

Introduction.
Continuity and Change.
A Screen Shakespeare(s) Snapshot*

This special issue arises from a seminar at the 2023 European Shakespeare Research Association (ESRA) conference in Budapest where participants explored elements of continuity and change in the field of Screen Shakespeares. We were pleased at the enthusiastic response to the seminar, and grateful for the generosity of Diana Henderson (MIT) in offering to be a respondent to the papers at the seminar; the insights and vital questions she gave to the group are reflected in her afterword here.

The phenomenon of Shakespeare on screen is now over a century old, with its origins in silent Shakespeare, most likely the 1899 *King John*.¹ From these ephemeral beginnings, Shakespeare's screen history developed to encompass a wide range of potential forms, from cinema adaptations (from mainstream to arthouse) and television series, such as the *BBC Television Shakespeare* series (1978-1985), *Slings & Arrows* (2003-2007) and *The Hollow Crown* tv series (2012-2016), to web films such as Netflix's *The King* (2019) and the range of new media and intermedia, including YouTube and Mobile Shakespeares.² Added to this are the intersections of the digital and theatre practices, and the phenomenon of the live broadcast/filmed stage performance.³ From "box office poison", in the words of producer Louis B. Mayer, to "mass-market Shakespeare film", when the 1990s saw "Shakespeare's passage into the realm of mainstream film"⁴ from "new wave Shakespeare"⁵ to a "post-'Shakespearean-blockbuster' phase",⁶ the history of Shakespeare on screen has been one of transformations and innovations as well as endurance and citation.

Culturally diverse, intermedial, interdisciplinary, global and local, Shakespeare is ever our contemporary, part of the fabric of modern popular culture, as Douglas Lanier's work has illuminated.⁷ Conceptions from "Apocalyptic" Shakespeares to "lock-down Shakespeares" evidence the way Shakespeare continues to speak to our contemporary moments.⁸

* We would like to express our sincere thanks to Anna Maria Cimitile and the team at *Anglistica AION* for their support in bringing this publication together.

¹ On silent Shakespeare, see Judith Buchanan, *Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2011).

² Daniel Fischlin, *OuterSpeares: Shakespeare, Intermedia, and the Limits of Adaptation* (Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 2014); Douglas M. Lanier, ed., "Special Issue on Shakespeare and Intermediality", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 67.4 (2016), 401-514; Iris H. Tuan, *Beyond Shakespeare: Film Studies, Performance Studies, and Netflix* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

³ Pascale Aebischer et al., *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). Erin Sullivan, *Shakespeare and Digital Performance in Practice* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

⁴ Douglas M. Lanier, "Shakescorp Noir", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53.2 (2002), 157-180, 163, 168, 165.

⁵ Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

⁶ Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, "Shakespeare, Memory, Film and Performance", in Andrew Hiscock and Lina Perkins Wilder, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Memory* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2017), 62-72, 68.

⁷ Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2002).

⁸ Melissa Croteau and Carolyn Jess-Cooke, eds., *Apocalyptic Shakespeare: Essays on Visions of Chaos and Revelation in Recent Film Adaptations* (McFarland & Company Publishing, 2009). Gemma Kate Allred, Benjamin Broadribb and Erin Sullivan, eds., *Lockdown Shakespeare: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*, The Arden Shakespeare (London:

There has also been immense variety in the type and style of engagement with the Shakespearean hypotext, ranging from sustained exploration to fleeting citations.⁹ As adaptation theorists such as Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders have articulated, the process of adaptation and appropriation encompasses a wide spectrum.¹⁰ Creators might situate their hypertext anywhere along that spectrum from announced adaptation or appropriation to invisible allusion, from close alignment with the text/s to “loosely based” adaptations.¹¹ Works that move further from the Shakespearean hypotext raise questions about the “Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare” distinction, while appropriating Shakespeare can also raise a range of ethical implications.¹² In engaging with Shakespeare, creators undertake a process of “Shake-shifting”, to use Henderson’s evocative term, and a process of “diachronic collaboration”.¹³

A scholar negotiating the field of Shakespeare on screen studies now has to contend with a formidable reading list.¹⁴ Readers in theory can choose from Lanier’s influential “rhizomatics” conception, drawing from the work of Deleuze and Guattari,¹⁵ Maurizio Calbi’s approach to Shakespeare as spectral,¹⁶ adaptation as a type of hacking, as Reto Winckler proposes,¹⁷ or focus on Screen Shakespeares through a gender lens, as Magdalena Cieślak invites us to do.¹⁸ In considering fidelity debates in our supposedly post-fidelity moment, a reader might also consider Lanier’s rethinking of fidelity in relation to networked rhizomatic Shakespeare nodes, or James Newlin’s idea of “uncanny fidelity”.¹⁹ Having obtained something of the breath of the field, and range of theoretical approaches, scholars might then turn to volumes focussing on specific plays or groups of plays, such as

Bloomsbury, 2022). Peter J. Smith, Janice Valls-Russell, Daniel Yabut, “Shakespeare Under Global Lockdown: Introduction”, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 103.1 (2020), 101-111.

