

# Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance

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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

**Ton Hoenselaars, *Shakespeare Forever! Leven en Mythe. Werk en Erfenis* [Shakespeare Forever! Life and Myth. Works and Heritage] (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2017. Pp. 431).**

**Jo de Vos, Jürgen Pieters and Laurens de Vos, *Shakespeare. Auteur voor Alle Seizoenen. Met een Terugblik op 50 Jaar Voorstellingen in de Lage Landen* [Shakespeare. Author for All Seasons. Looking Back on 50 Years of Theatre Productions in the Low Countries] (Tielt: Lannoo, 2016. Pp. 272).**

Reviewed by *Coen Heijes*\*

It does not happen very often that Dutch books on Shakespeare are published in the Low Countries, but recently two have found their ways, one in the Netherlands, and one in Belgium. *Shakespeare Forever!* was written by Ton Hoenselaars, professor in Early Modern English Literature at the University of Utrecht, and is a book about Hoenselaars's personal experience with Shakespeare, while teaching and studying the bard for over thirty years. He sets out the goal of his book in the first chapter, telling us that he wants to demonstrate that the works of Shakespeare are often unjustly so considered to be 'difficult' or 'elitist', and that reading or watching Shakespeare need not be a frustrating, but can rather be a very enriching experience. Shakespeare, Hoenselaars argues, is not so much a schoolmaster, but a grandmaster, who in the end teaches us nothing, except that every apparent reality has its reverse side. In this way, Shakespeare presents the complexity of human existence, not so much because he chooses sides, but because he understands all of his characters, be they law-abiding, ordinary citizens or bloodthirsty tyrants, be they princesses or prostitutes. With this book, Hoenselaars wants to sketch a portrait of 'his' Shakespeare, the man with whom he spent more time than with anyone else, but also of the Shakespeare such as others have seen him through the centuries, and, in the end, the book is also about 'our', 21<sup>st</sup> century, Shakespeare.

The book has a clear structure: it starts with chapters on Shakespeare's life and times, next discusses the comedies, histories, and tragedies, and ends with chapters on translations, and Shakespeare's afterlife. Although

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Shakespeare's sonnets do not have a separate chapter, they are discussed throughout the book, for example in chapters two and three, where Hoenselaars discusses the facts of Shakespeare's life, and to what extent his work might tell us something about the man behind the plays and poetry. Hoenselaars shows us how little we actually know about Shakespeare's life, and how this has given rise to a plethora of far-fetched theories on the authorship of his work. He does so in a conversational, easy manner, clearly demonstrating himself to be a Stratfordian in the process, and making short shrift of the Oxfordians, whom he compares with religious fanatics. The lack of information has caused many to delineate details of Shakespeare's life and character from his plays and sonnets. Hoenselaars argues that one should be wary of this, as early modern literature did not so much aim at expressing the private life of the author, but rather aimed at 'translatio, imitatio, and aemulatio'. Interestingly, Hoenselaars himself uses Shakespeare's handwritten monologue for *The Book of Sir Thomas Moore* (1603), as a way to tell us something about Shakespeare's possible character. Shakespeare first uses the word 'other', next abbreviates it to 'oth' and finally even reduces it to 'o' as it reoccurs in the text: Shakespeare obviously is inspired and abbreviates the less important word, because they'll be written out properly later on. Although the argument might be tentative, at the same time, it is also interesting and tempting to try and get some grip on the man behind the work. Hoenselaars argues how Shakespeare was both a poet, aiming at a relatively small, more highbrow audience of readers, and a playwright, aiming at a wide group of spectators. Recalling his own personal memories as a student in the seventies, he shows us how important the theatrical aspect was in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a visit to Stratford was an obligatory part of the Shakespeare course at a Dutch university. The aspiring academics were confronted time and again with the question: but what would it look like on stage?

Chapters four, five, and six focus on Shakespeare's plays. Again, Hoenselaars uses an almost conversational tone, intent on avoiding the jargon and pervasive referencing of academic literature. While the chapter on tragedies divides its attention between the major plays, his chapter on comedies is relatively brief and focuses almost entirely on *The Tempest*, showing the possible autobiographical echoes, and the doubts it raises on mankind's capacity for spiritual growth. Once again, the personal touch is captivating, as when Hoenselaars describes how the half line 'Something too much of this',—in Hamlet's description of his friendship for Horatio (act 3, scene 2)—, fascinated him for years: was Hamlet embarrassed for his feelings, even with his best friend; did he want to express how he could rise above his feelings; how to translate this half line?

