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Review of *Eating Shakespeare: Cultural Anthropology as Global Methodology*, edited by Anne Sophie Refskou, Marcel Alvaro de Amorim, and Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho, London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, pp. 301

Abstract

Consistently interesting and excellently articulated, this volume of essays entitled Eating Shakespeare will reward scholars of Shakespeare time and again, specifically those who consider expansive global Shakespeares and ways of traversing the problematic 'centre' and 'periphery' locales of Shakespearean performance. Fortunately, this form of critique also challenges the alleged divide between subaltern identity and more traditional, European forms of subjectivity. Most importantly, this collection of essays breaks new ground in ways to theorize, articulate, and put into practice innovative forms of Shakespearean appropriation using the notion of anthropophagy, or cannibalism, as a central metaphor. Whether one is a Shakespeare scholar, a theatre practitioner, a creative writer, or simply an anthropology enthusiast, this book contains enough nutrients to sustain multiple explorations not only from the alleged 'periphery' of Global Shakespeares but also productions closer to home in the 'centre' of Shakespeare studies.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Cannibalist Manifesto; Oswald Andrade; Cultural Anthropophagy; subaltern identity; Global Shakespeare; Hamlet; Othello; Ophelia; Tribe Arts

In this time of global pandemic and food shortages, a book entitled *Eating Shakespeare* seems particularly apt. With keywords such as 'digestion', 'nutrition', 'performance', and 'ritual' scattered throughout, at first glance such a volume might appear in line with the revelry portrayed by Sir Toby Belch and others in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. However, the sustenance in this collection is not only more sustaining than a mere celebration consisting of cakes and ale, but the essays also break new ground in ways to theorize, articulate, and put into practice innovative forms of Shakespearean appropriation using the notion of anthropophagy, or cannibalism, as a central metaphor. Consistently interesting and excellently articulated, Shakespeare scholars will return to this book time and again to consider expansive global Shakespeares and ways of traversing the problematic 'centre' and 'periphery' locales of Shakespearean performance; fortunately, this form of critique

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also challenges the alleged divide between subaltern identity and more traditional, European forms of subjectivity.

Following a forward by David Schalkwyk, and the splendid introduction by the editors, the book's twelve chapters (some called "Conversations") are carefully divided into four sections, "Shakespeare and Cultural Anthropophagy in practice"; "global conversations and intricate intersections"; "insiders and outsiders"; and "re-cultivating and re-disseminating Shakespeare beyond the institution"; Alfredo Michel Modenessi contributes a succinct afterword. While space limits me from considering and commenting on all the chapters, I want to highlight the essays (or interviews/conversations) I found most valuable.

The introduction should be required reading to anyone interested in Shakespearean appropriation more generally, or the topic of Brazilian modernist Shakespeare productions more specifically. Using Oswald de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto", first published in 1928 as a starting point, the book employs his declaration "I am only concerned with what is not mine" as central to twentieth-century artistic output in Brazil. This "Manifesto", and this particular quote, as the editors point out, is "an approach which is taken up and explored repeatedly throughout" their book (6). Moreover, they explain how valuable such an approach can be in "negotiat[ing] a new cultural identity by celebrating" Brazil's "pre-colonial indigenous past" in a way that allows the cannibal to be transformed into a "newly heroic figure"; in other words, "European cultural elements and influences were not simply to be rejected but to be subsumed – eaten – self-consciously and irreverently while mixed with native and contemporary elements" (5). Such hybridity, of course has been explored by Homi Bhabha's notion of 'Third Space' (1994), but while his concern seems more spatially external, it's hard to imagine a more metaphorical internal image than that of 'consuming' or 'eating' as a revitalizing force for creativity and transformation, among other things.

Applying this idea more directly to Shakespeare, the editors point out references to or acts of eating one's own species – "like the banquet that accelerates the violence of *Titus*" or Othello's tales of "the cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi" (1.3.144-145)[1] – which Desdemona finds so fascinating, clearly present in Shakespeare's own world and work. The most prominent of these is found in the character of Caliban in *The Tempest*, whose name may or may not be an anagram of 'cannibal'. What we do know, however, is that when Michel de Montaigne wrote his famous essay "Of Cannibals", it was penned, according to Rogério Dudasz, when he "met three newly arrived" members of the Tupinambá tribe, a "branch of the Tupi [indigenous peoples] that was hostile to the Portuguese, who claimed ownership of the land" in Brazil, through their colonial exploits (Budasz 2006: 1). Montaigne proclaimed that the tribe represented "the triumph of nature over art", in the form of the noble savage, and as a corollary, claimed that cannibalism "was motivated by a sort of noble revenge" (2). During the Brazilian *moderniso* movement of the 1920s, birthed in part by de Andrade's "Manifesto" but also incorporating elements of the Dada art movement, Brazilian artists used anthropophagy as a symbol of how they should not merely 'mimic' European modernists, but in-

