

Shakespearean Performance as a Multilingual Event: Alterity, Authenticity, Liminality

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... why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?
Macbeth 1.3.108–9²

The age of global Shakespeare 2.0 has arrived. It is an age in which national and transnational performances become self-conscious of the contact zone they inhabit, where dramatic meanings are co-determined by linguistic cohesion and pluralism. If Jacques Derrida's theory of translation makes all writing inherently multilingual, Shakespeare performances as multilingual events at home and abroad complicate the idea of translation and cultural difference. The business of performing Shakespeare has grown into a multilingual affair since the 1990s, as transnational connections and touring have become not only more desirable but necessary for artistic inspiration and success.

In order to address these issues, two frames of reference are useful here: ethnic American performances in New York and international festivals in London. This essay comprises one case study of each of these: John R. Briggs's *Shogun Macbeth* (1985) and the London Globe's multilingual World Shakespeare Festival, which was timed to coincide with the 2012 Olympics. Each of these frames of reference shows how meanings, both intended and unintended, are generated as a result of the shifting cultural and linguistic tensions that inhabit translated Shakespeare from Asian-American to

post-imperial British cosmopolitan identities. This hermeneutic is informed not just by the original play, but also by the adaptor's intent, the improvisation and identities of performers, the economics of touring, and the population shifts apparent in the audience, as well as divergent perceptions of intercultural identities.

Multilingual Shakespeare is a boomerang business, inasmuch as it has been transformed from Britain's export to import industry. As touring and transnational productions become a staple of the entertainment industry, translated, bilingual, and multilingual works take centre stage. To celebrate the London Olympics in 2012 and as part of the Cultural Olympiad, the London Globe launched a multilingual Shakespeare project to stage each of the plays in a different language in a single season (thirty-eight in total). Shakespearean plays in translation and adaptation have also inspired English-language performances. John Briggs's English-language play, *Shogun Macbeth*, drew upon Akira Kurosawa's film *The Throne of Blood*, Japanese *kyôgen* comic tradition, Asian-American sensibility, and Shakespeare's language. Even though Briggs's play is in English, its multilingual roots are clearly marked by its sources (Shakespeare and Kurosawa), its performance style, and Pan Asian Repertory Theatre's engagement with notions of otherness and issues of diaspora. Farther afield, numerous productions were designed with multilingual festival audiences in mind, blurring the distinctions between hometown and foreign performances. Kuwaiti-British playwright and director Sulayman Al-Bassam's *The Al-Hamlet Summit* had both English and Arabic versions for touring purposes and demonstrated a keen awareness of the demands and perils of addressing multiple constituencies in one single work. Other artists have experimented with multiple languages within the same production. Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen's pan-Asian *Lear* was performed in multiple Asian languages and theatrical styles to interrogate the fiction of cultural coherence and the issue of inequality in cultural globalization.

This chapter examines the US and UK assumptions behind the production of Shakespeare in multilingual contexts and the patterns of reception, with an emphasis on how cultural authenticity and alterity are reconstructed in the liminal space between languages – a postnational space constructed by festival venues where national identities are blurred by the presence of such entities as transnational corporate sponsors. The organizing principles of London's Cultural Olympiad suggest that beyond the symbolic value of the

global at the Globe Theatre, both the celebrated and contrived visions of otherness in Shakespeare as a multilingual event can increase the production value and help to construct a national identity just as the Olympics do. Subsumed under Shakespeare's purported universality, otherness ceases to function as a marker of cultural difference. The space between nations and between languages compels us to rethink Shakespeare's place in today's world, a world dominated by non-Anglophone nations and cultures.

AGENCY, LANGUAGE,
AND CULTURAL AFFILIATION

Multilingual Shakespeares put pressure on some of the theoretical models theatre historians have privileged in their documentation of the Western sources of non-Western performances. Some of these touring theatre works are produced under circumstances that may prove challenging or alienating to even the most cosmopolitan audiences. The alienating experience serves important sociocultural and aesthetic functions, and capturing the experience as it unfolds in its shifting cultural location can help us move from narratives driven by political geographies to histories informed by theatrical localities – the variegated locations embodied by touring performances. There are three recurrent themes in the production, touring, and reception of multilingual Shakespeares.