It is in the chapter on the histories, however, that Hoenselaars seems to be enjoying himself the most, and in which he wants to bring across the obvious

fascination he feels for these plays. Plays which, ironically, are among the least performed in the Netherlands, with the exception of *Richard 3*. He uses many and long citations from these plays (in Dutch translation), discussing both tetralogies, and demonstrating the many complex layers of these plays, while at the same time discussing the (implicit) conservative ideology from their representation of history. Special attention is given to the afterlife of the histories, and how new interpretations have emerged, as in Hytner's 2003 *Henry 5*, employed to criticise Blair's support for the invasion in Iraq. The afterlife in the Netherlands started in 1651, when a play by Lambert van den Bosch (*Roode en Witte Roos*) on the strife between the houses of York and Lancaster was in part based on *Richard 3*. The play was written against the background of the critical situation in the young Dutch Republic. William 2, Prince of Orange, had just died in 1650, and his heir was born a week afterwards. The discussion on whether or not to install a Lord Protector led to a debate between on the one hand the republican-oriented capital Amsterdam, and on the other hand the house of Orange, with its many privileges in the provinces. In this fascinating example, Hoenselaars points out how the urgency that the histories must have had in Shakespeare's times, was transported to the Netherlands, where the example of a Lord Protector who murdered young princes, must have been a serious cause of concern. Hoenselaars also includes more recent examples, such as the 2015 *Kings of War*, by Ivo van Hove, conflating *Henry 5*, *Henry 6*, and *Richard 3* in a four and a half hours' modern production, and performed abroad with English surtitles to wide critical acclaim.

In a separate chapter on translation, Hoenselaars argues how a translation is much more than merely changing the language of the text from early modern English to modern Dutch or Flemish. Translations are also a form of negotiation between different cultures, different ways of looking at the world. He shows how translations have changed through the centuries and discusses the current trend to adapt or rewrite Shakespeare, for example in the 1997 mega production *Ten Oorlog* by Lanoye and Perceval, who rewrote the eight histories, and where the polished, rhetorical style of the beginning was gradually taken over by foreign elements and hip-hop influences, reaching a climax in *Richard 3*. The process of translation and adaptation itself has become much more ambivalent than in the Romantic era. On the one hand there is a desire for identification with one of the world's most popular authors, while on the other hand there is a determination to undermine the canonical status and to express one's own, personal, contemporary voice. This brings Hoenselaars to the huge gap between non-Anglophone countries, - where Shakespeare on stage was reborn on stage time and again as a contemporary -, and the situation for the British audience, who are still confronted with a language that has not been spoken for more than 300 years and has, in effect, become a language waiting to be translated in contemporary English. This, however, Hoenselaars argues, is still seen as

blasphemous by most, leading to the paradox that attempts to protect the national icon only seem to mummify him and alienate him further and further from today's audience. Although Hoenselaars provides evidence of a few, more liberal minded voices in this debate, such as Dennis Kennedy and Stanley Wells, he concedes the strength of the conservative, romantic anti-translation lobby. And he philosophises what a true pity it is that no one has ever asked Alan Bennet to rewrite Falstaff's pub scenes in contemporary English, perhaps even with a light touch of the Yorkshire accent, or that Ian McEwan or Julian Barnes have never rewritten *Julius Caesar* in analytical English, in order to bring us closer to the real Shakespeare.

Although all chapters in his book partly refer to Shakespeare's afterlife, the last chapters specifically zoom in on this, not only in the Netherlands, but also elsewhere, ranging from a production of *Richard 2* on a ship of the Dutch East India Company off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1607, to another *Richard 2* with Ian McKellen in Bratislava in 1969, during the Russian occupation, when McKellen realised it was his first time ever to experience a crying audience. Crying, because Richard's words could have been their words, and for a while the English Shakespeare became a contemporary of the Czechoslovakian audience. But Hoenselaars goes beyond theatre and touches upon the afterlife in literature, opera, classical music, movies, and even into the realm of popular music pointing out Shakespeare's afterlife in David Bowie, The Eagles, Led Zeppelin, and Madonna. Shakespeare is everywhere, Hoenselaars argues, and when a proper balance can be found to bridge the gap between highbrow Shakespeare and creative attempts to reach out to a larger audience, such as in Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, many of the objections to demummifying Shakespeare will disappear.

Of particular interest in these last chapters, is Hoenselaar's account of Shakespeare during and after war periods and it is here that Hoenselaars himself expresses his fascination even more directly as when he discusses Shakespeare in concentration camps, post Holocaust productions of *Merchant*, or Zadek's 1965 movie *Held Henry* (Henry the Hero), a fierce reaction to the political hypocrisy in England during and after World War Two, as exemplified for example by Laurence Olivier's *Henry 5*. Hoenselaars becomes even more personal, when he discusses his former professor English literature in Leiden, Fred Bachrach, who had been interned in Japan during World War Two. Prisoners were allowed one book, and Bachrach chose Shakespeare's collected works, secretly using it for Shakespeare lectures during the Japanese occupation. Hoenselaars was deeply impressed when, as a student, he was told this story and shown this book by Bachrach. As was I, merely reading about it. Shakespeare behind barbed wire, Shakespeare as survival poetry: if one thing would demonstrate the bard's ability to survive the centuries, and not just as an elitist hobby, it is surely this. In writing his book, Hoenselaars aimed at a broad

audience, and his easy style makes one feel as if one is standing next to an enthusiastic guy in a pub, going on and on about his hobby. But then, this surely is Hoenselaar's hobby, and it is contagious in its style, its wide-ranging examples, its personal touch, its incredible enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Those who enjoy the bard, those who enjoy culture, those who are interested in history, they would love this book, although Hoenselaars wonders if the 50,000 audience going to a football match would also really be interested. Well, Hoenselaars had me captivated, and to be honest, I'm also one of those 50,000.

