience: open-ended, destination-driven, and the framework of a continuum. Jack Halberstam uses *trans** to describe categories around "but not confined to" gender variance. In this particular usage, transition is not defined by a destination, "a final form," or "an established configuration of desire and identity." The asterisk opens up the possibilities of transitivity.²³ In contrast, transgender identities can also be mapped on a more linear journey from a gender someone was assigned at birth against their self-recognition to a gender that they embody. The journey would cross over boundaries between binary gender roles. Offering a third approach, Howard Chiang proposes to examine not the who but the what in transgender. Inspired by Adrienne Rich's concept of a lesbian continuum, Chiang develops a structuralist model of continuum that questions even internal coherence of "transgenderism." Instead of focusing on who counts as transgender, his approach is concerned with how different factors relate to one another through the category of transgender.²⁴

Today, transgender theory analyzes the positionality of gender, principally by recognizing that gender practices have relational meanings that are contingent upon other vectors. Transgender theory examines the future and nature of gender in the lived experiences of transgender, intersex, and transsexual individuals with an eye towards the future. As Alexis Lothian surmises, "how could attempts to envisage possibilities outside [normative] structures not involve a certain futurity?"²⁵ The keyword of transgender theory is intersectional embodiment. Similar to the emergence of one feminist strand out of the women's suffrage movements, transgender theory is rooted in activism and social advocacy.²⁶ Specifically, building on the feminist movement in the 1960s–1970s, feminist literary criticism emerged alongside new historicism and cultural materialism in the 1980s and replaced New Criticism,

Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, and Poststructuralism as a new critical paradigm. Judith Butler writes, in a hopeful tone, that “if identities were no longer fixed,” a new political future “would surely emerge from the ruins of the old.”²⁷ While trans serves as an umbrella term, not all trans practices are nonbinary, fluid, or queer, and some arcs of transition are more visible than others.²⁸

CONCLUSION

At this junction, let us return to the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter: Why is *Viola as Cesario* often performed as a courageous and empowering act, but *Falstaff as the Witch of Brainford* a farcical interlude? What does the “anatomy verification” scene in *The King and the Clown* tell us about perceptions of trans feminine characters? Why is Asaji in *Throne of the Blood* (and *Lady Macbeth* in many films) often regarded as a masculinist character? Is trans masculine cross-dressing necessarily liberating? Do all-female productions of Shakespeare always emancipate characters and actors from prescriptive gender roles? While it is important to recognize that all-female productions offer more equal opportunities to women who are traditionally underrepresented in classical theater, the practice may not always succeed in deconstructing gender roles. For example, Elizabeth Klett regards all-female productions as “less challenging to normative gender ideology than selectively cross-cast productions” where “the presence of male bodies on stage” highlights the “gap between actress and character.” As a result, productions such as Deborah Warner’s National Theatre *Richard II* (1995) “made it harder for spectators to fix a stable gender identity on the actress’s anomalous embodiment of a male.”²⁹

Modern audiences tend to regard trans masculine performance as empowering, but trans feminine acts as comedy material. Examples of drag as a mockery of femininity and therefore as clownish jokes include *White Chicks* (dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans, Revolution Studios, 2004) and *Some Like It Hot* (dir. Billy Wilder, Ashton Productions, 1959). As Sawyer Kemp observes, in some cases, “male-to-female cross-casting” is used to “down-play sexist violence” or behaviors in all-male or all-female performances (e.g., all-male productions), while in other cases it leads to intended or unintended “comedic effect.”³⁰ In contrast, a cis actress’s cross-dressing is sometimes seen by second-wave feminism as liberatory and empowering. Scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s tends to interpret trans masculinity as emancipating because the act enables the female character to access male-exclusive social spaces. The act is seen to reveal gender roles as socially constructed.³¹ There is a gap between social perceptions of gender

crossing in drama and of gender transition in real life. A trans person's crossing—particularly that of trans women—is often taken by popular culture as farce, deceit, or worse, as an illegitimate act. In their widely circulated early 1990s studies, psychologists Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough still conflated sexuality with gender expression. The Bulloughs argued that trans men are motivated by gaining independence and freedom, while trans women wish to access women-only spaces for sexual titillation or “indulge” in homosexual encounters.³² In contemporary performance, “female-to-male drag” is usually considered radical or “reclamatory” of misogyny in the classics.³³

Transgender theory enables us to reclaim gender-variant performances and expand our collective archive of global Shakespeare. Multiple gendered crossings in *Throne of Blood* and *The King and the Clown*, among other works, disrupt cisgender presentation on stage and on screen. By reading narratives of flower boy actors as trans feminine and Viola/Cesario as non-binary, we build a more capacious theoretical model to elucidate not only performance histories of sexual transformation, such as Montaigne's story of Marie Germain³⁴ or Ovid's Iphis and Ianthe,³⁵ but also less explicit representations of trans practices such as double crossdressing. We could deploy transgender theories to examine other cases as well, such as the practice of cross-gender casting (Julie Taymor's 2010 film *The Tempest*), gender-bending performances (contemporary productions of Jacob Gordin's 1898 play *The Jewish Queen Lear*), and postgender adaptations, in which gender is not treated as a meaningful denominator of characterization (Michelle Terry's 2018 Globe productions). Performance theories inflected by transgender studies destabilize the line between normalcy and the deviant in and beyond scripted performance.

