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Shakespeare is still alive
The Hogarth Shakespeare Project in the Era of Adaptation

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Introduction

In the late twentieth century an irresistible impulse to re-write stories stimulating the afterlife of past literary texts has been noticed among scholars. In the literary field, writers have seemed to be more interested in re-writing and going back to old stories than writing anew. With this respect, since the advent of postmodernism, a growing need has been felt to move away from the idea of authorial originality toward a more collaborative and societal understanding of the production of art and the production of meaning (Iyengar 2023, x). The inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning and an ever-expanding network of textual relations. Not only are the writers producing new meaning when engaging with different works and re-working them into new concepts, but also the readers who create their own intertextual webs while recognizing echoes, allusions, parallels in the texts they come in contact with (Sanders 2006, 2-3). When reading a book, a journey begins that takes readers through echoes, allusions and parallels – even unconscious ones – with different texts existing within the literary system, so that the act of reading engages consumers of literature in a network of textual relations. Tracing those relations among present and past texts is part of the enjoyment of literature and allows the discovery and creation of new meaning. Far from being sheer imitations of previous works, adaptations do not simply reproduce the adapted text, but they rethink and reimage old works from a new critical direction. "To adapt is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable" (Hutchen 2006, 7). Adaptations, with their revisitation of prior works, breathe new life into old texts infusing them with new sense and they make them resonate with our present time. Adaptations repeat the same stories, characters and themes without necessarily replicating the work they are based on and creating a new work of art that is fresh and new and has an independent character; it is "repetition, but repetition without replication (Hutcheon 2006, 7). Adaptations are so much a part of Western culture that they appear to affirm Walter Benjamin's insight that "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" (Hutcheon 2006, 2) and this impulse to go back to the same stories and keep them going seems to be an answer to an inherently human need, that to tell and to be told stories.

Adaptations have not always enjoyed popularity and favour in the field of literary scholarship. In fact, adaptation detractors consider adaptations secondary and perverted pieces of work being second to an idealized original one. However, such derogatory cultural evaluation of adaptations that sees those texts as spoilt versions of past texts has been challenged by highlighting the value of adaptation as a mode of storytelling.

The Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon makes a point when she asks "If adaptations are […] such inferior and secondary creations, why then are they so omnipresent in our culture and, indeed, increasing steadily in numbers?" (Hutcheon 2006, 4). Post-structuralist adaptation studies now consider adaptations worthy of study in their own right as autonomous texts and not as corrupted versions of an idealized previous text (Iyengar 2023, 9).

Although interest in adaptation studies has increased starting from the last century, recycling old stories and keep them going is not something new. In fact, the practice of going back to old texts to rework them across various genres and art forms has been popular for a long time. Among others, "Shakespeare transferred stories from page to stage an made them available to a new audience" (Hutcheon 2006, 2). Despite being idolized as a natural and authentic genius, Shakespeare himself was an avid imitator and wrote his plays in a collaborative creative environment; he used the plots that he had read throughout his life time to create new and vibrant stories that companies of actors could bring to life on the theatrical stage. Ovid, Seneca, Plutarch, Boccaccio, Holinshed are just some of the sources that shape Shakespeare's corpus and that he drew from while imagining the plots of his plays.

Now, in their turn, many modern artists and writers turn back to Shakespeare in order to remake him in our own image and often with spectacular results (Henderson 2006, 2). Shakespeare is enjoying a rich and thriving afterlife thanks to his inheritors who continue to collaborate with the Bard and, in doing so, they keep him alive and accessible to modern audiences, bridging the gap between Elizabethan era and our present day. Going back to those texts many centuries after their first draft actually allows a reflection on culture at large. In this respect, such retellings change the meaning of Shakespearean works and invite us to look at the past and at the present through new lenses. Writers are allowed to make free use of their creativity in countless adaptation, reinterpretation and modernizations of his plays.

In the field of Shakespearean adaptation, scholars have gradually moved away from evaluation of how true or faithful a given adaptation is to Shakespeare. On the contrary, scholars of Shakespeare and adaptation now consider how an adaptation works in itself and how it builds new knowledge and ideas for today (Iyengar 2023, 5-6). Shakespearean adaptations are now conceived of as "plants that have adapted contingently to local environments, with corresponding changes to structure, flourishing and dispersal through time" (Iyengar, 2023). Some lineages and lines of descent can be traced, but some adaptation will look a lot different from their origins. In the twenty-first century, the Bard still proves to be a source of creative inspiration and artistry all around the world and his plots and stories still manage to captivate audiences that have different social and cultural backgrounds. Shakespeare stands as an

enduring testament to the power of human creativity. His works, spanning a diverse range of genres, continue to resonate with audiences worldwide, captivating hearts and minds all around the world. Amidst our modern perception of chaos and uncertainty, "Shakespeare is called upon to embody something that will, we desperately hope, last" (Henderson 2006, 4).

The first chapter of this dissertation will briefly introduce the ideas of some of the main thinkers which have formed the backbone of the adaptation theory and intertextuality. Starting from T.S. Eliot's pronouncements in his 1919 pivotal essay *The Tradition and the Individual Talent* regarding his idea of literature as an enclosed yet dynamic system in which texts breed other texts, the discussion delves into the realm of intertextuality. In this regard, Roland Barthes suggested that "any text is an intertext" (Barthes 1981, 39), proposing that when dealing with literature the works of past and contemporary cultures are always there. The act of reading, thus, engages us in discovering a network of textual relations; moving between one text and the other and tracing such relations is to interpret the text and to work out its meaning or meanings.

The first chapter will also provide an outline of the rich field of Shakespeare adaptation studies. "Shakespearean canon has provided a crucial touchstone for the scholarship of adaptation as a literary practice and form" (Sanders 2006, 46). Accordingly, Shakespeare's texts have proved to be rich sources for adaptation since they provide readers with a template of archetypal stories, a series of familiar reference points and expectations which authors can exploit, twist and relocate in new, different ways (Sanders 2006, 83). Despite snobbish assumptions that Shakespeare's plays should remain perfectly untouched, his texts are continuously returned to and reworked. Going back to those texts after many years allows writers to make a commentary upon past culture, world view and ideas and, at the same time, to shed light on our present society and culture with themes which are dear to our modern sensibilities.

The second chapter aims, first of all, to dismiss the elitist assumption of Shakespeare's inherent superiority as a mythical and natural genius by showing the image of Shakespeare as an adaptor who recycled old stories to create the texts for his plays. In his 2001 *Shakespeare's Books. A dictionary of Shakespeare Sources,* Stuart Gillespie offers the full range of literature Shakespeare was acquainted with, including classical, religious and contemporary works. The practice of source-hunting and reflection on Shakespeare's sources can actually be useful to the discussion around adaptation and how we should think of texts as intertexts which exist in relationship with each other (Gilliespie 2001, 2).

In the same way as Shakespeare transformed his literary knowledge into new literature weaving together multiple sources, Shakespearean inheritors have subsequently transported his

plays into modern culture and have transformed him. That was precisely the case with the Hogarth Shakespeare series, a major international project launched in 2014 by the Hogarth Press that sees a selection of Shakespeare's plays reimagined in the form of a novel by some of today's bestselling and most celebrated writers. Jeanette Winterson, Howard Jacobson, Tracy Chevalier, Gillian Flynn, Margaret Atwood, Jo Nesbø and Anne Tyler were called to take part in the project and each of them found a way to go back to those classic stories and translate them into modern day in this extraordinary creative endeavour. With this collection of novels, the Hogarth Shakespeare authors provided us with a valuable perspective on the ways that Shakespeare's plays continue to raise pertinent questions for today (Cavanagh 2018, 113).

After having provided a brief overview on the entire collection of books belonging to the series, the third chapter offers an analysis of Anne Tyler's *Vinegar Girl*, published in 2016, and a comparison with the play by Shakespeare *The Taming of the Shrew*. With her choice, Tyler faced the challenge to find an appropriate modern parallel for Kate's marital circumstances, given the distance between Shakespeare's time and our own. However, she was able to create a story that – even with sometimes lighter tone – is able to tackle complicated issues of gender roles and politics and that is ultimately about violence and abuse. In her updated version of the play, Tyler masterfully transported those issues into twenty-first century western society and to write a story about gender and social expectation most women belonging to Kate's generation can relate to. It is the story of a young woman who feels stuck in life and does not know which direction she should take in a society which would like a woman of her age to have it all figured out and fit the boxes that society use to define people. The situations escalates when she is forced by her careless father into a sham marriage with his Russian assistant.

The fourth and last chapter offers a piece of criticism of the Hogarth Shakespeare series concerning the choice of authors with respect to diversity. Given the growing interest in studying Shakespeare through different cultural traditions (Kapadia 1997, 34), a project centering only on Europe and the North America seems to neglect a huge part of the discourse. Cross-cultural productions and adaptations challenge Shakespeare's status as a British poet and icon; "Shakespeare's global pedigree" (Kapadia 1997, 5) must be foregrounded and its influence outside Anglophone countries can not be neglected. Shakespeare's global reach is inextricably intertwined with trade and colonial expansion. During the height of the British Empire, Shakespeare was seen as the embodiment of British culture and identity. His plays were performed for British audiences all over the world, and they were taught in schools to instill British values in young people. Shakespeare's works were also used to justify the British

Empire's expansion, by portraying the British as bringing civilization and progress to the rest of the world. The case of India is exemplary of Shakespeare's reach and influence beyond the United Kingdom and the United States. A nation with a rich literary and theatrical heritage of its own, India embraced a Shakespeare of its own, weaving in elements of traditions with the result being that Shakespeare became part of India's growth towards modernity.

CHAPTER 1
Adaptation and Shakespeare

1.1 Adaptation Theory

"After all, the work of other writers is one of a writer's main sources of input, so don't hesitate to use it; just because somebody else has an idea doesn't mean you can't take that idea and develop a new twist for it. Adaptations may become quite legitimate adoptions."
—William S. Burroughs

In his 1919 pivotal work *The Tradition and the Individual Talent,* T.S. Eliot acknowledges the skepticism that dominates the critical approach towards tradition and tries to reconceptualize it in a new and modernist way which marks a fracture with the previous attitude towards the past. In the early 20th century, when Eliot is writing, he is very much conscious of the need to repack tradition in a framework which is more agreeable and palatable to English ears (Eliot 1919, 36). In fact, tradition is perceived as something which is not commendable when it comes to originality and departing from older ways of writing. According to T.S. Eliot, tradition means a historical sense which "compels a poet to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of past literature" (Eliot 1919, 37), of Europe from Homer onwards. A traditional writer must have a sense of the history of literature – that is, not only knowing the past but also the importance of the past in the present. In this view, "the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past but also of its presence" (Eliot 1919, 37). The historical sense binds together the timeless and the temporal and, while making the writer resonating with the past, it makes them also conscious of their contemporaneity and engagement with the present.

Unless a writer is knowledgeable about his past and conscious of the tradition in which they are situated, their own sense of belonging would not be completed at all. The knowledge of the past is what makes the writer situated within their own time.

In order to spin the discussion on tradition further, the author claims that the most valuable parts of a poet's work are those in which the "dead poets, his ancestors assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot 1919, 37). There is a dynamic relationship between the past and present

writers who merge their personality with the tradition. “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone” (Eliot 1919, 37). Throughout his essay, Eliot tries to point out “the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors” and “the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” (Eliot 1919, 39). Past works have already formed an “ideal order”, complete in itself (Eliot 1919, 37); when a new work is added, the ordered is readjusted and becomes complete again. It is precisely this understanding of tradition as an entity which is not static and conservative but changes continuously in a flux that reveals Eliot’s modernist approach on tradition and marks a departure from the Romantic attitude. When a new work of art is created, it does not exist alone in a vacuum but it also alters the way in which all the other previous works have been understood and received. Rather than a still entity, it changes when a new text is introduced in the system. Literature is viewed as a “self-enclosed system in which texts breed texts” (Taylor 1989, 368).

However, the idea of tradition outlined in the essay is not be understood as blind imitation. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance and larger context. Eliot challenges the assumption that when writers imitate their predecessors, they are lacking originality. “Novelty is only possible when tapping into tradition”, it is not only a repetition of traditional works but “an awareness and understanding” of the works of the past (Eliot 1919). The individual talent creates new material upon the foundation of the literary past.

Not only is the idea of tradition as imitation discouraged, but also the idea that tradition can be simply inherited. On the contrary, it can be obtained only through “hard labour” (Eliot 1919, 37). It is produced by a willful kind of action, an engagement with a certain kind of labour in order to make sense of the text. Literature is not only about pleasure but also about difficulty and hard work. Engagement with the past will lead to the assimilation of the past which will inevitably influence the individual work.

However, Eliot seems to be aware of the pedantic nature of such an exercise. With this respect, he mentions Shakespeare to give an example; the author acquired much from his personal readings and not necessarily through his education having, as Ben Johnson famously said, “small Latin and less Greek” in his knowledge (Eliot 1919, 39).

He is alerting his readers to the possibility that there could be ways to absorb the past; the most important thing is to develop a consciousness of the past which becomes important in asserting the individual character of the writer as well. This brings with it an important innovation compared to the Romantic notion according to which the poet’s personality was of most importance and poetry should be an extension of the poet’s own character. On the contrary, “what happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is

more valuable" (Eliot 1919, 39). Eliot argues that what is more important is the way in which the past works with the present and produces something which is very radically different. He uses a scientific analogy to suggest that the poet's personality should remain unchanged in the process of creative production and should only be an agent or medium which initiates and accelerates these actions. What follows is that the poet's personality should be completely erased. Even though he does not deny that the experience of the writer will have a bearing on their production, the mind of the poet has to remain "inert, neutral and unchanged" like the platinum after the mixing of sulphur dioxide and oxygen (Eliot 1919, 39).

Eliot combines the traditional element along with the individual talent. He praises the significance of the individual talent but, it is crucial in his analysis to pay attention to the continuity which becomes more important than the originality or individuality of the writer himself. The reminisces of the "dead poets" may be found in the original works and that is how the immortality of tradition gets asserted (Eliot 1919, 37-38). When a new work is judged based on the standards of the past and on the works produced by the dead poets, the intention is not to entirely annihilate the new work of art because it does not subscribe to the older notions. A mere adherence to the old standards would not produce a new work at all. It is rather a "comparison, in which two things are measured by each other" (Eliot 1919, 38). There has to be a sufficient degree of originality for the work to be different, but it has also to fit in the tradition.

T.S. Eliot's 1919 essay has been described as "perhaps the single most formative work in the twentieth century Anglo-American criticism" (Sanders 2006, 8). His concept of tradition and the individual talent highlighted the idea that artists should engage with existing works, transforming them through creative lens rather than striving for mere imitation. This approach to adaptation influenced subsequent generations of writers and thinkers and encouraged them to navigate between admiration for established works and the need for novelty, thus reshaping the discourse on adaptation as a dynamic interplay between past and present artistic expressions.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, there was a notable emphasis on questioning the necessity or value of originality and writers have proved to be more interested in re-writing rather than writing originally. The desire to re-write is expressed in theoretical terms through the concept of intertextuality, pivotal in the field of adaptation theory and a central tenet of postmodernism (Sanders 2006, 17). The origin of intertextuality can be traced back to 20th century linguistics; a major role in understanding intertextuality was played by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. By emphasizing the systematic features of language, Saussure established the relational nature of meaning and texts (Allen 2000, 8-35). Another literary

theorist who had a major influence on the theory of intertextuality was the Russian literary theorist and philosopher Michael Bakhtin, who emphasized the relation between an author and his work, the work and its readers and the relation of all three to the social and historical forces that surround them (Allen 2000). Drawing from Saussure and Bakhtin's linguistic analysis, in 1980 *The Bounded Text* and 1986 *Word, Dialogue, Novel*, Bulgarian born, French semiotician and philosopher Julia Kristeva argued that all texts refer to and reshape other texts in a rich and dynamic cultural panorama thus introducing the concept of intertextuality in literary linguistics (Sanders 2006, 5). A literary work is not simply the product of a single author, but of their relationship to other texts.

The need was felt to move away from the idea of authorial originality towards a more collaborative and societal understanding of the production of art and the production of meaning (Iyengar 2023, x). In the literary sphere, Roland Barthes suggested that "any text is an intertext" (Barthes 1981, 39), proposing that when dealing with literature the works of past and contemporary cultures are always there. The concept of intertextuality dramatically blurs the outline of texts, making them an "illimitable tissue of connections and associations" (Barthes 1981). All literary productions take place in the presence of other texts and texts are allowed to come into being only through intertextuality. "Any text is a new tissue of past citations", however "intertextuality […] cannot be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation mark" (Barthes 1981, 39). Writing is always a re-iteration and a re-writing which foregrounds the trace of the text in both knowing and unknowing places.

In line with what T.S. Eliot seems to suggest with his notion of historical sense, new meanings originate from the relationship between literary texts. Not only are the writers producing meaning when engaging with different works and re-working them into new concepts, but also the readers who create their own intertextual webs while recognizing echoes, allusions, parallels in the texts they come in contact with. Accordingly, "an interrelation between texts seems to get to the heart of the literary, and especially, the reading, experience" (Yengar 2023, 30). It can be argued that a text is constituted only in the moment of its reading. Accordingly, the readers' own previous readings, experiences and positions within culture also form crucial connections and open new doors to intertextuality.

The act of reading engages us in discovering a network of textual relations; moving between one text and the other and tracing such relations is to interpret the text and to work out its meaning or meanings. In Intertextuality, Graham Allen writes "meaning becomes something

which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (Allen 2000). Part of the pleasure of recognizing the intertextual relationships between adaptations and their sources has been described in Freudian terms as the joy of repetition, the return of the what feels familiar in a different context (Julie Sanders 2006, 83; Hutcheon 2006, 4). "New settings, new characters, new language, and so on – and comfort, in that readers or viewers familiar with the prior text know some of what's coming next" (Iyegar 2023, 30).

However, the pleasure of literature seems to depend on the readers' sensibility and require a knowledge on the part of the reader of the vast body of literature ever produced. In order to partake the enjoyment of literature and grasp the new meanings produced by derivative texts, the reader is required vast knowledge of the source. "Adaptation both appears to require and to perpetuate the existence of a canon" (Sanders 2006, 8), just passing tradition, without questioning or challenging it. Despite its modernist take on tradition, Eliot's essay has been attacked on the grounds that the tradition he is defending is a Euro-centric kind of tradition and "it implicitly assumes a canon, a series of valued texts that are (re)turned to and consulted by subsequent ages" (Sanders 2006, 8).

However, drawing from Adrienne Rich's thought-provoking essay 1972 *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision*, Julie Sanders claims that re-writings and adaptations do not merely reproduce previous texts and position themselves within the established canon, but they can be subversive and oppositional political acts (Sanders 2006, 97). Such texts do not simply reproduce the adapted text, but they rethink and reimage old texts from a new critical direction. "To adapt is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable" (Hutchen 2006, 7).

Focusing on the need for women to awaken from their historical and cultural silence and to reexamine their roles and identities, Rich claims "we need to know the writing of the past not to pass tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich 1992, 369). The essay encourages to use writing as a tool for transformation and empowerment; in her view, re-vision involves looking back, not just at the text, but at its entire world, with fresh eyes. In this sense, it is a conscious act of reimagining and reinterpretation that challenges traditional norms and allows for new representations. With this respect, postcolonialism, feminism and gender studies, queer theory and post-modernism have all played a major role in re-working previous texts and challenging past worldview. "Coming after means finding new angles and new routes into something, new perspectives on the familiar and the new angles in turn identify entirely novel possibilities" (Sanders 2006, 157).

