

Poonam Trivedi and Ryuta Minami, eds. 2009: *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*. London and New York: Routledge. 343 pp. ISBN: 0-415-99240-0.

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Poonam Trivedi and Ryuta Minami's *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* (2009) confirms that the interpretation and appropriation of Shakespeare's works in the continent has become a recurrent topic in the field of Shakespeare Studies. Proof of the scholarly interest in the reception of Shakespeare in Asia is found in the proliferation of treatises and volumes on the topic —published just before or after the book under review. The special issue of *Borrowers and Lenders, Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective* (2009), Alexander Huang's *Shakespeare in Asia, Hollywood and Cyberspace* (2009), Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan's *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance* (2010), a special issue of *Asian Theatre Journal* entitled *Asian Shakespeares 2.0* (2011), edited by Alexander Huang, and *Shakespearean Adaptations in East Asia* (2012) are cases in point.¹ With the exception of the special issue of *Borrowers and Lenders*, all these volumes focus mostly on Shakespeare on the Asian stage, and cover the areas of China, Korea and Japan. Trivedi and Minami's compilation is distinctive in its wider perspective/view of Asia —India, the Philippines, Bali, Malaysia and Taiwan are included in the volume. Yet, Trivedi and Ryuta not only explore in depth the reception of Shakespeare in Asia and how Asian societies/cultures intersect with Shakespeare, but they also subtly touch upon interculturality.

The book is neatly structured into four thematic sections: 'Re-playing Interculturality', 'Re-playing Textuality/Theatricality', 'Re-playing Ethnicity, Identity and Postcoloniality' and 'Re-playing Genre and Gender'; a seemingly appropriate division, given that the volume moves from the general —the discussion on intercultural Shakespeare— to the specific. Apart from providing an excellent summary of all the chapters included in the book, the introduction is interesting *per se*. It is challenging and groundbreaking, for it argues how intercultural borrowing is dialogic rather than a one-way process. Perhaps the book's most innovative idea is its engagement with a new kind of interculturality that has to do with the reception of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* in the different Asian locations. The introduction also contends that the category of *Asian Shakespeare* may be problematic,

¹ Unlike the rest of the volumes mentioned, *Shakespearean Adaptations in East Asia* does not consist of critical and theoretical articles on specific productions in Asian theatrical forms, but comprises twenty-five Asian adaptations of Shakespearean works translated into English.

and substantiates the editors' purpose in establishing the multiplicity of Shakespearean representations in Asia, in which heterogeneity, not hegemony, is the rule.

The first part of this collaborative project revolves around the intricacies and complexities of the term *interculturality* and the four essays contained here provide a thorough discussion of the concept. Jim Brandon inaugurates the section with his chapter 'Other Shakespeares in Asia: An Overview'. He identifies three tendencies in the trajectory followed by the majority of Asian countries in their appropriation of Shakespeare: the canonical, the indigenous and the intercultural. Although Brandon's chapter is well-meant, it falls precisely into the generalization of Shakespeare in Asia that the volume rejects in the introduction. Brian Singleton's essay is much more specific than Brandon's and concentrates on Ariane Mnouchkine's reworkings of Shakespeare —*Richard II*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Henry IV, Parts I and II*— which are highly inspired by Japanese, Indian, Chinese and Indonesian theatrical conventions. For Singleton, Mnouchkine's reworkings —in spite of being produced in the West— favour interculturalism. Trivedi's essay clearly contrasts with Singleton's, for one of Trivedi's premises is that intercultural Western adaptations of Shakespearean works inevitably become Orientalized versions. Consequently, his critique of Mnouchkine's versions is implicit. Trivedi compares two different versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Tim Supple's version (2006) and Chetan Datar's Marathi adaptation *Jungal Mein Mangal* (2004). While he strongly criticizes Supple's version on the grounds of its "orientalising" perspective —being targeted at global audiences— the author praises the Marathi adaptation because it challenges traditional stereotypes. This chapter is quite transgressive, since it interrogates the "fields of interculturalism" (7), considering the audience that a performance addresses. Co-editor Ryuta Minami closes the first section by contrasting two Japanese productions —Fukuda Tsuneari's *shingeki Hamlet* (1955) and Ninagawa Yukio's *kabuki* adaptation of *Twelfth Night*— exposing the ironies brought about in intercultural theatre. While Japanese audiences were familiar with Shakespeare, they needed to be familiarized with the traditional Japanese theatrical forms in these productions. Minami then offers a strong conclusion to the section evoking the ironies and subtleties of interculturalism, indicating that the concept is still in the early stages and deserves more discussion.

