

Editor's Note

Martin Orkin remarks that, "Since their first performances, Shakespeare's texts have been and are, in a manner of speaking, travellers to countless always different locations" (1). And just as travellers are often altered by their experiences, so are Shakespearean texts and the stature of Shakespeare himself, who no longer remains just the Bard of Avon. The journeys have of course been inflected with considerations of race and power, especially in the former colonies where the study and production of Shakespeare have often been born of a matrix of hegemonic intent and interpellated intellect. However, just as Shakespeare's plays are remarkable for their capacity to resonate on multiple levels, the remarkable popularity of Shakespeare in diverse cultural contexts across the globe, several decades after the collapse of the British Empire, cannot simply be explained by a lingering effect of colonial discourses. As Dionne and Kapadia explain, "Today, reconstructions and revisions of Shakespeare's works continue as the plays are co-opted by postcolonial and minority cultures, further shattering the notion of the universalist interpretation that privileges West-

ern experience as primary. As such, Shakespeare's plays can no longer signify an exclusively British, or even Western, identity; instead, they function as sites of contest reflecting a manifold of cultures" (6). The papers in Vol. 1, Issue 2 of *Postcolonial Interventions* attest to this transformative logic and the uncontainable plurality Shakespearean texts have engendered and accommodated, as they take the readers across time and space, media and language, genre and discipline to tease out not just the lasting relevance of Shakespeare, 400 years after his death, in a global culture but also to analyse the intersections of race, space, and power that shaped Shakespeare's own texts and punctuated his proliferation across former colonial outposts. While Claire Chambers explores the particular significance of *Othello*, as a play that foregrounds concerns of race and gender, in the context of various Indian Shakespearean adaptations, on both stage and screen, Cecile Sandten dissects the significance of Dev Virahsawmy's rewriting of *The Tempest*, another text that not only foregrounds race but even operates as an allegory of colonisation. Both papers reveal the myriad modes through which the Bard continues to be localised and indigenised which definitely challenges the hegemonic designs to which the Shakespearean oeuvre has been subjected. Of course, such processes are neither novel nor infrequent. Therefore, apart from an examination of recent adaptations of Shakespearean texts, this issue also looks back at some of the earlier attempts to voice resistance through

reworking of Shakespearean texts as evident from either Lamia Zaibi's exploration of George Lamming's celebrated novel, *Water with Berries*, and its reworking of the Caliban-Prospero paradigm or Sarah Mayo's analysis of the production and translation of Welcome Msomi's *uMabatha*, a transcreation of *Macbeth* in Apartheid-era South Africa. Both papers focus on the fraught and complex nature of postcolonial negotiations and how assertions of selfhood are often mired in inexorable discursive pitfalls which only ensure the perpetuation of stereotypes. It is not as if Shakespeare himself was free from such pressures. As Masoud Farahmadfar's paper highlights, Shakespeare, conditioned by the dominant discourses of his own times, dealt with various such stereotypes, whether with regard to Persia, or Africa or other exoticised, Otherised spaces. As Innocent Ngulube points out in his paper, it is this proliferation of colonial discourses through the Shakespearean texts which enraged postcolonial artists and critics like Ngugi wa Thiong'o or Ayi Kwei Armah, who wanted to decolonize African education systems. However, as the paper points out, in African countries like Malawi, Shakespeare still dominates the school and university syllabi as a constant presence even as Malawi authors become 'optional' and glide in and out of various syllabi. While part of the answer may be found in the machinations of colonial and neo-colonial policies, the remarkable aesthetic and affective appeal of Shakespearean texts across time, space and culture cannot be denied either.

This perhaps explains why whether in India or elsewhere not only does Shakespeare continue to live in a thousand different avatars but continues to speak to audiences in a variety of different situations. This is again evident from the concluding paper of the issue by Sayantani Chakraborti, which focuses on Vishal Bhardwaj's transposition of the tragedy of *Hamlet* onto the troubled terrain of Kashmir. To borrow the words of Dionne and Kapadia, "Such examples speak to the hybridity of Shakespeare's influence but also the densely woven nature of his 'local habitation'" (3) – a fact that is also illustrated by Tapati Gupta's scholarly and personal peregrinations across various Shakespearean adaptations in her foreword. But what makes possible such plethora of local habitations? One possible answer is offered by Kiernan Ryan who finds in Shakespeare's plays a "revolutionary universalism" which articulates "the potential of all human beings to live according to principles of freedom, equality and justice" (emphasis original; 9), dramatized from what Ryan calls "an egalitarian perspective that is still in advance of our time" (emphasis original; 15). As Ryan fervently asserts,

It's my contention that this profound commitment to the universal human potential to live otherwise is the secret of the plays' proven ability to transcend their time. This is what drives their radical dissatisfaction with Shakespeare's world, divorcing their vision from the assumptions and attitudes that held sway in

early modern England, and opening them up to the future and the prospect of the world transfigured. That prospect — the tidal pool of futurity that inflects their language and form at every turn — is what propels Shakespeare's plays beyond the horizon of his age to speak with more authority and power than ever to ours. (9)

In a postcolonial world rife with inequality, conflict and violations of humanity, the transfiguring potentiality of Shakespeare will inevitably generate many more adaptations and transcreations that will continue to address the diverse transformations of human history, here on this bank and shoal of time. And postcolonial studies, in keeping with Patrick Williams' classification of it as an "anticipatory discourse, looking forward to a better and as yet unrealized world" (Williams 93), will surely continue to find in such creations resources of both pleasure and hope. We wait; "Readiness is all".

Works Cited

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