⁹ See Alexa Alice Joubin and Victoria Bladen, eds., *Onscreen Allusions to Shakespeare: International Films, Television, and Theatre* (Springer International Publishing AG, 2022). This volume arose from the pioneering work on Shakespearean citations on screen of the late Mariangela Tempera (University of Ferrara). See also Sarah Hatchuel, *L’Écran shakespeareien. Adaptation, citation, modèle* (Aix-en-Provence: Rouge Profond, 2023).

¹⁰ See Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), and Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹ A recent example is *Anyone But You* (2023), directed by Will Gluck, in dialogue with *Much Ado About Nothing*.

¹² Christy Desmet, Natalie Loper, Jim Casey, eds., *Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin, eds., *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹³ Diana E. Henderson, “Shake-shifting: An Introduction” in Henderson, *Collaborations with the Past: Reshaping Shakespeare across Time and Media* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 2018).

¹⁴ Valuable starting points might include the following: Russell Jackson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2020); Samuel Cowl, *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio U.P., 2003); Samuel Cowl, *Shakespeare and Film: A Norton Guide* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008); Sarah Hatchuel, *Shakespeare: From Stage to Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004); Mark Thornton Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012); Courtney Lehmann, *Shakespeare Remains: Theater to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 2018); Diana E. Henderson, *Collaborations with the Past: Reshaping Shakespeare across Time and Media* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 2018).

¹⁵ Douglas Lanier, “Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value”, in Huang and Rivlin, eds., *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, 21-40. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, [1987] 2013).

¹⁶ Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁷ Reto Winckler, “Hacking Adaptation: Updating, Porting, and Forking the Shakespearean Source Code”, *Adaptation: The Journal of Literature on Screen Studies*, 14.1 (2021), 1-22.

¹⁸ Magdalena Cieślak, *Screening Gender in Shakespeare’s Comedies: Film and Television Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019).

¹⁹ Douglas Lanier, “Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare: Afterword” in Christy Desmet et al., *Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 293-306; James Newlin, *Uncanny Fidelity: Recognizing Shakespeare in Twenty-First-Century Film and Television* (Tuscaloosa: The U. of Alabama P., 2024).

the *Shakespeare on screen* series, published by Cambridge University Press and edited by Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin.²⁰

Given the daunting task of gaining even a broad overview of the field, it thus goes without saying that this special issue does not claim in any way to be exhaustive of contemporary Shakespeares on screen. Instead, what it offers is a snapshot from the current field, providing glimpses of the research of a cross-section of scholars, and the evocative questions these endeavours raise.

As theorists recognise, there are processes of continuity and change in the shifting sphere of Screen Shakespeares.²¹ As Lanier expresses, negotiating Shakespeare in relation to the ever evolving field of adaptation theory remains “unfinished business”.²² Melissa Croteau, in her article in this issue, reminds us that in approaching Screen Shakespeares, in addition to the work of adaptation theorists, we can also gain insights from seminal filmmakers such as Russian filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). Croteau argues that Eisenstein’s influence and impact has extended to the present and that screen adaptations of Shakespeare’s chronicle plays, such as *Henry V*, are often in dialogue with Eisenstein’s work. She explores Eisenstein’s theories that Shakespeare’s plays, in their disjunctive narrative form, demand active reading/viewing from their audiences to fill in gaps, and thus mediate, literally and figuratively, the *Urphänomen*, the higher level experience, of cinema, thus rendering the director a type of co-author in dialogue with Shakespeare.

It has now been over 10 years since the *Shakespeare on Screen. “Macbeth”* volume was published,²³ and it is striking that, a decade on, *Macbeth* remains a dominant source for adaptation and appropriation, reflected in two of the articles here – Kinga Földváy’s and Márta Hargitai’s. Földváy aptly asks whether *Macbeth* is the play that speaks most directly to our violent, contemporary world and she considers the filmic strategies of three adaptations by Justin Kurzel (2015), Kit Monkman (2018) and Joel Coen (2021). She argues that each of these films experiment in various ways and reflect shifts in Shakespeare on screen, developments in cinematic production, and in terms of popular and critical reception.

Hargitai also explores a cross section of *Macbeth* adaptations – Rupert Goold’s (2010), Kurzel’s and Coen’s – focussing on the Fleance narrative, and building further on the earlier work of William C. Carroll.²⁴ She considers the way that the playtext enigmatically leaves the future of Scotland open and, through an examination of key moments such as the show of kings and the endings, illuminates the ways that these adaptations suggest a linear or cyclical continuation of Fleance’s story and Scottish history, while also emphasising the cycle of violence.

The current era of new, online and complex television brings new medial contexts for appropriating Shakespeare.²⁵ As Sarah Hatchuel has outlined, television series have affected the study of

²⁰ See the most recent volume in the series: Victoria Bladen, Sarah Hatchuel, and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, eds., *Shakespeare on Screen: Romeo and Juliet* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2023).