First, the cultural and political conditions of a venue or a production intervene in reception and undercut the work of artistic intent. This genre of stage works is shaped by forms of agency that are not rooted in intentionality. Second, in Shakespearean performance, language is often granted more agency than the materiality of performance, leading to the tendency to privilege certain modernized and editorialized versions of Shakespearean scripts and their accurate reproduction in foreign-language performances. The humanities over the past century have witnessed the so-called linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, and the cultural turn, all of which operate on assumptions about the substantial and substantializing power of language as opposed to the materiality of cultural representation. As opposed to other forms of embodiment, language as a marker is deeply ingrained in identity politics. Language is a tool of empowerment to create solidarity, but it can also be divisive at international festivals, where audience members who do not have access to the

immediacy of the spoken language on stage might feel alienated or excluded. Third, non-Western Shakespeare productions that tour to major venues in the West, particularly in the U.K., reflect shifting locational terrains of performative meanings that – unlike nationalist imaginations of Shakespeare – do not always correspond to the performers’ and audiences’ cultural affiliations. The systemic mutations in the politics of cultural production and compression of time and space engender variegated, layered subject positions. These three issues of politics, language, and performative cultural affiliations inform the reception of Shakespeare in multilingual contexts.

MULTILINGUAL SHAKESPEARES IN NEW YORK

John R. Briggs combines both approaches when he brings the Scottish play, Kurosawa, and Asian America together in his *Shogun Macbeth* (1985), a play in English (interspersed with a great number of Shakespearean lines) set on the island of Honshu in Kamakura Japan (1192–1333). Japanese titles or forms of address replace Shakespeare’s originals: the Maruyama [Birnam] Wood moves to Higashiyama [Dunsinane]; Thane of Cawdor becomes Ryoshu of Akita; bottom-lit *bunraku* puppets as ghosts are summoned by the witches; “the best of the *ninja*” are the Murderers; and the Porter scene morphs into a *kyôgen* comic interlude performed by a pair of drunken gatekeepers. The emergence of a work such as *Shogun Macbeth* coincided with Japan’s rising economic influence in the U.S. in the 1980s and American theatre’s continued interest in select Japanese cultural tokens in the new millennium. Briggs notes with enthusiasm the “world-wide rebirth” of Japanese culture that fed into American fascination with “all things Japanese, especially things samurai.”³ As a “samurai” film, *Throne of Blood* has been so successful that it has been cited as inspiration for new works beyond Asia, including Briggs’s play, Alwin Bully’s Jamaican adaptation (1998), Arne Zaslove’s stage production (1990), and Aleta Chappelle’s proposed Caribbean film *Macbett* (2010). In contrast to *The Throne of Blood*, which uses *Macbeth* as a launching pad for cinematic experiments, *Shogun Macbeth*, as an American play, deploys fragmented Japanese performance culture to rescue Shakespeare from what Peter Brook has called “cold, correct, literary, untheatrical” interpretations that make “no emotional impact on the average spectator” in a time when “far too large a proportion of intelligent playgoers know their

Shakespeare too well [to be willing to] suspend disbelief which any naïve spectator can bring.”⁴

Regarded as a “Kurosawa-lite adaptation,” in both the positive and negative senses of the phrase,⁵ *Shogun Macbeth* was first staged at the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas in 1985, then by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in 1986 (also directed by Briggs). The play has also been performed by non-Asian groups, including a San Francisco State University production directed by Yukihiro Goto in 1992 and The Woodlands High School production directed by Carlen Gilseth at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2003.⁶ It was revived in New York in November, 2008, again by the Pan Asian Repertory (directed by Ernest Abuba, who had played the title role in 1986), with a cast of white and Asian-American performers.

The curtain opened to reveal a minimalist stage set cast in ominous green light. All of the action took place in front of an eight-foot statue of Buddha behind a Torii gate (a traditional gate commonly found at the entry to a Shinto shrine), a statue that seemed to look down at the dramatic events with a sense of aloofness, a transcendental indifference; this Buddhist reference informed the framework of the narrative. Biwa Hoshi (Tom Matsusaka), an itinerant blind priest and narrator, opened the production with a powerful delivery of lines from the *Sutra* that echoed the ideas of fourteenth-century *noh* playwright Zeami (*Atsumori*) and anticipated some of Macbeth’s later lines:

Biwa: Life is a lying dream, he only wakes who casts the world aside. The bell of the Gion Temple tolls into every man’s heart to warn him that all is vanity and evanescence.⁷

Macbeth: Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.

