Transatlantica

Revue d'études américaines. American Studies Journal

1 | 2010

American Shakespeare / Comic Books

"A democratic art at a democratic price": The American Celebrations of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, 1916

Monika Smialkowska

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/4787>

DOI: 10.4000/transatlantica.4787

ISSN: 1765-2766

Publisher

Association française d'Etudes Américaines (AFEA)

Electronic reference

Monika Smialkowska, "A democratic art at a democratic price": The American Celebrations of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, 1916", *Transatlantica* [Online], 1 | 2010, Online since 27 September 2010, connection on 10 February 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/4787> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.4787>

This text was automatically generated on 10 February 2023.

Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

"A democratic art at a democratic price": The American Celebrations of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, 1916¹

Monika Smialkowska

- 1 The plan for "a great national Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration" was conceived at the 1914 convention of the Drama League of America (*Program 3*). In the following two years, the Drama League promoted the idea across the U.S.A. so successfully that in 1916 the country erupted into a veritable Shakespeare frenzy. Across the nation, local groups and individuals organised thousands of large and small-scale events: outdoors pageants and masques, professional and amateur performances of plays, exhibitions of Shakespeareana, lectures, talks and sermons on Shakespearean themes, tree and garden plantings, dances, and even Shakespeare parties². Despite all the cultural furore, the American celebrations of the three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death may at first sight seem to be an insignificant episode in the history of the United States, rightly consigned to historical obscurity. Matters of far greater political magnitude, such as economic recession and the accompanying social unrest, immigration problems, and uncertainty as to whether the U.S.A. should enter the First World War, easily eclipse a national outburst of public tributes in honour of a long-dead British poet. However, recent interpretations by critics such as Thomas Cartelli and Coppélia Kahn have demonstrated that the Shakespeare Tercentenary in the U.S.A. was much more than a brief, politically neutral vogue for bardolatry (Cartelli 63-83, Kahn [2000]). Instead, it was closely involved in the key socio-political issues of the time, especially the debates concerning the nature of American national identity and democracy in the face of dramatically increased "new immigration" (Higham 159) from Southern and Eastern Europe. This article develops these important insights by extending the analysis of the American Shakespeare Tercentenary beyond its New York centrepiece, Percy MacKaye's mammoth "community masque" *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* (MacKaye title page), which has so far been the almost exclusive focus of critical attention

(Cartelli, Kahn [2000], Potter, Levine 80, Green, Smialkowska). By broadening the scope of discussion to include the nation-wide, popular celebrations across the U.S.A., this article seeks to shed further light on the Tercentenary's contribution to the crucial political debates of its time.

- 2 Both Cartelli and Kahn situate their analyses of the Shakespeare Tercentenary within the context of the early twentieth-century American reactions to the "new immigration." Those reactions fluctuated between two contrasting points of view. One encompassed the hostile and increasingly racialised responses of nativists such as Madison Grant and Edward Alsworth Ross, who advocated the superiority of the old, "Nordic" (Grant 72-82) or, as Kahn terms it, "Anglo-Saxon" (Kahn [2000] 261-62) American immigration and warned of the dangers of America becoming overrun by the allegedly racially inferior, new immigrants (Grant, Ross). At the other end of the spectrum were the efforts of Progressivist reformers to integrate the new immigrants into American society through education and acculturation (Kahn [2000] 256-84)³. Kahn and Cartelli demonstrate that the celebrations of the Shakespeare Tercentenary contributed to those Progressivist educational efforts by employing Shakespeare as a rallying figure for the championing of social cohesion. As Kahn argues in her discussion of *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, by participating in that event, "ever more diverse and divided segments of American society were meant to become a single unified 'imagined community'" (Kahn [2000] 256). Indeed, the organisers of the New York festivities expressed this purpose explicitly and designed their celebrations to fulfill it. *Caliban* drew about 1,500 amateur participants from across New York's local communities to deliver group dances, monumental choruses, tableaux, pantomime, and processional entries and exits in the interludes between the sections of dramatic action performed by professional actors. MacKaye explained that the "function of the Celebration" was "to help unite all classes and all beliefs in a great coöperative [sic] movement for civic expression through dramatic art" (MacKaye xx). Similarly, in his address at the Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Dinner held on 4th May 1916, Otto Kahn, the chairman of the Mayor's Honorary Committee for the New York Shakespeare Celebration, associated the occasion with the integration of the American population through the familiar image of the melting pot:

