

**AUTHORSHIP, TEXTUALITY AND INTERTEXTUAL
PERSPECTIVES IN THE THEATRE:
THE CASE OF SHAKESPEARE**

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The interrelationships between author/text/performance have been at the kernel of the English directorial problematic concerning the presentation of Shakespeare's plays since the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the RSC developed a practice that conceived the performance as an interpretation inscribed in the stable text and guaranteed by the dramatist's authority. At the same time, the Open Space, following an intertextual practice, understood meaning as the provisional result of the interplay between text, the theatre institution and the historical and political conjuncture. Investigating the theoretical premises of these two approaches, the article that follows attempts to contribute to the articulation of a directorial problematic on Shakespeare.



Within the history of Western civilization, literature and drama, Shakespeare stands out as the single figure that has more often than not been identified not only with English culture but also with high art itself. He is considered to have laid down the constituents of a classical work of art, lines of his plays have figured in the commercial world and in Beatles songs while his name, at least in England, has even been recruited to support different political choices and philosophical positions. In the field of the theatre as well, many directors and actors have seen as a challenge in their career the opportunity to stage one of his plays or impersonate one of his famous heroes and thus share some of the Bard's fame and glory. So, the Renaissance playwright, having deeply impregnated culture and education, has been vested with a power difficult to be seized by another writer, especially in England.

Throughout the 1980s and under the impact of post-structuralism, literary theory has seriously attempted to challenge Shakespeare's authoritative position in education, the media and traditional criticism.¹ In the area of

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Shakespearean scholarship, the new approaches to Shakespeare's plays that emerged affected their performances as well. It has to be admitted though that the relationship between the developments in the theory of literary criticism and these of the performative level is not one of simple and immediate anteriority or posteriority; instead it suggests an intricate configuration constituting a diversified field of multiple and asymmetrical directions. Thus, the current image of Shakespearean performances that has been handed down to us — either conventional or experimental, affirming or questioning the dramatist's authority — and the debates surrounding these theatrical representations are not the direct outcome of the theoretical framework developed in the previous decade; these have both emerged much earlier from the fertile and experiential work that was done in England during the 1960s and 1970s.

During this period, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), a company established specifically to develop work on Shakespeare, propagated his official image, which was that of the national poet and a cultural symbol. Coming in contact with his plays was believed to constitute the ultimate dramatic experience while his oeuvre was understood as loaded with universal truths immanent in his sacred and unalterable texts. During the same period at the Open Space, Charles Marowitz was developing an oppositional and pioneering work that has been less often the object of historical and critical study than that of the RSC.² Marowitz tried to dismantle the playwright's cultural authority and the reverence attached to his texts, long before the post-structuralist reconsiderations regarding authorship and textuality had gained any prominence in the English scene. While the directorial discourse developed at the RSC repeatedly limited the signifying process of Shakespearean productions by treating the performance as an interpretation inscribed in the text and guaranteed by the playwright's authority, Marowitz, based on an intertextual practice, liberated Shakespearean productions from the binary and hierarchical opposition between text/author and performance. He thus displaced the playwright's values and intentions from the center of signification concerning either the text or the performance. Such a practice was in disagreement with that of the RSC which reproduced the logocentric claims to origin, unity and authority and, as a consequence, a metaphysical understanding of the unalterable text.

The comparative study of these two different approaches that follows attempts to provide one of the many missing links in the history of the English directorial discourse on Shakespeare. It thus draws upon the directors' empirical rationalizations and problematic as its primary material to fulfill a twofold intention. On the one hand to articulate their theoretical basis and, as a result, provide a vital prerequisite for the investigation of the still largely unwritten stage history of the Shakespearean plays, that is, a methodological approach. On the other, to reveal the basic issues directors were initially preoccupied with and which still constitute an object of debate

within the recent theoretical formulations in Shakespearean criticism: the nature of the Shakespearean text, its viability and relevance; the range and scope of directorial intervention; the interrelations between text, author and performance.

