

**Reconstructed closing remarks, “Shakespeare as Global Cultural Heritage”,
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When, as Director of Global Shakespeare, I am asked the question: “What is Global Shakespeare?”, I usually respond that I haven’t a clue. In part, the answer is disingenuous, but it has a point. Ludwig Wittgenstein opens his *Blue and Brown Books* with the question, “What is the meaning of a word?” This is an apparently conventional move, since it repeats an enquiry that philosophers and linguists have been pursuing for centuries. But instead of answering the question, Wittgenstein responds by suggesting that we “attack” it. We should attack it because the question itself forces us to provide inadequate answers to it. Its grammar keeps reiterating the problem the question is meant to resolve. As Wittgenstein puts it, “The question ... produces in us a mental cramp. We feel we point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something ... a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it”.²

By repeating the question “What is Global Shakespeare?” we prolong our “mental cramp” by repeatedly looking for a “thing” that isn’t there—or at least, isn’t there as a *thing*. That is not to say that the phrase “Global Shakespeare” does no work at all. There are phenomena that fall, more or less comfortably, under the concept. And in her talk yesterday, Sonia Massai sought to relieve us of our cramp by suggesting that rather than thinking of Global Shakespeare as a field (Bourdieu), we should consider it under the concept of network (Latour) (which has some affinity with Douglas Lanier’s notion of a rhizome (Deleuze). I responded by suggesting that Sonia was really talking about two different networks: the network of Global Shakespeare scholars and practitioners, a proportion of whom are in this room, on the one hand, and the activities and practices involving Shakespeare across the globe—always on the move, never stable, never reducible to any notion of an “original” or “authentic”

Shakespeare. The problem is to bring these two networks into contact or alignment with each other.

I also indicated what seemed to me to be a further problem. Acknowledging that all metaphors or analogies never completely comprehend the putative objects they attempt to grasp, that they may *always* be challenged, I suggested that one of the challenges to the metaphor of a network is that it suggests something that is perhaps a little too static, and that doesn't account for differences between centre and periphery or inequalities of power. My observation seemed to be supported by the fact that in his response to Sonia, Gil Harris's used the world map behind her [she was on Skype] as an example of a network. I'm happy to accept Sonia's affirmation that a network as she understands it *does* encompass movement and difference. I would like to investigate those possibilities. But I want to focus for now on one of the two networks implied in Sonia's talk: the one that encompasses us, in this room today.

Stephen Greenblatt's participation in this workshop prompts me to consider how the network of New Historicist scholarship that has dominated Shakespeare studies for at least four decades established itself as such a powerful and influential force in the academy. The crucial thing, it seems to me, is that the New Historicism offered a way of producing new, fresh, surprising, and even subversive readings of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It did so by offering an alternative to the decontextualized close reading of the New Criticism, on the one hand, and the quest for the causal historical explanations of traditional Marxist criticism, on the other.³ But, as we all know, Shakespeare scholars, at least in North America, have long been demanding something to replace the New Historicism, whose method, politics, entrenchment of the canonical Shakespeare, repeated in monograph after monograph and, more significantly, in a multitude of PhD dissertations, have grown "tired with iteration".⁴ Queer Shakespeare offers a radical questioning of settled assumptions, especially since it has extended its initial focus on sexuality to broader instabilities, but it has failed to achieve a general acceptance within the network of

Shakespeare studies.⁵ An answer of what can replace historicism that seems to be emerging is Global Shakespeare. The problem is that to many it is less a new method or field of study than a bandwagon.

We have all praised, without reserve in the past two days, the need to destabilise and to release radically different, volatile, unexpected and unpredictable energies from what Derrida calls that “thing” Shakespeare: “moving ‘in the manner of a ghost, ... it inhabits without residing’ ... lend[ing] itself to an infinite series on permutations and yet remains irreducible to, and in excess of, each of these permutations”.⁶ But the academic network I am focussing on requires a certain degree a *relative stability* in its object and in its method. The New Historicism provided both and more: in the Shakespeare text, the resources of the archive, and in its analogical method coupled with the notion of the “circulation of social energy” that allowed the text to be connected to the archive in transformative and surprising ways. (Approaches contemporary with the New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Feminism, depend upon a similar relative stability of the text, mobilized by their respective *political* agendas, and even Deconstruction requires a certain stability of the text in order to reveal its fundamental instability when it is read against itself.) It is, I think, with this relative stability in mind that Sonia suggested some years ago that Global Shakespeare is a *methodology*.