It is a tale told by an idiot; full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing.⁸

(see *Macbeth* 5.5.23–8)

Fujin Macbeth (Lady Macbeth; Rosanne Ma) walked the stage in *kimono*, while most characters carried *katanas*. The three white-faced *yojos* (weird sisters) in Day-Glo wigs and *kabuki* makeup played a major role throughout the performance, as they manipulated and channelled events and news. Briggs intended “all horrible

events or negativity” to spring from the *yojos*.⁹ They manipulated the *shoto* (dagger) that Macbeth reacted to (“Is this a *shoto* I see before me, the handle toward my hand?” [see *Macbeth* 2.1.33–4]). Their appearance marked as androgynously “Japanese” through *kabuki* makeup, movements, and chanting, the three *yojos* were played by both male and female performers (Claro Austria, Shigeko Suga, and Emi F. Jones, who doubled as *isha*, the doctor). The *yojos*’ cultivation and channelling of various characters’ desires and behaviours were enacted by the kinetic energy of their presence in many scenes – seen or unseen by the characters. They delivered armour and a helmet to an agitated Macbeth (Kaipo Schwab) in the final battle scene, and remained on stage as enchantresses and indifferent observers of the end of his story.

Unseen by Fujin Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene but exerting a felt presence, the *yojos* followed her every step of the way, creating the impression that these creatures were both the cause and result of her nightmarish imaginations. Fujin Macbeth’s *suri-ashi* (“slide her feet and shuffle along”) gait articulated well with the *yojos*’ presence in this dreamscape. The doubling of the enchantress (witch) and the healer (doctor), facilitated by a *noh* mask, exemplifies Briggs’s investment in the capacity of Japanese signs to generate new meanings from this famous scene (5.1):

Isha / Yojo One: When was it last she walked?
 [*The lights come up to reveal Yojo One wearing a noh mask.*]
 Gentle Woman: Since Shogun [Macbeth] went into the field ...
 Isha / Yojo One: In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking
 and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you
 heard her say?
 Gentle Woman: That sir, which I will not report after her.
 Isha / Yojo One: You may to me, and ’tis most right you should.¹⁰

The otherwise benign diagnostic conversation between the doctor and the gentle woman bears a more malignant undertone as the *yojo* (Shigeko Suga) speaks from behind her mask. The very reference to Hell by Fujin Macbeth brings forth the other two *yojos* as she washes her hands:

Fujin Macbeth: Yet here’s a spot. Out damned spot! Out, I say!
 One; two; why, then ‘tis time to do’t. Hell is murky!

Yojo Two: Fujin Macbeth!

Yojo Three: Fujin Macbeth!

Fujin Macbeth: [She does not see or hear the *yojos*] What, will these hands ne'er be clean?!

Yojo Three: Fujin Macbeth!

Fujin Macbeth: No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that!

Yojo Two: Fujin Macbeth!

Fujin Macbeth: You mar all this with starting.

Isha / Yojo One: You have known what you should not.

Gentle Woman: She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that.

...

Yojo Two and Three: Oh! Oh! [echo]

Isha / Yojo One: What a sigh is there! ¹¹

Even though Fujin Macbeth did not interact directly with the *yojos*, the way her lines coincided with those of the *yojos* created a suggestive layer of intertextuality, as she unconsciously danced to the rhythmic hissing and growling of the *yojos* toward the end of this scene. Briggs envisioned an aesthetic structure and “solipsistic” philosophical framework that allowed violence to “scream its horrors beneath the fragrant cherry blossoms.”¹² As both observers and instigators, the witches are given substantially more agency than they have in Shakespeare’s play.

The artistic and critical focus of *Shogun Macbeth* has thus far rested upon the production’s capacity to test Shakespeare’s universality and to liberate *Macbeth* from variously defined traditionalist interpretations; as one critic wrote in 1986, “Though language and character are altered, the soliloquies remain and ... at its bloody heart, the play is still *Macbeth*, albeit an exotic one, with a universality transcending time, place and performance style.”¹³ And yet as a unique English-language adaptation exploiting Japanese sensibilities, *Shogun Macbeth*, as director Abuba points out, also provides an opportunity for exploring what it means to be Asian-American: “One of the major intents of re-visioning *Shogun Macbeth* is to demonstrate the exceptional talent of the new generation of Asian American actors.” This vision is in line with the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre’s mission to “bring Asian American Theatre to the general theatre-going public and deepen their appreciation and understanding of the Asian American cultural heritage.”

