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Shakespeare and East Asia

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Prologue

The Cultural Meanings of Shakespeare and Asia Today

Performance is a doubly acted affair that is shaped not only by the characters but also by the actors. Actors embody characters across history and culture. Adaptations, meanwhile, are strangers at home. They defamiliarize canonical works and everyday utterances while offering something recognizable through a new language and form.

When Viola, disguised as page boy Cesario, and finding herself pursued by the lovelorn Olivia, declares that "I am the man . . . she were better love a dream" in *Twelfth Night* (2.2.25–26), she speaks with double irony as a doubly cross-dressed boy actor on the early modern English stage (such as Nathan Field, 1587–1619) and as an adult male actor (Johnny Flynn) in Mark Rylance's all-male production at the Globe Theatre in London in 2012 (dir. Tim Carroll). In Yukio Ninagawa's 2005 Kabuki *Twelfth Night*, Onoe Kikunosuke V brought a new perspective to the notion of gender fluidity when he played in rapid succession Viola, her twin brother Sebastian, and her alter ego Cesario. As an *otokoyaku* (actress specializing in male roles) in the all-female Takarazuka musical production (dir. Kimura Shinji, 1999) derived from *shōjo* (teen girl) mangas, Yamato Yuga's Viola would embody enticing gender fluidity when speaking Japanese, a language that often elides the subject. Since the genre of Takarazuka is an all-female production, Viola's Cesario would not be the only cross-dressing character. *Otokoyaku* actresses present the "sensitive masculinity" of idealized male characters for a predominantly female audience.[1] In addition to making the right choice of employing the familiar or the polite register, based on the relation between the

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OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

speaker and the addressee, male and female speakers of Japanese are restricted by the gender-specific first-person pronouns available to them. The gender dynamics in *Twelfth Night* worked well for Takarazuka, which is known for its romantic, extravagant musicals.[2] Similarly, gendered code-switching creates semantic ambiguity in Kei Otozuki's double performance of both twins, Viola and Sebastian. Having played exclusively male roles in the Takarazuka Revue until her retirement in 2012, Kei brings a unique perspective to her roles in *Twelfth Night*, the second Shakespeare production in Japanese, with a Japanese cast, directed by John Caird, honorary associate director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (Nissay Theatre, Tokyo, March 2015).[3] It was a rare opportunity to see an actress specializing in male roles play Viola, Cesario, and Sebastian.

In general, syntactical differences create linguistic and cultural opportunities in articulating anew Orsino's comments about love from a masculinist perspective and Viola's apology for a woman's love when in disguise (2.4.78–125)—or the exchange between Oliver and Rosalind in disguise as Ganymede on her "lacking a man's heart" when she swoons, nearly giving herself away in *As You Like It* (4.3.164–76). These are but a few examples of how the phenomenon of global Shakespeare reshapes academia, festivals, and theatre circuits. Touring Shakespeare performances and globally circulated films have become a staple at international festivals, allowing audiences to appreciate the vitality of world cinema and theatre.

Since the nineteenth century, stage and film directors have mounted hundreds of adaptations of Shakespeare drawn on East Asian motifs and styles and performed in Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Taiwanese, English, Singlish, Hokkien, and a wide range of dialects. Some of the works have originated outside Asia, whereas others have toured from Asia to the West to critical acclaim. They have been recognized as among the most innovative in the world. The first Asian-language performances of Shakespeare took place at different points in history within comparable contexts of modernization: 1885 in Japan, 1913 in China, 1925 in Korea, and 1949 in Taiwan.[4] Performing Shakespeare in Asian styles has constituted an act of defamiliarization for audiences at home and abroad. By the late twentieth century, Shakespeare had become one of the most frequently performed playwrights in East Asia.

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Hamlet has been a popular play for political appropriation. Notably, Chinese director Lin Zhaohua staged his production of *Hamlet* (*Hamulaite*) in the wake of the student demonstration in Tian'anmen Square and the Chinese government's crackdown on the democratic movement in Beijing, which culminated in the massacre on June 4, 1989. Lin's *Hamlet* (1989, 1990, 1994), set in contemporary China, used three actors to play the titular character (among other roles) in order to demarcate different stages of psychological development of the prince. The director extrapolated something extraordinary from Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy (3.1.58–92; delivered alternately and collectively by the three actors) to drive home the message that, in his postsocialist society, "everyone is Hamlet," and Hamlet is one of us. The production paid tribute to the student protestors' boldness in awakening China to the vision of a democratic, civil society. To view the full production (1995 version), visit the page curated by Alexa Alice Joubin on the *MIT Global Shakespeares*: global shakespeares.mit.edu/hamulaite-lin-zhaohua-1995/