If Global Shakespeare is not a *thing*, then, and if the concept of a network appears not to give full recognition to its continuous movement and instability, then how can we acknowledge its volatility, newness, its transgression of boundaries, its proliferation, and its uncanniness, while preserving the *relative stability* that we require as a network to do our work? How do we acknowledge Douglas McQueen-Thompson’s wonderful suggestion that Shakespeare introduces all the surprise, uncertainty and volatility of a pirate attack? I’m not at all sure. One thing that I do believe is that the extension of the network to include people whose primary aim is not the study of Shakespeare but the performance, production, proliferation and practical deconstruction. An example of which we saw in the performance of the *Ur-*

Hamlet by Ruben Polendo and the Theater Mitu last night, will make our network much more receptive to different ways of doing things with Shakespeare. This workshop is a preliminary building of a new and smarter room, to go back to Sonia's talk yesterday. But if we also go back to Madhavi Menon's talk on desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it should teach us to ask what it is we want when we pursue Global Shakespeare or, as Gil reminded us, Global Shakespeares.

Stephen Greenblatt was explicit about his desire. He wanted to talk with the dead. He set about creating the right conditions, and was followed by a multitude of students and scholars in that conversation. I suspect that the things that we desire are different and divergent, and that often we don't quite know what it is we want. This is perhaps one of the reasons why, despite our desire for radical newness, we keep erecting the walls that Madhavi lamented that keep us on the side of the familiar, known, and comfortable. Yesterday, however, Katherine Williams was one of the few in this group who was explicit about what she desires: in her argument that new uses of Shakespeare in the present and beyond English reveal aspects of the historical Shakespeare to which we have been oblivious or resistant (the dancing in the "*Zulu Macbeth*", *Umabatha*, for example, may remind us of the centrality and ubiquity of dancing on the early modern stage), she declared that she loves Shakespeare's text and sees Global Shakespeare as an opportunity to open up the fullness of that text.

I want to follow Stephen's example by suggesting that possibly one of our desire is to talk to others, well aware of the problematic, neo-connotations of the term). If that is what we want, then we should all make a real attempt to extend our conversations beyond the confines of the familiar, the known, and the comfortable. How we do that is the central challenge for the future.

For the moment, however, I am going to return to the impossible and perhaps foolhardy desire to offer yet another (inadequate) metaphor for Global Shakespeare, as open to piecemeal criticism and objection as any other, but which I hope will

stand alongside Sonia's suggestion of a network as a possible way of dealing with a specific problem that has surfaced at our workshop and elsewhere: the vexed problem of distinguishing among the translation, adaptation, or appropriation of Shakespeare, and the recent resurrection of the problem of an *ethics* of appropriation with regard to Shakespeare.⁷ Three weeks ago I delivered a paper on a panel on Global Shakespeare at the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) conference in Berlin, where I argued that we may transcend these questions (which, even in an "era of post-fidelity", as Douglas Lanier argues,⁸ always return us to some degree to the notion of origin, authenticity or fidelity), if we see Shakespeare as a *language*.

To talk about the Shakespeare Language (as in the "English Language") is not to talk about Shakespeare's language or even English. It is to conceive of Shakespeare along the lines of what Ferdinand de Saussure theorised as *la langue*: the language system that makes it possible to speak and write, and which is available to all speakers of the language to use in order to pursue their own ends in individual utterances he called *la parole*. Now there are many problems with the Saussurean conception of language, but his distinction sharpens my idea of Shakespeare as an enabling network of connections and meanings that are available for different uses in the way that any language is available to its speakers.

One of the problems with Saussure is his lack of interest in syntax, which is generally included in the individual uses of speech or *la parole* and is not part of the *object* of study, strictly speaking. But he does include some settled syntactical structures within the system. Expressions like "How do you do?" have a meaning as part of the enabling system, and so we can regard all the familiar Shakespeare strings, like "To be or not to be" or "If music be the food of love, play on" or "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" as part of the Shakespeare Language System (SLL), which release their meanings whenever they are mobilised in new contexts, and these may be as various as a deconstructed version of *Hamlet*, as graffiti on a wall in Verona or on a T-Shirt worn by a tourist. Most important, the Shakespeare

