

Introduction

Almost twenty years ago the British Council funded my participation in the Cambridge International School. One weekend the organizers took us to Stratford-upon-Avon to see a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Since we had some time off, I tried to contact Professor Philip Brockbank, who was then the Director of The Shakespeare Institute where I had studied as a British Council student. At that time he did not feel very well, so he invited me to visit him at home. The day was chilly and a fire-place threw reflections on the walls of his sitting-room. We talked about Poland, which was still under martial law and about Shakespeare. At one point Professor Brockbank asked if I would like to play a game with him.

He produced a big photograph album that he had apparently received from his Chinese colleagues. The photographs presented almost all of Shakespeare's plays as they were staged in China. I was to guess which play each of the pictures represented. At first the pictures overwhelmed me with their colours, hyperbolic gestures and exotic costumes – kimonos, meticulously arranged chignons, large hairpins and faces with distinctive make-up. Though the culture which produced Shakespeare's plays was alien to my limited Communist experience of the world, I won the game, since I could easily recognize all the characters and situations that the pictures showed. There were: melancholy Hamlet contemplating a skull, the angry face of Leontes accusing Heromione of infidelity, Romeo and Juliet celebrating their first meeting with a sonnet and violent Queen Margaret crowning Warwick with a bloody crown. Photograph after photograph, I was discovering the intercultural penetration, the circulatory flow of cultures in the name of a universal Shakespeare.

Since all theatrical stagings constitute a form of appropriation, the pictures of the Chinese players showed that they derived their worldwide meaning of Shakespeare from their local national identity. When in 1992 Terence Hawkes succinctly expressed his conviction that Shakespeare does not mean

but that rather “we mean by Shakespeare” (1992: 3), he was, in my opinion, stating that since any meaning changes with context, Shakespeare has, if anything, more meanings that we can yet imagine. Even a quick survey of the latest publications indicate his presence in all the possible venues of culture – elitist and popular – all over the world. The issue of Shakespeare’s appropriation constitutes the subject of *Shakespeare and National Culture* edited by J. J. Joughin (1997). *Japanese Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* edited by Yoshiko Kawachi shows Shakespeares as thoroughly “Japanized” and recontextualized in every way, reflecting local concerns and themes. *Russian Essays on Shakespeare* edited by Alexander Parfenov and Joseph G. Price (1998) explain the origins of Shakespeare’s significance to Russian theatre and the nineteenth century as well as his pervasive influence through decades of communism. “*O Brave New World*”: *Two Centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian Stage* (2001) edited by John Golder and Richard Madelaine locates Shakespeare in the context of Australian reality. *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe* (2003) edited by Louis Pujante and Ton Hoenselars proves that Shakespeare has been the property of various European cultures while *The Globalization of Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* edited by Krystyna Kujawska Courtney and John Mercer (2003) illustrate how throughout the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was used for many different purposes.

Concentrating on the worldwide (Australian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Spanish, Romanian, Russian and Taiwanese) interpretation and generation of meanings derived from national appropriations/subversions of Shakespeare’s works, the authors of this issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare* present the problematics of cultural transactions from various perspectives. Though the three main vistas of this annual publication (translation, appropriation, performance) are preserved, none of the essays addresses them exclusively from one thematic viewpoint. In fact, in addition to Shakespeare himself one main subject prevails: the political, social and cultural presentation of the nation of each of the essays’ author that has been inscribed and reinscribed in Shakespeare’s name and has given the latter its distinctive local flavour.

The essays are not divided into parts or sections because all of them illustrate one ongoing theme: all over the world various nations identify, define and assert their own national values and concerns by constantly refashioning Shakespeare outside the boundaries of his national British habitat. The opening essay is of special significance, since it is the last work of the late Professor Jose M. Ruiz. In “The Translation of Shakespeare into Spanish,” Ruiz not only gives a general survey Spanish translations, but he also makes references to the most eminent Spanish critical commentaries and analyses of Shakespeare. Since *Hamlet* is one of the most representative

and most frequently translated Shakespeare's plays into Spanish, the essay devotes much space to its history in Spanish culture. The work concludes with two appendices: the first demonstrates the earliest and the latest translations of Shakespeare's plays, while the second shows all Spanish translations of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

The following work "Chinese Hamlets: A Centenary Review" presents Chinese renditions of Shakespeare (paraphrases, translations of his works and theatrical adaptations) on the basis of one play – *Hamlet*. In his erudite essay Ching-His Perng acquaints his readers with impressive archival and critical material representing not only Western thought but also original Chinese opinions taken from philosophy, religion, history, culture and theatre studies. "Cultural Transformation and Linguistic Transfer: Chinese Transplant of Shakespeare" examines selected translations of Shakespeare's works into Chinese. Though its author, Lingui Yang, explores their validity against a profound context of current poststructural theories and cognitive psychology, he also shows an impressive command of Chinese politics and history.

