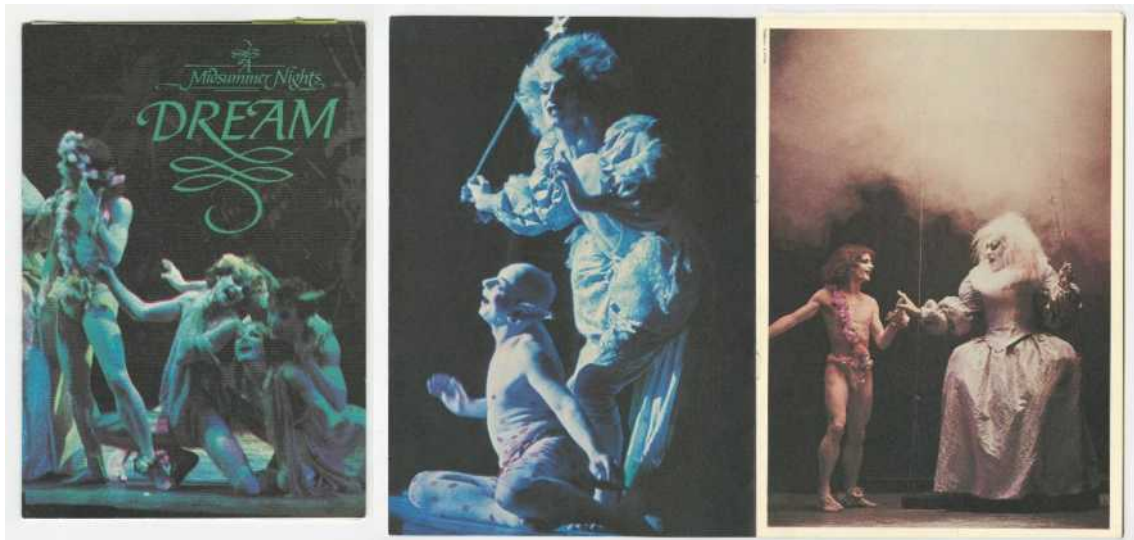


Marginalised Interpretations of Shakespeare

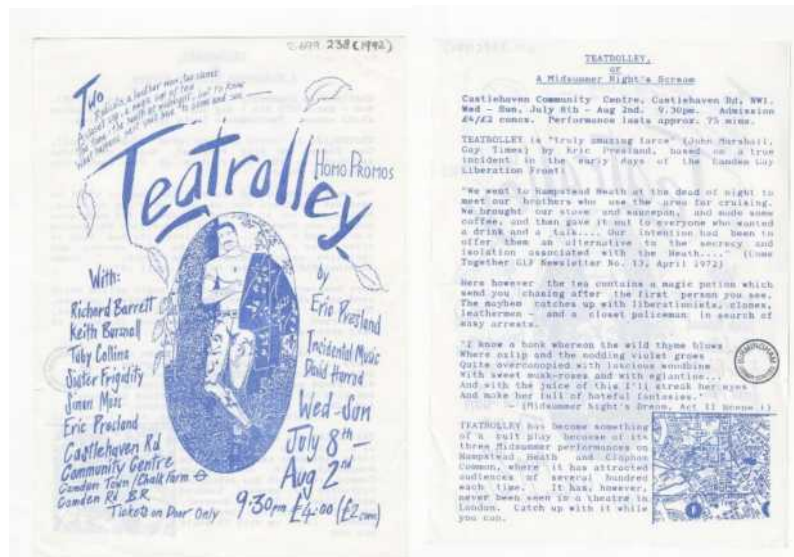
Adam Khan

To many people from marginalised communities, the connotations of Shakespeare and his works has been one of an elitism, inaccessibility, and often intangibility. However, for centuries individuals from a diverse array of backgrounds have interpreted the works of Shakespeare to meet the needs of the communities they identify with. These works are a collection of those interpretations which give a voice and insight into these marginalised communities.



A Midsummer Night's Dream (1985, programme)

An artistic portrayal of A Midsummer Night's Dream, starring and directed by Lindsey Kemp, who was publicly gay. Its themes included non-verbal expressive language, fantastical elements and erotic undertones.



Teatrolley, or A Midsummer Night's Scream (1992, programme)

A radical portrayal of A Midsummer Night's Dream, which draws upon an incident during the early days of the Camden Gay Liberation Front. Its themes include exploring the various gay subcultures of London in the 1970's, fantastical and comedic elements placed within contemporary society, and the roots of the Gay Liberation Movement as experienced by individuals.



