

Introduction

Gail Marshall

The National Portrait Gallery was formally established in 1856 with the purpose of celebrating ‘those persons who are most honourably commemorated in British history’.¹ The first portrait to be acquired by the gallery was the Chandos portrait of Shakespeare, a gift from one of its founder trustees, Francis Egerton, first Earl of Ellesmere. The National Portrait Gallery now owns fifty portraits of Shakespeare, making him one of the best commemorated figures outside the British royal family. In 1874, Leicester Square, just north of the National Portrait Gallery, acquired its own Shakespeare memorial in the shape of a white marble statue of the playwright mounted on a plinth with four dolphins and a fountain at its base. This process of memorialization is echoed throughout the country in the nineteenth century, with statues being erected to Shakespeare in new civic spaces, and his bust or portrait appearing on the facades of theatres built by local bodies to proclaim their own cultural credentials. In the Midlands, the Birmingham Shakespeare Library was founded in 1864 as part of that year’s centenary celebrations. After a fire destroyed much of the central library building, John Henry Chamberlain designed the Shakespeare Memorial Room in 1882 for the rehoused Shakespeare Library. Shakespeare’s physical presence proliferated in the nation’s streets, parks and open spaces throughout the nineteenth century, memorialized in marble, mosaics, stone and of course in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre that opened in Stratford in 1879.

But this physical realization of Shakespeare’s memory is only part of his nineteenth-century story. For he was also acted, spoken by theatre professionals and ordinary citizens, quoted, painted and endlessly referred to. Far from needing to be memorialized, his image physically captured in order that he be remembered, Shakespeare is a living presence in the nineteenth century, ever available and resonating through English-language speech and writing. As the essays in this collection demonstrate, Shakespeare’s was a lambent presence in the nineteenth century, available

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throughout the world in a variety of forms that exceed particular interests and embrace rather than exclude. The monumental Shakespeare, then, is a testimony to Shakespeare's persistence and vivacity rather than a necessary reminder of past glories; but the monuments also refer implicitly to how contested the legacy of Shakespeare is in the nineteenth century. Shakespeare was not just the darling of civic bodies looking to advertise their cultural credentials, but belonged just as much to the ordinary people of Britain who used his voice to contest contemporary power distribution. The monumental civic Shakespeare may have been intended as a rejoinder to the upstart masses, an assertion that Shakespeare was one of the elite rather than one of them. As much of the latest criticism of Shakespeare shows, however, the vibrancy of Shakespeare's interaction with his multiple nineteenth-century audiences was not easily subdued. His is a presence defined by generosity, the generosity that successive generations have found in the acuity of his words' responses to their situations and various needs, and the generosity with which audiences have welcomed his presence and insights.

The rest of this book pays testimony to that symbiotic relationship between Shakespeare and his readers, actors, critics, audiences and interpreters. It is a symbiosis that the chapters themselves actively demonstrate, as do the books referred to below, which represent some of the most recent critical treatments of Shakespeare's nineteenth-century afterlife and which are described here in order to contextualize the present volume and to give readers a broader sense of the breadth of work being carried out in this area.

SELECTED CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

In the last two decades interest in the afterlives of Shakespeare has burgeoned. Two major multivolume series, *Great Shakespeareans* from Continuum and *Lives of Shakespearian Actors* from Pickering & Chatto, are concerned to examine respectively the ways in which various cultural, political, literary and theatrical figures have rewritten Shakespeare during the nineteenth century. Figures examined so far include Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, John Keats, the novelists Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, the actors William Macready, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Fanny Kemble, Charlotte Cushman, and the writers and editors Anna Jameson and Mary Cowden Clarke. *Lives of Shakespearian Actors* by contrast concentrates on the stage and looks at how Shakespeare and some of his most noted theatrical

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interpreters have been involved in a process of symbiotic creation and recreation. Subjects so far include Edmund Kean, Harriet Smithson, Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps, William Macready, Helena Faucit, Fanny Kemble, Elizabeth Vestris, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Herbert Beerbohm Tree. These volumes variously take advantage of newly accessible electronic resources that can bring us closer to the day-to-day relationships between Shakespeare and nineteenth-century men and women, and show us in more intimate detail the sheer extent of the ways in which he infiltrated their lives and language, and they in turn ensured his longevity. What follows is a brief summary of some of the recent critical texts that have been devoted exclusively to the nineteenth century.

Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). This work adds an important international dimension to the proliferation of Shakespeare on stage in the nineteenth century, one that embeds Shakespeare's international travels within the dominant political prism of the British Empire. As chapters on Macready, Phelps, Kean, Calvert George Rignold, Irving, Tree, Benson and Granville Barker, Louis Calvert and Annie Horniman show, the effort to take Shakespeare abroad on lengthy tours was usually financially rewarding, but was subject to the particular political exigencies of the moment, which might derail a tour, as Macready found out on his 1848 tour to the United States (p. 3). However, theatre was more usually a means of cementing international relations, though the theatre of war in 1914–18 might raise questions of ownership between the British and German nations.

Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney and John M. Mercer, *The Globalization of Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). This collection of essays ranges across eastern and western Europe, Asia and the Americas to show how the influence of Shakespeare is deployed in a range of countries and theatres to great commercial, cultural and political effect. The essays show how a range of countries adopt Shakespeare as a 'national figure' (p. x), and one who helped a number of countries articulate their own burgeoning sense of nationalism in the nineteenth century. For instance, Josef de Vos argues that the translation of Shakespeare directly from English into Flemish, as opposed to working through the mediation of a French neoclassical translation, helped the Flemish people of Belgium break free from French cultural dominance and assert the use of their own language in cultural and political contexts. Translations and performances of Shakespeare in Hungary perversely perhaps enabled the establishment of a Hungarian national theatre. In the United States, Yiddish adaptations of *King Lear* help to 'bring Jewish

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culture out of the ghettos and into mainstream Western civilization' (p. xi). Shakespeare's powers are not, then, confined to his own shores, but his much valued ability to articulate identity, often in the face of opposition, clearly transcends national boundaries.

Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (eds.), *Victorian Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Volumes on 'Theatre, Drama and Performance' and 'Literature and Culture' explore a range of Shakespeare's interactions with the period, through art and literature – both British and European – but also through technology and politics – national, domestic and international. Detailed readings sound out their implications through a range of media to show how invasive and inescapable was Shakespeare's voice for the Victorians, and how the Victorians' Shakespeare continues to sound out through our own period.

Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People: Working-class Readers, 1800–1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Mapping out developments in education and the availability of editions of Shakespeare, Andrew Murphy conducts a careful study of the presence of Shakespeare in the lives of the working classes in Britain in the nineteenth century. Working primarily with the evidence of working-class autobiographies, Murphy shows how Shakespeare is introduced to working-class readers and the difficulties with which they determinedly maintain their reading in the face of demanding working conditions, or, in the case of women, the multiple calls on their time in the home. He shows too how Shakespeare might be the means of forging cross-class understanding when he quotes the example of a trade union leader who, surprising 'a particularly dogged employee of the old school' with a quotation from *Much Ado About Nothing*, finds himself involved in a lengthy discussion of the comedies that mutates into a debate about Shakespeare's qualities as a historian, all of which is held over a convivial lunch. Brought back to the subject of the strike that was the pretext for their meeting, the employer concedes the men's demands (p. 156). As Murphy argues,

Clynes and his host reach an agreement because Shakespeare serves as common ground on which representatives of two distinct strata within society can meet and negotiate, both culturally and in more pragmatic, quotidian terms. The story indicates the extent to which Shakespeare had, over the course of the nineteenth century, become a common cultural property. (pp. 156–7)

Adrian Poole's *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Arden/Thomson Learning, 2004) is an excellent introduction to this topic, and yet it is far more than that: a set of brilliant readings of Shakespeare, of

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Shakespeare's words as reworked by the Victorians, and a generous sense of the sheer 'multitudinousness' of Shakespeare in the Victorian age. Considerations of the main literary genres, of the Victorian stage, and a concluding consideration of Shakespeare as 'The Great Image of Authority' make for an invigorating, generous and multiply illuminating reading experience.

