



Shakespeare and the Second World War: Memory, Culture, Identity

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Shakespeare's works occupy a prismatic and complex position in world culture: they straddle both the high and the low, the national and the foreign, literature and theatre. The Second World War presents a fascinating case study of this phenomenon: most, if not all, of its combatants have laid claim to Shakespeare and have called upon his work to convey their society's self-image.

In wartime, such claims frequently brought to the fore a crisis of cultural identity and of competing ownership of this 'universal' author. Despite this, the role of Shakespeare during the Second World War has not yet been examined or documented in any depth. *Shakespeare and the Second World War* provides the first sustained international, collaborative incursion into this terrain. The essays demonstrate how the wide variety of ways in which Shakespeare has been recycled, reviewed, and reinterpreted from 1939–1945 are both illuminated by and continue to illuminate the War today.

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