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“What’s in a Name?” Authorship as (Micro)Genre in the Paratext of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project

Eli Løfaldli

- 1 Modern prose adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays have crossed many borders – generic, cultural, temporal – and the novels commissioned and published as part of Penguin Random House’s Hogarth Shakespeare project are no exception: they involve a series of such recontextualisations of Shakespeare’s work. In the project, which is still ongoing, a series of novelists was commissioned to retell a Shakespeare play in prose form. The series began with the publication of Jeanette Winterson’s version of *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Gap of Time*, in 2015, and it will be concluded with the publication of Gillian Flynn’s retelling of *Hamlet*. Three novels were published in 2016: Howard Jacobson’s *Shylock is My Name* (a retelling of *The Merchant of Venice*), Anne Tyler’s *Vinegar Girl* (*The Taming of the Shrew*) and Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* (*The Tempest*); in 2017 Tracy Chevalier’s *New Boy* (*Othello*) and Edward St. Aubyn’s *Dunbar* (*King Lear*) were released, and Jo Nesbø’s *Macbeth* was published in 2018. Continuing “a lengthy history of Shakespearean reconceptualisations”, the project also contributes to the current tendency of “updating Shakespeare’s works and substituting a modern idiom for Shakespeare’s” (Cavanagh 99; Lanier 230).
- 2 The commissioned authors and the popular conceptions of their work as representative of a certain form of writing play a particularly important role in the process of establishing a new generic framework for the modern reworkings of Shakespeare’s plays: the adaptation process involves not only a recontextualisation of the material from the genre of drama to that of prose, but the choice of author to adapt it may also serve to locate the adaptation in a very specific subgenre, or microgenre, defined by the connotations engendered by the modern author’s *oeuvre* – and frame its reception accordingly. Genre fulfils an important function in establishing readers’ horizons of expectation and informing their reading of literary works (e.g. Jauss x; Fish 36.). What E.D. Hirsch described as a “tendency of the mind to use old types as the foundation of

new ones" is often activated before a text is even read, offering what Thomas O. Beebee terms "a set of 'handles'" on a given literary text (Hirsch 104; Beebee 14). Both genre and authorship, whether conflated or seen separately, are usually already established in the paratext. As Gérard Genette has famously shown, the paratext is a "threshold" and "a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but of *transaction*" which guides the reception and reading of the text (Genette 1-2). It is where the text's "relation with potential and actual readers" is organised and where the "frames and filters through which we look at, listen to, and interpret" texts are established (Birke and Christ 67; Gray 3). It is also an important locus for the implicit and explicit expression of notions of authorship, ownership and authority, especially through their function of "assigning *value*" to a given text (Birke and Christ 70, Gray 81).

- 3 In order to investigate the role of the author's name as a signal of a (micro)generic recontextualisation, I will analyse the elements of the paratexts of the novels published as part of the Hogarth Shakespeare project that most readers encounter before going on to reading the actual texts themselves (which I will not be discussing). Since the part of the paratext that surrounds the text – what Genette would term the peritext – has a particularly important function in framing, positioning and marketing the literary work, particular attention will be paid to material such as novel covers, dust jackets, dedications, and so on. In addition, I will discuss the immediate critical reception of the Hogarth Shakespeare series as it appeared in newspaper reviews published before, during or immediately after the publication of the novels.¹ The appearance of Jo Nesbø's name on the cover of *Macbeth*, the newspaper reviewers' discussions of Edward St. Aubyn as a reteller of *King Lear*, or letting Gillian Flynn adapt *Hamlet* are all ways of making creative use of popular conceptions of the modern authors evoked by their very names to reframe, revise and re-energise Shakespeare's work for new audiences, partly by way of the specific form of generic recontextualisation that they bring about.

