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## The Trouble with Shakespeare

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This article is actually an advanced first-chapter draft of a book in progress (of the same title), so it should not be taken as a self-contained discussion. Were this a literary piece instead of a scholarly work, the reader might be left to contemplate the meaning of its title. Here, though, it is more appropriate to be direct. Yes, our title does echo the title of the clever and delightful Hitchcock film, *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), and it does so with direct and transparent purpose. In the film, the trouble with Harry, first and foremost, is that he is dead. There are conflicting theories about what should be done with Harry's body after it is found in the woods near a pristine New England village. The problem is that several people feel responsible for his death. They gather and begin to corroborate their own stories in order to agree on a single feasible theory for Harry's possible murder, so as to avoid the circum-spection of the town's single policeman. Harry's death becomes everyone's trouble, and Harry is buried and exhumed more than once while the locals attempt to take into account scattered and changing bits of information in order to get their stories straight.

While it would be a mistake to draw too many parallels between Harry and an actual Renaissance playwright — the results would be inexact, and morbid — it is certain that the body of Shakespeare's works, his "corpus," has been the source of conflicting ideas about what should be done with it and how it should be viewed. The specific reference here is to the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's works, which is the lion's share of the corpus, and which appeared

seven years after Shakespeare's death. While no one is likely to argue that the work should be buried, the playwright, like Harry, was unable to speak for what was left behind, but there are certainly many who have positioned the corpus within diverse and highly adapted frameworks of understanding. It a case where there is too little extant factual information from Shakespeare's time, where new information that is discovered or cross-referenced changes our understanding, we continue to see the story of Shakespeare's work altered and sometimes altered greatly. In some camps, Shakespeare isn't even Shakespeare at all. On the whole, the trouble with Shakespeare has really nothing to do with a playwright named Shakespeare. It has to do with how the name, Shakespeare, has been adapted to the corpus left behind, and it also has to do with the trouble the reformed name has generated for those who have taken the charge to preserve the work and explain it.

### **Shakespeare, Jesus, and Culture**

The word, "Shakespeare," is one of the most troubling proper names in the English-speaking world. The argument could be made that the word, Shakespeare, ranks with the higher canon of troubling words, even the word, Jesus, although not quite as high. The word, Shakespeare, may inadvertently trigger certain insecurities: it may be a reminder that we should have studied harder in school or that we should have spent more time trying to cultivate an understanding of immortal art. The word, Shakespeare, may bring to mind personality traits that we dislike — say, smugness or pretentiousness — or the word, Shakespeare, may provoke irritating images of coffee house dilettantes or amateur theater types who think too highly of themselves. The word, Shakespeare, is not just personally troubling: for some it falls within larger global concerns about the enduring influences of unrighteous colonial rule, or at least the prevalence of Western cultural values over those of underrepre-

sented peoples and nations.<sup>1)</sup>

The persistent efforts in print and other media to position Shakespeare in a less troubling light — efforts particularly in school education that insist Shakespeare should be seen as friendly or accessible or fun or that we should set Shakespeare free — testify to the existence, or at least perceived existence, of the notion that Shakespeare is generally unfriendly, inaccessible, not for fun and un-free. In fact the position that there should be a friendly or free or untroubling Shakespeare in contrast with the converse, troubling perception of Shakespeare is troubling in itself. One wonders if the polemics, the contrasts between friendly and unfriendly, free or un-free, are not simply bits of one-sided tennis with the word, Shakespeare.<sup>2)</sup>

That the word, Jesus, is troubling makes sense. We lack religious consensus. We can't agree on precisely what we are supposed to think or do when we hear or read the word, Jesus, but we know that we're supposed to think or do something and that it should be serious. Whereas many would argue that the word, Jesus, should not be troubling at all, it is at least understandable how a proper name that brings to mind myriad, diverse, and universal reckonings about the notion of eternal life would remain in the troubling top tier.

The word, Shakespeare, though, is not specifically religious. Also, we have reached something of a consensus concerning Shakespeare in that, barring some relatively weak dissent, there is wide agreement that the performance, the study, and the appreciation of Shakespearean works are good things. On the surface, at least, it seems unfair that the name of Shakespeare ranks so high on our

1) This is a reference in particular to the rise of Postcolonial studies, particularly in the past twenty years.

2) There are many examples of such efforts. See in particular Norie Epstein, *The Friendly Shakespeare*, Peggy O'Brien, *Shakespeare Set Free*, (on teaching Shakespeare), and Lois Burdett, *Shakespeare Can Be Fun Series*, (Shakespeare for Children).

troubling chart. Therefore efforts to free Shakespeare from trouble, efforts to associate the word, Shakespeare, with such words as friendly and free, seem useful and good.