The other book, *Shakespeare. Author for All Seasons*, takes a different approach than Hoenselaars and focuses on theatre history in Flanders and the Netherlands over the last half century. It is written by three generations from the University of Ghent, Belgium: emeritus professor English literature Jo de Vos, professor literary studies Jürgen Pieters, and dr. Laurens de Vos, a graduate from Ghent, who is currently teaching theatre studies at the University of Amsterdam. Their book aims at providing an overview of some of the main productions of Shakespeare's most important plays in Flanders and the Netherlands since the late 1960s. Shakespeare has been performed in Flanders and the Netherlands more than any other playwright, - which explains the title *Shakespeare. Author for All Seasons* -, and both directors and actors consider Shakespeare like participating in the Champions League. It is the ultimate test to demonstrate one's skills. The specific time frame was chosen because of the change in the late 1960s, in the way directors approached Shakespeare on stage. The text-oriented, and often pseudo-historical approach gave way to a more present-day approach, and a personal interpretation, in which directors used the Shakespearean text and context with more freedom, in the wake of directors such as Brecht and Brook. The authors, however, aim to move beyond an overview of productions, and want to integrate this with a thorough introduction on the life and plays of Shakespeare, the historical context, and why and how his plays have formed a challenge for directors and actors in Flanders and the Netherlands. The duality of Jonson's poetical praise of Shakespeare, who describes Shakespeare as both 'the soul of the age' and as 'He was not of an age but for all time!', also permeates the book. The book hovers between the two poles of, on the one hand, the historical analysis and Elizabethan/Jacobean context of his plays, and on the other hand, the way directors and actors coped with him in the last 50 years in Flanders and the Netherlands. Ultimately, the authors aim at providing an accessible book to help their readers in a further enjoyment and understanding of watching Shakespeare's plays.

The structure of the book is straightforward. After an introduction in chapter one, which also provides some brief information on Shakespeare's life and times, the following nine chapters are grouped according to the plays, or groups of plays they discuss. Chapter two starts with the history plays, followed by three chapters on three major tragedies: *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*.

Chapter six discusses the comedies, which is followed by a chapter on two ‘love tragedies’, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*. Chapter eight again highlights two plays, the ‘problem plays’,—*The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*. The book is rounded off by a chapter on the Roman tragedies, and a final chapter on *The Tempest*.

Chapter two, on the histories, starts with an extensive part on the historical context of the play, as the authors describe the sources of the play, the relationship of these plays to Elizabeth and James, the concept of the ‘King’s Two Bodies’, and also the importance of history in not so much ‘objectively’ representing, but in providing an object lesson for the future. They indicate the after effects that must have been felt in Shakespeare’s time of the chaos of the Wars of the Roses, the religious struggles in Europe, and how the English and later British nation slowly came into being, reflected in part by the movement in the histories. Next, they show how criticism on the histories has evolved, starting with the ‘Tudor myth’ of Tillyard, which saw the histories as a perfect illustration of an Elizabethan world view in which a belief in order, as represented by the monarchy, would be central. In the course of the 1960s they see this change with Kott’s ‘Grand Mechanism’, and productions become increasingly critical of the histories, seeing them as a continuous power struggle of cruelty and violence, rather than a teleological movement towards harmony and peace. The relatively large amount of space awarded to the historical context and the critical development leaves, unfortunately, less space for a description of histories in Flanders and the Netherlands. The authors decided to zoom in on *Ten Oorlog* (To War), an adaptation of the two tetralogies in 1997 by Lanoye (author) and Perceval (director). It turned out to be a huge success, and in 2015 it gained the first place in the top-100 of the most important productions in the Dutch-speaking theatre, ahead of Joost Vondel’s *Lucifer* (1654). Reworking the eight plays to six, performed in the course of three evenings, each evening would focus on a particular theme: the (often destructive) father-son relationship, the battle between the sexes, and man in conflict with himself in a battle between moral awareness and the inability to suppress destructive violence. Perceval and Lanoye repeatedly argued they wanted to dust off the plays’ British history and focus on the grand, universal story of the tetralogies.

In the next three chapters, on the three major tragedies, it is particularly in the chapters on *Lear* and *Hamlet* that the authors extensively discuss the performance history in Flanders and the Netherlands, whereas in the chapter on *Macbeth*, the authors tend to focus more on the historical context of the play. In Flanders and the Netherlands, *Hamlet* is by far the most often performed play on stage, and the authors select six productions for further analysis. Interestingly enough, the authors not only discuss the more traditional productions and translations of *Hamlet*, and how the various directors coped with the challenges of this play, they also include interesting adaptations, such as *Hamlet vs Hamlet*

(2014) from Cassiers (director) and Lanoye (translator). Although language, characters, and plot were unmistakably interwoven with *Hamlet*, the changes resulted in a (partially) new play. Horatio and Fortinbras were removed, and a new character, Yorick's ghost, was added to the plot. Almost continually on stage with Hamlet, he functioned as Hamlet's good or bad conscience, always supporting one Hamlet versus another Hamlet. Hamlet himself, or herself, was played by the actress Abke Haring, who received the prize for best female lead role of the season. She played Hamlet as an androgynous adolescent, a character, which the authors described as neither man nor woman, neither youth nor adult, neither a doubter nor self-assertive, neither introvert nor extravert, but rather the sum of these poles. Hamlet's world was dominated by ruthless power and politics, which Hamlet occasionally may have seen through, but which he would be unable to escape from.

