

authority. The critic argues that what authenticates Shakespeare as the author of his plays is his numerous references to the art of theatre (on which Ploritis elaborates), proving a man who worked in the business as the author of the plays (rather than, say, Francis Bacon, or even the Queen herself). The second appendix is on gold or the “yellow slave” in Timon’s words (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.34). The third one focuses on madness (real or feigned) and blindness (*King Lear* and *Hamlet*). The book is also rich in material such as paintings and photographs, some of which are not to be found in most illustrated books on Shakespeare and his time. Although Ploritis does not seem to follow a particular theoretical frame (he gives the historical background of Shakespeare’s plays without really adopting a historicist point of view for his textual analysis), his work provides both general information for the average reader and a close reading of the plays to satisfy more scholarly readers, a fact which also proves his deep knowledge of Shakespeare’s work.⁶

***Re-Presenting Shakespeare: Text, Performance and Analysis.* Vol. 1. Ed. Sarbani Chaudhury. Kolkata: University of Kalyani & Macmillan, 2002. ISBN 0333 93816x. Pp. Xx+78. Price Rs. 98.00**

***Re-Presenting Shakespeare: Interpretations and Translations.* Ed. Sarbani Chaudhury. Kalyani: University of Kalyani, 2002. ISBN 81-901525-1-3. Pp. 128. Price Rs. 150.00**

Review by MITALI GANGOPADHYAY

Edited by Sarbani Chaudhury, Professor in the Department of English, University of Kalyani, the two books, *Re-presenting Shakespeare: Text, Performance and Analysis* (Vol. 1, 2002) and *Re-presenting Shakespeare: Interpretations and Translations* (Vol. 2, 2002) have opened new vistas in our appreciation of Shakespeare in the world today. The first book, *Re-presenting Shakespeare: Text, Performance and Analysis* is a compilation of lectures presented at an international seminar organised by the Department of English, University of Kalyani in 2001. The second book, *Re-presenting Shakespeare: Interpretations and Translations*, described as a “sequel” by Chaudhury, possibly stands as an

⁶ Marios Ploritis has taught Shakespeare at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens, Greece.

evidence of that inspired motivation among the contributors who “responded so readily” to her “call for papers” (7). It is this frenzy to deconstruct Shakespeare, to re-investigate and re-present the bard in newer modes and contexts that make the two compilations follow each other with such interest and immediacy in the same year.

Comprising nine articles, Vol. 1 takes up the challenge to subvert the notion of a homogeneous English Shakespeare, thus dispossessing the British of their prerogative to singularly uphold and monopolise the legacy of Shakespeareana over the ages. This book aggressively breaks through the notion of an essential Shakespeare and unequivocally shares and asserts with the post-1980 Shakespeare Studies, the non-homogeneity and plurality of Shakespeare. The subject of this compilation is appropriation, adaptation and re-presentation of Shakespeare all around the globe. The thrust area of this volume is the negotiation between literal criticism and performance-oriented studies of Shakespearean plays. As textual analysis continues to dominate, performance analysis of Shakespeare’s plays suffer neglect in academic studies. This collection makes a valiant effort to decode the non-verbal signs of Shakespearean texts by highlighting the spatial significance of the stage.

The sequel, Vol. 2, crosses the confines of the stage to situate Shakespearean texts in a socio-cultural context, especially contextualising Shakespeare in India. It is neatly split into three sections, “Interpretations”, “Young Voices on *Midsummer*” and “Translations”, to distinguish between the academic scholars’, young students’ and theatre persons’ diverse approaches to Shakespeare. From the wide spectrum of stage space offered by the first book, the sequel leads us to a wider space rooted in history and culture of the Indian nation, thus bringing up questions regarding the “identity”, “ideology” and “plurality” of Shakespeare. In an attempt to re-interpret Shakespeare from colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial standpoints, the book is in keeping with the increasing interest in Shakespeare Studies in India since the 1980s. The contemporaneity of both the volumes, their ability to bring together the diverse strains of post-1980 literary theories and their application to Shakespeare, demand appreciation.