I. Royal Shakespeare

Since Peter Hall founded the RSC in 1960, the way of producing Shakespeare was not going to be the same again. Being the first permanent company to receive state subsidy, the RSC managed, though not always, to function free from commercial pressures and to build common working habits and ideological objectives. These went beyond the performances of individual plays articulating the Company's overall directorial outlook that influenced other theatres as well, especially the National and the Royal Court. The RSC attempted to free Shakespearean productions from the heavy and stylized manner with which they had been associated till then and introduced a new approach. This emphasized liveliness and social relevance always controlled by "a concern for textual accuracy and scholarship" (Elsom 171). The renovating directorial outlook produced for the first time the image of a modernized Bard that often became the target of the critics' attack.

However original, this approach reproduced Shakespeare's central position in culture. The two most well-known directors of the RSC in the 1960s, Peter Hall and Peter Brook, both justified, though in different ways, their various productions by attributing their interpretations to the Renaissance playwright, no matter how provocative or contrary to the audiences' and the critics' expectations these occasionally were. So, the RSC is not found wanting in adventurous productions. But these were imprisoned in a directorial discourse that nullified all stage experimentation under Shakespeare's genius, reconstructed the playwright and his texts as cultural symbols of utmost importance and, as a consequence, repositioned them as authoritarian origins of unified and unifying signification. So, the RSC was established as a powerful institution fulfilling a significant ideological function in affirming the image of the Renaissance playwright as a cultural symbol.

A. The Director as Mature Shakespeare

The most well-known production of the RSC in the 1960s was Hall and Barton's cooperation on *The Wars of the Roses* (1963) which brought together the *Henry VI* plays with *Richard III*. The material was compressed and Shakespeare's 12,350 lines were reduced to 7,450 of which 1,000 were written by Barton and reworked by Hall (Barton and Hall xvi). As a result, sequences of events were changed, lines spoken by specific characters in Shakespeare were delivered by others in performance, and some of the incidents developed in the original text were omitted. Such radical directorial

interventions were justified by Hall and Barton in their Introduction to the published text of their adaptation. Firstly, the changes were effected since the directors believed the *Henry VI* plays to be instances of early Shakespeare including a lot of undramatic material that had to be reworked to remind of the playwright's mature stage. Secondly, the plays were the result of collaborative work and not entirely written by Shakespeare, so further contemporary interventions were acceptable, especially if they aspired to the retrieval of a more genuine Shakespearean text (Barton and Hall vii-viii). Finally, the changes did not affect the conveyance of the basic Shakespearean values which, according to Hall, consist of the need for the existence of religious, political and moral order. This seemed to be a useful lesson for contemporary audiences since "the mechanism of power had not changed in centuries" (Barton and Hall x-xi).

Such directorial interventions have become common practice at the RSC and continued well into the performances of the 1970s.⁵ The rationale that justified such a practice was not unusual or particular to the RSC. A.C. Bradley, the most influential Shakespearean critic of the 20th century, in the Introduction to his famous *Shakespearean Tragedies* (1904) engages himself in a similar problematic. He does not only divide Shakespeare's tragedies into mature and immature ones to which the standards of "pure tragedy" should apply with qualifications; he also leaves out *Titus Andronicus* on the grounds that it was written long before Shakespeare had achieved any tragic conception or personal style. Finally, from *Timon of Athens* he discusses only the parts believed to have been written by Shakespeare and not by others (Bradley xv).

What is discernible in all of these instances is that directorial practices assisted by literary criticism have constructed the category of an essential Shakespeare that should be discovered in the treatment of his plays (Sinfield 175). All additions, cuts and alterations are done in his name either to restore to maturity those plays that have deviated or had been contaminated by collaborative work. The decision concerning which plays or sections of plays belong to a particular writer depends on whether they conform or not to a predetermined set of stylistic and ideological attributes. This is the so-called maturity which is then used to defend the principles against which major and minor writers are judged. Finally, the category of the author is employed to obscure or disregard aspects of the plays that do not fit into the writer's intentions, style and values as these have been constructed by literary criticism and directorial interpretation. In this way, the complexity of the work is overlooked in favor of a unifying formula. In the case of *The Wars of the Roses*, the directors took over from the playwright and effected a series of changes that resulted in formal and ideological closure. As it has been noted, the reestablishment of order in the adaptation was much more final contrary to the provisional order in the original (Sinfield 162; Cohn 7). The latter was obviously understood as not representing "genuine Shakespeare,"

in one way or another. The author then becomes, as Michel Foucault claims, the “principle of a certain unity of writing” employed “to neutralize contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts” (Foucault 111). The playwright is finally constructed as a coherent entity with a solid philosophy. S/he is treated as an actual person with values and style particular to him/her which are then reproduced in performance as mediated by the text.

