

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 1**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

**Amy Bolis (University of Minnesota)**

**Adapting Shakespeare vs. Globalizing Shakespeare:  
Is There A Difference?**

In my current dissertation project I am examining recent adaptations of *Othello* created by American artists/authors for the stage. Two of these productions, *Othello: The Remix* by the Q Brothers and *Desdemona* by Toni Morrison, had extensive international tours and/or performance histories outside of the United States. In the case of *Othello: The Remix*, it premiered at the Globe to Globe Festival in London in 2012 while England was hosting the summer Olympic Games and then went on to visit other parts of Europe, Asia, the Oceania continent, the Middle East, and the United States (its country of origin); touring nine countries total. Similarly, *Desdemona* has been performed in eight countries and is the result of a collaboration between American writer Toni Morrison, American theatre director Peter Sellars, and Malian singer, songwriter, and guitarist Rokia Traoré.

Using these two productions as loose touchstones, I hope to explore the relationship between adaptations of Shakespeare and the concept of “Global Shakespeare.” Is adaptation an inherent part of the process of globalizing Shakespeare, and if so, in what ways? How does collaboration with artists outside of one’s own country, such as the partnership between Toni Morrison, Peter Sellars, and Rokia Traoré to create *Desdemona* help us to better understand Global Shakespeare? And finally, what role does language play in the process? The Globe to Globe Festival was framed as a festival of “languages” as opposed to a festival of countries and/or nationalities, allowing for a hip-hop version of *Othello* to represent the United States, and yet this framing was sometimes in tension with itself throughout the festival and after its conclusion. So my question is: What can adaptation tell us about “Global Shakespeare” and how might adaptation theory help us to rethink the relationship between the local and the global?

**Sheila T Cavanagh (Emory University)**

**‘Make New Nations’:  
Shakespearean Communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As scholars continue to explore Global Shakespeare in higher education, performance, and adaptation, the malleability and contestation associated with geographical borders needs to be kept in central focus. This essay will consider the many ways that “nations” can be construed in the context of global Shakespeare, drawing specifically from the work of the World Shakespeare Project (WSP), the International Opera Theatre (IOT), and Flute Theatre. The WSP uses videoconferencing and site visits to connect students, faculty and arts practitioners across continents. The IOT, which is based in Philadelphia, performs world premiere Shakespearean operas in Umbria, drawing performers from multiple countries. For the past two years, the IOT has also incorporated costume designs developed by a local art studio in Città della Pieve that serves students with Downs Syndrome and other developmental challenges. Flute Theatre, founded by former National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 2**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
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Theatre artist Kelly Hunter, performs Shakespeare in several countries for students with autism and presents a growing series of Shakespearean productions designed for “inclusive” audiences. This essay will examine the intersecting projects of these disparate endeavors, with a particular emphasis upon those aspects of their missions which complicate understandings of “national” Shakespeares.

**Claire Dapkiewicz and Eric M. Johnson (Folger Shakespeare Library)**

**Preparing *Shakespeare Documented* for the world**

The 2016 international commemorations of Shakespeare’s death demonstrated the worldwide reach of his legacy. But his plays and poems were originally intended for English theater-goers and readers, and the millions of visitors who annually embark on pilgrimages to Stratford-upon-Avon testify to the interest in the geographical origin of those works. At least since Rowe’s first biography in 1709, there has been an enduring public appetite for knowledge about Shakespeare’s material life: how he grew up, participated in his household, worked, and died. To those who inhabit the world of Shakespeare studies, this might seem unremarkable, but the interest in his biography far outstrips that of any of his contemporaries, even taking into account his popularity (how many non-scholars know the name of Thomas Middleton’s wife, or have visited the place where Ben Jonson was born?).

Although the particulars of Shakespeare’s life have fascinated audiences outside England, the documents that inform Shakespeare’s biography -- the contracts, legal records, printed poems and plays, contemporary commentaries, and more -- have mostly remained within English archives and collections, and virtually all of their holding institutions have imposed physical access restrictions to them. Many reproductions of these documents can be found in printed books, but not all within the same covers.

So it was with expanded access in mind that the Folger Shakespeare Library convened *Shakespeare Documented*, a website that brings together more than 400 primary sources that describe the details of Shakespeare’s public and private life. The site’s goal is to satisfy the curiosity of those who wish to know Shakespeare better through physical artifacts, but who cannot visit the places where he dwelled or examine the documents that passed through his hands. This paper will describe how the Folger shaped *Shakespeare Documented* for a diverse and curious global audience.

