

Shakespeare Without Class
Misappropriations of Cultural Capital
Edited by Donald Hedrick and Bryan Reynolds
palgrave

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Chapter 1

Shakespace and Transversal Power

Donald Hedrick and Bryan Reynolds

Prefatory Space: The Collection and Its Title

These essays, chosen to address current issues of class, race, gender, sexual preference, postcoloniality, and pedagogy, were originally solicited so as to distinguish the volume from other treatments of Shakespearean adaptation by an emphasis on "dissident" responses to Shakespeare. Now, however, they seem to us rather more complicated in what they do. As it happens, dissidence, though important to the essays and by no means omitted from the overall ideological picture, constitutes only one type of response in an ensemble of actions, understandings, and affects—a broader field including, to name an area otherwise excluded from more strict usage of the term "dissidence," criminality. To the perennial question of how to do things with and to Shakespeare, the essays now speak less rigidly but more provocatively. The very fact of the difficulty of a sustained catego-

rization of them seemed evidence that we needed a far more nuanced and expansive model of the kind we will theorize here.

Rather than providing reductive, homogenizing, and therefore dispensable summaries of the essays collected, essays that speak delightfully for themselves without benefit of abstract, and rather than giving a polite tip of our editorial hats to their infinite variety, we want to address the question of what is common to the following scenarios we find in them (presented in no particular order here) and in certain questions they provoke:

4. A teacher and her students join together to play witches in improvisations of *Macbeth*. What are the new energies, both positive and negative, that get released from this shared transgressive performance, and from where do they come and go?
9. A teacher of Shakespeare responding to the renewed interest in the moral questions of literature is caught within the dilemma of either presenting moral certainties under canonical authoritarianism of a master, or treating teaching Shakespeare as show business without moral import. What Shakespeare would resolve this problem?

In each case, the encounter, or collision, or union with Shakespeare takes one, or one's interpretive community, outside oneself or that community, and outside the officially assigned space of one's subjectivity. Like dialogism, there may be collision or clash, but unlike dialogism, there is shared space for repositionings and transformations of more than voice alone. The family resemblance between these scenarios, therefore, is that the teachers, students, adapters, directors, and actors experience the encounter with Shakespeare in a collective, creative space not fully limited by their own interests, conceptions, or affects, and one in which new social arrangements are, if not actually produced or produced in miniature, at least become capable of being imagined. The particular scenarios we have included here thus constitute transversal cases that we have for the presentation of our book's contents provisionally catalogued as follows: acting out from under some authority; adapting historical ideologies by way of tactical contingencies; loving "otherwise" outside assigned subjective territory; "disfilming" or visually exhibiting and challenging hegemonic power; and teaching transversally or transgressively, as it were without a net—all with a view toward achieving salutary social and civic effects from certain theaterlike experiments in "being what you aren't."