LOCAL AND GLOBAL MYTHS IN SHAKESPEAREAN PERFORMANCE

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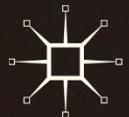
Introduction

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Contradictory myths are the foundation to many conversations about Shakespeare today. What makes Shakespeare widely "useful"—if not appreciated—in so many different cultural contexts? Did Shakespeare's works go global because of their intrinsic aesthetic values, or are his works demonstrably better than those of other nation's poets by virtue of their circulation? What values and ideas does Shakespeare's cultural work sustain or undermine?

Global Shakespeare as Myth

Myths give the airy nothing of ideologies a local habitation. Criticism of global Shakespeare over the past decade has considered at length what is local, metropolitan, racialized, marketable, and cosmopolitan about performances that pass through various historical, digital, and cultural

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spaces (Orkin 2005; Massai 2006; Thompson 2013; Burnett 2013).
What is missing is theorization of the canon's perceived mythical capacity that fuels global circulations of Shakespeare. The phenomenon of global Shakespeare is fuelled by the myth of the canon's utilitarian value. We can better grasp the significance of global Shakespeare by understanding the cultural logic of the production and consumption of these myths—often articulated in the form of journalistic adoration of universal aesthetics.

In Graham Holderness's 1988 cultural materialist approach to the making of one specific myth about Shakespeare—bardolatry and contested biographies of the poet—he defines myth as a "real and powerful form of human consciousness" rather than some "non-existent ideological conjuring-trick." Based on partial truths, myth is a particular narrative structure serving a particular social function. He compares the figure of Shakespeare to legendary "cultural heroes." All societies, however they are organized, have myths. Some myths share common structural characteristics. In Holderness's analysis of the factors that enabled the mythologization of Shakespeare as a cultural hero, he observes that the mystery of identity is in fact the primary catalyst of hagiographic narrative patterns: the son of a Stratford glove maker becomes "England's greatest poet." Folklore figures are often not the persons they appear to be. They derive their mythical power from their hidden identity and parentage. Debates about authorship further solidify the mythologized status of Shakespeare. Holderness suggests that we are missing the point if we focus on verifiable evidence of Shakespeare's biography. "Historical details were merely narrative properties" that mythologize Shakespeare as a cultural hero. Holderness argues that it is the "institutions of bardolatry and quasi-religious worship" that are holding the Shakespeare myth in place (1988a, 10–11).

Nearly three decades after the publication of Holderness's *The Shakespeare Myth*, we are in need of a broader understanding of the Shakespeare myth in transnational contexts and particularly in performances. This volume takes up where Holderness left off. In her 1998 book, *The Shakespeare Trade,* Barbara Hodgdon started paying attention to the "ideological contours of the Shakespeare myth" and the ways in which this myth sustains "cultural consensus" (194). Following Holderness, Hodgdon's book attends to phenomena of collector's fetishes. Amateur and professional collectors are drawn to a range of representations of the figure of Shakespeare, such as "Shakespeare kitsch" and mass market souvenirs. Twenty years on, at this point in history, "Shakespeare" is associated

not only with bardolatry and a national poet's biography but also with performances—the primary venue where the general public encounters Shakespeare. Supporting these performances are liberal political ideologies that work against bardolatry and yet condone other aspects of the Shakespeare myth. When the myth of Shakespeare is mentioned, the focus seems to be, even in 2009, still on the figure of Shakespeare rather than larger performance cultures (Hackett 2009, 4–5). The current myth about Shakespeare is global in nature, and it draws upon celebrity culture instead of mystified biographies, and upon the cultural value of worldwide locations instead of just Stratford-upon-Avon. This collection offers new perspectives on materials that were not discussed in Holderness's book, notably, the wide range of uses of a global Shakespeare myth on stage and on screen.

Useful here is Northrop Frye's theory that myth consists of recognizable types of story serving an aesthetic function, "a story in which some of the chief characters are … beings larger in power than humanity." He further theorizes that this narrative is "very seldom located in [factual] history" but is often used as "allegories of morality" (1961, 597 and 599). Within the history of global performances of Shakespeare, the perceived moral authority of the Shakespearean canon has led to an impression that the works are both period specific and beyond history ("timeless"). The works are seen to be able to empower individuals as well as threaten the status quo.

For example, some sponsors and patrons were outraged by Gregg Henry's Trump-like Julius Caesar and Tina Benko's Calpurnia with an eastern European accent in Oskar Eustis's production for Public Theatre in New York (June 2017). Debates ensued on the roles of art and politics. The mythical status of Shakespeare's plays—namely, public investment in this specific genre of fiction—provoked strong reactions from all sides. Delta Air Lines and Bank of America, two major corporate sponsors, withdrew their support on account of what conservative news outlets and some audiences deemed offensive. Some critics believed that Eustis's production promoted violence against politicians. This incident demonstrates that the myth of Shakespeare's moral authority has enabled comparisons of characters and motifs in his plays to our contemporary political figures. Indeed, throughout the 2016 US presidential campaigns, critics from both camps drew comparisons between candidates and Shakespearean characters ranging from Richard III to King Lear. Increased awareness and scrutiny of Shakespeare's power as motivational material may be one reason why—despite the fact that Caesar has

historically been likened to multiple political leaders including Obama—Public Theatre's production became a lightning rod. Censorship of this particular production of *Julius Caesar* reveals more about corporate America's anxiety about free speech and the mythical power of the play than about the ability of the performance to incite violence or even political assassination.

