

Analyzing Mexican Adaptation of Shakespeare: A Study of Onstage Violence in Richard III and Its Impact on Mexican Viewers

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Abstract : Shakespeare and Mexican theatregoers have enjoyed quite a complex relationship. Shakespearean plays have appeared on the Mexican stage with remarkable perseverance, yet with mixed success. Although Shakespeare has long been a part of the global cultural marketplace and his works are celebrated all around the world, the adaptation of his plays on the contemporary Mexican stage is always an adventure, since the works of this early modern author are frequently seen as the legacy of a 'high', but obsolete, culture, one that is quite distant from the present-day viewers' daily experiences and concerns. Moreover, Mexican productions of Shakespeare are presented mostly in Peninsular Spanish, a language similar yet alien to the language spoken in Mexico, one that does not wholly fit into the viewers' cultural praxis. This is the reason why Mexican dramatic adaptations of Shakespearean plays tend to replace the cultural references of the original piece with ones that are more significant and innate to Latin American spectators. This paper analyses the new Mexican production of Richard III adapted and directed by Mauricio Garcia Lozano, which employs onstage violence - a cultural force that is inherent to all human beings regardless of their beliefs, ethnic background or nationality - as the means to make this play more relevant to a present-day audience. Thus, this paper addresses how the bloody bombast of staged murders helps to avoid the tyranny of a rigid framework of fixed meanings that denies the possibility of an intercultural appropriation of this European play written over four hundred years ago. The impact of violence displayed in Garcia Lozano's adaptation of Richard III on Mexican audiences will also be examined. This study is particularly relevant in Mexico where the term 'tragedy' has become a commonplace and where drug wars and state-sanctioned violence have already taken the lives of many people.

Keywords : audience, dramatic adaptation, Shakespeare, viewer

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