

PART XVII

SHAKESPEARE AS CULTURAL ICON

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Among the several meanings of the word “icon,” Shakespeare’s widely accepted canonical role in the Anglo-American world certainly defines his status, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition, as “a person regarded as a representative symbol of a culture or movement, etc. and considered worthy of admiration and often adoration.” A number of questions arise. When did Shakespeare the playwright and poet become Shakespeare the cultural icon? Do the iconic associations with his name vary among periods and societies? Some would argue that the power of his name today lies precisely in his representing or “speaking for” so many diverse cultures and identities, among other reasons. To what extent does his iconic role really have a worldwide currency? These issues lead us via a circuitous path through the many histories treated in this chapter.

In the course of charting cultural criticism from the mid-1980s and 1990s to the present, this chapter explores how Shakespearean works have “traveled” – the movement of the plays through time and space – in these decades while highlighting the ways in which they have been adapted and appropriated by different cultures. Appropriation, like travel itself, almost inevitably invokes a complex, hybrid, and dynamic process that can destabilize familiar epistemologies and their attendant categories of difference. At issue in these encounters is whether appropriation involves a genuine resistance to the universal, univocal Shakespeare or marks a celebration of pluralism and multiculturalism – and of a reflexive “newness.”

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Shakespeare as “the Soul of the Age” (1623)
- Traveling “Shakespeares” in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries
- Shakespearean spectacles on global circuits
- Prison Shakespeares: rethinking affect and ethics
- Reentering the confined world of *Measure for Measure*

159. SHAKESPEARE FESTIVALS AND JUBILEES

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Shakespeare Companies and Festivals: An International Guide, published in 1995, records the presence of more than 150 active Shakespeare companies and festivals worldwide. These are based in the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Africa. Since the publication of the guidebook, more festivals have been listed on privately maintained Web sites such as the Shakespeare Fellowship. The ultimate inspiration for all of these festivals was David Garrick’s Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769. The creative mixture of business, art, and popular fascination with celebrity that it set in place, through its self-conscious “idolatry,” taste for spectacle, and commemorative medals and ribbons that functioned as secular relics and pilgrims’ badges, is still active today.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Garrick’s Shakespeare Jubilee
- Taking the boy out of Warwickshire
- Writing the icon
- After the Jubilee

160. SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS

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Shakespeare's plays in performance have shown an exceptional ability to adapt in different times and different places. But what happens to them when they are transplanted to a place that is *no* place? Shakespeare actors behind bars take the notion of a *nomadic* Shakespeare – a Shakespeare that travels – to a state of extreme homelessness, where inmate players are not in movement between locations of otherness but fixed absolutely in a place they do not borrow, rent, or own. How is the cultural appropriation of Shakespeare experienced and transacted by people in a state of near total dispossession, who occupy such a zero-sum sense of place?

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Inmate appropriation of performance text and space
- Cultural capital and branding prestige
- Why Shakespeare?
- Dead or alive: the inmate actor
- Prison Shakespeare, academic Shakespeare

161. THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

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Geographically located two blocks east of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library in fact stands in direct contradiction to the economic and political interests that dominate American society. In his working life, Henry Clay Folger, the founder, was fully identified with the interests of capitalist enterprise and commodity exchange. The library's vaults and reading room were, however, created to nurture what Folger, following Emerson, would have understood as the spiritual culture of life. To the scholars who use its collections, the Folger Library offers a respite from those conditions of life defined by the pitiless hyperactivity of total economic and political mobilization. In this sense it is, paradoxically, the most radical antithesis of capitalism.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Location along an axis of power
- Shakespeare the American
- Building the collection
- A collection becomes a library
- The spiritual culture of life

162. GLOBAL DIASPORAS AS REFLECTED IN THE WORK OF KENG SEN ONG

Alexa Huang, George Washington University, United States

Whereas the diaspora of peoples may conform to the political logic of imperialism, the diaspora of Shakespearean materials today veers closer to the cultural logic of global capitalism. Ong's multimedia works *Lear* (1997 and 1999), *Lear Dreaming* (2012), *Desdemona* (2000), and *Search: Hamlet* (2002) are diasporic in the sense that although the director is from Singapore, these works can hardly be said to have a Singaporean origin. In addition to a transnational network of collaborating artists and funding, Ong's Shakespeare trilogy embodies the processes of globalization and localization at work – germinated and manufactured in fragments in multiple locations, often outside Singapore, and deftly reassembled, staged, and consumed all over the world.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Shakespearean diasporas
- Shakespeare and Ong Keng Sen as diasporic subjects
- Ong's Shakespeare Trilogy

163. BOLLYWOOD

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Shakespeare has always been an important influence in Indian cinema. Shakespeare's myriad manifestations include live performances of Shakespearean theater in cinema, citations from his plays in dialogue and songs, straight translations as in *Angeer* (1982, based on *Comedy of Errors*), and adaptations of story lines as in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003, based on *Macbeth*) and *Omkaara* (2006, based on *Othello*). Locating cinematic engagements within specific sociopolitical frameworks of their production and examining issues of spectatorship and reception enable us to arrive at some answers about the precise work that films can do or undo in dismantling the authority that the Shakespearean text commands in the ex-colony.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Early films, Parsi theaters, and commercial entertainment
- Wooing a world audience in *Maqbool* and *Omkaara*
- Indian Shakespeare in English