B. The Unalterable but Inexhaustible Texts

Peter Brook was another director that left his mark on English Shakespeare. Approaching Shakespearean texts, Brook often betrayed his affiliation to Artaud. Brook’s belief that a “ritualistic use of rhythm” can show us “those aspects of life that are not visible on the surface” (Brook 57) relate him to Artaud’s idea of a theatre that could express the unknown forces deriving from nature and the unconscious. Also the English director attached great significance to the physicality of the stage and the actor. In his work on *King Lear* (1962), Brook regarded the play as “a series of intellectual strands which only performance can tie together...its full meaning can only be comprehended existentially — on a stage” (Marowitz 1963: 103). The stage language then becomes of primary importance since it functions as the motivation of the written text. Under the impact of Artaud, Brook created a more physical and dynamic theatre language in which spontaneity and improvisation broke down the rigidity of cerebral and verbal performances. However, he did not manage to disentangle himself from the powerful and long tradition of literate theatre in England for as long as he lived there.

At a first look, it seems that Brook does not share Hall’s loyalty to Shakespeare, the author. Instead he differentiates playwright from text attributing priority to the latter. Although he believes that plays reflect their writers’ viewpoints, he claims this is insignificant for contemporary readership to whom the text, a “fabric” made up of “hundred of thousand words unfolding in a certain order,” arrives not as “a series of messages, which is what authorship almost always produces, but as a series of impulses that can produce many understandings” (Brook 76). Brook’s interest in the structures and codes of the written text that carry meaning does not turn him into a structuralist. He does not imprison meaning and, as a result, the readers’ response in structure. Interpretation is the meeting point between the text and its reader at a specific time (Brook 76-77). The text produces understandings, but readers, too, bring with them their own subjectivity and aspects of the historical period they live in.

Finally, no interpretation is ever complete: “The history of the plays shows them constantly being reinterpreted and reinterpreted, and yet remaining untouched and intact. Therefore they are always more than the last interpretation trying to say the last word on something on which the last word can’t be said” (Brook 78). Here Brook seems to be joining hands with

Roland Barthes in refusing to impose a final signified on the text. However, he contradicts himself when he identifies a fixed element in the play despite its ability to signify endlessly. As it turns out, Brook's understanding of multiple signification is not attributed to the evasive signifier but to the Renaissance playwright's greatness. As he has epigrammatically claimed, "Everything remarkable in Brecht, Beckett, Artaud is in Shakespeare" (Brook 54). So he contends that the different readings and directorial outlooks are guaranteed by the wealth of the writer, have been anticipated by him and are expressed in his unchanged text.⁴

Even when directors acknowledge that their readings have been influenced by extra-textual and contemporary determinants, they still propagate their interpretations as expressing Shakespeare whose genius makes his work speak to all conditions at all times.⁵ Textual meaning then preexists the practice of interpretation which, deprived of any productive function, is relegated to a technique that can only reveal what was already present in the stable, written text whose richness cannot be exhausted in a single performance. The notion of a fixed text is also shared by Hall who claims that the director can each time retrieve it as if the long history of its interpretative stage-life had not intervened, and reveal one more layer of its signification (qtd in Addenbrooke 98). Although the text then can become a vehicle for recent ideas, it is unaffected by them (Holderness 1991: 171). It remains a master-text encompassing all readings, existing beyond politics and ideology, enjoying an unbroken bond with its writer.