Shakespearean criticism is mostly preoccupied with the play as a structure of words. Little light is thrown on the stage as an instrument of signification. Tirthankar Bose’s essay, “A Grammar of Space: Stage Images in Shakespeare” in Vol. 1 (1–10) regards theatre as a multi-textual art and focuses on the semiotic value of the physical elements of the stage. Bose asserts that the written text is necessarily fixed in its meaning and experience; only when it is interpreted by gesture, voice, posture of the actor and stage composition that it becomes a theatre. The essay, therefore, throws light on the language of the theatre, a composite language made up of the verbal text and the spatial configurations of the stage. Theatre as a performance text is more elaborately discussed by

Abhijit Sen in the next essay, “From Page to Stage: Shakespeare in the Theatre” (11–19). Sen traces the changes in the tradition of Shakespearean stage performances from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. Throwing light on the emergence of performance theories in the twentieth century, Sen argues how the director, set-designer, costumier have introduced a new “interpretative” approach to the Shakespearean text. The essay, however, does not merely privilege the director as the maker/interpreter of the meaning of a play, but asserts that the success of a performance depends on the responsiveness of the audience. Thus, we move gradually from the actor-oriented theory, as exemplified by Bose in the first essay to an audience-centric criticism of Shakespearean plays, as argued by Sen in the second article.

Ashok Mukhopadhyay’s essay, “A Note on the Problem of Translating Plays” (Vol. 1, 20–24) deals with the practical problems of enacting Shakespeare in translation, which according to the author, originate from the problems involved in understanding the multiple layers of meaning as contained in the plays. Seen from the point of view of content, this essay should have been more suitably included in “Translations”, the concluding section of the sequel, *Re-presenting Shakespeare: Interpretations and Translations*. However, being the only essay in the volume that discusses Shakespeare from the point of view of a translator and an actor-director, it offers a remarkable variety of thought and purpose. More significantly, when compared to Basudeb Chakraborti’s article “Girish Ghose’s Re-presentation of Shakespeare in Bengali: A Study of *Macbeth*, Act One, Scene One”, which appears in Vol. 2 (107–14), we get two divergent standpoints. Mukhopadhyay, who is an academician, a translator and a theatre activist, distinguishes between the role of a reader and an audience, thereby enlightening us with a pragmatic and concrete view of stage performances of Shakespeare translations. Chakraborti, in contrast, offers us a scholarly linguistic reading of Girish Ghosh’s Bengali translation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Whereas Mukhopadhyay follows an orthodox notion of showing fidelity to the original text, Chakraborti argues that cultural and linguistic differences between the original and the translated text make translation a difficult endeavour. Further, Mukhopadhyay’s own Bengali translation of the witches’ scene in *Macbeth* can be studied with certain scenes translated from the same play by Girish Chandra Ghose (115–19), Jatindra Nath Sengupta (120–23) and Duttatreya Dutta (124–28), which appear at the end of Vol. 2. Besides localising Shakespeare in Bengal, these translations together, offer a dialogic, focusing on the subtle differences of reading and translating Shakespeare by professionals ranging from playwrights to poets, academicians to theatre activists.

The cinematic representation of Shakespeare is explored by Amitava Roy in “Shakespeare and the Filmic Imagination” (Vol. 1, 25–30) and Piyas Chakraborti

in “‘Much Ado About Nothing’: A Study of Race and Gender in Branagh’s Adaptation of Shakespeare’s Text in his Movie” (Vol. 2, 86–90). These two essays can be seen as complementary to each other, the former providing the poetics of filmic imagination, and the latter, presenting a case study of Branagh’s cinematic presentation of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. Though Roy illustrates the art and craft of scripting film scenarios in Shakespeare, Webster, and Milton, thus attempting to capture the filmic imagination in the Renaissance, the essay somewhat fails to explore the intricacies of transactions between text, stage and screen. However, in her foreword to the first volume the editor tries to supplement Roy’s efforts by offering to enlighten the readers with a quick and brief cataloguing of successful film productions of Shakespeare. Chakraborti’s essay, in contrast, attempts to bring the text and the screen under critical observation, thereby comparing certain important scenes of *Much Ado About Nothing* with their cinematic counterparts. The author shows that drawing heavily on various Hollywood codes, Branagh creates the screen-impact of racial discrimination and gender equations operating at the heart of the text.

