

2019 Seminar Abstracts: Shakespeare and Cultural Appropriation, Part Two
Vanessa Corredera, Andrews University
Geoffrey Way, Washburn University

Respondents: Elizabeth Rivlin, Clemson University

“Political Appropriations” Group:

Sabina Amanbayeva
Oklahoma City University

Popular Shakespeare in the 1960s Soviet Union: Vladimir Vysotsky’s *Hamlet*

My paper focuses on the “Thaw” period in Soviet history, the period approximately from 1960s to 1980s, after the death of Stalin and the relative liberalization of Soviet society. The period was also marked by a resurgence in Soviet Shakespeare studies and the move away from the social realist approaches that dominated the field in 1950s. Specifically, I am interested in the problem of popular Shakespeare in the “Thaw” period, especially as embodied in the figure of Vladimir Vysotsky. Vysotsky was a cult figure in popular Soviet culture – a popular singer and author of his own lyrics, a prominent theater and film actor. His voice and his songs captivated millions of Soviet people, but interestingly, it is the figure of Hamlet, whom he played for the first time in 1971 in Theater on Taganka (a major Moscow theater), that fused his stage personality with the Shakespearean character, as his theater group interpreted the latter. This seemingly perfect combination between the actor and his role led the audience to associate Hamlet with Vysotsky, not vice versa: for example, Vysotsky was buried in Hamlet’s costume after his death, and at the opening of his performance, he read a poem “Hamlet” by Boris Pasternak, which further cemented the identification of the actor with the role.

There are several interesting problems that Vysotsky’s cultural appropriation of Hamlet raises: first, in Shakespeare adaptation studies, the name of Shakespeare still evokes a cult-like status, and the assumption that an adaptation can interpret a Shakespeare’s text, but Shakespeare still remains in some sense the “original.” I am interested in the challenge that Vysotsky’s own iconic status as a pop star brought to Shakespeare. The fissures between popular and academic cultures in the Soviet society of the 1960s became, arguably, more evident as a result of Vysotsky’s role. Another problem that Vysotsky’s *Hamlet* raises is the problem of “re-adaptation” – I borrow the term from a similar concept of “re-translation” in Translation Studies – or the idea that a “re-adaptation” of a classic, such as Shakespeare, follows a different trajectory than the translation of a work that has never been adapted before. Accordingly, the paper will demonstrate how Vysotsky’s interpretation of Hamlet is based on the tradition of previous Soviet adaptations and interpretations of *Hamlet*, rather than on some ineffable sense of the original.

Natalia Khomenko
York University

Comrade Rutland: Anti-Stratfordian Conversations in Early Soviet Russia

The entry dedicated to William Shakespeare in the Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia (The Smaller Soviet Encyclopedia, 1931) opens by stating that, while “traditionally” the man from

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Stratford-upon-Avon was identified as the famous playwright, doubts about his authorship claims have been percolating for centuries. Indeed, according to the entry, some young aristocratic courtier—such as Roger Manners, the 5th Earl of Rutland—makes for a much more likely candidate.

This relatively circumspect comment on the authorship problem marks the decline of the early Soviet ideological anti-Stratfordianism, officially promoted throughout the 1920s by the Commissariat of Enlightenment, the central administrative organ for cultural governance. In periodicals, public talks, and scholarly publications produced in Soviet Russia between 1917 and the early 1930s, Rutland was the favoured candidate for authorship. He was suited for this role both by his humanist education and his presumably passionate rebellion against the monarchy (i.e. participation in the Essex uprising), which was used to position him as a vaguely proto-revolutionary figure.

My paper discusses the rise and eventual fall of the early Soviet anti-Stratfordianism as an intensely ideological process of appropriating foreign cultural capital for the purposes of post-revolutionary cultural building. By attributing authorship to Rutland, early Soviet thinkers were able to re-frame the English Renaissance as the originary point for revolutionary struggle that would later lead to the October Revolution. Simultaneously, accepting anti-Stratfordianism as the official policy allowed a rehabilitation of Shakespearean drama, which then could be unmoored from the vulgar considerations of profit and positioned as a product of politically progressive humanist thought.