C. (Almost) Alternative Shakespeare at the RSC

This monolithic understanding of the author that reproduced the Renaissance playwright and his texts as authoritarian cultural symbols was not renounced by the Company under the influence of the alternative theatre that emerged at the end of the 1960s. Undoubtedly the politicization that defined the next decade changed the way the RSC and other theatres understood Shakespeare's plays. These were now seen in a way oppositional to the dominant one, challenging the received readings that treated his work as agents of universal truths and of an unchanging human nature. As a result, Shakespeare, who in the previous decade was understood to be concerned with Man, a unified category, in the 1970s, under the impact of the growing, new political movements, was shown to have developed an interest in women as well as in racial minorities and third rate citizens. So Michael Bogdanov in his 1978 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* read the play in feminist terms and saw Kate's attempt to establish independence as a challenge to "the regime and the preconceived ideas of a woman's role in society" (qtd in Sinfield 173). Also throughout the 1970s presenting Isabella in *Measure for Measure* doubting the Duke became the dominant way of reading Shakespeare's play both at the RSC and other theatres (Berry 1981: 40-47). Finally, in Jonathan Miller's productions of *The Tempest* (Mermaid

Theatre 1970) and *The Merchant of Venice* (National Theatre 1970), Ariel, Caliban and Shylock were presented as members of oppressed racial minorities (Sinfield 177).

Although this is a radical difference from the way Shakespeare was understood in the previous decade, the above mentioned innovative productions were once more justified as expressing Shakespeare's genius and true intentions (Sinfield 173, 177). Throughout then the established or "alternative" theatrical practices, the use of Shakespeare in the directorial discourse fulfilled a restraining function though his skill to constantly reproduce new and divergent fields of signification knew no limits. In other words, Shakespeare has functioned as a restricting force on the "proliferation of meaning" (Foucault 119). As a result, the directorial discourse conceptualized the reusage of Shakespeare's plays on the basis of a hierarchical opposition between the playwright's original, eternal text and its versions, always granting authority to the first term. No matter how adapted or distorted, Shakespeare was reestablished as a cultural authority since everything derived from him.

It is imperative then to dismantle this problematic and develop a theoretical body of work indicating that the readings and transformations to which the plays are subjected have been mediated by a plurality of determinants, theatrical and otherwise, that question Shakespeare's all encompassing presence. To this effect, Derrida's resolutions concerning the release of the written text, as well as of spoken language, from any restricting framework, including that of the conditions of its initial production and its writer's intentions, provide a significant support (Derrida 12). Such an approach allows us to displace our interest from the identification of the original meaning and its derivatives, and direct it to the examination of the text's various conditions of signification and their subsequent alterations in an intertextual field free from the attitude of authorial and textual colonization.

II. Textual and Intertextual Reconsiderations: the Case of Marowitz

Moving towards this direction, it is first of all imperative to dispense with the idea of Shakespeare's stable text that can function as the single source of meaning. Any close study of the history of his texts would indicate their instability. Having written before the invention of print, Shakespeare did not share an immediate relationship with the published versions of his plays. What has been handed down to us as "authentic" Shakespearean text has been mediated by scribal copies, theatre prompt-books or manuscripts from touring companies resulting in the "bad" quartos. Any comparison between the quarto and folio editions would point out to numerous differences and indicate that these texts, to which such an aura is attached, have been the result of thorough editorial interventions (Scott 4). For a long time the effort of editors has been to identify and dispense with any foreign elements and

reconstitute the ur-text of authorial intention. But this method is now believed to have produced doubtful results as far as the “purity” of the texts is concerned. The new Oxford Shakespeare edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (1986) challenges the belief in the existence of a master text and in the purpose of trying to construct one, and attempts to present texts as affected by performances rather than loyal to their author. So *King Lear*, for example, is presented in two versions, without prioritizing the one over the other as genuine Shakespeare.⁶ The published text that includes its performative perspective ceases to be seen simply as pertaining exclusively to its writer’s values. Textual and stage histories start converging, each one consisting of equally variable texts.