²¹ Stephen O’Neill, *Broadcast Your Shakespeare: Continuity and Change across Media*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

²² Lanier, “Shakespeare and Adaptation Theory: Unfinished Business” in Diana E. Henderson and Stephen O’Neill, eds., *The Arden Research Handbook of Shakespeare and Adaptation*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 38-55.

²³ Hatchuel, Vienne-Guerrin and Bladen, eds., *Shakespeare on Screen. “Macbeth”* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013).

²⁴ William C. Carroll, *Adapting “Macbeth”: A Cultural History*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2022); Carroll, “Fleance in the Final Scene of *Macbeth*: The Return of the Repressed”, in Hatchuel, Vienne-Guerrin and Bladen, eds., *Shakespeare on Screen. “Macbeth”*, 261-278.

²⁵ Christina Wald, *Shakespeare’s Serial Returns in Complex TV* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). Martin Shuster, *New Television: The Aesthetics and Politics of a Genre* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 2017). Hatchuel and Vienne-Guerrin, eds., *Shakespeare on Screen. Television Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of Michèle Willems* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2008).

Shakespeare, and she illuminates the links between Shakespearean and serial production.²⁶ Pauline Durin's article in this volume considers *Bridgerton* season 2 (2022) and its dialogue with Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Durin provides a thought-provoking analysis of how we can bring Shakespeare into a text that reimagines the appropriation of Jane Austen and her Regency world, while also engaging with Shakespeare's *Shrew*. Having recognised Shakespeare in the mix, what meanings emerge if we filter these intertextual dialogues through our contemporary feminist lens: is it a feminist adaptation, or is the answer more complex?

Shakespeare's cultural capital permeates our world, so it is unsurprising to find his work referenced in advertising. As Graham Holderness has observed, from the 1980s "the use of Shakespeare in advertising became something that could be taken seriously", reflected in the recent critical volume *Local/Global Shakespeare and Advertising*.²⁷ In her article for this special issue, Roberta Zanoni's analysis of the 2005 Levi's 501 jeans advertisement illustrates that citing multiple Shakespeare texts can create a complex palimpsest effect, even in a brief text such as an advertisement. Here *A Midsummer Night's Dream* intersects with *Romeo and Juliet*, mediated via the latter's afterlives, creating both incongruous and innovative effects. Zanoni's work reminds us of the instability of the intertextual process and that a viewer's reception of the advertisement will depend on what intertextual knowledge they bring of the various Shakespeares alluded to. In this montage effect, the weight of the Shakespeare intertexts is used to add perceived value to the jeans as a commodity.

Following the ethos of the *Shakespeare on Screen* series, this volume presents a balance of experienced and emerging scholars, and in doing so, we also bring together scholars coming from a range of cultural viewpoints and perspectives (Australia, France, Hungary, Italy, US). We are grateful to all our authors for contributing their work to this volume and for taking on board our editing and the valuable suggestions of the team of peer reviewers, to whom we are so grateful, many of them carving out time from their summer breaks to assist us with the peer review process.

In 2024, as we were preparing this special issue, the circle of Shakespeare on screen lost a pioneering scholar, a wonderful colleague and dear friend in Sam Cowl, author of, *inter alia*, *Screen Adaptations: Shakespeare's Hamlet* (2014), *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era* (2003), many chapters in the *Shakespeare on Screen* series volumes, and, finally, *Shakespeare and Baseball* (2024).²⁸ A stalwart of the Shakespeare on screen family, Sam's ethos of collegiality and generosity was as important as his erudite and insightful scholarship, and it was fitting that we dedicate this special issue to his memory. We also offer, on behalf of all of the Shakespeare on screen scholars, our thoughts and condolences to his wife Susan Cowl and the rest of Sam's family. Although we have lost his big-hearted presence, we can continue to be inspired by his work, and we like to think that he would have enjoyed reading this volume and would have had much to say about the issues it canvases. We hope that readers will find these articles, together with Diana's valuable reflections and insights, stimulating for their further explorations in the ever-evolving sphere of Screen Shakespeares.

For Sam.

Victoria Bladen and Sylvaine Bataille, 2024.

²⁶ Sarah Hatchuel, "Ce que les séries télévisées font aux études shakespeariennes", *TV Series (Le Havre)*, 22 (2023), <http://journals.openedition.org/tvseries/7616>.

²⁷ Graham Holderness, "'Beauty Too Rich for Use'? Shakespeare and Advertising", in Julie Maxwell and Kate Rumbold eds., *Shakespeare and Quotation* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2018) 260-274, 260; Marta Minier, Maria Elisa Montironi and Cristina Paravano, eds., *Local/Global Shakespeare and Advertising* (Routledge, 2024); and see Roberta Zanoni's chapter "The Italian Reception of Shakespeare in Advertising" in that volume.

²⁸ Samuel Cowl, *Screen Adaptations. Shakespeare's "Hamlet": The Relationship Between Text and Film*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Cowl, *Shakespeare at the Cineplex*; Cowl, *Shakespeare and Baseball* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio U.P., 2024).