Caroline Lion
Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham

Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice* as Post-Holocaust Prophetess

This paper is founded on 20th century scholarship such as that of Jan Kott and Ruby Cohn. It agrees that the appropriation of Shakespeare is inevitable. It also agrees with Douglas Lanier that appropriation turns into an act of becoming, or a ‘rhizome’, and thereby places the Shakespeare text on an equal playing field with interpretation.

This paper argues however that the Shakespeare rhizome can and must interact with other rhizomes. I will call this interaction the double rhizome theory. The history of interpretation inherent in Shakespeare scholarship is clearly not singular. Many other cultures and religions also create intricate if not the same structures of interpretation which also need to be recognized. When two rhizomes meet (or hit head on) such as the Hebrew Bible (for example) with Shakespeare, I contend that the result is synthesis. The agency of becoming becomes intensified. The desire of becoming (I contend) causes a continual state of synthesizing. This agency of synthesis realizes itself in all parts of the play, including in the characters.

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In other words, while this paper agrees with Lanier that within a single rhizome there is not synthesis, when two rhizomes meet, synthesis does occur and represents itself in the agency of the characters.

This paper therefore is based on the argument that any action which involves the transformation of appropriation to a future synthesizing of cultures is a positive action and one worth serious consideration. The theory of a double rhizome when considering cultural appropriation therefore is also worthy of consideration.

I disagree however that simply more appropriation will directly lead to this compelling new paradigm of universal synthesis. Much appropriation is harmful. It forces even greater schisms between cultures. As unfolded by Jonathan Dollimore, appropriation can create misunderstandings which (I contend) can fuel devastating conflicts. These conflicts and the related persecution are then perpetuated by those who grow to misunderstand even themselves. We have inherited this political reality and it cannot be glossed over.

This paper will therefore focus on how to transform harmful appropriation into beneficial appropriation through a double rhizome theory as explained above. While borrowing from *The Merchant of Venice*, it will ultimately demonstrate (that which Shakespeare intended or so I claim) the possibility of a new world paradigm, one which can lead us beyond the corruption and violence so prevalent in the present day.

Katherine Romack
University of West Florida

"I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue": Royalist appropriations of *Lucrece*

My paper examines the competing political representations of the story of Lucrece during the interregnum. In the 1640s and 1650s the figure of Tarquin is regularly invoked in both republican and royalist newsbooks, broadsides, sermons, commonplace books, and anthologies. I am interested in identifying the specific qualities of Shakespeare's poetic rendition of the story that prompted royalists, contra their republican contemporaries, to turn to Shakespeare in their recuperation of a classical story about tyranny, rape, and the birth of a republic. Writers such as Marchamont Nedham, John Milton, and the anonymous G.H. consistently pass over Shakespeare in favor of Livy in their repeated alignment of both Charles I and II with Tarquin. John Quarles's 1655 edition of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* is the most notable royalist attempt to appropriate Shakespeare in the interest of subverting the commonplace conflation of Stewart with Tarquin. Quarles reframes Shakespeare's original by replacing the dedication and appending a rejoinder to the poem entitled *The Banishment of Tarquin: Or, The Reward of Lust*. Significantly, Quarles's poem focuses entirely on the psychological ruminations of Tarquin, reducing Lucrece—who, in Shakespeare, offers a poignant commentary on the political appropriation of her private, unrepresentable, suffering—to a silent emblem of chastity. In a move that further erodes the attachment of Lucrece to a republican founding myth, while paradoxically evoking the

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dangerous specter of a feminine representation, revenge is exacted by a flock of nightingales, led by Philomela, that pluck out Tarquin's eyes after he falls dead, ravished by their song.

“Current Stage Appropriations” Group:

Mail Marques De Azevedo
Centro Universitário Campos de Andrade

Emilia: a XXIst Century Globe Production Featuring Shakespeare's Dark Lady.