Two centuries of Asian interpretations of Shakespeare's plays such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are now making a world of difference in how we experience Shakespeare. Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (based on *Macbeth*, Toho Studios, 1957; starring Toshirô Mifune) and *Ran* (based on *King Lear*, Herald Ace and Nippon Herald Films, 1985)—while now canonical in the study of Shakespeare—are far from the earliest or the only Shakespeare films from East Asia. There are several notable early twentieth-century silent film adaptations. Around the time that Asta Nielsen's gender-bending *Hamlet* (dir. Svend Gade and Heinz Schall, 1921) was filmed, silent-film adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* (*Nü lüshi* [*Woman Lawyer*], also known as *Rouquan* [*Bond of Flesh*], dir. Qiu Yixiang, Tianyi Film, 1927; starring Hu Die [aka Butterfly Hu] as Portia) and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (*Yi jian mei* [*A Spray of Plum Blossoms*], dir. Bu Wancang, Lianhua Film, 1931; starring Ruan Lingyu as Julia [Hu Zhuli]) were being made in Shanghai and marketed to the European expatriate and Chinese diasporic communities there and in Canton (today's Guangzhou) and Southeast Asia. An explosion of bold and imaginative interpretations of Shakespeare's plays has occurred since the 1990s, many of which aim to attract audiences in multiple locations around the world. The beginning of the new millennium

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

was for Asian Shakespeares as the 1990s were for Anglo-American Shakespeare on film.

This book traces shared and unique patterns in post-1950s appropriations of Asian and Western motifs across theatrical and cinematic genres. These visions of otherness are located in East Asia, the USA, the UK, and other cultures. The Czech-based artist Nori Sawa combined Japanese Bunraku and Czech puppets in his widely toured solo marionette theatre adaptations of *Macbeth* (1999), *Romeo and Juliet* (2000), and *King Lear* (2004). The culturally hybrid approach to performance has been a signature in his international career since 1992.[5] A Bunraku puppet represents Ariel in Julie Taymor's 1986 Off-Broadway production of *The Tempest* for the Classic Stage Company in New York City.[6] The puppet's head floated above the stage working its magic in various scenes. Prospero freed both the spirit and the puppeteer in the final scene, fusing fiction with reality. Similar to Sawa, Taymor brought together classical Japanese theatre and the Italian *commedia dell'arte* in a visual feast. Kenneth Branagh's Japanesque film *As You Like It* (BBC and HBO, 2006) attempts some form of cultural ventriloquism through its use of film and imaginary locations: Wakehurst Place dressed up with a Zen garden, shrine gate, and trappings of a nineteenth-century Japan torn between samurai and European merchants. The intercultural fusion is reflected by Rosalin's and Celia's Victorian dresses during the sumo match between Orlando and Charles (Fig. 1). Sitting behind them, Duke Frederick dons dark samurai armor. Both *As You Like It* and the dream of Japan are deployed ornamentally in the filmmaker's signature visual romanticism (e.g., Orlando's love letters in Japanese *kanji*).[7] These are but a few examples of hybrid Asian-Western aesthetics. More recently, South Korean director Chan-wook Park's American debut film *Stoker* (Fox Searchlight, 2013) features India Stoker (Mia Wasikowska) as a female Hamlet figure. Well known for his eclectic, Korean-language revenge thriller *Oldboy* (CJ Entertainment, 2003), Park ventures into English-language filmmaking with *Stoker*, which is not explicitly marketed as an Asian adaptation of *Hamlet* but is recognized by many reviewers as a film with Freudian-inflected, Hamletian elements.[8]

How do Anglophone directors such as Taymor and Branagh use imaginaries of Asia differently from directors based in Asia, such as

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Fig. Prol. 1 Branagh's *As You Like It*. Rosalin (Bryce Dallas Howard), Celia (Romola Garai), and Duke Frederick (Brian Blessed) at the sumo match between Orlando (David Oyelowo) and Charles (Nobuyuki Takano).

the larger-than-life cherry tree in the widely toured production of *Macbeth* (1980) directed by Yukio Ninagawa? Conversely, what cultural logic governs the circulation and reception of works by East Asian directors, such as *Stoker* by Park, Nori Sawa's puppet theatre, and *Throne of Blood* by Kurosawa? Why do critics repeatedly use the adjective "Shakespearean" to describe the genre fluidity of South Korean director Bong Joon-ho's quadruple Academy Award-winning *Parasite* (Barunson E&A, 2019), which features a unique tonal blend of tragic, comic, lyrical, and horror elements?[9] More so than Kurosawa's films, Bong's Korean-language film has transcended what he called "the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles" to reach large, international audiences.[10] How do the crossovers between theatricalization and cinematic conventions enrich performances? Directors see the copresence of Shakespearean and non-Western motifs as a unique opportunity, and they use select cultural elements drawn from disparate genres, such as conventionalized gender presentations and Chinese martial arts sequences, as common denominators and bonding agents between different periods and cultural locations. The artists' racial identities can sometimes incriminate them in ethnic selling out or cultural imperialism. In other contexts, however, their cultural origins and locations exonerate them from cultural appropriation.