Yet, it is possible that freeing the word, Shakespeare, from trouble may not be the position we want to take. Specifically, we may not want to simply assume that trouble is always pejorative and that, in the case of Shakespeare, all troubles should be driven away. In the case of the word, Shakespeare, we should at least examine the sources of the trouble before moving to remove it. Perhaps the question is: are we being troubled by Shakespeare in an appropriate manner? This question calls for an analysis of trouble in an effort to isolate appropriate trouble from inappropriate trouble. The entry point for this analysis is obvious. The word, Shakespeare, has drawn more trouble than it seems to merit. Therefore, the word, Shakespeare, must point to something else, an area in which we have not reached a consensus and an area that, similar to religion, provokes a range of troubling thoughts and emotions

This area is obviously located within our vague but ubiquitous notions of "Culture" — another highly troubling word. The word, Shakespeare, is intricately tied with the word, Culture. There is little agreement on exactly what Culture is, or what it should be, or even where it is, exactly, but we know that when we hear the word, Culture, we're supposed to think or do something and that it should be serious.

Therefore, one might argue that the name, Shakespeare, draws trouble because it is associated with great Culture, or, specifically, with great literature and that great literature is, in essence, troubling. How can the word, Shakespeare, be un-troublesome or friendly when it leads us directly to culturally troubling plots and themes? In the tragedies and histories, the body counts alone are troubling. There is the murder of children, the murder of spouses, regicide, suicide, patricide, fratricide, and all the troubling attendant

abuses that accompany such acts, such as stage prompts for graphic violence accompanied with brutal and profoundly disturbing language. Shakespearean comedies do not have these horrific elements, but they do contain troubling views of gender and race and often troubling abuses among characters that are, in some cases, exposed only in time to avoid a tragic blood bath in the final scenes.

It should be easy to see how the name associated with these stories might also be troubling — appropriately troubling — but Shakespearean plots and themes do not seem to be the source of the greater trouble. When placed beside many literary figures who tell troublesome tales — Dickens, Hemingway, Mary Shelley, Flannery O'Connor, and even the highly troubled and ponderous poetic perspectives of Milton or Eliot or Yeats or Frost — the name of Shakespeare still stands out as independently and uniquely troubling.

In fact, in our troubled reception of Shakespeare, the play is definitely not the thing. The works attributed to Shakespeare, their themes and story lines, the inviting and enlightening histories that are mixed with these works, are often an obscure backdrop for the word, Shakespeare. The vast majority of people in the English-speaking world (and beyond) only have a marginal encounter with Shakespeare's attributed works. When they do, the experience is often — well — troubling but not chiefly because of the plots and themes of the plays. Usually these Shakespearean encounters are sponsored by our local educational institutions and are accompanied by fretful homework assignments. Given the charge to "think" about Shakespeare and then "do" something, the student knows that this assignment is serious, but is often unsure what he or she should think or do. Any student with educational ambitions knows that this assignment best be completed diligently, for Shakespeare will certainly show up again on a troubling standardized examination.



Shakespeare in school is a certain source of trouble. In an educational context, it is difficult to relax and see *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as popular stories made into plays for eager audiences by a commercial playwright in collaboration with a professional public theater troupe. It is inconceivable to think that so little cultural value was placed on these works during their time that their preservation was barely achieved. However, these works usually come to us initially in the heavy package of the eternally certified instructional text. They are presented under the watchful gaze of a teacher guided by a ubiquitous cultural semi-deity — represented by the word, Shakespeare — who, as we attempt to think about Puck, assesses our relative worth as human beings.

Perhaps Shakespeare in school provokes inappropriate trouble. To argue this point, though, one would have to question whether the troubles brought on by math and science classes (which can be highly troubling) are also inappropriate. Moreover, the question still remains why Shakespeare is more troubling than Dickens or Hawthorne or other major literary figures who have made their way to the classroom and to the homework roster. Again, the answer is to be found in the word, Culture. There is a unique cultural force entwined with Shakespeare that carries the name beyond a sententious or even a friendly school encounter. Indeed, Shakespeare is an ever-present commodity in the commercial marketplace. The name is featured in a steady stream of for profit movies on Shakespearean plays and subjects. This stream feeds into a river of Shakespeare play editions and books on Shakespeare (including this one) that exceed the demand for school texts. There are also countless Shakespearean festivals and theater troupes that may not run on profit but that are nonetheless sponsored by public or commercial entities that view Shakespeare as good for business.