1.2 Fidelity and Ownership

Studies of adaptation and rewriting stimulate heated discussions on fidelity and ownership. Fidelity criticism judge adaptations according to their faithfulness and truthfulness to the idealized prior text and to what was in its author's intentions and to what degree adaptations capture the spirit of the original text (Iyengar 2023).

Relevant to the discussion is 1967 seminal work *The Death of the Author* by the French cultural and literary theorist Roland Barthes. The work questions who is the real author of a text, be it a book, a photograph or anything created that can be consumed and interpreted by another person (Barthes 1977). Barthes theorizes that the whole notion of authorship needs to be re-thought; he argues that when a text is created, it is a multi-faceted manifestation of different cultures, ideas, philosophies and beliefs. When writers put their pen to paper, they believe that the ideas are their own and claim to be the authors of their creation. However, Barthes highlights the fact that the self-proclaimed author has borrowed everything from pre-existing texts that they have become aware of and can not be held responsible for the multiple meanings readers discover within literary texts (Barthes 1977). Barthes proclaims the death of the death of the author and views the situation as a liberation for the readers.

In 1969 Michel Foucault spined the thread of the discussion even further in a lecture in which he discussed what he called the "author-function" (Foucault 1969, 304).
Foucault stresses the importance to "reexamine the empty space left by the author's disappearance" (Foucault 1969, 303). Foucault states his idea of the author as a timeless and irreducible category, one which he calls "author-function". According to the Foucault, the "author-function" is the author as a function of discourse. It is not a person and is not to be confused with either the author or the writer. The author function is more like a set of beliefs and assumptions governing the production, circulation, classification and consumptions of texts (Foucault 1969, 304-308). Accordingly, we should not place too much emphasis on authorial intent when analysing a text; in fact, "the text itself exists independently of the embodied human being who held a pen to create a text" and "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination", that is the reader (Iyengar 2023, 6). If the author is irrelevant, what gives power to the text is the reader. Reader, who gaze into a text through our own interpretations and belief systems, are what we should turn to. Engaging with stories "does not happen in a vacuum" (Hutcheon 2006, 28) but within a certain society and general culture. We ourselves decide what a text means, therefor creating new ideas and meanings in our mind. However, since the

intertextual nature of literary works always leads readers onto new textual relations, literary meaning can never be fully grasp by the reader (Barthes, 1977).

What follows is that post-structuralist adaptation studies consider adaptations worthy of study in their own right as autonomous texts and not as corrupted versions of an idealized previous text (Iyengar 2023, 9). Scholars place focus on a part of culture which adaptation detractors have considered secondary and perverted and challenge this negative cultural evaluation by highlighting the value of adaptation as a mode of storytelling. As the Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon has insightfully pointed out, human beings have always re-told stories from the beginning of human times. Western culture has a "long and happy history of borrowing and stealing or, more accurately, sharing stories" (Hutcheon 2006, 4). Accordingly, the practice of adapting is central to the storytelling imagination. Stories are never invented anew; they are taken from somewhere else. Hutcheon places adaptations in a continuum and argues that even if a text comes first, it does not have any claim to any kind of authenticity and there is no such thing as an 'original' (Hutcheon 2006, 1).

"An adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (Hutcheon 2006, 9). We need to evaluate adaptations from a more positive vantage point and to see them as creating new aesthetic possibilities. Adaptations repeat the same stories, characters and themes without necessarily replicating the work they are based on and creating a new work of art that is fresh and new and has an independent character; it is "repetition, but repetition without replication (Hutcheon 2006, 7). The field of Shakespeare studies thrives with battles and wars about textual fidelity, the universality of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's genius (Iyengar 2023, 71). Apologists and detractors of the fidelity discourse face up in the name of their love for Shakespeare and engender never-ending debates and discussions on to what extent a writer should stay within the boundaries of the original text, provided that we can speak about an original when dealing with Shakesperean texts.

The image of Shakespeare as a mighty tree, already evoked by Dryden (1670) and Johnson (1765) who, more precisely, compared the playwright to a forest, and plant imagery have contributed to develop the discussion around fidelity even further. In the field of Shakespearean studies, critics of the fidelity discourse praise and evaluate those offshoots which appear as flowers from Shakespearean seeds, reproducing an imaged ideal plant (Iyengar 2003, 24).

The genetic model by Hutcheon and Bertolotti (2007) was an attempt made to free Shakespearean adaptation from the fidelity discourse (Iyengar 2023, 32). Based not on origins

but on line of descent, this model was a departure from the notion of "off-shoots" that reproduce the plant that had seed them, used by Cohn (1967) to describe creative works inspired by Shakespeare. In Hutcheon and Bertolotti's view, adaptations resemble "plants that have adapted contingently to local environments, with corresponding changes to structure, flourishing and dispersal through time" (Iyengar, 2023). Some lineages and lines of descent can be traced, but some adaptation will look a lot different from their origins.

However, fidelity models now prefer to resort to yet another metaphor, that of "rizhome" to account for the variety of pleasurable off-shoots emerging from Shakespeare (Iyengar 2023, 33). The idea of an origin or telos is completely abandoned; being "decentred, non-hierarchical and unexpeted" (Iyenga, 34), rizhomes offer a rich and nuanced method for investigating Shakesperean adaptations and offer also an insightful view on Shakespeare's global reach.
The relationship between writers and their literary influence was described as "an Oedipal struggle between sons and their literary forefathers" (Sanders 2006, 10). When dealing with Shakespeare, adaptors seem struggle between the desire to pay homage to the bard and honour him and the need to rework those texts into new contexts to make them fit for new audiences and sensibilities. "Diana Henderson modifies the Freudian model to suggest that [writers] collaborate with prior authors" suggesting that collaboration offers a model that connotes the pleasure we derive from the connection among individuals (Iyengar, 79). Elaborating on the psychoanalytic metaphor, Thomas Cartelli and Kathrine Rowe (2007) have described the "dislodging of the patriarchal figure from his established position of control or 'effect' of authority" as "Lear-Effect" which creates in turn a "Cordelia effect that forgives everything" (Iyengar 2023, 80-81).

Suyata Iyengar, in 2023 *Shakesepare and Adaptation Theory*, claims that the study of Shakesperean adaptation has moved away "from evaluating how true or faithful a given adaptation is to Shakespeare […] into what culturally conservative skeptics notoriously call the muck of a postmodern swamp and what its proponents would call feminist revision, rewriting ourselves, or a racially empowering recreative dialogue enabled by adaptation by adaptation freedom and multiplicity of address" (Iyengar 2023, 5). Scholars examine how an adaptation work functions in itself; its production, reception, and its potential insights into Shakespeare's era, in order to produce new knowledge and ideas for today. The assumption of Shakespeare's inherent superiority and his mythical origin was dubbed as "bardolatry" (Iyengar 2023, 24). Shakespeare is not above criticism; rather, his texts often prove fallible, in particular, with respect to morality and new sensibility. Adaptations can, therefor, offer new insights into

traditional readings and understandings of Shakespeare's texts and even make up for the perceived deficiencies in the prior text.

"The ultimate 'adaptor' of Shakespeare is the reader or viewer, whose prismatic and unique set of experiences and memories continually engages and transforms the cultural behemoth called Shakespeare" (Iyengar 2023, 10).

1.3 Adapting Shakespeare

In the 1606 play by Shakespeare, King Lear carries the dead body of his murdered youngest daughter onto the stage.; "she is dead as earth" (V.III.256-260), but still he talks to her.

When explaining his choice to collaborate with Shakespeare and the relationship between the living and the dead, in talk given at a TEDx event in Tallahassee, Florida, Gary Taylor claims that our ability to love the dead can even extend to the ability to love those who have died even before we have met them. The dead are the most disempowered and disadvantaged of all human beings, however our relationship with them can be as powerful as our relationship with the living. The dead have no power at all, unless the living – we – decide to give them power. According to the Taylor, in order to learn something from the dead, we have to preserve their independence and entertain the possibility that they might have seen things radically differently than we do.

"Shakespearean canon has provided a crucial touchstone for the scholarship of adaptation as a literary practice and form" (Sanders 2006, 46). Together with myths, fairy tales and folklore, Shakespeare's texts have proved to be rich sources for adaptation since they provide readers with a template of archetypal stories, a series of familiar reference points and expectations which authors can exploit, twist and relocate in new, different ways (Sanders 2006, 83). Shakespeare himself was a great adaptor; he acquired much from the reading of other works and was able to put the plots of the stories of his culture to stage (Sanders 2006, 46).

Critics often claim that Shakespeare's characters are not bound to a particular place or time, but are the "genuine progeny of common humanity" and that he "represents universal truths about human nature" (Hacket 2013, 99), however this view has been challenged; Shakespeare was limited – confined by the boundaries of space and time – and his characters reflect the specific context of his time.

What strikes out as particularly interesting to us is that his texts can be returned to from our vantage viewpoint, to comment on the past world and, most importantly, reflect upon ours. According to Ian Kott in *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, a token of greatness of works of art is precisely the ability to shed light on the meaning of our times; with Shakespeare this becomes clear. "Every historical period finds in him what it is looking for and what it wants to see" (Kott 1964, 5). The reception of the English dramatist and his works can be a useful example to underline how, with every passing century, a work is permeated with new meaning.

Adaptation theory, when applied to Shakespearean works, delves into the intricate process of reimagining, reinterpreting, and reconstructing his texts, revealing the interplay between fidelity to the original material and creative divergence. "Scholars are redefining what he wrote, how he wrote it, what it meant in his own time, and what it means to ours. Lines are being redrawn; old stories are being told with new twists; disintegrating and reforming" (Taylor 1989, 4). Feminism, postmodernism, structuralism, and gay and lesbian studies, along with queer theory, have significantly influenced the approaches and techniques used in adapting Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare's texts are returned to and reworked to make a commentary upon the past world and ideas and, at the same time, to shed light on our present society and culture and themes which are dear to us.

"From the Restoration to the Romantics, the movement of Shakesperotics had been essentially vertical; assessments of the value of his work rose and rose. In the middle of the eighteen century Shakespeare was crowned the King of the English Poets and in the late eighteen century his supremacy was consolidated", (Taylor, 114 - 167). England's prosperity in the 18th century was built in part on its success as a trading nation and Shakespeare was one of its most successful cultural exports. A tide of Shakespeare texts rose – books, magazines, newspapers, prints; publishing was the most successful industry of the period and Shakespeare was a safe investment (Taylor, 123 - 128).

In opposition to the political situation of France, "the openness of Shakespeare's art – his mixing of genres, his representation of all strands of society – embodied the openness of English society" (Taylor, 149), English liberty against French absolutism and represented a safe past in a time of political turmoil. In the wake of the events of the French Revolution, in contrast to action, they praised the lame and impotent hero, Hamlet (Taylor, 205). Quoting Hamlet and all the other plays and poems, the Romantics paste pieces of Shakespeare into their lives, letters and poems. Shakespeare was quotable because he was familiar. "Shakespeare's plays were broken down into fragments and then disseminated through the bloodstream of English society" (Taylor, 111).

The nineteenth century saw adulation of Shakespeare rose to unprecedented heights; the "ocean of Shakespeare" became relevant to more areas of cultural domain and activity. "Shakespeare a's reputation, like Britain itself, entered a period of expansion and diversification" (Taylor, 168). With the growing hegemony of Britain, Shakespeare was brought to the outposts of the Empire as the epitome of all that was great about Britian and heralded as a supposedly civilizing influence.

Firmly clung to their belief in progress, The New Shakespeare Society offered Victorians a Shakespeare whose evolution could be measured with scientific precision. This evolutionary vision of literature corresponded to Darwin's vision of life and belonged to the dominant Victorian vision of society (Taylor, 181). Not only were Victorians interested in the evolution of Shakespeare, but they wanted to break down also the evolution of the author's fame. "Cambridge Shakespeare represented the first serious intrusion of academics into the history of Shakespeare's reputation" (Taylor, 186).

While abroad Shakespeare's reputation was experiencing an enormous expansion, at home, the reception of the bard was influenced by some economic and social changes. During the nineteenth century, book prices fell, while literacy and real income rose. In this period, the techniques of serial publication were also applied to Shakespeare; numbers of Shakespeare were sold every week which made possible for families with limited incomes to collect an edition of Shakespeare piece by piece (Taylor, 183-184). While the popularity of Shakespeare was increasing among the masses, a familiarity with Shakespeare was expected of every educated person by the end of 19th century (Taylor, 205).

However, Shakespeare was no longer simply read for pleasure but was actively studied; accordingly, it became the component of the new subject English Literature in an expanding educational system and pioneered a triumphant national culture in Britan and abroad (Taylor, 194,195). Late in the century, the majority of the students of English Literature were women who, in turn, played a major part in Shakespeare criticism (Taylor, 205).

19th century writers started to be invested in adaptations and Shakespeare was at the agent of this creative impulse (Sanders 2006, 121). Such adaptations were commonly tailored to suit the tastes of the Victorian audience; accordingly, they reflected the Victorian sensibilities and values, emphasizing morality, decorum, and societal norms. Famously, Charles and Mary Lambs and Thomas Bowdler – alert to the potential danger arising from Shakespeare's texts – sanitized them to make them safe for young women (Taylor, 207-208).

In the twentieth century, Renaissance plays enjoyed a revival thanks to a significant boost from T.S. Eliot and his generation of thinkers and writers. Far from being a rich and

prosperous golden age, Eliot argued that the English Renaissance was an "age of anarchism, dissolution and decay" (Hacket, 194). The author drew a line between the gruesome acts of violence that people experienced during the centuries of the Renaissance and the horrors that his generation had to confront with the experience of the World Wars. Revenge tragedy rose in popularity in this period, but subversion and the questioning of established beliefs can be easily found in the plays produced by Renaissance drama; "along with other issues that struck chords from the 1960s onwards such as race, gender and sexuality (Hackett 2013, 196). Enthusiasm for Renaissance drama continued to grow throughout the century with the 1980s and 1990s being decades in which Shakespeare's statute within the literary canon was put into question. Other dramatists benefited from this, however "as the twenty-first century began, Shakespeare was a bigger cultural presence than ever." (Hackett, 197-198).

In the vibrant landscape of the twenty-first century, Shakespeare's legacy endures as a timeless beacon of literary prowess and theatrical brilliance. Despite the centuries that have passed since his works were first penned, Shakespeare's impact remains profound, resonating across cultures, languages, and mediums. In today's era, his plays continue to captivate audiences worldwide, finding new life through innovative adaptations, modern reinterpretations, and diverse artistic expressions. Shakespeare surrounds us and is enormously powerful within our culture (Taylor, 411). The bard's themes of love, power, self-interest, materialism, sexualization of culture, violence remain deeply relevant, providing a mirror to contemporary society. Shakespeare's plots and themes are reworked through a wide range of genre and media forms and artefacts; not only have international films based on Shakespeare proliferated – Shakespeare holds the record for the most filmed author (Guiness World Record, 2023) –, nowadays the web swarms with internet memes, hashtags, TikToks, YouTube shorts, mashups and other genres such as 'shakesqueer' and 'shakespereaninsult' with thousands of creators and views (Iyengar, 89-95) and also streaming on demand content such as podcasts which have become highly popular since the breakout of COVID-19 and appealing a more niche audience who subscribe to those channels and choose the contents to enjoy (Iyengar 2023, 100). Every time a Shakesperean play migrates from one medium to the other, its meaning likewise evolves (Iyengar, 89). Despite the ever-going debate about what is and what is not adaptation, critics, readers, viewers fan shakespeare-ify freely while nonetheless feeling that they are being 'true' to Shakespeare no matter how alien is the new product to the texts which have inspired it (Iyengar, 155). "However much you deform or refashion Shakesepare, he remains always Shakespeare" (Iyengar, 156).

Every single day, whether we are aware of it or not, we use words and phrases that Shakespeare added to the English dictionary and even without being familiar with the works of the author, one would immediately recognize the balcony, *Hamlet*'s famous line and the skull. Shakespeare is a literary titan and a literary termite burying in all sorts of places we would not expect. His most famous lines and celebrated scenes permeate our culture and inject Shakespeare into our daily lives. In *Reinventing Shakespeare,* when expanding on Shakespeare's singularity, Gary Taylor compares the Bard to a literary blackhole. "Light, insight, intelligence, matter – all pour ceaselessly into him, as critics are drawn into the densening vortex of his reputation; they add their own weight to his increasing mass. […] The light from other stars – other poets, other dramatists – is wrenched and bent as it passes by him on its way to us." (Taylor, 410)

CHAPTER 2
The Hogarth Shakespeare Project

2.1 Shakespeare's Library

Prospero: "My library was dukedom large enough."
The Tempest (Act 1, scene 2)

In *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human* (2012), the American literary scholar Johnathan Gottschall writes about "the primate Homo fictus (fiction man), the great ape with the storytelling mind" (Gottschall 2012, xiv). He uses the expression "storytelling animal" to give the most accurate definition of man. Man is a storytelling animal, that is an animal that helplessly needs to tell and to be told stories. This is probably the most distinctive feature of the human being, what makes it different from other species. Human beings, as a species, are addicted to stories. The power of fiction alone allows us to live many different lives at once, to accumulate different experiences and build our own self and our own world through illusion.

Most importantly, human beings have not just told stories since early times but we have re-told and recycled old myths, fables, tales from the folklore or from the oral tradition from the beginning of human times (Hutcheon 2006, 2). What fidelity scholars and knights of Shakespeare King of Poetry perhaps fail to acknowledge and seem to neglect is the fact that Shakespeare himself was a great adaptor and was influenced by the stories he read about and shaped his experience as a literary man. "Shakespeare was unbelievably clever at figuring out what stories have long lives," (54) said Stephen Greenblatt, author of *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. "He was a great recycler of stories, and there's no reason why his stories shouldn't be recycled" (61). Shakespeare never invented a plot, but he always went to an existing story or text. He, like many other writers of his own time, kept some stories going and that is exactly what modern adaptors are doing with Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's era was far more open about literary borrowing and imitation than the modern era. Imitation was learnt and practiced as an exercise in schools and continued during the adult writing career; Shakespeare himself worked in a collaborative writing environment and probably would have expected to be adapted by future generations of writers (Sanders 2006, 46-47). Already in the Restoration, when the theatre reopened, the way that authors felt that they had to keep Shakespeare in the repertoire usually involved extensive re-writing and for

many years audiences witnessed these altered versions – his scripts were cut, sanitized and modernized to make them fit prevailing sensibilities. "Shakespeare's plays belonged to the theatre more significantly than they belonged to Shakespeare" (Dobson 1992, 2).

Shakespeare was a great reader throughout his life and his readings affected his works and writing. Suggestive parallels have been drawn between Shakespeare and his character Prospero who could not be separated from his beloved books through which he weaved the webs of the story that unfolds on the island in *The Tempest*. Likewise, Shakespeare owned an imaginative library with which he created his literary dukedom. Accordingly, almost all his plots derive from stories that other writers or storytellers had already told.

There are no specific records relating to the education of Shakespeare or his attendance at school but reasonable assumption can be made based on the information that is available. After the first years at a local Petty School, he would have attended a Grammar School in Stratford-upon-Avon (Muir 1997, 1); there he would have had a very rigorous education in the classics, in oratory and rhetoric. Classical texts were prominent in the educational curriculum at Grammar Schools where Elizabethan boys like Shakespeare would encounter "the comedies of Terence, the rhetoric of Cicero and the poetry of Ovid, Virgil and Horace" among many others (Hackett 2013, 8-9) and they might have performed some of their works as well since it was considered part of their education. Despite not attending any higher education, Shakespeare gained a lot of literary knowledge from the readings that he had made during and after the school years. It is precisely for this reason that T.S. Eliot mentioned him in his essay among those authors who had been traditional and endowed with an historical sense. He has been a reader throughout his life transmuting the books he had read sometimes into great literature.

