



The Shakespearean International Yearbook

THE SHAKESPEAREAN INTERNATIONAL YEARBOOK

**DISABILITY PERFORMANCE AND GLOBAL
SHAKESPEARE**

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incorporating and mixing it with indigenous Brazilian elements” (9). This formulation disrupts any sense that the later work is somehow indebted to a superior colonial culture.

As the book’s title would suggest, *The Tempest* features prominently in Woodford-Gormley’s analysis, beginning with Roberto Fernández Retamar’s complex and evolving relationship with the figure of Caliban. Retamar’s first invocation of the character in his 1971 essay, “Caliban,” reflects his awareness of being a champion of Latin America’s *mestizo* culture, while speaking the language of the European colonizers. By the nineties, Woodford-Gormley relates, the essay had been published so widely that Retamar felt compelled to write that he wanted to move on from his association with Caliban; by the end of the decade he had resigned himself to having captured a cultural moment.

Dramatic productions are the focus of the book, though, and Woodford-Gormley documents and analyzes engagements with four main texts: *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. This includes a feminist retelling of *Hamlet* from Ophelia’s perspective, a mash-up of *The Tempest* with other plays, whose characters are stranded on the island, or a take on *Romeo and Juliet* in which the virtues of life under the guidance of the *Comité de Defensa de la Revolución* lead to a peaceful ending to the play; for readers like myself, less familiar with theatrical productions in communist countries, the account of *Romeo y Julieta en Luyanó* provides a useful corrective for those more familiar with the reductive stereotype of “girl meets tractor” stories. Throughout these considerations, Woodford-Gormley provides a wealth of background, both historical and cultural, for a reader unfamiliar with Cuba. Even more crucially, she provides detailed histories of the companies and artists that produced the plays, frequently citing the directors’, writers’, and dramaturgs’ own descriptions of their intentions.

In contrast to Woodford-Gormley’s critical study is a collection of translations of plays. Rare in the field of global Shakespeare studies are primary materials for teaching and research. Alexa Alice Joubin’s *Sinophone Adaptations of Shakespeare: An Anthology, 1987–2007*, fills this lacuna. It is an ambitious collection, with at least three interwoven critical projects. As with much of the work undertaken by scholars and practitioners engaging with global Shakespeares, Joubin seeks to “blur the lines between central and peripheral locations of cultural production” (6), “using Asian cultural texts themselves as a methodological hub” (7). Her choice to curate a specifically regional approach to the topic is intended to break down the silos created by “narrowly defined national Shakespeares” (6) and also to dislodge the conception of “China as a homeland in a settler colonial mentality,” using the term “Sinophone [as] a more inclusive notion that points to a network of cultures” (9). The introduction is both carefully theorized

and generous in its detailing of the political and cultural conditions under which each of the chosen texts was originally created.

The works collected include fairly close translations, radically streamlined musical adaptations, a solo performance of *King Lear* that riffs on the scenes of the play, rather than presenting the full story, and a 1986 production in which Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, and Othello share each other's lines, while their stories are probed by a Modern Man. As a collection, the plays and libretti make a fascinating, varied archive, representing productions in varied styles and with varied political agendas. Yilin Chen, for example, offers a translation of Lü Po-shen's *huaju*-style musical, *The Witches' Sonata*, which Chen presents as an explicitly feminist take on *Macbeth*. The Shanghai Jingju Theater Company's *King Qi's Dream*, in contrast, puts a Confucian spin on *King Lear*.

The volume's general introduction by Joubin and the introductions to each play (some by Joubin, and others by her contributors) provide a reader possessing only a glancing knowledge of Sinophone theatrical and musical traditions with the essential cultural background to grasp how the original writers bring their own literary traditions into play with Shakespeare's texts. The translations themselves, in some cases, could give the reader a little more guidance through paratextual cues. In some of the productions that mix spoken dialogue with song, it can sometimes be difficult to tell when the singing stops and normal speech resumes.

Joubin's choice to present pairs of adaptations generates many points of productive contrast. For example, the two engagements with *Macbeth*, *The Witches' Sonata* by Lü Poshen and the *kunqu* opera *Story of Bloody Hands*, offer very different representations of Lady Macbeth. Lady Iron, as she is called in *The Story of Bloody Hands*, does not merely sleepwalk; rather, like Richard III on the eve of Bosworth, she is tormented by the ghosts of her and her husband's victims, including her sister Lady Mei (Lady Macduff). Lü's Lady Macbeth is made of sterner stuff, disarming her husband in the banquet scene. In *The Witches' Sonata* it is she who appears as a ghost, a memory haunting her husband in the brief interval between her death and his. The works collected and translated here are therefore a useful archive, and Joubin's collection is to be commended for giving these productions broader exposure.

In their *The Arden Research Handbook of Shakespeare and Contemporary Performance*, Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince have elicited from their contributors a collection of essays that examine self-consciously the question of how scholars and practitioners engage, or sometimes fail to engage, with each other's work. In the words of C. K. Ash, an independent researcher, director, and dramaturg, one goal of "this collection of interviews was to open up a two-way dialogue between academics and theatre practitioners" (245). An excellent example of this overlap is the chapter

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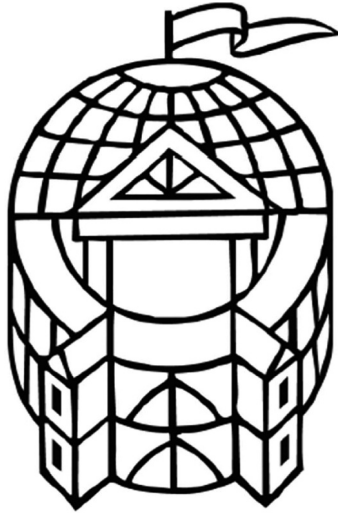
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