

Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory. Jyotsna G. Singh.

Arden Shakespeare and Theory. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2019. xvi + 246 pp. \$102.

Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory, by Jyotsna G. Singh, is the latest title in the Arden Shakespeare and Theory series and provides an excellent, thoroughly researched book that breaks new ground pushing the field of postcolonial Shakespeare studies in a promising direction. With an introduction by the author, the text is divided into three parts that work to bridge the distance between early modern cultural studies regarding race, colonialism, trade, and travel and the discourse surrounding postcolonial adaptations and appropriations from the 1960s to the present day.

Deeply steeped in the historicism of race, trade, travel, ethnicity, and gender, the early sections of the book explore how Shakespeare's plays reveal, marginalize, and engage with issues of race, encounters with people of color, and burgeoning English nationhood. Chapter 1 uses *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello* to vividly and persuasively illustrate the specific ways in which Shakespeare's plays "relate to early English colonial (or proto-colonial) endeavors" (26), and offers a detailed account of how early modern trade and travel intersected with representations of non-Western people and races. Throughout chapter 1 and continuing into chapter 2, Singh contextualizes marginalized characters—Caliban, Shylock, Othello—within the broader spheres of the early modern period's increasing reliance on global trade and travel.

Such an approach allows for a significant "reappraisal" not only of Shakespeare's plays but, more importantly, for a reassessment of the "history of emergent colonialism during the early modern period" (55). Specifically, the text evaluates early modern London through the perspective of postcolonial theory, arguing that such an approach allows for greater understanding of how Shakespeare's London was a center of "growing global contacts and imperial ambitions" (58). Chapter 2 provides a well-documented overview of early modern London as an emerging multiracial, multiethnic global city.

Part 2, "Shakespeare, Decolonization, Postcolonial Theory," begins with a "temporal leap" as Singh moves the discussion to the decolonization period of the post 1960s. Here, again, Singh thoroughly supports her claims with numerous and detailed examples. Chapter 3 begins with an examination of how artists such as Aimé Césaire and George Lamming, among others, strategically appropriated select texts and sections of the plays in order to problematize Shakespeare's canonical status. The second part of chapter 3 discusses how Shakespeare studies was strongly impacted by the 1978 publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. As she does so effectively throughout the book, Singh uses examples of specific, seminal works to support her argument and to link it to the broader issues—here the paradigm shifts that Shakespeare studies experienced in the 1980s. Chapter 4, "Intersectionalities: Postcoloniality and Difference," continues grafting the connective tissue between specific texts and the larger theoretical and cultural

framework. Singh uses a postcolonial lens to focus on South African capital and class struggles via *King Lear*, racial (sometimes racist) and sexual depictions of Cleopatra through a recent Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the establishment of English nationhood in *Cymbeline*.

Part 3, “Shakespeare, Postcoloniality, and Reception: Performance and Film,” moves to foreground more recent, global appropriations. Employing specific examples to forge a larger point, the first chapter in this section analyzes the discourse and reception surrounding specific intercultural, intertextual, non-Western productions: Ong Keng Sen’s *King Lear*, Salim Ghouse’s *Jatra-style Hamlet*, and Sulayman Al-Bassam’s *Richard III*. One of the book’s aims is to collapse the colonial-postcolonial binary, and Singh tackles this more directly in chapter 6, exploring the concept of contemporary Britishness in a multilingual, multiracial, and multiethnic Britain. Chapter 7 explores Shakespeare on film, particularly stressing Shakespeare within the context of world cinema.

This text provides richly detailed, in-depth analysis of specific productions and the key critical influences of seminal scholarly works; however, its true contribution lies in situating the playtexts, critical responses, and reviews of productions and appropriations within the ongoing—and always evolving—conversations regarding race, religion, ethnicity, nationhood, and gender. Singh’s dual observations that Shakespeare’s early modern audiences themselves lived in a multiracial and multiethnic global city, and that readers and audiences of Shakespeare continue to become “more transnational, trans-cultural, as well as multilingual,” resonates throughout this highly engaging book.

Parmita Kapadia, *Northern Kentucky University*
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Shakespeare and Queer Theory. Melissa E. Sanchez.

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Melissa Sanchez’s aim in writing *Shakespeare and Queer Theory* was “to make new two fields of study that can, if we let them, become predictable and stale precisely because of their institutional prestige” (178). Bringing to the project both an expertise in Shakespeare studies and queer theory as well as a healthy insistence on the contingency of her own participation in an “ongoing, productively unwieldy conversation,” Sanchez succeeds admirably (2). *Shakespeare and Queer Theory* is an excellent resource for those seeking an understanding of the origins and development of academic queer theory, the history of lesbian/gay/queer Shakespeare scholarship, and the emergence of work that explores early modern queerness beyond homoeroticism. Though accessible to newcomers, Sanchez’s judicious, balanced assessments of these scholarly fields, as well as