The notion of Shakespeare as commodity may be highly troubling to those few who actually think about such issues, but Shake-

speare as commodity should not be troubling at all. While certain plays seem targeted for private entertainment, the origin of many of the plays in performance is the public playhouse, a commercial enterprise. However, there is inappropriate, even excessive, trouble in the way the word, Shakespeare, has been appropriated our time. The source of the trouble cannot be located in school and in non-profit organizations that contribute to public education. It cannot be located specifically in the commercial marketplace either. However, inappropriate trouble may be found in the uneasy relationship between these areas: specifically the uneasy relationship between the what we see as the do-gooders, found in school and non-profit enterprise, and the sharks, found in commercial enterprise. If so, the trouble with Shakespeare, or, specifically, the inappropriate trouble with the word, Shakespeare, has little to do with a corpus of plays and much to do with what we view as the differences between the fundamental roles of cultural engineers, the educational and the commercial forces that renew Shakespeare's presence in each generation.

### Grand Funk Railroad

Before examining these differences and conflicts, we should first understand what is at stake. In doing so, it is necessary here to introduce the first false assumption that creates inappropriate trouble for Shakespeare: it is the perception that the word, Shakespeare, is actually more powerful than it really is and the fact that the actual people who engineer the preservation of Shakespeare's work are often overlooked. It is doubtless that the body of plays attributed to Shakespeare has been received and promoted consistently by the generations that followed as significant creative works. That Shakespeare is importantly entwined with a common cultural history, or cultural destiny, or cultural identity is an idea, however, that began to congeal long after the Shakespearean period and was put forward



by ideologues rather than engineers. Regardless of how important Shakespearean works may appear to us in modern times, their preservation, the insistence on their importance, have been put forth often by individuals who were not necessarily powerful but who, for generations, have ardently pushed the distribution of Shakespeare's works to playgoers and readers. They successfully produced, sometimes against the odds, what some might be misled to think is a simple given in cultural history: Shakespeare is great.

Indeed, given the rough start that Shakespearean work had in the print industry during the playwright's life, it is odd that it rose to follow only the King James Bible or *The Holy Bible* in terms of the concerted and continual efforts both have attracted to produce, distribute, and promote the printed material. The King James Version of *The Holy Bible*, even though it had a notoriously rough start in print<sup>3</sup>, even though no one at the time would have predicted its current fame, had a far better chance at gaining universal appeal than any work attributed to Shakespeare before the First Folio. *The Holy Bible* was published in 1611, only a few years after appearances in print of such plays as *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. This was certainly a good period for the production of eternal best sellers, but in the case of Shakespeare, it was not a good period for the preservation of Shakespearean texts.

The producers of the *The Holy Bible*, including James himself, knew that they were in the middle of massive reapportionments of religious practice and sensibility, and the original translations of the King James Bible reflect serious diligence. Adam Nicholson, though, has pointed out recently that the early printing history of the King James Bible was "an incredible muddle" (Nicholson, Interview). The King James Bible did not do well commercially, nor was it received very well in its time. However, the importance of

3) This is one Nicholson's main points in *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*.

the project was never questioned, and there was never any real chance for the effort to be entirely ignored or forgotten. While the people of late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup>-century England were generally and often keenly aware of the heated religio-political controversies of their times, they were, no doubt, entirely naive to the fact that they were living in "The Age of Shakespeare." This grandiose classification of their age came into being many years after. One drifts between irritation and amusement when considering the locks that cultural historians have put on our historical perspectives with such markers. One wonders, indeed, if, three hundred years from now, it will be decided that we were, after all, living in the "The Age of Elvis."

Certainly London playgoers were familiar with the name, Shakespeare, and certainly Shakespearean plays enjoyed widespread popularity in public and private entertainment venues during the period (one should consider, though, that London, though large for its time, only had between 100,000 and 200,000 people)<sup>4</sup>. There is, however, a conspicuous and troubling lack of Shakespearean manuscript material. The missing manuscript is a common problem for scholars of other writers during this period, and one wonders why not even a single manuscript page of such fine works as Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* has survived. Cultural preservation is difficult; much more is lost than preserved. In the case of Shakespeare, the lack of manuscript material does not suggest that Shakespearean works were not appreciated during their time, but the absence of a preservation effort does indicate that the appraisals these works were afforded during their time were below the enormous antiquarian value they would hold now.