Kathryn Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals* (London: Routledge, 2008). This important work brings together the burgeoning disciplines of print culture and studies in Shakespeare's afterlives to assert the imperative of reading Shakespeare in nineteenth-century periodicals. There, Prince argues, we will see not Shakespeare the emerging national icon, an 'artificially magnified figure', but rather one occupying a 'relative and shifting position' in nineteenth-century theatre (p. 4). Similarly, a consideration of publications aimed at the working class, children and women will demonstrate how Shakespeare could articulate the special interests of those groups, and not simply a culturally hegemonic position. This material embeds Shakespeare in the 'shifting tides of topics' (p. 4) that swirled around readers of the time and makes him too emphatically of his moment. For instance, Prince's reading of the Victorian national theatre debates through periodical coverage, rather than through the retrospective lens of monographs, enables us to see how far the inclusion of Shakespeare in that debate depended rather on his place within the movement for popular education than on his assumed position at the heart of late Victorian culture (p. 12).

Linda Rozmovits, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Culture in Late-Victorian England* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). This study of *The Merchant of Venice* in the late nineteenth century examines the play's implications for that historical moment and how it is conditioned by that moment. Specifically, Rozmovits discusses the place of this Shakespeare play within the late Victorian democratization of education, Jewish migration into Britain, and the way in which Portia is received in a period in which she has much in common with the figure of the 'New Woman'. This is a wide-ranging study that draws on theatre history and various forms of print culture to produce a sensitively inflected account of the conditions determining the play's meanings at this time.

Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare: George Eliot, A. C. Swinburne, Robert Browning, and Charles Dickens* (Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 2003). Sawyer's work takes as its starting point Gary Taylor's assertion that 'Shakespeare's reputation peaked in the reign of Queen Victoria'.² Focusing on the period 1850–80,

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Sawyer considers the ways in which Shakespeare is implicated in the developments of that time, how his chosen authors ‘use Shakespeare’s works to question their culture’s notions of gender, desire, identity, and the family’.³ Unsurprisingly, the writers find a Shakespeare who can support opposing views, in a post-Romantic world where stage and page compete with each other to produce a Shakespeare fit for the moment. Sawyer is also interested, as are many modern critics, in finding ways to describe the relationship between Shakespeare and his literary successors. Considering Margaret Cavendish’s suggestion that all subsequent writers ‘stole’ from Shakespeare, Sawyer rather opts for ‘appropriation’ as his preferred mode, a form also used in his co-edited (with Christy Desmet) work, *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 1999). However, a variety of terms are being used by scholars interested in Shakespeare’s afterlives: Martha Tuck Rozett suggests that we ‘talk back’ to Shakespeare, and in the work of other scholars engagement, revisioning, reconstruction, reinventing, translation, mythologizing are also tried for size.⁴

Richard W. Schoch, *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). This work has done much to restore modern scholars’ interest in Charles Kean, son of the more famous and more talented Edmund, who was manager of the Princess’s Theatre, Oxford Street, from 1850 to 1859, where he staged a series of Shakespeare ‘revivals’ to great popular acclaim and did much to attract the burgeoning middle classes of that decade to the theatre.

Richard W. Schoch, *Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Following on from the pioneering work of Stanley Wells in his five-volume edition of *Nineteenth-century Shakespeare Burlesques* (London: Diploma Press, 1977), Schoch has made the Shakespearean burlesque an inescapable part of the theatrical landscape of the nineteenth century. He shows in this brilliantly entertaining work how vibrant were these plays in ‘their exuberant humour’, and how controversial in their apparent ‘[imperiling] the sanctity of Shakespeare as a national icon’ (p. 3). But burlesque might also protect Shakespeare from contemporary extravagances by lampooning not the playwright but his interpreters, and so, Schoch argues, to burlesque was perhaps to be most Shakespearean (p. 4). This work is situated by Schoch as one of a growing number of studies of Shakespeare’s afterlives, told through the historically sensitive recovery of artefacts, and, in this case, through the careful recovery of an almost forgotten genre.