Interest in the origin of Shakespeare's corpus is not diminishing and ideas of what can be attributed to Shakespeare are subject to continuous change. The practice of source-hunting and reflection on Shakespeare's sources can be useful to the discussion around adaptation and how we should think of texts as intertexts which exist in relationship with each other (Gilliespie 2001, 2). A quick glance at volumes that attempt to analyze Shakespeare sources is sufficient to grasp the idea of "the extraordinarily rich hinterland of tales, interludes, legends and histories feeding Shakespeare's imagination and shaping his theatrical practice" (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2). With this respect, *Shakespeare's Books. A dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (2001) by Stuart Gillespie contains nearly two-hundred entries covering the full range of literature Shakespeare was acquainted with, including classical, historical, religious and contemporary works.

In the introduction to his work, Gillespie pays homage to some of the most renowned and influential works ever written on the topic – T. W. Baldwin's *Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944) and Geoffre y Bullough' s *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957-75), Kenneth Muir's *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, (1957—77), an d Emrys Jones' *The Origins of Shakespeare* (1977), but also claims that it is necessary to continue to work on Shakespeare's sources and influences "because the understanding of the nature of a source has been changing to embrace intertextuality" (Gillespie 2001, 1-2). In his guide, he wants to address not only the works which have been customarily thought of as Shakespeare's immediate sources, but also those other works which can be considered of interest and importance in understanding his corpus of texts (Gillespie 2001, 2). In other words, Gillespie's project is based on a broader sense of "how literary texts can relate to one another" (Gillespie 2001, 3). Shakespeare is known to have made use of direct sources as well as translations. The influence of certain books on Shakespeare's work has been examined in details. Nearly all plays in the corpus or, at least, some part of their plots and their characters, have a narrative source. Many playwrights of the time used sources; however, what according to Gillespie is distinctive of Shakespeare is the way in which particular words seem to resurface in different plays in an intense way.

Questions have been raised about what languages the Shakespeare's corpus implies knowledge of. During the years at the grammar school, he acquired reasonable knowledge of Latin. He doubtless read some Ovid at school, and a copy of the *Metamorphoses*, bearing his possibly forged signature, is still in existence. The Ovidian influence was pervasive especially in the early plays and it was probably the main source for his information about classical mythology (Muir 1977, 7-8). "The *Metamorphoses* is one of the world's great source-books, a poetic handbook of mythological stories" (Gillespie 2001, 390). Accordingly, it consists of a series of self-contained narratives woven together and included within a rough chronological sequence which extends from the Creation onwards.

Ovid's major influence on writers of the Middle Ages can be documented in Chaucer, so that Ovid's influence may sometimes be mediated through him, but he was a major literary figure also among Shakespeare's contemporaries such as Spenser, Greene, Jonson and Marlowe. English version of Ovid's tales had begun in the fourteenth century; however, an important translation for Shakespeare and his contemporaries was Arthur Golding's *Metamorphoses* (1565-7), a major and enduring Elizabethan achievement (Gillispie 2001, 393). The world that we encounter in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is arguably Shakespeare's fullest attempt to respond to the inspirations afforded by Ovidian materials; its figures and actions are implicitly

and explicitly based on the narratives of the *Metamorphoses*. However, it is Prospero's speech 'Ye elves of hills' in *The Tempest* to be considered the most striking Ovidian imitation in Shakespeare's plays. (Gillispie 2001, 397).

One field of specialist scholarly enquiry in recent years has been how much Shakespeare knew of Greek tragedy (Gillespie 2001, 2). After Ben Jonson's commentary on his scarce knowledge of Greek, it was traditionally assumed that Shakespeare did not master the language enough to use Greek texts with any ease. However, many Greek tragedies had been recast into Latin by the Roman poet Seneca; his versions were widely available and translated into English and even performed from time to time in Early Modern England (Gillespie 2001, 4). Some arguments about Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek have involved intertexts, that is indirect routes by which knowledge of Greek plays could have travelled. Sophocles' character Antigone, for example, is present in a number of English or Latin works, so that Elizabethan writers might have picked something of Antigone even without accessing the original source directly (Gillespie 2016, 356).

A major influence on Shakespeare's plays of Roman and Greek history, such as *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, was Greek biographer and historian Plutarch, particularly his *Lives of the noble Greeks and Romans*, which he accessed through Sir Thomas North's translation. The qualities of North's prose made the English Plutarch often highly adaptable for theatrical use; Shakespeare needs only to versify the sentences he finds, and by keeping close to North achieves some powerful theatrical effects. Moreover, Plutarch's history is focused on individual lives, and hence tends to offer a dramatic, indeed tragic shape. Plutarch's concentration on the personal aspects of individuals' lives, coupled with the transformation of subjective traits into politically relevant facts, sets his work apart.

Plutarch concerns himself with issued that interested the Renaissance and which seem to have interested Shakespeare: the nature of heroism in an unheroic world, the limitations of Stoic doctrine, the individual's relation to the state. Such interests associate Plutarch strongly with other writers on Shakespeare's shelf, for example Montaigne (Gillespie 2001, 429).

Another important Greek influence was the fabulist Aesop. Despite the absence of any sure evidence on its authorship, Aesop was attributed a large collection of fables and anecdotal stories using animal and mythological characters to illustrate moral and satirical points (Gillespie 2001, 10). This way the Greek author was able to encapsulate timeless wisdom in concise, relatable tales. Shakespeare and other early modern readers had access to rearranged and mediated versions of the stories; William Caxton's version of the tales, *The History and Fables of Aesop* (1484) was the best-known English version, going through many editions, and

apparently the only one available in Shakespeare's youth – though several others were made during Shakespeare's lifetime. These same fables circulated also in different kinds of compilations and collections, some of them had even become proverbial; so that it is an unreliable procedure to identify a single text od Aesop which Shakespeare could have relied upon. Moreover, Shakespeare does not allude to Aesopic material with an obvious or systematic pattern; the story of the fox and the grapes was mentioned in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the story of the hawk and the dove is used to illustrate reversal of natural hierarchy in, for instance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.232, *Antony and Cleopatra* 3.13.195-7, and *Coriolanus* 5.6.115, the story of the countryman and the snake he warms in his bosom only to have it bite him recurs in *Henry VI* 3.1.343, *Richard II* 3.2.129 with a moral implication.

Of modern languages he acquired some knowledge of French, Italian and started to learn some Spanish. Reading, translation and adaptation of Boccaccio in Britain began early, most notably with Chaucer. A main source for the *Othello* story is the big collection of Italian tales, Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (1348-51), a collection of one hundred stories in a variety of kinds and from source that range from the classics to folklore. The form or forms in which Shakespeare knew Boccaccio's text can not be established for certain. The possibilities are: Boccaccio's original Italian, Le Magon's French and, Painter's contemporary English version. Boccaccio's impact on Shakespeare is mostly associated to *All's Well* and *Cymbeline*; but echoes taken from other versions of the tales that circulated at the time of Shakespeare can be found also in *Romeo and Juliet*.

An example of a work that Shakespeare could not have accessed in English is Giovan Baptista Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565), whose structure is similar to that of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. One of the narratives of the collection tells the story of a more who lived in Venice and is considered to be the principal source of *Othello*. As far as it is known, the story had not been translated into English by the time *Othello* was written. It is not clear whether Shakespeare would have used Cinthio's Italian text, but there are definite signs that he looked at Chappuys' French translation. He is supposed to have known the Italian poet and playwright Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1521) both in Italian and in Sir John Harington's English translation. Connections are also drawn between Shakespeare and the French essayist Michel Eyquem de Montaigne. In England, he had his translator in the lexicographer and translator John Florio whose mastery of language achieve good equivalence with Montaigne's wit. Famously, Gonzalo's description of his idea of a commonwealth in *The Tempest* shows a debt to Montaigne's essay *On the Cannibals* (1580) which was translated by Florio. Outside *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's use of Montaigne as a direct source is a matter of speculation which

has tended to concentrate on a small number of plays. However, commonality of interests and cast of mind between Shakespeare and Montaigne led several critics to point out how Shakespeare could have easily expressed similar feelings as the French essayist without any direct influence.

Shakespeare's corpus was also shaped by many English influences. During Elizabetha times, Holinshed enjoyed great popularity and became a quarry for many dramatists, especially Shakespeare, who found, in the second edition, material for *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*, and many of his historical plays. He read English poetry, such has *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) by Arthur Brook written forty years before *Romeo and Juliet* (Gillispie 1977, 66-67) He also read English fiction, such as *Arcadia* (1590) by Philip Sidney, which lies partly behind *King Lear*.

It is also certain that, as an actor, Shakespeare was acquainted with a large number of plays which he took part in and other which he just witnessed as a spectator. He echoed Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, *Dido*, and *Edward II*; he quoted from *Doctor Faustus* in *Troilus and Cressida*; he quoted a line from *Hero and Leander* in *As You Like It* (Muir 1977, 8). He was clearly influenced by Thomas Kyd's more famous play, *The Spanish Tragedy*, the revenge play that provided a model for the original *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's variations on the saine theme. Thomas Lodge gave him the plot of *As You Like It* and a few phrases in *Richard II* and Shakespeare was influenced by many others of the so-called University Wits like Robert Greene (Muir 1977, 7-9).

While much has been written on Shakespeare's debt to the classical tradition, less has been said about his roots in the popular culture of his own time. In his book *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Culture Popular Culture* (2006), Stuart Gillespie goes on to explore the full range of his debts to Elizabethan popular culture and the influences that shaped his drama back then. While the modern term of "popular" refers to commercial activities designed for mass consumption, the author explains that the older meaning of the term refers to those activities which are cultural expressions *of* the people themselves (Gillespie 2006, 1). These old forms of popular culture – dramatic enactment of Bible stories, the festive rituals associated with holidays, clowning, old romances told around a winter's fire and other products of oral tradition such as proverbs, ballads, and songs – "still retained a considerable power in the sixteenth century and were very much part of the social fabric with which Shakespeare grew up" (Gillespie 2006, 1). According to Gillespie, drama is the most significant of the forms of popular culture in the early modern period. "In the professional theatre the process of composition, rehearsal, performance and commercial afterlife would be likely to include most

of the following stages: access to printed sources and folk memory, writing, communal reading (for both literate and non-literate actors), oral delivery (memorized and improvised), and finally the journey into printed play-text." (Gillespie, 10).

Shakespeare has now been established as a classical author for so long that it is often overlooked how the grounds of his works are in the popular culture of his own age. Often labelled as barbarous and vulgar, Shakespeare's works were accused to be too mired in the popular culture of his time. The distorted picture of Shakespeare as an elitist writer is nothing more than misleading; to grasp the real essence of Shakespeare, it is crucial to be aware of the complex negotiations between high and low culture and between classical and popular literary forms. Hamlet is perhaps the most extreme case of a highbrow play which is imbued with the most ambiguous aspects of popular culture, belief and superstition; however, throughout the entire corpus of Shakespeare's plays there is an "an interweaving of high and low cultural forms which ultimately defines the nature of his drama and of his distinctive achievement as a writer" (Gillespie 2006, 11).

Shakespeare repeatedly draws on the same kind of popular elements throughout his career in different contexts and for often different purposes; scenarios in which fairies interfere with human life, God is malicious, human beings can do magic, ghosts haunt the living and future can be foreseen are to be found in more than one of his plays. Gillispie interestingly suggests that "the grounding of so much of Shakespeare's work in the popular culture forms of his own age has been an important factor in his continued popularity down to the twenty-first century." (Gillespie 2006, 3).

2.2 From the Stage to the Page

"Shakespeare's dense web of adaptive allusiveness testifies to an attitude and practice of extraordinary artistic freedom; transformative reimagining is the guiding principle of his new and still-experimental theatre" (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 4). Shakespeare did not live and write in a vacuum; he was not an isolated genius. On the contrary, he was imbued with the culture that surrounded him and with the readings that he devoted himself to during the school years and after. During his career, Shakespeare transformed his literary knowledge into new literature weaving together multiple sources, in turn there have been several Shakespearean

bearers who, after his death, have transported his plays into modern culture and in the process have transformed him. “He died. Or rather, a man died and “Shakespeare” lived on and kept growing, becoming, as centuries passed, the bearer of English history, an encyclopedia of phrases, a source of profound inspiration, and fodder for many professions.” (Henderson 2006, 2). He has turned into a source of unquestioned artistry and authority. Shakespeare inheritors – Diana Henderson calls them “Shake-shifter” (Henderson 2006, 11) – are those artists who continue to collaborate with a dead man and by doing so they kept him alive and accessible; the benefits of the distance existing between the English playwright and contemporary writers is that they are allowed more space for interpretative creativity.

Accordingly, countless adaptations, reinterpretations, and modernizations of his plays continue to captivate audiences worldwide, bridging the gap between the Elizabethan era and the present day. They turn back to Shakespeare in order to remake him in our own image—the results are often brilliant and captivating. “Using his plays as a kaleidoscope, modern artists shake up Shakespeare, cutting his glassy essence to bits in order to create newly evocative patterns” (Henderson 2006, 2). These retellings also teach us to look at that image and the past anew. Every age creates its own Shakespeare and these attributes become entwined with the modern figure of Shakespeare. Given our distance in time and space, language and context, “what we do to Shakespeare is always transformative” (Iyengar 2023, 48). Adaptations, or better, appropriations, in this case, change the meaning of the work and offers substantial critique or commentary.

Drama, with its generic conventions, embodies an invitation to reinterpretation; it encourages constant reworking and reimagining, so that “the dramatic form is inherently an adaptive art” (Sanders 2006, 48). In the initial stages of revisioning Shakespeare’s plays, most adaptations were intramedial, Shakespeare plays were re-worked into other pieces for the theatre. From the Romantic era onwards, however, adapters have turned with increasing frequency to other media to recreate Shakespeare for their own time (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 5). The movement into a different generic mode can encourage reading of Shakespearean plays from a different viewpoint and can breathe new life into old tales.

The Victorian era can be taken as a starting point; Victorian writers were much invested in adaptation and Shakespeare was at the centre of this re-writing drive. The generic mode most constantly looked to by adaptors and appropriators was prose fiction (Sanders 2006, 121-122). More precisely, we should go back to the beginning of the 19th century; the official start of retelling of Shakespeare in tale collection was marked by the 1807 collection of tales *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb. These latter reimagined the plays for young readers,

in particular young ladies, as an introduction into the study of Shakespeare, carefully selecting what was proper for a young lady's ear. Thomas Bowdler and his sister Henrietta had a similar aim when they put together their 1807 sanitized collection *The Family Shakespeare* and removed any material deemed too blasphemous, or otherwise sensitive for young or female audiences (Taylor, 209). In prose versions for children, an omniscient narrator is typically introduced to exemplify and explain complex issues for education purposes. These fairytale-like retellings produce simplified meaning in which opacity is dispelled for the benefit of the young readers.

To the eighteen-century rise of children literature in the book market, the nineteenth century added the importance of Shakespeare as required reading for children (Tosi 2013, 75-76) and other collections and prose versions followed in the twentieth century.

In Shakespeare's afterlife, one of the forms that his works have taken is the novel. In 2021 *Shakespeare and the Modern Novel*, Graham Holderness establishes a connection between Shakespeare and the genre of the novel; this latter term derives from the Italian novella, a form of short story popular in the Renaissance, and which provided the plots for most of Shakespeare's plays. The consequence is that the novel was already inside Shakespeare; the Bard was able to incorporate plots, characters and themes from Italian novellas because the form of drama he practiced was as diverse and varied as is our contemporary popular fiction (v-vi). Free from the constraints of the unity of time and place, mixing genres and characters from every level of society, novels contributed to enhance Shakespeare's reputation. The Bard and his texts can now easily migrate into popular fictional genres of our time; fiction writers now can imitate and adapt Shakespeare's plays as easily as he was able to adapt the novel into drama. It is not coincidence that many Shakespearean plays have been transformed into novels with successful results. Actually, "In our own twenty-first century, the Shakespearean novel is undergoing a Renaissance" (vi). "The process of transposing a mimetic mode into a diegetic mode has a powerful impact on time-place coordinates, character, and setting presentation as well as perspective" (Tosi 2013, 74). Shakespearean modern narratives can be defined by use of addition and expansion devices, with extra information, new characters, incidents and episodes interpolated with the familiar worlds of the plays.

Moreover, while stage plays offer a broader perspective rather than a single point of view, novels which have reshaped Shakespeare have been interested in the first narrative and poetic persona. This practice is referred to as transfocalization (Sanders 2006, 48). Authors enter these old texts from the point of view of one or of few characters and provide readers with the story retold from their particular perspective or with a new story in which they are the

protagonists. These narratives are often voiced wholly by characters who are marginalized and offer a fresh take on past plots.

Going back to those texts four centuries after their first draft allows a reflection on culture at last. By adding information and offering new points of view, establishing new links with the past, all these texts negotiate with well-established interpretations of the plays. The process of adaptation often involves the exercise of reading between the lines; retellings highlight conflicting gaps, absences and uncomfortable silences within the canonical text. They can be subversive political acts (Sanders 2006, 97). They often write back to the original from a new perspective and revised cultural and political position. The history of the use and appropriation of Shakespeare is an especially instructive instance of this cultural process. As a result, the reader will never experience that work in the same way after having accessed to the implicit critique in their appropriations.

The stories that Shakespeare wrote and put on stage have been enlisted in countless political and social debates and become pressing social and ethical issues in the modern world. We can take antisemitism for instance in *The Merchant of Venice* with Shylock's famous monologue "Hath not a Jew eyes?", or racial hatred of the black man in *Othello* when Iago says to Rodrigo "I hate the Moor"; the relation between colonizer and colonized in *The Tempest* where Caliban says to Prospero "This island's mine… which thou takest from me", the contrast between parents and children in *Romeo and Juliet* with Juliet's father insulting her "Hang the… Disobedient wretch"; parental relationship like father-daughter relationship in *King Lear*; love, loss and family.

Shakespeare's plays thus continue to speak to us and informed adaptations keep positing questions about topics which are dear to our modern society. What is particularly interesting is that, as in the case of the collections of tales for children, adaptations and rewritings often are the first medium through which readers, who have never read the play texts or experienced them performed on a stage, access Shakespeare. In such cases, "adaptations disrupt elements like priority and authority" (Hutcheon 2006, 174) given to the Bard and the texts perceived as the originals. Readers can read these books straightforwardly as entertainment or they can pick anything from their literary background.

