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Erica Sheen • Isabel Karremann Editors

Shakespeare in Cold War Europe

Conflict, Commemoration, Celebration



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York and Munich, October 2015

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Conflict in Shakespeare's England (forthcoming, with J. Baldo), as well as several essays in international journals. Other areas of interest include eighteenth-century literature, gender studies, literary animal studies, and ecocriticism.

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Introduction: Conflict, Commemoration, Celebration

Erica Sheen

Abstract This chapter outlines recent approaches to the study of 'cold war culture', and—by way of contrast—to the plural and multifaceted nature of cultures of the Cold War in Europe. It illustrates the value of these approaches for readings of the place of Shakespeare in those cultures, tracing them through the themes and arguments of the chapters that follow.

Keywords Shakespeare • Europe • Cold War • cold war culture • Berlin • Poland • USSR • Germany • France • Spain

The word missing from the title of our volume is, of course, culture. Its absence might seem to solve certain problems: problems that arise from an attempt to combine the 'timeless universality' of Shakespeare with the absolute contemporaneity of the Cold War.¹ To study Shakespeare is to

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¹For an account of, and attempt to recuperate, Shakespeare's 'timeless universality', see Ryan (2015). For the 'absolute contemporaneity' of the Cold War, see Jacques Derrida (1984, p. 27): 'The nuclear epoch is not an epoch, it is the absolute épochè [...] [I]f "literature" is the name we give to the body of texts whose existence, possibility and significance are the most radically threatened, for the first and last time, by the nuclear catastrophe, that