Language as I am conceiving it is not limited to *words*; it is not Shakespeare's texts as they are conventionally conceived, but rather the vast body of performances, films, images and words as they have been reiterated across space and time. So, to offer extremely simple, banal examples, the hand-held skull is as much a part of the SLL as Hamlet's famous soliloquy, as is the balcony that separates the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Although Saussure offers some help in fleshing out my analogy, his theory is much too static for my purposes. To see what I mean about the power of Shakespeare considered as a language, we need to turn to Mikhail Bakhtin, whose remarkable work on language has sadly waned, perhaps as a result of the hegemony of the New Historicism. I'm interested in four things. First, the availability of the Shakespeare Language to anyone who is acquainted with it and wants to use it for particular purposes, just as any anyone is with regard to a natural language. Second, the degree to which the Shakespeare Language is thoroughly heteroglossic: that is to say, it is filled with a chorus of other voices, both within what Shakespeare wrote, but also beyond the text, as it were, which resonate afresh every time "the text" is used afresh in a new place and time. Third, the fact that the Shakespeare Language is not circumscribed: like all languages, it has grown out of other tongues, places, stories, and semantic and cultural resonances (think of Shakespeare's promiscuous use of what is known as his "source material", which, as Gil and others have reminded us, go back thousands of years and to places of which Shakespeare may not even have dreamed), and it will continue to accumulate meaningful materials in the future. Finally, it cannot be policed by appeals to the rules of fidelity or authenticity. There are rules that govern language, but they can always be broken or bent to new creative purposes, and whatever language police set themselves up to prevent particular uses of the language for being illegitimate will be successful only locally and in a limited way. It is our task to resist their efforts.

I hope you will excuse my concluding my argument by reading the final paragraphs of my Berlin talk. They contain passages from Bakhtin that I have not memorised,

and so it is easier for me simply to repeat what I said then. The paper was called “Shakespeare at Home: Or How Global is Shakespeare Really?”

Bakhtin’s heteroglossic and dialogical view of language as utterance holds that all utterances—instances of language in use—are already always filled with their previous overtones: they resonate with the contexts, meanings, speakers, and intonations of all previous users and contexts. He writes: “Any utterance ... reveals to us many half-concealed or completely concealed words of others with varying degrees of foreignness ... The utterance appears to be furrowed with distant and barely audible echoes of changes of speech subjects and dialogic overtones ... Each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances”.⁹ If these resonances are available in ordinary languages, then they resound in multiple ways in the Shakespeare Language. The Shakespeare Language comes to new users filled with the meanings, intonations, resonances, and evaluations of four centuries and multiple cultural contexts, and it picks up new resonances every time it is used, in whatever way, medium, place, natural language, or time. Not all those resonances will be released or recognized on every occasion, but they are always there, *in potentiam*. This language brings us together, but like all languages *it can also drive us apart*.

The question of ethics, value and authority remain; but they are displaced onto the ways in which the Shakespeare Language is employed on each occasion of its use. The problematic notions of faithfulness, adaptation, and appropriation are, however, left behind. We may use the Language poorly or well, creatively or unimaginatively, beautifully or in ugly ways, to ethical purposes or for the sake of evil, just as we may use any language. But judgments about these uses will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis; they cannot be determined in advance by appeals to fidelity to a pre-existing text or set of meanings.

From this perspective, Shakespeare is less a black hole that swallows everything, as Gary Taylor has remarked, but rather an enormous, creative

resource available to everyone who wants to use it. Nor does it matter [I observed earlier in the talk] that [globally] *Hamlet* seems at the moment to speak more powerfully and frequently than *The Comedy of Errors*. The latter may well have its day, as Shakespeare is renewed in what Bakhtin calls *great time*:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogues of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future developments of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed forms (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. The problem of *great time*. (170)

Bakhtin's concept of great time frees us from obsessing about whether Shakespeare's meaning is preserved or released in any single performance, translation, adaptation, appropriation, or allusive reference, at any one moment or place. It shows that Shakespeare is not a singular case in the general movement and renewal of texts over time. But his works have become, for whatever reasons, the most universally recognized and mobilized repository of meaning across the globe. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are "universal" in the usual sense of the word. It means that they carry an enormous resonance, which grows with each new sounding, and which may be variously heard and re-released by anyone on the planet. That resonance will sound in different ways in different places and contexts: the homecoming festival of any single resonance, as Bakhtin puts it, is always

waiting in the wings—but it will always in some sense be strange, uncanny, and since we are in Berlin, we might say, *Unheimlich*—which, as both Freud and Antipholus of Syracuse teaches us, is, of course, also *Heimlich*.