A representative review of playwright Morgan Lloyd Malcolm's *Emilia* (2018) read: “[...] speculative history of Shakespeare's lover brims with wit and rage.” Commissioned by the directory of the Globe to write about Emilia Bassano – a woman remembered mainly as Shakespeare's potential lover, but who achieved the stupendous feat of having her work published – the young writer delved enthusiastically into the scarce research material available. By republishing Bassano's poems with the play, she hoped, in her own words, “to give them exposure through a different lens.” It is our aim in this work to examine how M.L.M. succeeds in bringing to public attention not merely Bassano's poetry but the entire sociocultural context of her writings. It is divided, therefore, into the study of three main aspects in the play: 1) the male-female relationships as a reflex of women's social inferiority; 2) the appropriation of historical Shakespeare as a character, in the role of mouthpiece for Elizabethan society's rules of female behavior. Going a step further, how the title-character Emilia is driven to distraction by the revelation that her lover has used in his plays words and exchanges in their moments of intimacy; 3) the consequences of xenophobia and misogyny. Starting from anthropologist Clifford Geertz's idea that culture is best seen as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions – for the governing of behavior. we establish parallels between the application of such mechanisms in *Emilia* and in two other literary works: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and passages in *Sir Thomas More* attributed to Shakespeare.

Dr. Anna Stegh Camati
Centro Universitário Campos Andrade

Nós Do Morro Appropriates Shakespeare's *Dream* from an Intercultural Perspective

Most Brazilian theatre ensembles working on a collaborative basis tend to subordinate the Shakespearean universe to local issues and values. From the 1st Shakespeare Forum in Brazil in 1997, the theatre group Nós do Morro [We from the Hillside], based in the Vidigal favela (Rio de Janeiro) and led by Guti Fraga, has developed an intense relationship with members of the Royal Shakespeare Company. In their first Shakespearean production, retitled *A Midsummer Night's Dream: an Intrusion into the World of Shakespeare* by Nós do Morro (2004), directed by Fernando Mello da Costa, the troupe established a parallel between the Shakespearean rustic amateur actors and the waste collectors, characters from their previous production *Burro sem rabo* (Donkey Without a Tail) presented in 2003. The waste collectors descend the hillside and invade the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, an elitist downtown theatre where the production

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took place, to kidnap the Shakespearean artisans in order to incarnate their roles themselves. This naïve device symbolically alludes to an act of cultural appropriation of the group, expressing their intent to approach Shakespeare according to their own aesthetic agenda. In the light of influential critics such as Oswald de Andrade, Silviano Santiago, Patrice Pavis and Peter Burke, I intend to investigate the aesthetic options of this intercultural production which, on the one hand, denounces the material poverty of the geographical context in which the group is inserted, and on the other showcases the luxuriousness of costumes displayed at pageants of the samba schools during Carnival.

Leticia C. Garcia
Emerson College

Much Ado About México

Shakespeare's plays on the world stage are often construed as a source of legitimation of cultural value. We are already aware that the canon is endlessly transposable. However, it is only transposable when done with care and concern. Primarily, this essay will identify how Shakespeare's Globe October 2017 production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, set in the revolutionary world of México, presents a cultural exchange levied through unequal power relations on a systemic level. In this case, cultural appropriation is not cultural appreciation. This essay will address why this particular *Much Ado* is so problematic. The answer is both straightforward and complex: at the core of cultural appropriation are unequal power dynamics and violent historical contexts. As a scholar whose research focuses on the intersection of diversity and culture in Mexican Shakespeare, and one who deploys Shakespeare as a signifier for the colonial project, I am compelled to mine our contemporary contexts as the basis for a more critical relationship with Shakespeare and the concept of appropriation.