In this great country, with its vast mixture of races, all thrown into the melting pot of American traditions, climate and surroundings, there is all the raw material of a splendid artistic development. Every kind of talent is latent here. All that is required is opportunity, inspiration and guidance. (Kahn [1916] 20)

- 3 Clearly, the organisers saw the Shakespeare Tercentenary as an occasion which could provide "opportunity, inspiration and guidance" for the heterogeneous masses to integrate into "American traditions," through engagement with art. However, their project invites further questions as to what constituted "American traditions," how and by whom the "raw material" of the immigrants should be guided to achieve "splendid artistic development," and what role Shakespeare should play in that process.
- 4 Currently, the prevalent critical opinion holds that the vision of America promoted by the organisers of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, while ostensibly democratic and inclusive, was in fact hierarchical and heavily biased in favour of the allegedly superior cultural norms of the old, Anglo-Protestant American elites (Cartelli, Kahn [2000]). This is to some extent borne out by analysing the vocabulary that Otto Kahn and Percy MacKaye employ when discussing their contributions to the Tercentenary. MacKaye explains *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* as the latest contribution to his long-standing

project of creating a "drama of democracy," a participatory art form that would express "the desire [...] of democracy consistently to seek expression through a drama of and by the people, not merely for the people" (MacKaye xviii). And Kahn does not limit himself to calling for democratic art, but goes as far as equating art and democracy: "art is democracy, art is equality of opportunity" (Kahn [1916] 6). However, he immediately qualifies his statement: "Not the false democracy which, misunderstanding or misinterpreting the purpose and meaning of the democratic conception, seeks or tends to establish a common level of mediocrity, but the true democracy which, guided by the star of the ideal and firm in its faith, strives to lead us all onward and upward to an ever higher plane" (Kahn [1916] 6-7). Kahn's use of the words "upward" and "higher" suggests an interpretation of democracy not so much as a levelling impulse, but rather as an agent of upward mobility, implying a vertical social and artistic hierarchy. Similarly, Vilma Raskin Potter points out that MacKaye, while promoting his vision of democratic art, was "unwilling to give up the notion of an aristocracy of intellect and talent" (Potter 71). Indeed, *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* formulates the ultimate goal for its protagonist in decidedly non-democratic terms: "to rise to lordly reason" (MacKaye 26, my emphasis). As Cartelli points out, MacKaye's writing displays a "surprising slippage of democracy into aristocracy" (Cartelli 81). And, like Kahn's vocabulary, MacKaye's use of the word "rise" hints at a democracy conceived in terms of self-improvement and upward mobility, rather than in terms of a celebration of an unqualified egalitarianism. The unresolved tensions between democracy and cultural hierarchy latent in MacKaye's and Kahn's formulations echo the nineteenth-century debates regarding the emerging cultural stratification in America⁴.

- 5 Moreover, both Cartelli and Coppélia Kahn argue that this concept of democracy is heavily biased in favour of the allegedly superior Anglo-American cultural norms, seeking to "interpellate Caliban, the cultural – and racial – Other, into Anglo-American culture" (Kahn [2000] 268). Cartelli suggests:

Apparent both in [Otto] Kahn's and MacKaye's efforts to bridge the distance between Fifth Avenue and Avenue A, Republican and Socialist, economic aristocrat and indigent immigrant, is the desire to sustain the myth of America's democratic sufficiency and a corresponding anxiety about how that myth might be sustained given the distance America had traveled from colony to postcolony to burgeoning imperial power with more huddled masses on its doorstep than it knew how to accommodate. (Cartelli 75)