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Directors—regardless of their cultural affiliations—working with Asian motifs often have to contend with their regionally marked cultural identity. Their works are compelled to respond to the competing demands to inhabit simultaneously the local and the global, to be innovative but conservative enough to be palatable, to represent Asia on the world market, and to be the conveyor of an Anglophone West to Asian audiences and vice versa.

This book is titled *Shakespeare and East Asia*, rather than *Shakespeare in East Asia*, to signal the interplay between the two condensed cultural signifiers and to emphasize a shift away from the linear, one-way-street model of tracing the transplantation of a British "giant" into a colonial cultural context. This false dichotomy between the native and the foreign can be broken down when we consider global Shakespeare performances in the context of cross-media and cross-cultural citations, the cultural vibration linking productions in different cultures. Adaptations reference or echo one another, across cultures and genres, in addition to the Shakespearean pretext.

Asian interpretations of Shakespeare matter to Western readers because of their impact on American and European performance cultures, as exemplified by the worldwide recognition of the works of Akira Kurosawa, Ong Keng Sen, and Oh Tae-suk. The pairing of a Western playwright with a set of Asian performance practices provides historically necessary and heuristically illuminating cases of filmmaking and theatre making.[11] The clashes and confluences of Asia and Shakespeare give a "local habitation" to the "airy nothing" of globalization (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.17–18). Asian Shakespeares are sufficiently complex and coherent as a system of signification to interface global cultural studies. For instance, through Asian Shakespeares metacritical inquiries may be launched into how Shakespeare and Asia have been used as cultural signifiers in competing narratives about gender, race, and nation. Further, non-Anglophone interpretations of Shakespeares matter to readers because the expansion of English studies is currently occurring "outside the discipline's traditional Anglophone . . . base." In his study of literary prestige, James English has called for scholars "at the presumptive center of things to begin paying more attention to the forms our discipline is taking at [those] sites of rapid expansion."[12]

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Compulsory Realpolitik

Performance creates varied pathways to dramatic and cultural meanings across history, but polity-driven historiography has constructed linear, synchronic narratives that have been flattened by national profiling, a tendency to characterize a non-Western artwork based on stereotypes of its nation of origin and to regard, for example, South Korean adaptations of Shakespeare as political allegories of the postwar tensions on the Korean Peninsula. The problem here is one of *compulsory realpolitik*—the conviction that the best way to understand non-Western works is by interpreting their engagement with pragmatic politics. This approach may impose intentionality upon directors and imply that their works are of interest solely because of their testimonial value. The approach runs the risk of turning global Shakespeares into "mere curiosities or colonial remnants."[13]

As a cultural institution, Shakespeare registers a broad spectrum of values and practices that rivals the complexity of the freighted notion of Asia. Consider, for example, the divergent Shakespeares paradoxically branded by the Globe Theatre in London,[14] by the American Shakespeare Center and Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, and by a slew of such institutions as the Panasonic Globe in Tokyo (1988–2002) and replicas of the first (1599) and second (1614) Globe theatres being planned for Beijing, Stratford (Connecticut), and Rio de Janeiro.[15] Likewise, the dissemination of knowledge of Asian styles of performance has been fraught with the politics of recognition and branding. Early examples include Madame Sadayakko's (1871–1946) quintessentially Japanese performances in the United States and Europe[16] and Mei Lanfang's (1894–1961) transformation of *jingju* (Beijing opera) into *guoju* (national opera) and a form of "tactical Orientalism" in Moscow (where Bertolt Brecht was inspired to create his theory of the alienation effect), in Washington, DC, and eventually on Broadway.[17] As Fredric Jameson puts it in his working definition, globalization has become "an untotalizable totality which intensified binary relations between its parts."[18]

The first phase of sustained study of global Shakespeare performance unfolded over the past two decades and has brought national political histories to bear on the story of Shakespeare in global

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

contexts. There are detailed histories of national Shakespeares in which "Shakespeare in India" is shorthand for postcolonial, political merits of adaptations of Shakespeare that serve as a tool for resisting Western hegemony. South Korean Shakespeares would be seen as allegories of the divide between North and South Korea, while mainland Chinese works on world tours would be thought to contain attenuated allusions to the Cultural Revolution. Anglophone Shakespeares are assumed to have broad theoretical applicability and aesthetic merits, whereas foreign Shakespeares—even when they focus on artistic innovation on a personal rather than an epic level—are compelled to prove their political worth. Critics are on the lookout for potentially subversive political messages in these works, which are compulsorily characterized as allegories of geopolitical issues.

