

Looking for his “Part”: Performing Hamlet in New Millennium Europe

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Abstract

Much has changed in Europe since the euphoria of the early nineteen-nineties of the last century: massive migration, pan-European Neo-Nazism, a new and active Moslem self-awareness, the resurgence of Russian Nationalism, and a severe financial crisis are just a few items on the historical agenda. In response to this new context *Hamlet* is no longer simply a vehicle for recovering, or creating, a national cultural memory but has become a trans-national, multi-cultural, “glocalized” site for positioning both play and protagonist between quickly changing geo-political developments and local events. This relocation has frequently been paired with the inclusion of various other media discourses in the performance space once reserved for traditional theatre acting, even abandoning this space for extreme locations and situations to relocate Hamlet, play and protagonist, for contemporary audiences: abandoned buildings, rusting shipyards, insane asylums, jails, and even subways. As a result, the desperate cry of ACTOR PLAYING HAMLET, the protagonist, in Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmaschine* (1977): “I am not Hamlet. I don’t play a part anymore. My words no longer mean anything to me. My drama no longer takes place,” has been qualified and *Hamlet*, the play, as well as Hamlet, the protagonist, are being provided with new signification, political and theatrical, as Hamlet’s search for his “part” in the new millennium Europe continues.

On the Subway

A Sunday afternoon in August 2011: passengers on the N and R line to Manhattan were surprised by men rolling around on the floor of the subway car trying to kill each other. A consternated elderly lady about to board the train was calmed by a younger fellow passenger who informed her that everything was okay; they were just performing Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The two guerrilla theatre actors (Fred Jones and Paul Marino) have taken an extreme approach to bring Shakespeare, not only *Romeo and Juliet* but also *Hamlet* to new audiences: the riders of the New York subway. They call their work “grating”, but Jones says: at the end of the day we can look back and say: «Nobody can take this away from us»¹. Actors in Europe have also been seeking out

extreme locations and extreme situations to relocate Hamlet for contemporary audiences: abandoned factories, rusting shipyards, insane asylums, and even jails. They have been reacting to the rapidly changing economic map, political agendas, and cultural discourses in the new millennium. Hamlet's "part" in all this is changing as well. Shakespeare's play is no longer simply a vehicle for recovering, or creating, a national cultural memory but has become a transnational, multi-cultural, "glocalized" site for positioning both play and protagonist between quickly changing geo-political developments and local events. This relocation has frequently been paired with the inclusion of various other media discourses in the performance space once reserved for traditional theatre acting. The desperate cry of ACTOR PLAYING HAMLET, the protagonist Hamlet in Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* in 1977: «I am not Hamlet. I don't play a part anymore. My words no longer mean anything to me. My drama no longer takes place»², has been qualified and *Hamlet*, the play, as well as Hamlet, the protagonist, has once again been provided with new signification, political and theatrical, in the new millennium Europe.

Blah, blah, blah

In 1977, Hamlet's frustration was also Müller's. Things were "rotten" in Müller's home country, the German Democratic Republic: Wolf Biermann, poet and song-writer had been expatriated, and with him, a long list of intellectual and theatre personalities, among them Müller's personal friends. Most importantly, Müller's own plays had been banned from the East German stage so that the outcry «my drama no longer takes place» had personal significance for him. Müller was in Sofia struggling to come up with a "part" for a modern day Hamlet that dealt with the relationship between father and son, political power and the intellectual, in a post-Stalinist communist country, such as Hungary or Bulgaria. Unable to generate dramatic dialogue, he resorted to a series of separate monologues for Hamlet and Ophelia in five acts/scenes; «There was no historical substance for real dialogues [...] It became [...] a self-critique of the intellectual [...] the description of a petrified hope, an effort to articulate despair». *Hamletmachine* marked a "terminal point" for Müller personally – the initials "H. M" [= *Hamletmachine*] have been construed to stand for "Heiner Müller" himself – and this «shrunk head *Hamlet*» (Müller) also signalled a caesura, if not a "terminal point", for the humanistic "what a piece of work is man" tradition for which the European, and German, Hamlets/*Hamlets*, in particular, stood and have stood. For Müller, history had lost its meaning, come to an "end", and with it Hamlet/*Hamlet* via a mimetic, illusionistic performance tradition. Like Jan Kott, Müller was fascinated by the "machine" underlying the play as well as the protagonist who continued to churn forward through time and across boundaries. Like the dislocated protagonist and the dislocated playwright, the premier of *Ham-*

letmachine was re-located from East Germany to the Théâtre Gérard Philipe in Saint Denis, France, in 1979.

In the 1980s, a decade of political unrest and finally upheaval, Shakespeare's ubiquitous Dane proved to be a most protean figure, adapting himself readily to the national stages of Eastern and Western Europe despite the signs of stagnation predicted by Müller's *Hamlet* offshoot. As the world of communist “Eastern” Europe came to an end in Berlin, on the evening of 9 November 1989, Heiner Müller's production of *Hamlet/Machine*, a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into which Müller inserted his own *Hamletmachine* (again H. M.), was being rehearsed at the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin, not far from the Brandenburg Gate which was still blocked off by the Berlin Wall⁴. This was to be the first performance ever of Müller's *Hamletmachine* on an East German stage (premiered on 24 March 1990). The events going on in front of the theater marked the end of the Cold War, as well as World War II, and the division of Europe into East and West. Likewise, Müller's combination of the two plays marked the transition from a tradition of “political” *Hamlets/Hamlets*, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, to postmodern, “post-dramatic” *Hamlets* with a new “part” and a new location.

«Tell my story»: *Hamlet* and/at the end of history

“History” supposedly came to an “end” with the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Hamlet* became *posthistoire*, and the Danish protagonist could be observed searching for a new “part” to play and an appropriate location to perform it. *Hamlet* performances Eastern European countries played an instrumental role in recovering precisely that history and in telling those stories which had remained untold in the years between 1945 and 1990; as Marta Gibinska and Jerzy Limon wrote in 1998, «test[ing] our contemporary reception of Shakespeare through *Hamlet*»⁶. Likewise, John Drakakis argued in his *Afterword* to a collection of essays dealing with the developing trans-national or global Shakespeare published in 1997: «Shakespearean texts have become the unified and unifying discourse in which cultures are encouraged to define their experiences globally. They are also the site upon which those experiences may be contested, rethought, reread»⁷.

On the German language stages of Central Europe (Germany, Austria, and German language areas of Switzerland) there were 116 productions of *Hamlet* between 1990 and 1999, an average of almost twelve per year, yet in some years 30% to 40% of the productions were offshoots: not only *Hamletmachine*, but also the comedy *Tonight neither Hamlet (Heute weder Hamlet)* by Rainer Lewandowski, the children's drama *Hamlet, the Little Prince of Denmark* by the Swedish author Torsten Letser, ballet, collages and puppet theatre⁸.