- 6 This implicates writers such as MacKaye in the process of defining American democracy and national identity through the privileging of one cultural strand: that of the established American elite, descended from the old, "Anglo-Saxon" immigration. Shakespeare is seen as the supreme artistic manifestation of that cultural strand. Consequently, the Tercentenary emerges as contributing to "an internal or domestic colonizing venture that seeks to enlist the consent and participation of the masses in their enforced acculturation" (Cartelli 75)⁵.
- 7 However, this interpretation of the American Shakespeare Tercentenary is coloured by the almost exclusive critical focus on MacKaye's New York centrepiece, which arguably was to some extent driven by the metropolitan social elites. An examination of the 1916 Shakespeare celebrations other than *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* reveals a rather more complex picture. While some of the organisers and patrons of the Tercentenary indeed hailed from the old, "Anglo-Saxon" stock, the celebrations throughout America were

too widespread and popular to be dismissed offhand as an affair staged by the members of the elite in order to force the masses to accept their vision of culture. A stunning range of large and small-scale Tercentenary projects was carried out across the country. In preparation for the anniversary, the Drama League of America put forward suggestions for the appropriate kinds of celebratory activities: "plays, masques, festivals, pageants, music, dancing, chorus, lectures, sermons, art and craft exhibitions, club programs, library exhibits, study courses, story telling, tableaux, planting of trees, and developing of Shakespeare gardens" (Roberts 354). An examination of publications from the period reveals that those suggestions were widely acted upon. For example, in Atlanta, the Shakespeare Study Class – a local society active since 1896 – organised the planting of an oak at Piedmont Park, combined with "an address on Shakespeare by Dr Henry Alford Potter and another appropriate address by Robert Loveman" ("Shakespeare Class" E8). The Thalian Club of Cordele, Georgia – a study club consisting of only twelve members – studied *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear* and held a Shakespeare pageant with some "wonderful" floats (Moore A2). University of Texas prepared a five-day programme of events, including "pageants, esthetic [sic] dancing, revels, fairs, lectures, plays and pageants again" ("To Commemorate Shakespeare" 5). The Dallas Shakespeare Club's contribution was an "al fresco Shakespearean festival" involving, among other attractions, placing garlands on Shakespeare's bust and the recitation of an original ode by a local poet (Periwinkle 13). In Wellesley, Massachusetts, a pageant in honour of Shakespeare was "originally planned by the parishioners of St Andrew's Episcopal Church, but the affair grew until practically every citizen [...] became interested" ("All Wellesley" 10). These are just a few examples, indicating that the nation's involvement in the Tercentenary was widespread and immensely varied. Besides large-scale municipal events, such as MacKaye's *Caliban*, thousands of celebrations were initiated by private individuals, educational and religious institutions, and other non-governmental organisations.

- 8 Even in New York itself, *Caliban* was by no means the only tribute paid to Shakespeare in the Tercentenary year. The printed programme of MacKaye's masque included an impressive, eight-page-long list (modestly claiming to be "necessarily incomplete") of "the supplementary celebrations" which were organised in the city and its environs (*Program* 5-12, 5). Hundreds of activities were reported to be held in churches, religious organisations, schools, community and recreation centres, clubs, parks, and settlements. They included a wide range of activities: professional and amateur productions of complete plays and extracts from Shakespeare's drama, pageants, masques, festivals, dances, songs, tableaux, recitations, exhibits, games, public lectures, sermons, church services, and "miscellaneous" events (*Program* 10). Among the more unusual New York tributes were a "Shakespearean Circus," organised by the Vacation Savings Fund, and Houdini's "Shakespearean denouement" [sic] (*Program* 10). While *Caliban's Program* provides no further information about either event, the latter may have been the incident covered by the New York newspapers in late March 1916, involving Harry Houdini freeing himself from a straitjacket, while hanging over a 40-foot subway excavation. According to the *New York City Sun*, the press agent Walter J. Kingsley of the Palace Theatre had announced the stunt as "part of the Shakespeare tercentenary celebration" and said that "this fact was what brought out the crowd"⁶. It is hard to determine how accurate these claims are, but the incident demonstrates that it was not inconceivable to present Shakespeare as a crowd magnet and to capitalise on the Tercentenary celebrations for publicity and financial gain. As another newspaper

ironically reported, "The performance, in addition to honoring the memory of William Shakespeare, was intended to win the performer a bet of \$500, and also, some way, to remind the public of its duty to the box-office" ("Shakespeare in Dual Subway Shaft"). It seems that the press coverage and the appeal of the Tercentenary have extended beyond grand, serious, and high-brow cultural manifestations.