There are a number of implications of this approach, which isolates performances in their perceived cultural origins. It could miss the rich intertexts between performance traditions; most adaptations borrow from more than one culture. It could subsume local history under Shakespeare criticism or vice versa. It could also imply that works from the Global South or Asia, assumed to be operating as national allegories, are valuable only for their political messages rather than their aesthetic merits, leading to research questions driven by polity—for example, "Why are there so many global Shakespearean adaptations in cultures with no love for Great Britain?"[19] Last, but not least, the fetishization of political merits could unduly emphasize global Shakespeares' alleged deviation from Anglophone practices and, in turn, instrumentalize global Shakespeares for the purpose of diversifying the scholarship and curricula in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.[20] Though there are valuable monographs on national Shakespeares, the same cannot be said of performances across genres that interface with more than one culture or region.[21]

National profiling—the tendency to bracket, for example, "Shakespeare in Japan" in isolation from other cultural influences—is a symptom of the aforementioned assumption that performances in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada are normative and aesthetically universal, whereas Shakespeare in Japan bears location-specific, often political, meanings—its aesthetic meanings are either indecipherable or uninteresting. As Rey Chow observes, despite "the current facade of welcoming non-Western 'others' into

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

putatively . . . cross-cultural exchanges," there is still "a continual tendency to . . . ghettoize non-Western cultures . . . by way of ethnic, national labels."[22] Due to the current structure of academia and hierarchies of cultural prestige, Asianists have always been obliged to know their Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, and Anglo-European critical theories, though scholars of Shakespeare and European literature tend to regard knowledge of Asian writers and directors as the responsibility of those who specialize in the subfields.

As a result, works by nonwhite authors are imagined to fix their intellectual content "by way of a national, ethnic, or cultural location."[23] Western, white examples are assumed to be more effective in their explanatory power, while African, Asian, and Latin American materials are recruited to serve as the exceptional particular. Henry Louis Gates Jr. makes a similar observation in his call for developing a "black theory" specifically for the interpretation of African American literature to counter the tendency not to see aesthetic merit in black literature. He writes that "black literature and its criticism . . . have been put to uses that were not primarily aesthetic; rather, they have formed part of a larger discourse on the nature of the black, and of his or her role in the order of things."[24]

Equally problematic is the tendency to regard the global and the local as politically expedient, diametrically opposed categories of difference in an often-unarticulated agenda to preserve a literary elite. The global is imagined to be "whatever the United States"—and by extension Great Britain—"is not."[25] In reference to the success of Haruki Murakami's and Orhan Pamuk's novels in translation on the Western literary market, Tim Parks coined the phrase "the dull new global novel" to describe what some critics believe to be a neutral style of writing that lends itself to translation.[26] In this view, these novels do not tend to contain culturally specific references or complex linguistic features of their local languages. They use Western motifs to cater to the taste of Western readers. Karolina Watroba has critiqued this line of argument about works that are "eminently translatable" due to their transparency by pointing out that critics of this type of works assign low aesthetic value to them in the first place: "An undercurrent of elitism is revealed in an ostensibly materialist argument: 'the local' and 'the global' start to sound like code words for 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow.'"[27]

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Asian Shakespeares give us a category that we can use to develop a site-specific critical vocabulary to address the epistemological foundation of histories of cultural globalization. They provide historical materials to bear on the tension between cultural homogenization and heterogenization in global communities.[28] This is not to say that studies of Shakespeare in performance should be eclipsed to give way to Asian film and theatre history just because Asia as a whole matters politically and economically in what the journalistic discourse bills as an "Asian century." The approach would risk creating new forms of Cold War-speak and epistemological Orientalism.[29] "Asiacentricity" is as problematic as "Eurocentricity."[30] As Rossella Ferrari writes, scholarship should treat Asian performing arts as "active producers of original epistemologies rather than merely as providers of ethnographies and derivative adaptations."[31] The story of Asian performance is not and should not always be political, though the Western media often gravitate toward stories of political dissidents. Stories of political oppression must be told, but dichotomized views do not get us very far.[32]

While Asia may, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words, be an "impossible interpellation" due to its inherent diversity and incongruity,[33] and Shakespeare a repository of endless recursive mimesis and theatrical repetition, each of these cultural conglomerates can be configured both to operate as a local canon and simultaneously to project a self-image in new contexts of signification, which is particularly true at international festivals and in touring productions. The critical tendency to prioritize realpolitik in non-Western works leads to blind spots in our understanding of the logic and significance of Asian Shakespeares.

The Postnational Space

Granted, some directors do tap into realpolitik to conceive and market their works. Artists and festival organizers have used Shakespeare and Asia as geopolitical and visual markers in past decades to propagate their worldviews. Many artists rely on international spectators to disseminate their decidedly local works, and more and more festivals thrive on the ideological purchase of being "global."[34] However, they do so as they engage in generic innovation and formalistic experiments, both of which aspects tend to be overlooked by critics.