[1] Shakespeare, William (2006), Othello, ed. By Michael Neill, London: Oxford University Press.

stead should see their productions as 'a source of nutrients'; in short, the Brazilians could "devour what was useful in the [Western] civilization, while maintaining their natural 'primitive' state" (Budasz 2006: 2). In that sense, it comes as no surprise that one of the most cited lines in Andrade's proclamation is one which references both European and Brazilian culture with a parodic twist: "Tupi or not tupi, that is the question" (Andrade 1928: 38).

In "Chapter 1" entitled "We are all Cannibals", the Brazilian poet and translator Geraldo Carneiro describes Shakespeare as a fellow cannibal, whose writing complicates the notion of "origin and departure and instead serves as a link in a great chain of digestion and re-creation" (2). This "chain of digestion" of Shakespeare consists of many links, according to Carneiro: "Shakespeare probably preferred to concentrate his efforts on rewriting them with better words – words cannibalized from everything he saw and read", and then we as auditors "devoured Shakespeare in our own way, as he had always done with his forebears", meaning his literary predecessors (28). Indeed, as Carneiro argues, Caliban's speeches seem to "prefigure the anti-colonial attitude of the 'Cannibalist Manifesto' published over 300 years later, and the perspective of all the peripheries of empires since time immemorial" (35).

Cristiane Busato Smith's essay "Cannibalizing *Hamlet* in Brazil: Ophelia meets Oxum" (Chapter 4) is another important essay in the volume's first section. While Shakespeare scholars are all aware that "the lyrical images that Gertrude employs to describe the heroine's watery death", have inspired painters and poets "to promote Ophelia to the status of an archetypal model as well as a cult heroine" (93), Smith goes on to note that "Ophelia's beauty obliterates the horror of her death" and she concedes that A. C. Bradley made a similar observation at the dawn of the twentieth century (93). However, Smith also suggests that Ophelia's story mirrors the Brazilian goddess *Oxum*, "the Afro-Brazilian *orixá* of the waters", an original and interesting transformation of the *Hamlet* story.

Smith also marshals another Brazilian source when she quotes from Silvano Santiago's term "space in-between", which he used to describe the "Latin American cultural condition that legitimizes the incorporation of the hegemonic culture into Latin American art" a move which displaces "source and influence, original and copy" (95). Applying this idea to Gertrude's description of Ophelia's drowning, Smith convincingly argues that "[t]hrough her poetic words, Gertrude breaks the linearity of the revenge plot that structures Shakespeare's tragedy and opens up a singularly poetic space", one that connects the play's only two female characters (101). Not unlike the uniting of the Old World of Europe and the New World of Brazil, this process of assimilation and asymmetry could equally be considered an act of cultural anthropology.

Of the essays in Part Two, I found Marcel Alvaro De Amorim's "Devouring Shakespeare translocally" particularly intriguing since I have also considered local versus global Shakespeare (Sawyer 2019). Perhaps the central question de Amorim raises is the following: "How can the anthropophagic perspective be viewed as a means of conceiving Shakespeare as a translocal author, at once part and parcel of various natures?" (136). He suggests that we accept "the existence of many different Shakespeares, each one apprehended through/by the various centres of inten-

tionality that enact, translate and adapt the Bard by bringing their own uniqueness into the equation" (137).

De Amorim's reading relating to identity itself adds that "Cultural Anthropophagy performs a radical existential deconstruction: the 'I' and the 'Other' become recognizable not as a third, ontologically definable element", but one of hybridity and multiplicity (148). Even more specifically, this concept also applies to globalized performances: "a Shakespearean staging, translation or adaptation brought about within specific geographical, social and political spaced may be understood as part of an ontology of multiple interchangeable natures", which energizes rather than subdues the action on stage (146).