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Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts (eds.), *Women Reading Shakespeare, 1660–1900: An Anthology of Criticism* (Manchester University Press, 1997). This pioneering collection of women critics' writings on Shakespeare has proved an important component in recent attempts to recover the specificities of the nineteenth century's engagement with Shakespeare. As its excerpts from the work of a variety of women show, Shakespeare proved an essential tool for women seeking to assert their claims within the cultural sphere, but was also important politically for women hoping to find a voice through which to speak their own dissatisfactions with their place in contemporary society.

Georgianna Ziegler, with Frances E. Dolan and Jean Addison Roberts, *Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1997). This catalogue to the Folger exhibition of the same name draws on the library's collections to reveal the extent of the practice of pictorializing Shakespeare's heroines in the nineteenth century. As the illustrations show, the unruliness of even Shakespeare's most intractable women could be calmed within the pictorial conventions of nineteenth-century representation, which might domesticate a Lady Macbeth or render Cleopatra a doe-eyed beauty akin to Shakespeare's romantic heroines. Their very ubiquity, however, suggests an unruliness, a cultural persistence not to be contained.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The book that follows is variously indebted to extant scholarship, but in its attempt to cross the boundary between perceptions of the Romantic and the Victorian it offers important continuities across the period. It is divided into five sections, with accompanying reference guides.

The dissemination and reception of Shakespeare

The opening section focuses on the ways in which Shakespeare was made known to his nineteenth-century audiences. The first three chapters will look at the main print media – editions, criticism and the periodicals – through which Shakespeare was both written about and read, and will track the predominant intellectual currents shaping the construction of a Shakespeare for the nineteenth century. The final chapter examines a strand of scholarly research that had broader implications for the way in which Shakespeare was viewed: that of his identity, both in the sense of

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the attribution question, and of more general biographical issues. It will assess the growth in interest in Shakespeare as a man.

Christopher Decker's 'Shakespeare Editions' represents a monumental effort to compact the more than eight hundred editions of Shakespeare's plays in the nineteenth century into a meaningful chapter. Decker identifies key trends and continuities across the practice of a variety of editors, often with their own particular, occasionally idiosyncratic, agendas. Editions for children and girls, for instance, were driven by pedagogic, but also by ideological, needs. What becomes most clear, as the century progresses, is how far editors and publishers were concerned to make Shakespeare available to all potential readers, no matter what their circumstances. It is also clear that many of the practices that shape contemporary editions were also established at this time, from the editorial apparatus employed such as biographies, textual variants, notes on performance, but also the practice of numbering lines, which we so take for granted today.

Mark Hollingsworth's 'Shakespeare Criticism' gives an insight into the vibrancy of the critical commitment to Shakespeare in the nineteenth century, a commitment which increasingly was pursued professionally as an important component of the ever-expanding publishing industry, but that also seeped into and out from the lives of its writers. The growth of Shakespeare societies in the century spawned rivalries and scholarly disputes which energized the contributors. But as the chapter also makes clear, criticism was itself becoming part of a new academic discipline, within which the study of Shakespeare was integral. Studies of the plays and poems vied with attention to, and indeed fed interest in, Shakespeare the man. As such, he was also enrolled within the moral project of the Victorian period, working as a form of moral pedagogue to young men and women. The disputes around the male relationships in the Sonnets disrupt this moral utility and generate evasions and silences that evidence the centrality of Shakespeare to cultural life at the time. Hollingsworth also shows how criticism seeps beyond its more usual arenas to infiltrate literature and social spaces, to become part of the texture of literary life at the time.

In 'Shakespeare in the Periodicals', Kathryn Prince similarly demonstrates the pervasiveness of Shakespeare and the sheer availability of his words and ideas to a range of readerships. The ubiquity of the periodical in the nineteenth century, and its sensitivity to market demands, means that we have an insight into the immediacy of a readership's needs of Shakespeare and the ways in which Shakespeare is brought into a relationship with current events and with identities across the political spectrum.