Huck Gutman’s “Re-presenting Shakespeare: The Impact of Electronic Technology” (31–34) and Swapan Chakravorty’s “This Sad Interim: Shakespeare in the Indian Classroom” (35–45), appear in Vol. 1 and focus on the dissemination of Shakespearean texts in the classroom. Gutman points to a revolutionary change taking place in the American classroom with an increased access to technologically advanced settings, from movies to television to VCRs and now to DVDs. In contrast, Chakravorty addresses the ideological issues involved in teaching Shakespeare in the Indian classroom, emphasising on the need to resist the domination of Western hegemony by locating the plays in the larger post-colonial context of India. Though Gutman’s brief essay overlooks much of the technological intricacies which have transformed American culture, it offers an insight into the pedagogical practices of the West, where textual approaches are fast losing their centrality as electronic re-presentation of Shakespeare is gaining prominence. Whereas Western classroom teaching stands the risk of losing contact with the enriched literal text of Shakespeare, Chakravorty’s essay implies a fruitful assimilation of the bard through a creative absorption of the text, without surrendering to the neo-colonial legacy of the British hegemony.

Manish K. Chowdhury and Manojit Mandal’s essays on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* present an “alternative” reading of Shakespeare in India, by pushing the Western critical apparatus to the periphery and valorising the postcolonial Other, thus focusing on the non-traditional, non-canonical interpretations of Shakespeare. “‘The Tempest’: Problematics of Meaning” (Vol. 1, 46–53) by Manish K. Chowdhury is a nationalist reading of the Prospero-Caliban conflict, condemning aggressively the imperialist projection of thought in the play by the use

of images, myths, symbols, norms and perspectives. Manojit Mandal's essay, "Prospero's Play, or the Manifesto of a 'Deformed Slave'? Contesting Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from a (Post)-Colonised Perspective", which appears in Vol. 2 (32–40), offers a more localised reading of Shakespeare by highlighting the divergent critical responses of two renowned Bengali literary figures, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore in their reading of *The Tempest*. We find a similarity of ideas when we compare Mandal's essay with Swapan Chakravorty's "This Sad Interim: Shakespeare in the Indian Classroom" (Vol. 1) as both the writers have valorised the Bengali poet laureate, Rabindranath Tagore's counter-readings of Shakespeare. However, both Chowdhury and Mandal's essays on *The Tempest*, laced with strong subjectivity and fiery outrage, serve to promote an Indian re-interpretation of Shakespearean texts, while failing to generate a cross-cultural, cross-border reading of Shakespeare.

Gender consciousness has given rise to a new perspective in the appreciation of Shakespeare. Pralay Kumar Deb's "Witches and Lady Macbeth: Points of View" (54–58), Swati Ganguli's "Women and Shakespeare: 'I am not that I play'" (59–76) in Vol. 1 and Md. Manirul Islam and Subhajyoti Sadhukhan's essays on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Vol. 2 (99–100; 101–03) encourage a gendered reading of Shakespearean plays. Deb's identification of the roles of Lady Macbeth and the witches as resistant to orthodox patriarchal domination in the text, probes the feminist concerns existent in the play. Ganguli's article on the other hand, throws light on the complex relation between representation of women in Shakespeare's plays and the social reality of their existence. In re-evaluating the major Shakespearean tragedies and comedies as studies of male anxiety and regulation of female sexuality, she triumphantly explodes the myth that Shakespeare glorifies the heroines of his comedies. Whereas Deb's article traces the divergent perspectives of literary critics in investigating the relationship between Lady Macbeth and the witches, thus lacking any subjective argumentative assertion, Ganguli positions herself as a Third World woman reader of Shakespeare and argues both with zeal and confidence. Islam's essay "Patriarchy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" and Sadhukhan's "Gender in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" are included in a separate section in Vol. 2, under the heading "Young Voices on *Midsummer*". The distinctiveness of these two articles lies in their being written by young students of English literature. These articles may not be scholarly unlike those written by the academicians, critics and Shakespearean scholars in these two volumes, but nonetheless in exploration of gender equations and sexual politics, they show the Indian students' critical responses to Shakespeare.