Next chapter will deal extensively with a collection of novels launched by Hogarth Shakespeare Press in 2014. Here I will just mention some remarkable novels inspired by Shakespeare's plays that were produced during the last decades. Pulitzer Prize winning Jane Smiley's 1991 *A Thousand Acres* is a modern rendition of *King Lear*; it relocates the story in rural Iowa and explores the dynamics of family relationship, power and gender roles through

the eyes of Ginny, the eldest of three sisters. Ginny, a complex and multifaceted character, is also the narrator and provides an intimate insight into the events that unfolds throughout the story. She is struggling to reconcile her role as a daughter, wife, mother and farmer and dealing with her insecurities and fears. Similarly, the other characters are complex and nuances. Marina Warner's 1992 *Indigo, or Mapping of Waters* offers a post-colonialist and feminist rewriting by providing the two marginalized female characters of *The Tempest*, Miranda and Sycorax, with a voice. The novel interweaves two narratives to portray the colonial reality of the Caribbean in the early modern period and post-colonial London in the twentieth century. 2012 *I, Iago* by Nicole Galland, is a retelling of *Othello* from the villain's point of view. The novel casts a new light on the complex soul of Iago depicting, from his earliest childhood, all the fateful events that contributed to create the notorious villain. Another clever product was the performance of Ian McEwan in his 2016 *Nutshell*; in this modern version of Hamlet the story is told by a fetus. The unborn child listens to and learns what happens in the world around him from his mother's womb and speculates about the it. As he observes the world, he also bears witness to an affair between his mother, Trudy, and his uncle Claude. This adulterous pair are plotting to kill the baby's father, John. Another work worth mentioning is the dark fantasy retelling of Romeo and Juliet in Chloe Gong's 2020 *Violent Delights*. Set in 1920s Shanghai, the novel centers on a gang feud between the Chinese Scarlet Gang and the Russian White Flowers. Heir to the former is Juliette Cai, and to the latter, Roma Montagov. The first loves turned enemies must now work together to fight a monster that brings doom upon the city.

2.3 The Hogarth Shakespeare Series

Following the trend for modern retellings of classic stories, in 2014 Hogarth Press – founded by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in March 1917 – announced the Hogarth Shakespeare series, as part of which well-regarded novelists re-tell a selection of Shakespeare's plays (Lanier 2018, 231). The Hogarth Shakespeare series is a major international project that sees a selection of Shakespeare's plays reimagined in the form of a novel by some of today's bestselling and most celebrated writers.

According to Douglas M. Lanier in *The Hogarth Shakespeare Series: Redeeming Shakespeare Literariness*, "the adaptational energy once associated with Shakespeare on film has migrated elsewhere" (232). Given the power attributed to listening to Shakespearean words and the commonplace that Shakespeare is meant to be seen and not read, it stands to reason that

novelizing his works would not be a high priority. However, by moving beyond drama, the Hogarth Shakespeare project may be able to reach new audiences with its attempts.

With this respect, Hogarth Press "assembled an all-star roster of stylistically diverse writers to translate Shakespeare's timeless plays into prose" (Alter 2015). Accordingly, acclaimed, and well-regarded authors Jeanette Winterson, Howard Jacobson, Tracy Chevalier, Gillian Flynn, Margaret Atwood, Jo Nesbø and Anne Tyler found a way to go back to those classic stories and translate them into modern day. Jeanette Winterson's 2015 version of *The Winter's Tale—A Gap of Time*—was published first, almost exactly four-hundred years after the Bard's death. While *The Winter's Tale* is not as well-known as the other plays in this series, this novel sets a high standard for its successors to meet (Cavanagh 2018). Six more installments have since been released, with the last one – Jo Nesbø's *Macbeth* published in 2018. Clara Farmer, the publishing director of Hogarth Shakespeare, expressed the desire to create a "coherent series" and adapt the entire canon of Shakespeare's plays but, for the moment, no other adaptations have been announced (Bury, 2013). As far back as 2015, *Gone Girl* best-selling author Gillian Flynn was supposed to be working on a re-telling of *Hamlet*, eventually due for release in 2021. However, there is no longer a mention of this on the website of the publisher (Murphy, 2020).

Each of the published works presents an updated version of Shakespeare's texts, with a variety of re-imagined settings. The *Gap of Time* moves back and forth between London after the financial crisis and New Bohemia. *Vinegar Girl* introduces immigration concerns into *Shrew*, which in this modern version is set in Baltimore. The plot of *Dunbar* sets up complex international business networks. *Shylock Is My Name* moves Shakespeare's play from Venice to England. *Hag-Seed* brings *The Tempest* into a Canadian prison environment, and *New Boy* reimagines *Othello* in a primary school in Washington, DC. *Macbeth* offers a gritty urban reimagining of the original story. Hogarth powerful team of authors "will undoubtedly consolidate the status of the Shakespearean novel as a global phenomenon for the twenty-first century" (Holderness 2021, vi).

Rediscovery of Shakespeare is always a revelation. The adapters involved in the project were attracted to the task simply for the fact that it was Shakespeare; the opportunity to work with those talismanic texts that they have loved and meditated upon and the exciting artistic challenge that adapting a classic meant (Vintage Books 2015). It is yet another evidence of Shakespeare's uncanny command of our imaginations and these retellings. Farmer wanted the books to be true to the spirit of the original plays, while giving the invited group of authors an exciting opportunity to reimagine these seminal works of English literature for a 21st century

audience (Flood 2013). In an endeavor like Hogarth project, the retellings borrow authority from the Shakespeare work and offer an updated perspective and aesthetic pleasure in return. Contemporizing a Shakespearean play is a fairly common undertaking. As the Hogarth Shakespeare's website notes, Shakespeare's works have frequently "been reinterpreted for each new generation, whether as teen films, musicals, science-fiction flicks, Japanese warrior tales, or literary transformations." (2017) Something that has been a constant barrier on meaning and him having an effect on society over time has been language, values and characters which don't necessarily resonate with the contemporary audience but these modern retellings can make Shakespeare and his meaning closer to our modern sensibility.

Most of the authors in the Hogarth series, to their credit, aren't so much "reimagining" the stories as reacting to the plays. They've taken on not the tale itself but the twists in the tale that produced the Shakespearean themes we still debate: anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice*, the subjugation of women in *The Taming of the Shrew*, art and isolation in *The Tempest*. Each of the novels gives us a revisionist account of the central Shakespearean subject, and asks us to think anew about that subject more than about the story that superintends it. (Gopnick 2016). Shakespearean stories were used to examine contemporary political, social, and cultural issues informed from the vantage and informed point of view of people living in the 21st century. Particularly poignant was Howard Jobson's commentary, "Only a fool would think he has anything to add to Shakespeare. But Shakespeare probably never met a Jew; the Holocaust had not yet happened, and antisemitism didn't have a name. Can one tell the same story today, when every reference carries a different charge? There's the challenge. I quake before it." (Bury 2013).

They created something original which is not a direct replica of the play. In fact, between plays and novels, as any other adaptation, there is a conversation taking place. As the plays they were inspired from, these have the potential to be problematic because they still address issues that are controversial to this day. As Lanier points out, "adaptors are collectively ingenious and tenacious in finding means for reconceiving and thereby preserving" Shakespeare (241). In adapting these plays for a more progressive audience, the Hogarth authors offer times and again the living proof of Shakespeare's eternal stories. The series offers a precious and valuable opportunity to experience Shakespearean themes, concerns and characters through modern lenses. Having familiar stories as a point of departure, they introduce modern topics – sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, imperialism – which require an alteration of plot and characterization. Even though they are not equally successful, the authors created a valuable

new perspective on the ways that Shakespeare's plays continue to raise pertinent questions (Cavanagh 2018, 113).

The Hogarth series offers a welcome opportunity to think about both the distinctiveness and the malleability associated with the places, motives, and challenges presented through Shakespeare's narratives and legacy. Several of these novels provide the readers with such imaginative, thought-provoking explorations of human foibles and possibilities that they make this whole project worthwhile (Cavanagh 2018, 113). Through the series, readers who are not so familiar or comfortable with Shakespeare's plays, have the opportunity to get to know the playwright, who is otherwise accessed only in academic environments, through these modern versions. At the same time, those readers who already got the chance to peruse the works of the Bard, experience that pleasure deriving from Hutcheon defined as "repetition with difference" (142) or the "palimpsestic pleasures of doubled experience" (173). Familiarity with the source texts makes the reading a total different experience: recognizing characters, allusions, echoes and parts of plot with modern and unexpected twists. The Hogarth Shakespeare novels bring together "the comfort of ritual recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty" as adaption involve both "memory and change" (173).

These updated novelizations continue the "historical relevance (economic, cultural, psychological)" (116) of Shakespeare's *ouvre*. The brilliant works that were produced thanks to the effort of the writers involved are another proof that "adaptations are derived from, ripped of from, but are not derivative or second-rate" (169).

JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE GAP OF TIME* (2015)

The *Gap of Time* is the first entry in this revisioning of Shakespeare's canon, a modern version of *Winter's Tale*. Winterson's reason for choosing this text was that it has a personal resonance; she has had the play by Shakespeare very close to her heart for a lot of time, firstly because she, like the young female character Perdita, was a foundling – abandoned as a baby by her biological parents, she then had the opportunity to start afresh (Vintage Books 2015).

The novel explores themes of jealousy, betrayal, regret, forgiveness, and the transformative power of time. With modern philosophy and psychoanalytic overtones, Winterson creates a tale that attempts to resonate with contemporary society. However, to capture some of the unreal and mystical atmosphere of the play, it resorts to video games and the baby hatch (Cavanagh 2018, 108).

The story is set alternately in London, after the financial crash, which is the catalyst for most of the events, and New Bohemia. Throughout the pages, the characters' lives intersect in unexpected ways. Winterson skillfully weaves together multiple perspective shifting between past and present and using flashbacks to reveal details about the characters' histories which creates a complex and sometimes unsettling narrative. While Leo Kaiser, Winterson's Leontes, an arrogant and paranoid wealthy businessman, becomes consumed with jealousy over his wife's supposed infidelity with his childhood friend, Xeno, an introspective computer nerd of ambiguous sexuality. Full of resentment and anger, the events escalate to the point that Leo pays his gardener, Tony, to take his daughter away.

In its second part, the novel follows Perdita's journey as she grows up and matures in the care of a family of Bohemians, Shep and his son Clo, two black men, who take her in and raise her as their own. As the story unfolds, the characters' lives become increasingly entangled. "The novel is consistently savvy about the implications associated with the "gap of time" signaled in its title. In Shakespeare's play, that phrase denotes the lengthy hiatus of many years separating the first and second sections of the play" (Cavanagh 2018, 107). Leo, who has since become a father to twin boys, is haunted by the guilt of abandoning his daughter and seeks to make amends for his past mistakes. Being alive is a punishment to him and remorse tortures him.

Winterson fashions "a narrative that correlates closely both with modern sensibilities and with the issues driving *The Winter's Tale*"; it tackles difficult questions – adoption, race, identity and sexuality – with rigour and grace. As the first book in this ambitious series, it sets the bar quite high" (Cavanagh 2018, 108 - 109).

HOWARD JACOBSON'S *SHYLOCK IS MY NAME* (2016)

Shylock Is My Name is Howard Jacobson's take on *The Merchant of Venice*. Jacobson's *Shylock Is My Name* draws from its author's considerable Shakespearean knowledge and Jewish background in order to present an impressive novel that mirrors, reflects, and deflects the original (Cavanagh 2018, 108). Jacobson is able to present Shakespeare's problematic play from a perspective that calls every character and every situation into question.

Simon Strulovitch is the main character of the story; a rich Jewish philanthropist and art collector, committed to his Jewish cultural heritage but disillusioned with Judaism and confused with his own view of Jewish identity. When he is in a graveyard in Cheshire to mourn the death of his mother, he sees Shylock – Shakespeare's character taken from the world of the play and transposed into twenty-first century England. The two struck up a conversation and, since then,

Shylock becomes his companion and interlocutor. As the story unfolds, Shylock functions as a phantasmal projection of Strulovitch's conscience (Lasdun 2016). The two characters' conversations focus not only on their personal difficulties, but also on wider issues of a sense of belonging and identity. The two Jewish men have with many similarities – two affluent men, lacking wives, who face difficulties in raising their daughters. Strulovitch can not help but asking Shylock questions and, throughout the novel, they engage in several conversations about some of these subjects: Shylock, moving to a modern setting, has the chance to look at what it means to be Jewish in a completely different era and see how things have changed and not have changed. After his wife suffered a stroke on their daughter's fourteenth birthday, Strulovitch has to bring up the sexually precocious Beatrice alone. Being a sensitive and anxious man, he seems to be rather obsessed with Beatrice's safety to the point that she secretly follows her wherever she goes.

"While keeping the Jewish characters under scrutiny, this version of the text keeps no one immune from sardonic investigation" (Cavanagh 2018, 109). Jacobson reimagines the representatives of Shakespeare's Christian characters of Bassanio, Graziano and Portia, renaming them Barnaby, an art connoisseur, Gratan, a brainless football player once accused of giving a Nazi salute on the football field, and Anna Livia Plurabelle Cleopatra A Thing of Beauty Is a Joy Forever Christine, a local celebrity and a reality-show host. They all live in Cheshire's Golden Triangle, the wealthiest part of Manchester. The interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish characters begins when Gratan begins to creep around Beatrice, who is studying art performance at the Golden Triangle Academy. A responsible and anxious father as well as a revengeful man, Strulovitch has been given ample provocation for exacting his own version of the pound of flesh when the opportunity presents itself to do so (Lasdun 2016).

The arguments unfolding in the novel are about some of the knottiest issues of *The Merchant of Venice* – revenge, mercy, intolerance, Jewish identity and antisemitism – by contextualizing them in twenty-first century. Nowadays, with the ongoing war in Israel and Gaza and deep-rooted antisemitism, these themes are always there. *Shylock Is My Name* offers a compelling route towards re-examining a controversial play with no easy answers to the moral and literary questions presented.

TRACY CHEVALIER'S *NEW BOY* (2017)

Tracy Chevalier gives *Othello* a contemporary spin by setting it in the 1970s in the suburbs of Washington DC. The author decides to center her story on the playground interaction of 11-year-old school students, taking inspiration from her unusual upbringing as part of white minority in a predominantly black school (Author Videos 2017).

Osei Kokote is introduced as the son of a Gahan diplomat assigned to Washington; he joins the sixth grade late in the school year. It is his fourth school in six years, so he is familiar with the feeling of awkwardness of being the only black boy in an all-white school which seems not to be ready to welcome him. A perpetual new kid, he knows the drill: fit in, don't stand out. While a lot of the classmates develop a spontaneous antipathy towards him, Osei is quickly befriended by Dee, a sensitive, imaginative girl who is fascinated by the exotic newcomer. Dee's devotion towards Osei is similar to the one portrayed between Othello and Desdemona in the play. Osei and Dee's romance is dealt with lightness and tenderness appropriate to the age of the characters; a pencil case decorated with strawberries that Osei gave to Dee as a present becomes the token of their friendship and the substitute of Othello's handkerchief. Osei's raise in popularity among the classmates threatens the power structure enforced through fear by the school bully Ian, who schemes to take him down. Ian's scheming in to disrupt the newcomer's reputation and manipulation, mirrors the fundamental deception of Iago in the original play.

In the novel, there are also some interesting innovations consistent with the setting in the 1970s and relating to African American culture. Osei's elder sister, Sisi, her Africanness and her exhortations of black empowerment and pride, provide convincing political context with reference to Black is Beautiful movements, the black power political organization Black Panther Party and the history of the consciousness formation of a black youth in the racist world of white Americans. Chevalier recast the play to illuminate the peculiar trials of our era and the novel explores a spectrum of racial attitudes through the reactions triggered by Osei's presence (Charles 2017) – white prejudices and ignorance about African culture, the disturbing desire to touch his hair and a pathetic appropriation of black culture. The novel constructs a binary opposition in which the inferior black is set against superior white; Osei is represented as different, an outsider and a threat to the society of the school.

The story per se is gripping and the effort to tackle themes as racism and fear of otherness is clear, however "compressing the actions of the play into one day, fixing the location in one, improbable space, and focusing the emotional weight of the narrative on children make it impossible to create a story that will move and convince its audience" (Cavanagh 2018, 108).

MARGARET ATWOOD'S *HAG-SEED* (2016)

Margaret Atwood is the novelist behind the multi-layered, meta-fictive *Hag-Seed*, the Hogarth Shakespeare Series' version of *The Tempest*, "modelled on the growing number of modern "Shakespeare in Prison" programs in the USA and other countries" (Cavanagh 2018, 100). Atwood has explained that she has always been drawn to *The Tempest* because of the many questions it leaves unanswered and complexity which opens the space for a lot of possibilities (Stratford Festival 2020). Even though the title of the novel points to Caliban, his voice finds its way in a more indirect way through the prison inmates that Felix, the protagonist of the story, teaches (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 115).

Felix Philips is in his self-imposed exile as he plots his revenge against the people who drive him to live like a penniless hermit. Twelve years before, Felix was fired from his job as artistic director of the prestigious Makeshiweg Festival. He was known for staging elaborate productions of Shakespeare's plays but, after the death of his wife and young daughter, Miranda, Felix lost touch with reality and his production became more and more outrageous causing audience members to complain. Felix was just about to stage an avant-garde version of *The Tempest* when his ambitious collaborator Tony Price sacked him and took over his job.
After nine years on his own, Felix's mental health has seriously declined. He was regularly stalking Tony via internet and interacting with the ghost of Miranda. He decided to go back to the real world and landed a job as a drama teacher at Fletcher Prison. After four years of teaching, his Shakespeare program with the Fletcher Correctional Players is going well. Felix is prompted to finally stage *The Tempest* when he finds out that some powerful politicians are about to come to visit including two of the men who destroyed Felix's career.

Whereas Shakespeare's work has a play within a play, Atwood plays with that meta-theatrical notion by having a play within a novel. The teacher plans to give Tony and his allies a terrifying immersive, drug-filled and revenge-laden theatrical experience. Like Prospero in the play, he weaves the threads of the plot and controls the events as they unfold. "Like Shakespeare, Atwood exploits the tricksy relationship between reality and fantasy that theatre provides." (Cavanagh 2018, 101). Felix presents *The Tempest* to his actors as a story about prisons, prisoners and jailers, so that by bringing the play to the context of the readers, Shakespeare speaks to their specific situation and becomes relevant for them; each of the character can identify with one of the characters of the play (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 116). He acts as a spiritual guide and the collective reading of *The Tempest* and its roles has a sort of

reforming effect on the inmates; accordingly, while they can easily relate to ideas of imprisonment and revenge in the play, other elements are remote from their experience. However, Cavanagh is right when she argues that Felix is egoistic in enlisting "his incarcerated actors into an outlandish manoeuvre that threatens to eliminate any chance they would have for eventual freedom" (103). A few days after the show, Felix throws a cast party for the inmates. At this point, groups of prisoners give reports on the afterlives of different characters and on what they think happens to them when the play ends. After losing so much, Felix is now free to make changes in his life; bringing Miranda back to life after all those years does not keep her spirit alive but keeps them stuck in a cloud of sadness. It is also time for her to be free.

Margeret Atwood is engaged and enticed by the challenge of this text and she is also developing the meaning further. As we look back at the play, we are enticed to look at both texts and The Tempest's complexities differently.

EDWARD ST. AUBYN'S *DUNBAR* (2017)

"A writer whose central subject is the decay of male aristocratic power" (Clanchy 2017), Edward St. Aubyn tackles dark and violent family drama, *King Lear*, in Dunbar. The novel relocates Shakespeare's play from the monarchy into the corporate world, where the 80-year-old titan Henry Dunbar has built a massive empire. His legacy and his global media corporation are under threat from his sinister and vicious daughters, Megan and Abigail, who have forced him into a sanitarium in rural England.

