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World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance (review)

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Hartley divides his discussion into two parts: "Principles" and "Practice." The first of these reveals a scholarly approach to dramaturgy and investigates the ambiguity that surrounds dramatic texts. It contains chapters such as "Theatrical Collaboration and the Construction of Meaning" and "Authorship, Authority, and Authorization." This initial material seems surprisingly bookish, given the active tasks required for dramatic staging, but it lays a solid theoretical foundation for the hands-on activities discussed in part 2. This practical section most clearly sets out dramaturgical duties and possibilities. Hartley is generous with specifics and aims to teach. His accounts of the preparation of scripts and rehearsal packets and advice on speaking to directors and actors are right on the mark and reveal his respect and sensitivity, not only to the text and scholarship in service of it, but also to the processes in which artists engage on and off the set.

Throughout, Hartley presents the dramaturge as one who communicates with the director and cast, but in his final pages he acknowledges the dramaturge's necessary connection to the theater-going public, which goes beyond the development of program notes, preshow speeches, and postshow chats. In order to achieve the splendid goal of making Shakespeare's plays accessible and significant to a modern crowd, a dramaturge must have a thorough knowledge of audience. Hartley's claim that a dramaturge may learn much from audience comments is undeniably true. A dramaturge who actively engages with audience members learns which choices resonated and which did not, what decisions needed to be communicated more or less forcefully—essentially, what did and did not work. Such knowledge is indispensable in fashioning future productions, particularly for a specific theater-going community.

Hartley's ideas are accessible and appealing, reflecting the style he proposes for any dramaturge whose scholarly bent is potentially threatening to nonscholars set to stage Shakespeare. He has proven himself to be as eager to perform dramaturgical tasks as he is to inspire others to do so. In addition to this text, he has published articles on dramaturgy and performance, organized panels that explore the scholar's presence in the rehearsal room, and taught courses on Shakespearean dramaturgy at the University of North Carolina–Charlotte, where he is Distinguished Professor of Shakespeare. Hartley introduces his discussion of Shakespearean dramaturgy by declaring that he is not "the Shakespeare Police" (1). And yet, his "dramaturgical self" (73) is so enthusiastic and qualified to explore stagings of Shakespeare that we might just be willing to cast him in that role—costume, props, and all.

World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance. Edited by SONIA MASSAI. Abingdon, UK, and New York: Routledge, 2005. Pp. xiv + 199. \$110 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

Reviewed by DOUGLAS M. LANIER

That Shakespeare has now become not merely a British, European, or Anglo-American cultural icon but a genuinely global phenomenon poses considerable

challenges to those concerned with his cultural afterlife. The complex relationship between Shakespeare's status as a worldwide cultural *lingua franca* and the dizzyingly various "local" contexts in which Shakespeare has been coaxed to speak is the subject of *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*.

This ambitious collection serves several purposes at once. First, the volume offers a judicious sampling of recent Shakespearean appropriations, many of which have not been addressed before by scholars. The sheer range of cultures addressed in the seventeen core essays is remarkable for a relatively short book. Examples are drawn from North America, Latin America, Europe, the Indian subcontinent, Asia, and the South Pacific; only Africa, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union go unrepresented. Second, all the contributors seek to situate their chosen appropriations in the specific histories, practices, and concerns of local cultures, often stressing how Shakespeare has become a means to address issues of national or subcultural identity through a global medium. One of the great strengths of the collection is how clearly and concisely the essays sketch out the local contexts they examine. Third, throughout the volume are fascinating theoretical reflections upon the complex ways in which the global and local reshape each other through intercultural performance. Too often, the global is aligned with homogenizing corporate or multinational interests, while the local is aligned with the embattled but heroically sustained indigenous culture of the subaltern. Here, such alignments are not assumed. As this volume represents the field, no clear overarching politics or aesthetic governs Shakespearean appropriation worldwide. Some appropriations are in service of conventional, even reactionary, values; others are oppositional; still others elude easy political categorization. Although the theoretical framework of postcolonialism and cultural materialism informs nearly all of the essays, the majority seek to problematize the dichotomy between globalist and localist Shakespeares without erasing their differences.

Sonia Massai's introductory essay—one of the strongest in the collection—situates the tension between global and local Shakespeares within recent debates about interculturalism. Using Bourdieu's notion of "field," Massai conceives of global Shakespeare as "the sum of the critical and creative responses elicited by his work" (6), which consists of a matrix of forces and struggles constantly modified by local contributions to the whole. "By stressing the fluidity of the field, its lack of any unilateral hierarchization and the permeability of its boundaries," she writes, "Bourdieu provides a powerful model to describe not only the impact which world-wide appropriations of Shakespeare have on their audiences, but also the *raison d'être* of a project like *World-wide Shakespeares*" (7). Among much else, the collection highlights appropriations otherwise not widely known, providing them with an added measure of cultural force to change the very global field they engage.