Julius Caesar holds a special place in American and world politics. The play is frequently taught in American public schools and, in other instances, the play has been used to discuss republicanism. John Wilkes Booth is notorious for having performed in *Julius Caesar* in New York shortly before he assassinated Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater in Washington, DC, during a performance of Tom Taylor's farce *Our American Cousin.* The incident itself has been mythologized, linking the power of art to political power.

Contemporary myths about Shakespeare have been jointly created by educators, scholars, practitioners, administrators, funders, artists, spectators, and readers. The myth of universality is built upon a discursive move that presupposes unchanging meanings of the same story to different cultures, an assumption that the plays are always locally relevant in the same way in aesthetic, moral, and political terms. The idea of universality is often backed by statistics (as many things are now) and not just literary merits. The 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, part of the Cultural Olympiad, featured 69 international productions, 263 amateur shows, 28 digital commissions and films throughout the UK. The Royal Shakespeare Company, the principal organizer, claimed that the festival reached "more than 1.8 million people" (2016). Shakespeare's name itself has been used to signify high culture. In Taipei, Taiwan, there is a luxury apartment complex named after Shakespeare. In Beijing, an English language school is named Shakespeare, with "to be or not to be" as their slogan. There are also bridal shops and wedding services throughout East Asia named Shakespeare. In Anglophone countries, politicians quote Shakespeare as if it were a gentleman's calling card.

More recently, 2016 saw an unprecedented number of commemorative activities across the globe to mark the quartercentenary of Shakespeare's death. The significance of the year 2016 has inspired projects that are dedicated solely to activities during that year, including the London-centric *Shakespeare400*, a consortium of performances, exhibitions, and events coordinated by King's College London to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and the more globally minded *Performance Shakespeare 2016*, a digital project to capture performances of Shakespeare

worldwide from January 1 to December 31, 2016. Oxford University Press reissued Israel Gollancz's *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (originally published on April 23, 1916), edited and introduced by Gordon McMullan, on the occasion of the 2016 centenary. Gollancz appealed to "Shakespeare's own kindred, whatsoe'er their speech," suggesting that Shakespeare, in 1916, was both a poet of British Empire and a playwright of the world despite the changing global order.

To put the 2016 festivities around Shakespeare in context, it is useful to recall that 2016 marks the 500th anniversary of Thomas More's *Utopia*, but there were no large-scale international commemorative events. King's College London hosted a small exhibition, which made reference to most people's selective attentiveness to Shakespeare and not other writers. There are exceptions, though. Fuelled by the global Shakespeare myth, 2016 as a landmark year not only brought the Shakespearean canon into the public consciousness but also enabled the mythologization of other cultural figures, including Tang Xianzu and Cervantes, both of whom passed away in the same year as Shakespeare, 1616. Without an ideological investment in the myth about Shakespeare, the anniversaries of Tang and Cervantes most likely would not have received any attention outside of select local communities such as Linchuan in China's Jiangxi province, the birthplace of Tang. Both Tang and Shakespeare have a special place within their national literary histories. Their names are evoked in festival planners' coordinated efforts to construct dreams about cultural and literary universalism in a post-national space. These dreams are based on commodified, cosmopolitan commemoration (Joubin 2017). The myth of Shakespeare is used by the Chinese embassy in the UK to generate visions of a global Tang Xianzu and simultaneously cement a well-established imaginary of a global Shakespeare. Festival planners in 2016 did not question the valence of comparison between the two playwrights. The coincidental effort to commemorate the playwrights and their cultures is a manifestation of a current consensus that exists in the UK and China about the economic utility of soft power. Shakespeare-inspired events around the world suggest that Shakespeare functions as the spokesperson for humanity and liaison for cultural diplomacy.

Some Shakespearean plays, such as *Hamlet*, have always already begun even before the curtain is raised. In Dominic Dromgoole's Hamlet *Globe to Globe*, which chronicles the tour of his production to 197 countries in two years, the former artistic director of the London Globe admits that he and his crew "were circling around and always return[ed] to *Hamlet*,"

because of "the protean nature of the text" and the "kaleidoscope of possible responses to the play." In Dromgoole's view, these features made *Hamlet* a suitable choice for a worldwide tour (2017, 14). Among the most important organizing principles and unspoken assumptions about Shakespeare's naturalized global appeal is the myth of Shakespeare's universal moral and aesthetic values. The assumption here is not that *Hamlet* would carry the same dramaturgical and social meanings around the world, but rather that the play—despite its bare-bones staging—would hold audiences' interest as the troupe toured through six continents and played to spectators in refugee camps, formal venues, and village squares. The investment not only in the universality of Shakespeare but particularly in *Hamlet* calls to mind Laura Bohannan's 1966 essay "Shakespeare in the Bush" in which the anthropologist reflected on her erroneous assumption that *Hamlet* had one "universally obvious" interpretation as she told the plot to elders of the Tiv tribe in West Africa (1966, 24). The essay documents various points of difference in moral worldviews between the Tiv and Bohannan's mid-twentieth-century American society.