Yet is performing in the style of a culture (*kabuki*, for example) actually embodying the culture itself – “not just visiting or importing [it] but actually doing [it]”?¹⁴ Despite its popularity, *Macbeth* is not typically associated with racial questions for Asian-American theatre, a racially defined theatre that was established in 1965 with the founding of the East West Players. *Shogun Macbeth* negotiates challenging cultural terrains as it deploys various elements of Japanese culture to interpret *Macbeth* and to expand the Pan Asian Repertory’s slate of otherwise Asian or Asian-American plays. The founder of the group, Tisa Chang, has been criticized for commercializing “Asian-ness” as foreign and exotic. Plays such as *Shogun Macbeth* address the younger generation of performers’ resistance to her request to “keep focusing on their Asian identity,” which, they believe, limits the creative possibilities even as it promotes Asian-American solidarity.¹⁵ Chang herself seems to be resisting the same concept: “I was so tired of Westerners using Asian-ness as an exotic characteristic.”¹⁶ The identity of *Shogun Macbeth* remains unclear, as the blending of different cultures does not necessarily lead to a hybrid one, though the identity of the lead actor, Kaipō Schwab (*Macbeth*) embodies this ideal: born in Honolulu, he is of Hawaiian-Chinese-German-Irish ancestry. Critics such as Leonard Pronko consider *Shogun Macbeth* a “non-Shakespearean play,” albeit with “many of the famous speeches [from *Macbeth*],” but Briggs maintains that the play is still “a Shakespearean play, in the best traditions of what that means.”¹⁷ One may wonder whether *Shogun Macbeth*, despite its repackaged Asian cultures and Asian bodies, might not harbor an investment in the notion of “a self-consciously white expression of minority empowerment.”¹⁸

Briggs sought to produce a work that rediscovers Shakespeare’s insights by “displacing the audience, forcing involvement in his language, creating an atmosphere that is new and different and capable of spontaneous surprise.”¹⁹ Perhaps his displacement succeeded too well; I attended a Sunday matinee performance in the 2008 revival, where more than half of the seats were empty, and quite a few audience members did not sit through the entire performance. Despite their respectable effort, a number of performers appeared to be lost in both the Japanese *mise-en-scène* and the Shakespearean lines, making for an atmospheric but uneven performance that the *New Yorker* called an “ethnic drag show.” Perhaps the playwright’s “white” identity and the racially mixed cast distracted audience and

critics; the reception history of Asian productions of Shakespeare in North America and Europe suggests that reviewers are often more tolerant of cultural differences and artistic innovations when these works are written and directed by artists from Asia.²⁰ As much as the company, Abuba, and Briggs wanted to break out of the stereotypical association of Asian-American theatre with a necessarily Asian-American repertory which is defined by plays such as David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, Shakespeare – however Asian – is always “white.” However, *Shogun Macbeth* has successfully constructed a contact zone that remains open for future inscription.

MULTILINGUAL SHAKESPEARES IN LONDON

Organizers of the 2012 London Olympics and the Cultural Olympiad proclaimed Shakespeare, once again, the bearer of universal currency. Much more ambitious than the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2006 Complete Works festival, the 2012 Globe to Globe (part of World Shakespeare Festival) was an integral part of the Cultural Olympiad to celebrate the Olympics. The festival was presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Edinburgh International Festival, and the Globe to Globe program. Opened on 21 April, it brought theatre companies from many parts of the world to perform Shakespeare in their own languages (“37 plays in 37 languages in [the London] Globe, within the architecture Shakespeare wrote for.”²¹ In fact, thirty-eight Shakespearean plays were performed in languages ranging from Lithuanian to British Sign Language. This is arguably one of the most important festivals since David Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769 that jump-started the Shakespeare industry and tourism in Stratford-upon-Avon. Billed as a “great feast of languages,”²² the Olympiad season featured *Troilus and Cressida* in Maori, *The Tempest* in Arabic, *The Taming of the Shrew* in Urdu, *Richard III* in Mandarin, a Cantonese *Titus Andronicus*, a Korean *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *All's Well That Ends Well* in Gujarati, and *Coriolanus* in Japanese, among other plays. The Globe to Globe's website suggests that the festival “will be a carnival of stories,” including inspirational stories by companies “who work underground and in war zones.”²³

The festival planners made choices about the languages to include in the festival and the companies to invite (usually one company for each language including Welsh, though Ninagawa Yukio's *Cymbeline*

was staged at the Barbican and Motoi Miura's *Coriolanus* at the Globe), but they worked with the visiting companies to decide on the Shakespearean plays to perform. The World Shakespeare Festival, unlike the previous RSC Complete Works Festival, included almost exclusively non-English-language performances. The WSF also made an effort to cover Africa, the Americas, Russia, Asia, Europe, and New Zealand. In terms of geographical distribution during the WSF, European companies alone offered fifteen touring productions to the festival including British Sign Language performances. Asian companies offered eight productions (not counting the Maori *Troilus and Cressida*), African companies six, and Middle Eastern companies six. Groups from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and the U.S. also brought productions to the WSF. The 2012 Globe to Globe, a core component of the WSF, had a few conditions ("the artists will play the Globe way"),²⁴ including running time under two-and-a-quarter hours, synopsis surtitles, minimal stage set and technology, and no lighting. Some of these limitations are part of the unique architectural space of the London Globe and the need for quick turnaround time among thirty-seven productions in rapid succession, but other conditions are related to the festival's goal to celebrate Shakespeare and world cultures, such as enforced linguistic authenticity, though there were a few exceptions to the ban on English on stage.