NOTES

1. Christy Desmet, *Reading Shakespeare's Characters: Rhetoric, Ethics, and Identity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 84–85.

2. William Shakespeare, *Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Second Edition*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3. Tsuyoshi Ono and Sandra A. Thompson, “Japanese (w)atashi/ore/boku ‘I’: They're Not Just Pronouns.” *Cognitive Linguistics* 14, no. 4 (2003): 321–47.

4. David Gramling and Aniruddha Dutta, “Introduction. Special issue on Translating Transgender.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3.3–4 (November 2016): 333–356; 334.

5. Helen Hok-Sze Leung, "Always in Translation: Trans Cinema across Languages," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3.3–4 (November 2016): 433–447; 433.

6. Having grossed \$85 million USD, *The King and the Clown* was a box-office hit. Its record rivals that of the *Titanic* in South Korea. It was seen by more than 12 million people—a quarter of Korean population.

7. Kim Tae-woong, *The Clowns*, trans. Will Kern (Carlsbad, CA: Hollym, 2013).

8. Adele Lee, Nafees Ahmed, and Antara Basu, among others, have identified key Shakespearean references in the film. Adele Lee, "The Player King and Kingly Players: Inverting *Hamlet* in Lee Joon-ik's *King and the Clown* (2005)," *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 12.1 (Fall 2018), <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/784121/show>, accessed January 10, 2020. Nafees Ahmed, "The King and the Clown (2005) Review: A Shakespearean Tragedy," *High on Films*, June 23, 2019, <https://www.highonfilms.com/the-king-and-the-clown-2005-review/>, accessed April 14, 2020. Antara Basu, "Film Review: *The King and the Clown*," *The Medium*, May 21, 2017, <https://medium.com/@antarabasu/film-review-the-king-and-the-clown-2005-c76bc6816bf1>, accessed April 30, 2020.

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11. Jeeyoung Shin, "Male Homosexuality in *The King and the Clown*: Hybrid Construction and Contested Meanings," *Journal of Korean Studies* 18.1 (Spring 2013): 89–114; 100.

12. Ch'oe Kyōnghui. "Chorong tanghal surok sesang ún chúlǵōwōjinda" [The more ridiculed, the merrier the world becomes], [www.movist.com](http://www.movist.com/article/read.asp?type=32&id=11293), December 29, 2005, <http://www.movist.com/article/read.asp?type=32&id=11293>; quoted in English in Shin, "Male Homosexuality in *The King and the Clown*," 101.

13. Timothy J. Murray, *Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera and Canvas* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 104; 106–107.

14. Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019) 4.

15. Danielle M. Seid, "Reveal," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1.1–2 (2014): 176.

16. Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion," *Hypatia* 22.3 (2007): 50, 59.

17. David Alderson, "Acting Straight: Reality TV, Gender Self-consciousness and Forms of Capital," *New Formations* 83 (2014): 7–24; John M. Clum, *Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

18. Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 89 and 109.

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27. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 1999), 189–190.

28. Lynne Bradley, *Adapting King Lear for the Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 187–188.

29. Elizabeth Klett, quoted in James C. Bulman, Introduction, *Shakespeare Re-dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 18.

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34. In a travel journal entry dated 1580, Michel de Montaigne records the transformation of Marie Germain from a village girl into a young male weaver. *The Complete works of Montaigne: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1948), 869–870.

35. Book Nine of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* depicts the Greek mythological story of Iphis. Born female but raised as a boy, Iphis—whose gender identity remains concealed—falls in love with a woman named Ianthe but is unable to marry her. Eventually Isis transforms Iphis into a man who then marries Ianthe.

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Contents

Foreword: “Appropriation and Collaboration” <i>Robert Sawyer</i>	xi
Introduction <i>Darlana Ciraulo and Matt Kozusko</i>	1
PART I: PAST	11
1 What’s in a Game?: Handy-Dandy, War, and Foreign Relations in <i>King Lear</i> <i>Jonathan Baldo</i>	13
2 Strawberry Hill: The House that <i>Hamlet</i> Built <i>Anne Williams</i>	33
3 What’s Past Is Prologue: Shakespeare the Romantic <i>Katherine Scheil</i>	47
PART II: PRESENT	67
4 Shakespeare’s Bust and the 1960s <i>Batman</i> TV Show <i>Darlana Ciraulo</i>	69
5 On the Shakespeare Trail <i>Peter Holland</i>	91
6 Shakespeare in the Dorm: The Rhetoric of Character in YouTube Shakespeare <i>Richard Finkelstein</i>	109

7	Why Are Shakespeare's Characters So "Relatable"?	125
	<i>Matt Kozusko</i>	
PART III: FUTURE		141
8	Levinas, Jessica, and Memory in Productions of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	143
	<i>Lisa S. Starks</i>	
9	Transgender Theory and Global Shakespeare	161
	<i>Alexa Alice Joubin</i>	
10	Quoting Machines: Shakespearean Things in and Beyond HBO's <i>Westworld</i>	177
	<i>Stephen O'Neill</i>	
11	On Character, Character Criticism, and <i>The King is Alive</i> : For Christy Desmet	197
	<i>Sharon O'Dair</i>	
	Afterword: Characterizing Christy Desmet	219
	<i>Sujata Iyengar</i>	
	Index	000
	About the Editor and Contributors	000

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