Twenty years ago, Marowitz was moving towards a similar direction as regards the illusory idea of the authentic text. On the occasion of his radical adaptations of *Hamlet* (1966) and *Macbeth* (1969), which were transformed into fragmented collages, he reminded those who claimed that these “cut-up” versions had nothing to do with Shakespeare the forgotten intertextuality of the precursor text: “But one can just as readily ask to what extent Shakespeare can be counted the author of a play which is compounded of ancient group-myths and cultural *bubumeinshes* as well as culled from two or three verifiable, non-Shakespearean sources” (qtd in Scott 106). Marowitz’s rationale invites us to accept the collective nature and the variable sources of the Shakespearean text and thus can help prevent us from assessing the text by virtue of its unquestionable bondage to the dramatist’s honorific status.⁷

It is now widely acknowledged that for the Renaissance playwright himself, his texts were changeable and subject to the will of the theatrical personnel, reflecting “several stages of authorial change, both literary and theatrical” (Parker 357). The practice of reworking the written text in order to make it functionable in theatrical terms was not specific only to the Renaissance period. As Michael Scott’s study demonstrates, there was never any of the so-called full Shakespearean texts performed as a whole. Directors always used them as transcripts for the performance rather than as finished texts to be performed (Scott 1-7). Cuts, additions and other alterations refashioned the text in order to serve theatrical convenience or resolve questions of relevance — though that was also often justified as serving the playwright as the RSC practice showed. Regarding the different interpretations attached to the texts, these are not the consequence of the playwright’s “inexhaustible wealth,” but of the framework that makes the plays intelligible and possible. As Marowitz contends, discussing his adaptation of *Othello* (1972), “the characters themselves from Shakespeare’s play, as a result of being around for almost four hundred years, have now detached themselves from their original context, so they are in a sense roaming free in a kind of cultural terrain, and therefore they can be appropriated and put into a new context” (qtd in Burgess 78). The

exploration of the texts' ability to function in new and various contexts transforms the meaning from being the property of the writer and his text and, as a consequence, stable to being the alterable result of the interplay that is built between texts, cultural discourse and extra-textual determinants.⁸

Vital in this configuration is the theatrical history of the play from which meaning in performance derives. Texts do not exist irrespective of their readings and, once a play is set in circulation, its readings are shaped by its past performances. In this sense, the category of the text which though altered in performance, does maintain its "inviolable essence" cannot be sustained (Holderness 1991: 171), contrary to Hall and Brook's contentions. The text assimilates its various readings and is changed by them. Thus, each time the same text is performed, the director does not treat the "same" text, but the text as refashioned by its theatrical history and its long career as an object of critical discourse.

The Merchant of Venice, adapted by Marowitz in 1977, is a suitable example. The readings of the play throughout the centuries have varied depending on the manner by which actors and directors responded to the traditions formulated concerning the portrayal of Shylock, to the prevailing views regarding the Jewish people, and to the dominant or current forms of drama. So till the mid-18th century, Shylock was performed as a comic character with "red hair and a long nose," a presentation in accordance with the commedia dell'arte aesthetic. Later, without eliminating the comedy, the "serious villainy" of the character was foregrounded providing a more challenging undertaking for the actors. In the 19th century, Shylock acquired an interiority and a "tragic pathos" and dispensed with his caricature-like aspects all together. Finally, with the growing popularity of realism, he achieved even more psychological consistency that went well into the 20th century (Scott 47). So when Marowitz came to work on the play in the 1970s, he was responding not only to the text as Shakespeare had written it but also to the stage history of the play, and to the whole field of its intertextual affiliations. What angered Marowitz was the recurrent use of the trial scene as a means of humiliating Shylock and depriving him of all dignity. In this scene he is "sent packing from the courtroom a forced convert, a disreputable father, an unmasked villain" (Marowitz 1978: 22). It was in order to criticize this dominant approach that the director adapted the play and projected a more sympathetic image of Shylock. But even more, this change in attitude was brought about by non-literary influences and practices that guided the reading, namely the "Jewish history which includes European pogroms, the Hitler 'death camps,' the rise of Jewish Nationalism and the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Of course Shakespeare," Marowitz acknowledges, "had no knowledge of any of these things and it is undeniable that none of these factors enter into *The Merchant of Venice*" (Marowitz 1978: 21-22).