Some productions tapped into geopolitical imaginaries. To the Globe's credit, they had an inclusive policy and issued open calls for proposals. Some companies were interested in geopolitical alignment, as evidenced by the Globe's promotional language for Teatro di Roma's production: "Where else but from Rome for *Julius Caesar*?" Andrea Barraco's *Julius Caesar* touts its cultural bona fides: it is set in "a dreamlike yet contemporary Rome."²⁵ Some companies approached the Globe with plays already in production. For example, Yohangza Company's (*yohangza* means 'travellers') Korean adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has toured internationally to critical acclaim. The Globe also commissioned some productions, such as the National Theatre of China's *Richard III*. In still other instances, the Globe suggested plays for the companies to consider, and the companies' rationales for choosing a specific play ranged from interest in creating escapist fantasies and experimenting artistically to a desire to participate in political activism. The Roy-e-Sabs Company of Kabul roundly rejected *Richard II. The Comedy of*

Errors performed in Dari suited them better because they wanted to have a laugh amid the realities of harsh Afghan politics, according to director Corinne Jaber. The themes of exile and the darker aspects of the comedy were not lost on the company and their audiences. The play opens with a merchant from Syracuse telling his life story in Ephesus, where he is about to be executed for violating the travel ban between the two warring cities. Jaber's group had to rehearse in Delhi for the Globe-commissioned production after having narrowly escaped being killed in a Taliban attack on the British Council building in Kabul.²⁶ Ashtar Theatre of Ramallah gladly took on *Richard II* because, according to Globe to Globe festival director Tom Bird, the "Palestinians were desperate to tell their stories" through the Arabic adaptation.²⁷

Beyond international politics, the World Shakespeare Festival is also conceived of as a festival of languages that celebrates and recruits London's diverse ethnic communities, some of which have historically been marginalized. Major world languages, as defined by the number of speakers, were obvious choices, including Spanish, Mandarin, Russian, and Hindi; and languages that are important to London communities, such as Bengali, were also included. For eighty-three percent of the audience members who were members of these communities, it was their first visit to the Globe.²⁸

The festival at the Globe concluded in early June, but other foreign touring productions continued to arrive in Stratford-upon-Avon and elsewhere in the United Kingdom throughout the summer. Saturated with foreign-language productions, the festival was both boldly experimental and reassuringly British, anchored by the production that both closed the festival and opened the Globe's own season: Dominic Dromgoole's English *Henry V*, which, according to the Globe's marketing material, "celebrates the power of English, or any other language, to summon into life courts, pubs, ships and battlefields, within the embrace of 'the wooden O.'"²⁹ The World Shakespeare Festival therefore served multiple purposes. First, it has successfully expanded its clientele by inviting London's ethnic communities to occupy the Globe's space. Second, the multilingual Shakespeare festival was a step toward consolidating the underdefined cosmopolitan British identity that was created at the inception of the original Globe. Third, it celebrates diversity within the United Kingdom (Welsh and British Sign Language were among the languages represented).

Finally, though, the festival was directed at the international audience who are the consumers of the South Bank's culture-driven tourism.³⁰ The timing of the festival coincided with the 2012 Summer Olympics, and the productions were offered in a model of one play per language in quick succession (each production ran for only two to three days). This provided enough diversity to allow tourists who had come for the Olympics to see several different plays during a short stay. The Globe appealed to these particular tourists by offering packages that were named after sporting events: biathlon for two shows, triathlon for three shows, decathlon for ten shows, and Olympian for all thirty-eight shows.