This depreciated view of Shakespearean works is also reflected by

4) This estimation is from the Greater London, Inner London & Outer London Population Density History at *Demographia*  
<http://www.demographia.com/dm-lon31.htm>.

shoddy *post facto* printings of the plays, based either on foul papers or poorly handwritten versions of the original material or perhaps the verbal recollections of actors. Until the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's work, it appears that too often "The Age of Shakespeare" was in the hands of pirating printers and less than diligent typesetters (a fact that latter Shakespearean editors have struggled with for generations). We have original printings of Shakespearean material that are replete with errors and that vary significantly from other printings<sup>5</sup>). Though these printings may have been popular reading, they were not treated as cultural mainstays. It is tempting to view the short time period that saw the original printings of *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and the *King James Bible* among many other significant works, including *The Faerie Queen*, as one of great sensibility, but the first extant printings of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* were handled by concerns entirely different from that of Robert Barker, the printer of the original *King James Bible* (who had trouble enough). The *King James Bible* project was aware of its importance, as were other literary projects such as *The Faerie Queen*. The preservation of Shakespeare, however, fell to entrepreneurs who were not aware that they were handling what would become invaluable cultural treasures.

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century a number of fine works were set up to be cultural mainstays, and many of them were religious. A now obscure work, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments (or Book of Martyrs)*, originally published in 1563 was exceptionally large and expensive, but extremely popular throughout the period of Shakespeare's plays and much later. The pre-First Folio works attributed to Shakespeare, at least in print, were on a far more humble course. These plays may have fallen into obscurity — along with the other plays only extant in the First Folio — had it not been for a unique early intervention by two members of Shakespeare's theater company, John

5) See Harold Jenkins the Q1 or the bad quarto of *Hamlet* (18-36).

Heminge and Henry Condell, the editors of the First Folio.

The Folio is highly significant because it contains 36 plays, 18 of which appear for the first time (including *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*). It is also significant because there are often large differences between Folio plays and earlier (quarto) versions. It is chiefly significant in this discussion because of the way in which the Folio markets the playwright in book form, a matter covered below. The point here, though, is that Shakespeare was not necessarily considered eternally great or powerful, or a figure who should always be revered or even distrusted. Moreover, the work was finally collected by fairly marginal figures, and, in the end, the work, given its discrepancy with other texts, was not well preserved. *The Holy Bible* was backed (if not officially sanctioned) by the King himself. Shakespeare's work was collected by two obscure actors after the playwright's death. *The Holy Bible*, indeed, went through far more printings. The First Folio is only the first in a number of efforts, from generation to generation and sometimes by marginal figures, to maintain Shakespeare in the public consciousness. What we may now see as the rise of the word, Shakespeare, to power did not occur until the Victorian period, a time that saw the birth of mass marketed ideologies.

Still, Shakespeare's fame was not a given. Shakespeare's continued fame is not a given. Even a superficial look at cultural preservation efforts shows us that cultural is fragile and ephemeral, the supreme hard sell. It takes enormous energy to preserve even a vague sense of cultural history. Significant buildings are thoughtlessly destroyed. Entire languages die out, sometimes, it seems, without a hint of regret from the speakers as they migrate to other languages. Shelley reminds us of the ruins of the forgotten King Ozymandias, once the "King of Kings" around which "the lone and level sands stretch far away." Even in recent political history massive political regimes have fallen, it seems, with the simple removal of a statue. Any im-



migrant or expatriated parent who has had a child born in a foreign country sees how completely the child adapts to the new culture and how difficult it is to pass on the culture and language of the parent. Shakespeare, no matter how significant the attributed works, could have easily disappeared from public view during any period that a given generation decided on a different set of priorities.

And then, years, maybe generations later, Shakespeare and the works could be brought back again. Each generation produces a diverse group of cultural engineers — sometimes such people as Heminge and Condell — not all of whom are in powerful or significant positions, but who promote what current and future generations should keep in mind and who work, often passionately and often competitively, to carry their torches forward. Major works and figures, even after years of being ignored, are revived while other major figures fall out of sight and out of mind. Moreover, these engineers may collaborate on the same goals, guided by vague guidelines in tastes, without really being in contact or even being aware of one another. A program administrator at a cable movie channel may unknowingly collaborate with university film instructors and succeed in keeping *The Wizard of Oz* in our consciousness while both might neglect the superb movie, *Sullivan's Travels*. In the next generation, a group may champion Elvis while neglecting Louis Armstrong, or the converse. Unmistakably, the continual hotbeds for cultural preservation are at school, but other forces work to alter cultural values and their promotion. In this generation the once highly regarded works of William Faulkner have declined, largely due to academe's response to the Civil Rights movement. The works of Jane Austen have enjoyed a spontaneous and lively revival on the Internet that has, in turn, increased the attention paid to Austen in the classroom. Winnie the Pooh is currently up, driven by the Disney industry; while the once ubiquitous *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is down and out, largely due to a major refiguring of African