It is neither possible nor desirable to debunk the myth. Rather, in this book, we seek to understand the foundation and operating principles of such myths. Similar to racial stereotypes, myths offer half-truths. Our task is to reveal the construction of ideas that enable Shakespeare's global status. Case studies in this volume decode the obscure content of the myth while highlighting tactical uses of it. We trace common patterns in several performance traditions and observe the uses to which Shakespeare has been put to. At the same time, the editors and contributors are keenly aware of our own subject position, as Michael Dobson astutely observes in his Afterword to this volume. While critics might fantasize about intellectual independence from institutionalized mystification, few would "bite the hands" which feed the "Shakespeare cult's paid-up intellectuals." After all, donations, fees paid to, and grants received from the Folger Library, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and London's Globe keep the Shakespeare industry alive.

Two approaches are particularly conspicuous in the application of the global as a myth to Shakespearean performances: the construction of Shakespeare as a cosmopolitan brand and as an aggregate of overlapping localities—the notion that Shakespeare is everywhere in all localities.

First, in the UK, Shakespeare as a locally manufactured global brand has helped major festivals market both national pride and palatable multiculturalism simultaneously. The 2006 Royal Shakespeare Company Complete

Works Festival, the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, successive Globe-to-Globe seasons, and other similarly structured festivals including the Edinburgh International Festival and the Barbican International Theatre Events regularly pitch Shakespeare as global celebrity against Shakespeare as national poet. The myth of Shakespeare's currency has turned global Shakespeare into a business model.

Secondly, Shakespeare is associated with select historical sites and imaginary sites of origin that still hold sway. The playing spaces he was affiliated with are seen as sacred, hence the financial and intellectual investment in reconstructing Shakespeare's Globe in London near its original site and Elsinore, "Hamlet's castle" in Denmark, as a tourist destination. The history of the London Globe has been well documented and I will not belabour the point about its cultural significance. Denmark's Elsinore, Kronborg Castle (2017), has been marketed as Hamlet's castle ("Home of Hamlet" is its tagline on the official website).[1] The Danish entrepreneurs who publicize it under the Elizabeth English spelling used by Shakespeare actively discourage modern editors of Shakespeare's play from updating the castle's name to its Danish form, Helsingör, fearing the possible economic consequences of the disappearance of its customary trade-name from Shakespeare's pages. The castle proactively invites and hosts site-specific productions of *Hamlet*. The Hamlet-Sommer festivals put on scenes and full productions of *Hamlet* on an open-air stage in the castle's courtyard every year. Over time, they have created a mythologized sense of site-specific authenticity. In Elsinore, the fictional inhabits the actual site of production. In turn, the performance site and its cultural location reconfigure the fictional. Similar to the London Globe's celebration of theatrical cosmopolitanism and local authenticity as the space Shakespeare wrote for, the Hamlet-Sommer makes the castle into an enticing point of mythical origin.

Site-specific epistemologies inform both approaches. At the core of global myths about Shakespeare lies a reified sense of locations. Artists often work across several cultural locations, some of which lie at the crossroads of fiction and reality. In the process of myth making, multiple localities may be layered upon each other to create a deceivingly harmonious image of Shakespeare. As such, Shakespearean myths are repositioned beyond national boundaries and traditionally understood colonial authority. Shakespeare inhabits a post-national space where multiple cultures converge.

Locality helps us see the physical, fictional, and geocultural dimensions of myth making. In the case of Australian director Baz Luhrmann's

Romeo + Juliet (Twentieth Century Fox, 1996), North American Protestantism is pitched against Latin American Catholicism, which is mapped onto cinematic interpretations of Protestant, Elizabethan England's anxiety about Catholic Italy, the setting for Shakespeare's play. Mexico City and Boca del Rio in Veracruz, the film's primary shooting locations, are dressed up as a fictional American city called Verona Beach. The fictional and geocultural localities, attitudes towards Latinity in the film, and Elizabethan English fantasies about Spain and Italy are meshed together to create new localities where youthful exuberance, religious sentiments, and early modern and postmodern notions of feud and hatred play out.

The concept of locality encompasses a number of related ideas, including the setting of a drama, the city and venue of a performance, the cultural coordinates of the audience, and all the meanings derived from these physical and allegorical sites. Representations—theatrical or otherwise—signify relationally, and each locality is further constructed by interactions between local histories embedded in and superimposed on the performances of Shakespearean myths. Such interactions and their potential for revolutionizing the performative and political practice are examined in the chapters by Benedict Schofield (Chap. 6) and Anna Stegh Camati (Chap. 7).

The local is not always the antithesis to the global or an antidote to the hegemonic domination that has been stereotypically associated with the West. Even though the humanities as a discipline tend to regard universal claims as suspicious and celebrate the local as a Quixotic force, in studying the local and global myths of Shakespeare, we have come to realize that——depending on circumstances, as each chapter shows—the local and the global can play many different roles. Globalization may well enforce homogenization and political efficacy, but it also exposes both complementary and irresolvable local differences. In some instances, the local is made subservient to dreams of Olympism, dreams of universalism, and dreams of neo-imperialism, as exposed in the chapters by Bettina Boecker (Chap. 2), Kevin A. Quarmby (Chap. 4), and Marcela Kostihova (Chap. 3). There are also times when the local becomes the coercive and oppressive agent, such as during China's Cultural Revolution and during the Cold War in Eastern Europe. In such cases, the global represents a potentially liberating space. The additional purchase of the global is used to reduce the oppressive authority of the local. Locality as a critical category can solve part of the conundrum of the multiplicity of myths about Shakespeare.