The final German language theatrical season of the outgoing century and the opening season of the new century were highlighted by a “*déjà vu*” *Ham-*

let production directed by Peter Zadek originally for the *Wiener Festwochen* 1999 for which Zadek re-united the cast of his legendary *Hamlet* production from his “Sturm und Drang” days in Bochum in 1977. The roles of the original cast were remixed and Elizabeth Plessen provided a new translation which combined the classical register of Schlegel with the contemporary German vernacular⁹. The tenor of the performance was that “all Denmark is a prison”, signified by the sole stage prop (except for a row of wooden chairs): an oversized, neon-lit container, which dominated the stage and through which all entrances and exits were made. For this innocent, childlike Hamlet, played by Angela Winkler, «the time i[w]a[s] out of joint». He/she was unable to cope with the likes of Claudius (Otto Sander) and Polonius (Ulrich Wildgrüber), whose behaviour reminded audiences of “Realpolitiker” of the nineties, such as Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder or Bill Clinton¹⁰. The production announced a return to the play *Hamlet* as a significant dramatic text central to contemporary German-speaking culture. This Hamlet was out of touch with the age in which he/she lived (despite a new translation); a flurry of Hamlet/*Hamlets* followed in the decade to come. For all the re-shuffling of characters, the “place of the stage”, however, remained in the conventional theatre.

New Millennium *Hamlets* on the German Language Stage

In the year 2000, with the advent of the new millennium, *Hamlet*, the play, as well as Hamlet, the character, returned to occupy centre stage in German language professional theatre. Mimetic, illusionistic representation gave way to a pastiche of forms, plot frequently consisted of stage happenings, monologue replaced dialogue, blank verse poetry came out as bits and pieces of text often repeated in archaic chants or raps, and the audience was given the role of joining these bits and snippets into a recognizable dramatic narrative. As Lisa Jardine argued on the eve of the millennium: «we might ask if Shakespeare is much more than a convenient empty box to put things into [...] a cipher, one of those iconic figures who can be filled with any consumer fancy you figure»¹¹.

The *Theaterschau* of the “Shakespeare Jahrbuch” between 2002 and 2012 lists 185 productions of *Hamlet* between the years 2000 and 2012. In 2000/2001 there were twenty-one productions and in 2002/2003 a peak of twenty-two, but in 2005/2006, mid-decade, the number declined dramatically to only four. What was the cause for this drop in Hamlet’s popularity? Perhaps it was a surfeit of *Hamlets*, including the film *Hamlet* (Dir. Michael Almereyda), which came out in the year 2000, or the publicity hype surrounding the Peter Zadek production and the Peter Brook production of *The Tempest* in French (*La Tempête*), which toured Germany in 2001. On the other hand, much was beginning to change in Europe since the euphoria of the early nineteen-nineties. With the expansion of the European Union came massive migration, resurgent nationalism coupled with militant xenophobia, and disenchantment with the

blessings of capitalism. *The Tempest* replaced *Hamlet* as the vehicle to re-read Shakespeare’s text and to expose the “brave new world” of the free market¹².

Nevertheless, the number of *Hamlets* on the German language stage jumped again toward the end of the first decade with eighteen productions in 2008/2009 and continued into the second decade with fifteen in 2010/11, and thirteen in 2011/12. These statistics include, as well, however, offshoots such as Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Christian Jost’s opera *Hamlet*, Müller’s *Hamletmaschine*, or Bernard-Maria Koltes’ *The Day of Murder in the History of Hamlet*. Hamlet did seem to become «an empty box [...] to be filled with any consumer fantasy». Hamlet’s “part” in twenty-first century Europe had yet to be defined.

Hamlet the “cipher” seemed to be the message in a production of the play directed by the Bulgarian director Lilia Abadjieva at the Magdeburg Chamber Theater in 2000. On the rear wall of a bare and brightly lit stage was a large sign with “HAMLET” written in brilliant red letters signifying to the audience which commodity, which “consumer fancy” they had hooked into. No reference to Elsinore, only the bare stage, no dramaturgy, only scene hooked onto scene without transition, no dramatic dialogue, only phrases, for example, «frailty they name is woman», and snatches from four speeches: «O that this too too sullied flesh would melt» (1.2.129ff), «I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth» (2.2.297ff), «To be, or not to be» (3.1.56ff), «Why, look you now, how unworthy thing you make of me» (3.2.366ff). A popular young local rapper entered from the side in a white farthingale to the pulsating rhythms of the song *Climbatize* by the band The Prodigy looking for his “part”. But his story was not told, only arbitrary visual signs and audial references to a play called “Hamlet” which the audience, mainly young people, was supposed to remember¹³. This staging of Shakespeare was at once an “alienation” of the Hamlet material in the sense of Brecht and a “Müllerization”¹⁴ of the Shakespearean text. As Dennis Kennedy and others have argued, it is exactly Shakespeare’s innate “alienness”, rather than his “Englishness”, in which audiences from non-Anglophone cultures see themselves¹⁵. Hamlet an immigrant?

At first glance Thomas Ostermeier’s production of *Hamlet* (2008), though in German, seemed to support John Drakakis’ suggestion that Shakespeare had become a “unifying discourse” for a Europe that was becoming increasingly “out of joint”, politically and economically, by 2008. The production opened on 7 July at the Hellenic Festival in Athens, proceeded thereafter to the Avignon Festival with French surtitles to rave reviews and thunderous applause before opening at the Schaubühne in Berlin¹⁶. Whereas Zadek had decelerated the pace of the dramatic action and his cast worked toward a theatre of minimum effect, this *Hamlet*/Hamlet was Sturm and Drang in postmodern “anything goes” dress: concrete physical action replaced character nuance and stripped-down functional language replaced poetry (in Marius Mayenburg’s translation). This Hamlet (Lars Eidinger) lacked any hint of introspective mel-

ancholy and acted out “the antic disposition” with vigorous enthusiasm to the excess. The players moved to the foreground (their number reduced from twenty to six), switching abruptly from one role to the next on stage (Hamlet, dressed in saucy lingerie, also played the queen in *The Mousetrap*), repeatedly resorting to the microphone which only served to highlight their poor enunciation. The performance began with Hamlet reciting the “To be, or not to be?” soliloquy – a question he repeated often during the performance – and continued with the burial of Ophelia as an exaggerated slapstick number with the gravedigger falling into the grave. The political culture in this Elsinore was show business underlined by Gertrude/Ophelia (Judith Rosmair) singing one of Carla Bruni (Mrs. Sarkozy)’s chansons to her new husband at the coronation banquet¹⁷.

In 2008/2009 the Staatstheater Stuttgart seemed to have been infected not with “swine flu”, but with Hamlet fever, staging no less than three *Hamlets*. The “Hamlet” theatre season opened on 20 September 2008 with the first German production of *Hamlet. Der Tag der Morde (Le jour des meurtres dans l’histoire d’Hamlet)* by Bernard-Marie Koltès, an early dramatic fragment discovered posthumously. On 26 October 2008, a musical entitled *The Prince of Denmark*, starring late-night entertainer Harald Schmidt (a German David Letterman) as “Prince Hamlet”, opened to rave reviews and continued to play to sold-out performances around Germany. As the first decade of the new millennium came to a close, Thomas Ostermeier’s *Hamlet* had proven not to be an exception in anything-goes-*Hamlet* on the German language stage. In a production directed by Volker Lösch in Stuttgart, Shakespeare’s play became contemporary agitprop, a provocation to the local political and business establishment. The message was that something was “rotten” in Germany, in general, and in Baden-Württemberg, in particular: Elsinore was a stage filled with mud, Old Hamlet a Nazi army officer, Fortinbras a young Fascist skinhead with a private army of young Nazi hoodlums, Polonius a woman and Gertrude a man. The Ghost became a chorus of nine figures resembling Hans Filbinger, the ex-Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, who served as a Nazi military judge. All were clothed in more or less transparent body costumes in which their flesh and extra pounds protruded and sagged. Young *Hamlet* (Till Wonka) rejected this world and seemed fascinated by Fortinbras whose young hoodlum army finally killed Hamlet.

