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**MOLLY ZIEGLER**

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## **Book review: *Shakespeare in the Global South: Stories of Oceans Crossed in Contemporary Adaptation*, by Sandra Young**

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***Shakespeare in the Global South: Stories of Oceans Crossed in Contemporary Adaptation*, by Sandra Young. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019; ISBN: 9781350035744 (£85.00, £29.99 pb.)**

Sandra Young's *Shakespeare in the Global South: Stories of Oceans Crossed in Contemporary Adaptation* offers an important contribution to the Bloomsbury series on the relationship between Shakespeare and the supposed 'other', *Global Shakespeare Inverted*. Young's book draws attention to the ways in which Shakespeare's plays and legacy have entered into the so-called 'Global South' and shaped theatrical and artistic practices of non-Western, non-Anglophone regions. In doing so, Young seeks to address how such practices have informed cultural theory and performance studies, and how Shakespeare's works constitute a tool for 'telling new stories' in an increasingly globalised and postcolonial world (p.248).

Much of the book's initial aim is to distinguish what is meant by the 'Global South'. According to Young, this term refers not to a geographic separation between northern and southern hemispheres. Rather, it serves as a way to highlight 'cultural and political alignments' between regions. While acknowledging the flaws of the term itself—no map can account for where the 'Global South' begins and ends—Young articulates the book's interpretation of 'Global South' as follows:

the framework of the global South enables a perspective on relations of domination and freedom across a complex world that differs from the signal points generated by post-colonialism. Instead of treating colonialism's abuses and postcolonialism's resistances as the defining moments for all contexts of historical domination across an uneven world, the term draws attention to connections and affinities between diverse contexts across the South (p.23).

Young further argues that critical attention to these 'Southerly' contexts helps reveal the limitations of other cultural and postcolonial theoretical studies. Young claims that,

analyses of these settings are too complex to fit neatly within a post-colonial framework, as postcolonialism assumes an inimical divide between 'modernity' and 'tradition' that is not reflective of real life (p.47).

For example, Young cites that 'the language of "diaspora" assumes a sense of dislocation that may not be true for a new generation of South Asian Londoners' (pp.47-48).

Belonging and exclusion, possession and dispossession are therefore key themes within this book, with Young seeking to establish where cultural identities situate within a contemporary, globalised world.

Shakespeare, Young suggests, forms an important mechanism for discussing culture and identity in the 'Global South'. His works 'can make visible the struggles of local contexts of dispossession and injustice in a post-colonial world' (pp.46-47). This book explores such 'visibility' through four main sections on 'Creolization', 'Indigenization', 'Africanization' and 'Diasporic

disruptions'. Though Young 'seeks to resist the predictable region-by-region framework familiar within the field of Global Shakespeare', these chapters are largely distinguished by their attention to different regions (Mauritius, India-administered Kashmir, Africa and South Asian communities in London, respectively) (p.17). Regardless, these discussions highlight the ways in which Shakespeare's works have been employed outside of traditional English spaces. The chapters on Creolization and Indigenization each centre around core case studies: Dev Virahsawmy's reimagining of *The Tempest*, titled *Toufann*, in the chapter on Creolization, and Vishal Bhardwaj's 2014 film adaptation of *Hamlet*, titled *Haider*, in the chapter on Indigenization. These chapters begin with surveys of key discourses around postcolonial and indigenous theories within Mauritius and India before engaging with discussion of their selected examples. While the focus on cultural theory and identity is fascinating (particularly when drawn across multiple regions), the chapters do not take into account the theatrical and performative impact on their communities. Specifically, discussions of these works remain largely at the level of the script, as opposed to examining how they offer new meaning through their chosen theatrical and filmic media. Similarly, in the later chapter on diasporic disruptions, Young's analysis of the Silk Road Theatre Company's production of *Merchant on Venice* is primarily concerned with how Shakespeare's source text has been altered to suit modern Los Angeles and London contexts.

Despite the need for further incorporation of theatre and film studies, the drawing together of these seemingly disparate examples into one study helps establish connections between cultural crises of identity and belonging. Of particular note is Young's chapter on Africanization, which offers an interesting departure through its look at how not only Shakespeare's plays but also his legacy have forged a relationship with African cultures. This chapter explores how Shakespeare's writings have entered into the continent's literary landscape via their inclusion in school curricula and political activism. Also examining the Royal Shakespeare

Company and Cape Town's Baxter Theatre Company's 2009 production of *The Tempest*, the additional engagement with non-theatrical employments of Shakespeare highlights his continued cultural currency and exposes the ever-present debates over Westernization, colonialism and African cultures. When balanced with the other chapters, this discussion helps broaden the scope of Shakespeare's influence in the Global South and raises additional questions of what it means for his works to be performed and included in non-Anglophone communities.

According to Young, the book's exploration of Shakespeare in a variety of regions is 'not so much a question of the malleability of the plays', nor is it about how Shakespearean stories should be taken as universal (pp.247-248). However, though seeking to centralise the 'Southerly' and not the 'Shakespearean' voice, the repeated referrals to Shakespeare as 'traveling through' these regions somewhat confuses these efforts, as it suggests that Shakespeare is the dominating, conquering presence that connects one part of the world with another. Young acknowledges that this is indeed a problematic feature within other scholarship, with Shakespeare remaining 'the dominant figure—the noun—and the region under focus is positioned as a colourful variant, qualifying the primary' (p.18). To that end, there is further room to probe precisely how Shakespeare's plays may 'bring into view the vulnerabilities and dispossessions that haunt twenty-first-century mobilities across an unequal world', without merely imposing an English ideal onto the experiences of non-Western cultures (p.249). Young's work certainly takes impressive strides towards this goal, while at the same time highlighting the need for additional study into how Shakespeare is present within the 'Global South'.

### **About the review author**

MOLLY ZIEGLER is a Lecturer in Drama and Performance Studies at the Open University, specialising in early modern English theatre, c.1500-1700. She holds a BA in theatre and psychology from Saint Michael's College (Colchester, Vermont) and completed

her MLitt and PhD in theatre studies at the University of Glasgow. She has taught theatre and English literature at the University of Glasgow and the Scottish Universities' International Summer School. Molly has also served as a dramaturg for work performed at the Citizens Theatre (Glasgow) and the Traverse Theatre (Edinburgh), and has written performance pieces staged at the Tron Theatre (Glasgow) and for the 2016 Shakespeare 400 Dream On! Festival.