American identity and consciousness. For reasons that may seem obvious but are nonetheless curious, Milton is struggling, once forgotten Marlowe is still holding steady on Shakespeare's coattails, Beowulf has lost his mojo, and the once popular rock band Grand Funk Railroad have derailed. Grand Funk Railroad. The once celebrated works of Thomas Pynchon have seemingly vaporized, the once languishing works of J.R.R. Tolkien are back on the march, and C. S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell simply refuse to go away.

As untenable as it may sound, the word, Shakespeare, survives in our consciousness, not because his works are universally and eternally significant and thus powerful, but because each generation produces often robust individuals who believe in Shakespeare's significance, who directly and consciously promote, through educational institutions and organizations, through commercial enterprise, the mass distribution and consumption of Shakespearean material. Without the next generation of cultural preservationists and aficionados, we are only a flimsy moment in history away from the entire disappearance of Shakespeare.

This point is important in disclosing one area of inappropriate trouble; that is, what to do with Shakespeare when the word, Shakespeare, signifies something far more than a playwright or literary artist. For instance, there are those who feel that Shakespeare is part of larger, State approved, ideologies that have promoted social oppression or gender discrimination or discrimination, particularly in the postcolonial world, but on any front. This perspective, largely academic, will be analyzed further in a future chapter, but the groundwork is being laid here to argue that the works and the modern appropriation of the word, Shakespeare, are two different things. However mammoth or powerfully the word, Shakespeare, may appear to those who study world cultures and subcultures, it is the word only that has been misappropriated and not the work. One wonders, in reality, how many people actually stop watching

the nightly news so that they can read or re-read the once obscure print version of *Hamlet*. One wonders how many people among those who actually do read the once obscure print version of *Hamlet* are suddenly overcome by an urge to oppress others.

There are also those who think that the word, Shakespeare, should be drawn into political discussions about retaining virtue and moral values and that the study of Shakespeare should lead us to enlightenment about certain other conservative principles. This view is difficult to comprehend, given that in Shakespeare's time, the religious puritans were the ones who asked the King for a translation of the Bible, not for a folio version of the works of Shakespeare. These same conservative puritans typically saw the venues where Shakespeare staged his plays as hotbeds of sin.

It is certain that the word, Shakespeare, has been drawn into a number of camps, but the easy accessibility to the actual work in print and on the stage in our time, is the simple outgrowth of cultural preservation efforts by those who find the work important, and who find the word important for reasons that are ultimately idiosyncratic. These are the people who comprise the base of Shakespearean preservation and distribution, the cultural engineers, the educators and non-profits and the commercial concerns that place Shakespeare in position to be debated among a superstructure of often misled cultural critics. That the word, Shakespeare, is drawn into various lofty political or social debates is usually the product of inexact historical reckoning, perhaps even the outgrowth, as is often the case with *The Holy Bible*, of ardent support for imagined meanings in texts that have not been read.

### **Shakespeare and Barbie**

This said, another inappropriate trouble with Shakespeare lies somewhere within the persistent success of the above-mentioned promotional efforts, starting with Heminge and Condell. To con-

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tinue we must take up the second false assumption that this discussion will challenge. This assumption is that there is somehow a clear cultural divide between the non-profit or educational and the commercial forces that promote Shakespeare: that the educational is purely for the public good while the commercial is purely for profit and detached self gain. In short, one is high and noble while the other is mercenary and low. Or, one is smug and elitist while the other is practical and truly productive. The second false assumption rests on the fact that cultural engineers simply do not understand and appreciate each other.

On the educational side we should first examine what intellectuals from academe are saying about Shakespeare or the word, Shakespeare. Recently academic critics have quarreled over the issue of whether Shakespeare deserves such a prominent place in the canon of academic literary study, and perhaps the presence of Shakespeare has been diminished among the "marginal elite," the dark, hand wringing category in which academic critics have been placed by John Guillory (145). Some, most noticeably Dinesh D'Souza, have argued that the great Western writers are lamentably on the wane. Others, including Gerald Graff and Patrick Brantlinger, have argued that Shakespeare is fairing quite well in the university even as reasonable questions have been brought to the fore about the priorities given to individual "great" authors. On both sides of the argument over Shakespeare and the canon of great works, though, ideological think tank types, like D'Souza, are often able to push around English academics because academics and other educators often miss or understate vast areas of support that can be disclosed by simple Internet searches. Educators also seem to underestimate the impact that the marginal elite truly have on commercial culture.