Method in his madness, words or no words, golfing in Gdansk

Other European countries have proven more adventurous in leaving conventional performance spaces in favour of more extreme venues. Accademia della Follia (Academy of Folly / Insanity), for instance, re-located their video adaptation of the play *Hamlet (Hamletich)*, subtitled *e/o del cambiamento* (“and/or the change”) (2000) in the Provincial Psychiatric Hospital in Trieste. Clau-

dio Misculin, director and founder of the troupe, worked from the maxim: technique + madness = art. In this case, Hamlet’s part was located between folly (i.e., madness) and normality, which forced both the performers, some of whom were patients themselves (for example, the man named Scialpi who played Hamlet) and the audience to assume a mask and enter a public forum, which Antonella Piazza and Maria Izzo describe as «a no man’s land between normality and folly, magic and professionalism. A madman is not borderline; he/she *is* the border»¹⁸. Thus Hamlet’s madness became both Scialpi’s and the onlooker’s madness. Misculin agreed with Polonius, «Though this be madness, yet there is method in it». By pairing Hamlet’s folly, his “follia” so to speak, from Shakespeare’s global stage, with the local therapeutic space of the Trieste Psychiatric Hospital, The Accademia and Misculin “glocalized” the play *Hamlet* and gave the protagonist Hamlet yet a new role to play in contemporary Europe.

In 2007, Lella Costa’s one woman, one hundred minute long monologue *Amleto* relocated not the performance space but Hamlet’s part in the body of a female. The playwright/performer concluded that after Hamlet’s pact with the Ghost in act 1, scene 5, nothing that happens makes any sense so she/he concern herself thereafter, as did Accademia della Follia, with whether Hamlet’s “folly” is feigned or real. By foregrounding the Fortinbras plot, Costa abandons the realm of psycho-drama to use Hamlet’s “part” to condemn the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as to criticise implicitly Italian domestic politics. As Mariangela Tempera concludes, *Hamlet* becomes «an antidote to the deluge of vulgarity and the systematic obfuscation of reality through TV channels controlled by Berlusconi that has shaped public opinion and paved the way for his success»¹⁹.

In Barcelona, Alex Rigola, the director of the Catalan company Teatre Lliure entitled his «Prologue to Hamlet without words» *European House* (2005). It was appropriately staged in/as a three-story well-to-do burgher’s house whose front had been removed so that the audience became voyeurs of the family coming to terms with the death of the family patriarch. In place of Shakespeare’s poetry, they were dished up surtextual slogans and visual metonyms, e.g. Ophelia urinating (foreshadows death in the water?), sour milk («something is rotten in the state of Denmark») or a caged canary («all Denmark is prison», or the *de rigueur* naked Hamlet showering (is it possible to stage *Hamlet* in Europe without nakedness?) so that despite the lack of words, the relationship to the original play was recognizable for the art house audience. The production was an obvious attempt to “authorize” the director via Shakespeare by reducing the play to a comment on «the emptiness of European culture, the decadence that reduces the whole of *Hamlet* to a question mark»²⁰. If the “European House” is built on credit ratings, it might be time for some countries, including Spain, to vacate their “rooms”, but neither Shakespeare’s play nor his protagonist was intended to be a benchmark for that. Ruth Owen

remarks in her preface to *The Hamlet Zone: Reworking "Hamlet" for European Cultures* (2012): «In the process of translation, adaptation and reinventing, Hamlet has become the common currency of Europe»²¹. However, can Hamlet have a “part” in this if he has no language to voice? As Maurice Charney remarked years ago, «*Hamlet* without words has its existence only in relationship to *Hamlet* with words»²².

Was it in reaction to threatened cuts in the municipal culture budget that moved Panagiota Pantazi and Yorgos Katinas to stage their adaptation entitled *Hamlet in the Dark* (2008) in an abandoned factory in downtown Athens with no stage and no seats for the audience? As opposed to the Catalonians, who eliminated the text, the Athenians foregrounded Shakespeare’s dramatic language, in the translation-adaptation of Yorgos Himonas, even if it consisted only of the soliloquies. They also pruned the *dramatis personae* to three characters: Hamlet, Gertrude, and Ophelia. The performance area consisted of a dark labyrinth, a metonym for the workings of Hamlet’s mind, with four spaces to and through which the audience was led to by Ophelia, Hamlet’s alter ego and guide for the audience. The words of this essentialist/existentialist Hamlet – his “part” – were recited by four different actors/actresses who transgressed gender boundaries as well²³. Again, Hamlet’s part remains indeterminate; «a rose by any other color would smell as sweet».

In 2004, Jan Klata staged his version of Shakespeare’s play as *H.* in the abandoned and rusting Gdansk shipyards. The performance opened with Hamlet, now reduced to “H.” playing an aggressive match of turbo golf with Horatio in front of the shipyards while “Seven Nation Army” by *White Stripes* blared on his portable CD recorder. The audience, which had arrived by bus, looked on and bided its time. Hamlet tore away the tape blocking the entrance and strode with them down the dark halls where Lech Watesa once worked. “H.” reminds us of Kafka’s protagonist “Josef K.” in *The Trial*. Like K., Hamlet (H.) wandered through a labyrinthine landscape trying to make sense of what was going on and how it affected him. This is a Polish House haunted by the memories of Solidarność and its historic strike that altered the political landscape of Europe, an industrial cathedral haunted by icons from the Polish past: a Hussar, who appears as The Ghost, the Gdansk shipyards, the modern day equivalent of the Wawel Castle in Krakow where Polish monarchs once reigned, and Maciej Tomczyk, the hero in Andrzej Wayda’s film *Man of Iron* about the formation of Solidarność in 1980²⁴. Poland’s ruling elite, however, is dressed in bright white fencing outfits, dances on the tables with the latest disco moves, and is more interested in the quality of the French red wines they are constantly drinking than the affairs of state. There is no conflict, only rivalry. Due to the constant shifting from one of performance area to the next, the dominant visual presence of the gantry crane hall, and the confusing acoustics of this industrial venue, it was occasionally difficult to follow Stanislaw Baranczak’s translation. In March 2013, Klata staged *Hamlet* at the Schauspiel-

haus in Bochum, Germany, site of Peter Zadek’s legendary *Hamlet* production in 1977 that was mentioned above, not as a Kafkaesque tale but as a wild and colourful graphic novel centring on the body movements of the performers.