Genre, microgenre and general descriptions of the project

- 4 The notion of genre, of course, is both simple and complex. We may understand immediately what the term denotes, but at the same time, its content is notoriously slippery, functioning as it does "simultaneously as a discursive act, a communication tool, and a means of cultural, ideological, and social mediation" (Moine xvi). Rick Altman has also noted that genre cannot merely be seen as a descriptive term, but may have several meanings and functions. Writing about film, but equally relevant for the study of literary texts, Altman distinguishes between "genre as *blueprint*, as a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns" cultural productions, "genre as *structure*, as the formal framework" that serves as the basis for later works, "genre as *label*, as the name of a category central to the decisions and communications" of industry actors and "genre as *contract*, as the viewing position" (or, in the case of literature, reading position) required of the audience of a text affiliated with a given genre (Altman 14). In relation to how authors' names function as generic markers, the key concerns are the understanding and function of genre as "label" and "contract": the Hogarth Shakespeare retellings are anchored to specific genres defined in part by the commissioning of specific authors, and the generic markers in their paratexts in turn work to enable a desired reading position and frame the reading of the text itself.

5 When considering genre in terms of its function as "label", inherent complexities and complicated networks of generic affiliations come to the fore, and the Hogarth Shakespeare novels are a case in point. Each of the commissioned modern novel versions of a Shakespeare play makes use of genre markers that align them with a wide set of sometimes interrelated types of genre. They belong to a very broad literary genre: they are novels (rather than plays or poems). They are also adaptations; another general textual genre. Moreover, they are affiliated with subgenres within those generic frameworks, such as those of Shakespearean adaptations, retellings and generic recontextualisations. Perhaps more unusually, but especially important in this context: they can also be said to belong to a specific *microgenre* – defined by the parameters set by the literary production and public perception of a given author and evoked by the mere mention of that author's name. Although relevant for and used about works from any period, the term microgenre has been most commonly associated with the digital age, new media and the world of music. Molly C. O'Donnell and Anne H. Stevens have described microgenres as "hyper-specific formulas and subgenres", and have demonstrated the significance of the generic phenomenon in today's media landscape:

Netflix has highlighted our fascination with the ultra-niche genre with hilariously specific classifications – 'independent dramedy featuring a strong female lead' – that can sometimes hit a little too close to home. The streaming giant has identified 76,897 different microgenres in its algorithms and has used them to great effect in developing hit new series like *House of Cards* and *Orange Is the New Black*. On Amazon you can find categories as microscopic as dinosaur erotica (sample title: *Ravished by the Triceratops*) and quilting cozy mysteries (Sample title: *Quilt or Innocence: A Southern Quilting Mystery*), while the worlds of electronica and metal can be parsed into dozens of sub-sub-genres (1).

6 The functions of genre as label and genre as contract can also be seen to be interrelated in the case of the microgenre signalled by an individual author's name. The name becomes an immediately recognisable label that frames the reception of a text via the contract into which it invites the reader to enter, even if this contract is only a "preliminary communicative pact" – it may be reviewed, revised or rejected throughout the reading or viewing process or in the text itself (Moine 91).

7 The novels in the series are given a very specific label: they are consistently presented and marketed as *retellings* of Shakespeare's plays. Atwood's *Hag-Seed* is "*The Tempest* retold", Jacobson's *Shylock is My Name* is "*The Merchant of Venice* retold", Tyler's *Vinegar Girl* is "*The Taming of the Shrew* retold" and so on. The phrase arguably suggests a focus on work over author and accentuates the status of the original, and it is often included on the back cover of the editions. However, the notion of a story "retold" also emphasises repetition and artistic reworking in equal measure, suggesting that the new story will be of (almost) equal interest and worth as the old one and that it has become a thing unto itself. The retelling borrows authority from the Shakespeare work and offers an updated perspective and readerly and aesthetic pleasure in return. In fact, the phrase "a Shakespeare play retold" can also be seen as a genre marker: it indicates that the new text belongs to the aforementioned ever-present, ever-growing and immediately recognisable genre of modern recontextualisations of Shakespeare.

8 The description of the Hogarth Shakespeare project as included on the last pages of the editions plays into and on the expectations generated by this familiar literary and adaptational subgenre. The description of the project to which the commissioned novels belong was originally introduced thus:

'He was not of an age, but for all time' Ben Jonson

For more than four hundred years Shakespeare's works have been performed, read and loved throughout the world. They have been reinterpreted for each new generation, whether as teen films, musicals, science-fiction flicks, Japanese warrior tales or literary transformations (see e.g. Tyler).