Browse the standards for secondary education in locales in English speaking countries and it becomes apparent how central Shakespeare is to literary study or language arts in middle school or high

school. The state of California places 13 plays by Shakespeare on its recommended reading list, a comprehensive list that also includes 40 works by African American authors (but only one work, *David Copperfield*, by Dickens). Shakespeare as a single author stands dominant. A simple search at Amazon.com for Shakespeare produces over 54,000 items, including a series of Barbies as Juliet and other Shakespearean women. The search term Toni Morrison brings 5,000 results, Charles Dickens, over 20,000, and John Milton, almost 40,000 (and no Barbies).

Aside from the fact that Dickens, not Shakespeare, seems to be in trouble, at least in the California school system, these simple searches indicate that Shakespeare is fairing quite well in the vast world of secondary education and even inside the relatively small world of English and Theater departments at prestigious colleges. Although most students have finished the study of Shakespeare by the time they reach college, although college humanities departments feel marginalized, the truth is that the folks in California and many, many other places depend heavily on the priority that was assigned to Shakespeare in their college experience. Likewise, the folks at Amazon.com and their suppliers love the notion that a demand for school texts in Shakespeare is so strong that it contributes even to the sales of Shakespeare novelty items.

The word, Shakespeare, has been uniquely branded, to use a marketing term, for mass consumption and this branding has been accomplished by a strong collaboration between educational and commercial engineers. In our time, Harvard's Shakespearean, Stephen Greenblatt, has benefited from this branding and has contributed to its continuation. The makers of Shakespearean Barbies have also benefited and contributed. As marketing specialists know, the branding of a consumer product stands separately from the quality or substance of the product. In their most cynical moods, marketing specialists will even tell us that people will respond to a

product in the way they are told to respond. One hopes that this is not really true, but it is nonetheless difficult to approach Shakespeare's actual work, when the time comes, without strong pre-branded opinions and expectations that have been handed to us, in the case of Shakespeare, from powerful and marketing sources that, when they are not hawking Shakespeare novelty items are more than happy to capitalize on the elitist or learned image of the word, Shakespeare. It's tempting to assert here, as many have, that Shakespeare should be friendly and fun and completely democratic, but, in truth, the preservation of Shakespeare's work depends quite strongly on the word, Shakespeare, keeping its affiliation with the authorities, whether the elite or not, who drive the need for learning and consumption.

In their most cynical moods, marketing specialists will also tell us that the way to sell a product is to create a sense of lack in the consumer. Indeed, the message of most advertisements is that the product will make us happy or better somehow: it will fill in an empty place of need. With the persistent and constant exposure to brand names, even those who are resolute in the feeling that they do not need a brand often begin to feel as if it is something they should want simply because so many others want it or have it. For better or worse, Shakespeare's affiliation with the elite, the noble, the wealthy, or the learned has contributed greatly to the preservation of the corpus.

Indeed, with Shakespeare, this affiliation has been culturally engineered to create a sense of cultural lack for "the people," in our time, not really by the elite, but by teachers, scholars, and individuals from the non-profit sector. Given that the name, Shakespeare, points to a vague sense of high cultural values that we "should" have, this sense of lack can be even more profound than the desire to buy a luxury car (or more profound than the resentment some feel towards luxury car owners). Trouble does not stem from brand-



ing the word, Shakespeare, to represent learning that we should have. The trouble comes from the notion from the educational and non-profit sector that commerce and marketing have made us lose touch with the glorious values of the past, and that we, as T. S. Eliot observed, suffer from a "dissociation of sensibility" with our past. Odd, this notion of a lost past is also mass marketed using Shakespeare and other cultural entities to make the educator feel a secondary sense of lack for a lost past. This feeling causes inappropriate trouble for Shakespeare because it further puts the educator and non-profit at odds with the commercial.

The marginal elite are further at odds with the commercial because they cannot afford a luxury car in most cases, because in most case the elite are underpaid teachers both in college and in high school and under recognized non-profit workers. On the other end the highly profitable world of Shakespearean commerce cannot afford to live without the educators and non-profits, but its members probably resent the smugness of academe and the aloofness of do-gooders who actually use similar business models.