However, unlike the Olympic Games, which focus attention on individual star athletes even when they participate in team sports, the World Shakespeare Festival at the London Globe seemed to have sidelined individual artistic identities: the festival promoted a Bengali *Tempest* (rather than a *Tempest* directed by Nasir Uddin Yousuff), a Turkish *Antony and Cleopatra* (rather than director Kemal Aydoğan's production), and so on. It is not always easy to locate the names of participants and further information in English about the director and cast. The Globe did away with programs altogether and instead provided a bilingual leaflet for each production that provided only scanty information. The same is true of their website. By contrast, much more information is readily available for the Royal Shakespeare Company's or the Globe's productions in English. The Globe's strategy of emphasizing the languages of the productions suggests that the main selling point is national or political Shakespeares rather than the backstories of artists, for which festival audiences may not have patience.

UPSTAGING LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE

Prominent in the marketing language of the World Shakespeare Festival (of which Globe to Globe was a part) was Viola's aforementioned question in *Twelfth Night*, now made rhetorical: "What country, friends, is this?" appears with an image of a marooned ship on the WSF's website to advertise the RSC's "shipwreck trilogy" (*The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*) and to serve as a tongue-in-cheek reaction to the deliciously confusing festival.³¹ The idea seems to be that if each country's artists fully embody the essence of their culture, the audience would be able to

tell which country it is at first blush. The Q Brothers' ninety-minute hip-hop *Othello: The Remix* was invited to represent the US at the Globe. Set in the modern-day United States, the story about the reigning king of hip-hop was acted and narrated by a cast of four men in jumpsuits, with a DJ up in the balcony. The production was among the first show to be sold out, and attracted a large number of young audiences.

There were moments in several productions when questions about cultural and geopolitical identities ceased to be rhetorical and became pressing in a productive way. When the National Theatre of China's *Richard III* opened at the Globe on 28 April 2012, the container that was carrying their exquisite set and costumes was still languishing on the North Sea. The Globe's support team and the Chinese actors quickly assembled substitute costumes and props from the Globe's storage room and the company pulled off a stellar, stylized performance without their full-face masks. They used simple but effective Western costumes, including Richard's red gloves, according to the conventions of the two primary styles the production employed, *jingju* and *huaju* (spoken drama). This is arguably intercultural theatre at its best, because both the hosts and visiting company turned contingencies into opportunities while on the road. Despite the overwhelming success of the performance in London, which was partly due to the effectiveness of the improvisation, director Wang Xiaoying and his crew were not entirely happy about the missing costumes and props.

While the production seems to hail from China, multiple intercultural elements indicate that it is born in a fluid, heterotopic space created by stage designer Liu Kedong. One of the most visible elements is calligraphy. The title "Richard III" is written with English letters morphed into pseudo-Chinese written characters in the style of square word calligraphy pioneered by the artist Xu Bing. The letter R for example is fused with the Chinese character for human (*ren*) and placed on top of a triangular structure that contains the remaining letters of Richard. This is an instance where Viola's question takes on an interesting dimension. For English speakers who cared to look closely, they would realize they could actually read the writing that seemed foreign at first glance. For Chinese speakers who assumed they could claim insiders' knowledge, they would quickly discover that the pseudo-Chinese characters were inscrutable except for individual radicals and elements (such as *ren*) that

made up the square word calligraphy.³² During the performance in Beijing with full stage set and costumes, names of characters that would be killed by Richard appeared in the same fashion on the backdrop of the stage. Buckets of blood were poured down on the names, gradually devouring them and Richard's kingdom.

One of the contributions of multilingual Shakespeares is that Viola's question will be asked with increasing urgency and will prompt more reflections on cultural identities that have been taken for granted. "Shakespeare" is a canon that is supposedly familiar to educated English speakers, but it is increasingly alien to the younger generation. If the Mandarin *Richard III* estranged Shakespeare in linguistic and artistic terms, the hip-hop *Othello* made Shakespeare more familiar and relevant.³³ Thus, the Globe to Globe seasons and other similarly structured festivals, including the EIF and the Barbican International Theatre Events, pitched Shakespeare as global celebrity against Shakespeare as national poet and created a new brand with contemporary currency and vitality.

THE BUSINESS OF WORKING WITH AND AGAINST THE SURTITLES

During the World Shakespeare Festival in 2012, the Globe devised a strategy to divert attention away from the surtitles to the action onstage and applied it uniformly to all of the productions in different languages. The purpose was to remove language as a distraction, if not an obstacle, in order to allow for a certain degree of improvisation. One obvious limitation is that the architectural space of the Globe is not ideal for line-by-line surtitles because of the pillars and the thrust stage. Only short summaries of the scenes – written by the Globe staff in consultation with the visiting companies – were projected on the two screens next to the stage. According to Tom Bird, the synopsis surtitles were meant to avoid the elitism associated with line-by-line translations of Shakespearean texts.³⁴ The plot summaries were based on Shakespeare's script most of the time rather than on performative choices or improvisational elements. Obviously no synopsis can be neutral whether it is based on narrative or dramaturgical structure, because it involves interpretive acts. As the actors worked with and against the surtitles, the synopsis surtitles redirected the audience's attention to the tension between the plot and dramaturgical structures, highlighting the "Brechtian