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As Prince argues, 'Chartism, feminism and imperialism' all enrol Shakespeare within their ideological projects, using him to enhance the status and familiarity of their demands and thereby establishing his credentials as effectively a contemporary voice. One of the recurring themes of the collection is first articulated in this chapter, where Prince shows how Shakespeare is presented to girls and boys in guises which make of him an educator through his plays and an exemplar in his own life, a self-made figure highly appropriate to the ethos of personal progress of the mid and late nineteenth century. In those media too, we can also see how Shakespeare is transformed into a writer capable of competing with sensational texts for the attention of young boys. As Prince shows, 'instruction and delight' are the media through which Shakespeare appeals to his nineteenth-century readership.

In 'Shakespeare our Contemporary', Russell Jackson assesses the ways in which Shakespeare was treated as 'the ideal literary personality', who had a 'quasi-supernatural understanding of human nature'. He examines the cult of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century, and the ways in which it was calibrated according to contemporary needs. There were, of course, those who would cavil at such treatment, most notably George Bernard Shaw, but they were relatively small in number compared to Shakespeare's champions and readers, who were keen to imbibe his wisdom, often in the most easily available forms, such as anthologies of sayings. Throughout more sustained criticism the life of Shakespeare, and its fascinations, was indivisible from the works, and as both playwright and exceptional human being Shakespeare was fundamental to the growth of an identifiable new national identity in the nineteenth century.

Literary allusion to Shakespeare

In the second section of the book the writers assess the influence of Shakespeare on the primary genres of prose fiction, poetry and plays. He appears as a character in a wide variety of works, but is most important as a source of characters and situations which could be reworked by modern writers, and as the progenitor of psychological insights and complexities which informed the work of nineteenth-century novelists and poets in particular. In 'Shakespeare and Fiction' I show that Shakespeare's characters, words and situations inform fiction across the century, from Jane Austen through popular romance to the late Victorian tragedies of Thomas Hardy. In a sense, the novel has inherited the mantle of Shakespeare's popular status and, in its mining of his words, has conferred upon

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Shakespeare a readership which may now approach Shakespeare through the prism of novelistic expectations and the desire for psychological veracity that the novel engenders. To some extent, of course, that desire is one prompted and enabled by Shakespeare himself, whose psychological insights tantalize a readership used to seeing those insights explored at great length in the novel. One might argue that in the Victorian period Shakespeare comes into his own as a writer of character, with a new audience trained by novel reading to appreciate his insights into the new sciences of the mind.

In 'Shakespeare and Poetry' the authors assess the impact of Shakespeare upon major Romantic and Victorian poets, tracking in the process the social and literary reticences and gaps in knowledge which in part enable Shakespeare's fascination for this century. Throughout the nineteenth century the question of Shakespeare's legacy was one with which poets of all types had to engage, but, as this chapter shows, the relationships ensuing were far from anxious in how they were experienced by the modern poets. Rather, they devised a variety of forms whereby they might speak with Shakespeare through their work.

In 'Shakespeare and Drama', David Taylor examines the influence of Shakespeare's work on nineteenth-century plays and playwrights, and shows how a variety of theatrical forms – extravaganza, burlesque, legitimate drama – employ Shakespearean references and thus participate within the interrogation of forms of 'theatrical nationhood' in the period. Taylor argues that it is in burlesque that the century's 'most complex theatrical engagements with Shakespeare are seen', in its opposition to the patent theatres in the 1830s and its inherently dialogic nature, which might be a force equally for radical or for conservative readings. Throughout this chapter, Taylor asserts the reinvigoration that Shakespeare, in myriad forms, represented for nineteenth-century drama.

Shakespeare on the stage

Shakespeare's presence in the theatre undergoes several significant transformations during the nineteenth century, and his fortunes are indivisible from those of the theatre generally, as it emerges as a significant cultural and social force and accrues respectability as the century progresses, but also as it benefits from the technological advances increasingly available to it and as production practices and values are reconfigured to reflect the theatre's new access to professionalism. The story of Shakespeare and the Victorian stage usually focuses on the London theatres, in all their variety,