- 9 Although the Jonson quotation is a clear signal that this is a genre that is anchored in the content and quality of Shakespeare's work, the focus here is on the genre itself and the type of works that it usually includes, placing even popular-cultural reworkings almost on a par with the texts that they have adapted, even if the justification for such retellings is safely rooted in Shakespeare's inherent timelessness. This tendency is further consolidated in the revised version of the Hogarth Shakespeare description in other editions in the series, where the introductory quotation from Jonson is replaced by the following phrases:

The world's favourite playwright
 Today's best-loved novelists
 Timeless stories retold (see e.g. Atwood)

- 10 Rather than emphasising the inherent universality and authority of Shakespeare, he is our "favourite"; his plays reworked by our "best-loved" authors, implying a focus on readerly affection and appeal. In addition to signalling the generic recontextualisation from drama to prose, the revised introduction actually goes on to define what lies at the core of the genre of modern versions of Shakespeare's texts more generally: "Timeless stories retold" is a phrase that aptly describes what lies at the heart of this genre, but also one that presupposes similar value and interest of the original and retelling alike and contributes to the notion that Shakespeare's plays in modern guise constitute a distinct genre.

Author-work pairings

- 11 The network of genres and subgenres to which the novels in the Hogarth Shakespeare project can be said to simultaneously belong and contribute is even more finely honed at the end of the standard descriptions of the publishing venture, as it concludes with an alphabetically ordered list of the commissioned authors and the texts they will be retelling or have retold:

Margaret Atwood, *The Tempest*
 Tracy Chevalier, *Othello*
 Gillian Flynn, *Hamlet*
 Howard Jacobson, *The Merchant of Venice*
 Jo Nesbo, *Macbeth*
 Edward St Aubyn, *King Lear*
 Anne Tyler, *The Taming of the Shrew*
 Jeanette Winterson, *The Winter's Tale*

- 12 Already with this list, readerly presumptions of what to expect from each of the novels are activated along predictable lines, and a meaning-generating microgeneric framework of sorts is set up for the individual texts. As Douglas M. Lanier has noted, according to a promotional video released at the beginning of the project, the commissioned authors were "free to choose their favorite Shakespeare play for adaptation" (Lanier 232). Whether this happened in each case is uncertain, and many reviewers took the commissioning to include a simultaneous allocation of a given Shakespeare play – presumably mirroring the assumptions made by many readers.

Even in cases where the pairing of a novelist with a play may have jarred with perceptions of their appropriateness, reviewers were quick to pick up on the links between what the novelists represented and why they had chosen or been asked to rework their specific play. One noted that “[t]he profiles and defining interests of the writers so far matched to assorted plays [...] encourage and indeed fulfil predictable expectations of what each will do with and to the original work”, for instance, whilst another criticised the project in part by listing the pairings and drily commenting “(See what I mean?)” (Boyagoda; Groskop on Tyler). Some of the author-text matches were seen to be particularly obvious. The general view on the commissioning of Howard Jacobson, for instance, was that he “was never going to be paired with anything other than *The Merchant of Venice*”, “the pairing of St. Aubyn with *Lear*” was presented as “predestined” and “[n]o marks” were given “for deducing that Margaret Atwood has decided to retell *The Tempest*” (Walton; Gilbert; Battersby on Atwood. See also e.g. Patrick, Heathcote, Leland). Indeed, expectations of what was to come were so strong that even well before its publication, Gillian Flynn’s version of *Hamlet* was given a rating of 4.06 stars on Goodreads, and interpretations based on anticipation alone were eagerly offered: “Can *Hamlet* get any darker?” one commentator asked, before providing the answer: “Probably, after it gets the *Gone Girl* treatment” (Goodreads.com; Gibson).