narrative tension and elements of mediation,” as British scholar and artistic director of the Pantaloons Stephen Purcell observed.³⁵ In the Mandarin *Richard III*, short English phrases were inserted by actors playing the two murderers for more immediate comic effect. In another production, the actors mocked the surtitles. The audiences were told not to trust what was being projected “up there.” In the Hindi production of *Twelfth Night* by Company Theatre, the yellow tights Saurabh Nayyar’s Malvolio wore onstage provided an interesting contrast with the cross-gartered yellow stockings the surtitles mentioned. Such moments of textual resistance became more noticeable through the synopsis surtitles.

For certain productions with large expatriate communities in London, such as the Hindi *Twelfth Night*, the Korean *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the Mandarin *Richard III*, few audience members seemed to miss the surtitles, since a majority of them spoke the language. The strategy of projecting summaries rather than fully translated surtitles was not always successful, as the productions had to be designed to work visually and musically against the crude plot summaries. Some productions worked well for the extremely mixed international audiences, such as audience for the Yohangza Company’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (which had toured to the Barbican in London a few years before in 2006 with a full set of surtitles – a line-by-line translation of the adaptation from Korean into modern English). Other companies played to the expatriate community and neglected audience members who were not versed in the language, such as the Company Theatre’s *Twelfth Night* in Hindi, directed by Atul Kumar. Citing “a Hindi-speaking woman sitting next to [him],” Peter Smith applauded the accessible translation in modern prose but lamented the fact that the English-speaking audience had no access to parts of *Twelfth Night* “that cause the emotions to well up: the delicacy of Viola’s ‘patience on a monument’ (2.4.114) or Olivia’s pathetic self-abasement as she offers herself to the ungrateful boy (3.4.212).”³⁶

Some touring or intercultural productions were seen as showcases for the exotic beauty of unfamiliar performance traditions for cultural elites. Targeting audiences who are bored by an overworked Shakespeare through the education system, these productions are not for purists. A few strands dominate in the narratives surrounding this type of production, ranging from celebration of other cultures’ reverence of Shakespeare (e.g., the “Shakespeare Is German”

season at the London Globe in 2010) to suspicion about delightful but bewildering (for the press at least) productions that are fully indigenized. The Globe has played host to numerous such productions, and the RSC often sets English-language performances by British actors in non-British locations.

Directors face a dilemma, as they are caught between pursuing authenticity and “selling out.” For example, the RSC’s recent English-language productions of two plays, one Chinese and the other Shakespearean, have re-ignited debates about cultural authenticity. The first is Gregory Doran’s adaptation of *Orphan of Zhao* with an almost exclusively white cast of seventeen. British actors of East Asian heritage have spoken up against the practice of “non-culturally specific casting,” in Doran’s words, or colourblind casting.³⁷ The politics of recognition can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, intercultural theatre is an important testing ground for ethnic equality and raises questions of equal employment opportunity in the UK. On the other hand, can an all-white cast not do justice to *Orphan of Zhao* just as an all-Chinese cast performed *Richard III* at the London Globe and in Beijing? Why would an English adaptation of a Chinese play have to be performed by authentic-looking East Asian actors?³⁸ The second is Iqbal Khan’s *Much Ado About Nothing* that is set in contemporary Delhi and staged at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in August 2012. In her essay in the program, Jyotsna Singh reminds the audience that “the romantic, sexual and emotional configurations underpinning the centrality of marriage in Shakespeare’s romantic comedies” are elements that “richly resonate within the Indian social and cultural milieu.”³⁹ Clare Brennan, writing for the *Guardian*, believes that the transposition of Messina to contemporary Delhi works well, because it “plays to possible audience preconceptions about the communality and hierarchical structuring of life in India that map effectively on to similar structuring in Elizabethan England.”⁴⁰ Performed by a cast of second-generation British Indian actors to Bollywood-inspired music as part of the WSEF, the “post-colonial” production (in Gitanjali Shabani’s words)⁴¹ was quickly compared by the press and reviewers to the two more ethnically authentic productions at the Globe from the Indian Subcontinent (Arpana Company’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* directed by Sunil Shanbag in Gujarati and Company Theatre’s *Twelfth Night* directed by Atul Kumar in Hindi). Cultural, linguistic, and ethnic pedigrees

