

# Editorial

In October 2016, to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, the Department of Philology, Literature, Linguistics of the University of Pisa organized a conference on the topic of 'Shakespeare and Money'. This issue of *Critical Survey* publishes some of the keynote papers from that conference.

In contemporary parlance, the notions of 'money' and 'cultural globalization' are often connected with the idea of global economy. As a consequence, they prompt awareness not only of the growing importance of collapsed trade barriers in the present juncture, but also of the close and complex relationship between economic and political power and culture in a historical perspective.

Shakespeare's characters and stories certainly played an important role in his own time in a historical and cultural context in which a new system of mercantile economy was developing out of geographical discoveries, and common law was trying to keep pace with current debates and regulations aimed at facilitating commerce (see, e.g., *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus*, *Othello*...). It should therefore come as no surprise that economic themes and motifs rank high among the pressing cultural concerns to which Shakespeare gave shape in his works. This rapid, dramatic rise to prominence of economic questions is typically reflected in the pervasive monetary subtext of Shakespeare's language and the sometimes baffling ubiquitousness of economic metaphors in his plays and poems.

As is also well known, moreover, Shakespeare has continued to play a crucial role on account of his status as a cultural myth straddling more than four centuries, at the crossroads of and as a point of encounter between national theatrical cultures that gradually overcame their isolation and/or separateness by participating in Shakespeare-fuelled flows.

Today, globalization has added an intercultural dimension to the reproduction and consumption of Shakespeare, a process that is clearly registered in the growing relevance taken on by the 'new' economic criticism in the study of his uniquely cosmopolitan afterlife.

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