"Shakespeare in Japan" by Yoshiko Kawachi acquaints her readers with the rich historical reception of Shakespeare in Japanese culture. Against a comprehensive historical background, she presents the most significant events in his appropriation, including the translations of his works, their popularization by newspapers and their adaptations by creative writers. Kawachi also devotes some space to Akira Kurosawa's cinematic renditions of Shakespeare's plays in which he used various traditional Japanese theatrical techniques. In a way her work enters into a dialogue with the ensuing essays, since they also attempt to give an overall picture of a national response to Shakespeare's presence in their culture and their culture's response to that presence.

Concentrating on the Romanian interpretation of the appropriation of Shakespeare's works, the authors of the next two essays, Eugenia Gavriliu and Monica Matei Chestnoiu reveal the problematics of cultural circulation from two different perspectives. In "Shakespeare As an Intellectual Challenge in Early Modern Romanian Culture" Gavriliu locates the initial Romanian encounters with Shakespeare within a larger framework of the paradigm of Western appropriation. Since in Romania his works inaugurated modernity, his cultural capital stimulated and reinvigorated the nation's creative originality and intellectual vitality. "Though Art Translated": *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Translations of Culture in Romania" written by Matei Chestnoiu examines the history of the Romanian translations of Shakespeare's above mentioned play from a historical, linguistic theatrical and cultural perspective. Her survey confirms the dictum that each culture requires its own modern translation of Shakespeare: the

translation that “speaks” to its readers as they are in a specific political, social and cultural moment.

In “The Main Trends in Russian Shakespeare Criticism: 1960–1980,” Mark Sokolyanski reveals that during the Soviet Communist regime Shakespeare played a distinctive cultural role owing to the efforts of such luminaries as Alexander Anikst, Leonid Pinsky and Grigorij Kozintsev. Since their works circulated all over the Soviet Republics, their achievements in Shakespeare studies influenced not only the Russian culture but also many others. Their presence can be detected in the scholarly and theatrical works in, for example, Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltic Republics. Sarbani Chaudhury’s “Circumscribed by Words: The Textual Experience in *Titus Andronicus*” serves as an example of current Indian criticism devoted to Shakespeare’s plays. Discussing selected issues of textuality in *Titus Andronicus*, Chaudhury devotes some space to the issues of race, gender and vengeance.

The last two essays are devoted to the issues of teaching Shakespeare at a university and high school level. Both authors share their personal experience of classroom situations. “Compiling A Shakespeare Dictionary for Chinese Students,” presents Liu Bingshan’s fascination with Shakespeare, a passion that he successfully passes on to his Chinese students, who must struggle not only with an alien British culture, but also with an alien language. Though Kay Elsdon teaches in Australia, in her essay “‘They Did Things Differently Back Then’: The Problematics of Teaching Texts and Their Historical Co/n/texts” she shows that the problems she encounters as a teacher are similar to Bingshan’s. Keeping herself abreast of an endless stream of scholarly interpretations and re-interpretations, she discloses the pedagogical techniques and methods that allow her to generate interest and sometimes delight with Shakespeare’s texts among her students through her daily teaching.

In this issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation, Performance*, s readers may also find a new section entitled “Book Reviews” compiled by Sarbani Chaudhury. The other regular section of our publication, “Theatre Reviews,” is in preparation and we hope that it will appear as a regular feature from Volume Three onwards.

With the encouragement of Shakespeare scholars from all over the world, we plan to publish thematic volumes.

The first of them – Volume Six – will be devoted to the worldwide contribution of women to Shakespeare studies, focusing on their frequently neglected role as players, scholars, translators and teachers. The essay submission deadline for this thematic volume in January 30, 2007.

Finally Professor Kawachi and I would like to thank you very much for all your comments and advice, and we hope that our friendly cooperation

will satisfy with time the requirements, needs and interests of the international Shakespeare community. Our flowing, circulatory system of national experiences “with Shakespeare” and the interplay of his local translations, appropriation and performance is one of the contributions to the ongoing world process known as Shakespeare: the global phenomenon.

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