‘To England’

Amongst the most popular Shakespeare plays in the British Isles, *Hamlet* had already seen 170 productions by the end of the first decade of the new millennium²⁵. Out of these, professional were sixty-four theatre productions, three operas and two ballets (including transfers and touring ones – in English, Welsh, French, Japanese, Lithuanian or German). Forty-eight were new adaptations, which ranged from recasting the playtext from the viewpoint of other characters, such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Ophelia or Gertrude (in plays written by Stoppard, Berkoff or Barker), to radical shifts in the stage genre (comedy, musical, gothic vaudeville, wordless dance, pantomime; «two gentleman show», all male, all female, «homemade Shakespeare [...] for two gloved hands»; 100 ninja figurine puppets, samurai; “kidz”, “bouncy castle”, teenage or family shows, promenade and “trash opera street spectacle”). Finally, over fifty-three were public amateur productions, ranging from local community companies, to university drama groups and school projects. The distribution of new professional productions between 2000 and 2010, however, has been uneven, with the play registering an all-time high in 2003 (10) – after having one new release in 2002 – and an all-time low in 2006 (0), when *Hamlet* made only a brief appearance in a visiting production in the *Complete Works Festival* (Baxter, Cape Town), one (2005) touring production, one open-air summer show and a staging of the First Quarto. *Hamlet*’s absence from the British stage may have coincided with the *Complete Works* festival and the closing down of the Stratford houses at the end of the season²⁶, but it lies in the play’s loss of momentum: political and theatrical. Since 2006 the play has registered a slow come back on the professional stage; *Hamlet*, however, has returned transformed, inviting an examination of both the “forms” the play has taken and the “pressures” that have reshaped it in the first decade of the new millennium.

The Politics of *Hamlet*

On UK and European stages alike, the play’s «political edge is blunted» – to borrow Sinfield’s words²⁷. The long-rehearsed national dissident role *Hamlet* played during the past century has run its course as totalitarian regime after regime collapsed and the European Union has been reconfigured; wider concerns (military, religious, financial) have occupied the international theatre of politics and preoccupied UK *Hamlets* in some seminal productions of the play, such as the Royal National’s in 2000 or the Royal Shakespeare Company’s in

2001. Recently, other Shakespeare tragedies have replaced *Hamlet* in its political role(s). Taking on board, with versatility, the new world conflicts (the Gulf War, the Balkan Wars, the Darfur crisis, religious clashes and the recession), *Macbeth* has remained Shakespeare's «most straightforwardly political play»²⁸ and was joined more recently by *Othello*; when *Hamlet* scored its lowest, in 2002 and 2006, *Macbeth* – the new political play – scored highest among Shakespeare's tragedies performed on the British stage²⁹.

«To go or not to go to war?» was the question two *Hamlets*, ten years apart, posed in Stratford-upon-Avon: Red Shift's touring production which visited the Bard's hometown in 2000 for a short run at The Other Place, and the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2008 box-office success. Their answers couldn't have been more different. *Hamlet: First Cut* was «a modern brutalist rendition of the First Quarto» played «against a thunderous contemporary rock score»³⁰ performed live by the actors on the «versatile set of jagged broken metal and steel obelisks»³¹ – a sci-fi post-war wasteland. Compared to Jonathan Holloway's production, in which war and its aftermath permeated everybody's life and the fight for power in this gun and drug ridden Elsinore sent this world spiralling down to destruction at dizzying speed, Doran's shiny Elsinore and its domestic politics were composed and sanitised – much like the British real life in which war featured (and continues to do so) mainly as brief news items and diplomatic talk. Despite its insistent focus on the (royal) family tragedy and the half-elimination of its political hinge, Fortinbras, war loomed over this heavily chandeliered Elsinore. The two productions provided conflicting responses to respective military events in British history: if Red Shift's production dealt openly with Britain's struggle regarding its participation in the recent war(s) and brought it home, the 2008 production went out of its way to shut out this messy issue. Beside presenting a non-committal Hamlet (when encountering Fortinbras' marching army) and choreographing the one gunshot (in the murder of Polonius) for maximum theatrical effect, Greg Doran's production cut out most of the final scene: gone were both Fortinbras' «rights of memory in this country» and any references to Hamlet's military rites of burial. A silent (silenced?) Fortinbras received the legacy of this Elsinore while Hamlet had the last word (or, indeed, gave the final order?): «The rest is silence».

Though a near-full-text production, Jonathan Miller's *Hamlet* at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol (2008) was equally diplomatic. This *Hamlet's* political neutrality was achieved by resorting to full period dress and to a story of personal grieving (both appropriate to the intimate in the round space, seating 300) displacing the political machinations that incapacitated this Prince (albeit well-known to him throughout). Like David Tennant's Prince in Doran's production, Jamie Ballard's Hamlet longed for human contact and for his family to be restored; his increasing isolation (after Ophelia's betrayal) was all the more strikingly painful in Miller's claustrophobic Elsinore, boxed in by three

pews that made the fixed set of this production, where both Hamlet's and the Ghost's outstretching ultimately failed to bring the desired hand touch. They were not granted even the temporary reunion – albeit seen only by the Prince not by his mother – at the end of Doran's closet scene in the beautifully choreographed family picture: sitting on the same bed, father and mother, trying to comfort their son. It was this pacifying trait that the two brothers (both played by Patrick Stewart in Doran's production) shared and that made Claudius, who was calm, composed, dignified till the end, a more dangerous political adversary and, perversely, Gertrude's natural choice after the King's death. Inferred only twice in this production, both his successful diplomacy and his court under constant surveillance (behind the double mirrors décor used as such only in the scene of Polonius' murder) kept the war threat outside this Elsinore and off this production's agenda.

Its agenda was of a different kind. In 2002, when asked in an interview for “The Guardian”: «Is there anything we're particularly good/bad at in this country? What do you think are the industry's real strengths and weaknesses compared with theatre elsewhere?», Greg Doran – then fresh in his artistic directorship of the Royal Shakespeare Company – replied: «If we do anything well in this country, it's classical theatre. It's one of our great exports, and it's one of the things people come here to see – we shouldn't erode that»³². The unhidden agenda of his 2008 *Hamlet* was precisely export – not primarily international (though that too), but domestic. Following shortly the RSC's educational department campaign in English schools “Stand Up For Shakespeare” (March 2008), this production decidedly worked – albeit by different means – to bring in audiences novice not only to Shakespeare but also to theatre in general. By casting a British TV cult figure in the lead, by offering an easy to digest interpretation of the play, in modern dress (in court tuxedos and formal frocks, in private t-shirts with Levi's or capris), and seasoned well with running around, comedy, wit, and some Shakespeare school lessons (the all-male grotesque dumb show serving as both), it did precisely that: it «ensure[d] that young people have the best possible experience of Shakespeare» not just in schools. As Doran declared, «if I chose to do my own “Eternity” *Hamlet* I would almost certainly frighten away many of that constituency»³³. Speaking of the RSC Shakespeare “exports”, Doran's 2008 *Hamlet* continued (and now has completed) its community work – of popularising *Hamlet* to theatre audiences otherwise more accustomed to the domestic TV screening of *Dr Who* series – via multi-media distribution in visual format. This *Hamlet* was broadcast, on Boxing Day 2009, by BBC2 and was released on DVD in January 2010. And in doing so, it continued to subsidise the refurbishment of its venues (a project started in 2006 and completed in 2011) and reinforced its maker's status: «the premier professional Shakespearean acting company worldwide»³⁴.

Given this claim to fame, it is rather intriguing how many letdowns (worthy of a novice) came to pass in this production: the stage space and set potential

remained largely unexplored (much as is Alice Chitty's "thrust" proscenium design for the RST 2001 *Hamlet*) and uncomfortable for the actors (save for Tennant who enjoyed racing around); scenes were blocked to project forward thus ignoring the basic demands of a space in the round and about two-thirds of the audience. The most puzzling choice, however, was the production's poster and programme cover: a digitally altered *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* which featured a Hamlet not contemplating the world, but one turning its back to the world and looking us in the face, instead. Which interpretations this *Hamlet* took on board (whether unwittingly or not) and which it rebuked when engaging with Friedrich's painting – take for example, nineteenth-century German Romanticism, or Nazi nationalism, or Disney industry appropriation, all of which the reception of Friedrich's work experienced during the twentieth century – remains anyone's guess.