Just as in Hoenselaars' *Shakespeare Forever!*, which we reviewed above, the comedies once again receive relatively little attention. One may wonder why this is the case, seeing for example that *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Twelfth Night* are amongst the most often performed productions in the Low Countries. Only three of the more 'problematic' comedies, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest* receive a more extensive treatment. Perhaps the darker undertones provide a more attractive venue for analysis. *Merchant* is firmly placed in the historical context and the authors argue how the audience, in an anti-Semitic, Elizabethan context, would have had little trouble recognizing the cruelty of Shylock and enjoying the 'happy' ending. In their analysis of present-day productions, they focus on the 1982 production by Marijnen, in which Shylock's vindictive behaviour near the end was seen to be the almost logical conclusion of his equally vindictive environment, which would continue to regard him as an outsider. It might have been interesting for the authors to also have discussed the public outcry that this production raised, being the first production in the Netherlands to actually stage a Shylock who showed vindictive traits. Then again, in a book aiming at providing an overview of 50 years, one has to make necessary choices.

Finally, both the Roman tragedies and the two 'love tragedies' (*Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*) each have a separate chapter. It is interesting to see how the authors monitor the development on stage from the almost integral versions of *Romeo and Juliet* of the 1970s to the post-modern, deconstructivist approach of the 1980s in which adaptation, irony, caricature, and detachment were used more extensively. They round off with an analysis of the production by De Vos in 2013, which tried to balance the tragedy and youthful energy of the play and introduced allusions to the Palestine-Israeli conflict, while maintaining intimate and poetical scenes between the two lovers. It is noteworthy that the authors not only zoom in on the major productions, but occasionally also touch upon smaller



productions, such as the 1985 *Othello* adaptation by De Bruycker, which was renamed *Hotello, de Vloek van het Huwelijk* (Hotello, the Curse of Marriage). The adaptation focused on Othello and Desdemona, and the actual dialogues taking place between them, thereby revealing the lack of communication between the two spouses. It was this lack of communication that was seen as the cause of the tragedy. Likewise, in the chapter on the Roman tragedies, the authors present almost a kaleidoscope of productions. They range from the internationally acclaimed 2007 *Romeinse Tragedies* (Roman Tragedies) by Van Hove,—which combined *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in a five and a half hour production—, to a radical adaptation by Gerard Jan Rijnders in 1988, named *Titus, geen Shakespeare!* (Titus, not Shakespeare!). The 1984 murder on the American-Jewish broadcaster Alan Berg, who invited his audience to phone in and voice their feelings, no matter how spiteful, was the basis for his production. Alan Berg was played by Titus (!) Muizelaar and the stories of Berg got entangled with Shakespeare's play, allowing brutal and contemporary 20<sup>th</sup> century reality to break into an ancient conflict of revenge.

Like Hoenselaars, the authors of this book also argue strongly (and enthusiastically) that Shakespeare has not lost his relevance in 21<sup>st</sup> century Flanders and Netherlands and will not do so in the foreseeable future. Key features in this are not only the theatricality of his plays, but also the broad variety Shakespeare offers for interpretation. The diversity of productions and adaptations of Shakespeare, and the fascination the authors share for the theatre is evident throughout the book as the authors analyse how directors and actors deal with the challenges of playing Shakespeare for contemporary audiences in Flanders and the Netherlands. The ability to contemporize not only the context, plot and characters, but also the language of the plays, so much more available to directors in Flanders and the Netherlands than to their English counterparts, is an unmistakable part of the creativity with which directors can approach Shakespeare and the infinite variety this offers. The subtitle of the book, *Looking Back on 50 Years of Theatre Productions in the Low Countries*, implicates that the book would focus on these productions, and to a certain extent it does, but equally, and occasionally even more important to the authors, is placing the plays in the Elizabethan context, and providing an analysis of the content of the plays. At times, this leaves, unfortunately, somewhat less room for productions, but it is a conscious choice made by the authors and they themselves are aware of the setbacks. One cannot do it all, and with the choices made by the authors, they succeeded in writing a highly interesting, and readable book. They wanted the book to be a (critical) homage to Shakespeare and the unforgettable impact he made on the stage in Flanders and the Netherlands, as well as a useful guide in enjoying and understanding his plays. In that, they surely succeeded.

**Kahn, Lily, *The First Hebrew Shakespeare Translations: Isaac Edward Salkinson's Ithiel the Cushite of Venice and Ram and Jael. A Bilingual Edition and Commentary* (London: UCL Press, 2017. Pp. x+540).**

Reviewed by *William Baker*\*

Yiddish translations and versions of Shakespeare especially in reference to *The Merchant of Venice* have received attention. Except for Lily Kahn's fascinating recent work in *Multicultural Shakespeare* and elsewhere (2017), little has been published on Hebrew translations and versions although there has been research on twentieth-century Hebrew translations: see for instance Shelly Zer-Zion's "*The Merchant of Venice* in Mandatory Palestine and the State of Israel," which focuses on performance and production rather than linguistic and translation issues.