The second section of the book entitled 'Re-playing Textuality/Theatricality' bundles together four chapters which focus on the transformations that the original texts have to undergo when they are performed in other languages for other cultures. It starts with an engaging review of the performance history of Suzuki Tadashi's *King Lear*, by Ian Carruthers. In spite of the fact that intercultural productions tend to be criticized for loss in translation, Carruthers demonstrates Tadashi's script retains the heart of the play. Li Ruru's chapter provides a thorough analysis of the translation and performance of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy in six Chinese productions —three in *huaju*, or modern spoken drama, and three in *xiqu*, traditional sung theatre. Like Carruthers, she concentrates on the challenges of translating Shakespeare, this soliloquy being of particular interest since Chinese does not have an equivalent for "to be". Ruru foregrounds that the appropriations of Shakespearean plays on the Chinese stage work at an intercultural and intracultural

level. In her chapter, Yoshihara Yukari examines three Inoue Hidenori pop adaptations of Shakespeare. *Shakespeare in the Year Tempo 12* (2002), an adaptation that reduces the 37 works to one; *Metal Macbeth* (2006), influenced by manga, Hollywood film and Japan's subculture; and *Lord of the Lies* (2007), based on *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, are examples of 'un-Shakespearings' Shakespeare *par excellence*. Yukari's brilliant essay discusses the role of Shakespeare in Hidenori's adaptations and in contemporary Japanese culture, where Shakespeare is just another cultural commodity which is constantly recycled and even combined with manga, rock or kabuki. In this way the original texts are diluted to the extent that sometimes the only similarity with the original is in the title, and people may question whether this is indeed Shakespeare. Tapati Gupta closes this second section with an analysis of a production of *Romeo and Juliet* by Utpal Dutt in the Indian *jatra* tradition, called *Bhuli Nai Priya*.² As Dutt aimed to reach the masses, he 'Indianized' the names and locations, and also added postcolonial contemporizations. The whole section explores the transformation of the source texts in Chinese and Japanese cultures.

The five articles gathered together in the third part of the volume ('Re-playing Ethnicity, Identity and Postcoloniality') concentrate on lesser known imperialisms, such as those of America, Japan and Islam, to see how the "Shakespearean canon was twinned with imperial authority either in an assertion or in a resistance to it" (10). The section opens with Judy Ick's chapter, which concentrates on the Filipino director Ricardo Abad's bilingual *The Merchant of Venice / Ang Negosyante ng Venecia* (1999) and *The Taming of the Shrew / Ang Pagpapaamo sa Maldita* (2002), highlighting the fact that Abad's adaptations make use of Shakespeare to criticize American colonialism in the Philippines. Next, Kim Moran touches upon the complexity of the modern Korean condition in relation to the reception of Shakespeare via the analysis of Oh Tae-seok's *Romeo and Juliet*, an attempt to 'Koreanize' Shakespeare that hints at the conflicts between North and South Korea. Unlike other Asian countries which encountered Shakespeare via Western imperialism, the Koreans' first encounter with his work was under Japanese rule, and Shakespeare thus became a comrade in the Koreans' battle for emancipation. Nurul Farhana Low Abdullah and C.S. Lim's chapter is a valuable asset in the volume, since it is the only exploration of Shakespeare in Malaysia to date. Delving into shadow puppet theatre, the authors emphasize the combination of the *wayang kulit* — an element of Malay culture — with Shakespeare. This fusion heralds a future for *wayang kulit*, which was heading for

² Utpal Dutt was a key figure in the re-birth of Shakespeare in post-colonial India. Dutt began his encounter with Shakespeare at St. Xavier's College (Calcutta) where he performed several Shakespearean plays. He joined the Shakespeareana Company (with Geoffrey, Laura, Jennifer and Felicity Kendall, amongst others) touring India and Pakistan in 1947-48 and 1953-54. He later founded the Amateur Shakespeareans, which was later renamed Little Theatre Group. They produced many Shakespearean plays in English, namely *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Yet, Utpal Dutt is mostly remembered for his significant contribution to the re-emergence of Shakespeare in post-colonial India with his Bengali productions of Shakespeare's plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and his performances in Indian theatrical forms such as *jatra*: for instance in the 1970s he produced both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*; in the latter Dutt attacked Indira Ghandi's regime.