Myth in Performance

We would now like to turn our attention from site-specific epistemologies to the politics of myth making. Myths are particularly fascinating to study when they are falling apart. It is no coincidence that Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* appeared in 1957, when French imperial myths were coming to a violent end with the decline of the second colonial empire. Similarly, Holderness's aforementioned collection *The Shakespeare Myth* was published in 1988, when British myths of postwar welfare society came under threat from Thatcherism. The present study of local and global Shakespeare myths emerges as we are witnessing the disintegration of the postcolonial world order, with the weakened position of the US and the future of the European Union shrouded in uncertainty. In this changing political situation, myths of Western domination and triumphant globalization begin to crumble. At the same time, as some narratives disappear, others return or emerge. Thus, we can see the rising myths of national independence and Asian dominance.

It is both exciting and urgent to explore the shifting myths around the globe, and it seems useful do to so through Shakespearean performance. After all, Shakespeare himself is one of the most powerful global myths, "as potent as the myths of Greek and Roman culture, and the Bible" according to Ton Hoenselaars and Ángel-Luis Pujante (2003, 24). Moreover, his international reputation was established in the very processes of colonization and globalization that are now under revision. Performances of his plays around the world thus offer a lens through which we might watch the decline and the dawn of modern mythologies. The focus on Shakespearean staging in this collection produces important insights into the dynamic and performative nature of myths as well as their circulation in local/global contexts.

Myth as a strategy of signification is at the heart of meaning making processes within and across cultures. Applicable in a range of areas, it provides a vital perspective on ways in which stories and ideas are constructed, disseminated, and exploited to endorse a particular worldview. The discussion of Shakespearean myths in this collection draws on several media and disciplines such as theatre, television, film, literature, history, politics, economy, cultural studies, and anthropology. What unites these diverse perspectives is a shared understanding of myth as a story which presents itself as true by careful construction of its constitutive elements, which plays a powerful ideological role, which tends to generate further myths, and which might

change, disappear, and then perhaps return in a new cultural and political context. This definition weaves together key ideas about myth expressed by some of the most prominent scholars writing on the subject. At the same time, the collection advances a performance-based approach to myth—one that is grounded in performance theory and analysis.

The understanding of myth as a story is rather broad, particularly once we combine elements of literary (Northrop Frye), semiological (Barthes), materialist (Holderness), and theatrical (Heiner Müller) perspectives. In Frye's description, which draws on Aristotle's *mythos*, myth is a "plot examined as a simultaneous unity, when the entire shape of it is clear in our minds" (1961, 590). Such plots can appear in a range of media and forms. Analysing Shakespeare, and other writers, Frye presents myths as metaphors or themes that span different works and periods. Barthes in turn understands myth as "a mode of signification," citing as its examples a grammar sentence and a *Paris-Match* picture (1991, 114–115). In *The Shakespeare Myth* and *Cultural Shakespeare* (2001), Holderness and his contributors turn their attention to objects, institutions, popular manifestations, and discourses surrounding the Bard. Finally, Müller sees myths as acts of historical disruption within drama, which have a potential to revolutionize the *status quo*. In the present collection, mythical instances are discussed as ideological narratives surrounding Shakespearean performances on stage, screen, and television. Each example shows a story that has sought to establish itself as true through a particular framing of events.

Myth's insistence on truth is inherently paradoxical. As Frye puts it, "A myth, in nearly all its senses, is a narrative that suggests two inconsistent responses: first, 'this is what is said to have happened,' and second, 'this almost certainly is not what happened, at least in precisely the way described'" (1990, 4). The comment might be read as a reformulation of Aristotle's implicit description of poetry as not "what has happened, but what may happen, – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity" (1902, 35). Barthes goes one step further and describes myth "as a story at once true and unreal" (1991, 127). The claim about the dual nature of myths is crucial. It rectifies the popular notion that mythical stories are by definition false. It also explains their ideological role: the recognition of the potential veracity of myths is vital if we want to argue that they function as meaning making tools that shape public views. It is in this spirit that Frye labels myths as "cultural frameworks of human societies" that, in turn, form a basis for "structures of ideas" that derive from them (1990, 204–205). It is also precisely because he acknowledges the

truth value of myth that Barthes argues that it "makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (1991, 115). The very same assumption underlines Holderness's description of myth as "a real and powerful form of human consciousness, holding some significant place within a culture" (1988a, 11).

The potential of myth to occupy such an important ideological role is well articulated by Barthes, according to whom myth is "a system of communication" or "a type of speech" (1991, 107) that represents "a *second-order semiological system*" (1991, 113). In his account, a sign, made of a signifier and a signified, belongs to the first-order semiological system. The sign, however, can become a signifier in the second-order system when, associated with a new signified, it acquires another level of signification, thus forming a myth as a second-order sign (1991, 113). In this process, the myth fundamentally distorts the signifier to which it is attached (1991, 121) and "*naturalizes*" the signified (1991, 128). Barthes's iconic example of this process is a *Paris-Match* picture of a black soldier saluting the French flag. Different elements in the photograph are carefully arranged to enforce the imperialist agenda. At the same time, they all appear to the viewer as perfectly natural and realistic.

Barthes's definition supports an idea of myth as a highly ideological concept that endorses a particular vision of the world. In the collection, several chapters explicitly engage with this idea. For instance, Marcela Kostihova reveals neoliberal and neoconservative agendas in the myth of authentic Shakespeare in the Canadian television series *Slings and Arrows* (broadcast from 2003 to 2006); Frank Widar Brevik examines the myth of Shakespeare's purity in Hollywood cinema, whereas Ruyta Minami uncovers the myth of Shakespeare's sophistication in Japanese culture.