Lily Kahn's study with its bilingual text of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* is consequently a most welcome antidote. Her twenty-six page "Introduction" is particularly instructive. Its four sections focus on: "The historical and literary background to the first Hebrew Shakespeare translations" (1-3); the pioneering translator from English to Hebrew "Isaac Edward (Elizer) Salkinson's [1820-1883] life and works" (3-9); "Salkinson's Shakespeare translations" (9-23); and "This edition of *Ithiel the Cushite of Venice and Ram and Jael*" (23-26).

In the first part of her "Introduction" Kahn places the first Hebrew Shakespeare translations in their historical and intellectual contexts as "a product of the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, a hugely influential social and intellectual movement that emerged in Berlin in the 1770s." Its supporters, the Maskilim aimed to quicken Jewish absorption into Western European culture hoping for eventual assimilation and integration of the Jewish population into the wider one. A consequence of this aim was a focus on traditional educational reform, and somewhat ironically "the creation of a modern literary culture in Hebrew"—Hebrew was not then an everyday spoken language (1).

Given this context it is therefore to be expected that given Shakespeare's preeminence especially in Germany there should be an attempt to translate his work into Hebrew and fragments from *Henry IV Part Two* were translated from German to Hebrew as early as 1816. Again there were attempts during the first half of the nineteenth century to translate excerpts from *Hamlet*. Salkinson's translation of *Othello* published in Vienna in 1874 heralded the start "of a new era in the story of Shakespeare in Hebrew because it was the first rendition of a complete play to appear in the language and the first to gain widespread

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critical attention in Maskilic literary circles” (3). Also it represented the initial Hebrew version of Shakespeare that was translated directly from the English rather than via the German.

Who was the translator Isaac Edward (Elizer) Salkinson? He is not to be found in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and it is a tribute to Kahn’s detective skills that she is able to provide the most comprehensive account of this important figure to date. Information about his early years is difficult to find but it appears that he was born in 1820 in a small village in what is today Belarus, then part of the Russian Empire. His father apparently an impoverished scholar had three children from his first marriage: Salkinson was the youngest. His father remarried and Salkinson was mistreated by his stepmother forcing him to leave home to seek his fortune when he was sixteen or seventeen. He spoke Yiddish and received a conventional education that included the study of Hebrew, the bible, the Mishnah or inquiry into the bible and the Talmud, commentary by Rabbinic authorities on the Five Books of Moses. He acquired a reputation as a very bright scholar but seems to have moved around Jewish areas in order to avoid enforced marriages. In Vienna he fell in love but his sentiments were not returned: he was rejected in favor of a Rabbinic student who wrote Hebrew poetry addressed to her. “Apparent jealousy of his competitor spurred Salkinson to make his first attempt at literary translation into Hebrew” (5) by translating the initial act of a drama by Schiller. This did not have the desired effect and it appears that while he was working at the port in order to make money for a trip to Berlin he encountered a converted ship’s captain of Jewish origin who offered him a free passage to London where he arrived in the late 1840’s.

In London Salkinson became involved with the London Missionary Society and organizations converting Jews to Christianity. He himself converted and following courses he became a Presbyterian minister in Scotland. Following his friendship with another convert Christian David Ginsberg (1831-1914) an eminent Hebrew scholar in his own right, he began work on a Hebrew version of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* published in 1870. Six years later he was sent to Vienna where he spent a good amount of time with members of Hebrew literary circles rather than engaged on his missionary activities. Whilst in Vienna he met a distinguished exponent of Hebrew prose fiction Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885) who encouraged him to prepare an edition of Shakespeare’s plays in Hebrew. This led to Salkinson’s Hebrew translation of *Othello* which appeared in Vienna in 1874 accompanied by a lengthy Smolenskin introduction. In this he “analyzes Shakespeare’s significance as a playwright and provides a psychological assessment of the characters appearing in the play, with particular focus on Ithiel (Othello), Doeg (Iago), Phichol (Brabantio) and Aenath (Desdemona).” Additionally he discusses the relevance of the drama’s “themes for a Jewish audience, and argues for his vision of good literature as a vehicle for the

depiction of human nature in all its moral complexity” (7). Why *Othello* should have been chosen is unclear.

Hanna Scolnicov in her “The Hebrew Who Turned Christian: The First Translator of Shakespeare into the Holy Tongue,” argues that Salkinson, as a convert and an outsider was attracted to Othello’s situation. In 1878 Salkinson’s translation of *Romeo and Juliet* appeared. But why did he choose this play? Devorah Gilulah in an article published in Hebrew “From *Ithiel the Cushite* to Alterman’s *Othello*,” proposes that Salkinson’s choice of Shakespearean plays focusing upon love and jealousy might be related to his unrequited love in Vienna.

Following these translations Salkinson moved on to translating the New Testament into Hebrew, a task unfinished at his death in Vienna in 1883 and completed by Christian David Ginsburg and published in 1885.