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

We have now arrived at the cusp of the second phase of global Shakespeare performance; theatre and film artists are challenging fixed notions of tradition and a narrow definition of cultural authenticity. Shakespeare performances have entered a postnational space, where identities are blurred by the presence of international performers, tourist audiences, transnational corporate sponsors, and the logic of international festivals. The postnational space shares characteristics of liminal spaces that are discursively formed. As Ian Watson writes in his observation of culture (which is defined by inclusion, exclusion, and a sense of belonging), the liminal spaces are sites of "conflict, eruption, compromise, debate, and above all, negotiation."[35] Cultural ownership is a fiction, and familiarity with traditional cultural practices does not align with ethnicity. In fact, certain Asian theatrical practices such as *jingju* and Noh are unfamiliar genres on their home turfs today, and Shakespeare's language has more immediate impact in modern translations, even as it grows more distant from the universe of English speakers. Outside the region, Asian cinematic and theatrical idioms such as *kung fu* and *jingju* are becoming more common in English– and European-language performances.

The transnational cultural flows go beyond the scope of geopolitical divisions of nation-states and cultural profiling. In other words, performances have deterritorializing and reterritorializing effects that unmark the cultural origins of intercultural interpretations because they work against assumptions about politically defined geographies. These performances tend to regard such geographies as artificial constraints that no longer speak to the realities of globalized art. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari developed the concept of deterritorialization to analyze cultural relations that are in flux. *Deterritorialization* is a process that separates cultural practices from their "native" habitats or points of origin. Performance styles such as Kabuki are available for appropriation by all artists, and, conversely, Japanese directors' use of Kabuki is not by default more authentic than a French practitioner's deployment of Kabuki elements. Touring productions can also *reterritorialize* the plays upon arriving in a new location, taking root in a new venue and taking on local colors.[36] As a result, intercultural works are best understood through theatrically defined cultural locations influenced by transnational networks of collaboration and funding (e.g., a French–Japanese *Richard II* by Ariane Mnouchkine in Paris

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

and on tour, or a "culturally neutral" *Richard III* made in Beijing by Lin Zhaohua, set in a no place, and presented in Berlin).

Therefore, my approach is marked by a fundamental departure from the national lens; it emphasizes the connections between distinctive and often conflicting interpretations of "Shakespeare" and "Asia" in different cultural and visual contexts. Numerous performances recast Shakespeare and Asia as condensed collective signifiers of cultural values through their marketability for audiences in different locations. Outside their country of origin, intercultural works attract audiences who are enthralled by the performance of the exotic, whether it's Shakespearean or Asian motifs. Within their local market, the name brand of an editorialized Shakespeare with Anglophone lineage helps to boost their production value.

Focusing on aesthetic and social functions of performances, this book situates adaptations of Shakespeare and Asian narratives in a postnational space of exchange. Chapters do not create or celebrate new centers for the postcolonial cachet of these adaptations, such as the sentiments expressed by the Calibanization of *The Tempest* or the quip of Malian singer Ali Ibrahim "Farka" Touré that Timbuktu is "right at the heart of the world" despite its obscurity on the world map.[37] In addition to giving us a critical category to examine how knowledge about performance is organized, the complexity of the transhistorical and translingual migrations of Shakespeare and Asian performance idioms compels us to maintain a productive critical distance from assumptions of familiarity and knowability.

My approach, which mines rhizomatic and horizontal connections among adaptations, reevaluates the perceived lack of connections between a known Western body of dramatic works and lesser-known East Asian traditions. Deleuze and Guattari use the botanical metaphor of "rhizome" to describe multiplicities, as opposed to an "arborescent" model of knowledge, which is hierarchic like a tree's trunk and branches.[38] A rhizome is characterized by its horizontal stem with lateral shoots. Since a rhizome provides nonlinear, trans-species connections in plants, a rhizomatic network of knowledge captures multiplicity more effectively through nonhierarchical entry and exit points in data sets and the interpretations of culture. My interpretive model for embodied performances connects what may otherwise seem to be isolated instances of artistic expression. The

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

field has come a long way in the four decades since J. L. Styan demonstrated the value of "stage-centered criticism" in Shakespeare studies in 1977.[39] The primary focus of Shakespeare criticism in the late 1990s was on the author-function in performances, though James Bulman cautioned against replacing "the old textuality with a new form of performance textuality which may be 'read.'" The move was driven by recognition of the "multiple material existences" of any single play.[40] As variously articulated notions of performativity penetrate ever deeper into cultural studies, the Shakespearean oeuvre is no longer a repository of "textual obligation[s]" detached from "performative option[s]."[41] Concepts such as the politics of visibility and repetition with a difference have transformed our understanding of the perpetual struggles for primacy between text and representation, and my approach acknowledges these theoretical developments.[42]

Cinematic Stage and Theatrical Film

There are deep connections among adaptations that extend through different media and genres. Few monographs in the field bring film and theatre studies together, but the nature of the material at hand demands that these two major genres be placed in a comparative context. To account for structural and narratological connections that are articulated through fusions of genres, this book looks at films and theatre works to explore the following questions: What cultural values associated with Shakespeare do Asian and Western artists appropriate? Why do characters' gender identities take a personal turn in appropriations? How do these artists use Shakespeare's plays to reframe modernity and reinvent local and global genres of performance in the international circuit of festivals?