Another important feature of myths is that, in presenting a particular worldview, they tend to form clusters. As Frye notes, myths "show an odd tendency to stick together and build up bigger structures" (1961, 598). This tendency can be explained by Barthes's theory of "a *second-order semiological system*." Since the relationship between a signifier and a signified is arbitrary and selective on the first semiological level, and it continues to be so on the second semiological level, where the relationship between a signifier and a signified is only partially motivated, this creates a certain incompleteness, which in turn encourages several mythical signifiers to emerge (1991, 125–6). Müller's account of myths provides another, more metaphorical explanation of their capacity to form groups. According to him, "Myth is an aggregate, a machine to which always new

and different machines can be connected" (2001, 120). Several contributions in the volume foreground this generative tendency of myths. Thus, Bettina Boecker reveals how the myth of Shakespeare's linguistic transcendence meets the myth of Shakespeare as a representative of shared European identity, whereas Benedict Schofield shows how the myth of German transgressive theatre has become conflated with the myth of "European radical performance."

Finally, myths are not only able to form clusters, but they also function as historical structures. They emerge at a particular moment, change, disappear, and perhaps return. In Müller's account, myths are born from historical processes. As he observes, "[t]he invasion of the times into the play constitutes myth" (2001, 120). Equally, in Barthes's theory, where mythology and ideology merge, myths evolve from a historical context. In *Mythologies*, this is the context of French bourgeois interests, waning colonial power, and divisions between Right and Left. Taking a cue from Barthes, Holderness and the contributors in *The Shakespeare Myth* study myths explicitly against the background of Thatcherist Britain caught in a dramatic shift from postwar welfare policies to neoliberalism. Similarly, the chapters in this collection are informed by specific cultural and political contexts. For example, Dan Venning, Kinga Földváry, and Kevin A. Quarmby show how myths are consciously constructed, transformed, and adapted to reflect cultural and national narratives in different parts of the world. Emily Oliver, Alexandra Portmann, Aleksandra Sakowska, and Saffron Vickers Walkling, in turn, offer a reflection on the validity of specific historical narratives, critically examining the myth of political Shakespeare in Central and Eastern Europe, and, in the case of Vickers Walkling, also in China.

While the volume draws on several established approaches to myth, it also advances a more performance-based perspective. The focus on theatre, cinema, and television in the chapters has important implications for the very understanding of myth as a strategy of signification. It foregrounds the temporary and transformative nature of myths, focusing on their capacity to frame and enforce a particular way of cultural reception. It also insists on a fundamental relationship between those who perform the myths and those who receive them—a community of spectators at whom a particular story is addressed. Moreover, the performance perspective encourages a greater attention to ways in which myths function in specific historical and geographical contexts within the local / global paradigm.

"[E]very myth can have its history and geography," as Barthes notes (1991, 151). The collection traces histories and geographies of Shakespearean myths from local and global perspectives, recognizing the necessity to examine the playwright beyond English or even Anglophone contexts. The development of Global Studies as a discipline and the rapid rise of globalization have prompted the study of Shakespeare as an inherently international author who has inspired a wealth of local appropriations. Thus, over the last 25 years, there have been fruitful discussions about "foreign" (e.g. Kennedy 1993), "postcolonial" (e.g. Loomba and Orkin 1998), and "world-wide" (e.g. Massai 2006) Shakespeares.

One of the key myths in the reception of Shakespeare as an international icon has been the idea that he represents universal human values. The myth might date back to Ben Jonson, who in a prefatory poem to the First Folio wrote of his fellow playwright, "He was not of an age, but for all time!" Taken up by the Romantics, the notion of Shakespearean drama as a repository of basic ideas and emotions that can be communicated across times and cultures has become a powerful story in Shakespeare criticism. Jonathan Bate expressed it in unambiguous terms:

> Because he was hardly ever narrowly topical in his own age and culture, Shakespeare has remained topical in other ages and cultures. Because he addresses great political issues rather than local political circumstances, his plays speak to such perennial problems as tyranny and aggressive nationalism. (2008, 221)

The myth of Shakespeare's universality has been often used to promote the vision of an empire or a nation. Nandi Bhatia notes that in British-ruled India, Shakespeare was identified with "'humanism,' 'morality,' and 'wisdom,' and presented as the universally transcendental text" (2004, 54), in an effort to disguise imperialism as a philanthropic project. In 1855, it was recommended that India's civil service examinations should include a component on English literature and language, with substantial weight given to questions on Shakespeare. This has led to the rich reception of Shakespeare's works in India that continues until the present, but it was also a means of imposing Britishness as a cultural presence and authority (Bhatia 2004, 54). After the Indian independence and the gradual dissolution of the empire, the use of Shakespeare as a paradigm of Britishness and a source of national unity has continued. In 1988, Holderness suggested that the "'Shakespeare myth' functions in

contemporary culture as an ideological framework for containing consensus and for sustaining myths of unity, integration and harmony in the cultural superstructures of a divided and fractured society" (1988b, xiii). As of 2017, the British citizenship exam, Life in the UK, includes several questions on Shakespeare, pressing immigrants to embrace the myth of the playwright as the essence of Britishness and the universal genius.