As de Amorim explains, "[w]hen we anthropophagically devour Shakespeare, we are in fact refusing the project of our own and the Other's autonomous existence; we are attempting to produce intelligibility about the point of intersection between the multiple natures that compose us" (148). Indeed, he continues, we need to strive to accomplish this deed, in part because Shakespeare "possess[es] such awe-inspiring qualities that it becomes necessary to capture and devour him", and, if done successfully, the final dramatic result is that "Shakespeare's qualities become an indistinguishable part of us, as we become parts of him"(148-149). In other words, in such productions, the local and global, the self and 'other' are collapsed and resist any attempt to impose a binary structure on identity or performance.

Anne Sophie Refskou's interview with Mark Thornton Burnett on the topic of "Past and present trajectories for 'Global Shakespeare'" in Chapter 7 continues this significant discussion. First Refskou questions Burnett about the "extent" that "Global Shakespeare has critically addressed globalization and globalization theories," including "economics and capitalism" (155). Burnett's response, I believe, is both crucial and cautionary: even though there is often "an assumption that Shakespeare is a non-fluctuating barometer of cultural capital", he begins, if one "drill[s] down a little into the various examples, a much more diffuse picture emerges" (156). "What this means", however, "is that whenever we are considering 'Global Shakespeare' we are dealing with an inevitably skewed and partial sample" (156) He, in fact, advocates for a position that is "less about locating Shakespearean cultural production in different parts of the world in order to describe and analyse it locally", insisting instead that we should focus more "on the economic and political links between locations" (157-158).

He also asserts that it is important to resist any assumption that Global Shakespeare is a type of 'other', so he, too, embraces Andrade's "Manifesto" (159), and specifically the ways in which anthropophagy "gesture[s] in multiple directions, both inwards and outwards, both locally and globally, both backwards in time and forwards in time" (160). A second point he concurs with in the "Manifesto" is that the adaptation process is symbiotic, particularly when it denounces "the sort of historical view that the New World was 'discovered' and has been trying to catch up ever since" (162).

A third way to critique or analyze Global Shakespeare, Burnett concludes, and one which seems particularly fruitful, is to emphasize the connection "between critics and creatives" (165). Perhaps, he continues, such a "mutual cannibalism of

cultural elements . . . can lead to a uniquely creative product or experience" (167). He also reminds us that "Global Shakespeare can be said to have begun as a creative practice and perhaps it needs to continue looking at itself from a very practical perspective to develop further" (165). One personal example demonstrates this concept. When I saw the Russian version of a *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the RSC in 2012, it veered far from the standard plot of Shakespeare's play, but was a comic production that the audience appreciated and applauded from start to finish. The genuine, and often boisterous, laughter in the Swan Theatre that night seems to me to be exactly the type of creative mischief Burnett promotes. As Refskou succinctly summarizes: Cultural Anthropophagy should "travel widely and make connections on the way: to free [these] way[s] of thinking about Shakespeare from overly specific local constraints" (169).

The first essay in "Part Three" expands notion that Cultural Anthropophagy should "travel widely", even in a reverse direction, to inhabitants of the Old World. After declaring that "the lack of attention given to Shakespeare produced by visible minorities in Britain is inadmissible" (177), Varsha Panjwani attempts to amend this by superbly weaving anthropophagical theory with interviews of Brasian (her term for British-Asians, which suggests an identity that is not "neatly separated with a gap" but one that "bleed[s] into each other") Shakespeare directors in the UK, an idea which certainly syncs with the notions of digestion, sustenance, and creative performance practices. In Chapter 8, titled, "'Tupi or not Tupi': conversations with Brasian Shakespeare directors" (175), she demonstrates how the study of Brasian Shakespeare also requires a theoretical model that, "instead of simplifying and distancing, allows for slipping between palimpsest of cultural identities" (179). And, more to the point, she argues that we must remember one of the most important distinctions in this book:

> The cannibal does not wish to remain aloof and separated from the Other and instead strives to erase boundaries between self and the Other by devouring the Other. Thus, one of the advantages of this theoretical standpoint is that it allows for seeing modern cultures as based on encounters with each other rather than perceiving them as sealed off from one another. (180)

When Samir Bhamra, artistic director of the theatrical group *Phizzical*, explained to her how he had became "interested in exploring the relationship between a Catholic Romeo and a Muslim Laila" for his production of *Romeo and Juliet* (182), Panjwani observed that the company was "not trying to forcibly fuse things and signifiers; they are simply representing the way they think and this way of thinking, in turn, illuminates parallels between texts across cultures and countries" (187). Even more specifically, Bhamra refers to the performers in his troupe as possessing "layered identities", such as his own, which he details: "I've had to grow up being Kenyan, Indian, British Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, [and] Christian" (187-188). So his productions, he admits, may combine elements of "the indie Brit Pop scene, with Bollywood and *Friends*", the long-running U.S. sitcom.