- 9 Moreover, several positions on the list of supplementary activities included in *Caliban's Program* bear witness to the spread of the Tercentenary celebrations beyond the Anglo-Protestant American elites. The section on "Church Services and Religious Organisations" (*Program* 5-6) mentions not only Protestant churches, but also many synagogues holding Shakespearean events, consisting chiefly of sermons. In addition, the Emanuel Sisterhood, a Jewish organisation, put on unspecified "Plays," and the Temple Emanu-El New York hosted a talk on "Children in Shakespeare's Plays" (*Program* 5). Similarly, Catholic schools were among those involved in Shakespearean celebrations: the Dominican Academy presented *The Tempest*, the Holy Rosary Academy *The Comedy of Errors*, and the Loyola School *The Merchant of Venice* and "The Boys of Shakespeare" (*Program* 8). The position these minority groups occupy in the *Program* indicates that the Tercentenary organisers treated them with parity and respect. The Jewish and Catholic organisations are included in the same sections as their mainstream counterparts: synagogues are intermingled with Protestant churches, and Catholic educational establishments with other "private schools" (*Program* 8). At the same time, they maintain autonomy and control over their own Tercentenary activities, rather than having Shakespeare delivered to them by the members of the Anglo-Protestant elites. This is demonstrated by the fact that most Shakespearean addresses in the synagogues were delivered by the local Rabbis, rather than by outside speakers belonging to or appointed by the members of the elite⁷.
- 10 Jewish groups and individuals did not only organise their own events, but also participated in the mainstream, general-public activities of the Tercentenary. In fact, the New York performance of *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* was only made possible by Adolph Lewisohn, a German-Jewish immigrant and successful businessman, who offered the stadium at the City College as the venue, after the organisers were denied their initial choice of Central Park⁸. The prominent Rabbi, Dr Stephen Samuel Wise, was a member of the Mayor's Honorary Committee (Kahn [2000] 257). The list of participants in *Caliban's Program* includes many Jewish names, and "boys from the Band of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum" are singled out as "bugler and drummers" (*Program* 26). Similarly, there is evidence that Jewish involvement was welcome in the large-scale municipal Tercentenary celebrations in Atlanta. At the monthly meeting of the Council of Jewish Women in January 1916, the president of the city federation of women's clubs spoke about the festivities being planned by the Drama League of America, and "stressed the point that the league should have the co-operation of every organization having Atlanta's artistic welfare at heart" ("Council of Jewish Women" B3). The indications are, therefore, that American Jews, apart from organising their own Tercentenary events, were also integrated in the mainstream celebrations.
- 11 The participation of African Americans in the Shakespeare Tercentenary is a more ambivalent issue. As Coppélia Kahn points out, they did not take part in the New York production of *Caliban* (Kahn [2000] 269). This does not mean that they were entirely uninvolved in the Tercentenary activities. A newspaper article outlining the preparations for the New York run of festivities reports: "twenty-five of the colored

societies [sic], representing about 3,000 members, have reported to the Shakespeare Celebration, through their chairman, J. Rosamond Johnson, that they will join in the city-wide celebration of the Shakespearian ttercentenary [sic]" ("The Great Tercentenary Celebration").⁹ A section entitled "Colored Organizations" is also included in the list of supplementary celebrations in *Caliban's Program* (Program 9). However, the position occupied by African Americans in that publication differs markedly from the position of such minorities as Jews or Catholics. Instead of being incorporated into relevant sections according to the type of organisation (for example, "Clubs," "Settlements," or "Community and Recreation Centers"), all "Colored Organizations" are grouped together in one section, which includes all kinds of institutions: clubs, associations, choirs, a men's guild, a "music school settlement," and the "Round Table of the Colored Branch" of the YMCA (Program 9). The only factor that brings these together is the race of the participants.

