

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Shakespeare Performance

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## SHAKESPEAREAN CHARITY AND THE PERILS OF REDEMPTIVE PERFORMANCE

Todd Landon Barnes

*Ramapo College of New Jersey*

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# Shakespearean Charity and the Perils of Redemptive Performance

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**ABSTRACT:** This Element examines recent documentaries depicting marginalized youth who are ostensibly redeemed by their encounters with Shakespeare. These films emerge in response to four historical and discursive developments: the rise of reality television and its emphasis on the emotional transformation of the private individual; the concomitant rise of neoliberalism and emotional capitalism, which employ therapeutic discourses to individualize social inequality; the privatization of public education and the rise of so-called “no-excuses” or “new paternalist” charter schools; and the emergence of new modes of address infusing evangelical conversion narratives with a therapeutic self-help ethos.

**KEYWORDS:** Shakespeare, documentary, education, performance, neoliberalism

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