There are compelling reasons to bring the genres of theatre and film to bear on each other rather than placing them in isolated silos. Several works examined in this book are products of metacinematic and metatheatrical operations, contestations among genres for primacy, or experimentations with features of disparate genres. It is more productive to examine samples from both dominant genres (theatre and film) for comparative analysis. For instance, although scholarship on global Shakespeare tends to focus more on theatre, East Asian cinema holds an important place in world cultures: Japanese feature

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

and animation films have become source material for adaptation around the world; South Korea is projecting soft power through its exported films, television dramas, and the Korean Wave (*hallyu*); and Hong Kong cinema is the world's third largest film industry in terms of global influence after Bollywood and Hollywood, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' 2013 report on cinema infrastructure. Analyzing works of adaptation from a key film culture enhances our overall understanding of global Shakespeare.

Chapter 1 offers new methods for looking at and listening to Shakespearean films and stage productions by focusing on the works and aesthetic claims of Akira Kurosawa and Yukio Ninagawa. Kurosawa used traditional Japanese theatrical elements in his cinematic depictions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; his signature long shots, which remain emotionally detached, are echoed in Ninagawa's stage version of *Macbeth*, particularly in scenes played behind semitransparent screen doors. Ninagawa was well known for the cinematic quality of some of his stage productions, and Kurosawa derived inspiration from Noh and Kabuki styles of presentation and makeup.

Among the works discussed in Chapter 2, the theatre occupies a central place in the Hong Kong comedy film *One Husband Too Many* (dir. Anthony Chan, 1988). The rustic stage where the play within a film is mounted serves as both a dramatic device and a venue where cultural values are negotiated. Following a couple aspiring to introduce Western culture to backwater Hong Kong through their iffy performance of *Romeo and Juliet* (itself an imitation of Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 period screen version), the film pits the decidedly local vibe of the stage against the perceived universal values of cinema. When the onscreen audience's booing prompts an unplanned intermission, they do not leave while the couple collect themselves backstage; rather, the audience seems invested in seeing how the production will turn out, even if they do not endorse it. Through its protagonist's Quixotic insistence on staging Shakespeare for enlightening messages, the film grinningly contrasts the contrivance of Zeffirelli's film with any fantasy that the allegedly greatest (British) love story of all time can ameliorate social conditions in Hong Kong.

One of the films analyzed in Chapter 3, *The King and the Clown* (dir. Lee Joon-ik, 2005), from South Korea, brings the life of two

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

fifteenth-century traveling players to bear on Hamletian narratives of the discoverability of truth. King Yeon-san of the Joseong era hires these vagabond players to help him catch the conscience of corrupt court officials. With a transgender figure, the clown, at the core of its narrative, the film creates ironic distances to both the craft of filmmaking itself and to traditional Korean puppet and cross-gender theatres.

The Singaporean film *Chicken Rice War* (dir. Chee Kong Cheah, 2000), featured in Chapter 4, draws its comedic energy from its rehearsals and performances of *Romeo and Juliet* and the offstage life of the actors in that college production. The film inserts an aspiring television news anchor to report on the conflicts between two families who own competing chicken rice stalls next to each other ("Two families, both alike in dignity and profession . . . "). Against moments where the stage asserts its putative Shakespearean or local authenticity (students performing in English; an elderly woman singing about the "feud" in Cantonese operatic tunes), cinematic elements of camera-work and editing (cutting between shots of the failed stage performance and reaction shots of parents interrupting the performance) strive to reclaim the superiority of film as a genre. As shown in Chapter 4, the film's opening and closing scenes, narrated by the news anchor, simultaneously parody Shakespeare's prologue, epilogue, and Baz Luhrmann's film, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. Like *The King and the Clown*, *Chicken Rice War* thrives on the tension between theatricalized presentation (such as the play within a play) and veri-similitude in cinematic representation.

These crossovers instantiate formalistic experiments and expressions of a range of ideological positions. Though theatre and film are distinct forms, we gain a fuller understanding of adaptation by taking stock of the cross-currents and common threads between them. Their intergeneric dynamics are best understood in a holistic context and through comparative analysis.

Form, Ideology, Reception, Diaspora

Shakespeare and East Asia identifies four themes that distinguish interpretations of Shakespeare in post-1950s East Asia from works in other parts of the world:

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

(1) formalistic innovations in sound and spectacle,
(2) ideological investments in art's remedial functions,
(3) conflicting and polity-driven production and reception, and
(4) multilingualism in diasporic adaptations.

More specifically, these four themes form a series of concentric circles of analysis that move from form to ideology, from local to global contexts, and from production to reception.