A paranoid and proud man, Dunbar is alienated from those who were loyal to him, including his third daughter Florence who will eventually rescue him. He is alone, with only a demented alcoholic comedian as company, the novel's Fool. It is only after his escape from the care home that he starts to understand the depth and magnitude of his daughters' treachery and his own ignorance and arrogance. Dunbar, who has been all of his life equally awful as his daughters, is finally on the wrong end of power and we pity him (Clanchy 2017). Together with Macbeth by Jo Nesbø, St. Aubyn's rewriting revisits the Bard's vision of power and its corruptibility, drawing deeply from the well of his obsession with greed and ambition (Smith 2018). St. Aubyn chose to maintain the focus on Dunbar, as Shakespeare did in the play with his own Lear. He is the only character that undergoes a change, while the other characters stay as frightful or as virtuous as they are at the beginning. The author follows the plot of the play exactly, so all the action is directed towards the humbling and hounding of Dunbar, allowing

for magnificent scenes of flight and madness and offering a contemporary psychological novel (Clanchy 2017).

"Dunbar's mammoth grief at the death of his daughter and the suicide of his companion create a mixture of sympathy and horror at the tragedy that makes this an impressive rendition of a powerful, sad story." (Cavanagh 2018, 111); it is an excoriating novel of our time with its themes of power, money and the value of forgiveness.

JO NESBØ'S *MACBETH* (2018)

Macbeth by the acclaimed crime-fiction writer Jo Nesbø is currently the last in the series, published in 2018. The author moves the story to modern times, in a police environment rife with drugs, gambling and violence. In a brilliant essay about the play — *On the Knocking at the Gate in 'Macbeth'* — Thomas De Quincey had reflected on how deeply Shakespeare understood the interplay of murder and suspense. Accordingly, with its gloomy, noir-like setting and with its dark depiction of the paranoid human mind, the play can be considered as one of the great progenitors of modern crime-fiction, thriller genre (Saphiro 2018).

Having problems with the supernatural aspects of the play – the witches, the prophecies, visions – but recognizing their vital importance for its structure, Nesbø relocated the plot in the 1970s in a bleak, industrial city resembling Glasgow and the three witches cook drugs instead of fatal potions (BBC Newsnight 2018). He took the supernatural element and made it fit the demands of modern, realistic thriller; accordingly, Hecate, the queen of the witches, is now a drug lord. In the story, we follow Macbeth as he and his fellow police officers tackle the local drug trade; one of drug lords has a greater plan, which involves manipulating and controlling Macbeth. Just as Shakespeare's play, it is a story of political ambition and greed and one's descent into corruption and villainy.

Nesbø gives the story a sharp social edge as well as a timely political resonance by setting his *Macbeth* in a period in which Glasgow was ravaged by the opioid crises and drug abuse, alcoholism, corruption and gang warfare (Saphiro 2018).

CHAPTER 3
Vinegar Girl

3.1 *The Taming of the Shrew*

The comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare is among the author's earliest plays and is believed to have been written between 1590 and 1592. There are records of around the same time of a similar anonymous play, *The Taming of A Shrew*; scholars have not agreed on which one came first, the exact authorship and whether it was a draft by Shakespeare or a work by some other author.

Shakespeare's shrew-taming plot depends on generic models centered around male fantasies of domination over a rebellious woman — folktales, educational treatises, sermons, ballads; the subplot – the wooing of Bianca – instead depends on other literary models, in particular George Gascoigne's *Supposes* (1566), a translation of the Italian comedy *I Suppositi* (1509) by the Italian poet and playwright Lodovico Ariosto (1474–1533). However, Sly's Induction, which frames the entire play, was probably inspired by the tale of Abu Hasan, called T*he Sleeper Awakened*, from *The Arabian Nights* in its modified European version, depicting the tale of the lord who found a sleeping drunkard (Mišterová 2009, 94-95).

Questions about marriage and gender roles recur in many of Shakespeare's works – supportive and love unions are rare, and they were rare, if non-existent, also in the Elizabethan society – the one between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is usually mentioned as the only in the Shakespearean canon – marriages in which wives play subaltern roles, instead, are more common. In *The Comedy of Errors* (1589–94), there is a debate between Luciana and Adriana about the nature of marriage with Luciana thinking that it is a wifey duty to be submissive and unwilful and Adriana pointing out how Luciana, who has never been married, knows how these things work. Language of exchange and commodity – especially the commodification of the female body – permeates also *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98) and many of the comedies. *The Taming of the Shrew* revisits all these questions; it explores gender issues, power relations, misogyny and marriage in a complicated way posing a lot of problems and asking a lot of questions which are still relevant today, more than four-hundred years later. Far from being simply a representation of marriage at the time, it seems to satirize social and gender

expectations related to it and male attitudes towards women. With no clear moral answer, the play simply opens a question and leave it there for the audience to deal with it.

In order to be able to fully appreciate the complexities of the play and the questions it raises, it is useful to reflect upon the society in which Shakespeare lived and the status of women in the sixteenth century. Accordingly, "the entire story figures the social anxiety about gender and power which characterizes Elizabethan culture" (Newman 1986, 87). The period was characterized by a deeply entrenched patriarchal society that was maintained through a strict hierarchy, where men held positions of power and authority in both the public and private spheres. The lives of Renaissance females were more or less controlled by the predominantly male world. Women were relegated to subordinate roles, expected to adhere to strict social norms and familial expectations. Their worth was often tied to their chastity and obedience to male authority figures, whether it be their fathers, husbands, or other male relatives. Moreover, the legal and social structures of the time favored men, granting them exclusive rights to property, education, and decision-making while women were denied property rights and were perceived as men's possessions and commodities (Mišterová 2009, 97). Such relationships of power and gender were justified in Elizabethan treatises, sermons, handbooks as divinely ordained; "it was an era in which creation of Eve from Adam's rib was both historical fact and article of faith" (Khan 1975, 88). During the period from 1560 until the English Civil War, in which many historians have recognized a crisis of order and a widespread sense of insecurity due to the breakdown of rural communities, the fear that women were rebelling against their traditional subservient role in patriarchal culture was widespread. Popular works such as *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (1598), Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611), *Hic Mulier, or The Man-Woman* (1620), and Joseph Swemam's *Arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and inconstant women* all testify to a preoccupation with rebellious women. In addition to what was to be found in those texts, public shaming and humiliation tactics were adopted for women whose behavior was non-normative (Newman 1986, 90). The period was fraught with preoccupation with female rebellion and independence and anxiety about rebellious women. Female offence was associated with class and status; "women who were poor, social outcasts, widows or otherwise lacking in the protection of a family were the most common offenders" (Newman 1986, 91).

Throughout England the feminine ideal was the quiet, submissive wife while, complexly, at the same time there was a woman ruling the country, the extraordinary and powerful Queen Elizabeth I. The rule and authority of a woman was perceived as a threat to the stability of the patriarchal system (Newman 1986, 91).

While portraying his female figures, Shakespeare does not simply conform to norms and stereotypes; he never fails to question the moral grounds and practical effects of patriarchal hierarchy (Khan 1975, 88). In the first part of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the female lead, the strong-willed and energetic Katherine, is depicted in terms of her resistance to male efforts to dispose of her in marriage. She is a headstrong and angry girl in a world that treats both of those traits as devilish and unforgivable when they manifest in a woman; she is referred to as "Katherina the curst" (I. 2. 125) or "wild cat" (I. 2. 192). Katharina's shrewishness shows mainly in two ways, she has a scolding tongue and loud raucous voice, and as long as she is insulted, she even bursts into physical violence (binding and striking Bianca, breaking a lute over Hortensio's head, hitting Petruchio and then Grumio). In a period in which there were waves of accusation against witches, constant allusions to her devilish spirit also link her to witchcraft (Newman 1986).

Katherine establishes herself as a "virago" (Mišterová 2009, 101), but appears fundamentally as a very lonely person whose future is uncertain. Society, mostly men, wants her to be something she is not, someone else entirely – a soft-spoken, kind ingenue like her sister, easy to marry off and subsequently to forget about. She does not confirm to the social expectations of gender and sex system; her behavior – bold, independent, self-assertive – would be desirable in a man but it is prohibited in a woman who must be complementary to man and must not dominate. Kate occupies a marginalized place in society; not only is she motherless, but also lacks the protection of her father who constantly rejects her in favour of her more compliant sister and, clearly, does not have Kate's best interests at heart (Newman 1986, 94). While suitors are unsurprisingly lining up to woo the lovely and docile Bianca, Kate is thoroughly reluctant to the idea of getting married and subdue to the authority of a man; in fact, she fights back with her sharp-wittedness and fearlessness to oppose men. Bianca is a jewel, an object of desire and possession; Katherine does not comply with the standards of her gender and, for this reason, she is shunned by society.

However, the father Baptista is determined to marry off the beloved Bianca only after the unpopular Katherine has also been given a husband. A false desire to conform to the hierarchy of age, which is actually a sheer marketing technique aimed at selling all the goods in his warehouse (Kahn 1975, 90). In the economics of marriage, his two daughters are commodities and possessions to be traded, whose worth is based on beauty, dowry and the attributes which would make them desirable wives. A good match means that he will not have to support them any further and will increase his reputation and his own financial status while assuring patriarchal hegemony. "The richer the husband, the greater the dependence of the wife;

the more powerful he feels socially and economically, the more authoritatively he plays the paterfamilias" (De Beauvoir 1949, 93-94). An exchange system of which Kate seems to be deeply aware and which she does not want to share; even though she will eventually marry the man that will reduce her to a mere thing.

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.
(III. 2. 230-232)

That money, and not his daughter's happiness, is Baptista's real concern is even more clear when he decides to sign her off to Petruchio. Even though also Bianca's sublot emphasizes the venal aspects of marriage, it is usually characterized as romantic and with a lighter comedic tone several in which several amorous suitors compete for Bianca's affection in increasingly ridiculous disguises.

Kate and Petruchio's plot, instead, appears as a terrifying display of the kind of all-encompassing power a man can hold in a woman's life and how it can be abused. In desperate need of money, Petruchio does not care if Katherine has a bad reputation as a shrew as long as he gets her dowry. Petruchio is not scared away by Kate; in fact, her belligerent attitude picks his interest even more. However, his force must necessarily triumph over Kate's because he is male and she is not (Kahn 1975, 94). Before Kate enters, Petruchio has a bit of a monologue, telling the viewers how he intends to tame Katherine. Basically, by using his position of power and total control over her life to make her existence absolutely wretched, while reassuring her he is doing it out of love the whole time. He, a skilled trainer, reduces her to an obedient – or seemingly obedient – animal, denying her any comfort or wish. The form of coercion that Petruchio imposes on Katherine which includes starvation, sleep deprivation, isolation, shouting, is a representation of the psychological realities of marriage in Elizabethan England, in which "husband's will constantly, silently and invisibly, through custom and conformity, suppressed the wife's." (Kahn 1975, 94).

However, Kate's rebellion does not seem to stop here; she has continued to speak. "From the outset of Shakespeare's play, Katherine's threat to male authority is posed through language" (Newman 1986, 92). Words are an instrument of command and assertion of

individuality throughput the play. Unable to really change her position in society, Kate does not simply submit but speaks her rebellion.

Why, sir, I trust Imay have leave to speak,
And speak I will. I am no child, no babe.
Your betters have endur'd me say my mind,
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break,
And rather than it shall I will be free
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.
(IV. 3. 73-80)

While silence has insured Bianca's place in the male economy of desire and exchange, Kate claims the importance of language and her use of it to women's place and independence in the world (Newman 1986, 93-94); she rejects the role to which women are assigned to in the patriarchal society, mere objects of exchange and of male desire. Through verbal strategies and ironic wordplay, she is able to condemn the patriarchal system and the institution of marriage women fall victim to.

When Petruchio demands that Kate agree that the sun is the moon, she appears to submit to her husband's unreason; however, even if she gives up her shrewishness and acquiesce Petruchio's whims, "she persists her characteristic linguistic exuberance while masquerading as an obedient wife" (Newman 1986, 96). In this scene, Shakespeare implies that male-supremacist utopia is ultimately based on such absurdities, for it insists that whatever a man says is right because he is a man, even if it happens to be wrong (Kahn 1975, 96). According to Newman, that Kate's role as an obedient wife and the final taming is a farce is motivated by the part known as Induction which frames the play at the beginning. The framing sequence for this play is that it is presented as a play within a play to a very drunk tinker named Christopher Sly, who through a series of shenanigans has been convinced that he is a nobleman as a practical joke. After waking up in the new guise of a duke, Sly wants to see his wife – who is actually young Bartholomew disguised. To create a diversion, the people who tricked him show him the play, The Taming of the Shrew. It is an interesting play within a play which sets up all the false identities, trickeries and schemes which are going to be played out in the actual story. The transformation of Christopher Sly from drunken lout to noble lord, a transformation only

temporary and skin-deep, suggests that Kate's switch from independence to subjection may also be deceptive and prepares us for the irony of the final part of the play (Newman 1986, 87-88).

The story wraps up with one of the most memorable scenes of the play. The grooms – Lucentio, Petruchio and Hortensio, who had married a window – making a bet as to who among them has the best wife. Bianca and the widow turn out to be rather disobedient wives while Katherine is the very model of the wifely obedience. "The wager scene is punctuated by reversals: quiet Bianca talks back and shrewish Kate seems to become an obedient wife. In a further reversal, however, she steals the scene from her husband, who has held the stage throughout the play, and reveals that he has failed to tame her in the sense he set out to" (Khan 1975, 98). Kate gives the longest speech of the play on the very subject, talking about how women just are not built to be argumentative and confrontational and she argues for quietness and submission, and it is far better for them to just get married and be happy. It is still a disputed matter of interpretation whether Katherina's final speech is perceived as a capitulation to the patriarchal order or a display of her respect for Petruchio. However, the play seems to show that division of power according to gender alone proves irrational and illusory. It is assumed that Shakespeare did not mean this monologue to be understood literally. Here Kate subverts the husband's power without hostility or bitterness, but, again, through the use of language. She has left the aggressive attitude of the beginning behind; in the final scene, "words speak louder than actions" (Kahn 1975, 99). What appears to be the fulfillment of the fantasy of male dominance is instead part of the farcical mechanism. She pretends to conform outwardly but she remains spiritually free and her freedom lays in words.

The idea that Shakespeare concluded the play with the purpose of subverting the roles in the existing patriarchal system seems to be confirmed by the general unease and unrest that the play created among audience members and other playwrights at the time of its first reception. The story has been put through several variants in an attempt to reconcile it with a more normative ending. Several were the attempts to write a new conclusion; an example Fletcher's response in 1611 entitled, *The Woman's Prize; or, the Tamer Tamed* (Levin 1989, 171), in which the female audience is given a satisfying ending, yet the conclusion fails to put women in a place of agency or autonomy. Instead, it is the men that are called upon to act and to change their ways. In the anonymous *The Taming of A Shrew*, by giving Sly this final ending, the author casts Katherine's ending as unrealistic, making it much less serious and thus much less likely to affect the opinions of women theatre-goers (Oliver 1982, 235).

Shakespeare's genius often lay in his deliberate crafting of ambiguity within his works, allowing multiple interpretations and layers of meaning to coexist. This ambiguity is one of the

most notorious aspects of Shakespeare's canon; it leaves enormous spaces for questions about what his true intentions and meanings were and allows modern writers to go back to those themes and explore new possibilities. Reflection on the meaning of the playwright's lines has not ceased today. With this respect, film and stage directors, producers and writers have returned to the play many times to re-imagine it and talk back to that old world from a fresh point of view with brilliant results. In the following section, I will provide a brief outline of the most famous adaptations of the play, raging from films, tales for children and stage productions. The last section, instead, will focus on the cover version of *The Taming of the Shrew* included in the Hogarth Shakespeare series – 2016 *Vinegar Girl* by the American novelist Anne Tyler.

3.2 The Afterlives of *The Taming of the Shrew*

Like many other plays in Shakespearean canon, *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted numerous times for stage, page, screen, opera, ballet, and musical theatre which engage creatively with Shakespeare's text and create space for discussion. "Nothing is fixed or immutable. Beyond Shakespeare's text is the rich world of adaptations" (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2). The inter-artistic operations of transforming one signifying system into another can produce invigorating new perspectives, contributing to an ever-evolving process of reception and creativity. As mentioned above, Shakespeare's plays leave much space open for re-interpretation and revision. There is no period of Western cultural history that has not produced its characteristic Shakespearean interaction; in this respect, "the earliest appropriative act might be Fletcher's drama *The Tamer Tamed* (c. 1609–11)", this playful female-led revenge for Petruchio's misogyny is the first rewriting which attempts to talk back to Shakespeare (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2).

Looking back at plays written more than four-hundred years ago enables adapters to rethink that gap existing between his Elizabethan England and our 21st century and reflect on our modern idea of sex, gender and race allowing the spirit of Shakespeare's works to live on and reach new generations and demonstrate that Shakespeare's place is not on a dusty shelf or in a corner of our mind relegated to old school memories. In particular, collaborating with *The Taming of the Shrew* is a "dangerous game": this is, after all, at least superficially a play with a plot that does what it says and strikes many audience members and scholars as archaic and benighted in its social assumptions (Henderson 2006, 155). So, engaging with *The Taming of the Shrew*, means to invest considerable energies to make the text resonate with a modern

audience and to reflect on our idea of gender, sex and marriage, as Tyler did with her novel. Each new production of the play presents its own challenges when presented to a modern audience, keeping faith with the text and also with modern gender politics. With the raise of feminism, the play is considered ultimately disgusting to modern sensibilities and called for a revision of the plot. Cultural context, therefore, plays a large role in when, how, and to what purpose adaptations of *Taming* are produced.

In this section, I will provide an overview of different adaptations which use different media and address different age targets. All adapters have approached Shakespeare's controversial play and its ideas of marriage and gender roles differently in a way that fits the needs of their target audience and according to the cultural context in which they were produced. As mentioned in chapter one, the nineteenth century was particularly invested in Shakespeare's texts and adaptations. Among the plays that Lambs brothers adapted for children in their 1807 *Tales from Shakespeare* as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare is also *The Taming of the Shrew* by Mary Lamb. As it often happens with adaptations addressing children, the plot is simplified, leaving out the Induction which frames the story in Shakespeare's version and which is crucial to the understanding of the irony of the final scene and the farcical mechanism of the entire story. Actually, Lamb's version leaves out a significant amount of irony and comedy compared to Shakespeare's play and makes it easier to interpret the story as a sexist one with Katherine, in the end, becoming "the most obedient and duteous wife in Padua". Katherine's final famous speech is removed; she is denied a voice and her words are simply summarized by the narrator in more or less two lines: "And to all the wonder of all present, the reformed shrewish lady spoke as eloquently in praise of the wife-like duty of obedience".

Another interesting version made for children, a modern one in this case, is 2009 *The Taming of the Shrew* by Andrew Matthews, which is part of the series *Shakespeare Stories*, retold by Andrew Matthews and illustrated by a Tony Ross, a British author and illustrator of children's picture books. Rather than throwing children in at the deep end with the Shakespeare language, Matthews' retelling of the *Shrew* is helpful for them to at least get to grips with the story. The paragraphs are accompanied by clever black-and-white drawings which, together with a simplified plot, again with no Induction, help children make sense of the story. Matthews, however, kept Katherine's monologue in a shorter version preserving some of the irony and contradictions of Shakespeare's version; here an example: "Our husbands keep us warm and safe, and work hard to feed and clothe us" which contradicts all the misery she was forced to experience after the marriage with Petruchio. In addition, Matthews added a chapter *Notes on*

Love and Marriage which further explains that in modern times Petruchio's outrageous behavior would be thoroughly condemned and that Katherine's mistreatment is unacceptable.