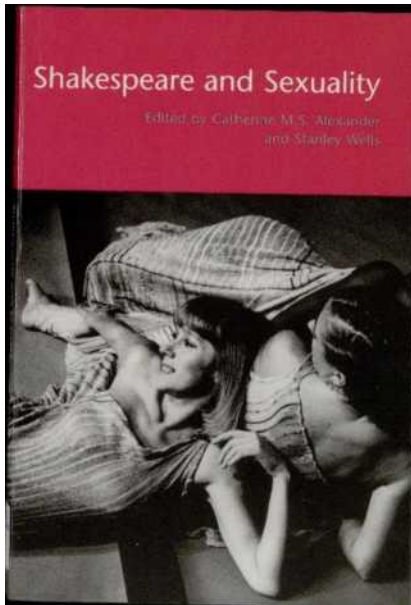
King Lear (1994, programme)

A portrayal of King Lear which utilises the experiences of migrant communities and the differences between generations, which also has undertones reflecting on mental health. Its themes include a back-to-basics approach of the play, with rivalry, adultery, and inter-generational family feuds being present, and there is a strong evocation of love, death and loyalty.



The Yiddish Queen Lear (2001, programme)

A portrayal of King Lear which is interpreted within the confines of Jewish Theatre, which also has feminist undertones. Its themes include the traditional tropes of birth, marriage and death, whilst incorporating a contemporary feel to the play, and the incorporation of the Yiddish language which was in the process of a mini-revival.



Shakespeare and Sexuality (2001, volume)

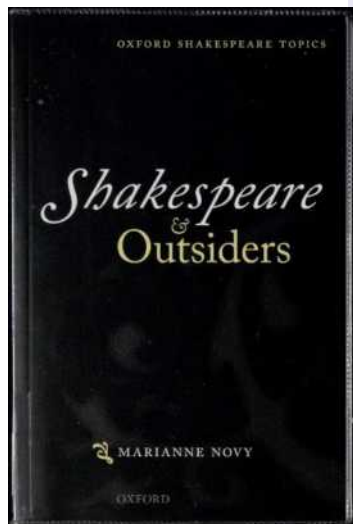
A volume of collected essays utilising different approaches to explore Shakespeare in both performance as well as text. Its themes include heteronormative relationships in contrast with both same-sex relationships and inter-racial relationships, shifting the focus of the sonnets from the typical white male lover to a black woman, and exploring the erotic effect of Shakespeare's language.

Male sexuality and misogyny
Michael Hattaway

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
To begin with, a description of an excellent but disconcertingly idiosyncratic production of *Measure for Measure* by Company Theatre Company. The group, directed by Neil Stansie, in a small case and, with Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, they generated a stunning new reading of the text by doubling members of the cast. Isabella and Mistress Overdone were played by the same actress, Angelo, Claudio, and Barnardine by one actor, and the authority figures of the Duke and Elbow by another. The resolution of the production came with the recognition of the last scene. In that final sequence, the Friar is introduced as the Duke; in this production, in a remarkably open gesture, Angelo was also stripped down—the case wore modern shoes—to the long-sleeved hat worn as Claudio in prison. At the Duke's question "Which is the Barnardine?" (3.1.477), the actor simply adopted the half-crazed mannerisms he had deployed for Barnardine during the short sequence that follows.
David Wallstrow had played Angelo as a compulsively smiling, bespectacled, and neatly haired young man whose first act on acquiring power was to tidy the Duke's desk. He looked like the most dangerous sort of neo-imperialist who exceeded his true day-dreams as he wangled Isabella to the ground at the end of 2.2. Handily, clearly, which was what? The doubling of the actors led to an equation of the "savagery" of Claudio's "with and husbandly" with the depravity of Angelo the "virgin violator". Claudio was merely Angelo in disguise, and, more jarringly, Angelo was Claudio in disguise. The Duke's second question, "What studied fellow's that?" (3.1.483) acquired another, grayer shade, meaning: the production ended with the Duke, a comfortable, cherubic, humorous fellow, chiding to himself entire stage. He too, it turned out, was "studied": the director had highlighted the moment when he had "purchased"

The scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets
Margaret de Guzman

Of all the many defenses against the scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets-Platonism, for example, or the Renaissance ideal of friendship—John Benson's is undoubtedly the most radical. In order to cover up the fact that the first 126 of the Sonnets were written to a male, Benson, in his *1609 Poem: Poem by 1610 Shakespeare* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), changed masculine pronouns to feminine and introduced titles which directed sonnets to the young man to a mistress. By these simple editorial interventions, he succeeded in converting a shameful heterosexual love to an acceptable homosexual one, a conversion reproduced in the numerous reprintings of the *1609 Poem* up through the eighteenth century. The source for this account is Helen E. Rollin's authoritative 1944 *Sonnets*, the first edition to detail Benson's pronoun changes and title insertions. Subsequent editions have reproduced his illustrations, for example John Kerrigan's 1986 edition which faults Benson for inferring on the Sonnets "a series of unbridgeable gulches" whose all "is single recurring revision; he extended the masculine pronoun used of the friend to a so-called "her", "hers", and "she"."¹ With varying degrees of indignation and amusement, critical works on the Sonnets have repeated the charge.
The charge, however, is wrong: Benson did not attempt to convert a male beloved to a female. In brief, such, the number of his observations has been greatly exaggerated. Of the seventy-five titles Benson assigned to Shakespeare's sonnets, only three of them direct sonnets from the first group of the 1609 Quarto sonnets (1-126) to a woman. Furthermore, because none of the sonnets in question specifies the gender of the beloved, Benson had no reason to believe a male addressee was intended. As for the pronoun changes, Rollin himself writes some pages of his own commentary qualifies the number of sonnets "with verbal changes designed to make the series apply to a woman instead of a man" from "one" to "many." Rollin gives three examples as if there were countless