The text then has an intact existence only as a "Barthian Work," a material

object “occupying a portion of book space,” closing itself on a signified (Barthes 74-75). But the director as reader, whose understanding of the text depends on his/her intertextual awareness, can only have access to it through the dramatic, theatrical and cultural codes as well as the extra-theatrical and non-dramatic material that make the text possible and intelligible. Relying on such an approach, Marowitz played against the cultural anticipations of his audience and, instead of reinscribing the performance in its familiar context to reproduce *The Merchant's* “established worth,” he positioned it in a discursive field that activated different references, thus challenging the preexisting assumptions of its common reception. In this manner, he broke the illusion “that some kind of eternal truth is enshrined in a time-space continuum called ‘a classic’” (Marowitz 1978: 25). His adaptations turned Shakespeare’s plays into vehicles of ideas never intended to be there initially instead of proclaiming that they represent the Renaissance playwright. The Bard is found wanting in relation to contemporary society, he loses the authority of speaking to all conditions and ceases to encompass all interpretative possibilities.

Finally, once the text is liberated from the restricting context of its writer and original production, it need not become prey to the belief that it can be made to mean whatever the reader wants it to.⁹ So there is a way by which a performance remains “loyal” to Shakespeare, according to Marowitz. The director works upon a “given material” and can interpret it in a number of ways non-existent in Shakespeare’s time; these are, nevertheless, recognizable as interpretations of each specific play (Marowitz 1978: 24). So the ideas contained in Marowitz’s collages “derived from” and “could be transferred back to” the original source or a more straightforward production (Marowitz 1978: 12). This is different from saying that the interpretation has been anticipated by the authorial text. It just means that the intertextual field in which the play is situated does not only release it from the autocracy of the author making it signify in many different ways; it also constrains the range of its interpretation since by necessity texts are situated in an existing network of power in the service of “particular interests” (Said 212). As a result, their ability to signify is placed under control, contrary to Derrida’s support of “boundless visions of textuality” (Clayton 27).

Henry V can be used as a suitable example. When England was at the verge of World War II, in 1944, this play especially together with the rest of the history plays became very popular. During that year, Olivier’s film *Henry V* was released encouraging war enthusiasm and national unity; also Tillyard’s *Shakespeare’s History Plays* was published affirming the order and hierarchy of the Elizabethan world picture as absolute values; finally, Wilson Knight’s essay *The Olive and the Sword* was placed in circulation celebrating patriotism and order in Shakespeare’s work, particularly in *Henry V*. As Holderness maintains, at a time when England was suffering from internal social turmoil and external threat, prominent members of its society

and institutions used the national poet in ways that were in favor of government and royalty to propagate ideas of discipline, heroism and patriotism (Holderness 1984: 24-45). Interestingly enough, many years later, in 1975, when the country was again in upheaval — due to the OPEC increase in oil prices — the season at the RSC started with *Henry V*. The Duke of Edinburgh expected that the play's "marvellous spirit" would encourage people "to overcome the menace of rising costs and inflation in the years ahead" (qtd in Sinfield 172). Significantly it was not, for instance, *Hamlet* the play used to encourage such attitudes. The Prince who hesitates to take up the subject position of an avenger and a responsible son able to reestablish the shaken order cannot be used to incite action and patriotism. So the text of *Henry V* can be altered according to the affiliations that are built between the theatre institution, the historical conjuncture and the political necessity, but it cannot be made to mean what *Hamlet* can and vice versa.

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The RSC directorial discourse on Shakespeare in the 1960s and 1970s has constituted a solid ground upon which later directors have relied without a different problematic gaining equal dominance ever since. Leading figures of the Company, who play a formative role in the English theatre as a whole, remain faithful to the RSC's dominant views, sometimes even when they have left the Company. In a 1973 interview, Trevor Nunn, who was Artistic Director at the RSC from 1968 – 1978, claimed that the changes that are by necessity made on a Shakespearean text do focus on "certain things that are intended in the original but are presented obliquely" (Berry 1989: 81). In 1988, Bogdanov, who had often directed Shakespeare for the Company, justified Hall and Barton's directorial interventions in *The Wars of the Roses* to restore early Shakespeare to maturity (Berry 1989: 220-21). Barton in 1984, director at Stratford since the early 1960s, supported Shakespeare's timelessness and contemporaneity claiming that "what he is to say is always true and real" (qtd in Scott 125). Finally, in 1988 leaving the National, Hall once more claimed that his readings, no matter how original, always derived from the Shakespearean text (Berry 1989: 211, 212). On the other hand, there is no evidence that a different theoretical approach was developed regarding the stage work in The Other Place in Stratford, the new space that the Company created in the 1970s with the rise of the alternative theatre — The Warehouse in London providing a home mainly for new writing. It was after all the financial and ideological authority of the RSC that allowed the creation of its own alternative versions that could only exist under its protection and hegemony (Scott 130).