Shakespeare has been a major source of filmic interest since the earliest days of cinema, the closest artistic neighbor to literature (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2). Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, Shakespeare's audience was relatively small; moving picture changed all that, with Oliver Laurence's 1944 *Henry V* setting the trend (Hindle 2015, xiv). As the most familiar medium for adapting Shakespeare, film continues to dominate the field today (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2). With its themes and set of problems, *The Taming of the Shrew* proves an ideal candidate for film adaptations.

Franco Zeffirelli's 1967 *The Taming of the* Shrew, starring as his star duo Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, perpetuates an oppressive narrative against women and denies Katherine dignity in the face of public humiliation and abuse. This makes the set of values represented in the film close to that of the sixteenth-century version, showing how certain social norms and gender expectations endure through time and are difficult to overcome. Zeffirelli's take on Shakespeare's play undermines women's liberation movement in the 1960s America and the fight for gender equality and women's autonomy (Lupear 2020, 32). Rather than an agent of her own self-actualization, in the patriarchal culture portrayed in the world of the film women stand as a "signifier for the male other", so that man can live out his fantasies and obsessions (Lupear 2020, 28). "Zeffirelli directed his film to satisfy the scopophilia of men who were struggling with their masculinity after WWII" (30); post-war cinema often portrayed women as pleasurable visual commodity – enigmatic and alluring figures, feeding into the male gaze, and fostering a culture of visual consumption. Women and sex were mixed in with violence to create the ultimate viewing experience for the male gaze; this explains why violence against Katherine is so overt in this film.

There are other films produced in the past century which played with the plot of *Shrew* a bit more. In 1929 *The Taming of the Shrew* by Sam Taylor, after delivering her famous final speech, Katherine winks ironically at her sister, suggesting that she is just playing the part of the obedient wife and that her words are not true to her real feelings and thoughts, following one line of interpretation of the play. 1953 *Kiss Me Kate* by George Sidney revolves around a theatre company who is putting up a musical version of *The Taming of The Shrew*; a spirited musical comedy that intertwines the onstage and offstage lives of its characters, offering an interesting metatheatrical version, and shifting the focus to a real-life fight between the two leads. In 1963 Western comedy *McLintock!* by Andrew V. McLaglen, the wealthy rancher George Washington McLintock navigates various challenges, including dealing with his

estranged wife, Katherine who returns seeking a divorce. Amidst their tumultuous relationship, McLintock also contends with conflicts between settlers and Native Americans, along with the arrival of his daughter Becky. The movie is a blend of humor, romance, and action, featuring classic Western elements intertwined with comedic situations. In 1986 *Moonlighting* made a parody of the *Shrew* that completely rewrites and subverts the ending.

"For generations born in the '90s and after, Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* stands out as one of the most well-known and popular Shakespeare adaptations" (Hixon 2023, 112). A romantic comedy which reworks the play by Shakespeare by redeeming both Katherine and her relationship with Petruchio and which offers a complex feminist approach to questions of gender, class and sexuality (Hixon 2023, 114). Set in a suburban Seattle high school, the film revolves around the spirited and strong-willed Kat Stratford, played by Julia Stiles, and her younger sister, the popular Bianca, portrayed by Larisa Oleynik. Bianca is forbidden from dating until Kat does, prompting Cameron, played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, to enlist the school rebel, Patrick Verona, portrayed by Heath Ledger, to seduce Kat. Far removed from Shakespeare's text, the film fits the teen comedies of the day (Hixon 2023, 113) with the usual structural landmarks, such as house parties, school drama, a troubled yet charming boy, a climax at the senior prom. Kat's hostility in the film is explained as a combination of stress for parents' separation and as a result of her relationship with the popular Joey, the villain; so that, her man-hate and anti-conformism is explained as a "feminist awakening" caused by traumatic experiences (Hixon 2023, 113). Kat is clearly a feminist here whose values and ideas are shown through her attitude and her literary preferences – there are references to Simone de Beauvoir, Charlotte Brontë and she is shown reading Sylvia Plath, three iconic women writers who had an immense importance to feminist criticism (Mattson 2010, 20). Patrick, Junger's version of Petruchio, gains sympathy, and in this reversal of roles, is the one who adapts to please Kat. In the film it is Kat and Bianca's father who displays the most controlling and oppressive behavior; being a wealthy doctor, he uses money to control the daughters' choices and lives. However, Junger allows a space for redemption and reconciliation when she let the father come to terms with Kat's freedom and will.

Cinema has always provided Shakespeare with new, enriched life and continues to do so. Today, researchers or students of Shakespeare film adaptations will need to be prepared for the impact that recent digital technologies will have on their future production, distribution and reception, including the increasingly diverse participatory platforms and transmedial entertainment environments in which they might be encountered. (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 2)

There have been several theatrical adaptations and stage productions of the *Shrew* with modern twists and innovations that subvert the meaning of the play. In 2016, Phyllida Lloyd directed an all-female production of Shakespeare's *Shrew* at Shakespeare's Globe – a style she also used for her version of *Julius Caesar* and *Henry IV* (Soloski, 2016). This innovative production counters the misogynistic trends by emphasizing and exposing them; in the midst of the play, Gremio, played by Judy Gold, strides onstage to express his annoyance "You want to know what's inappropriate – the fact that the director of this show is a woman". Llyod explained her choice by claiming that "conventional casting struggles to make sense of the play in the 21st century" and that "doing Shakespeare with a single gender, whether it is all-male or all-female that opens up certain possibilities" (Van-Syckle, 2016).

In his 2019 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Justin Audibert sets the play in an Elizabethan age re-imagined as a matriarchy, shifting power dynamics and putting women in charge this time (Royal Shakespeare Company 2019). In this theatrical adaptation, the usually female roles, such as Katherine and Bianca (Bianco) become male characters, and are played by men while the usually male roles Petruchio (Petruchia) and Gremio (Gremia) become female characters and are taken by women. Inspired by the science-fiction novel *The Power* by Naomi Alderman, in which women become the dominant sex, Audibert wanted to wanted to bring contribution to the ongoing "conversation about gender and power" (Royal Shakespeare Company 2019). Even if the characters still behave as their originals did, it is interesting to see how the perspective changes when it is a mother – and not a father – to sell off his sons.

3.3 *Vinegar Girl*

Anne Tyler is one of the authors who were invited to take part in the Hogarth Shakespeare Project and her contribution was a cover version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Not keen on the contemporary literary marketplace, she has always shunned public appearances and interviews during her career. Accordingly, in *Still Just Writing*, she pictures her job as a writer as her entering other people's lives and not being invaded by the outside world (1980). However, some interesting information about her life and her devotion to writing can be grasped in the article *Watching Through Windows: Perspective on Anne Tyler* (1992) by Patricia Rowe Willrich and from the writer's own essays. Anne Tayler was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1941 and grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina. Together with her family, she spent her early years in North

Carolina where they joined a Quaker community in order to withdraw from society during the Second World War and then moved to various rural Quaker communes in the Midwest and South. The experience in the commune made the author look at the outside world with a certain amount of distance which she finds helpful to a writer. Rather than diving into the world, she feels as if she was sitting behind a window and writing about the world with a sense of distance. The American writer and professor Reynolds Price told in an interview in 1983 that "Anne Tyler was almost as good as a writer at age sixteen as she is now; and she's now one of the best novelists alive in the world" (Rowe 1992). A novelist, short story writer, and literary critic, Anne Tyler emerged as one of America's leading fiction writers during the 1980's and has been compared to John Updike, Jane Austen, and Eudora Welty, among others (Allardice 2012). She has published twenty-four novels, including *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1982), *The Accidental Tourist* (1985), and *Breathing Lessons* (1988). All three were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and *Breathing Lessons* won the prize in 1989. She has also won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize, the Ambassador Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2012 she was awarded The Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence.

Her later books include *Digging to America* (2006); *The Beginner's Goodbye* (2012); and *A Spool of Blue Thread* (2015), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2015. Tyler's 22nd novel, *Clock Dance*, was released in 2018. *Redhead by the Side of the Road* (2020) centres on a tech expert who finds his highly organized life upended, while *French Braid* (2022) follows a family over six decades (Britannica 2023). Nearly all her stories are set in Baltimore, where she has lived most of her life. With her melancholy portrayals of family relationships, affectionately drawn misfits and redemptive storylines, her writing is an attempt "to give the mundane its beautiful due" (Allardice, 2012). In her novels recurring themes are family relationships, love, old age and death. Anne Tyler writes of the human condition and has the unique ability to mesmerize readers with tales of everyday life and domestic environments. The reader of Anne Tyler will find real human emotion in her books. The stories often exude a slightly melancholy, bittersweet tone that somehow perversely manages to leave the reader feeling utterly satisfied by the last page. However, Anne's main interest are characters; they are the driving forces behind her stories and the starting point for her writing and then she lets the plot go their way; when talking about her involvement in the Hogarth Shakespeare series, she claimed "since my greatest joy in writing novels has been the deepening understanding of my characters in ways I'd never predicted, it seemed to me that *The Taming of the Shrew* was the natural choice" (Tobar, 2013).

Vinegar Girl (2016) was written as third installment for the Hogarth Shakespeare series. With her choice, Tyler faced the challenge to find an appropriate modern parallel for Kate's marital circumstances, given the distance between Shakespeare's time and our own. As it has already been noted, the novel shies away from the physical violence and utmost brutality portrayed in the Bard's version, creating a story with a lighter tone, great undercutting humour and softer characters; with this respect, in novelistic terms, the book has been categorized into the romantic comedy genre (Etman 2017, 86). However, the text ultimately complicates the genre with its grim undertones. I agree with those scholars, like Natalie K. Eschenbaum, who claim that, on a deeper level, with its portrayal of sexism, parental relationships, gender politics and social expectations, the novel remains outrageously misogynistic and it is the adaptation that most successfully addresses problematic gender politics within the series. "The story of *Shrew* is a story of violence against women that extends through to today and reverberates with any narrative about the dominance of men over women. *Vinegar Girl* is also a narrative about the ways in which men abuse women" (Eschenbaum 2021, 33).

After being ejected from university for disrespecting one of her tutors, 29-year-old Kate has gone back to her father's home, the eccentric research scientist Dr. Louis Battista. She has had no exact plan for herself since and has no idea how to move forward in life. She is now stuck being a caretaker for him and for her flirtatious teenage sister Bunny. After the death of their mother, Kate took on the role of parenting her young sister, who was not yet one-year old, while their absent-minded father was spending much of his day at his lab. In addition to that, she also began to function as the household help; shopping, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry and all the small activities that keep a household running are now all on her shoulders. An unsatisfied mother, housekeeper, and wife for her father, Kate becomes "a perfect example of the invisible, double duty of labor often placed on women" and her story an accurate depiction of "unequal gender dynamics of household labor" (Hixon 2023, 99). This is how grim she images her future at his father's house: "Who else has ever given me a thought? Here in this house I'm just part of the furniture, somebody going nowhere, and twenty years from now I'll be the old-maid daughter still keeping house for her father. 'Yes, Father; no, Father; don't forget to take your medicine, Father.' This is my chance to turn my life around . . . ! (Tyler 2023, 186)

When she is not tending the house and its members, Kate works as an assistant teacher at The Charles Village Little People's School, a position that was arranged for her by her aunt Thelma and that Kate took on in the lack of better prospects. The other teachers disapprove of

her for her unusual manners, but also for her unmarried status and non-feminine choices of clothes. She is constantly getting into trouble because of her unconventional teaching methods and unique ways to approach children. Her supervisor explains that she sees her in charge of a classroom one day, once she matures, but she always seems to be looking for an excuse just to fire her. Kate begins to matter and to be seen as an equal only after the announcement of the engagement and imminent marriage: "It seemed they viewed her differently now. She had status. She mattered. All at once they were interested in what she had to say" (165).

Kate describes herself as a kind of a shrew – "a viperish, disapproving old maid when [she is] barely twenty-nine" (102); like Shakespeare's Katherine, Tyler's vinegar girl also does not comply with certain gender expectation of our time that would like a woman, in almost her thirties to have her life all figured out; to be married, or at least in a stable relationship, and with children. In addition, Kate lacks social skills and is less conventionally feminine. She is sarcastic and blunt; she hates gossip and beauty talks. Kate is "dark-skinned and big-boned and gawky" (41) and refers to her own hair as "a bunch of dead cells" (41). She has dared to wear a skirt at school one day, but she described herself as a "mutton dressed as lamb" (79) and went back to jeans.

She sometimes seems to fancy his only male colleague at school but never considers to make a serious move on him; "[Adam] would always make her feel too big and too gruff and too shocking; she would forever be trying to watch her words when she was with him. He was not the kind of person who liked her true self, for better or worse" (206). Basically, she would be required to be something she is not. While deprecating her sister Bunny's attitude and pretenses, she sometimes wishes to be more like her, her coworker Natalie or the other women in the neighborhood who don't look as lonely as she does; "one of the many complexities of *Shrew* is that it examines the ways in which society trains girls to behave in certain ways" (Eschenbaum 2021, 36). Kate is aware that she does not perform according to what the norm dictates and "[longs] all at once to be softer, daintier, more ladylike, and she was embarrassed by her own gracelessness" (33).

As the story begins, Kate is gardening when her father calls her from work. He forgot his lunch and would like her to bring it to his lab. After some initial complains, her resistance falters when Battista asks her to be a "good girl" (Eschenbaum 2021, 34). Kate slams the phone, grabs the lunch box, and does what she is told. This was part of Battista's cunning plan for him to introduce Kate to the almost visa-less Pyotr Shcherbakov, his research assistant, who works with him at the lab and is months away from deportation. This situation is nagging Battista; if the Immigration forces Pyotr to leave the country, he might as well close the lab and abandon

the project he is so invested in. Dr. Battista's selfishness culminates in his absurd and repulsive request that Kate will marry him because a marriage with an American woman will ensure his stay in the US by granting him a green card – a clever twist that Tyler gives to create a modern forced marriage. To sponsor his daughter, Battista praises Kate's qualities as a housekeeper, "she's very domestic" (10), and as a potential mother, "she's wonderful with small children" (11); all traits that, according to him, would make of her a proper wife. Later in the novel, also Pyotr makes a rather sexist remark when he refers to Kate's body and hair as the things that would allow her the choice of a husband; "You are very independent woman and you have the hair that avoids beauty parlors and you resemble dancer" (100).

Like Baptista of the play, the father of the novel clearly does not have his daughter's feelings and interests at heart but is only moved by an extreme selfishness. Battista does not hesitate on trading his daughter off for his own personal gain and, this way, makes of Kate a human sacrifice. He is so blinded by his own egotism that he would like to force Kate to marry a man she does not know, let alone love, so that his research will not be compromised.

Feeling hurt by her father's mistreatment, Kate takes immediately offence to the suggestion of a sham marriage and makes it clear that she will not marry Pyotr; "he must think she was of no value; she was nothing but a bargaining chip in his single-minded quest for a scientific miracle. After all, what real purpose did she have in her life? And she couldn't possibly find a man who would love her for herself, he must think, so why not just palm her off on someone who would be useful to him?" (76). To make things even worse, Dr. Battista justifies his proposal by hinting at Kate's lack of real marriage prospects and by assuring her that Pyotr will move to live in their house so that things will not change much for her: "All I had in mind was, we would go on more or less as before except that Pyoder would move in with us" (111). His is a well-devised plan to make her marry his assistant to save his scientific research without losing his daughter-maid who will continue to keep the house and do all the work he does not want to do.

Unlike Bianca, who is totally submissive and unassertive, modern Bunny interestingly makes no secret of her horror at the marriage plan and makes it clear that their father has acted as an "oligarch" (185) throughout their lives. "The man forgets for months at a stretch we even exist, but at the same time he thinks he has the right to tell us who we can ride in cars with and who we should marry" (131-132) and when Kate finally acquiesces to the marriage, Bunny is in shock and remarks that Kate is no "chattel" (131) echoing Petruchio's lines in the *Shrew*. Later in the novel, she even warns Kate because she perceives that Pyotr is trying to direct Kate and being controlling.

Even though throughout the novel there is bad blood between Kate and Bunny, according to Bertucci, giving particular attention to the "sisterly bond between Kate and Bianca helps create a space for feminist resistance" (414) within modern adaptations. It is true that Kate eventually decides voluntarily to engage in the sham marriage to get out from under her oppressive situation that she lives at home, and she may well end up in a better situation than she was in with her father, but the plot still reveals numerous examples of dominance and abuse. Actually, "we should not only account for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century notions of domestic violence; we need to consider twentieth-century notions of violence as well" (Eschenbaum 2021, 33).

In 2021 *Modernising Misogyny in Shakespeare's Shrew*, Natalie Eschenbaum considers Tyler's purposeful use of the powerful term 'girl' to show how the taming plot is modernised, but remains misogynistic. "'Girl' signals, not peevish independence, but pliant, even tearful, obedience. Kate is not supposed to mature into womanhood; she is supposed to learn how to properly perform girlhood" (37). At twenty-nine, Kate Battista is definitely not a girl but is constantly called one by her elders, like his father or her Uncle Barkley, by Pyotr and also by the author herself. Despite raising her sister, taking care of his father and running their household on her own, despite working a full-time job, she is constantly denied womanhood and maturity because she does not comply with certain expectations regarding how a woman should look like, think, act and behave. Only when the wedding is approaching, the father tells Kate that she "looks very grown up" (Tyler 2023, 190), as if only the status of being married will make her a woman.

While Kate resigns herself to being called a girl by her elders, she does not accept being called one by a peer, like Pyotr, who should know better. Despite her repeated and exhausting attempts to correct him, Pyotr continues to refer to her as a girl; while in the novel there are constant references to Pyotr's foreignness and linguistic obstacles, his constant unwillingness to listen to her – even when she has something important to say, as how she wants to be defined – signals the subtle way in which dominance and oppression remain the themes of this story. When Aunt Thelma asks her niece if she is going to take his husband's surname after the marriage and be Kate Cherbakov, she completely rejects the idea and says she'd rather stick with Battista. Pyotr intervenes in the middle of the conversation "No, no, no. Will be Shcherbavokov-*ah*. Female ending, because she is girl." "Woman," Kate said (Tyler 2023, 166).

When Pyotr is late for the marriage ceremony, Kate teeters: "She honestly wanted to know, because whatever it was would be preferable to Pyotr's simply deciding he found it too

off-putting to marry her no matter how advantageous it was. 'Would not be worth it', she could hear him saying. 'Such a *difficult* girl! So unmannerly" (200). Her use of the word 'girl' and the questioning of her own worthiness suggest that she has internalized the cultural and social expectations of her (36). Even if some detractors of the novel, claim that there is no taming happing in Tyler's updated version of the play (Cavanagh 2018, 104-105), this utterance signals that she is giving in to the toxic and misogynistic mentality she was wrestling against.

Even if Pyotr does not equate Petruchio's evident cruelty and viciousness, his dominance and authority over Kate is more subtle, "ignoring Kate again and again has a profound effect on Kate's person" (38). Pyotr often passes as a hapless, clumsy freak and much of his eccentricity is excused throughout the novel, however his behavior is often unacceptably rude and disrespectful; many of his statements are sexist and the cultural barrier can not be a justification for that. While Kate often tolerates and excuses Pyotr's behavior, Mrs. Liu, Pyotr's fellow tenant, seems to feel sorry for Kate who married him: "'He is the one is very rude', Mrs. Liu said. 'He's had a really hard day'. 'He has many hard days', Mrs. Liu said." (218).