In Panjwani's second interview, this time with Samran and Tajpal Rathore, the directors of the acting troupe *Tribe Arts*, they first explain how the name of their group suggests both "community and combativeness" (196). Their productions,

they point out, focus on a different type of hybridity, by "combin[ing] characters from different Shakespeare plays in a fictional space and let[ing] them have debates" on important issues (190). In one instance, for example, they combined elements of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, and by locating these on the same stage, at the same time, the combination "added to [their] understanding of the connections between" the two dramas that are both "about brotherly bonds being broken for political power" (190); I would simply add that both plays also demonstrate 'community' and 'combativeness' inherent in the name of their troupe. "Eating Shakespeare aggressively", Panjwani concludes, "allows these directors to rejuvenate both Shakespeare and Brasian culture", by placing "canonical Shakespeare in a creative relationship with language, theatrical forms and literatures from around the world", a move that may also "invigorate the practice and study of Global Shakespeare" (198).

In Chapter 9, "'Not where he eats, but where he is eaten': rethinking otherness in (British) Global Shakespeare", Anne Sophie Refskou raises the question about how to "'write back' from within" (203), especially when an "artistic director's multicultural ethos is not necessarily understood and appreciated by venue mangers, marketers or critics as anything other than 'novelty Shakespeare'" (qtd. in Islam 2017: 17) (204). Moreover, Refskou suggests that Cultural Anthropophagy "offers an alternative to the concept of multiculturalism – which has often been rightly criticized for ultimately furthering segregation – in part because performative strategies can be self-conscious and culturally affirmative, and in addition to mimicking the colonizer, they can self-mimic, self-positioning as an indigenous cannibal while simultaneously appropriating European cultural forms" (qtd in Islam 2011: 172). In fact, Refskou interestingly suggests that "this feature of Cultural Anthropophagy is not far removed from the notion that indigenous 'performances' of cannibalism [which were] designed to frighten colonial invaders" (207).

Eleine Ng considers similar transformative moments in Chapter 10, specifically ones that might occur on a stage in Singapore. As she points out, it is possible to see the "interstitial space a 'cultural orphan' occupies" as one which "engenders potential, as cultural rootlessness leads to the possible reinvention of new identities based on intercultural plurality"; always in motion and rarely static, such a position "transverses and resides both outside and within particularized cultural and theatrical localities" (225).

In Part Four of the book, we encounter two essays which consider the institutions of the nation state vis-a-vis Shakespeare. The first essay by Aimara da Cunha Resende (Chapter 11) shows how Shakespeare's works can be consumed, "devoured", and digested in ways that help children in a rural area of Brazil to become "more responsible, socially conscious future citizens" (262). While on the surface we might be suspicious of such political deployment of the Bard, none of us would contest her accomplishments in teaching "nutrition" to her students. Focusing on the scene in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Bottom "declares he prefers oats and hay to honey", Resende uses this moment as a jumping off point to emphasize the "importance of vegetables in one's diet, and the easy way to cultivate them in one's own orchard" (262), literally connecting the digestion of Shakespeare's words to the children's own physical digestion and nutrition. While

Chapter 12 seems to work in an opposite way, by focusing on the "deinstitutionalization" of Shakespeare, it mainly points out that we "should be careful about thinking of Shakespeare in fixed terms", particularly ones presented to us by theatre, universities, schools along with the "common constructions of everyday life in the English-speaking world" (278), something that Resende's work with children also does, despite what seem to be differences in the methods they employ. Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho references work with juvenile offenders enacting Shakespeare to make a similar case: "those incarcerated individuals, whom we want to see as a prisoner or offender, can take themselves and us somewhere else" (279); indeed they can, if only for the length of the play, become someone else.

Whether one is a Shakespeare scholar, a theatre practitioner, a creative writer, or simply an anthropology enthusiast, this book contains enough nutrients to sustain multiple explorations not only from the alleged 'periphery' of Global Shakespeares but also productions closer to home in the 'centre' of Shakespeare studies. Moreover, this volume is a refreshing counter to the current crisis of global 'McTheatre' (for example *Cats*, *The Lion King* and *Mama Mia!*) productions in which the standardization of each one diminishes its 'immediacy', its 'uniqueness', and its "ability to respond to place and time" (Rebellato 41-2). Fortunately, the essays in this book offer many spicy alternatives to the stale theatrical fare offered by McTheatre productions.

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