- 12 Thus, the "Colored Organizations" are segregated from the mainstream festivities and assigned a marginal space in *Caliban's Program*. Similar segregation seems to have occurred in Tercentenary observances elsewhere, as New Orleans' *Times-Picayune* reported: "in Washington, D.C., the celebration will be made part of the commencement exercises, and different schools will co-operate. Three white schools will combine on one Shakespeare pageant, and two colored high schools together will produce another" (Haskin 9A). Clearly, the co-operation of "different" schools did not cross racial divisions, and educational segregation in Washington, D.C., extended to Shakespearean celebrations. Overall, it seems that African Americans did participate in the Tercentenary, but they did so in limited and restricted ways, remaining to a large extent detached from the mainstream events.
- 13 While the Shakespeare Tercentenary thus failed to integrate a vast proportion of American citizens belonging to ethnic minorities, evidence presented above suggests that public interest and participation extended beyond the narrow circles of Anglo-American, Protestant elites. Furthermore, what is striking is that most Tercentenary initiatives in the United States did not originate from governmental institutions and bodies, but rather from the grassroots: members of the public, clubs and associations, individual educationalists, churches, schools and colleges. The chief promoter of the celebrations was the Drama League of America, a voluntary organisation which arose from women's club activities and spread throughout the U.S.A. in the early twentieth century, attracting one hundred thousand members by 1915 (Blair 148-60). The League's idea for the Tercentenary was not to engineer a centrally controlled, official affair on the national scale, but to encourage local interest: to "organize local celebrations all through every city, in the local groups that already exist, and then bring them to a focus in some large municipal festival in which the whole city can have a part" ("New York Gets Ready" SM12). This is clearly evidenced in the inclusion of the extensive list of small-scale, city-wide events in *Caliban's Program*, as discussed above. As a result of this approach, the American Tercentenary celebrations acquired a strong local focus, engendering communal involvement rather than becoming an official "diet" of Shakespeare fed to the populace by the central government.
- 14 Local pride is evident in the newspaper report on the preparations for the Tercentenary in the mining city of Butte, Montana, which announced: "Mining City Will Not Be Behind Other Cultured Centers in Observing Occasion" ("Plans Are Maturing"). Similarly, the press coverage of the celebrations in Atlanta emphasised

their local nature. One newspaper proudly stressed that the city's main Tercentenary event was being prepared by the inhabitants of Atlanta themselves: "Other cities which have presented similar pageants this year have, in nearly every case, had to import their talent, [...] but the Drama league has worked out the Atlanta pageant entirely as a home affair" ("Over 2,000 People" C10). And, similarly to MacKaye's goal expressed in the Preface to *Caliban*, both Butte and Atlanta aimed to unite all walks of life in the celebrations. The *Butte Miner* wrote: "Butte [...] hopes to draw from all interests and from all phases of its population in its presentation" ("Plans Are Maturing"). And the *Atlanta Constitution* explained:

Just as the day laborer and the college president alike find enjoyment in 'Midsummer Night's Dream' or 'Macbeth,' so all classes of Atlanta's social and business life will be drawn upon for the support of the pageant [...]. Shop girls and clerks will be called upon to fill the roles of actors and dancers as well as those wealthy young men and women who have had special advantages along these lines. ("Atlanta Children" C2)

- 15 After the event, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that "it was due in great extent to this splendid and harmonious co-operation of everybody that the affair was such a wonderful success" ("Thousands Witness" D8). The festivities were clearly seen as an expression of local identity, solidarity and civic spirit and not as something imposed from the outside by the U.S. authorities.

- 16 Moreover, the Tercentenary in America was, on the whole, not financed by the federal or state governments. Instead, the organisers of Shakespearean events had to mount their own fundraising campaigns, as the leaflet issued by the New York City Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee in the months leading to the jubilee demonstrates:

The current expenses of the Committee are heavy and it is necessary to have the performance of the Masque underwritten. There is immediate need of funds. Those willing to contribute funds or solicit them are asked to communicate with Mr. W. Forbes Morgan, Jr., 71 Broadway. (*New York City Shakespeare Celebration*)

Certificate of support for *Caliban*, issued as part of the fundraising campaign. From "Papers of MacKaye Family", ML-5 (294), Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH. Reproduced with kind permission of Rauner Special Collections Library.

