

## Call for Contributions to Edited Volume:

### *'Why Should This a Desert Be?'* *Performing, Teaching, and Studying Shakespeare* *in the Arabian Gulf*

Contacts: **Katherine Hennessey** (Research Fellow, Global Shakespeare, University of Warwick/Queen Mary University of London) and **James Lambert** (Chair of the English Department, American University of Kuwait), [k.a.hennessey@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.hennessey@warwick.ac.uk) and [jlambert@auk.edu.kw](mailto:jlambert@auk.edu.kw).

Over the past two decades, Shakespeare scholarship has evolved markedly, from a rather sceptical recognition of 'foreign Shakespeare' as an acceptable target of intellectual inquiry, to a celebration of and a sustained engagement with productions of the Bard's work around our globe and in diverse languages. Recent anthologies analyze 'Shakespeare Beyond English' (Bennett and Carson 2013), Shakespeare in African theatre (Plastow 2013), Shakespeare in Asia (Kennedy and Yong 2010, Trivedi and Ryuta 2010) and Chinese Shakespeares (Huang 2009). The performance videos on MIT's 'Global Shakespeares' website range from *The Merchant of Venice* in Maori to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Korean, from a Romanian *Titus Andronicus* to a Palestinian *Richard II*.

Conspicuously absent from the discussion, however, has been the question of what Shakespeare means in and to the contemporary Arabian Gulf—in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. With the burgeoning, though young, university and performing arts cultures in the Arabian Gulf, the study and performance of Shakespeare's plays have begun to penetrate academic, political, cultural, and economic realities in the region.

This anthology aims to address both the gap in Shakespeare scholarship and the potential of Shakespeare in the Gulf through a collection of essays that address the following questions:

#### Shakespeare in Education

- Who teaches Shakespeare in the Arabian Gulf states, at which institutions, and to what ends?
- Which language is used: Shakespeare's English, contemporary English, Arabic translation, or a combination of these?
- What are the particular obstacles that teachers and students encounter in approaching Shakespeare in the Gulf? How, for example, might a classroom engage with the Bard's frank references to sex, alcohol, politics, religion, etc. in a context where public discourse on such matters is generally more reserved and circumspect, if not outright censored?
- Can Shakespeare serve as a springboard for classroom discussions about contentious contemporary issues?

#### Shakespeare in Performance

- How, where, and why are Shakespeare's plays performed across this region?
- What types of audiences do they aim to attract?

- How do performances communicate the relevance of Shakespearean themes to contemporary issues, or highlight perceived similarities between the context of the plays and various aspects of Gulf culture?
- The issues of censorship and ‘cultural sensitivity’—does the cultural cachet of Shakespeare permit challenges to accepted norms of speech and action on the stage?
- How are contemporary authors and playwrights, like Sulayman al-Bassam in Kuwait and Ahmad al-Izki in Oman, and local theatre troupes, like the Doha Players and Resuscitation Theatre Abu Dhabi, staging and adapting Shakespeare’s work?
- How do (or how might) theatre festivals in the Gulf, both local and international, and drama programs at Gulf universities, both public and private, encourage performances of Shakespeare?
- To what degree do the Gulf’s performing arts spaces, both the relatively old and the spectacularly new ones, support and promote Shakespearean performances?
- What types of exercises, activities, and pedagogical approaches seem most effective in helping students in the Gulf learn about Shakespeare and his work, or in enabling actors and directors to communicate with their audiences?

We welcome contributions from scholars, teachers, and students, performers and theatre practitioners, expat residents and Gulf citizens, reflecting critically on their experiences studying, teaching, and performing Shakespeare in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Please send **250-word abstracts** to [k.a.hennessey@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.hennessey@warwick.ac.uk) and [jlambert@auk.edu.kw](mailto:jlambert@auk.edu.kw) by **September 1, 2015**.

#### **Anticipated Publication Timeframe**

September 1, 2015: abstracts due

September 15, 2015: selection of abstracts

December 15, 2015: full chapters due

Jan-March 2016: revisions and manuscript completion

Manuscript to be published before the end of 2016

#### **Editors:**

Dr. **Katherine Hennessey** is a Research Fellow with the Global Shakespeare programme at the University of Warwick and Queen Mary University of London. From 2009 to mid-2014 she lived in Sana’a, researching and writing about contemporary Yemeni theatre; her current projects include a documentary film on that subject and a book entitled *Shakespeare in the Arabian Peninsula* (Palgrave 2016). For more, see [www.warwick.ac.uk/khennessey](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/khennessey).

Dr. **James Lambert** teaches Shakespeare and Early Modern English poetry and is chair of the Department of English at the American University of Kuwait. He received his PhD in English from the University of Iowa in 2012, and has published articles in *Studies in English Literature*, *Studies in Philology*, *Philological Quarterly*, *Literature and Belief*, and others. He is currently working on a book project on the expression of religious joy in Renaissance England.