

2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and the Global South 1
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Kevin Quarmby, College of Saint Scholastica

Colombia's Force-Fed Consumption of Shakespeare

In 2016, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, the UK's British Council created a pedagogical experiment that saw collaboration between educational establishments in 140 countries: "Shakespeare Lives in 2016". Films, exhibitions, and performances allowed a global community of high school students to experience Shakespeare as a twenty-first century cultural construct. In Bogotá, Colombia, students from four schools with strong English-speaking credentials were exposed to Shakespeare as distinctively scientific constructs.

As these students explored the STEM educational potential of Shakespeare, Colombia was engaged in its own drama of peace and reconciliation, performed on a local stage that achieved international notoriety and Nobel Prize-winning affirmation. By engaging with an appropriated narrative form of Shakespeare that countered aspects of the social and political turmoil of the nation's peace accord and the reintegration of FARC/ELN forces into mainstream Colombian society, young predominantly female Colombian students were empowered to consider the political state of their nation through the lens of Shakespeare, and to reevaluate their traditionally sublimated societal role. This paper questions the post-colonial pretensions of the British Council – in league with the Royal Shakespeare Company and supported by the touristic might of the British government – while also considering the extent to which the "Global South" benefits from such Shakespearean educational interventions on a localized scale.

Calling on interviews with the Bogotá educationalists tasked with disseminating "Shakespeare Lives in 2016" among its select youthful academic community, this paper highlights the questionable benefit of adhering too closely to externally-imposed, patriarchally dominant educational agendas, especially for a nation whose own recent history is as performatively tragic, especially for the country's women, as any blood-soaked Shakespearean dramatic dénouement.

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**Translating the myth of Shakespeare in India:
temporality and ‘un/translatables’**

Shakespeare’s plays have been performed, translated, adapted in India since the mid-19th century. Critical responses to these have highlighted the double-bind of the prevalence, popularity and responses to Shakespeare in India – that he remains intrinsically linked to colonial educational policies and the so-called “intrinsic merit” of his work the latter of which has created timeless “myths” of the “universal genius” of Shakespeare. In this paper, I look at how late 19th and early 20th century responses to Shakespeare in India, by critics like Charles Sissoo (1926), and Ranjee Shahani (1932) and translators like Lala Sitaram engage with translation and this double bind. Are these acts of translation early attempts to “write back” to the empire, to decolonize the minds of the readers and spectators of these translations via “throwing a light on the social customs and modes of the colonizers” as Sitaram puts it? But, what are the implications of this when they also bolster the “myth” of the power of Shakespeare? These are some of the questions through which I explore the idea of the infinite translatability of Shakespeare which ironically enough is predicated on and reinforces the notion that his “spirit” is untranslatable. Through this analysis I engage with broader questions of how mythical temporalities, and their political connotations, allow for the conceptualization of “un/translatables”.

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**The Underbelly Bites Back:
Theorizing Global Shakespeare from the South**

As Jean and John Comaroff note, the so-called ‘Global South’ has long been - and is still in some measure - “treated less as sources of refined knowledge than as reservoirs of raw fact: the minutiae from which Euromodernity might fashion its testable theories and transcendent truths” (114). As this paper will argue, that binary also haunts the scholarly discipline currently known as ‘Global Shakespeare’, which studies Shakespearean manifestations in different geographical and cultural locations. Brazilian theatre company Grupo Galpão’s internationally acclaimed production of *Romeo and Juliet* is one such manifestation. In a review of its performance at

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Shakespeare's *Globe* in 2000, UK critic Charles Spencer wrote: 'I guarantee that you will never have seen a *Romeo and Juliet* like this. Grupo Galpão is a mad and manic delight, persuasive proof that Brazil really is where the nuts come from' (*Daily Telegraph*). While Spencer's review is undoubtedly positive, his 'Brazil nuts' pun is not unproblematic when read alongside a scenario in which non-English Shakespearean performances, particularly from the Global South, become synonymous with a new kind of raw material for European audiences to enjoy, and for scholars to analyse from the perspectives of European thought. This paper attempts to invert this scenario aided by another Brazilian Shakespearean example, which not only merits inclusion in the *theoretical* framework of Global Shakespeare, but could also help refine the cultural-political agenda of the discipline: Oswald de Andrade's playful and powerful transformation of Shakespeare's most famous line into 'Tupi or not Tupi: *that is the question*' in his *Cannibalist Manifesto* of 1928. Behind the pun (which refers to native Brazilian Tupi tribes) is a series of potent alternatives to the binary described by Comaroff and Comaroff, which, this paper will argue, might provide the means for Global Shakespeare to become less about mapping Shakespearean performance trails around the world and more about scrutinizing global cultural politics through a dialectical relationship with the 'underbelly' of the world.

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Twins, Doubles, and Long-Lost Shakespeare

This paper will examine Shakespearean iterations in post-Independent India, with a view to formulating a new vocabulary for speaking about Shakespearean adaptations in the global south. Rather than relying on the conventional postcolonial models of 'appropriating,' 'borrowing,' or 'writing back,' I want to revisit Shakespeare in the Indian context in a way that is untethered to its colonial origins. This paper will look at how Shakespearean plots find correlates in a broad repertoire of indigenous stories, epics, and traditions. It is these stories that predispose us to Shakespeare, rather than the other way round. Put another way, Shakespeare might be seen less as a source and more as a result of our predilection to particular narrative traditions. We read him and use him catachrestically, I argue. In particular, I will examine the grafting of Shakespeare onto indigenous forms in a range of Bollywood productions from the '80s onward. For our purposes in this seminar, I will focus on a tradition of Bollywood films that reenact the drama twins, doubles, and brothers-lost-and-found. I will argue that the doubles in these comedies of error raise interesting questions about origins, authenticity, and circulation that we might draw on to formulate a new theory about the circulation of the Shakespearean text in post-Independent India. In other words, what if we consider Shakespeare as a long lost brother, a *judwa bhai* or a twin of sorts, who exists simultaneously, as the brother and the other of the text?

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The Outpouring of Ophelia in *Ham-let*

An exuberant five-hour adaptation of Shakespeare's play, *Ham-let* (1993/2001) has left a unique mark on the history of Shakespearean theatre in Brazil for its bold experimental nature. Staged by Teatro Oficina, a São Paulo-based theatre company under the direction of Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa, *Hamlet* was submitted to a radical reconfiguration through the tenets of Oswald de Andrade's Cannibalist Manifesto, a process known as "cultural cannibalism" in Brazilian aesthetic practices. Combining carnival, myth, dance, orgy and other stage practices meant "to shake the spectator out of his lethargy", Corrêa wasted no opportunity to attack Brazilian bourgeois morality. While the production has received considerable critical attention, the exceptional treatment afforded to Ophelia's death and burial scenes has gone unnoticed. Not only is Ophelia's drowning painstakingly dramatized on stage but, in an unusual theatre practice, her body is brought onto the stage during the graveyard scene. In stark contrast with the history of Ophelia in performance, which has been traditionally marked by silences and gaps, with her lines often being cut or abridged, *Ham-let* offers us an expanded and polysemic Brazilianized Ophelia. This paper investigates the intercultural re-workings of Ophelia's drowning and burial scenes as well as the socio-historical circumstances that prompted their materialization.

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