- 17 The scarcity of tangible support from official institutions is further illustrated by the fact that the Shakespeare Tercentenary enthusiasts could not even rely on the Board of Education to subsidise materials designed to support nationwide celebrations in schools. In April 1916, activists of the Drama League of America reported on their involvement in producing and disseminating *The Tercentenary Pamphlet for Schools and Colleges*:

Our members are earnestly requested to do everything in their power to swell the sales of this pamphlet. The material was to have been published as an official document by the United States Bureau of Education; but the Bureau's funds ran out, and the League had either to print at its own expense or to let the material go unused. We hope that our members will agree that the Directors decided wisely in determining to risk the large outlay (*Drama League* 6).
- 18 Once again, the burden of financing Tercentenary-related activities fell on the members of the public, rather than on the governmental bodies¹⁰. This is despite the fact that, as the article claims just a few pages earlier, the Drama League received a "phenomenal response to its advocacy of a nation-wide celebration of the Shakespeare Tercentenary" (*Drama League* 1). It seems that the "phenomenal response," as far as it translated into practical support, came from the general public rather than from the official channels.
- 19 This demonstrates that, while ideologically loaded in its promotion of Shakespeare and English-language culture as the unifying forces for American society, the Tercentenary was not a state-sponsored or government-led affair. President Woodrow Wilson sent Percy MacKaye a letter explaining his absence on the opening night of *Caliban*, to which

he seems to have been invited: "I wish with all my heart that it were possible for me to go up and see the Shakespeare Masque, but, alas, pleasures of this sort are denied me during these hurried and troublous [sic] times. I am nonetheless warmly obliged to you" (Wilson). The President clearly considered the Tercentenary to be "pleasure," rather than crucial state business, in which the U.S. government would need to be involved. Instead, the initiative, organisation, and, crucially, financing of the celebrations fell to non-governmental groups and enthusiastic private individuals.

- 20 Those individuals hailed from a variety of backgrounds, not all rich, politically influential, or descended from the old "Anglo-Saxon" stock. Percy MacKaye was a member of the intellectual elite, whose ancestry could be traced back to Plymouth Colony (Cartelli 66), but financially he was not very well off. His wife's brief reflection on the period leading to the Tercentenary is tellingly entitled "Months of Ordeal," and reveals the hardships the family endured while Percy worked on *Caliban*: "no money," cramped living conditions, and the children's sickness ([Marion MacKaye] 2)¹¹. At the other end of the spectrum were Tercentenary patrons like Otto Hermann Kahn, the chairman of the Mayor's Honorary Committee for the New York Shakespeare Celebration. He, unlike MacKaye, could boast a healthy financial position but, as a German immigrant, no claim to Anglo-American descent. The same can be said of other members of the Honorary Committee, such as Jacob H. Schiff and Mortimer L. Schiff, wealthy bankers of Jewish-German origin. It looks like those at the forefront of sponsoring the Shakespeare Tercentenary were a mixed group, bringing in a range of contributions: Anglo-American heritage, intellectual and artistic prowess, social connections, and money.
- 21 Cartelli calls the coming together of these elements for the production of *Caliban* a "wedding of New England pedigree and New York commercial energy" in service of a project "which very consciously aimed to make Shakespeare the centerpiece of an undertaking reflective of Anglo-American exceptionality and magnificence" (Cartelli 66). However, he does not comment on the paradoxical fact that Anglo-American exceptionality was being sponsored by Americans who were naturalised, rather than descended from the "old" stock. Apparently, promoting the privileged position of English-language literature, epitomised by Shakespeare, was the domain not only of the Anglo-American elites, but also of those more recent immigrants who achieved commercial success in the U.S.A. Perhaps the association with Shakespeare, a powerful cultural icon, served to enhance the social and cultural status of the latter group. As Lawrence Levine argues, "to many of the new industrialists as well as many members of the new middle classes, following the lead of the arbiters of culture promised [...] an avenue to cultural legitimacy" (Levine 176). Or perhaps high culture, of which Shakespeare was by then considered a prime example (Levine 31-35, 72-81), was connected not so much with ethnic heritage but with social class, and the members of the privileged classes, whether Anglo-American, German, or Jewish in origin, had vested interest in its promotion. Whatever the reason, the situation seems more complicated than that of one ethnic group forcing their cultural norms on diverse other groups. At least some representatives of the other groups had already internalised those norms and were now involved in their dissemination.
- 22 These issues concerning class and ethnicity bring us back to the question of the involvement of the Shakespeare Tercentenary in the debates surrounding American identity and democracy in the early twentieth century. Adopting Shakespeare as a