For the most part, the essays adopt a similar, very effective rhetorical pattern. Each offers a concise overview of a particular local context against which a handful of appropriations are read in close detail. Ruru Li discusses how *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet* were reshaped by director Jiang Weiguo to accom-

modate, respectively, the conventions of *huangmeixi* (a Chinese song form) and *huaju* (modern Chinese spoken drama). With several recent Indian productions of *Macbeth*, Poonam Trivedi traces how Shakespeare has moved “from being an instrument of imperial coercion to becoming a voice against post-colonial oppressions” (48). Marcela Kostihová argues that several recent productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* on the Czech stage reveal “a deeply rooted reluctance to accept social changes inspired by feminist movements in the West” (72). Lukas Erne demonstrates how Friedrich Dürrenmatt reshaped *Titus Andronicus* into a protest against postwar ideological constructions of Swiss patriotism and fatherland. Robert Shaughnessy deftly chronicles several London productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 2002 to tease out how they reconceptualize postimperial Englishness in a play long associated with fantasies of English identity.

Of special interest are those moments where contributors move beyond close contextual reading to engage recent debates about appropriation. Trivedi’s discussion about Indian veneration of adaptation as a literary form is a case in point. So, too, is Alfredo Michel Modenessi’s analysis of Mexican appropriations of Shakespeare, who he claims is “seldom associated with hegemony or imperialism” but rather is “much more often viewed as either an indifferent given of ‘high culture’ or an artist of the greatest worth, regardless of his national origin” (105). Observing of Robert Lepage’s *Elsinore* that “familiar models of subversion, appropriation, hybridization and dialogic interaction seem unable to capture, quite, this show’s peculiar engagement with the canon” (133), Margaret Jane Kidnie argues that Lepage’s peripatetic multimedia extravaganza highlights how *Hamlet*’s canonical tradition is itself a local context. These and other passages throughout the volume offer very thought-provoking reconceptions of the nature and force of Shakespearean appropriation.

This volume is distinguished by the consistently high quality of the research and writing and by its retention of focus, so that the book functions far more as a unified whole than as a collection of interesting parts. Paradoxically, that consistent focus highlights several unresolved issues. Although the first two sections are called “Local Shakespeares for Local Audiences” and “Local Shakespeares for National Audiences,” the distinction between “local” and “national” is not always clear. Indeed, the very possibility of a distinction opens up various strata of local interests—neighborhood, city, ethnic subculture, province, language group, nation—that compete with each other. That the local is not a self-consistent context, but often an arena of struggle, is perhaps insufficiently acknowledged in several readings. So, too, fuller consideration of the nature of Shakespeare’s globalism seems warranted: is global Shakespeare merely the totality of local Shakespeares or an empty brand name? Or does it exert specifiable cultural forces of its own? If global Shakespeare is a “field,” how should the particular struggles and affiliations which constitute it as a system at this moment be mapped? The issue of medium also seems ripe for further consideration. Most of the examples are dramatic performances, by their nature perhaps more prone to the kinds of localism discussed here. How do visual media, which travel more readily across cultural

borders, navigate local and global tensions? Other than Sonia Massai's fascinating account of Pier Paolo Pasolini's vignette of *Othello* in *Che cosa sono le nuvole?* and Ton Hoenselaars's analysis of Philip Purser's novel about Olivier's *Henry V*, it is only in the scant final section, "Local Shakespeares for International Audiences," that Shakespeare film, arguably one of the most powerful agents of Shakespearean globalism, finally makes a concerted appearance. There, Mark Houlahan discusses two horizons of reception (one local, one global) that operate simultaneously in Don Selwyn's Maori film of *The Merchant of Venice*. Houlahan's essay, like Kidnie's on Lepage, opens up the very productive question of how local productions travel outside their originating cultural contexts. A related issue, Barbara Hodgdon notes in her incisive afterword, is the problem of individual reception, perhaps the ultimate vehicle for localizing Shakespearean meaning.

These questions for further study only suggest, however, how valuable and stimulating this collection will be for those interested in the theory and world-wide practice of Shakespearean appropriation. It takes its place alongside two collections, Dennis Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (1993) and Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin's *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (1998), as essential reading for those interested in Shakespearean appropriation around the globe.