Shakespeare is always equally at home and far away—for *everyone*.

[The following conclusion was not delivered orally because of a lack of time.]

This discovery of *our home* as unhomely or uncanny, strange and unfamiliar, returns me to Stephen's talk this morning. He illustrated the ways in which his "Cardenio Project" [by which he commissioned theatre groups from across the world to use the play *Cardenio*, written with the playwright Charles Mee, and the original Cervantes story, to fashion their *own* theatrical narratives] may prove instructive for our own quest for the elusive ghost of Global Shakespeare.¹⁰ Stephen ended with five points regarding the mobility of his text and its transformations and dislocations:

1. Literal mobility: the fact that all texts can literally cross boundaries (just as all language can and do).
2. Contact zones: the areas in which texts meet each other, resulting in various forms of resistance, assimilation, transformation, violence and translation (again, as language are bound to do).
3. Individual agency and structural constraint: the fact that with each movement and contact, there is an interplay between the capacity for individuals to forge something new and the structural constraints that they perforce must suffer, historically, ideologically, financially, personally, but also as the enabling condition for their agency, just as *la langue* constrains but also makes possible the creative uses of *la parole*. This relationship is one of *relative stability*.
4. Rootedness: the fact that every instance is deeply informed by local culture, politics and concerns (just as a language is shaped by its rootedness in the forms of life through which it is used).

5. Magical malleability: Stephen attributed such malleability to Shakespeare as a special quality of his texts, but such malleability is inherent in language itself.

Now I don't want to suggest that Stephen has pulled a methodology for Global Shakespeare out of his remarkable critical hat. But his five points do offer related nodes of relative stability around which we can direct our own inquiries about the mobility of the Shakespeare Language. To Stephen's five points, I would add a sixth: The Return. The driving purpose or desire of Stephen's reflection on the transplantation of *Cardenio* in the Cardenio Project is to discover something about the relation between what he sent out and what was taken and used: in some sense to return home, with the simultaneously surprising, delighted and disconcerting discovery that it is not quite as you thought you knew it. Possibly that is why the Croatian production which broke the rules by *not* transforming his original text but rather simply translated it and rooted it in local, contemporary (right-wing) Croatian concerns was for him the most disconcerting or *Unheimlich* experience of them all.

The Shakespeare Language as I've described it does not need our intervention or mediation to be used. People who wish to use Shakespeare—from the recent *Hamlet*-based Indian film *Haider*, to the Chinese productions of *King Lear* about which William Huizhu Sun told us this morning, to the single quotation from Shakespeare that comes at the very end of over two hours in the Turkish film, *Winter Sleep*—do not need to do it through Anglo-American Shakespeareans. Shakespeare offers a language in which all people can attempt to talk to each other. Being part of that multi-dimensional conversation (notwithstanding the forces within conversation, as in all conversations that seek to exercise power, violence and exclusion) is what Global Shakespeare is about. But it is not what it is.

¹ This is a reconstruction and elaboration of verbatim remarks delivered I the last session of the workshop. I have tried to reproduce what I said as accurately as possible, but have also included remarks I intended to include, but for which there was not enough time, and have elaborated briefly on some points.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1975), 1.

³ One of the first criticism of the New Historicism came from the Marxist critic, Walter Cohen, who condemned the New Historicism's "commitment to arbitrary connectedness" which "preclude a systematic survey of the available evidence" and renders impossible a "potentially Marxist concern with a hierarchy of causes and effects within society" (p. 38). In short, the New Historicism "describes historical difference" but it cannot, or will not, "explain historical change" (p. 33). See "Political Criticism of Shakespeare" in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor. London: Methuen, 1987).

⁴ I offer an account of why the New Historicism has persisted so doggedly in the US academic network in a paper delivered at the Shakespeare Association of America meeting in 2014, available here.

⁵ For a representative example of its range, see Madhavi Menon, *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2011).

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York; London: Routledge, 1994), 18; quoted in Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century* (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

⁷ See Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin, eds., *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁸ "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value", in Huang and Rivlin, *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, 22.

⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 93 and 91.

¹⁰ An account of the project may be found at this website: www.fas.harvard.edu/~cardenio/