The book is structured around modes in which one might encounter Asian-themed performances of Shakespeare. Each chapter—unhindered by divisions of plays or performance genres—offers an approach to reading particular works. Although there is significant intra-Asian cross-fertilization, each chapter generally examines works from one cultural sphere. There are a multitude of approaches to Shakespeare and East Asia, and this book offers but one possible path through the historical material. Readers are encouraged to explore the connections across these works and languages. Many of the works selected contain teachable moments and are readily available in replayable media, such as digital video. Among the criteria for selection have been availability and accessibility, positionality within Asian and Anglo-European cultures, and curricular applicability.

Since Japan has historically been a gateway for the filtration of Western ideas into East Asia, Chapter 1 focuses on the achievements of Kurosawa's postwar film version of *Macbeth* and Ninagawa's contemporary stage version. The two directors have been influential in both the West and Asia: both pioneers—perhaps unwittingly—in the internationalization of Asian Shakespeares, they were discovered by English-speaking critics early on and became part of the canonical critical framework. As the "default" Asian directors for discussion, they have emerged, over time, as more palatable and "less foreign" to Western minds. Mindful of Ninagawa's and Kurosawa's representative function in canonical criticism, this chapter delineates methodologies to listen to and view performances by analyzing the aural, musical, and visual compositions of Kurosawa's and Ninagawa's works. Both directors combine a visual language borrowed from Japanese painting and Shakespearean motifs to defamiliarize and unpack stock images of *Macbeth* and Japan. A prime example would be Ninagawa's *Macbeth*, which takes place under a large cherry tree within an enlarged, stage-size

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Buddhist altar for home worship. As Macbeth wades through blood, spring turns to autumn and the petals fall. Another example is the final scene of Kurosawa's film. The Macbeth figure dies from arrows made of the forest, symbolizing that the forest encroaches upon his castle to consume him. Complex and multidimensional, the works of both directors compel us to reexamine our assumptions about Japanese and Shakespearean performance cultures.

Chapter 2 continues the line of inquiry into the intersections of form and ideology in the Sinophone world. One prominent strand of adaptation is an imagined remedial effect that Shakespearean motifs and East Asian aesthetics can have on each other, on the artists, and on the audiences. Works analyzed in this chapter either amplify Shakespeare's purported remedial merit and instrumentality, using it to promote social justice, or ironize it in parodies of the political efficacy of a "reparative" Shakespeare. With case studies from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, this chapter examines the politics of reform, the myths of Shakespeare's remedial merit, and the operating principles of these myths. Such metacriticism allows us to move beyond national profiling by bringing formalistic features to bear on the ideological purchase of adaptations. Feng Xiaogang's *kung fu* feature *The Banquet* (*Ye yan*, 2006), for example—made in the same genre as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (dir. Ang Lee, 2000)—adapts *Hamlet* in a way that remedially recasts gender roles. The film gives Gertrude and Ophelia, women characters who are traditionally silenced, a strong presence. One might even say that *The Banquet* "rescues" Ophelia from a fate of being silenced by the patriarchy. Parody, on the other hand, provides quite a different take on the idea of remediation. Though the emergence of parodic rewritings can indicate a society's familiarity with the Western canon and confidence in its own performance genres, there are subtle distinctions between actual familiarity and using parody to construct a familiarity that does not yet exist. Taiwan, a society more Westernized than many of its East Asian neighbors,[43] with an American system of secondary and higher education, has produced more irreverent approaches to Shakespeare—a prominent example being *Shamlet*, Lee Kuo-hsiu's long-running (since 1994) stage parody. Chapter 2 also situates select works in the international contexts of such *Hamlet*-inflected works as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.*

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

Building upon the foundation of formalistic and ideological criticism, Chapter 3 examines the metacritical question of the production and reception of adaptations. It first tunes in to the diverse, both parallel and conflicting, voices behind the production of select works from South Korea in a polyphonic framework. Each of the voices—artistic and political, drawn from shamanistic traditions and Shakespearean narratives—has its own trajectory, authority, and weight in the arc of development of an adaptation from inception to reception. Among the different sites for the engagement of Asia and Shakespeare, two of the richest, yet understudied, cities are London and Edinburgh; there, the commercialization of festivals is complicated by the expectations of compulsory realpolitik of Asianized spectacles and, sometimes, Asian exceptionalism. Shakespeare makes Asian theatre legible in the British context, and Asian performance styles played an important role in the rise of Shakespearean theatre as a global genre, as evidenced by the British reception of Oh Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet* (London, 2006) and *The Tempest* (Edinburgh, 2011). This chapter argues that performing Shakespeare in Asian styles and manufacturing Asian identities through Shakespearean theatre are reciprocal processes that have contributed to the emergence of Asian productions.