Types of genre markers associated with authors

- 13 The sign of the author’s name, then, was enough to frame both presumptive and actual readings of the individual novels, which is suggestive of the general function of the author’s name as a marker of a certain microgenre with its own set of genre markers. What, then, are the genre criteria at work in these cases? And upon which criteria and groups of characteristics are they usually based? Again, the immediate critical reception of the novels in the Hogarth Shakespeare project may serve to help: among reviewers’ many skills is the ability to make the implicit explicit – to put criteria and expectations that are shared, but often unspoken, into words – and the reviews of the novelistic retellings in focus here confirm that. The newspaper reviews of these novels do not only typically include concrete descriptions of the characteristics of each of the writers and their work, but also shared features and types of criteria that appear to guide what is seen to belong to what defines a given author.
- 14 First, the status of the author emerges as a defining feature, either in terms of their competence or their popularity, or a combination of both. Margaret Atwood is “one of the great living writers in English”, Tracy Chevalier is a “gifted author” and Edward St. Aubyn an “immensely talented writer”, while Jeanette Winterson is presented in terms of her past literary successes, most notably by having authored classic and successful novels such as *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (Goldsworthy; McCrum; Clanchy; Miller; Dalley). References to past successes in the form of official accolades are another way of emphasising their skill and status: referring to Howard Jacobson’s Man Booker Prize or Anne Tyler’s Pulitzer Prize emphasises their literary status and enmeshes their literary authority and proven skills in the description of who they are as novelists (e.g. Mahony; Goldfarb; Turpin). Jo Nesbø is a slight exception in this regard. Instead of via high-culture credentials, his status is acknowledged (sometimes begrudgingly) through references to his popularity and craftsmanship. He is typically cast as the bestselling

"king of Scandi noir", offering the readerly pleasure of "watching a crack storyteller put his noir stamp on one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies" (Poole; Drabelle. See also Scholes; Sharma; Heathcote; Burke). Being a "crack storyteller" is not bad, but it is not quite the same as being seen as a "gifted author" or an "immensely talented writer". Nonetheless, even the descriptions of Nesbø highlight both his skill and his popularity, both of which contribute to an author's status and standing in the literary world, which in turn become integral to defining the microgenre that is evoked by the mention of their individual names.

- 15 Another recurring feature with genre-descriptive consequences comes in the form of various references to the authors' previous works. This happens through the mention of titles, characters and groups of previous publications, often ones that are generally well-known and can therefore work as a shorthand description. Mentioning Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* or Edward St. Aubyn's Melrose novels, for instance, not only elicits connotations of critical and commercial success, but also denotes a certain kind of writing (e.g. Richardson; Sethi; Foster; Gilbert; Quinn). The same applies to references to specific characters, such as Jo Nesbø's detective Harry Hole, or character types like Anne Tyler's "quirky heroines" (e.g. Scholes; Heathcote; Burke; McAlpin; Hertzell). Beyond signifying a distinct individual microgenre, such references may also point to the broader literary subgenres within which the authors tend to operate, and which in turn serve to characterise their individual writing – for Chevalier, historical fiction; for St. Aubyn, autobiographical fiction; for Nesbø, crime fiction or Scandi noir. Various levels of genre are signalled paratextually.
- 16 The invocation of the author's *oeuvre* can also find expression in other forms than references to their literary texts, characters and preferred genres in reviews. Central themes and recurring preoccupations in their literary output are also typically highlighted in this kind of material, contributing to the definition of the distinguishing features associated with a given author. It is of course the features most relevant for the novel under review that are highlighted, so thematic and other preoccupations that have been deemed irrelevant for the novel in question may be missing. Moreover, given the fact that these are retellings of various Shakespeare plays, it is not surprising that the focus is on the points of connection among the modern novels and the old plays, consequently making explicit some of the implicit inferences to be made by the "naturalness" of the pairing of each of the authors with a given play.
- 17 In Atwood's case, it is a recent interest in "[w]riting about goodness" along with an earlier concern with "[e]vil twins and slippery doubles" that is emphasised, while for Chevalier, it is her literary preoccupation with representations of "outsiders" and the "talismanic power of objects" in her former novels, especially *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*, that is brought into the description of her authorship ("Book Review: Hag-Seed"; Abrams on Atwood; Sethi). For Jacobson, it is his career-long interest in Jewishness and Jewish identity, along with his many representations of Jewish characters and amusing "stereotypical depictions of conservative Judaic attitudes" that is typically highlighted (Martiny. See also e.g. Abrams on Jacobson; Herman; Gonzales; Lasdun; Merritt on Jacobson). Convergences between Nesbø's work and *Macbeth* are typically seen to revolve around the darkness of setting and atmosphere, but also thematic links such as "the nature of evil, struggle with inner demons, the question of choice, violence, greed, loss and self-destruction" (Sharma. See also e.g. Finch, Heathcote, Cannon). The most commonly commented feature of St. Aubyn's work is a