Perhaps we should examine a period when these two groups, or at least a facsimile of these two groups seemed to get along better. The establishment of Shakespeare as a cultural icon began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the name, Shakespeare, was branded by citizens of the not-so-glorious past long before any of us were born. We should look at the First Folio with our modern understanding of marketing. In order to make an accurate assessment of the packaging of the Folio, we should understanding that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Shakespeare was not yet a product of mass school education. In this discussion the educational has been grouped with non-profit, the do-gooders, but the non-profit organization, of course did not exist in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, or at least not in the modern sense of the term. Modern non-profits are the outgrowth of democratic societies (and democratic tax structures), and have replaced (roughly) what was, in

Shakespeare's time, aristocratic patronage. We don't have aristocrats in the old sense of the term, but we have government and people with extra money, at times wealthy people with much extra money, who often support education, the arts and specifically Shakespeare. Modern non-profits and educational efforts are maintained by arguing successfully for the cultural and social good of a particular enterprise. Similar arguments were often made to aristocrats for cultural support in Shakespeare's time.

The opening pages of the First Folio basically outline the parameters for successful marketing of an author, then and now. It requires that first we see the author, the face that indeed authorizes and certifies the work as a single corpus, the product of a single mind. The editors of the Folio are savvy in their presentation of Shakespeare, offering on the title page what some might see as an over the top, full page portrait (the now famous Droeshout engraving) of the author. Offset on the left side of the page is Ben Jonson's "To the Reader," which begins with a crafted sales pitch for the eternal quality of Shakespeare's wit, and which finally implores the reader to

look

Not on his Picture but his Book. (A1v) [Modern spelling here and below.]

Jonson offsets the magnitude of the picture with false modesty that one typically expects from polite society at the time. The effect is to remove this work from its original stage venue (and often shoddy quarto versions) and place it in the arena with other fine books of the time. Yet more is happening here. One wonders how we would respond to, say, a two-page ad in a major modern magazine, where on the right, the place one first looks when initially opening a magazine or book, is a striking full-page photograph. On the left is a statement asking the reader not to look at the photo-

graph but at the article on the pages behind the photograph. The reader, when asked not to look at the picture, of course, gives it a hard second look. In the case of the First Folio, the reader cannot help but look again at the "book's" author. The humility of Jonson's lyric echoes many prefaces of works printed at this time, but the placement and wording are a unique moment of brilliance. This juxtaposition rivals the magazine industry of Madison Avenue at its best, using reverse psychology to inspire a double take on the author in an effort to brand the product.

The marketing continues on the title page, above Shakespeare's portrait, where we are told that the works are "Published according to the True Original Copies." This seems a little overblown, given the textual differences between the folio and various extant quartos (although as members of Shakespeare's acting company, Heminge and Condell presumably had access to play scripts, and it is feasible that they also had access to manuscript material).

From the title page, it becomes clear that the authority and authenticity of the First Folio is being superbly marketed. In the next pages, we see two distinct addresses, one to the sources or potential sources of patronage and one to the general public. In these addresses, we see the early immergence of our modern Shakespearean landscape, the plea to the patron and also to the commercial buyer. We also see the diametrically opposed strategies used in soliciting both types.

First comes a Dedication to the aristocratic patrons, the Lord Chamberlain, William, Earl of Pembroke and Philip, Earl of Montgomery. In this Dedication, Heminge and Condell begin by apologizing for being rash and fearful. They explain that they were rash in the enterprise and fearful of the success. They call the works but "trifles" that are beneath the sensibilities of their dedicatees. However, they speculate that the dedicatees, because these nobles had in the past shown favor to these trifles and their now deceased author,

may perhaps still retain this favor even though the "parent" of the plays is no longer with them. They continue by saying specifically that they have collected these plays only to do service to the dead

without ambition either of self-profit, or fame: only to keep the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow alive, as was our SHAKE-SPEARE, by humble offer of his plays, to your most noble patronage. (A2r)

In modern translation, Heminge and Condell are in line with the conventions of seeking or accepting patronage during their time (and during our time). Specifically, they emphasize their rash interest in the preservation of a deceased friend's life work, and go to some pains to emphasize that they are not hungry for profit or self-promotion. They fear success because it may make them seem mercenary. This type of humble solicitation is made many times a day now from non-profit organizations eager to keep or secure a wealthy donor on board by insisting on the organization's dedication to its mission, and in doing so they imply that the organization is staffed by individuals disinterested in personal gain.

