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## Editorial

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Over the last few issues of the journal we've noted the increasing scholarly interest in cultural mobility (*pace* Stephen Greenblatt), and in particular, the ways in which popular entertainments have been appropriated and utilised as the *laissez-passer* of cultural emissaries. In this context perhaps circus has led the way, and its language of physical skills and sagacious animals have provided an instant passport which allowed participants to engage with each other. The search for a common language was relatively easily fulfilled. We should not, however, make the existence of a common language act as the criterion for a cultural artefact's accessibility. If this were to be the case, how would we explain the popularity of an Edwardian musical comedy in Japan or the extraordinary success of the world's most travelled playwright William Shakespeare in non-anglophone countries? Obviously the answers to such questions demand an understanding of the cultural conditions which welcomed such alien theatrical forms. Some of the answers may well be informed by three key aspects that underpin, for example, the discussion of a "topography of Asian Shakespeare" in Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan's edited volume *Shakespeare in Asia*.<sup>1</sup> They point to elements that may distinguish the acceptance of Shakespeare but which we may also find useful in their application to non-Shakespearean interventions—nationalist appropriation, colonial instigation and intercultural revision.<sup>2</sup> These elements are clearly represented in the contributions to this issue.

On the surface it might appear extraordinary that a melodramatic confection like *The Mousmé* should have been approved enthusiastically in Japan in 1912 a year after its première West End staging, particularly in the light of the performance ban imposed on *The Mikado* in 1887, a ban that would last until after World War 2. In London the production was a further theatricalisation of Japanese life and exotic ways that had been anticipated in the Living Displays of Japan and the Japanese since 1862. The success of the play in London was measured in terms of the production's "anthropological accuracy" displayed in the realistic sets and costumes as well as the spectacular scenic effects. It also enabled spectators to embark figuratively on journeys to exotic locations and feel that they had been exposed to the adventures of travel without the hazards and inconveniences of actually participating in the life of a "pre-modern and pre-industrialised society." In his article on *The Mousmé* Henry Balme places Robert Courtneidge's production within the context of a rapidly expanding theatrical marketplace where George Edwardes had positioned himself in London in the late 1890s, selling the rights of his Gaiety plays worldwide to such entrepreneurs

as J. C. Williamson in Australasia and Maurice Bandmann who controlled venues from Gibraltar to Yokohama. It was Bandmann who introduced *The Mousmé* to Japanese audiences in Tokyo. Balme suggests that part of the play's success can be attributed to the position of Japan itself at the time wanting to be aligned with and sympathetic to European expressions of modernity. Interestingly he also points to the success of the musical score in Japan although it demonstrated a marked discrepancy with the visual elements. The score embodied a European model with few concessions made to the production's profession of orientalism, despite the fact that the principles of visual representation were determined by its insistence on accuracy.

In the last twenty years there has been considerable scholarly interest in Shakespeare and his reputation in the so-called Far East.<sup>3</sup> Kennedy and Lan in their introduction attempt to address the meaning of Shakespeare and ask the question "why Shakespeare?" They discount the paternalistic imperialism of Maurice Bandmann who commented that performances of Shakespeare might educate the 'natives' into playgoing. In fact, they suggest that Shakespeare's works performed a number of functions. To nations like Japan, for example, emerging out of its isolation after 1868 and determined to fashion itself to be on a par with the powerful, industrialised Western nations, Shakespeare appeared to offer an entrée into a high culture that might profitably be emulated: "the introduction [of Shakespeare] was part of the reform movement, allied with industry and open markets as an exemplary 'contemporary' writer, driven by the national project of modernization."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed Shakespeare as a high culture flagbearer persists and Yeeyon Im explores the relationship of Shakespeare to popular culture in South Korea through an examination of Janek Ledecký's *Hamlet Musical*, a remarkable attempt to counter preoccupations about shallow American commercialism with a demonstration of European cultural superiority while integrating elements of intercultural revision and a degree of nationalist appropriation. The original production of *Hamlet Musical* was Czech and its European origins tied it to a tradition of 19<sup>th</sup> century grand opera rather than of the American Broadway musical. Nevertheless, Shakespeare brought with him a ready-made cultural prestige and initially this was a key factor in the early marketing of the production in Seoul. Yet, as the article points out, each of the four revivals has seen a marked decline in their dependence upon Shakespeare's reputation as star actors drawn from South Korean soap operas took on the major roles of Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude and Claudius in a version of the play that glorified love and created parallel love stories bearing little resemblance to Shakespeare's text.