Hello, Sweet Prince

If Bristol cast Hamlet as an emotional (yet not sentimental!) young Prince and the RSC gave stage to a Hamlet who explored fruitfully the comedy of the part³⁵, the rival Donmar *Hamlet* at Wyndham's Theatre (2009) was a star vehicle production that exploited a(n unscripted) novelty of Hamlet's character. With Jude Law in the lead, the Prince became the "sexpot" Dane in a production that sold out well before the start of its run in London and its transfer to Broadway. That this production was part of an entire season designed to boost the Donmar's presence in the West End via its one year residency at Wyndham's Theatre had been public domain since September 2008³⁶.

How exactly this *Hamlet* was going to cash in on the profile of the star employed for the job became apparent from the first moments: the production began with a still photo shot – Law crouched down at the centre of a dark empty stage, a single light beam down on him, as if teasing the audience with the play's first line «Who's there?». Later on, his «To be or not to be» soliloquy delivered «with earthly eloquence», barefooted, in falling snow (stage depth lit for full effect), concluded with a Hamlet literally weighed down against the cold walls of this snowy Elsinore – another photo shot lapped up by the reviews. These two stills were the only moments when Law's always-on-the-move-Hamlet stopped; he was no introvert and «no brooding philosopher/prince; he [was] an angry young man, a bundle of nerves forever threatening to explode» – which he did in the closet scene, and later when realising that Ophelia was dead. Besides his extremely physical (and over-gestural) performance – which won him a string of titles (from the "Yoga" Prince, hyperkinetic, mercurial, who "capers about", to a Hamlet who renders sign language assisted performance superfluous, "Spark Notes" Hamlet) – «Law also capture[d] the more tender feelings and contradictions that ma[d]e this tortured hero at once elusive and essentially human – particularly in his soliloquies, which [we]re

both muscular and exquisitely lyrical»³⁷ and in his relation to Ophelia, whom this Hamlet loved (more than his lines) passionately and sincerely throughout (not just in the funeral scene).

Trolling the reviews, from broadsheets to glossy magazines, it seems that only Michael Coveney found it hard to «warm to this husky Prince»³⁸. All reviewers, from both sides of the Atlantic, acknowledged this Hamlet as a site of conflict: once again, alas, this had nothing to do with war or politics, but rather with the press disputing its attention between this Prince's stage life and his other life. Law's powerful performance against the rest of the cast's rather cardboard presence was unanimously noted, a comparison which by no means aims to detract from the merits of the former. On the contrary, it would have been interesting to see if and how Law's Hamlet's complexity of character and stage presence worked in great company, like the one Tennant enjoyed at the RSC and Ballard at The Tobacco Factory.

Multi-media *Hamlets*

As in the case of the RSC 2008 *Hamlet*, the production was disputed by the mass media and had an anachronistic double existence on stage and on page. The latter, much hyped in anticipation, intertwined this production's Shakespeare credentials (initially advertised as directed by Kenneth Branagh, who opened the Donmar season as Ivanov in Chekhov's play) with the star's biography (his Oscar and Globe nominations as well as his previous London stage adventures in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Dr Faustus*)³⁹ and his night life throughout the production run. In Tennant's case, even when he was absent from the production (due to a back injury), the reviews of Edward Bennett's performance (normally Laertes) (re)sold the production under titles such as «Hamlet without David Tennant: the Verdict» and the RSC as «a true ensemble company»⁴⁰. Following up Tennant and Law groupie-style, the press didn't stop making these *Hamlets* and raising the profile of these two cult figures. It jumped at the news that the RSC production was going to be released on DVD. Though sold as such, this was no novelty either for the RSC or for director Greg Doran: his *Macbeth* had been filmed for Channel 4, and both *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale* were released on DVD. What was novel in the case of a *Hamlet* theatre production was the marketing of the release (and its targeted audience) reminiscent of a blockbuster movie or a popular fiction release. Consolidating the production's impact as the new *Hamlet* of our times was the BBC 2 contract that aimed restore the production's Time Lord to his TV medium and his wider audience. Jude Law's adventures as the Dane and the production's quest for Shakespeare authority didn't finish with the production's sold out run at Wyndham's Theatre, London, either. This Dane went to Broadway – where Law first trod the boards in 1995 and received a Toni nomination – in another sold out twelve-week run and much

raved about in the reviews. In between, though, the production travelled to Denmark, for a six-night run, to claim «the highest accolade for any thesp. Law [...] be[ing] the first actor since Kenneth Branagh in 1988 to play the Dane at “home” – Kronborg Castle»⁴¹.

Factory *Hamlet*

A product of the national Shakespeare factory, Doran's *Hamlet* offered the full RSC package: “authentic” in the round venue, live music, good verse and ensemble work⁴². On his fourth return to the play⁴³, Jonathan Miller's *Hamlet* traded on the Bristol based company main trait: site-specificity. The tobacco factory warehouse was turned into an intimate completely in the round Elsinore, where the audience was treated to a seventeenth-century dress tragedy acutely present. The same seventeenth-century threat was in the air when rumours of The Factory staging *Hamlet* surfaced: this was the brainchild of Tim Carroll (former associate director for the Globe, London, and recently directing for the RSC at the Courtyard). *Hamlet* couldn't have been more different at The Factory, a young company (founded in 2006 and ran by Carroll and two 28-year old actors) «working on the principle of being as free as possible, free from conventional theatre spaces, free from conventional theatre processes, and free from theatre economics»⁴⁴. The «hottest ticket in town» in 2009-2011, this project's «ethos [wa]s not so much site-specific as site-unspecific, changing location every week»: in February 2009 «it pitched up at the Riverside Studios and performed one act in the underpass alongside the theatre and another on the banks of the Thames»⁴⁵; in October, it moved – within one week – from the Railway Arch, Clapham (11 October) to the Bristol Old Vic (16-17 October). This was possible because The Factory has been playing this secret cult – and low cost – “unrepeatable” *Hamlet* by «preferably hijacking a theatre stage currently dressed for a different production. Word of mouth or e-mail announcement a few days before are the only ways of knowing where it's on. Audiences are given badges so they can recognise each other later, like a secret society [...] Every ticket costs a tenner and the cast are a big revolving group of unpaid actors [now around 180!], so if anybody is away working, the show will go on»⁴⁶. Cast afresh every night through a paper/scissors/stone contest – leaving company members who have won «delighted, fearful, triumphant, and those who had not: disappointed, relieved, pissed off» says Catherine Bailey, one time Ophelia at the «crumbling Wilton's Music Hall in the east end, built in 1858»⁴⁷ – the *Hamlet Skull*⁴⁸ is the school of a rolling rehearsal made with direct audience involvement. They were invited to bring along CDs that make the *ad hoc* soundtrack and to prop the show: «a remote control» was «used by Marcellus to combat the ghost on “Shall I strike it with my partisan?”», a make-up bag with powder in it [...] created a cloud when it was struck by Hamlet as he said “Do you see yonder cloud”,