The reason for the RSC's achievements can also explain its lack of renewal, namely, the loyalty to its own "culture" — that is, its own standards, values, and ways of doing things." This culture can be compared

to that of a family carrying with it all the traditional implications:

The family asks for and expects loyalty, but looks after those it considers its own. Disagreements between members of the family about their identity or even about the overall 'culture' itself are kept from pulling the RSC apart by the 'culture' itself, by the ultimate power of the chief executive, under the governors, and by the practical need each has for the other.

(Chambers 17-18)

Within this tight, conventional structure, the RSC survived throughout the years presenting a Shakespeare who was political or spectatorial, using him to secure a box-office success or to make the career of an actor. New interpretations were constantly emerging, audiences' expectations were confirmed and occasionally challenged while the RSC developed into the basic institutional factor involved in the construction and reproduction of Shakespeare/genius as an ideological figure in the national culture, the dominant image that people have come to recognize as "Shakespeare."

The need to disrupt this dominant image of the Bard was imperative since the 1960s, for Shakespeare had always been employed to reproduce conventional artistic and political ideas. These concerned either the author and his sacred, unalterable texts whereby meaning was determined by the former and immanent in the latter, or art's transcendence of history and politics, projecting the notion of the eternal human condition. In this respect, Marowitz's contribution to the disruption of the institutionalized approach was valuable to the effect that it relativized the role of the author/text and initiated a practice of constantly reopening the Shakespearean text to new and divergent meanings, and investigating the determinations that condition its reception each time. He thus introduced the playwright into a field of struggle where cultural, ideological and political meanings are debated. Others in the alternative theatre moved towards similar directions regarding the treatment of the texts. Steven Rumbelow, for example, founder of the Triple Action Theatre, affected like Marowitz by Artaud as well as by Grotowski, through powerful stage images and tailoring of the text, adapted Shakespeare's plays to his own needs unconcerned about issues of reverence to the genius. The very name of his Company suggests Rumbelow's criticism of the theatre that employed the "two-dimensional rendition, almost recitation of texts," disregarding non-textual elements (Cohn 311).

The alternative theatre, though, from which one would have expected to question the dominant approach to the Bard, was not interested primarily in Shakespeare but in new writing.¹⁰ In addition, the rare documentation of the few alternative theatre productions of Shakespeare, the disregard of its directors' views and the scarce publication and study of the texts of the adaptations have left to a great extent Shakespeare to be appropriated by the dominant discourse of the subsidized theatres. Finally, the articulation of a theoretical approach regarding not only the conventional but also the

experimental stage work, which directly concerns us here, is still at an embryonic stage. This situation indicates the difficulties that underlie the recent interest that has been developing in studies concerning the investigation of the textual and stage history of Shakespeare's plays within a historical, cultural and institutional framework. Such undertakings, though, are imperative in order to understand the oeuvre of the Renaissance dramatist in its theatrical perspective and to demonstrate how the plays are constantly reinvented and altered for new audiences in the process of an endless reappropriation. For a long time directors believed that they could retrieve the master text behind centuries of stage history, interpretative processes and interaction with other cultural elements whose contaminating traces they had to eliminate. It seems though that precisely these aspects have to be taken into consideration if theatre practitioners and scholarship are to stop reproducing the closed truths of the past — the metaphysics of the text and the author's autocracy — and free up the dramatic work for new and divergent meanings.