Yet to any would-be producer the Hamlet story has to be made culturally specific and this can also be exemplified in the absorption of plays into the form of *Shojo Manga*, the highly stylised form considerably influenced by comic books which has been widely disseminated since the 1970s and which realises the action of the plays through the visual expressiveness of a cinematic storyboard. In Yi Chen's discussion of *Manga* she starts with an examination of Morikawa Kumi's 1978 version of *Twelfth Night* but develops this to include a comparison with Nana Li's 2009 version put together thirty years later.<sup>5</sup> The two versions foreground the issue of gender identity and sexuality in *Twelfth Night* but treat them in very different ways. The article is thus a comparison between the two

versions and their representation of Viola's cross-dressing and sexuality. Traditionally, *Shōjo Manga* has been pitched at teenage Japanese girls and the 1978 version appears to have favoured liberating the play's characters from culturally prescribed gender and sexual roles, told through a story involving female characters in male clothing, a recurring theme in *Shōjo Manga's* development since the 1950s. On the other hand, the 2009 version was targeting a global market and thus a different readership. While the earlier version revelled in gender bending played out in a love triangle comprising Orsino, Olivia and Viola, the later version emphasised the existence of a power struggle based on traditional perspectives of a cultural gender binary in the expectation that this emphasis would prove more generally appealing. By contrast, the earlier version was more radical and certainly more culturally precise.

The *Hamlet Musical* apparently found little favour on Broadway although its European roots would have had much in common stylistically with the French *Les Misérables*. Broadway has developed a culture of fandom in which 35% of all Broadway visitors are dedicated musical specialists who manifest a fierce fidelity to particular productions. This lies at the heart of Caroline Heim's discussion about the emergence of the concept of Broadway and the development of a new kind of spectatorship. In 2016 she published her investigation of the changing role of theatre audiences<sup>6</sup> chronicling a slippage between the traditional notions of audience detachment and the occasions audiences have themselves become performers. It is a view that finds additional purchase in the article by Susan Haedicke to which we'll return shortly. Heim argues that Broadway theatre fans form a distinct species or sub-culture of theatregoers. Possibly this new manifestation is the latest movement in the role of spectators that shows the infiltration of popular entertainment practices into the world of commercial theatregoing. This kind of slippage also dissolves the divisions of formal theatregoing and theatre in the streets as fans spill out into the streets having copied the costumes and star branded consumer items while living out the narratives they have witnessed on stage as their own. It is an extraordinary expression of belonging and ownership which finds its apotheosis in the virtual stage doors offered by social media like Twitter. The historical trajectory is an obvious one, from the theatrical clagues that supported key performers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the theatrical riots where spectators took matters with which they disagreed into their own hands, to the stage door johnnies and celebrity chasers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Heim confines her discussion to New York and traces this phenomenon from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the direct impact on theatre practices of the Bowery b'hoys and matinée girls, especially from 1860 onward. But passionate engagement with performers and the sense of ownership which entitled spectators to engage directly with them has always been an integral part of popular entertainments. In a sense this new expression of fandom is at odds with the staid appreciation of theatre as high art and has much more in common with rock concert fans and sports enthusiasts with whom the term fan was first identified.<sup>7</sup>

