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Andreea DOBRIN

ADAPTATIONS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:

SHAKESPEARE'S NEW OFF-STAGE LIFE OR, READING THE BARD IN KLINGON

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Illustrations

Fig. 1: Jane Tomlinson, *Map of the Plays of Shakespeare.*
Fig. 2: *To Beer or not to Beer* by William Shakesbeer (on a €14.99 T-shirt).
Fig. 3: Bell's edition of Shakespeare (1774).
Fig. 4: Front page of Charles Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807).
Fig. 5: Front page of *The Twenty Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare: A Home Study Course*.
Fig. 6: Performance at The Globe (Marcia Williams, *Tales from Shakespeare*). Available at:
Fig. 7: First two pages of *As You Like It* (Marcia Williams, *Bravo, Mr. William Shakespeare*! London: Walker Books Ltd, 2009.).
Fig. 8: First two pages of *The Merchant of Venice* (Marcia Williams, *Bravo, Mr William Shakespeare*, 2009). London: Walker Books Ltd, 2009.).
Fig. 9: The trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice* (Marcy Williams, Bravo, Mr William Shakespeare, 2009).
Fig. 10: Yasuko Aoike's manga, *Sons of Eve* (1977–79); Ryō Kurashina's manga *Yaoh* (2003)
Fig. 11: *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, The Manga Edition*, page 24.
Fig. 12: *Manga Shakespeare: Twelfth Night* (2009); *As You Like It* (2008)
Fig. 13: *Manga Shakespeare: Twelfth Night*
Fig. 14: *Manga Shakespeare: As You Like It.*
Fig. 15: Instances of the clock striking the hour in *The Animated Tale: Romeo and Juliet* (author's screen captures).
Fig. 16: *The Animated Tale: Romeo and Juliet* (author's screen capture).
Fig. 17: *The Setting of Romeo and Juliet* (author's screen capture).
Fig. 18: *Zetsuen no* T*empest*: The clash between the Tree of Exodus and The Tree of Genesis (author's screen capture).
Fig. 19: Sample pages of *The Klingon Hamlet*
Fig. 20: Wil'yam Shex'pir, author of *The Tragedy of Khamlet, Son of the Emperor of Kronos*
Fig. 21: Ian Doescher, *William Shakespeare's Star Wars Trilogy*
Fig. 22: Cover and front page of *Thirteenth Night* by Stephen Graham Jones and Scorpio Steele (2016).

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first have witnessed a significant increase in the presence of Shakespeare – the works, and/or Shakespeare-related topics – and a visible proliferation of references to Shakespeare in non-Anglophone contexts, not only in the form of scholarly works, but also on Twitter and YouTube. An early signal came from a volume of essays published in India and significantly titled *Shakespeare without English*: *The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries* was published in India. The editors come from India and Malaysia, while the contributors are from Brazil, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, and Romania, offering a non-Anglophone approach to the most Anglophone writer of the world.

Published one year later, a collection of essays edited by Robert Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (2007), traces the meandering road of Shakespearean adaptations, and covers such topics as "Shakespeare Abbreviated," "Shakespeare Illustrated," "Shakespeare serialized," or "Performing Shakespeare in Digitalized Culture" – among others. More recently, *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (2011) devotes a chapter to "Shakespeare and Youth Culture", while ample space is devoted to "Shakespeare, Media and Culture" and covers the presence of Shakespeare on film, television, the radio, internet and the digital media. Last but not least, Stephen O'Neill's *Shakespeare and YouTube* (2014) is a more detailed analysis of one of the most popular media for Shakespeare's plays.

The intention of this research work is to observe the four main directions of research – popular culture, adaptation, appropriation and parody – as a general framework for the critical discourse. This study will hopefully identify the relevance of the abbreviated versions of Shakespeare's plays both for the readers and the theatre-goers, the extent to which these versions preserve the literary value of the original, and the reception of such attempts by the critics and consumers alike. It will re-consider the *kitsch* status

conferred by the critics to animated versions of the plays, under the circumstances created by the well-known late-1990s BBC2 *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales* series which has since been broadcast by TV stations all over the world, and is still popular on the YouTube (a simple Google search yielding a staggering 3,250,000 entries!).