Cristiane Busato Smith
Arizona State University
and
Liana de Camargo Leão
Universidade Federal do Paraná

**“Sir, you’re robb’d”:
Iago and the Ethics and Aesthetics of Adapting Shakespeare in Brazil**

Shakespeare's presence in Brazil has never been a matter of passive transmission – it involves transformations that rework the source text. The case of the musical *Otelo da Mangueira* (2006-2007) takes transformation to a more sophisticated level in that it is not a straightforward “rewriting” of *Othello*. Relocated to a Rio de Janeiro favela in the 1940s, *Otelo da Mangueira* cannily reclaims a new identity for Shakespeare's tragedy in terms of genre, style, geography, history and language. Engaged in telling the history of Mangueira (the first samba school in Rio de Janeiro), a whole “new” product is created, in a dynamic “robbing” process that reinvents the notions of “original” and “copy”. While traditional samba songs dialogue with Shakespeare's

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theme of love, jealousy and betrayal, they primarily celebrate the vibrant culture of samba and carnival in Rio de Janeiro. Shakespeare's text was translated and adapted by Gustavo Gasparani, who also plays the role of Iago. Gasparani is in fact "an absolute Johannes Factotum": playwright, actor, director, historian, samba musician and talented dancer. This paper will focus on Gasparani-Iago's improvisational approach to the Shakespearean playtext, treating it as his own. Much as the iconic figure of the cannibal in the concept of cultural anthropophagy (which originated in the 1920's in Brazilian Modernismo), Gasparani's self-empowering consumption of Shakespeare will pick the cherries and altogether transform them in something (almost) entirely different. Arguably the most representative music adaptation of Shakespeare in Brazil, *Otelo da Mangueira* sets the bar high for future performances through its resourceful experimental nature.

"Shakespeare, Cultural Appropriation, and Race" Group:

Amy L. Bolis

PhD Candidate: University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

***Appropriating Othello: Keith Hamilton Cobb's
American Moor and Questions of Black Masculinity***

This paper explores the relationship between Keith Hamilton Cobb's one man show *American Moor* and the term cultural appropriation. It attempts to answer the question, where do plays like *American Moor*, which explicitly adapt neither the plot nor characters of Shakespearean drama, fit into our current discourse about cultural appropriation? Is extensively referencing Shakespeare and *Othello* in service of a frank discussion about perceptions of black masculinity in America enough to constitute *American Moor* as an appropriation of *Othello*? Are terms such as appropriation or adaptation the right words to describe the kind of work that Cobb is doing in *American Moor*? Ultimately, *American Moor* seeks to inform white audiences about race relations in the United States from the perspective of its black protagonist, using Shakespeare's cultural capital as a starting point from which to launch this conversation. By problematizing the way in which *Othello* has been staged and drawing attention to the types of stereotypes that Othello's character continues to perpetuate, should Cobb's play be classified as an appropriation of Shakespeare, or as something else entirely? Is simply talking about Shakespeare, *Othello*, and the character of Othello at length in *American Moor* enough to constitute cultural appropriation? How does Cobb mobilize Shakespeare's popularity to serve his discussion of black masculinity, and is this form of mobilization appropriation?

Elizabeth Charlebois

St. Mary's College of Maryland

The Multiple Appropriations of Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed*

Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold* (2016) is the fourth novel in the Hogarth Shakespeare series that reworks Shakespeare's plays in a contemporary context, a project launched to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Derived from one of

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Prospero's denigrating names for Caliban in *The Tempest*, the novel's title raises expectations that Atwood's adaptation will participate in the tradition of Shakespearean adaptations that recenter the narrative on marginalized or vilified characters by privileging Caliban's perspective. But on the contrary, Atwood's Prospero, Felix Phillips, overwhelmingly dominates the narrative. The ousted artistic director of a commercially successful Shakespeare festival, Felix goes into hiding and, under the alias "Mr. Duke," directs a performance of *The Tempest* at a men's prison as a means of exacting revenge on his brother Tony. Felix, Atwood's protagonist, is at the emotional and narrative center, while the inmate actor, Leggs who plays Caliban in Felix's production isn't any more developed than any other member of the cast, making the title of book seem baffling and misleading. However, rather than being represented in a single character the novel's Caliban is dispersed and refracted across the cast of inmate actors. The voice of Caliban is heard through the play in the voices of the inmates, who, according to Felix's rules, are only permitted to use curse words if they come from the text of Shakespeare's play. While the inmates' curses serve as an implicit sign of their resistance to Felix, the hip-hop songs that they write and insert into the play operate as more overt resistance to Felix's megalomania and artistic power that Atwood both critiques and parodies. As someone who has taught Shakespeare and worked with inmate actors through St. Louis-based Prison Performing Arts, in this paper I will explore the ethical questions raised by Atwood's adaptation and related appropriations that, in addition to *The Tempest*, include Shakespeare-in-prison programs and the deployment of hip hop in that context.