The third section of Kahn’s “Introduction” concentrating on “Salkinson’s Shakespeare translations” (9-23) is divided into several sections. It begins with a discussion of “Publication and reception” (9-13). Salkinson’s translation was not designed for stage performance but private reading. The print run of *Ithiel*, published in 1874, was a thousand, and as a “standalone volume” (9), it was well received. *Ram and Joel* appeared four years later in a similar print run and was also positively received. Both provided the inspiration for subsequent late-nineteenth-century translations of Shakespeare into Hebrew. Salkinson’s translation of *Ithiel* was reprinted in 1930 in Tel Aviv, Salkinson’s use of “biblicized names for the characters” being “replaced by the English originals” (12) and it was performed as *Othello* in Haifa in 1936. Nathan Alterman’s 1950 *Othello* translation into Hebrew, acknowledging its indebtedness to Salkinson’s replaced it. Interestingly in 2015/16 *Ithiel* was reissued by an Israeli publisher as a fine illustration of neglected Hebrew literary translation and even was the subject of an article in one of the main Israeli daily newspapers *Ha’aretz* 2 August 2016.<sup>1</sup>

In short Salkinson’s translations are a landmark in the history of Hebrew literature, and provide the foundation for subsequent Shakespeare translations. “They are of particular relevance for translation studies specialists in that they constitute some of the only examples globally of Shakespeare adaptations in a largely unspoken language”—Hebrew. Additionally they provide “insight into the reception of plays in a nineteenth-century European minority society” (13).

In her discussion of Salkinson’s translation style, Kahn indicates that the translations are not necessarily literal, lines are not omitted and the sense of individual speeches is retained but a lot of paraphrase occurs. The reason for this is due to problems of finding Hebrew equivalents for Shakespeare’s wording, the difficulty of finding Hebrew rhymes that will be equivalent to those rhymes

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<sup>1</sup> [www.haaretz.co.il/literature/prose/.premium-1.3024895](http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/prose/.premium-1.3024895)

found in Shakespeare's text: *Romeo and Juliet* in particular with its high incidence of rhyming couplets provided a problem in this respect.

Salkinson's translation was a product of the ideological orientation of its time and his own predilections. In spite the fact that he was working in his capacity as a Christian missionary, there is no overt attempt at conversion in these translations, a reflection perhaps that in Vienna he had close Jewish contacts. Six elements can be isolated in his translation style: his treatment of the names of characters; his translation of Christian "rituals, institutions, and oaths; Classical mythology; other non-Jewish cultural references; ...the insertion of biblical verses and phrases into the composition; and foreign-language elements in the source text" (15-16). Kahn's introduction discusses each of these at some length (16-20).

She indicates that the translation removes the distinction between prose and verse and that everything in the Hebrew translation appears in verse form. Lines are formally distributed corresponding on the whole to Shakespeare's and the text contains vocalization. Salkinson's poetry lacks iambic pentameter although the rhyme schemes are equivalent to Shakespeare's with ABAB, ABA, ABBA occurrence with variations of course. In terms of language usage, post-biblical Hebrew is used as well as biblical Hebrew. Unfortunately Salkinson fails to indicate which edition of Shakespeare he used for his translation.

The fourth and final part of Kahn's fascinating introduction discusses her specific edition. This is a reproduction of the translations with the original spelling and vocalization, and the original footnotes are retained. The Hebrew is on the right side of the page with an "English back-translation" on the left (23). The purpose of this is to make the Hebrew text accessible to readers who do not know the Hebrew language. Biblical or postbiblical citations and allusions appear in bold with an explanatory footnote. There is a running commentary too. Kahn's references are to the third Arden editions of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

In conclusion let me provide instances of how useful Kahn's work is to students of both plays. At the opening of *Othello* there is a street scene in Venice in which Iago (Salkinson translates as "Jago") enters with Roderigo ("Raddai"). In Salkinson's Hebrew version "Raddai" is accompanied by "Jago" or "Doeg." In a footnote Kahn notes the source as *1 Sam* 22:18 and *Psalms* 52:2 and observes: "Doeg was an Edomite and chief herdsman to King Saul who carried out the execution of a large number of priests. Edom was an enemy nation for biblical Israel; in rabbinic literature, it became a symbol of the Jews, Roman conquerors and of Christianity in general." Salkinson possibly used the name "Doeg as the equivalent of Iago in order to highlight the character's murderous proclivities and to mark him as a Christian enemy in contrast to the Jewish Ithiel" or *Othello* (78, n. 4).

Kahn's footnote observation on the significance of the name "Jael" for Juliet in *Ram and Jael (Romeo and Juliet)* is equally fascinating and instructive. Apart from the "sound correspondence" the name also "has symbolic connotations." Jael is the central figure in the biblical story found in *Judges* 4 and 5 where she enticed Sisera the enemy general into a tent, killed him consequently and saved her people from certain defeat and conquest by the Canaanites. In post-biblical Jewish tradition and in the Babylonian Talmud Jael/Juliet is considered "to be more meritorious than even the four biblical matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah." Consequently by giving her the name Jael "Salkinson has chosen to cast her unambiguously in the model of the strong, independent biblical figure who is unafraid to risk death in defense of her beliefs": or in the instance of Jael/Juliet, love (341-42).