Not gender perspective alone, Pralay Kumar Deb's second article, "Iago's Motive(s)" in Vol. 2 (53–56), explores also the racial perspective in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Situating *Othello* within the context of the socio-economic

power relations of Renaissance England, he shows how Iago's love for Desdemona is essentially racial, whereby he becomes the "protector" of all white women, thus positioning Othello as the "other" in the text. Both the essays by Deb, "Witches and Lady Macbeth: Points of View" (Vol. 1) and "Iago's Motive(s)" trace the critical tradition of the past and the present to establish his argument, and bear testimony to his immense scholarship.

Whereas Vol. 1 of *Re-presenting Shakespeare* predominantly focuses on the tragedies, Vol. 2 offers space for almost all genres, tragedy, comedy, tragic-comedy, history plays and problem plays of Shakespeare. Anuradha Mukherjee's "Wrestling with Genres in *The Taming of the Shrew*" (Vol. 2, 62–68) questions the strict genre divisions which classify Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* as a comedy and shows that since the nineteenth century movements for women's liberation, it has frequently been turned into a problem play, thus revealing the serious tragic content underlying the farcical actions of the play. Whereas Mukherjee challenges the rigid compartmentalisation of Shakespearean plays into generic divisions, Parbati Charan Chakraborty's "*The Winter's Tale*: Towards a Note of Integration" (Vol. 2, 69–74) traces a common symbolic theme and purpose which binds the last plays of Shakespeare in an artistic unity. By differing from Lytton Strachey's assertion that the last plays of Shakespeare evoke a sense of boredom and bitterness, the writer points to the integration and symphony which are the focal points of these plays. A similar unity in the early and the middle comedies of Shakespeare is identified by Sarbani Putatunda in her article, "Co-relating Shakespeare: The Early and the Middle Comedies" (Vol. 2, 75–80). Scanning the critical theories of the late 1970s feminists, new historicists and cultural materialists, the writer points out that though perspectives vary, the basic values remain unchanged, thus forming a link between Shakespeare's early and middle comedies. Whereas Mukherjee is all set to flout the essentialist generic classification of Shakespeare's plays and regard them as independent texts, Chakraborty and Patatunda harp on integration and universality and trace the unifying bond in Shakespeare's comedies. This comparative study makes the articles a rich amalgam of diverse perspectives.

Two history plays, *Henry V* and *Richard II*, are explored by Sarbani Chaudhury and Priyanka Basu in their respective articles in Vol. 2. Whereas Chaudhury's essay "Englishing the Colonies in Shakespeare's *Henry V*" (41–52) takes up a discourse study of Shakespeare's English, "Reading/Counter-Reading: Historical Criticism of Shakespeare's Plays Since 1944" by Basu (91–96) is a vivid study of the different modes of historical criticism of Shakespeare's plays. Chaudhury challenges and subverts the notion of a homogeneous language used in Shakespearean texts and collectively labelled as "Shakespeare's English". Her article illustrates how the use of "pure" and "dialectical" versions of the English language underlines the existence of a fractured nationalist-

-colonialist discourse in *Henry V*. Basu's essay is a critique of the Anglo-American scholars of Shakespeare and traces the extra-literary concerns which shape the formulations of these critics. As the title suggests, her essay is a counter-reading of the centre by the margin, thus serving to generate an indigenous Shakespearean scholarship by adopting the methods of new historicism.