**Amrita Dhar (University of Michigan)**

***Sushila-Birshingha:***

**Shakespeare Gone Local in Nineteenth-Century Bengal**

This paper will rethink the “global” in “global Shakespeare” using a nineteenth-century Bengali adaptation of *Cymbeline*, *Sushila-Birsingha* (1867). I argue that in *Sushila-Birsingha*, Shakespeare inspires what is decidedly *local*. And yet, the very fact of adapting to the subcontinent a story set in Britain (a Britain in a fraught relationship with Rome, at that) offers its author, Satyendranath Tagore, a kind of

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 3**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

pan-subcontinental range through his own setting of the story in Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Maharashtra. (It is worth mentioning that although the language of the play is Bengali, Bengal is *not* the setting of the story of *Sushila-Birsingha*.) The paper will also discuss the form of the play. The text of *Sushila-Birsingha* is partly in verse and partly in prose. This is not unlike what we find in many Shakespeare plays, of course, where some of the dialogue is more explicitly metrically patterned than the rest. But unlike in Shakespeare, where the speaker's status may have a lot to do with who gets to speak in poetic language, the main determinant in *Sushila-Birsingha* seems to be the need of the play as a musical. That is, the text of *Sushila-Birsingha* appears to be structured as a *geetinatya* or a *nrityanatya* (a song-drama or a dance-drama). Again, this will enable a discussion of an intensely local valence to what Shakespeare inspires. Through these examples, and finally, through a brief discussion of the uses of "global" thinking for Shakespeare studies, the paper will assert theoretical and practical payoffs for imagining, in partnership with "global Shakespeare," of Shakespeares gone local.

**Mark Houlahan (University of Waikato)**

**Girdles round the earth:  
globe to globe (or "there and back again")**

Puck:

I'll put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes. (*MND* 2.1.175-6)

We don't yet have the physical means at Puck's command, girdling in 40 minutes the 12,000 mile space between New Zealand and London (though doubtless such things are dreamt of daily in research labs at Eion Musk's *SpaceEx* and M.I.T); yet enduring bonds of affinity still link New Zealanders to the cultural and fiscal power of London. The pulse of globalisation, in tandem with nano-instant digitisation across the planet, which might have diminished London's "strong force", seems in some respects to have enhanced it. New Zealanders can be more present (and more attuned to London) than ever before.

The proliferating fields of "global Shakespeare" show these energies in a variety of ways. In this paper I will explore four specific manifestations of "Shakespeare" which are both/and "global" and "New Zealand". Marking the ironies around these specifics will, I hope, help work towards a refreshed understanding of what global Shakespeares might yet turn out to be.

**Adele Lee (Emerson College)**

**"How do you solve a problem like China?:  
'Global Shakespeare' and the Limitations of the 'Cosmopolitan Model'"**

Shakespeare has been translated, performed and interpreted across geographical borders for centuries, but only recently – and especially since the 2012 Globe-to-Globe festival – has "Global Shakespeare" emerged as a (dominant) field of study. A conceptual umbrella term, "Global Shakespeare" confers a stable, monolithic quality

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 4**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

over an incredibly diverse and complex corpus, and seems designed to celebrate cultural plurality (and Shakespeare's canonicity) while simultaneously eliding continuing cultural differences and inequalities in the age of globalization. In fact, as a commercial industry and academic discipline, "Global Shakespeare" has arguably absorbed the subversive potentiality of "foreign" appropriation and ensured local cultures do not (continue to) treat the playwright as an ideological battlefield. Focusing primarily on "Asian Shakespeare," which some suspect is another product of Western cultural imperialism, this paper highlights not just the rather gimmicky nature of "Global Shakespeare" but, more importantly, its role in attempting to bridge the ideological gulf between East and West *and* reaffirm Anglo-American hegemony.

Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare have proven particularly difficult to accommodate, however, and having previously resisted fitting into postcolonial paradigms, they now reject the cosmopolitan paradigms trending in the twenty-first century. Not meeting the demands of the global cultural market, the work of directors Wu Wenguang and Lin Zhaohua among others, I argue, not only refuse to conform to the politically democratic agenda of "Global Shakespeare," but its emphasis on assimilability and accessibility; after all, productions that can be enjoyed and digested by Westerners are the staple of online archives such as MIT Global Shakespeares, review sites such as [www.bloggingshakespeare.com](http://www.bloggingshakespeare.com) (an offshoot genre of "Global Shakespeare"), and university courses on the subject that have helped revive student interest in a long-dead playwright. Instead, Chinese versions of Shakespeare expose the underlying ethnocentrism of "Global Shakespeare" and the Anglo-American academy that created and controls its *modus operandi*.