The presence of Shakespearean material in modern media questions the very meaning and use of appropriation. In support of the statements above, a number of objectives are set on addressing different instances, other than the stage performances or screenings, of Shakespeare's afterlife which will eventually develop into as many directions of research (listed alphabetically):

(1) *Abbreviated Shakespeare*, addressing the response to restlessness of present-day existence which justifies the interest in "simplified", "condensed" or even 'minimized' Shakespeare, and answers the claim that "abbreviated Shakespeare is easier."
(2) *Animated Shakespeare*, analysing the relevance of the multitude of animated cartoons to a discussion of parody, starting from the assumption that, besides parodies, animation offers re-creations of Shakespeare, where either the superstructure is altered yet the infrastructure of the story remains almost the same, or missing parts of a story are tried to be filled by artistic imagination.
(3) *Children's Shakespeare*, which builds upon the assumption that the effects of introducing children to Shakespeare and his work at a young age are only beneficent: (1) builds their general knowledge about the world around them - about English history and about English-speaking culture; (2) helps them develop a rich vocabulary; (3) introduces them to universal stories that are part of our English-speaking culture; (4) gets them interested in Shakespeare before they are old enough to develop a fear or dislike of his work;
(4) *Tales from Shakespeare*, which outlines the importance and influence of the early nineteenth century *Tales from Shakespeare*

(1807) by Charles and Mary Lamb on subsequent adaptations of Shakespeare for a young readership;

(5) *Graphic Shakespeare*: from the comic book to the graphic novel, and from there to the manga Shakespeare, our purpose is to demonstrate the graphic genre's continuity with traditional literary expression, which, according to Douglas Lanier, provides a means to consolidate and extend its critical acceptance as a legitimate art form.

(6) *SF Shakespeare* analyses how Shakespeare's plays function within the concept of postmodern space operas, toying with echo chambers and universal simulation. Holodeck performances and *Hamlet* quotes in Klingon in *Star Trek*, or *William Shakespeare's Star Wars* – in many different forms, Shakespeare in space continues to raise questions about the self-fashioning of humanity as a whole in a future of steadily increasing challenges.

(7) *YouTube Shakespeare:* the twenty-million-and-a-half Google entries on the topic justify the importance of the different genres of YouTube Shakespeare, and the necessity to interpret them through theories of remediation and media convergence and as indices of Shakespeare's shifting cultural meanings.

Due to the great number of comprehensive studies that cover Shakespeare's presence in the different manifestations of popular culture we have decided to limit ourselves to the seven directions outlined above, which are complementary, and sometimes overlapping, and follow Shakespeare's presence off-stage in the three media: print, TV and film, and the internet.

This book is structured in four parts and ten chapters, covering the seven directions of research delineated above. Some of the information and/or conclusions have been gathered in summative tables, and a number of illustrations – all belonging to the public domain – have included in the body text. The Bibliography covers the works cited in this research work, and also a number of other works consulted, listed as 'Further Reading."

PART I: *On the Theory and Practice of Adaptation* provides the theoretical background of my approach, and it has been structured into three chapters, each covering the contemporary approaches to Shakespeare:: a typology of

adaptation, the meaning of cultural translation as related to the adaptation process, and the seven instances detected in analysing the presence of Shakespeare in present-day culture, the so-called Shakespeare *á la dérive*. This is the theoretical component of this book, covering significant approaches and resources for off-stage Shakespeare.

Chapter One: *Towards a typology of adaptation* is a review of the most recent theories of adaptation, and starts with the views expressed by authoritative critics such as Ruby Cohn, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Frank Kermode and Andrzej Zurowski. One basic assumption is that all the modern and postmodern adaptations of the Shakespearean drama are a solution for the rediscovery of traditional values, without ignoring the contemporary preferences of the public. We found it necessary to discuss the similarities and differences between three terms – adaptation, appropriation, and representation – analysed by Linda Hutcheon in her seminal study *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Regarding the adaptation typology, it is important to note that there is a wide variety of approaches regarding the taxonomy of adaptations, depending on the criteria that we choose to lie at the basis of our study. Literary critique talks about adaptation on screen or stage, meaning a transposing process of what is written to what is spoken, from letters to words. Taking into account the former explanations of key terms such as *appropriation* and *representation*, we can conclude that these two are also forms of adaptation. Another common materialization form of this process is translation. The manifestation context of the literary creation is another criterion which leads to the emergence of other adaptation typologies: cinematic, theatrical, radio, cartoons, children books, commercials and the list could go on. When talking about Shakespeare, the situation is even more complex, as his popular personality develops to a larger extent the process of adaptation. In order to understand the constant variation of the adaptation process, we discussed the complexity of the dramatic structure, and some of the definitions of tragedy as seen by Aristotle, Oscar Mandel, Schlegel, and Hegel. If adaptation is seen as a process and not as its result we get to three major approaches: telling, showing or interacting with stories – all of them forms of artistic manifestation compared to the source texts. The realm of imagination is replaced by the sphere of straight and simple perception, abounding in expressive details and connections revealed by the sound of