notable thematic focus on dysfunctional families (even leading one reviewer to state that he “has built a career out of family pain”), but his inclusion of complex female characters and stylistic features with thematic consequences such as a thoroughgoing combination of comedy and tragedy are also traits that keep appearing in the reviews of his novel (Quinn; e.g. Clanchy, Gilbert, “Book Review: Dunbar”). Tyler’s far more positive depictions of family life and especially marriage are held by many to be central to her work, and the geographical transposition of *The Taming of the Shrew* to Baltimore is seen as characteristic of her usual focus on middle America and her status as a Baltimore writer (e.g. Battersby on Tyler; Fischer; Turpin; Elliott). In Winterson’s case, it is her ability to present “insights into love and grief” and, perhaps most significantly, her tendency to incorporate elements of myth, fairy tale and magic that are presented as typical traits of her literary works (Merritt on Winterson; Miller; Dalley).

- 18 The descriptions of Winterson as an author illustrate the existence of a further component that may be part of the connotative power of an author’s name: their personal history. The author’s autobiography is given particular pride of place when the author is known for using it in previous works of autofiction, such as when Winterson’s own experience as an adopted child and St. Aubyn’s troubled upbringing are mentioned outright or more indirectly referenced (Miller; Dalley; Quinn; Dickson). Jacobson’s literary preoccupation with Jewish identity is also placed in the context of his own Jewishness, both through the overt mention of the fact, and also via more indirect hints at his identity as a Jew, for instance by describing how he writes “with glorious chutzpah” (Mahony; Abrams on Jacobson). The fact that his novel is reviewed in publications such as *Jewish Renaissance* and *Jewish Book Council* also serves to emphasise his Jewishness (Goldfarb, Herman). The various writers’ nationality is also commonly referenced, especially when they are not British. The fact that Atwood is Canadian and Nesbø Norwegian is mentioned, and Tyler and Chevalier are considered in relation to their American hometowns of Baltimore and Washington D.C. (e.g. Groskop on Atwood; Drabelle; Fischer; Foster).
- 19 A final trend that emerges in the immediate critical reception of the novels in the Hogarth Shakespeare project is the focus on the various authors’ distinct writing style, typically consisting of a conglomerate of their uses of language and more general, perhaps often intangible elements associated with their work – a certain something, a *je ne sais quoi* – that gives rise to connotations that are presumably shared by reviewers and potential readers. Offering a medley of some of the terms used to describe their work might echo the rush of connotations elicited at the mention of their names: Margaret Atwood, for instance, writes in “captivating prose” with “gusto and mischief”, “joy and hilarity” and “bravado”; her novel “sparkles” with her “characteristic wit and play with language” in “her taut and ever shimmering prose”; she is a “funny” author whose current novel is “a barrel of laughs” (Cage; Groskop on Atwood; “Book Review: Hag-Seed”; Awad; Battersby on Atwood). Tracy Chevalier writes “thoughtfully” and “with typical aplomb”, while Jacobson displays his “gift for comedy” in his usual “relaxed, garrulous style” (Richardson; McCrum; Herman; Lasdun).
- 20 Jo Nesbø, on the other hand, includes typical “exciting set pieces – drug busts gone wrong, car chases, and shoot-outs” displaying his “ghoulish imagination and sense of atmosphere” in a “dark, DC Comics-style” setting (Sharma; Heathcote). Edward St. Aubyn is presented as “one of our blackest, most surreal and hectic wits”, a “master

prose stylist" who "writes like a fencer fences – so elegantly that it disguises the sharpness of his strike" in the style familiar from his former "exquisite" and "magnificent" novels (Clanchy; Gilbert; Quinn). "Fun, accomplished, readable, enjoyable" Anne Tyler uses her "delicate gifts" and "flutey, organic imagination" to craft an "amiable retelling" in her typical style: "fun, light-hearted, clever, compassionate and filled with Tyler's always extraordinary love for her characters", while Jeanette Winterson, "one of the most original literary voices of our time", has written a text with "characteristic wit and poetry" and "bold and poetic prose" that displays "powerful feelings of loss and abandonment" (Groskop on Tyler; Battersby on Tyler; Elliott; Turpin; Fischer; Miller; Merritt on Winterson; Dalley).