‘extinction’ due to the ban imposed on it by the Muslim government in the 1990s. The last two chapters in this third section both reflect on the presence of Shakespeare in Taiwan. Wu Peichen sheds light upon the difficult geopolitical situation of Taiwan through the analysis of two Shakespearean plays. Alexander Huang then concentrates on two local productions of *Romeo and Juliet* —*Zhuo Mi and Ah Luo* and *The Flower on the Other Shore*— that performed regional Chinese opera and did not tour abroad. Placed at the end of this third section, Huang’s engaging reading of these two adaptations is a springboard to a new concept of *local*. This whole section is especially useful for future research, because it extends the notion of Shakespeare as colonial baggage.

The following section, ‘Re-playing Genre and Gender’, reveals how genre and gender have to be transformed in the re-playing of Shakespearean works in Asian theatrical forms. Paromita Chakravarti and Swati Ganguly’s contribution offers an original analysis of Saibal Basu’s *Wheel of Fire* (2000), based on *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and Vikram Iyengar’s *Crossings* (2004-2005), inspired by *Macbeth*. These authors move beyond the intercultural performance to focus on the intracultural aspects of performances, mirroring Li Ruru’s chapter. Chakravarti and Ganguly explore how the performance of gender is altered by Indian theatrical and dance forms, and conclude that “Shakespeare’s texts are feminized in these dance performances” (283). In a smooth chapter that flows easily and reads well, John Emigh explores a *Macbeth* in Bali in the ancient *gambuh* theatre style, where the genre was renegotiated as a result of the Shakespearean influence and Shakespeare became the means to criticize politics. The volume is brought to a close with Beatrice Lei’s chapter on two camp productions of *Romeo and Juliet* in Taiwan. In a well-documented essay, Lei initially alludes to several Taiwanese productions of Shakespeare’s plays, later focusing on these two particular Taiwanese appropriations in which the essence of *Romeo and Juliet* is completely transformed —both productions playing it as a farce. Throughout her essay she emphasizes the constant trivialization of Shakespeare in Taiwan. Of particular interest in this section is this new view of Shakespeare, which entails more experimentation, where, alongside Inoue Hidenori’s pop adaptations mentioned in part two, the adaptations analyzed promote new, alternative and ‘free’ Shakespeares that distance themselves further and further from the source texts.

The bold strategy of the book, focusing on such a large number of appropriations of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* in the vast terrain of Asia, has its weaknesses at points. With so many reworkings, the coherence and unity of the volume as a whole is sometimes lost. *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* feels at times to be more an encyclopedia than a single treaty. The multiple approaches to the different performances in so many Asian theatrical modes may sometimes discourage the reader. Although the volume never in fact becomes incomprehensible in its use of jargon, it is clear that it is targeted at scholars with a clear knowledge of Shakespeare in Asia. If the collection had aimed to address a less erudite audience, a glossary with the different Asian theatre forms explained would need to have been included. Although the authors occasionally clarify some terms, such as *huaju*, *xiqu* or *jatra*, the characteristics and complexities of the forms would have benefited from further explanation.

Yet, curiously enough, the collection's strength resides in just this variety and wide coverage of Asian locations, since, through its broad representation of performances and countries, the book is an accessible entry point for Westerners unfamiliar with the cultures discussed. The study of Shakespeare in Taiwan —explored in several chapters— is especially innovative and enriching. The volume's index of Shakespeare's plays mentioned and alluded to throughout is also an important contribution. Characteristic of each entry is that the director of the performance, language and/or theatre form is provided. This index therefore acts as a comprehensive and extremely useful tool to learn about a specific production. Minami and Trivedi's work is also pioneering in its engagement with a different level of interculturality —intraculturality— which focuses on the differences concerning the representation of Shakespeare in the locations of Asia, demonstrating that interculturality is hardly an exhausted topic. The collection is an enlightening and up-to-date contribution to the field of Shakespeare in Asia. Its lucid and captivating articles provide a vast range of encounters between Shakespeare and Asian theatrical forms making it a compulsory collection for those interested in this growing field of studies. With their work, the authors smooth the way for future research and consolidate the need for this critical paradigm in order to arrive at a global understanding of Shakespeare.

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