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Notes

1. The list of books on the subject grows constantly but suffice it to mention Lisa Jardine's feminist reading in *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (1983); two anthologies, the one compiled by John Drakakis, *Alternative Shakespeares* (1985) and the second by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1985) which provide readings of Shakespeare's plays by various contemporary discourses and a study of the plays' appropriation by education, the media and the theatre. Finally, Terry Eagleton's *William Shakespeare* (1986) studies the plays relying on the theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan while Terence Hawkes in *That Shakespearean Rug* (1986) questions basic aspects of the traditional Shakespearean criticism and studies some significant instances when the Bard was put to the service of British politics in the twentieth century.
2. Berry (1981 and 1989) does not mention Marowitz, almost exclusively concentrating on the RSC's and other subsidized theatres' practice; Cohn (1976) and Innes (1981) provide brief analyses only of his *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* adaptations; Styan (1977) refers only to his cooperation with Brook on *King Lear*; the most informed, though still not complete, account of his work to date is provided by Scott (1989).
3. See, for example, Terry Hands' approach concerning his production of *Henry V* in 1975, as developed in Sinfield, 175.
4. But even seeing the text irrespective of the writer, as Brook seemed to be doing at one time, does not preclude the freedom from authoritative meaning. As Foucault has pointed out, "writing seems to transpose the empirical characteristics of the author into a transcendental anonymity," thus reproducing the author's attributes

- (Foucault 104).
5. Evidence for this approach abounds. I will only mention Hall's very representative words: "He has everything: he is domestic as well as tragic, lyrical and dirty; as tricky as a circus and as bawdy as a music hall. He is realistic and surrealistic. All these and many other elements jostle each other in rich contradictions, making him human, not formal. This is why you can now read Samuel Beckett in *Lear*, or the Cuban crisis in *Troilus*" (qtd in Sinfield 174).
 6. The rationale underlying this new edition and the consequences on the future editorial and theatrical work on Shakespeare are studied in Brian Parker, "Bowers of Bliss: Deconflation in the Shakespeare Canon," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 24 (1990).
 7. Holderness reaches a similar conclusion in his fruitful study of intertextual perspectives in the analysis of Shakespearean texts (Holderness 1991: 169-70).
 8. A positive approach to the intertextual reading of texts, theatrical or otherwise, is developed in Fred McGlynn, "Postmodernism and Theatre," in Hugh J. Silverman (ed), *Postmodernism-Philosophy and the Arts* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), and in Tony Bennett, "Text and History," in Peter Widdowson (ed), *Re-Reading English* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1982).
 9. The acceptance of the texts' materiality and the constraints they impose on their interpretations is shared by Antony Easthope, "Literature, History, and the Materiality of the Text," and Catherine Belsey, "Literature, History, Politics," both appearing in *Literature and History* 9. 1 (1983).
 10. It has to be acknowledged, though, that within the overall scope of new writing to demystify the great figures of the past, some dramatists, notably Stoppard, Bond and Wesker, in rewriting Shakespearean texts did provide some very challenging and unreverential treatments of the Renaissance playwright.

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Οι διασυνδέσεις μεταξύ συγγραφέα/κειμένου/παράστασης βρίσκονται στον πυρήνα του σκηνοθετικού προβληματισμού σχετικά με τις παραστάσεις των έργων του Σαίξπηρ στην Αγγλία από τις δεκαετίες του 1960 και 1970. Εκείνη την εποχή, το RSC, θεμελίωσε μια πρακτική με βάση την οποία η παράσταση οριζόταν σαν μια ερμηνεία εγγεγραμμένη σε αναλλοίωτα κείμενα κι επικυρωμένη από την εξουσία του συγγραφέα. Το ίδιο χρονικό διάστημα, το Open Space, ακολουθώντας μια διακειμενική πρακτική, καλλιέργησε την άποψη ότι η διαδικασία παραγωγής νοήματος σε κάθε παράσταση γίνεται νοητή μόνο μέσα από το πλαίσιο των διασυνδέσεων μεταξύ του κειμένου, του θεατρικού θεσμού και της ιστορικής και πολιτικής συγκυρίας. Διερευνώντας το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο αυτών των δύο απόψεων, το άρθρο που ακολουθεί επιχειρεί να συμβάλει στη δημιουργία του σκηνοθετικού προβληματισμού για τον Σαίξπηρ.