**Zoltán Márkus (Vassar College)**

**Hybrid Shakespeares and the Challenges of History**

With the aid of a specific (or idiosyncratic) understanding of the concept of appropriation that suggests that appropriations are reciprocal maneuvers of hybridization that negotiate and construct both their subjects and their objects at the same time, this paper explores Shakespeare as a cultural hybrid produced in various historical and cultural contexts. It accepts the view that Shakespeare's works have no immediate, unmediated presence; they are always already displaced. Moreover, it also maintains that historical approaches as vehicles of authentication in search of an 'original Shakespeare' are problematic and unhelpful. On the other hand, it proposes that temporal dimensions of hybrid Shakespeares remain crucial. It emphasizes that a play by Shakespeare is not a static and finalized entity but a constantly emerging process. Drawing on current philosophical debates about perdurantism versus endurantism as well as "polychronicity" versus "multitemporality," it aims at finding ways in which we can productively historicize the cultural hybrid we call Shakespeare.

**Emer McHugh (National University of Ireland)**

**Performing Irishness at Shakespeare's Globe:  
the spaces and places of *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016)**

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 5**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

My paper takes Shakespeare's Globe's 2016 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* as its case study – a production where the majority of the cast and crew were Irish, and which relocated the play to 1916 Ireland – as I explore its performance of Irishness on a major English stage. Serving as the theatre's commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising centenary (or perhaps as an interrogation of Irish commemorative culture by director Caroline Byrne and her creative team), I demonstrate how the production trades in a broad, globalised performance of Irishness, as well as showing how *Shrew* is conditioned by the Globe's theatrical repertoire and by its relationship with 'global Shakespeare', as evidenced by the Globe2Globe festival and its worldwide tourings of its productions. I also explore how the Globe as a site of performance has implications for this performance of Irishness, as well as *Shrew* as a theatrical event: the Globe as place, and how its repertoire has created place from space, has implications for how audiences respond to the performances that take place there. Ultimately, in my mapping of the traces of the multiple spaces and places of this *Shrew*, I attempt to map the position (or positions) of Irish Shakespeare performance within the tenets of 'global Shakespeare'.

**Victoria Muñoz (Ohio State University)**

**What Do We Mean By 'Early Modern Geopolitics'? :  
The Spanish Empire in Shakespearean Drama**

The emergence of "Spain" within the collective European imaginary occurred not only through self-fashioning among writers, artists, politicians, and others from within the Peninsula, but also through the competitive deployment of a distinctly "Spanish" character from beyond Iberia. As Antonio de Nebrija remarked to Queen Isabel of Castille in the dedication of his 1492 Spanish grammar, *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, "*siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio*" [language has always been partner to empire].<sup>1</sup> Nebrija's observation seemingly corroborates the view, commonly held among translation scholars, that the use and spread of a language forms a crucial part of cultural imperialism. For early modern England, however, the term *Spanish* referred to more than just a language or ethnicity. *Spanish* was also a concept, a culturally inflected set of Catholic ideologies originating from a nation led by a king of seemingly ruthless ambition. The persistent use of "Spanish" over "Iberian" within the English lexicon pointed to concerns over Spain's efforts toward establishing a "universal monarchy" across the globe. This essay explores the geopolitical resonances of "Spain" and "Spanish" within Shakespeare's plays, particularly concentrating on the significance of the Spanish character names and Spanish place-names.

**Sarah Olive (University of York)**

**Shakespeare and global citizenship in Japan**

This paper focusses on two questions: 'Is the content of Shakespeare teaching in Japan perceived by educators to raise public issues?' and 'Are the processes of

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio de Nebrija, *Gramática castellana* (Salamanca: Juan de Porras, 1492), sig. A2r. Translation is my own.

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 6**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

Shakespeare teaching perceived by educators to mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement?' They were asked in relation to two Japan-themes issues of the British Shakespeare Association's *Teaching Shakespeare* (6 and 13). Both questions were answered with a resounding 'yes', although the absence of material suggesting an association between teaching Shakespeare and advocacy and rights was noted. We used definitions of citizenship education and its objectives by Davies, Elliott, and Ikeno. These include citizenship as a subject (or content) and as a process, with its objectives including to foster political literacy, social and moral responsibility, social engagement, community involvement, democracy and justice, awareness of citizens' rights and duties, identities and diversity. The perception that teaching Shakespeare in Japan, often through performance or performance studies, makes good global citizens and enhances transcultural communication was foregrounded throughout.