- 21 The individual authors' status and competence, other well-known texts that they have written, recurring themes and preoccupations in their work, autobiographical information about them, their writing style – these are some of the variables by which a given author's name elicits substantive and shared connotations, to the extent that their very name signals a very specific microgenre. In the peritext of the novels in the Hogarth Shakespeare series, the connotations evoked do fall into similar categories as those of the reviews, working to play into pre-existing conceptions of the authors to frame and market their work. Phrases like "The new thriller from the number one bestseller" on the cover of Nesbø's *Macbeth* or "Winner of the Man Booker Prize" on that of Jacobson's version of *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, serve as clear signals of their status and competence. Similarly, references to their previous literary works can be found, such as when St. Aubyn is hailed for "his masterwork, the five Melrose novels" on a dust jacket flap, as can statements signalling how the current novel taps into familiar thematic and other concerns in their literary career, for example in the similarly placed description of Tyler's novel: "Anne Tyler's retelling of the *Taming of the Shrew* asks whether a thoroughly modern, independent woman like Kate would ever sacrifice herself for a man. The answer is as individual, off-beat and funny as Kate herself." Using words like "off-beat and funny" to characterise Tyler's novel, moreover, arguably taps into a perception of what her work usually looks like that is similar to the descriptions used elsewhere, while statements such as those included inside the dust jacket of Chevalier's *New Boy*, where the focus is on "what led her to rewrite *Othello*" and the transposition "to a 1970's suburban Washington school yard" point to the significance of autobiography in the paratextual framing of the text. Therefore, the connotations of an author's name on the cover of a novel do not only crop up as if by magic in the mind of the individual reader, but are also emphasised rhetorically in the paratext.

Old author vs. new author. The relational definition of authorship

- 22 Of course, in an endeavour like the Hogarth Shakespeare project, where the literary texts in question are retellings of another author's plays rather than ones that are primarily tied to the context of these authors' own works, the connotative power of the authors' names also functions *relationally*: whether implicitly or explicitly, the novelists are defined and positioned in relation to Shakespeare. The extent to which the new and the old author are in focus varies among the different novels in the series, and it can also find visual expression. For instance, both Jacobson's and Atwood's novels include a

stylised print of a figure immediately recognisable as William Shakespeare, whereas the corresponding print in Chevalier's reworking consists of images of strawberries – suggestive of an image that may require more knowledge of the play, namely the strawberries on the pencil case that serves as her replacement for the strawberry-strewn handkerchief in *Othello*. Other clues can be verbal: *Dunbar*, for instance, is placed in relation to St. Aubyn's authorship rather than to that of Shakespeare by providing the backdrop of his Melrose novels. They are described inside the dust jacket as "dissect[ing] with savage and beautiful precision the agonies of family life", indirectly signalling similarities with the plot of the original play. It is only St. Aubyn who is openly referenced, and his novel is presented as an independent work of art, describing it as "a devastating family story and an excoriating novel for and of our times – an examination of power, money and the value of forgiveness." In contrast, Winterson's *The Gap of Time* is introduced on the front dust jacket flap in very different terms: "Jeanette Winterson's cover version of *The Winter's Tale* vibrates with echoes of the original, but tells a contemporary story where Time itself is a player in a game of high stakes that will either end in tragedy or forgiveness", simultaneously signalling artistic affiliation and independence, along with intertextual relationships with both Shakespeare's and her own work.

