

## **Editorial**

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## Editorial

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This special issue on adaptations of early modern English drama reveals the extraordinary diversity of uses to which such texts can be put and the variety of cultural work they can do. Three of the essays, Janice Wardle's, Jennifer Clement's and Christian Long's, and my own, take as their subject specific individual adaptations of specific individual plays: Wardle focuses on Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Clement and Long compare Justin Kerzel's film of one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, *Macbeth*, with Michael Almereyda's film of one of his least known, *Cymbeline*, and I discuss the Nigerian playwright Débò Olúwatûmínú's Yoruba reworking of *The Duchess of Malfi*. Each of us in our own way shows how the Shakespearean or Websterian original not only acquires new meanings of its own in the process of being adapted but is also actively put in dialogue with contemporary concerns and flashpoints, and this is equally true of the topics of the two remaining essays, those by Reto Winckler and Sarah Olive. Winckler and Olive do not focus on specific texts but look with a wider lens at the phenomenon that is Shakespeare, with Olive examining Shakespeare Unlocked, the BBC season broadcast on television and radio from March to June 2012, and Winckler looking at the use of Shakespearean allusion in the popular TV series *Westworld*.

These apparently separate essays are united by some unexpected synergies. The appearance of the actor Ed Harris as both Almereyda's *Cymbeline* and *Westworld*'s Man in Black is a minor example of being on a shared wavelength, but its most significant manifestation is a

recurrent concern with authenticity. This is not simply a recurrence of the vexed question of fidelity, but something deeper and more far-reaching. In Wardle's essay, the idea of authenticity bears directly on the balance Branagh tries to strike between Shakespearean adaptation and classic Hollywood musical, and she carefully and delicately examines the ways in which the film both is and is not a real musical and also is and is not 'real Shakespeare'. In Clement and Long's, attention turns to the question of setting: does taking the Scottish play to Scotland (albeit to a very different part of the country from that ruled by the thane of Glamis) make it more 'real', and how does the famously artificial *Cymbeline*, with its twenty-four separate dénouements, fare in a pared-down, low-budget version? My own analysis of *Ìyálóde of Ètì* argues that for all its apparent divergence it brings us very close indeed to the underlying ethos of *The Duchess of Malfi*, and in so doing comments on the nature and purpose of literary allusion and borrowing. Olive's discussion of festival and commemoration played out through social media inevitably engages with the question of what is really at stake in such events, and whether we value all engagements with Shakespeare on equal terms. Finally, Winckler's discussion of *Westworld* implicitly raises the most frightening question of all, which is whether we ourselves are real. One of the answers implicitly offered by *Westworld* is that we are if we can quote Shakespeare, and collectively these five essays show why he still deserves that iconic status, and how much early modern texts have to offer to modern audiences.