The "Epistle Dedicatorie" begins on the right-hand side of the page after the title page. To finish the reader must turn and read from the back, or left side of the next page (A2v). On the right-hand side (A3r), the next letter to the "great Variety of Readers," in plain view to the reader of the dedicatory epistle, begins by pointing out that the "fate of all Books depends upon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses." Should the implications of this statement not be understood, the editors point out that their readers are free to evaluate the book, but to "buy it first." Then the reader is implored to "spare not." The reader can weigh the value of the book but "whatever you do, Buy." So in the first twelve lines the reader is asked to buy the book four times (A3r). Suddenly we have descended from clever marketing and a highly manner request for patronage to out and out hawking.

One wonders whether or not Pembroke and Montgomery continued reading beyond their dedication page, and, if they did, what they may have thought about the humble pledges of the editors to be unmotivated by profit. One also wonders whether or not the "Variety of Readers" were wont to read the earlier dedication and question the credibility of these self-ordained devotees to a friend's life work who suddenly turn into street solicitors.

It is as if both sides would understand the need for both rhetorical approaches, as if the targeted patrons and the reading public were expected to understand that the need to find patronage and the need to succeed commercially were both integral parts of the very first attempt to preserve and market Shakespeare. If so, then the incongruity between the dedication and the letter to the readers only existed, at least in the mind of the editors, on a formal level. Given the brilliant appropriations on the title page, it is unlikely that Heminge and Condell completely misread the sentiments of their audience. Perhaps it was generally understood below the surface that the humble preservation of Shakespeare and the personal and perhaps financial successes of the people who carried the torch forward were not as incompatible with each other as we might think in our time.

The conflict between non-profit patronage or sponsorship and commercial endeavors did not seem so strong in the Preface to the First Folio. Perhaps our minds should not be so rigidly fixed by such categories, even if this way of thinking has profound roots in our society and in our history. Perhaps we should quietly accept the fact that the non-profit or educational and the commercial are clearly one highly diverse but inextricably tied promotional entity. Throughout this entity, whether at work in a classroom or a community festival or a publishing house or professional theater or film studio, one finds apprentices and paid professionals. In all of these areas one may find self-promotion, perhaps even cynical self-



promotion, but in all of these areas there are successful attempts, as the film director Spike Lee would put it, to "Do the Right Thing."

In the case of Shakespeare, this single, but diverse promotional entity has placed and retained the playwright on the all time best-seller list, helping countless people find inspiration, and it has contributed mightily to fruitful careers in publishing, teaching, and acting. The interrelationship between what we ostensibly call non-profit or educational and commercial is obvious. Shakespeare in school cultivates a market for Shakespeare in feature films and Shakespearean Barbies. Shakespeare is film, in turn, promotes the study of Shakespeare in school. The production of Shakespeare editions and texts for school is a quietly lucrative market for the publishing industry, and non-profit organizations and educational institutions frequently raise money using the name and image of Shakespeare in their marketing strategies.

Given these combined efforts for appreciation and preservation, Shakespeare is fairing well in our time, and it looks promising that there are unborn souls who yet will champion the Shakespearean corpus in coming generations. To retire the second inappropriate trouble with Shakespeare, the engineers of the base sector of Shakespeare preservation, the educational and non-profit and the commercial would have to realize that they are pursuing the same goal and learn to get on a little better with each other. In doing so, this single entity would better manage the ideologies, on the left and on the right, when they get the urge to annex Shakespeare for their own arguments.

### Grounds for Further Research

This article has done an inadequate job of backing up its basic premise. Indeed, to do so requires a book-length view of this matter, one that examines more closely the historical development of Shakespeare by looking at how the author was preserved and pro-

duced in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also it is necessary to examine more closely the modern appropriations of Shakespeare on the left and on the right and attempt to define who exactly belongs in the society of engineers and who is making trouble while riding the coattails of this engineering effort.

However, the basic outline for the project is provided here. First, Shakespeare is troubling for a number of reasons, not all of which are bad. The inappropriate troubles are the outgrowth of the word, Shakespeare. However, the word, Shakespeare, is a necessary brand for preservation of the work. There are appropriate and inappropriate troubles. Being troubled by a provoking theme in a Shakespeare play is appropriate, but being in awe of or troubled by the power of the word, Shakespeare, is inappropriate because Shakespeare was not viewed as powerful in his time and because preservation efforts are always fragile and potentially ephemeral. By examining the early history of the First Folio, one sees that Shakespeare was not originally preserved by powerful forces, but by devoted (and clever) marketing of Shakespeare's work, which even includes the branding of the name at that early time. By understanding that both the educational and commercial forces that promote Shakespeare in our time are inextricably tied, we can overcome the troubling divisions between these two groups and, combined, the engineers of Shakespeare preservation and appreciation can overcome the idle appropriations of the playwright by ideologues.

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