

Chaudhuri, Sukanta and Lim, Chee Seng, eds. *Shakespeare without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries*. Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2006 (pp 220). ISBN 81-7758-142-2.

Edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri and Chee Seng Lim, *Shakespeare without English* brings together a wide range of essays interrogating the reception of Shakespeare in non-Anglophone countries, primarily on stage and in the classrooms. The collection joins the recent spate of critical forays aimed at evaluating the impact and assimilation of Shakespeare in disparate communities across the globe. However, while monographs like Monica Matei-Chesnoiu's *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory* (2006), or even the critically acclaimed *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance* (2005) edited by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomusz, confine their survey to specific geographic regions, *Shakespeare without English* aims at a more global outlook. The collection under review owes its conception to the seminar on "Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone countries" held in April 2001 as part of the Seventh World Shakespeare Congress in Spain, and opens up a dialogue among eleven scholars from eight different countries stretching from Brazil to Japan. While acknowledging the contribution of postcolonial studies in the critical responses to contemporary staging of Shakespeare, the editors of *Shakespeare without English* in their introduction nonetheless betray an anxiety regarding "a ghetto mentality or neo-colonial segregation" (viii). This accounts for the juxtaposition of overtly postcolonial readings with essays which apparently have little to do with empire. The editors triumphantly pronounce that "[t]he very interaction of speakers from so many countries lent a cosmopolitan dimension to the discourse; clearly, by contextualizing Shakespeare within so many cultures, they were extending rather than confining the range of his work" (viii). Such "cosmopolitan" overtures raise obvious questions while classifying the collection. Can *Shakespeare without English* be included within the realm of postcolonial studies? Or does the very exploration and expansion celebrated by the editors render it beyond the scope of post-colonial criticism?

Not surprisingly, the editors see their collection as a response to Dennis Kennedy's pioneering edition on non-Anglophone receptions of the bard, entitled *Foreign Shakespeare* (1993). Kennedy in his introductory essay identified his edition as one of the first sustained investigations of Shakespeare performances outside the Anglo-American theater. It is easy to understand why *Shakespeare without English* would be eager to inscribe itself

within this critical trajectory. However, while *Foreign Shakespeare* concentrates primarily on non-Anglophone European productions (with the exception of Israel and Japan), *Shakespeare without English* comes up with a more mixed bag. Framed by two essays challenging the very basis of the Anglophone/non-Anglophone binary (Shen Lin and Harish Trivedi), the collection under review gets organized around two distinct movements. The opening essays examine Shakespeare receptions in the Far East—notably in Taiwan (Alexander C.Y. Huang), Korea (Younglim Han) and Japan (Kumiko Hilberdink-Sakamoto and Etsuko Fukahori), before moving on to India (Shormishtha Panja) and Brazil (Margarinda Gandara Rauen). Questions of counter culture, stage adaptations and translations raised in the first segment get played off against mirror anxieties in the concluding essays dealing with European contexts. The second movement, therefore, involves a detailed examination of the bard's impact in Romania (Emil Sirbulescu), Germany (Lawrence Guntner) and Spain (Keith Gregor).

In its insistence on yoking together distinct cultural contexts from across the globe, the collection under review has more in common with *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance* (2000), edited by Edward J. Esche. Esche's collection, with an introduction by Dennis Kennedy, in turn can well be read as a continuation of the revisionist attempts of *Foreign Shakespeare*. However, while Esche's edition, as well as the collection under review share an interest in examining postcolonial and European contexts simultaneously, *Shakespeare without English* stands out as being more critically self-aware. While Esche's edition makes overtures to this juxtaposition, the editors of *Shakespeare without English* highlight, even fixate, on this hybridity. Even for the contributors, the status of their critical approaches against a rigid postcolonial paradigm becomes a major cause for concern. For instance, in his essay "Why Shakespeare in Japan?: Resituating the Japanese Shakespeare," Kumiko Hilberdink-Sakamoto insists that "Japan is not part of the postcolonial world. No overwhelming sense of oppression by foreign powers has contributed to the construction of Japanese national identity" (70). Similarly for Lawrence Guntner ("From Elsinore to Brussels: Shakespeare as Transnational Discourse on German Stage") the impact of the bard in Germany demands to be read not against a postcolonial script but in light of the aftermath of World War II. On the other hand, Shormishtha Panja's essay "Not Black and White but Shades of Grey: Shakespeare in India" isolates The United Players Guild's (UPG) production of *Othello—A Study in Black and White* to showcase the problems of decolonization, marginalization and the position of the subaltern—all central concerns in postcolonial studies.

One of the ways in which the editors attempt to justify this apparently random yoking of cultural contexts is to isolate a common trait in the adaptations of Shakespeare across the global community. Not surprisingly, language emerges as a major concern for the editors as well the contributors of *Shakespeare without English*. Dennis Kennedy had famously enquired “What is it that endures when Shakespeare is deprived of his language?”(ix). In an attempt to answer this teaser, the editors identify the fable or the mythos as “the basis of all reconstitutions of Shakespeare” (ix). The “mythos” of Shakespeare becomes simultaneously the bard’s legacy, as well as the site of all innovations. Furthermore, for the contributors of the collection, Shakespeare adaptations ultimately and inevitably register as an instrument of protest against hegemony. The non-Anglophone productions, in other words, deconstruct systems of colonial or even neocolonial and protoimperial oppression. This critical emphasis on identifying the bard’s adaptations as instruments of protest, ultimately brings the collection within the folds of postcolonial studies. Historical surveys, especially the privileging of counter histories, therefore, emerge as important aspects of almost all the essays. The individual articles in the collection work well together since they raise identical issues of cultural hegemony, hybridity and subversion. Simultaneously, however, owing to the disparate cultural contexts, they refuse to be reduced into a homogenous group. This apparent paradox between a common concern and heterogeneity ultimately registers as a celebration of the postcolonial condition—a state marked by constant slippages and plurality of socio-political contexts. It is laudable that the collection avoids all totalizing schemes and allows this plurality in the essays. And this deliberate heterogeneity ultimately demonstrates the escape from the leveling effects of the “ghetto mentality” feared by the editors.

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