164. SHAKESPEARE AND FIRST NATIONS IN CANADA

Ric Knowles, University of Guelph, Canada

Shakespeare is Canada's "cultural undead," haunting the collectivity. In spite of the best efforts of (non-Native) Canadian Shakespeareans to find or invent them, there are almost no overt Aboriginal or First Nations versions or adaptations of Shakespeare in the land that is now called Canada. Nevertheless, there are traces of a spectral Shakespeare inhabiting at least some corners of the Native dramaturgical "hauntology" (a concept derived from Jacques Derrida that suggests that the past leaves an ineradicable impression on the present). The only full-length, acknowledged Aboriginal adaptation of a single Shakespearean source text in English in Canada, *Death of a Chief* (2008), used *Julius Caesar* to examine the place of betrayal, personal ambition, and abuse of power within postcolonial First Nations communities, where the links between their project and Shakespeare's play about the roots of European history were most deeply felt.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The desire for Native Shakespeare
- *Brebeuf's Ghost* and other revenants
- *Death of a Chief*

165. SHAKESPEARE IN BRITISH PEDAGOGY

Sarah Olive, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

There is a long tradition of staging Shakespeare's plays in schools; however, Shakespeare as an object of the academic study of literature in school syllabi is a more recent phenomenon. The teaching of Shakespeare in British schools expanded alongside the development of a state education system through legislation such as the Revised Code (1862) and the Education Act (1870). The Newbolt Report (1921) and The National Curriculum for English (1988) continue to influence how Shakespeare is taught in British schools today, including debate about critical approaches.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Nineteenth-century standards
- Anti-elitism in the Newbolt Report (1921)
- The National Curriculum for English (1988)
- Matching pedagogy to policy
- Literary-critical approaches
- Critiques of literary-critical pedagogies
- Active-methods approaches
- Active methods in Shakespeare education policy
- Contextual approaches to Shakespeare in schools
- Reception and critiques of contextual approaches
- Engaging academia with Shakespeare in schools

166. CORIOLANUS IN SOUTH AFRICA

David Johnson, Open University, United Kingdom

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* has provided a means of enunciating different conceptions of historical agency in South Africa. In loosely chronological sequence, this chapter first sets out apartheid-era interpretations of *Coriolanus* by a high school examination board, by Marxist anti-apartheid activists, and by professors of English literature. The second half contrasts two post-apartheid readings of *Coriolanus*: one by the political biographer Mark Gevisser and the other by theater director Debbie Lütge. Only by paying careful attention to the histories of the rapidly mutating contexts of South Africa since the 1960s can these competing interpretations of the play – and the political stakes involved – be understood.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- *Coriolanus* and apartheid education
- *Coriolanus* against apartheid
- *Coriolanus* and the English professors
- *Coriolanus* and the post-apartheid biographer
- *Coriolanus* on the Durban stage
- The importance of context

167. THE STRATFORD SHAKESPEARE TRADE

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Some of the most calculated performances in Stratford-upon-Avon take place not in the RSC's theaters but on the streets and in the tourist sights of the town. Beginning at Shakespeare's birthplace on Henley Street, Stratford's "must see" property and the controlling ideological center of Shakespeare's narrative, visitors typically follow an itinerary that includes the site of Shakespeare's house New Place and the period rooms of Hall's Croft, with possible excursions to two sites associated with women, Anne Hathaway's cottage and Mary Arden's farm. No less important is the shop run by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, where Shakespeare's narrative – and those of his plays – enters the visitor's time and space.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Lived history in the birthplace
- Time traveling
- The dig at New Place
- The Hall's Croft showrooms
- Natural settings associated with women
- Buying Shakespeare
- Virtual tourism

168. MIDDLE EASTERN SHAKESPEARE

Avraham Oz, University of Haifa, Israel

There is a distinction between the ways in which the Shakespearean canon is interrogated by its modern Middle Eastern appropriators. Whereas the Arab theater, in general, attempts a dialogue between remote, rather alienated worlds interconnected through the uncomfortable tension of cultural colonialism, the appropriation of Shakespeare into the realm of the recently developing Hebrew language, an ideological process originating in nineteenth-century Europe, regards the canon as the prodigal son returning and paying its dues to its mother culture. The case of the Israeli Palestinians, living confusingly between the dictated Hebrew culture and their inherent Arab tradition, marks the meeting point between those two versions of appropriation.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Hebrew Shakespeare
- Strategies of encounter
- “Peace” as key concept
- A state of war in *The Comedy of Errors*

169. SHAKESPEARE AND GERMAN ROMANTICISM

Bettina Boecker, University of Munich, Germany

If one had to single out the literary movement most influential in elevating Shakespeare to the status of Germany’s third national classic, it would have to be German Romanticism. From a much criticized and often belittled figure hardly considered worth translating, Shakespeare had advanced by the 1830s to the status of a cultural icon – and a *German* cultural icon at that. This process had both a literary and a political dimension, as for many contemporaries opposition to neoclassicist poetics (hence their endorsement of “natural” and “irregular” Shakespeare) was a manifestation of liberal politics.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- *Sturm und Drang*/Storm and Stress
- Shakespeare and Storm-and-Stress drama
- Goethe and Schiller: the Weimar years
- Shakespeare and Goethe’s Weimar theater
- Conscious artistry: Shakespeare and the Jena circle (Tieck and the Schlegels)
- Resituating Shakespeare historically and socially
- Making Shakespeare German
- The Schlegel/Tieck Shakespeare
- Shakespeare and Anti-Romanticism