and a telephone used by Polonius as he dialled up to hear Hamlet’s love letters to Ophelia»⁴⁹. Elsewhere on tour, an orange bucket stood for Polonius’ arras; Ophelia in her mad scene used one night a marrow the other a BB gun; a toy koala and a flipper served to explain the difference between deliberate and accidental drowning; umbrellas or tennis-rackets served as rapiers in the duel. This kind of precious intensity of the show lies precisely in the fact that, like the challenges (actors, part, space, props, audience), the solutions *cannot be repeated*. This theatrically risqué method was not without risks – as when distinguishing between the indoor *versus* outdoor scenes in the play, for example – but offered extraordinary *ad hoc* solutions. As Catherine Bailey (Ophelia) recalls, «there was [...] a wonderful fleeting moment when Hamlet said “methinks I see my father” and looked directly at Bobby who was on his own upstairs in the gallery, filming the show. Horatio said “Where my lord?” and Hamlet replied: “In my mind’s eye, Horatio” – amazing on so many levels! As Ophelia I was chuffed to have been given a Wonderwoman apron by Laertes in our first scene together, which didn’t come off until I saw him again in Act 4. Finally the duel was a reading contest, with Laertes and Hamlet finding two books from the audience and then frantically trying to “out sight-read” each other»⁵⁰.

The Hamlet of our times or a one night wonder?

While The Factory’s *Hamlet* defied interpretive fixity, the RSC fought on all fronts to fix and perpetuate (its version of) the play as the *Hamlet* of our times. Paradoxically, both made use of multi-media technology as subservient to their making – one post-, the other pre- performance: the RSC’s was filmed for TV and released in DVD format; The Factory’s could not have happened without the web underground movement, the only means of finding out about a performance being electronic word-of-mouth (facebook, twitter, e-mail forwards and *Hamlet Skull* e-membership). As in the case of the latter, *Hamlet* has come to talk about experimentalism in a UK theatre company, and has become the mouthpiece for the status of theatre and its mode of production in the UK (and elsewhere, given the Hungarian roots of this project and its method). In doing so, it takes to task twentieth-century theatre and its “forms and pressure” – the investment pressure of producing *Hamlet* in a repertoire run (ensemble, venue, set). It makes alternative propositions: glocal mobility – for the actors, whose absence would bring a traditional production to a halt, and for the production itself; involvement and composition of the audience, not only *Hamlet*-the-play aficionados or Hamlet-the-star fans, but true urban theatre junkies who go to great length to see a show. Not least, it turns «Facebook and playground games» into valid methods of work which «have created a production of *Hamlet* with an intensity that more than matches anything by the Donmar or RSC»⁵¹.

Where there's Will there's a way

The UK *Hamlets* discussed are, undoubtedly, of (and for) different walks of life; whilst the “forms” their individual projects took vary, they all appear to wrestle with the same “pressure”: theatre making in the new millennium which, just as in Shakespeare’s time, is a competitive business – artistically and financially. In doing so, however, the UK productions appear to trade on what elsewhere in Europe are “empty” concepts.

Regardless of the interpretive takes and artistic priorities (period, modern or no particular dress and conventions), for English productions of *Hamlet* the “text” is still held as sacrosanct. Despite necessary cuts and rearrangements (due to time, place, cast pressures), these productions still capitalised on the “authenticity” value. Incidentally, any staging of the First Quarto *Hamlet* is (still) labelled a *Hamlet* adaptation (and listed in the same category with pantos, musicals, one man shows, in the *Shakespeare Survey*). On the other hand, productions which excise Fortinbras, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or Cornelius and Reynaldo, or which rework the play for six or eight characters, or which set the play in a BMW factory complete with vintage cars, or which stage it as open air re-enactments anywhere between the twelfth century and the Victorian England, remain main stream *Hamlets* according to the *Shakespeare Survey*’s production lists.

Hamlet may not be a one man/star show (though one may be employed to boost it, as the examples have tried to illustrate), but it remains a one man story. The fact that even when scripts are drastically cut, the Prince’s lines remain untouched only opens the debate: opportunities are missed when the parallel stories in the play are truncated or plainly left out, opportunities which all regard Hamlet. Fortinbras is the first one to go, and little, if anything, is usually made of Laertes’ politically threatening return; Claudius, both in the script and in Hamlet’s speeches, has more lines than the Ghost, but is rarely given the same attention; finally, Gertrude and Ophelia are subserviently choreographed (from costume to actorly input) into the main/male story, their parts idiosyncratic especially in productions that boast with setting the play in the present².

Hamlet productions continue to flirt with the “low-high” culture dichotomy even when in practice they live off this marriage happily. This double-standard has been mutually lucrative for the parties involved. The 2008 RSC *Hamlet* seems to have fulfilled Doran’s 2002 dream: «We should be able to pay actors more so that they don’t hold out for some crap TV rather than stretch themselves in the gymnasium of the theatre. Reinvigorating the reps is so important, and we’re doing this: it will reinvigorate all the work we do»³. Though at the opposite end of the pole and living in the real world of work commitments for artists outside rep theatres (actors, directors, creative team in general), The Factory sees itself as self-perpetuating drama school, too, albeit a lower maintenance and non-profit driven one.

Another wealth of opportunities is being missed as *Hamlet* stubbornly remains the bastion of Puritanism media-wise; ironically, productions take greater pains to hide (rather than to use) the complex technology that creates the sixteenth- or nineteenth- century illusion (or some version of it). Other Shakespeare plays – the histories being a case in point – have been putting this collaboration to good use; ignoring it, ultimately deprives theatre of a growing audience that is digitally and multi-media native. As Doran commented back in 2002, «The role of theatre and live performance is becoming more and more important, more unique: it's an event, a risk. We're really building toward a big theatre, that tells big themes, big stories – we should celebrate the difference we have from these other media»⁵⁴. Perhaps as topical now as it was in 2002, Doran's comment on medium purity has acquired several more layers of national urgency (sinisterly reminiscent of the Thatcher years) – and perhaps offers one reading of this *Hamlet's* Hamlet turning his back unto the world and facing home: in the financial crisis that threatens both theatre and education, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is (still) a good bet and a national hero. For all three rep theatres, *Hamlet* had been a strategic choice. Not only was the play on the national syllabus, but each of the three had clear financial targets to meet: the Tobacco Factory Theatre was fundraising for a new ventilation system; the RSC, for its new buildings; the Donmar, to pay for the Covent Garden venue recently acquired. The Factory, on the other hand, before moving on to new writing, chose to launch their "guerrilla style" with two classics: *Hamlet* and *The Seagull*⁵⁵.

Whether on English turf or elsewhere, *Hamlet* has remained a productive editing business. As this article has argued, editing *Hamlet* in performance in the new millennium is not restricted to the textual. In the UK productions discussed, however, the tendency was to reclaim the territory of professional theatre through the "authority" of this Shakespeare play in "the language" and "tradition" it came about (illusory a claim as this may be and reminiscent of the play's nostrification during the nineteenth century in other European countries).

