THE SHAKESPEAREAN INTERNATIONAL YEARBOOK

17: Special Section, Shakespeare and Value

Edited by
Tom Bishop and Alexa Alice Joubin

Guest Editor
Simon Haines
At the London Globe in May 2012, pro-Palestinian activists protested a Hebrew production of The Merchant of Venice by the Israeli company Habima (from Tel Aviv). Both the play and its supposed anti-Semitic sentiments have been the subject of debate in critical history, but this protest brought contemporary international politics into the mix. Leading actors—Mark Rylance, Emma Thompson, and others—called for the Globe to boycott the company because it had performed in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. When Shakespeare is referenced in the global cultural marketplace, the canon is often given an additional ethical burden, and the same play can end up valued in quite different ways depending on its use.

How do Shakespearean plays sustain clashing values within them, or imposed on them? Is Shakespeare anti-Semitic? Can Shakespeare be a feminist? How is value subject to context, to market, and demand? A wide range of moral, political, and aesthetic values—profitable or heartening or threatening from case to case—have been associated with Shakespeare, and those values have changed over time. And conflicting values may coincide at different levels of discussion of a given play, at once driving diversity in entertainment industries and sustaining traditional aesthetic principles, or in some other concatenation.

This volume's special section of essays on "Shakespeare and Value" explores these questions through general enquiry and case studies of complex moral designs that resist easy profiling in the plays. Instead of following formulae or jumping to conclusions, the contributors urge us not to flatten out the contradictory sets of values in these designs, but to set these clashes at the heart of action and inquiry.

The Shakespearean International Yearbook surveys the present state of Shakespeare studies, addressing issues that are fundamental to our interpretive encounter with Shakespeare's work and his time, across the whole spectrum of his literary output and across historical periods and media.

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Currently in its seventeenth year and formerly published by Ashgate, The Shakespearean International Yearbook surveys the present state of Shakespeare studies, addressing issues that are fundamental to our interpretive encounter with Shakespeare’s work and his time, across the whole spectrum of his literary output. Contributions are solicited from among the most active and insightful scholars in the field, from both hemispheres of the globe. New trends are evaluated from the point of view of established scholarship, and emerging work in the field encouraged, to present a view of what is happening all around the world. Each issue includes a special section under the guidance of a specialist Guest Editor, as well as a review of recent critical work in Shakespeare studies. An essential reference tool for scholars of early modern literature and culture, this annual captures, from year to year, current and developing thought in Shakespeare scholarship and theater practice worldwide.

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