Though the thrust area of Vol. 2 is primarily the Indianisation of Shakespeare, the first essay of the volume, "Polish Shakespeare Representations: Selected Issues" by Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney (19–31), presents us with the "Polish Shakespeare" and the wide extension of Shakespeare Studies in Poland. The author not only traces the popularity of Polish translations and productions of Shakespearean theatre over a period ranging from the late sixteenth century to the present, but also focuses on Shakespeare's role in shaping the national identity of Poland and emerging as a cultural icon. This essay familiarises the Indian readers with an unknown sphere of Shakespearean influence in Poland, and when read with the host of other essays in this volume, can offer a scope for comparative study between Shakespeare Studies in Poland and India.

On a different track, two essays in Vol. 2, Tirthankar Chattopadhyay's "Merely Players: The Roles that Characters in *King Lear* Play" (57–61) and B. G. Tandon's "Offstage Action in the Plays of Shakespeare" (81–85) can be studied as a journey from text-based approach to a production-oriented criticism. In his close reading of *King Lear*, Chattopadhyay analyses the multiple roles that the characters play in the text and delineates how the interplay of concealment and revelation is one of the interesting motifs of the play. Tandon, on the other hand, looks at the stagecraft in Shakespeare, which is less commented upon by the critics, and throws light on an aspect which has not been touched upon by any other contributor in the course of the two volumes. With a list of onstage and offstage presentations chosen from a cross-section of Shakespearean plays, he points out how Shakespeare transcends the limitations of the constructed theoretical norms.

Both the volumes of *Re-presenting Shakespeare* are conditioned by different locational and historical parameters, encompassing far-off boundaries, cultures and languages, thereby rejuvenating the spirit of the sixteenth century English dramatist in a globalised academic world. Most of the contributors belong to the rarified academic circle, specialising in Shakespeare studies, and the editor timely reminds us in her foreword to the second volume, that most of the articles in these collections are "peer-reviewed" (14). No wonder then that a majority of the essays smack of professional specialisation, revolving around an ability to master and apply critical literary theories, like, feminism, reader-response criticism, cultural materialism, new historicism, performance criticism, post-colonialism in the study of Shakespeare. One is thus tempted to question, is "re-

presenting” Shakespeare just another name for “re-presenting” theories, and if so, where lies the real essence of Shakespeare – in the playhouses amidst public domain, or, in the exchange of literary theories in scholarly conferences? The editor’s assertion, “Shakespeare, is no longer the prerogative of the academics alone” (ix) is however, not adequately supplemented by the essays anthologised, though Huck Gutman’s “Re-presenting Shakespeare: The Impact of Electronic Technology”, the problems of translating Shakespeare discussed by Ashok Mukhopadhyay, and the Bengali translations by several hands, assure us of Shakespeare’s immortal engagement with the readers and the audience beyond the jargons of literary theories. Vishal Bharadwaj’s films, *Maqbool* (2004), an Indian version of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, and *Omkara* (2006), an interpretation of *Othello*, and their box office records show how Shakespeare continues to appeal to the ordinary masses in India. Common people can certainly get closer to Shakespeare by watching these movies; while Mary Thomas Crane’s insights into cognitive neuroscience explaining the structures and categories of words in Shakespeare in her book, *Shakespeare’s Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (2001), will reach out only to a section of elite academic readers.

An author index diligently tagged at the end of the first volume (77–78) is conspicuously absent in the second, probably due to the hasty publication of the second volume. Also, a brief biography of the Bengali men of letters, who have been so frequently referred to by the essayists in their attempt to localise Shakespeare, could have facilitated the understanding of the Bengali literary traditions, to readers not only outside Bengal, but also outside India. Each article in Vol. 2 has a helpful and elaborate list of “Works Cited” at the end, which is missing in Vol. 1.

With their multiple perspectives, receptions, responses and re-presentation, both the volumes of *Re-presenting Shakespeare* challenge the traditional modes of Shakespeare appreciation and break grounds in formulating new strategies and revolutionary methods of sharpening our literary sensibilities and attaining adulthood in our negotiations with Shakespeare. The domain of Shakespeare Studies around the globe should be indebted to the editor’s enthusiastic as well as strenuous efforts to publish the two volumes within a span of three months. Shakespeare criticism, in these two compilations, acquires great heights of novelty and maturity.

Works cited

- Crane, M. T. *Shakespeare’s Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.