Cultural identities are not always rooted in one place or one national language. Moving from monolingual to multilingual performances, Chapter 4 explores the dilemma of intercultural identity in the Asian diaspora, examining works that not only feature translation as a political metaphor but also dramatize the interstitial space among languages. One such case is the aforementioned Singaporean film *Chicken Rice War*, a work that addresses local language policy and global teen culture, critiquing Singapore's multiracial policies that seek to erase ethnic differences. The chapter also asks: What are the political implications when an English-speaking Singaporean director such as Ong Keng Sen appropriates *King Lear* and Noh theatre to create the multilingual stage work *Lear* (1997 and 1999), a piece both intracultural ("pan-Asian") and intercultural? Ong's diasporic background informed the structure of his pan-Asian, multilingual *Lear*. Symbolizing a revisionist history of the Japanese occupation of Singapore (1942–45), the Mandarin-speaking Older Daughter kills her Japanese-speaking father, only to discover that she now inhabits the patriarchal role she has critiqued. Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister,

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

who searches for a national identity through his performance of the prince in *Hamlet*, Ong puts his actors in search of a new Asian identity through his multilingual productions. In what ways do Ong's works differ, formalistically and ideologically, from Ninagawa's Kabuki-style *Macbeth* or the British-born but France-based director Peter Brook's *Mahābhārata* (1985)? How "Asian" is a touring production when it is specifically designed for the context and taste of audiences at an international festival? Ong, who was invited in 2009 to speak at the Shakespeare Association of America's conference and to screen his *Lear* in Washington, DC, is not only a leading director in world theatre but also an influential playwright and curator. His highly self-conscious works are well known for their high-gloss postmodernism.

The four chapters of *Shakespeare and East Asia* thus move through concentric circles of analysis, from formalistic and sociological criticism to reception studies and the politics of multilingualism. The adaptations examined break new ground in sound and spectacle; they serve as a vehicle for artistic and political remediation or, in some cases, the critique of the myth of recuperation; they provide a forum where diasporic artists and audiences can grapple with contemporary issues; and, through international circulation, they are reshaping debates about the relationship between East Asia and Europe.

Caveat Lector

It should be noted that most of the directors and adapters examined in this book are male, which has long been a function of the setup of Asian theatre and film industries, particularly when it comes to adaptations of Shakespeare. The inequality is stark in the theatre circle, though there are a few prominent female artists, such as Chinese American director Tisa Chang, Taiwanese choreographer Lin Hsiu-wei, and Japanese playwright Kishida Rio. Born in Chongqing, China, and now a key figure in Asian American theatre, Chang founded the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in 1977. Her company's Asian American adaptation *Shogun Macbeth* is discussed in Chapter 1. Lin cofounded with her husband, Wu Hsing-kuo, the Contemporary Legend Theatre in Taipei in 1986. The company's solo *Lear Is Here* is discussed in Chapter 2. Lin also played a triply masked dancing doll in

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

the company's *Kingdom of Desire* (Beijing opera based on *Macbeth*, dir. Wu Hsing-kuo, 1987). Kishida is a key collaborator with Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen on *Lear* and *Desdemona* (Chapter 4). As one of the few feminist playwrights in Japan with her own company and a member of the first generation of female directors, Kishida had several intra-Asian collaborative productions. She is best known outside Japan for her collaboration with Ong, notably on *Lear* (1997), a multilingual production with performers from Japan, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. Unfortunately, these works have come to be known primarily as Ong's productions.[44]

There are, of course, also figures such as Miyata Keiko, a rare, award-winning woman director in a men's world. She was artistic director of the New National Theatre in Japan from 2010 to 2018. The dismissal of Hitoshi Uyama and subsequent appointment of Miyata was protested by Yukio Ninagawa, Hisashi Inouue, and other leading directors. She has directed productions of plays by Bertolt Brecht, George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Miller, Ibsen, and others. However, Miyata is not known for adaptations of Shakespeare.

Wherever possible, I have also made an effort to draw attention to works by women and gender minorities, such as Komaki Kurihara's landmark performance of Lady Macbeth (Lady Asaji) in Kurosawa's film *Throne of Blood* (Chapter 1), or Lee Joon-gi's embodiment of Gong-gil, a transgender court entertainer, in the film *The King and the Clown* (Chapter 3).

Conclusion

The history of East Asian Shakespeares as a body of works—as opposed to random stories about cross-cultural encounter—allows us to understand better the processes of localizing artistic ideas through transnational collaboration, processes that can unsettle assumptions about the stability of Shakespeare as a textual and verbal presence and about Asia as a privileged, unified visual sign. Going beyond what has been theorized by Walter Benjamin as the translational mode of survival (*Überleben*) and continuous, extended life (*Fortleben*) of art-works,[45] adaptations register the negotiations between fiction and

OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 8/12/2020, SPi

history, between genres and modes of representation, between text and performance, between what happens in the narrative in the past and the social discourse in the present. Adaptations activate the historicity of a play and mobilize differences to achieve an impact onstage and onscreen. They lead us away from an overdetermined concept of the canon.