Kate's final speech at the family gathering is Tyler's version of one of the most controversial and disputed moments in Shakespeare's *Shrew*: "'It's *hard* being a man', because men are 'a whole lot less free than women are, when you think about it. Women have been studying people's feelings since they were toddlers; they've been perfecting their radar – their intuition or their empathy or their interpersonal whatchamacallit. … It's like men and women are in two different countries! I'm not "backing down", as you call it; I'm letting him into my country. I'm giving him space in a place where we can both be ourselves'" (256).

Like in the play, this speech comes as a bit of a surprise; in this case, it does not focus on obedience and wifely duties, but on the emotional traumas and sufferings that men face on account of the pressures of masculinity. It is a critique on those traditional gender norms that pressure men to conform to rigid standards of toughness, emotional suppression, dominance, and aggression while discouraging traits like vulnerability, emotional expression, and empathy. Tyler has already voiced interest in the topic of men's emotional oppression; in an interview that she gave in 2012, she claimed that men "are forced by society to hide their feelings", and when she is writing from the perspective of a man "[she is] aware of how confined [she is]" and feels like "[she is] walking a narrow path with high walls on either sides"; while writing from a man's point of view, she realized how we should worry also about "men's liberation" (Allardice 2012). While it is crucial to dismantle these harmful stereotypes and encourage a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of masculinity, claiming that men, as a group, are a lot less free than women comes out as ridiculous and far-fetched; Kate questions the harm that

the patriarchal system has caused to men, but does not acknowledge the other side of the coin, the burden this puts on women as well (Eschenbaum 2021, 39). Moreover, as Orenstein (2019) points out, it is not the responsibility of women— "girlfriends, mothers, and in some cases sisters"—to provide the emotional labor of "processing men's emotional lives".

As in the scene of the wager scene in the play, this speech turns out as ambiguous; it is not clear how the Kate's words are true to her thoughts and feelings and if she has truly internalized such social and gender expectations and eventually decided to perform girlhood. Claiming that "men are more less free than women" turns out as ridiculous particularly when considering that she herself had to marry a man to reach a little bit of independence and break the chains of her paternal house. Kate sees the marriage to Pyotr as a chance to turn her life around and to stop being part of the furniture of her father's house. Accordingly, after the marriage, Kate finally leaves his father's suffocating house and escapes her role as a housekeeper, eventually attains the degree in botany she had long longed for and could devote herself to her passion for gardening. She could eventually find the strength behind submission.

CHAPTER 4
Criticism of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project: Shakespeare Global Echo

4.1 Away from the Centre: The Case of India

"In honouring the genius of Shakespeare, we do not merely offer homage to the memory of an individual, but we are witnesses to the intellectual fraternity of mankind: and it is that fraternity which assures us of the possibility of co-operation in a common task, the creation of a social order founded upon Union."

Ananda Coomaraswamy, Intellectual Fraternity (p319)

"When I carefully studied the poems of the illustrious dramatic poet Shakespeare, whose widespread fame is known all the world over, it was the Buddhistic sentiments in them that appealed to me the most, and I was greatly rejoiced in the study of our deep philosophy, inasmuch as they added to the profound interest I felt in the subject."

S. Z. Aung, Homage to Shakespeare from the Burmese Buddhists (p327)

"Shakespeare lived over 3000 years ago, but he appears to have had a keen grasp of human character. His description of things seems so inwardly correct that (in spite of our rapid means of communication and facilities for travelling) we of present age have not yet equalled his acumen. It is to be hoped that with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare's works. That this could be done is suggested by the probability that some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore"

A South African Homage, translated (p339)

"For this composer of plays, not his own country only but the world itself is the stage on which by skilfully mingling mirth and gravity he displays the vicissitudes of human fate.

His pre-eminence is praised by ordinary men and by the greatest of poets as well with unanimity. Hence he is exalted in the host of literary men like the sun that fares in the midst of the planets.

He needs no glorifying monument, for he will endure for ever like the sun and the moon. No conqueror by universal victory has ever reached the level of his lustre.

Encomium by Mugdhanala, trasnalted by A. A. Macdonell (p311)

"In the nineteenth century, the idealization of Shakespeare and British imperialism advanced together" (Marcus 2017, 6). With the growing hegemony of Britain, Shakespeare was brought to the outposts of the Empire as the epitome of all that was great about Britian and heralded as a supposedly civilizing influence (Taylor 1989, 252-253). Wherever the English went, Shakespeare followed and became immersed in the project of civilizing conquered people. In many colonies, the British brought Shakespeare's works as part of their cultural baggage, using them to promote the English language, literature, and the ideals they believed Shakespeare represented—civilization, order, and sophistication with the aim of "[initiating] colonial subjects into Englishness and [cementing] cultural unity with the mother country" (Marcus 2017, 5-6). The Bard's plays were seen as a pinnacle of English literature, and their dissemination served to establish a cultural hegemony, reinforcing the idea of British cultural superiority among the colonized populations. Even if Shakespeare knew nothing of the British Empire and imperialist ideology, he became complicit in the colonial project. Worshipped like a "Prophet" (Kapadia 1997, 11), Shakespeare was idealized as a badge of English superiority and viewed as above his peers, "displaying relative enlightenment by comparison with his fellow Elizabethans and Jacobeans" (Marcus 2017, 18).

The colonizers viewed the indigenous populations of the colonized territories as primitive, and lacking in civilization compared to their own cultural norms. This perception was used to justify the ruthless subjugation and brutal exploitation of these communities, as the colonizers believed they were bringing civilization and progress to supposedly backward societies. This perception of superiority justified the imposition of cultural, social, and economic systems onto the colonized peoples, often resulting in the erasure or suppression of their languages, traditions, and belief systems. This dehumanization served to rationalize and normalize oppressive colonial practices, as it made it easier for the colonizers to justify their exploitation and mistreatment of the colonized communities.

However, despite being utilized as a tool of cultural imperialism, Shakespeare's works also carried within them themes of power, justice, oppression, and resistance that could resonate

with the colonized. Some scholars and local artists in colonized territories have reappropriated Shakespeare's plays, subverting colonial interpretations and using them as vehicles to criticize imperialism, highlight socio-political injustices, and reclaim cultural autonomy. He then became a “palliative” and an “important vehicle of anti-conquest” (Marcus 2017, 4).

The relationship between British colonialism and Shakespeare's works is multifaceted, reflecting not just the influence of the Bard on colonialism but also the ways in which colonialism appropriated and molded Shakespeare to serve its own agendas, while also inadvertently providing opportunities for resistance and cultural reclamation. Shakespeare occupies “a truly paradoxical position: as a tool of colonial power, he represented continued cultural hegemony on the one hand and a disruption and fracture of that hegemony on the other” (Kapadia 1977, 36).

From now on, I will refer to Parmita Kapadia’s 1997 *Bastardizing the Bard: Appropriations of Shakespeare’s Plays in the Post-colonial India* to outline a brief history on the long-lasting tradition of study and performance of Shakespeare in India which roots are to be traced back to colonial times and the role it assumed in the education system. The case of India proves particularly interesting when considering that “Shakespeare shares a long history of engagement with India, probably the longest outside his own country” (Thakur 2014, 21) and when considering it as a country where another world of Shakespeares came into being.

The East India Company is one of the reasons why Shakespeare began to conquer India. The original aim of the Company was simply to find sources of spices, silk and gems in that magical land of wonders that was thought of India; however, “the final result was the colonization of millions of peoples that would last for centuries” (Kapadia 1997, 6-7). Indian heterogeneity and fragmentation were a powerful weapon in the British arsenal against Indian nationalism; emphasis on diversity, especially in the language, allowed the British to argue that the subcontinent was too fragmented to be considered a nation worthy of sovereignty. (Kapadia 1997, 16). At that point, a “master/servant relationship” between Britian and India began, with Britian also dictating the direction and degree of cultural contact with the colonized (Kapadia 1997, 25). As the British empire expanded, political and military power had to be fortified with cultural and moral superiority. This policy had the double aim to guide Indians towards Christian morality and principles without directly addressing religious issues and to create an educated class of natives that could operate the daily business of colonial government (Kapadia 1997, 15).

After the British government crucially decided to take an active role in Indian education, English canonical literary texts, and Shakespeare in particular, soon became required readings.

By initiating indigenous population to the heights of English literature, they hoped to affect an alteration in their feelings and attitudes. “The civilizing power of Shakespeare was one of the tools by which Indians were to be made quasi-Englishmen, introduced to a superior culture and imbued with its values” (Marcus 2017, 131). The teaching of Shakespeare in India goes as far back as the early eighteenth century, and by the mid-nineteenth, had become routine in British government schools. In colonial India, Shakespeare formed the core of the curriculum imposed by the British on native population; the plays were used to inculcate proper, moral behaviour among the Indian population. In order to serve the purpose, Shakespearean texts were cut to censor inappropriate elements while other parts were rewritten to stress or to add other elements (Kapadia 1997, 25-26). Some teachers of Shakespeare even created their own printed teaching versions of single plays for the sake of pedagogical convenience, but over time there were also series of plays specifically edited for Indian students; Macmillan’s “English Classics of Indian University Students” began publishing in 1888 in order to meet the specific needs of the indigenous students and to explain those things that to an English boy would have resulted straightforward instead (Marcus 2017, 132). Each Macmillan text included a detailed introduction discussing extensively the play in terms of dating, influences, plot, character and interpretation. It was endowed with full explanatory annotations at the bottom of the page to repair the cultural ignorance of Indian students, as it would become standard later. Censorship, commentary and bowdlerization were also common to the benefit of the readers (Marcus 2017, 141-142). However, these experimentations enabled teachers to approach the texts of the plays differently and gradually became model among educators in Britain as well.

Shakespeare plays were produced in the theatres across India and they were introduced to students in schools and universities. The plays most frequently taught were *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Henry IV* and *As you Like It* (Kapadia 1997, 13). Used to propel a sense of British authority, it could be said that the British Empire believed that they could make the Indian population more British. Conversely, this gave India the tools necessary to translate Shakespeare, giving them a sense of power and the belief that they could construct an Empire of their own. Indian scholars and writers hoped to articulate an Indian response to the plays by taking into account differences between race, culture and ethnicity. They called attention of the beauties and qualities of Sanskrit drama and poetry, in particular the classical poet Kalisada, and translators appropriated the plays to suit local customs and traditions and to suit their individual needs (Kapadia 1997, 4). While Britain was disseminating Shakespeare’s cultural views, Indians were challenging his supremacy and promoted Indian pride in an attempt to counteract the argument that Indian literature and culture

were worthless and that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India” (Kapadia 1997, 9). Actually, English literature could be perceived as a bit raw and new to Indian people, compared to the long and rich tradition of the Sanskrit (Marcus 2017, 138).

The challenges that began with these individuals continue today; translation, appropriation and adaptation continue to modern day creating a long history of Shakespeare in India, weaving in Indian elements, metaphors, references and images either by combining the Shakespeare play with an Indian text or by manipulating Shakespeare so that it articulates Indian concerns and sensibilities (Kapadia 1997, 41). Indian writers and scholars have assimilated and made Shakespeare an integral part of its growth towards modernity. Today, Shakespeare book is also used as “a vehicle to investigate the realities of a post-colonial existence” (Kapadia 1997, 14). Rather than the usual British Shakespeare as a corrective for Indian values, we encounter a Shakespeare who is aligned with them (Marcus 1997, 149), infused with Indian concerns and challenging colonial authority and articulating post-colonial realities. With this respect, some writers and critics contend that post-colonial societies are inevitably hybrids and any attempt to recover the pre-colonial uncontaminated past would inevitably fail; “the resulting cultural and linguistic hybridities offer opportunities to subvert Western authority and construct post-colonial realities” (Kapadia 1997, 20).

Post-colonial countries share many broad concerns, problems and histories. However, the diversity of their individual experiences must not be glossed over (Kapadia 1997 21-22). Shakespeare’s texts, even when not overtly and consciously appropriated, changed in their new contexts and adapted to new theatres, conventions, audiences and societies. The myriad of languages, cultures, religions and traditions that enrich the Indian sub-continent make the case of India unique and the notion of Indianess an ambiguous concept. While India’s diversity is today used to justify Westernization, India’s multiplicity actually provided “the barrier against cultural annihilation during colonialism” (Kapadia 1997, 42-43).

India embraced a Shakespeare of their own and through adaptation and interpretation found a way of exploring his texts through their own theatre practices. “On the Indian sub-continent, Shakespeare comes with all the baggage of colonialism, subjugation and occupation, and yet despite this, Shakespeare remains popular with audiences, challenging for directors and lucrative for literary scholars” (Kapadia 1997, 37). Colonizers left but Indian people could not give up Shakespeare and is now imbued in the fabric of their culture.

Indian Independence has required Shakespeare scholars and directors to provide more politically relevant interpretations and productions. Indian theatre appropriates Shakespeare’s

play-texts by weaving in Indian elements, references, metaphors and images "either by combining the Shakespeare play with an Indian text or by manipulating the Shakespeare text so that it articulates post-colonial, Indian concerns" (Kapadia 1997, 40). To read and be aware of such texts existing in the former colonies is a way to subvert what had long been used as an oppressive and subjugating instrument and to give voice to the marginalized and silenced. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o claimed that only a shift away from European cultural and linguistic systems can bring about a "decolonization of the mind" (Kapadia 1997, 20).

4.2 Indian Shakespeare

"The withdrawal of Britain from India in 1947 as political force hasn't seriously affected the study of Shakespeare (and of English literature) in [Indian] colleges and universities" (Iyengar 1964, 1). The impact and presence of Shakespeare in different cultural contexts and national realities gave rise of varying reactions; Shakespeare and his texts were appropriated into local traditions and are now part of the Indian imagination and cultural fabric. Indian directors, scholars and educators have translated, adapted and appropriated the Shakespeare text in order to suit their individual needs. They have appropriated the plays using them to comment on their contemporary political and social situations. At the same time, they also created new versions in order to adapt those texts to their own sensibility, morality and traditions (Kapadia 1997, 37). It is interesting to see what can be found out in post-colonial India's appropriations and responses to Shakespeare.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, English plays were produced for the entertainment of the British residents; all of the performances were reserved for the British and Indians had no access to them. However, as soon as theatrical companies began to take Shakespeare's stories across India, the British and Indian culture was inevitably brought together and appropriations of foreign texts started (Kapadia 1997, 48-49). "Today, cross-cultural productions constitute a significant part of Indian theatre" (Kapadia 1997, 51). With this respect, a remarkable case is the Natrang Theatre Group which is known for the adaptations and presentations of Shakespeare plays with a touch of Dogri flavour. Natrang is best known for their presentation of Shakespeare plays including *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* - which was presented at Abhinav Theatre during the occasion of Four-day Natrang Theatre Festival on the 15th of May 2018 (Kumar 2019, 46).

The place where Shakespeare still finds its place today is the increasingly popular Indian cinema. In particular, "the recent popularity of "Bollywood" (a hybrid term fusing Bombay and Hollywood) in the West may be attributed to the growing awareness of the commercial potential of expanding Indian markets and of the Bombay (now Mumbai) film industry with its national and diasporic audiences" (Chakravarti 2014, 127). As India establishes itself as a powerful economy, Bollywood transforms itself from a typically indigenous product into a global brand with growing influence in the international culture industry. Bollywood is considered to be indebted to Parsi theatre, an old theatre based in feudal romance and tropes such as realism and fantasy, snide humor, catchy folk songs, heroism and local legends and festival dancing. With its music and dances, love triangles, comedy, melodramatic plots, Bollywood seems to be a very apt means to adapt the variety of Shakespeare plays. The last decades, in particular, have witnessed a growing interest in Shakespearean themes within the mainstream Bombay film industry (Chakravarti 2014, 128). However, with a huge corpus of Bollywood films revolving around Shakespearean themes like feuding families, familial infidelity and ambition and overpowering duty, Shakespeare has been unconsciously present within Hindi cinema and has inspired it since the 1920s. One of the first was a 1927 silent film based on a play by Agha Hashr Kashmiri, a 1900 adaptation of The Merchant of Venice. 1935 Khoon ka Khoon and 1936 Said-e-Havas by Sohrab Modi followed, both were recorded versions of Hamlet. The latter director had a long reputation as a great Shakespeare actor in Parsi theatre and it was his desire to film his plays that led him to produce films (Thakur 2014, 22). Sanjay Leela Bhansali′s 2013 Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ramleela also owes more to Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare. Piya Behrupiya directed in 2019 by Atul Kumar is a Hindi adaptation of Twelfth Night.

Several Shakespearean versions in Bollywood were fair copies of Hollywood adaptations such as Kishore Sahu's 1954 Hamlet, which was a shot-by-shot imitation of Laurence Olivier's 1948 Hamlet. The 1947 Romeo and Juliet starring Nargis as Juliet, was a copy of the Hollywood version with Norma Shearer, directed by George Cukor. In recent years, the Rani Mukherjee starrer 2009 Dil Bole Hadippa! was a loose copy of 2006 She's the Man 2006 based on Twelfth Night (Kumar 2019, 47).

"It is because of the post–Vishal Bhardwaj phenomenon that Bollywood Shakespeare is now considered an important and serious area of study" (Thakur 2014, 22). Vishal Bhardwaj, a prolific filmmaker in the Indian cinematic landscape, has carved a niche for himself with his unique ability to intertwine Shakespearean drama with the vibrant tapestry of Bollywood. "Loosely applied, the term "Bollywood Shakespeare" refers to and reflects the growing interest in Shakespearean themes within the mainstream, commercial Bombay (now Mumbai)–based

film industry of India". However, this label also extends beyond Bollywood's cinematic reinterpretations of Shakespeare; it is also applied to the emerging corpus of global Shakespeare performances that embrace Bollywood conventions and representational styles, mixing theatrical presentations with cinematic elements and thereby producing significant hybridizations of genres and aesthetics (Chakravarti 2014, 128).

The global success of Vishal Bharadwaj′s trilogy of Hindi films, 2003 *Maqbool*, 2006 *Omkara* and 2014 *Haider* has actually brought Shakespeare Bollywood to its heights. These three films have kept quite close to the original text while relocating it in contemporary India. Bhardwaj succeeds in "reculturalising Shakespeare" concentrating on "small, essentially indigenous, spaces that speak of problems that are quintessentially Indian" – the inner workings of the Mumbai underworld in Maqbool, the murky politics of rural Uttar Pradesh in Omkara, and the age-old problem of Kashmir as a bone of contention between India and Pakistan in Haider (Mondal 2017, 2).

Macbeth is the most popular tragedy by Shakespeare in India after *Othello* and has been consequently modified and reworked in different productions (Trivedi 2005, 48). 2003 *Maqbool* is one of the forms that the Shakespeare tragedy took in India, with turns and twists to make it relevant to today's time. Bhardwaj relocated the Shakespearean setting to the 21st - century Muslim environment of Mumbai's underworld. The film masterfully intertwines elements of loyalty, betrayal, ambition, and moral dilemmas, staying true to the essence of Macbeth while infusing it with the gritty realism and nuances of Mumbai's world of crime. However, by Bhardwaj's own admission, he had "no plans to take up Shakespeare" originally. Before directing the movie, he had not read the tragedy, he only knew that he wanted to make a film on the underworld, for which reason he was looking for a "great story." He decided precisely for Macbeth after he had read an abridged version of the play and found it suitable to be turned into a gangster movie (Singh, 2015). Like *Macbeth*, *Mabool* is a man who constantly oscillates between ambition and guilt. He is born into an evil space, so much so that evil is not an option for hum but "a compulsory part of his existence" (Mondal 2017, 3). *Maqbool*'s life takes a dramatic turn when two corrupt cops, Pandit and Purohit, plant the seeds of ambition in his mind, suggesting that he should take over the powerful Abbaji's empire. Once a loyal follower, Maqbool chooses to yield on his latent desires, though not without self-examination. Given Bhardwaj's own fascination for cinematic projection of social disorder, the film suggests that the mafia dons of Mumbai, having influence over a wide range of social aspects, are the real rulers of the state (Sen 2010, 231).