are part of the picture.⁴² Some critics question the RSC's form of internationalism. Birmingham-born director Khan's treatment of Indian culture is seen as too simplistic. Kate Rumbold wishes the production had not ignored but "ironized the company's inevitable second-generation detachment from India."⁴³ Taking issue with the production's "pastiche of 'internationalism', with apparently second generation British actors pretending to return to their cultural roots in a decidedly colonial way," Kevin Quarmby states that the production offers "the veneer of Indian culture, served on a bed of Bradford or Birmingham Anglicized rice." He concludes that "as the World Shakespeare Festival and Globe to Globe seasons have shown, 'international' is best understood in the context of the nations who embrace Shakespeare as their own."⁴⁴ The more difficult part of these debates concerns commercialized cultural and ethnic identities. Obviously art and commerce are not antithetical activities, but they have become inescapable predicates in the debates about the sociological and expressive values of touring and intercultural Shakespeare performances.

CONCLUSION

While multilingual Shakespeares may celebrate polyglot cosmopolitanism, their reception is governed by the logic of cultural prestige. In the case of the 2011 Edinburgh International Festival, a bridge was built between Europe and Asia, as EIF director Jonathan Mills had hoped, but Asia's economic prowess did not quite translate into cultural prestige or meaningful ways to intervene in Western cultural hegemony. Oh Tae-suk expressed a strong desire to validate the cultural value of Korea through his production in Edinburgh.⁴⁵ The Korean press took pride in the British approval of Oh's production by noting how it captured the imaginations of the demanding audiences in Shakespeare's home country, as was reported in the *Donga News*,⁴⁶ and the *YTN News* referred to the British media's attention: "Oh Tae-suk's *Tempest* drew critical interest from England's prominent newspapers such as *The Guardian*, *Telegraph*, and *The Financial Times* and was given four out of five stars."⁴⁷ One of South Korea's major newspapers noted, when the production visited Russia, that the "Korean *Hamlet* works well on international stages" because Shakespeare could help condense select aspects of Russian and Korean cultures and facilitate an otherwise

challenging cross-cultural encounter.⁴⁸ This kind of sentiment enabled high-profile touring productions to receive government support and become part of South Korea's branding effort. Along with corporate sponsors such as H S B C and Shell U K, several Asian government agencies co-sponsored the tours of productions to Edinburgh, as they did again for the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, in the hope of elevating of the status of their cultural productions. The P R C's Ministry of Culture supported *The Peony Pavilion* and *The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan*, and its rival Republic of China in Taiwan backed *Lear Is Here*. Public unease about these sources of funding led Mills to clarify for the *Scotsman* that "there was no pressure placed on the Festival by either government agencies" and to stress that "it is extremely important to remain connected in China ... but it is not an attempt to be a Chinese festival in any way."⁴⁹ During the World Shakespeare Festival 2012, the London Globe did not share box-office income with the guest artists, but it gave each company a fixed fee, local accommodation, and fifteen round-trip tickets to London.⁵⁰ Despite the Globe's offer, most companies had to rely on other sources of funding.

Multilingual Shakespeares have a de-territorializing effect, in the anthropological sense, that unmarks the cultural origins of intercultural productions because they work against assumptions about politically defined geographies in theatre historiography – artificial constraints that no longer speak to the realities of theatre-making. Touring productions can also re-territorialize the plays upon arriving in a new location.⁵¹ In a world constantly in motion, representations of certain aspects of culture transcend territorial boundaries. These touring works can be best understood through theatrically defined cultural locations (e.g., a French-Japanese *Richard II* in Paris and on tour, a "culturally neutral" *Richard III* made in Beijing but presented in Berlin) rather than through political boundaries (e.g., when "Shakespeare in India" is used as unproductive shorthand for literary universalism). Simplified notions of the universal can be self-deceptive and even self-effacing, as Marvin Carlson points out in his study of Brook and Mnouchkine, because it "den[ies] the voice of the Other in an attempt to transcend it."⁵² Locality criticism, as I have suggested elsewhere, focuses on the multilayered cultural localities within and around a production (and its venue) so as not to impose on the work the nation-state as a critical criterion.⁵³ Theatre can produce and redefine visible and invisible

cultural localities. Recent publications have begun to explore these fronts to show that theatrical cross-fertilization and mobility is the norm, not the exception. As Steve Tillis points out in his study, theatre history is currently driven by polity, by periodization, and by continental divisions, and as a result it inadvertently creates myths of multiple unknowable objects.⁵⁴