Shakespeare & Outsiders (2013, volume)

A volume which examines the concept of outsiders in Shakespeare, with relative focus on men who love men, the different perceptions of women, and the treatment of racial and religious outsiders. Its themes include the ambiguity of what 'category' outsiders fit in, which is often found with multiply marginalised individuals, and the non-binary nature of who may be considered insiders or outsiders.

As Chapter 2 will show, *Twelfth Night* returns to the vivid portrayal of an outsider's punishment, but includes more explicit suggestions that the punishment is excessive. Malvolio makes the choice to leave Olivia's court after his humiliation, but Olivia and Orsino are eager for him to return. The nature of Malvolio's outsider status is ambiguous: we see antipathos in Sir Andrew and in much of the mockery of Malvolio, yet Maria denies that he is a puritan after she has introduced the term. Most obviously he is an outsider because, on the comic stage, he objects to clowns and jokes.

In all these plays, the comic spirit has to confront sadness. The outsider status of Don John and Jaques is explicitly associated with their melancholy temperament. Near the beginning of *Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night* other characters also announce their sadness. Portia is sad because her father's will doesn't seem to give her a choice in her marriage, Orlando because his brother treats him like a servant, Rosalind because her father is banished, Olivia because her brother has died. The comic plot solves these characters' mood problems, but it can't help Jaques (though he may actually enjoy his melancholy), it can't help Malvolio, who in mocking Feste shows that he is basically against the spirit of comedy, and it can't help *Merchant's* Antonio, who says he doesn't know why he is sad.

Antonio's sadness and his unwillingness to explain it is a long-standing problem in *Merchant* criticism. My first chapter relates it to the ambiguity of his position as a man who loves men in a society in which 'gay' or 'homosexual' is not yet a widely recognized identity category and in a literary genre which typically ends in heterosexual marriage for most of its characters. However, in *Twelfth Night*, the other Antonio, who is also in love with a man, is not identified as sad, but is an outsider in another way, as a suspected pirate who has been on the other side of a bloody sea-battle with Orsino. Recent scholarship shows evidence of socially accepted male-male homoerotic love in England at the time, yet if the relationship crossed class or national boundaries or involved someone suspected for religious or political reasons it might be seen as sodomy, and perhaps the situation of the two Antonio's registers this ambiguity as well as the difficulty of fitting same-sex love into a traditional comic plot.²⁸

Orsino. Pechter points out that the play calls attention to the general mechanism of "difference experienced as hostility" when Iago moves from mocking women to "Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk" (1.2.117).

Shakespeare's previous plays have presented characters who define themselves as in opposition to other groups and social structures, including those to whom they appear to have loyalty, such as Richard III, Aaron, and (more trivially) Don John. These versions of the stage Machiavel justify themselves with regard to a characteristic they have from birth—deformity, illegitimacy, melancholy temperament doomed by the stars. With Iago, there is no such explanation: the identification of his name with the legendary Moor-killer has a different status. He looks like an ordinary man on stage, with an ordinary man's resentments. At the same time as he accuses Moors of jealousy and changeability and women of duplicity, he is himself jealous, changeable, and, above all, duplicitous.²⁹ Indications of such projection are not so unusual in Shakespeare, but the phenomenon of projection of qualities onto such outsiders is so frequent that some audience members might not notice it.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare complicates Iago's attitude to Desdemona and Orsino beyond these generalizations. In soliloquies, he says that the Moor "is of a constant, loving, noble nature" (1.2.276) and that Desdemona can be subdued "In any honest suit" (1.3.313), admitting that he will "turn her virtue into pitch" (And out of her own goodness make the net) "That shall ensnare them all" (1.3.46). To Rodrigo, he says that Desdemona and Orsino are changeable and will tire of each other, but these passages show that he would not expect this to happen without his intervention. Iago knows that some of the stereotypes that he uses to influence others are false. But he does not care.

This doubleness in Iago's attitudes toward Orsino and Desdemona has led to other speculations about underlying causes of his hostility to them. Perhaps, even though he sees Desdemona as virtuous, he resents that virtue, whether because of its association with her upper-class status or because it represents a counterexample to his cynical view of the world. When he says that Cassio "has a daily beauty in his life" (That makes me ugly" (5.1.19-20), perhaps this may hint at his attitude to her. Other critics have argued that Iago resents Orsino