This first adaptation has then brought about a successful Indianised Shakespearean trilogy. The second film of this trilogy, *Omkara*, adapted from the tragedy of *Othello*, was brought to the big screen in 2006. *Othello* has been among the more popular of Shakespeare plays in India; not only is Shakespearean tragedy routinely prescribed in the syllabi of English literature at university but it is also a popular staging choice for both amateur and professional companies (Charry and Shahani 2014, 108-109). The director takes pride in bringing the famous tragedy to life "in an Indian milieu for the first time in mainstream Hindi film" (Charry and Shahani 2014, 110). In Bhardway's version, Shakespeare's story is updated and transplanted to the world of corrupt politicians and their gangsters in the northern Indian region of Uttar Pradesh. Omkara Shukla is a respected and feared political enforcer. His right-hand man, Langda Tyagi, harbors resentment after being passed over for a promotion in favor of the charming and loyal Kesu. Fueled by jealousy and manipulation, Langda Tyagi orchestrates a web of deceit, leading Omkara to suspect his beloved wife Dolly of infidelity with Kesu. The narrative intensifies as suspicion turns to paranoia, leading to tragic consequences driven by betrayal, revenge, and the destructive power of jealousy. "Reviewers of the film respond by describing it as capturing the "essence of the original" and as serving as a reminder of the enduring appeal of the bard: "what you take away from Omkara is the knowledge that the classic script always has the power to move us" (Charry and Shahani 2014, 109).

The last film of the trilogy is 2014 *Haider*, a modern-day adaptation of *Hamlet*. Set in militarized Kashmir in the mid-1990s, also this film did not shy away from political concerns. "Haider goes beyond Bollywood's Pakistan bashing for Kashmir's troubles and speaks about the alleged atrocities of the Indian Army on Kashmiris", it is an intense, disturbing film, not a regular Bollywoodian one (Kaushal 2014). The film follows the journey of Haider, a young student who returns home from Aligarh after receiving news of his dissident father's disappearance during the insurgency in Kashmir. Haider discovers that his mother Ghazala is romantically involved with his uncle Khurram, raising suspicions about his father's death. As Haider delves deeper into the political and familial complexities surrounding him, he becomes entangled in a web of betrayal, revenge, and the blurred lines between loyalty and justice. The film explores the psychological toll of conflict, political intrigue, and personal vendettas in the troubled landscape of Kashmir.

Shakespeare has been now performed in India for more than two centuries in many different local languages and has been weaved into local cultural traditions. While his influence was initially restricted to certain areas, the reach of his plays extended notably, spanning the entirety of India. However, with the growth of cinematic industry, the popularity of Indian

adaptations of Shakespeare is not only to be understood locally, but there is now an international audience who is mesmerized by the "magic combination between the Bard and Bollywood" (Chakravrati 2014, 130). These new, vibrant reinterpretations of Shakespeare help articulate Indian identities in a rich cultural environment.

"While both Shakespeare and Bollywood can be said to constitute cultural capitals of a kind—Shakespeare the millennial poet whose worldwide performance and publication bespeaks a global presence, and Bollywood, the largest film industry in the world, whose audiences are said to be spreading incrementally across the globe— they are, nevertheless, equally divergent, spanning almost insurmountable differences of language and culture. Yet it is the fate, or the good fortune, of Shakespeare to be translated, adapted, appropriated, and absorbed in countless languages, genres, and media across the world" (Trivedi 2014, 193). According to the findings of the survey conducted by The British Council late last year, as an attempt to better understand Shakespeare's popularity around the world, surprisingly it was found that — the country that claimed to have liked and more importantly understood Shakespeare the best was India (British Council 2016). The new respectability and consequent critical accord gained by "Bollywoodization" may instigate more Indian filmmakers to return to Shakespeare in the future. Who knows—"Bollywood Shakespeare" may even be poised to create memorable film versions like the Russian and the Japanese (Trivedi 2014, 197).

4.3 Hogarth Shakespeare: Lacking Diversity

In light of what emerged from the previous sections focusing on Shakespeare's global reach and the influence that the Bard's plays had outside the Anglo sphere, I will now address a piece of post-colonial criticism of the Hogarth Shakespeare series. With its lengthy and rich history, Shakespeare's plays in modern guise constitutes a new generic framework on its own; the adaptation process involves not only the recontextualisation of the material from the genre of drama to that of prose, but also the choice of author to adapt it (Løfaldli 2022, 1). Adaptations can be "scintillating, surprising, immensely creative, subtle, innovative, and absolutely cutting edge." They can also be "dull, obvious, banal, gauche, clichéd, and unfashionable." (Cavanagh 2018, 99). The Hogarth series fits many of these evaluative categories and the stylistically varied writings of the series offer readers and scholars of adaptation studies much to give thought to. Although the writings of the Hogarth team of authors are stylistically varied, their biographies and backgrounds are less so. While from the point of view of gender, the series

seems to be equally balanced with four women and three men joining the team, all the writers are white. Two of the them are American and three are British, while the last two that joined the group are the Canadian Margaret Atwood and Norwegian writer Jo Nesbø. I agree with Lauren Marie Scovel when, in a 2017 article for The Millions, she argued that the series would have been more rewarding and illuminating, "if it [had featured] writers whose backgrounds vary more drastically from Shakespeare himself", considering the reach that Shakespeare had outside Britian after the colonial era.

The project seems to have been tailored in order to attract a wider audience and be granted widespread popularity. The Penguin Random House worked out an effective marketing strategy and strongly associated each cover version with the name of its famous author. With this respect, Eli Løfaldli's investigation into the paratexts of the Hogarth Shakespeare's project in 2022 *"What's in a Name?" Authorship as (Micro)Genre in the Paratext of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project* proves insightful. To begin with, "the novels in the series are consistently presented and marketed as retellings of Shakespeare" (3) and association with the texts they derive from is omnipresent. Atwood's Hag-Seed is "The Tempest retold", Jacobson's Shylock is My Name is "The Merchant of Venice retold", Tyler's Vinegar Girl is "The Taming of the Shrew retold" and so on – presupposing similar value and interest of the original and the retellings alike. However, not only do the cover versions borrow authority from Shakespearean corpus of texts, but they win appeal thanks to the constant association with their prestigious and best-selling novelists and the genres they are immediately affiliated with. The mere mention of an author's name invokes a particular kind of literary production and public perception (3). Just to make an example, the appearance of Jo Nesbø's name alone is an effective signal of what to expect from his retelling; readers and reviewers are quick to pick up the links between the authors and the literary production they are associated with. The author status as "King of Scandi noir" and popularity immediately connect the novel with a specific genre. This message is further amplified by iconography typically associated with crime fiction. By such means, the reader is informed that this book is not simply Macbeth retold, but Macbeth retold as a very specific and recognisable type of crime novel – a Jo Nesbø novel (6-9).

Another consequence of calling attention to an author's name is the subsequent reference to their body of works. To stick with the Norwegian crime-fiction writer, convergences between Nesbø's work and Macbeth are typically seen to revolve around the darkness of setting and atmosphere. Chevalier, who chose Othello, shows a particular interest for the representation of the outsiders in her novels. Jacobson has had long-career interest in Jewishness and Jewish identity. St. Aubyn, who rewrote King Lear, has been particularly

interested in dysfunctional families. As already mentioned, Tyler's depictions of family life and domestic environments are central to her work. Instead, fairy tale, myth and magic are typical traits of Winterson's works and that surreal energy is also palpable in her The Gap of Time (6-7). All this helps to frame the text before the reading experience and to guide the expectations of what it is going to be found in the text. The Penguin Random House seems to have made creative use of popular conceptions of the modern authors evoked by their very names to reframe, revise and re-energise Shakespeare's work for new audiences and grant success with the author's affectionate readers and hoping to reach an even wider audience.

Although each author did actually achieve some success within their own adaptation, what I find most disappointing is that a project that aimed to see the Bard's plays retold for a contemporary readership, selected writers who are not ultimately representative of all that contemporary society has to offer (Scovel, 2017) and did not take into account the fact that King Shakespeare now rules over an Empire of readers or spectators. Plays like *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *The Tempest* bear considerable weight in terms of racial concerns, identity issues and postcolonial politics. In some cases, the choice of writers on part of Penguin Random House has led to fascinating twists on Shakespeare's works, namely Jacobson's parallel Shylocks in *Shylock is My Name*. The pairing of the author with *The Merchant of Venice* seemed an obvious solution, and it was interesting to see how he could reinterpret the play and rework its themes given his Jewish background and from the point of view of an historically informed 21st century perspective. In the case of *Othello*, instead, it would have been interesting to see the play retold from the point of view of an author not belonging to a dominant racial group. Even if Tracy Chevalier explained that she was inspired by her own experience as an outsider at an all-black school, this cannot be compared to the systematic racism faced by global minorities. A new version of a play like *Othello* by a writer belonging to a marginalized group would have added value to the series. To mention another example, given the colonial problems such as the conquest and government of native populations and the assimilation of people from different cultural and religious traditions underlying the text of *The Tempest*, it would have been interesting to get a postcolonial take on Shakespeare's play.

These are just two examples that can be made considering the impact and the importance that Shakespeare had outside the Western part of the world and English-speaking countries, which was totally left out in the project. Sadly, with no hint at future releases, Nesbø's *Macbeth* seems to be the last and final chapter of the series. The project had much potential, but with its Western-centric approach and neglect of the post-colonial sphere, it seems that the publishing house decided to play safe and avoid risks. Given the growing interest in studying Shakespeare

through different cultural traditions (Kapadia 1997, 34), a project centering only on Europe and the North America seems to neglect a huge part of the discourse. Cross-cultural productions and adaptations challenge Shakespeare's status as a British poet and icon; "Shakespeare's global pedigree" (Kapadia 1997, 5) must be foregrounded. In light of our richly cross-cultural knowledge, the reach of Shakespeare beyond the United Kingdom and the United States is not to be ignored; "many different cultures have found, and continue to find, Shakespeare's plots and characters adaptable to their interests and concerns producing a long and rich history of Shakespeare performance all over the world." (Hackett 2013, 197). In non-Anglophone countries, his works have been cherished, adapted, and performed for centuries, leaving an indelible mark on literature, theater, and even popular culture. There, Shakespeare's texts are usually read and performed in translation, having undergone a process of interlingual, socio-cultural reworking, itself a type of adaptation (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 5).

Shakespeare as global export is unavoidably connected with trade and colonialism. In the wake of colonial conquests, Shakespeare's plays became emblematic of the English language and Western cultural supremacy. Colonizers leveraged his works as tools for cultural assimilation, using them to propagate English language proficiency and instill Western values among indigenous populations. Performances of Shakespeare first appeared in India as a means of entertaining homesick colonialists, then became part of the education system with the aim to cultivate unrefined natives which as an important component of the colonial mission. At the same time, un-English adaptation proliferated since Shakespeare was being transformed and translated into local languages – across Africa, East Asia and India (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 9-10). Having thrown off all the rots of colonialism, ex colonies have kept Shakespeare. "Shakespeare had been translated into myriad far-flung languages from Welsh to modern Greek to Urdu and Bengal; in every quarter of the globe to which civilized life has penetrated Shakespeare's power is recognized" (Marcus 17, 7).

With modern media making him accessible in a huge variety of platforms all around the globe, Shakespeare is now more global than he has ever been. "Global Shakespeare is not just a story of history and legacy but a vibrant world of inventive performances and afterlives" (Bickley and Stevens 2021, 10). Re-fashioning and re-constructions, especially when occur across boundaries marked by differences I language, geography, religion and culture, offer unique moments that assert the malleability and permeability of borders" (Kapadia 1997, 37). However, it would be a mistake to assert that all cultures values Shakespeare's works equally. Shakespeare is distinct in different parts of the globe, speaking different voices, having a different history, responding to different stimuli. "Shakespeare is everywhere, but in different

colours and guises and very local, which is what gives it its distinctive strenght" (Trivedi, Chavarati, Motoashi 2021, 4).

Conclusion

The Hogarth Shakespeare project was an ambitious creative initiative and publishing enterprise that has reimagined seven of William Shakespeare's most celebrated plays for a contemporary audience. Launched in 2014 by Hogarth Press, the project commissioned renowned novelists, including Jeanette Winterson, Howard Jacobson, Margaret Atwood, and Jo Nesbø, to retell the Bard's works in their own unique styles and voices. The initial purpose was to rewrite the entire corpus of Shakespeare's plays, however, with no hint at future installments, the collection seems now to be concluded. The aim of the project was to breathe new life into the Bard's stories while retaining their essence. By inviting contemporary writers to reimagine these classics, the project has opened up Shakespeare's works to a wider audience and demonstrated the enduring power of his storytelling. The Hogarth Shakespeare project has played a significant role in bringing Shakespeare's works to life for contemporary audiences and, most importantly, has proved to be yet another testament to the enduring relevance and adaptability of Shakespeare's storytelling. The skillful writers that make up the Hogarth creative team of authors lead readers back to the worlds of Shakespeare's characters to let them discover different and new places, but with which they still have familiarity. What is more, projects like this one, can be considered as yet another challenge to the notion of the notion of priority or of authority of the play, since the novels may be accessed before the play is read or experienced in the theatre. *The Gap of Time* reimagines *The Winter's Tale* in the aftermath of 2008 economic crises keeping in world where technology has blurred the lines between reality and illusion; *Shylock is my Name* explores the enduring complexities of anti-Semitism through a contemporary retelling of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*; *Hag-seed* is set in a contemporary prison where the inmates work together on a musical production of *The Tempest* under the guidance of the former theatrical director Felix; *New Boy* is set in a 1970s suburban Washington schoolyard where Osei Kokote is the new student at a predominantly white school; *Dunbar*, set in the cutthroat world of media and finance, is a modern retelling of *King Lear* in which the author offers a dark and compelling exploration of power, betrayal and human frailty; *Macbeth* follows the tale of Inspector Macbeth, a hardened detective haunted by his violent past and a man driven by ambition and fueled by a thirst for power, is drawn into a dangerous game of manipulation and deceit when he is approached by Hecate, a mysterious figure who prophesizes his rise to the top of the police force.

2016 *Vinegar Girl* by Anne Tyler proves to be a little gem within the collection. Set in Baltimore, a favourite setting of the author, it is the story of Kate Battista, who after being expelled from university, goes back to live at his father's house and, despite working as a part time teacher, has no exact plan for her future. Being less conventionally feminine and having no direction in life, she feels extremely inadequate most of the time and sometimes desperate to fit in. She feels the pressure of the social expectations of her time that would like her to fit into predefined boxes. Things start to get even worse her father, Dr. Louis Battista, wants to force her into a sham marriage to his laboratory assistant, the Russian Pyotr Shcherbakov, whom she barely knows, to grant him a visa and allow him to stay in the United States. The idea of the sham marriage is Tyler's clever stratagem to create a modern version for the marital circumstances of the play which works successfully in the novel. Despite being a story with apparently light tone and undercutting humour, the novel remains misogynistic and a story of how men abuse women. Despite avoiding the extreme, physical violence of the play, in the novel there are several examples of dominance and abuse according to a twenty-first century sensibility. It is definitely the adaptation that most successfully addresses problematic gender politics within the series. Tyler's modern revisitation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, with its themes of gender politics and social expectations, is the proof of how Shakespeare's works are still relevant today and still speak to us. It is the proof of how *The Taming of The Shrew* still has something to share with a twenty-first century young woman.

The adaptation of past literary texts is not a new artistic endeavour. Writing back to the past has increasingly come about as a challenge in which new texts engage in a dialogue with Shakespeare's work. So that today we do not have only one image of Shakespeare, but a mosaic of different "Shakespeares" in which his plays assume new and deeper meaning. As Ian Kott claims in his 1964 *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, "great works of art have an autonomous existence, independent of the intention and personality of their creators and also of the circumstances of the time of their creation" (xi). Every age has managed to create its own Shakespeare and was able to make his plays resonate with the present; "every historical period finds in him what is looking for and what it wants to see" (Kott 1964, 5). In this respect, the Hogarth Shakespeare project was able to give us back an image of Shakespeare that is true for our own time. Choosing different media and modes of expressions, with their specific generic conventions, other than the original dramatic mode requires a lot of artistic and creative experimentation. The postmodern collapsing of generic restrictions has enabled Shakespeare to migrate much more comprehensively across previously sealed boundaries, into popular genres (Holderness 2021, vi). From stage productions to film adaptations, musical renditions to graphic

novels, Shakespeare's plays have been reinterpreted and reimagined in a multitude of ways. The Hogarth novels will undoubtedly consolidate the status of the Shakespearean novel as a global phenomenon for the twenty-first century. Fiction writers now can imitate and adapt Shakespeare's plays as easily as he was able to adapt the novel into drama. "Over four centuries, Shakespeare's plays have undergone some remarkable transformations, but none so striking as the gradual evolution of the novel form to a point where Shakespeare, poet and playwright of yesterday, could be so readily and successfully incorporated into the fiction of today" (Holderness 2021, vi). Hopefully, this project will inspire future initiatives and Shakespeare's legacy will continue to resonate for centuries to come.

Despite having produced some valuable novels and being a successful initiative offering much to give thought to and proving the enduring power of Shakespeare, one can not help but noticing something lacking in the project. What I have found most disappointing is that a project, that aimed to see the Bard's plays retold for a contemporary readership, selected writers who are not ultimately representative of all that contemporary society has to offer and totally neglects the global reach of the Bard. Plays like *The Merchant of Venice, Othello* and *The Tempest* bear considerable weight in terms of racial concerns, identity issues and postcolonial politics. It would have been interesting to see the play retold from the point of view of an author not belonging to a dominant racial group or to a cultural background completely different to that of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare as global export is irretrievably connected with trade and colonialism. Colonizers used Shakespeare's plays as tools for cultural assimilation and examples of cultural superiority, using them to propagate English language proficiency and instill Western values among indigenous populations. However, despite being utilized as a tool of cultural imperialism, Shakespeare's works also carried within them themes of power, justice, oppression, and resistance that could resonate with the colonized. Not only was it a weapon used for colonial conquest, but after the colonial era, his texts were returned to create and shape the identities of the natives. Accordingly, Shakespeare's plays were actively adapted and reinterpreted to fit diverse contexts. Cross-cultural translations, appropriation and adaptation continue to modern day, creating a long history of Shakespeare outside Britian so that each country embraces a Shakespeare of their own and reads the plays through their own particular experiences. Shakespeare's work is not as a relic of colonial past, but a living, breathing source of inspiration. His works continue to been cherished, translated, and performed for generations, leaving an indelible mark on local literature, theater, and even popular culture. Given the growing interest in studying Shakespeare through different cultural traditions (Kapadia 1997,

34), a project centering only on Europe and the North America seems to neglect a huge part of the discourse. Sadly, with no hint at future releases, Nesbø's *Macbeth* seems to be the last and final chapter of the series. The project was successful in keeping Shakespeare's stories going and make them available to a twenty-first century audience, which was its first aim, however there was still much more to give. With its Western-centric approach and neglect of the post-colonial sphere, it seems that the publishing house decided to play safe and avoid risks.

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