Elsewhere editing engages primarily with the theatrics: it is not just the spoken text that sees updating, as new translations/adaptations are commissioned for stage productions⁵⁶, but the performance, too – actorly and spectatorly. In Sibiu – Romania, *Hamlet* went multi-media in 2008: its competing stories (Hamlet's, Ophelia's, Claudius', Polonius', Laertes', Horatio's) and its competitive formats (cinema, drama therapy, stand-up comedy, TV, video art) dialogued throughout demanding first the actors then the audience to negotiate their narrative in a continuous process of "spectediting" (a participatory experience more akin to computer games and visual arts than to textual editing). Two examples were particularly telling in this production: Hamlet was disputed live on stage by two stories – one delivered by Horatio, who thus cast Hamlet as an avenger, and one by Ophelia, thus casting him as a lover; the

female characters, who choreographed their stories to begin with, were finally swallowed up by the male textual and performative narrative. Both these aspects the production put forward for “spectediting” or visual prioritising by the audience⁵⁷. Having striven throughout to capture this story, chief editor Horatio (propped with a mike, a JVC recorder, and a camcorder permanently linked to the two TV screens on stage) was revealed not as the faithful teller/preserver of Hamlet’s story – as the Prince requests him – but as performance Grave-digger. This production ended with a haunting prospect of erasure: on the play’s last line, the lights went off and in a projected image on the ceiling, Horatio and the two Grave-diggers were «piling the dust upon the quick and dead», thus blacking out the pile of dead bodies on the stage and their stories.

Who’s there?

In 2009, László Bocșárdi’s production at Metropolis Theatre, Bucharest posed this and several more questions regarding the play and its Prince: what is *Hamlet*’s role in post-dramatic theatre? How can Hamlet and audiences deal with the past and the present? What story is left to be told? Who’s there to tell “the story”? Is there anyone there to listen? Several elements of the production were crucial in articulating these questions: some spectators would have seen this production’s Hamlet (Marius Stănescu) cast as Hamlet in Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmachine* only a couple of seasons before and fewer might have seen this Claudius as Vlad Murgur’s Hamlet in 2001 (a comment perhaps as much on the old-new regime as on what actors have to do in the open market competition). The set was an old eight door cupboard whose revolving doors exposed various skeletons (a domestic looking-like Ghost, Hamlet-Ophelia’ love story, the rat behind the arras); the back of the doors doubled as the “mirror held to nature” – for actors and audience alike. Most intriguing, however, was the fact that the set itself was fitted on a revolving stage: though a mechanical facility used only on a couple of occasions, this revolving stage decided the fate of the Prince and of this production: the long wooden handle (to the left of the cupboard) which allowed for the rotation of the set was physically disputed by Hamlet and the Ghost: the young Prince pushed it clockwise – the Ghost insisted on pushing it anti-clockwise. The latter won and the story dutifully (albeit reluctantly) remembered the past.

This *Hamlet* was a story of refusniks *par excellence*: the Ghost of late King Hamlet lingered insistently and refused to let go of its “rights” to be “remembered” and “avenged”, even when knowing that such demands jeopardised the life of his own son and his country. Nagged by this selfish “old mole” Ghost, this production’s Prince was a son reluctant to believe in ghosts, fathers, history or theatre as traditions/values capable of either redeeming the past or altering the present – much like the refusnik Hamlet in Müller’s *Hamletmachine* (directed by Dragoș Galgoșiu at the Odeon, Bucharest, 2006).

This production articulated the struggle *Hamlet* as a play continues to face in Romania and in Europe, at large: the dead weight of the politicised text in translation and in previous stage versions; the past-present, East-West counter-productive dichotomies. Perhaps its most striking statement in this sense was its finale, but not because it cut the arrival of Fortinbras and gave Hamlet the last words. It was Horatio's actions in this scene which were crucial: he ignored Hamlet's request «absent thee from felicity a while/to tell my story». Telling Hamlet's story would have surrendered the play to the *posthistoire* routine it fought to escape and would have *per force* edited out the other *Hamlet* stories this (and every) production of the play contains. This Horatio chose not to do so by drinking the leftover poison and leaving his friend Hamlet and the play *Hamlet* to die at the end of the evening. His was a conscious act of erasing Hamlet's "rights of memory" in so far as it deprived the Prince of his chosen story-teller. Besides cancelling "his" story, Horatio's act aimed to free future (Hamlets/*Hamlets*) from the pressure of history, and to free *Hamlet*, the play, which has been for too long «politicised with a vengeance», of its *posthistoire* condition⁸. Memory/remembrance was no longer Hamlet's and *Hamlet*'s sole task, Bocsárdi's production suggested. His Hamlet died not as an action-slacker, a victim of political conspiracy, but simply as a victim of an indifferent (i.e., postmodern) society. When ending with Horatio performing Hamlet's "rights of memory" as a silent burial (as Nica did in 2008) or with Hamlet left prey to the realisation «Horatio, I die? / The rest *is* silence» (as Bocsárdi did in 2009), such productions refused to tie Hamlet/*Hamlet* to the past – as stories, histories, theatrics. Instead, they "gave" their audiences "pause" before posing, from beyond the grave and with renewed urgency, the question "Who's there?", thus turning the page to *Hamlet*'s and Europe's *newhistoire*.

Notes

1. C. La Rocco, *Stand Clear of the Screaming Shakespearians, Please*, in "New York Times" (14 August 2011); http://theater.nytimes.com/2011/08/15/theater/shakespeare-on-the-subway.html?_r=0.

2. H. Müller, *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage*, ed. and trans. by C. Weber, Performing Arts Journal Publications, New York 1994, p. 50.

3. *Ibid.*

4. See the discussion with Müller on what to do with this production in this unique historical situation, which I recorded at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, on 16 November 1989, see H. Müller, *Gespräche 2. 1987-1991*, in Id., *Werke*, vol. 11, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M. 2008, pp. 790-820.

5. See A. Höfele, *A Theater of Exhaustion? "Posthistoire" in Recent German Shakespeare Productions*, in "Shakespeare Quarterly", vol. 43, n. 1, 1992, pp. 80-6.

6. M. Gibinska, J. Limon (eds.), *Hamlet East-West*, Theatrum Gedanense Foundation, Gdansk 1998, p. 5.

7. J. Drakakis, *Afterword*, in J. Joughin, *Shakespeare and National Culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1997, p. 335.