The playwright's universality, however, hinges also on the long and rich history of his local appropriations. As Stephen Greenblatt points out, the most astonishing feature of Shakespeare is his "virtual universal appeal"; he may be local in England, but he is universally worshipped elsewhere (2016, 1–2). A perspective that approaches the local and global as complementary and interdependent categories, in the spirit of glocalization, shows that Shakespeare myths have shaped identities and ideas in different political and cultural systems. Examining Shakespearean performances both locally and globally, we can trace common patterns and responses.

Theatre and film provide excellent material to study myths associated with Shakespeare in a worldwide context, since they seem to be situated on the two opposing sides of the local-global spectrum. Theatre is traditionally embedded in its immediate environment. The artists and audiences gather in a given time and place, whether it is a purposefully designed building, a venue used for a site-specific production, or a public space. Being together here and now creates a sense of community that might extend beyond the performance event. Theatre is seen as an important way of engaging with the concerns of a particular neighbourhood, city, and country, while local, municipal, and national playhouses are expected to play both artistic and social roles.

Cinema, on the other hand, by its nature encourages a global approach. It tends to involve large-scale funding, often secured from multinational corporations and grants from cultural organizations based in multiple countries. Given a greater number of cast and crew members in comparison to theatre, and not infrequently, a multiplicity of production sets scattered around the world, the film industry is more likely to depend on international collaborations. Finally, as an art form that does not rely on liveness, film becomes easily dissociated from the location in which it was recorded and produced, particularly when shown to international audiences.

The juxtaposition of theatre as local and cinema as global, however, is not fully accurate. Theatrical versions of Shakespeare can easily attract international funding relying on the playwright's cultural capital, and they can tour globally. Thomas Ostermeier's *Hamlet*, staged by the Berlin

Schaubühne in co-production with the Hellenic Festival Athens and the Festival d'Avignon, has been performed in 28 cities since its premiere in Athens in 2008. In 2010 alone, it travelled to Sydney, Taipei, Bucharest, Moscow, Seoul, and Reims (*Schaubühne* 2017). Shakespeare's works are regularly staged at international festivals, many of which are explicitly devoted to showcasing the playwright as a "product presented for the pleasure of a privileged and culturally dominant group of consumers for whom 'globalization' meant market access" (Knowles 2004, 111).

Alongside these economic and cultural shifts, the very concept of liveness that lies at the heart of theatre's locality has expanded in the last three decades. The use of video and large-scale projections by directors like Elizabeth LeCompte, Grzegorz Jarzyna, and Ostermeier has contributed to the development of intermedial performance, while the launching of The National Theatre Live in 2009 has redefined the experience of theatre for millions of spectators around the globe. The NT website claims that its broadcasts have reached more than 5.5 million people in over 2000 venues worldwide (*National Theatre Live* 2017). Shakespeare remains crucial in this process: among the NT highlights are the transmission of the Donmar Warehouse's *Coriolanus* with Tom Hiddleston and the Barbican's *Hamlet* with Benedict Cumberbatch.

Meanwhile, several film versions of Shakespeare have situated the playwright and his audiences in a local setting, reflecting on social and political issues that are important for a particular community. *Mickey B*, a 2007 adaptation of *Macbeth* directed by Tom Magill, is a striking example. Shot in Belfast's Maghaberry prison, with the inmates speaking a mixture of early modern and contemporary language in Northern Irish accents, the film situates Shakespeare's cycle of violence in the context of present-day social and economic deprivation and the history of the Troubles. In an interview with Sarah Werner, Magill argued that some of these local elements were not legible to viewers outside Northern Ireland, who did not have "the 'cultural capital' to read the films [about the Troubles] as a local audience would" (Magill 2011). He immediately noted, however, that localization was crucial for the film's global success (Magill 2011).

In focusing on specific Shakespearean productions in a range of historical and geographical contexts, the chapters in this volume offer sophisticated analyses of the way myths impose frameworks of interpretation onto Shakespeare's plays and their reception. They show how myths shape perceptions of cultural, social, and political phenomena, never losing sight of their uniquely powerful grip on audiences worldwide.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, "Myths of Linguistic Transcendence, Universality, Authenticity," examines different conceptual and cultural manifestations of the universal, humanist Shakespeare. Bettina Boecker explores "the myth of Shakespeare's linguistic transcendence"— the idea that Shakespeare's plays might function without English and, in fact, without any form of linguistic communication, given their universal performance potential. This assumption, which makes Shakespeare suitable for any type of intercultural appropriation, contributes to another powerful myth—the myth of Shakespeare as a symbol of a common European identity. Boecker identifies the conjunction of these two myths in multilingual Shakespeare productions in Europe, focusing on Karin Beier's 1996 *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Similarly, Kevin A. Quarmby tests the myth of Shakespeare's capacity to speak across cultures by looking at the South Korean Yohangza Theatre Company's *Hamlet* which was performed in London in 2014. He identifies its appropriation of shamanism and the *gut* ritual as a staple feature through which the production reinvents mythical traditions in order to redefine the national Korean identity and to commodify it for global audiences. As an academic and spectator, Quarmby self-consciously questions the competence needed for appreciating intercultural performances. Marcela Kostihova, in turn, shows how the Canadian television series, *Slings and Arrows* (2003–2006) establishes the myth of authentic Shakespeare as a source of universal values and a means of personal and artistic liberation. The myth is constructed in opposition to the limitations of scholarly interpretations and to the demands of commercial theatre. Kostihova's analysis reveals, however, how under the guise of promoting individualism and self-determination, this localized myth of Shakespeare makes the protagonists buckle under globalized neoliberal pressure and comply with neoconservative values.