In short this is a fascinating volume from which much can be learnt about translation, differing perceptions of Shakespeare in eclectic cultures and traditions. Kahn and the publishers are to be congratulated. Hopefully their volume will receive the wide circulation and attention that it deserves.

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**Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick and Poonam Trivedi, eds., *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel* (New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xix+271).**

Reviewed by *Elena Yuan*\*

*Shakespeare's Asian Journeys* seeks to reclaim Shakespeare from European perspectives and a universal essentialism that tars all Asian manifestations of Shakespeare with the same brush—an essentialism that fails to recognise the individual differences between different countries and one that focuses on what Shakespeare has done to Asia rather than what Asia in its multiplicities has done to Shakespeare. This collection of essays alludes to the post-colonial debates that have dominated intercultural performance and scholarship about Shakespeare in Asia for the last three decades but offers up instead a fresh, more nuanced reflection of the same. It focuses on championing the myriad and distinct ways that Shakespeare has been planted, grown and borne fruit in Asia. And it does so without succumbing to a pan-Asian or “totalizing Asianist ideology” (4), offering instead an understanding of the individual “historical and cultural affinities among Asian communities as well as their immense differences” (4).

The collection is divided into four sections: Redefining the Field, Shakespeare and Asian Politics, Shakespeare and Asian Identity, and finally Asian Shakespeare and Pop Culture. In the first section, contributions challenge previous discussions of Shakespeare in Asia that relied on discrete geographies, national theatres and a strict bifurcation of hierarchical relationships between Shakespeare source and local receivers. Judy Celine Ick's essay on “The Augmentation of the Indies: An Archipelagic Approach to Asian and Global Shakespeare,” offers a new geographic paradigm for looking at Shakespeare. This paradigm emphasises the fluidity of Shakespearean performance, the interconnectedness and blending of cultures and countries along maritime routes, as opposed to the fixed homogeneity of bordered nation-states. Subsequent chapters on the introduction of Shakespeare into Japan, Hamlet and the Bhagavad-Gita, and Japanese translation of Shakespeare, emphasise the active reception and reconstruction of Shakespeare in local terms.

Part 2 on Political Shakespeare examines four different cases: Taiwan, mainland China, Korea and Indonesia, demonstrating the range of roles that Shakespeare has played in Asia: from authority to protest, and bulwark of establishment to provocateur—as in Shen Lin's analysis of Lin Zhaohua's production of *Coriolanus* with Beijing People's Art Theatre. Part 3 looks at the use of Shakespeare to reflect Cultural Capital in the Philippines, the

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“glocalization” of Shakespeare through production, translation and adaptation of his plays in Malay and Korean performances. It is a refreshing look at how Shakespeare forms part of local efforts to preserve, shape and re-shape Asian identities through the pressures of colonialism, post-colonialism and the subaltern’s claiming of voice. The final section on Asian Shakespeare and pop culture offers insights into how Shakespeare has been fragmented and reinvented in Indian film and Japanese Anime and Manga. In both, Shakespeare has been appropriated and re-purposed to complement new indigenous visions and cultural purposes at the same time that local artists further the spread of Shakespeare to audiences world-wide.

In many ways this collection of essays responds to and expands upon a range of traditional scholarship from the body of work inspired by Jan Kott’s *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, through to the post-colonialist discourses of Homi Bhabha, the concerns of intercultural performance around globalisation, and cultural geography’s explorations of identity and place. Where its real value lies, however, is in the reclaiming of Asian Shakespeare for and by a plurality of Asias—each with their own history, culture and future. This is a fascinating, varied and welcome addition to the fields of Shakespeare Studies, Cultural Geography and Intercultural Performance.



**Hiroshi Seto, *A History of Chinese Reception of Shakespeare* 濑户宏, 中国のシェイクスピア (Osaka, Japan: Matsumotokobo, 2016); Chinese translation 莎士比亚在中国: 中国人的莎士比亚接受史, trans. Linghong Chen (Guangzhou, China: Guangdong People's Press 广东人民出版社, 2017. Pp. 377).**

Reviewed by *Sun Yanna*\*

The history of China's reception of Shakespeare has been discussed from distinctive perspectives in book form by many researchers, including Shujun Cao and Fuliang Sun (1989), Xianqiang Meng (1994), Xiaoyang Zhang (1996), Ruru Li (2003), Murray J. Levith (2004), Alexa Alice Joubin (2009), Yanna Sun (2010), and Hiroshi Seto (2016). As a specialist of modern Chinese drama based in Japan, Seto offers a unique cross-cultural perspective on the topic in his monograph, *Shakespeare in China: A History of Chinese Reception of Shakespeare*, which was published in Japanese in 2016. The book was subsequently translated into the Chinese language and published by Guangdong People's Press to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. This review is based on the Chinese edition which may differ from the Japanese original due to regulations within the mainland Chinese publishing industry. I do not read Japanese, and therefore limit my comment to the Chinese edition.