8. This survey is based on the "Shakespeare Jahrbuch", *Theaterschau* 1992-2001.

9. Most performances in the nineties used either Schlegel-Tieck or Heiner Müller.

10. See, for example, Stefan Steinberg, *Die Zeit ist aus den Fugen*, 5 October 1999.

11. Lisa Jardine quoted in B. Sokolova, *Shakespeare: Man of the Millennium*, in A. L. Pu-jante, T. Hoenselaars (eds.), *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, University of Dela-ware Press, Newark 2003, p. 98.
12. See N. Cinpoeș, B. Sokolova (eds.), “Un/Happy Wrecks”: Post-1989 Tempests, in “Shake-speare Bulletin”, vol. 29, n. 3, 2011.
13. For a more extensive discussion of the performance, see L. Guntner, *Shakespeare as Transnational Discourse*, in S. Chaudhuri, C. S. Lim (eds.), *Shakespeare without English. The Re-ception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries*, Longman Pearson, Delhi 2006, pp. 168-79.
14. In German “Vermüllern”, this is a term coined by the director Frank Castorf for radically abbreviating the plot and text of the play, often inserting other textual fragments from outside, an approach similar to William Burroughs’ “cut and paste” technique of composition.
15. D. Kennedy (ed.), *Foreign Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 20.
16. Since then, the production played at the *Hamlet* edition of the International Shakespeare Festival, Craiova, Romania (2010) and the UK, visiting the Barbican Centre (2011).
17. Various excerpts from performances are now available on YouTube.
18. A. Piazza, M. Izzo, *The academia della follia’s Hamlet and global Shakespeare in Italy*, Unpublished Paper, World Shakespeare Congress (Prague 2011), p. 3.
19. Mariangela Tempera, *Good Night, Sweet Princess: Lella Costas’s One Woman Hamlet*, Unpublished Paper, World Shakespeare Congress (Prague 2011), p. 3.
20. K. Gregor, *Hamlet’s “European House” and the “Place of the Spectator”*, Unpublished Paper, World Shakespeare Congress (Prague 2011), p. 4.
21. R. Owen, *The Hamlet Zone: Reworking “Hamlet” for European Cultures*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge 2012, p. 5.
22. M. Charney, *Hamlet Without Words*, in “English Literary History”, 32, 1965, p. 470.
23. V. Yannakopoulou, *Hamlet in the dark: staging the existential core of the tragic prince*, Unpublished Paper, World Shakespeare Congress (Prague 2011).
24. J. Fabiszak, *Hamlet/Hamlet in the post-context of the Solidarity revolution*, Unpublished Paper, World Shakespeare Congress (Prague 2011).
25. My survey is informed by the regular report on “Shakespeare on the British Isle” published yearly by the *Shakespeare Survey* (see issues between 2001 and 2012).
26. The Royal Shakespeare Company and its in-house directors, however, staged new pro-ductions of *Henry VI* (1, 2, 3) and of *King Lear* in the temporary venue, The Courtyard.
27. A. Sinfield, *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Material-ism*, Routledge, London 2006.
28. L. Guntner, *Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear on Film*, in R. Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 128.
29. In 2002, *Macbeth* saw 8 new productions, 1 opera, 2 adaptations (1 in Dutch, 1 amateur), and was in close competition with *Romeo and Juliet*, which had 8 new productions, 1 musical, 1 hip-hop, 1 ballet, 1 adaptation; closely following was *Othello*, with 6 new productions, 1 adap-tation, 1 opera. In 2006, there were 6 new, 8 touring, 14 adaptations, 2 operas, and 10 amateur productions of *Macbeth*, and 5 new (1 in Korean), 1 touring, 1 ballet and 1 adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*.
30. The comment was made by the director Jonathan Holloway. For more information, see the company’s website <http://www.redshifttheatreco.co.uk/jonathanbiog.html> (Accessed July 2013).
31. L. Gardner, *Hamlet: First Cut*, in “The Guardian”, 13 September 1999.
32. Gregory Doran: *Who’s Who In British Theatre*, in “The Guardian”, 6 July 2002.
33. G. Doran, *To cut or not to cut Hamlet: there’s the rub*, in “The Times”, 4 August 2008.
34. D. E. Henderson, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, Routledge, Lon-don 2008, p. 10.
35. David Tennant was no stranger either to the stage or to the RSC, where he had been typecast in comedies – Touchstone, Antipholus of Syracuse and, post Hamlet, Berowne and will appear as Richard II in the 2013 season.
36. During the 2008-2009 season, four productions were staged by the Donmar at Wynd-ham’s Theatre, London (venue refurbished for the occasion), all directed by Michael Grandage

Chekhov's *Ivanov* (Kenneth Branagh as Ivanov and a newly commissioned play script by Tom Stoppard), Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (Derek Jacobi as Malvolio), Mishima's *Madame de Sade* (Judi Dench), and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Jude Law as Hamlet). Each production had a twelve-week run; *Hamlet* transferred to Broadway.

37. E. Gardner, *Excellence, thy name is "Hamlet" on the Broadway stage*, in "USA Today", October 7, 2009.

38. M. Covey, *First Night: Hamlet, Wyndham's Theatre, London*, in "The Independent", June 4, 2009.

39. The fact that Law attended the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, has been glossed over.

40. On how financially important his presence in the production was, see interviews which reassured the public of Tennant's return and calmed the troubled waters when the RSC refused to reimburse tickets to disillusioned *Dr Who* fans.

41. "The Mirror", 10 July 2009.

42. More on the RSC "production line": the black mirror backdrop in *Hamlet* was "on loan" from Doran's revival of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and inspired the Elsinore set; the *Hamlet* ensemble (save for Claudius/Ghost – Patrick Stewart, Gertrude – Penny Downie, Peter de Jersey – Horatio and John Woodvine – Player King) was recast in Doran's other Shakespeare for the season, a production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, directed with «fizz and finesse» in Elizabethan dress, on the same «mirrored set dominated by a huge tree festooned with dangling, leaf-coloured glass» – out of a cheap souvenir shop. See Paul Taylor, *First Night: Love's Labour's Lost, Stratford-upon-Avon*, in "The Independent", 9 October 2008.

43. Miller's *Hamlet* portfolio includes: *Hamlet*, Cambridge Arts Theatre, Cambridge, 1970 (Hugh Thomas as Hamlet), *Hamlet*, Greenwich Theatre Company, 1974 (Peter Eyre as Hamlet), and *Hamlet*, Donmar Warehouse Theatre, London, 1982, then Piccadilly Theatre, London, 1982 (Anton Lesser as Hamlet). From photographic evidence, all his *Hamlets* are in period dress (or rather what Elizabethan dress was taken to be at the respective times) and the three pews are traceable even in the rather cluttered set of his 1970 production.

44. T. Carroll, *Introduction to the Hamlet Project*, interview in Romania. <http://thefactory.wetpaint.com/page/TC+interviewed+in+Romania> [Accessed July 2013].

45. A. Jones, *Today's hottest tickets are for site-specific shows in cafés, restaurants – and railway carriages*, in "The Independent", 14 February 2008.

46. S. Heawood, *A Very Different Version of Hamlet*, in "The Times", 9 February 2008.

47. C. Bailey, *To be or not to be in Hamlet*, on The Factory's website <http://www.factory-theatre.co.uk/>.

48. On line, the Factory's *Hamlet* also goes by the name of *The Hamlet Skull* – its logo and e-poster a digitally enhance colourful skull – or by the name of *The Hamlet Project*.

49. Bailey, *To be or not to be in Hamlet*, cit.

50. *Ibid.*

51. E. Catty, *Hamlet at The Factory – Secret Shakespeare*, in "Music OMH" 5, 2008.

52. This is one aspect that deserves further attention, especially when reading recent productions of the play, for example, the Wooster Group's (2007) or Ostermeier's (2008), which cast the same actress in both parts.

53. G. Doran, *Who's Who in British Theatre*, in "The Guardian", 6 July 2002.

54. *Ibid.*

55. For more details, see the RSC's 2009 annual report and C. McGinn, *Michael Grandage on "Hamlet" and Jude Law*, in "Timeout", 19 May 2009.

56. Several projects of translating the Shakespeare canon are currently undergoing or are being considered in Portugal, Romania and Hungary.

57. For more on this concept, see N. Cinpoș, *Shakespeare's Hamlet in Romania, 1778-2008: A Study in Translation, Performance and Cultural Adaptation*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston (NY) 2010, pp. 265-79.

58. See N. Cinpoș, *Hamlet or the Skeletons in the Cupboard*, in K. Gregor (ed.), *Shakespeare and Tyranny*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming.