The second part, "Myths of Local Identities and Global Icons," focuses on the uses of Shakespeare as a global icon in the construction of local identities. The first two chapters consider Shakespeare's appropriations in Germany. Dan Venning reviews Ludwig Tieck's efforts as a translator, critic, dramaturg, and director to create the Romantic myth of a "German Shakespeare." Steeped in Romantic aesthetics and ideology, Tieck saw Shakespeare as a genius, whose study of society and nature could help Germany forge its identity as a nation. Tieck's vision has

shaped the understanding of Shakespeare locally in Germany, but it has also inspired English Romantics and several twentieth-century critics, contributing to the development of German Shakespeare as a global brand. Benedict Schofield identifies a more recent, revised version of a German Shakespeare myth as a "transgressive" performance practice, which is anchored in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht's iconoclasm. He shows the manifestation of this myth in Bremen Shakespeare Company's *Timon of Athens* and Thomas Ostermeier's *Hamlet* that were performed in London in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Schofield argues that this trend of German Shakespeare theatre has become associated with radical European performance more generally, as it has turned into a global phenomenon, with German productions being exported for enjoyment of the international audiences. Finally, Anna Stegh Camati explores *Hamlet* as a mythical narrative, akin to Greek mythology, through the concept of anthropophagy ("cultural digestion") developed by the Brazilian modernist writer, Oswald de Andrade in 1928. Her essay focuses on José Celso Martinez Correa's *Ham-let* (1993) and Jessé Oliveira's *Syncretic Hamlet* (2005), which appropriate the play in the context of Brazilian society and politics, incorporating Afro-Brazilian mythology alongside current references. The localized anthropophagy of these two productions might be appreciated worldwide, as both are available in the MIT *Global Shakespeares* open-access digital video archive.

The third part, "Myths of Political Shakespeare," looks at the ways in which Shakespeare and his works have been deployed for interventionist purposes in significant historical moments or political turning points. Emily Oliver contends that the idea that Shakespeare is always part of political opposition is itself a myth. Through a case study of Heiner Müller's 1990 production of *Hamlet/Maschine* at the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin, she demonstrates that there is a trend of wishful thinking in crediting East German Shakespearean performances with more political agency and influence than they had. Saffron Vickers Walkling's study, which also focuses on appropriations of *Hamlet*, provides a different vantage point. Productions of *Hamlet* from non-Anglophone cultures are often conceived to harbour progressive, politically subversive messages, such as Lin Zhaohua's *Hamulaite* and Jan Klata's *H*. Vickers Walkling explores why these *Hamlet*s tend to be read as "political allegories trading in modern myths." Alexandra Portmann continues the discussion of global *Hamlet*s by turning to the myth of political Shakespeare in the former Yugoslavia. She argues that Tomaž Pandur's 1990 *Hamlet* and Gorčin

Stojanović's 1992 *Hamlet* create an aesthetic reality to counteract and interrupt the political reality. As the productions engage with the disintegration of former Yugoslavia through creating particular modes of representation, they offer dramaturgical strategies that are alternative to Jan Kott's theatre of allusion. The final chapter in this part focuses on the myth of political Shakespeare in Russia. Aleksandra Sakowska complicates the idea of political Shakespeare in Prijut Komedianta Theatre's and Nikolai Kolyada Theatre's productions of *King Lear*. The former not only sustains the myth of politically subversive (hence expedient) Shakespeare but also takes on mythologized Russian history of World War II, which is known locally as the Great Patriotic War. By contrast, the Kolyada *King Lear* is characterized by whimsical props and set in an unspecifiable moment and culture, which suggests an escapist tendency. Sakowska argues that Russian theatre does not always seek out Shakespeare in order to speak up, or speak politically.

The fourth part of the book, "Shakespeare as a Myth in Commercial and Popular Culture," analyses Shakespeare's evolving mythologized status as a high culture icon. Kinga Földváry tackles the idea of a disruption of union in ancient myths of Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and Shakespearean narratives. The chapter examines five cinematic "location-based interpretations" of *King Lear* released between 2001 and 2009. While in Shakespeare's *King Lear* the powers of Nature are seen as the source of divisions within families and societies, modern film adaptations tend to offer very localized conflicts, such as Kristian Levring's *The King Is Alive* (2000) or Sangeeta Datta's *Life Goes On* (2009). Frank Widar Brevik takes on another form of fossilized imagination of what Shakespeare should be. He argues that cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare "struggle to reconcile three interpretative force fields: the spectators' myth-based expectations, the historico-political situatedness of the text, and our own presentist cultural and political concerns." His chapter contrasts three screen versions of Shakespeare's plays with two stage performances to claim that theatre, unlike commercial cinema, has a great potential to showcase contemporary conflicts and issues. Lastly, Ryuta Minami's chapter takes us to Japan to probe the double-sided story of Shakespeare's canonical status in Japanese culture. On one hand, Shakespeare is worshipped there as a literary giant, which is solidified by the history of frequent revisions and the re-publication of Japanese translations of his plays. On the other hand, these translations and the received wisdom of

Shakespeare's "greatness" are challenged by Kaki Kuu Kyaku, a theatre company that produces all-female performances, "*nyotai* (female bodied) Shakespeare." By doing away with conventional stylistic features of Shakespeare in formal Japanese translation (as it was commonly seen in the late Yukio Ninagawa's works), these innovative performances of *Hamlet, Macbeth*, and other plays "liberate" the texts by inching closer to the everyday language of the theatregoers, thus debunking the myth of Shakespeare's greatness as incomprehensibility.