Spectators have always demanded to be astonished or at least surprised by what happens on stage. This has conventionally been allied with exotic locations, astounding physical feats or hallucinatory light shows that have dazzled onlookers but have inevitably helped to maintain a divide between the

providers of the shows and their receivers. More recently, as venues have changed and as locations for performances have literally and metaphorically detached themselves from fixed spaces, the changes have affected not only performers but also audiences both of whom are now able to renegotiate their relationship to each other. Both Caroline Heim and Susan Haedicke refer to Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* in supporting the establishment of a community of narrators and translators.<sup>8</sup> The artwork, whether a theatrical piece or an installation, links spectators and artists in a two-way process in which the spectator translates the offered artwork and thus participates directly in the process of creation and its transmission. Haedicke's examples are drawn from the work of street companies grappling with social issues with a particular focus on the continuing availability of food in societies where urbanisation and wealth have succeeded in separating people from land and the soil. To emphasise the point groups have been formed to defamiliarise the urban landscape through confronting onlookers and passers-by with strong juxtapositions, like the sudden appearance of a working farm in an urban street or the creation of a simulacrum of a French family garden in a city centre demonstrated by Le Phun in 1986. Certainly there exists a nostalgia for a simpler rural life but the creation of imaginative situations like the positioning of a floating farm in the middle of a river (mounted by Opéra Pagai on the Garonne river in 2011) stimulates a discourse between the presenters and the onlookers whereby topics like the possibility of future urban agriculture or the rehabilitation of urban wasteland into a shared and productive public space can be undertaken. Hopefully the result will change everybody's understanding, attitudes and behaviour. This all stems from the emancipation that actively encourages participation and engagement on the part of the new spectatorship.

To return to where we began: the transnational mobility of popular entertainments. But neither the emergence of trade routes serviced by fast steamships nor the laying of international telegraph cables were able to replace the most basic form of assisted locomotion, that of the horse. The fact that our latest cars are still described in terms of horsepower indicates the horse's continued presence as a determinant of speed and power. Indeed, the ongoing presence of horses in contemporary rodeos, dressage displays and Olympic Games ceremonies iterates the continuing equine presence while both plays and films have foregrounded the horse's engagement with human beings and highlighted their mutual dependence: *Equus*, *War Horse*, *The Horse Whisperer* and *The Man from Snowy River* as examples.

In 2013 Kim Baston wrote about John Bill Ricketts, the founder of circus in America at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and his Edinburgh Equestrian Circus.<sup>9</sup> She emphasised the significance of performing horses to that most transnational of displays. In this issue she takes up the reins again to examine the legacy and innovations in contemporary equestrian performance. In doing so she also refers back to the existence of hippodrama, a form which integrated the use of horses within a dramatic context and was particularly popular in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Baston writes "The horse within hippodramatic performance ... [played] ... an instrumental role that displayed high level physical training, and a narrative role that fulfilled certain cultural needs ... such as nobility, loyalty and willing subservience to a human master." Originally hippodrama was an integral

part of the circus programme but as the fixed theatrical building was replaced by a tented transportable structure, hippodrama as such disappeared. To demonstrate, however, that while lions, elephants and tigers may be on the way out as display animals other than in carefully regulated zoo environments, equestrian troupes have mounted a resurgence. Baston considers two examples: Cavalia, based in Montreal and the Théâtre du Centaure in Marseilles. Both organisations may present idealised versions of the relationship between humans and horses and are at pains to show a fully developed equine agency, but both tap into an ongoing fascination with human/horse relations which appear to be as universally popular as ever and which the proliferation of rodeos and dressage events would corroborate.

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan, eds., *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy and Lan, *Shakespeare in Asia*, 7-10.

<sup>3</sup> This interest can also be documented in the Pacific rim more broadly for example in John Golder and Richard Madelaine's edited volume *O Brave new world: two centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian stage* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2001) and more specifically Japan, in Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw, eds., *Shakespeare in Japan* (London: Continuum, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy and Lan, *Shakespeare in Asia*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> The 1978 version is also discussed in Minami Ryuta's chapter "Shakespeare for Japanese popular culture: *Shojo Manga*, *Takarazuka* and *Twelfth Night*" in Kennedy and Lan, *Shakespeare in Asia*, 109-131.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Heim, *Audience as Performer: the changing role of theatre audiences in the twenty-first century* (Abingdon, Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> See Lucy Nevitt, "Popular Entertainments and the Spectacle of Bleeding," *Popular Entertainment Studies* 1: 2 (2010): 78-92, on the behaviour of spectators at rugby union and professional wrestling contests.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, (London: Verso, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Kim Baston, "John Bill Ricketts and the Edinburgh Equestrian Circus," *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 4:2, (2013): 5-28.