Ronan Hatfull
University of Warwick

**'Do That Funky Moor Thing':
The Ethics of Shakespearean Ad-rap-tation**

In this paper, I will critique the tradition of incorporating rap music and hip-hop culture into Shakespearean performance and, by focusing on rappers and theatre-makers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, will analyse the apparent malleability of hip-hop with Shakespeare's language, themes and specific characters, as appropriated by white artists and re-appropriated by black artists. My principal case study is the Reduced Shakespeare Company, a white, three-man comedy troupe, who have created a number of rap parodies during their thirty-seven year history. Through personal interviews with the writers and access to the unpublished 2018 revision of their first play, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (abridged) (1987), I will explore their reasons for omitting the sketch 'Rap Othello' from this most recent version.

I will reflect on the ethical considerations behind parodying Shakespeare through the medium of hip-hop, particularly by these artists, who self-reflexively described themselves in their 1995 BBC radio series as 'three white boys ripping off black culture', and the ramifications of a post-Hamilton world, where the fusion of hip-hop, Shakespeare and theatre has become a legitimate and recognised genre. I will therefore analyse more neoteric examples of Shakespearean 'ad-rap-tation', a term coined by the Q Brothers, whose production *Othello: The Remix* was commissioned as part of the 2012 Globe-to-Globe Festival. Finally, I will explore the process of

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re-appropriation by black artists such as the rapper and self-proclaimed ‘Ghetto Othello’ Nas, the comedy duo Key and Peele, and the hip-hop educators Akala and Devon Glover, aka The Sonnet Man.

Lawrence Manley
Yale University

**“This thing of darkness I don’t acknowledge mine”:
 The Problem of Caliban and Miranda in the Work of David Dabydeen**

The worlds of pain unleashed in the first confrontation of Caliban with Prospero and Miranda (*The Tempest*, 1.2.321-374) have been elaborated in an extensive body of “Calibanic” adaptations and postcolonial discourse dealing with problems of empire and race. The role of Miranda in this confrontation—and especially the problematic Folio speech heading that attributes lines 350-361 of the confrontation to her—has brought problems of gender into the conversation, quite prominently so since the 1990s.

I think it will be worth introducing the Caliban-Miranda dyad into our discussion of appropriation, partly because it seems worth asking where we are with recent adaptations built around that pair but more importantly because this particular dyad may raise ethical questions about appropriation in circumstances involving the cultural force of race and gender. In what ways (to use the terms of James O. Young) might “subject appropriation” of the painful scenario between Caliban and Miranda risk giving offending or doing harm to others? Could there be additional risks of content appropriation arising from possible asymmetries in what Cristy Desmet labeled the “sharing and contested ownership” of a resource like Shakespeare? And what are the reparative potentials of the Caliban-Miranda dyad when it comes to sharing and contesting ownership of Shakespeare on questions involving race and gender?

I will explore these questions with reference to the Calibanic writings of David Dabydeen and his efforts to negotiate problems of race and gender across two decades, from his 1984 collection *Slave Song* (and the particularly problematic poem “The Canecutter’s Song”) through the Caliban-Miranda love poems of *Coolie Odyssey* (1988), his essay “Hogarth and the Canecutter” (2000), and the seeming retraction in the Postscript to 2005 edition of *Slave Song*, where he writes, “This thing of darkness I don’t acknowledge mine.”