As the chapters in the book expose and question some of the key local and global myths in Shakespearean performance, they interrogate powerful nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century narratives of national identity, transnational heritage, intercultural dialogue, and global community. Such interrogation is an important task for scholars in our times, when the decline of faith in globalization, in both economic and political terms, is giving rise to nationalism and populism in different parts of the world.

Note

1. See the Danish tourism board's website http://www.visitdenmark.com/kronborg-castle-shakespeare-hamlet; accessed March 7, 2016. The UNESCO's world heritage sites' website states that "It is world-renowned as Elsinore, the setting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" (http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/696, accessed March 7, 2016). We are told that "Hamlet's spirit is still roaming the hallways of Kronborg" as well by Copenhagen's visitor bureau (http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/kronborg-castle-gdk476685, March 7, 2016).

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Reproducing Shakespeare

Reproducing Shakespeare marks the turn in adaptation studies toward recontextualization, reformatting, and media convergence. It builds on two decades of growing interest in the "afterlife" of Shakespeare, showcasing some of the best new work of this kind currently being produced. The series addresses the repurposing of Shakespeare in different technical, cultural, and performance formats, emphasizing the uses and effects of Shakespearean texts in both national and global networks of reference and communication. Studies in this series pursue a deeper understanding of how and why cultures recycle their classic works, and of the media involved in negotiating these transactions.

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Preface

This volume has its origins in a seminar at the 2013 European Shakespeare Research Association Conference in Montpellier co-directed by Aneta Mancewicz and Alexa Alice Joubin. Several contributors presented early versions of their chapters on this occasion, while some of the key critical ideas were formed in the course of the discussions. As other contributors joined later, the project expanded in terms of its theoretical framework and geographical scope.

The collection proposes a new understanding of local and global Shakespeare myths in theatre, cinema, and television, as the economic and social costs of globalization are increasingly under scrutiny. Drawing on a definition of myth as a powerful ideological narrative, the volume examines historical, political, and cultural conditions of Shakespearean performances in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. Some of the questions explored include: What kind of myths have been generated locally and globally in Shakespearean performance? Can we trace common patterns across different regions of the world? What is the role of Shakespearean myths in reflecting important social, cultural, and political concerns?

The book begins with an introduction that is divided into three sections. The first section, "Global Shakespeare as Myth" written by Alexa Alice Joubin, introduces new theoretical foundations for understanding aspects of the Shakespeare myth beyond bardolatry. Contradictory myths are the foundation to many conversations about Shakespeare today. Taking up where Graham Holderness left off in his landmark volume *The Shakespeare Myth* (1988), this section delineates the ways in which international films and performances construct myths of Shakespeare's moral authority and use

value. Supporting these performances are liberal political ideologies that work against bardolatry and yet condone other aspects of the Shakespeare myth in the global context. This section identifies two approaches that are particularly conspicuous in the application of the global as a myth to Shakespearean performances: the construction of Shakespeare as a cosmopolitan brand and as an aggregate of overlapping localities. Both these approaches are informed by site-specific epistemologies, that is a strong sense of locality or, in other cases, many overlapping localities. The discussion of broader questions concerning global and local relationships in the first section leads to definitions of terms in the following section. The second section, "Myth in Performance" written by Aneta Mancewicz, takes a European and an intermedial perspective. It defines key terms organizing this volume: myth, the relationship between local and global elements, and performance. Myth is introduced from several perspectives: literary (Northrop Frye), semiological (Roland Barthes), materialist (Graham Holderness), and theatrical (Heiner Müller). It is defined as a story that presents itself as true through a particular framing of events and that plays an ideological role. Myth is also explained as a historical structure that can change, disappear, or emerge again, but also as a construct which tends to form clusters. Local and global relationship, in turn, is defined with reference to imperial and national narratives that underlie the idea of Shakespeare's universality. Finally, the section describes theatrical and cinematic performances of Shakespeare as phenomena on the local and global spectrum. The critical introduction closes with the third section that explains the organization of the chapters into four distinctive parts and offers chapter summaries.

The chapters collected in the book present several case studies of performances in Europe, with a special emphasis on Germany, in light of its long tradition of mythologizing the Bard. Many chapters, however, span across other continents, looking at performances of Shakespeare in Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, and South Korea. The range of international references reflects the worldwide impact of Shakespeare's works, and it opens a broader discussion about their cultural and political significance in the twenty-first century. Given this geographical breadth and the focus on local and global mythologies, the book problematizes narratives about Shakespeare's cultural identity and value in the context of globalized performance in the twenty-first century.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Dan Venning is Assistant Professor of Theatre and English at Union College in Schenectady, New York. He holds a PhD in Theatre from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where his dissertation explored the ways German theatre artists of the nineteenth century deployed Shakespeare's plays in performance in service of building German national identity. He also holds an MLitt. in Shakespeare Studies from the University of St Andrews and a BA in English and Theater Studies from Yale. Previously, he was Associate Dramaturg of the California Shakespeare Theater.

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