- 23 The only trace of *Macbeth* on the front page of Nesbø's novel version, on the other hand, is its title. All other visual and textual elements point towards a different genre than that of the Scottish play. As has been argued, Nesbø's name alone is an effective signal of what to expect from his retelling, and this message is further amplified by iconography typically associated with crime fiction. By such means, the reader is informed that this book is not simply *Macbeth* retold (a phrase incidentally never used on its cover), but *Macbeth* retold as a very specific and recognisable type of crime novel – a Jo Nesbø novel. However, it should of course be noted that the title of a Shakespeare play may be enough of a reminder of the author, making explicit mention of Shakespeare's name superfluous, as his name and the titles of his play are "folded in together", as is commonly the case with well-known authors and well-known works of literature (Vareschi 2). All the same, it is indicative of a greater tendency in the Hogarth Shakespeare novels of downplaying or not including Shakespeare's name on the novels' covers. Some, but not all, first editions in the series include the formulaic phrase mentioned earlier, which signals that this is a Shakespeare play "retold", focusing on the individual title of the play in question by highlighting the title of the play in red font. Jeanette Winterson's *The Gap of Time*, for instance, is framed by including both the familiar phrase "William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* retold" and the title of the original play on the back cover. In addition, some of the titles in the novel series are taken from the Shakespeare play that is being retold, thus foregrounding the intertextual relationship to varying degrees – a quotation like *Shylock is My Name* is arguably more easily recognisable than *Hag-Seed* – but nonetheless work to remind the prospective reader of Shakespeare even without overtly mentioning his name. It is also interesting that many other intertextual and interpersonal debts are mentioned in many of the Hogarth Shakespeare editions, acknowledging the existence of a greater network of writers and thinkers to which many of the novelists thus indirectly state that they belong. In Howard Jacobson's acknowledgements, placed towards the end of his book, this network is expanded to include the people who facilitated his novel's unusual origin as a commissioned text, but, rather unexpectedly, leaves Shakespeare out of the group: "I won't thank the

writer of the originating play, but I must thank Juliet Brooke, Clara Famer and Becky Hardie at Hogarth for thinking I might do something with it, and my unerring agent, Jonny Geller, for agreeing with them." The humorous absence of Shakespeare's name in Jacobson's list serves as an ironic reminder of his inevitable presence in any retelling of his works.

Concluding remarks

- 24 The investigation into some of the paratexts of the Hogarth Shakespeare project has shown how a generic recontextualisation has been enacted by the evocation of a new microgeneric network signalled by the mention of the new author's name. Made explicit in newspaper reviews and referenced in the novel editions, certain sets of characteristics and variables recur: the status of the authors, references to their former work, their personal history and their writing style all appear to be some of the axes of signification along which the various microgenres associated with each of the authors are defined. Given that these are adaptations of former plays by another author, and amplified by the fact that that author is none other than William Shakespeare, microgeneric properties associated with *his* name are also folded in with those of the retellers – along with the prestige a pairing with Shakespeare inevitably brings.
- 25 One of the dangers of analysing a novel's paratext is the inherently unstable nature of such material. As Marius Warholm Haugen has pointed out, analyses of paratexts may "illustrate how much the objects we deal with as literary critics are complex and unstable, as they differ significantly from one edition to another, altering, as it were, the hermeneutical object" (71). This applies to the novels that are part of the Hogarth Shakespeare project as well: the hermeneutical object changes with each new published edition, each review printed or posted and with each translation into a different language, which may both include emended paratextual matter and differing connotations connected to text, author and titles alike. Changes like the inclusion of an image of Elisabeth Moss upon which the marketing staple "From the author of *The Handmaid's Tale*" was superimposed on the cover of a paperback edition of *Hag-Seed* have implications for both the generic and the authorial positioning at play in the paratext of Margaret Atwood's novel. Similarly, the differing cover images of *Dunbar*, where an earlier version depicting a lone stylised figure on a heath was replaced by a photograph of a recognisably modern individual in an urban landscape served to draw the text further from *King Lear* and closer to the rest of Edward St. Aubyn's work. In a similar fashion, it could be argued that the name Jo Nesbø on the cover of his Norwegian *Macbeth* may elicit different associations than Jo Nesbo, the Anglicised version on the cover of the Anglophone edition, as may the Norwegian reviews of his retelling of Shakespeare (itself a name whose meaning may change between cultures).
- 26 This also applies to the various genre markers embedded in the paratext, including that signalled by a reteller's name: exactly *what* is in a name may shift and change, but the function of framing the text itself and guiding readerly expectations to what will be found behind a novel's cover remains. Similarly, although the instability of a novel's paratext is inevitable, it is important to pay attention to the very place where generic and other contracts between texts and readers are made. It is not only the generic and other recontextualisations that the Hogarth Shakespeare novels enact that involve the

crossing of borders: the first border that is crossed as a reader approaches these and other literary texts is the threshold that is the paratext.