The book consists of nine chapters and an informative prologue. In the prologue, Seto divides the history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare into three stages. The book offers a comprehensive overview of each phase. For each phase, Seto covers the history of translation, performance, and dramatic criticism. In the first phase (from the late Qing Dynasty to the May Fourth era), Shakespearean dramas were introduced as legendary stories. Next comes a phase (the May Fourth Movement to the late 1980s) that focuses on preserving the authenticity of Shakespeare. The third phase (1990 to the present) witnesses creative interpretations of Shakespeare's plays. Seto also briefly introduces the reception history in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

To illustrate the history of Shakespeare in China, Seto offers case studies of five types of performances. The first approach focused on localizing Shakespeare's characters and plays. For example, several early twentieth-century performances were based on Lin Shu's translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* which reframes Shakespearean narratives as Chinese folklores and fairy tales. In *The Woman Lawyer* (an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*), Bassanio borrows money from Antonio to help Portia, his younger sister, to establish a women's school. Staged during China's New Women

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Movement, this adaptation localized key elements in Shakespeare's play to address a local agenda. In contrast, the second commonly deployed approach imposed Western theatrical realism on the productions, such as Shanghai Drama Society's (Shanghai xiju xieshe) 1930 *The Merchant of Venice*. The 1937 *Romeo and Juliet* production by the Shanghai Amateur Experiment Troupe (Shanghai yeyu shiyan jutuan) is another good example, as it adopted Stanislavsky's system of acting. The third approach, which also emerged in the early twentieth century, brought Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese opera forms (*xiqu*) together. Seto diverges from current scholarly consensus regarding the viability of adapting Shakespeare to *huaaju* (Western-influenced realist, spoken drama theater) and *xiqu* (stylized Chinese opera theater). Scholars such as Shujun Cao, Ruru Li, and Alexa Alice Joubin have written extensively on the aesthetic and political agency of Shakespeare in Chinese opera. Seto does not think it desirable to adapt Shakespeare to Chinese operatic styles. He argues instead that staging Shakespeare in *huaaju* (spoken drama) or "any other modern theater forms" can better vitalize Shakespeare's plays (229; my translation). I believe traditional Chinese opera theater has historically played an important role in popularizing Shakespeare in China. The fourth approach, in Seto's account, involves more artistic license and liberty. It highlights the adaptor's and the director's personal styles. Prominent mainland Chinese director Lin Zhaohua's works exemplify this approach. He does not see himself limited to any one particular theatrical style. Last but not least, the fifth approach takes a hybrid form by mixing spoken drama with Chinese opera.

Of special interest is that beyond the Chinese reception history, Seto offers a full and detailed account of Japan's reception history of Shakespeare. While Seto does not bring the two parallel histories to bear on each other as Alexa Alice Joubin does in her forthcoming book *Shakespeare and East Asia* (Oxford University Press), Seto's book – now available in Chinese – could pique Chinese readers' interest in the history of globalization of Japan through the tangible case of Shakespearean reception. Japan is a country that has played important roles in the rise of modern East Asia.

Hiroshi Seto's book is a compelling work that traces China's reception history of Shakespeare from the late Qing Dynasty to 2016, covering well over 170 years. This great achievement can be attributed to his rigorous scholarship. Seto has carried out solid archival research in Beijing, Shanghai, and Jiang'an, and his research is supported by interviews he conducted. His attention to detail is shown in his treatment of his primary sources. He not only cites his sources, but he also provides spelling variants and differences between various editions. Seto has made several contributions to the field. His research shows hitherto unknown details of the history of reception. Tian Han may have consulted Tsubouchi Shoyo's version of *Hamlet* when he translated it into Chinese. Lin Shu's rewriting of Shakespeare's history plays in classical Chinese prose is

partly based on A. T. Quiller-Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*. Historically there are multiple pathways through other countries, such as Japan, for Anglo-European canonical writers to be introduced into China.

There are a few issues that prevent Seto's arguments from coming through clearly. For example, Seto argues that Shakespeare was first introduced into in China in 1844. Among others, Hao Tianhu (1999, 2012) and Alexa Alice Joubin (2009) have established elsewhere that Shakespeare was first mentioned in 1839 in a Chinese compendium of world cultures compiled by Lin Zexu. Further, Seto suggests in the prologue that the Chinese Shakespeare Society has ceased to organize academic activities since the early 1990s. In fact, the Society organized the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival, which stands out as a notable milestone in the history of Chinese Shakespeare. And four years later, the Society co-organized the International Shakespeare Conference with the Shanghai Theater, the Hong Kong Shakespeare Society, and the Australian Shakespeare Society. As far as Stanislavsky's system of acting is concerned, Seto is full of self-contradiction in demonstrating its beginning in China. In one instance, he remarks that psychological realism was first adopted by the Shanghai Amateur Experiment Troupe in their production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1937. In another section of the book, however, he points out that the system was first employed by National Modern Drama School (Guoli juzhuan) between 1938 and 1939 when the famous director Huang Zuolin and his wife Danni taught there. Further, the chapters do not seem to be interconnected. Instead of functioning as integral chapters in a monograph, the chapters read like essays that sometimes contain the same information. The repetition unfortunately breaks the continuity of the work. There are some typos. It is unclear whether these typos were introduced by the Chinese publisher and translator, or from the original Japanese version. For instance, the title of Lin Shu's *Yao Meng* was misprinted on page 94.

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