**Shormishtha Panja (University of Delhi)**

**What's Global got to do with Shakespeare?**  
**Bhardwaj's *Haider* and Sen's *Arshinagar***

This paper will problematise the use of a term like global with its associations of hegemonic homogeneity in conjunction with a name like Shakespeare already marked as high culture/master text/male white guru. I should like to posit instead a term like intercultural which diminishes hierarchisation, recognizes indigenous traditions and gives agency to the non-western culture that adapts Shakespeare. The ethical issues of guarding against cultural imperialism, the importance of focusing on what Pavis calls the human encounter without the easy assimilation of everything foreign into something universal and easily comprehensible when Shakespeare encounters a non-western cultural form, are some of problems that this paper hopes to explore. The layers of differentiation, hybridity and localization that non-western adaptations of Shakespeare foreground find expression in two recent Indian films, Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* (2014) (based on *Hamlet*) and Aparna Sen's Bengali *Arshinagar* (City of Mirrors,) (based on *Romeo and Juliet*) (2015). The first, mostly in the national language Hindi, deploys Shakespeare or one could say uses Shakespeare as an alibi to criticize the Indian army's atrocities in Kashmir in the 1990s (and thus interestingly runs counter to the 2012 British Cultural Olympiad's attempts to make Shakespeare a strong, uniting national presence in England). The second, a regional language musical, draws on specific local musical and poetic traditions even while foregrounding contemporary societal ills: corruption in politics and communal disharmony. With their clear critique of nationalism, their immersion in local cultural traditions, their use of narrative techniques that do not have even a pan-Indian, let alone global, currency, these films critique the easy assumption of a global Shakespeare.

**Adele Seeff (University of Maryland)**

**Rethinking the 'Global' in 'Global Shakespeare'**

In the space between cultures, the text speaks anew—separate and autonomous. As Worthen has suggested, it is reconstituted through performance. Scholars advance

**2018 SAA Seminar: Rethinking the Global in 'Global Shakespeare' 7**  
**Leaders: Susan Bennett, University of Calgary;**  
**Sonia Massai, King's College London**

many issues that aid and abet or obstruct “global” Shakespeare. In no particular order, these include market forces, digital marketing and brand discourse, the challenge of moving global studies beyond the limiting scope of nation-state and language, the tired issue of Shakespeare, the dramatist without his dramatic poetry, audience estrangement, translation, the notion of cultural imperialism, Shakespeare as myth/icon. Most compelling are the challenges to (older) notions of globalization, borders or lack thereof, notions of cultural imperialism, the staging of an international political relationship to Shakespeare as body of texts, as idea, the notion of Shakespeare as public property, reciprocity/ cultural exchange, and translation and language in a world where the presence of multiple dialects and the constructedness of official languages go under-recognized.

In this paper, I propose that Shakespeare texts have been propelled into a world of connectivity in which ideas are absorbed differently at the local level. I reject therefore notions of cultural imperialism in a multilateral world where localities can be microcosms of the “world-as-a whole.” Cultures are no longer bounded, and we should consider instead an international crossover culture. Cultures blend into one another through borrowing, imposition, and appropriation. *Othello, c'est qui* (2013) which staged the problem of linguistic and cultural translation through an estranged relationship to the audience, and Janet Suzman's 2006 “rainbow nation” production of *Hamlet* will serve as illustrative. Where then does “global” Shakespeare fit? No longer “feasible as a figure of British triumphalism,” “he” can perhaps function as the ground for mutual understanding, internal self-reflection, and connection as the texts are performed cross-culturally, multilingually, spatially unbounded.

**Betsy Sullivan (University of Southern California)**

**Pay for Play:  
Shakespearean Adaptations and Global Branding**

In considering how social media, transmedia marketing and corporate personality branding contributes to the success of global Shakespearean productions, one adaptation in particular comes to mind: Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, a loose adaptation of *Macbeth*. This immersive adaptation of *Macbeth* currently runs in New York and Shanghai, and, while the structure and tone of each narrative world is near identical in both productions, the branding strategies and physical structures that house each play—and evoke audience response and participation-- are strikingly different. Although the production is largely denuded of dialogue and the narrative is a 1920s era *Macbeth* laced with Hitchcockian voyeurism, the rich narrative worlds on and offstage have both birthed and been created by a transnational Shakespearean fan base. The audience inclusivity of *Sleep No More* coupled with dense fan-driven conversations about the production on social media outlets underscore how immersive productions and digital worlds are created by a multiplicity of participants... or should these participants be termed co-authors? Exploring Shakespearean adaptations vis a vis international productions of *Sleep No More* points to ways in which early modern and contemporary digital worlds complicate issues of spatiality and location and what these complications might mean for global Shakespearean productions and attendees in the future.