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NOTES

1. Genette divides the paratext into "peritext" and "epitext": "Within the same volume are such elements as the title or the preface and sometimes elements inserted into the interstices of the text, such as chapter titles and certain notes. I will give the name *peritext* to this first spatial category [...]. The distanced elements are all those messages that, at least originally, are located outside the book, generally with the help of the media (interviews, conversations) or under cover of private communications (letters, diaries, and others). This second category is what, for lack of a better word, I call *epitext*" (Genette 4-5). According to Genette's framework, newspaper reviews would normally be seen as metatext rather than paratext since they are not sanctioned by the author or their representatives (see e.g. Genette 3 and Moine 42), but given the commercial interaction between publishers and newspapers, which suggests an implicit sanctioning of their content, along with their important role in the marketing of the texts in question, I will nonetheless treat them as part of the paratext in this context and add newspaper reviews to the part of the epitext that is relayed medially. In my discussion, the immediate critical reception of the novels is investigated for its mediating function rather than its role as commentary, thus aligning it more with the common function of paratexts than that of metatexts (Genette xviii-xix). In addition,

quotations from reviews are often included as part of the peritext of later editions of literary works, including in the Hogarth Shakespeare series.

ABSTRACTS

The novels commissioned and published as part of the Hogarth Shakespeare project involve a series of recontextualisations of Shakespeare's work, not only from the genre of drama to that of prose or a range of established subgenres, but the choice of author to adapt it may also serve to locate the adaptation in a very specific *microgenre* defined by the connotations engendered by the modern author's *oeuvre* – and frame its reception accordingly. The article discusses how this process finds expression in the Hogarth Shakespeare project paratexts, which are seen as ways of making creative use of the popular conceptions of the modern authors evoked by their very names to reframe, revise and re-energise Shakespeare's work for new audiences, in part through the specific form of (micro)generic recontextualisation that they bring about.

Les adaptations modernes en prose des pièces de Shakespeare ont franchi plusieurs frontières (génériques, culturelles, temporelles) – et les romans commissionnés et publiés au sein du projet Hogarth Shakespeare n'en font pas l'exception. Ils mêlent toute une série de remise en contexte dans le travail de Shakespeare. Les auteurs commissionnés et les conceptions populaires de leur travail, représentant une certaine forme d'écriture jouent un rôle majeur dans ce processus. Le procédé d'adaptation n'implique pas seulement une recontextualisation du contenu, dérivée du genre théâtral jusqu'à celle de la prose ou des affiliations étant faites avec une série de sous-genres déjà établis, mais le choix de l'auteur dans cette adaptation peut également servir à placer l'adaptation dans un *micro-genre*, défini par les connotations engendrées par l'œuvre moderne de l'auteur – et conceptualiser sa réception en ce sens. La fonction du paratexte dans les romans est particulièrement centrale dans ce procédé : l'apparition du nom de Jo Nesbø sur la couverture de *Macbeth*, les arguments des critiques de Edward St. Aubyn qui relatent à nouveau l'histoire du *Roi Lear*, ou l'utilisation de Gillian Flynn pour adapter *Hamlet* sont des façons d'exploiter de manière créative les conceptions populaires des auteurs modernes évoqués par leurs appellations pour redéfinir, réviser et redynamiser les travaux de Shakespeare pour un nouveau public, en partie par la forme spécifique de recontextualisation générique qu'elles apportent.

INDEX

Mots-clés: adaptation, recontextualisation générique, genre, paratexte, Projet Hogarth Shakespeare, Atwood (Margaret), Chevalier (Tracy), Flynn (Gillian), Jacobson (Howard), Nesbø (Jo), St. Aubyn (Edward), Tyler (Anne), Winterson (Jeanette), microgenre

Keywords: adaptation, generic recontextualisation, genre, microgenre, paratext, Hogarth Shakespeare project, Atwood (Margaret), Chevalier (Tracy), Flynn (Gillian), Jacobson (Howard), Nesbø (Jo), St. Aubyn (Edward), Tyler (Anne), Winterson (Jeanette)

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