spokesperson for democracy and as an American national icon was not a straightforward operation. As Michael Bristol points out, "Shakespeare's centrality in American culture may be construed as a kind of anomaly," since his work is closely involved with "the institutions of hereditary privilege," which revolutionary America so emphatically rejected (Bristol 2). Similarly, Kim Sturges demonstrates that American attitudes to Shakespeare from the War of Independence until the emergence of "the threats posed in the twentieth century by Communism and more recently 'terrorism'" were marked by a paradox: a continuing admiration and gradual assimilation of Shakespeare, despite his perceived affiliation with the hated, oppressive and tyrannical "Englishness" (Sturges 10 and passim). Some remnants of this ambivalent attitude still persisted in 1916. For example, Dr Archibald Henderson, professor of mathematics at the University of North Carolina and an amateur drama critic, argued that "Shakespeare fails to have a proper appeal today [...] because he is essentially undemocratic" (quoted in "Says Ibsen" 4). However, most Tercentenary enthusiasts were at pains to "democratise" Shakespeare. A character in Denton Jaques Snider's "dramatic epos" of 1916, *The Shakespearriad*, used this term to describe his desire to transform the entirety of Shakespeare's work and thought ("Shakespearopolis") while transferring it to America ("Atlantis"):

In young Atlantis oversea I would
Democratize great Shakespearopolis,
Transfusing all its royalty and noble stock,
Mossy with privilege of centuries,
Back to the people's primal protoplasm [...]. (Snider 415-16)

- 23 Similarly, Judge R. L. Batts of the Federal Bench argued: "More than three hundred years ago [Shakespeare's plays] were written by a democrat for the public. By democrat I mean one capable of affiliating with all classes, one who gets pleasure from such association" (Batts 48). Clearly, the American Tercentenary activists were keen to make Shakespeare into, in the words of Richard Burton, "a democratic art at a democratic price" (Burton RP5).
- 24 Some contemporary commentators felt that the price of "democratising" Shakespeare in the United States in 1916 was the sacrifice of the artistic standards: "If Shakespeare could rise in his grave and witness some of the events scheduled in his honor this year, [...] it is reasonably certain that he would go back to his shroud and consider himself fortunate to be among the departed" (Pauline Maurice, quoted in "Sisters Shine" 11). Some, like the reporter who commented on *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, saw the price to be the departure from the original Shakespeare: "if there was not much Shakespeare in evidence in the only popular appeal made by the masque, there was a great deal of democracy" ("Shakespeare Community-Masque" 1701, quoting from the *New York Evening Sun*). Whatever the price, the gain for us, almost a hundred years later, is an insight into some of the processes and tensions involved in defining American identity and democracy in the second decade of the twentieth century. Those processes included, most notably, the negotiation of the position of disadvantaged groups such as new immigrants, African-Americans, and the urban underclasses, in relation to the privileged cultural discourses, such as English-language literature epitomised by Shakespeare.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

"All Wellesley Honors Shakspeare." *Boston Daily Globe*, 14 May 1916, 10.

"Atlanta Children Rehearsing for Shakespearean Pageant," *Atlanta Constitution*, 2 Apr. 1916, C2.

BATTS, R.L, "Shakespeare, Purveyor to the Public," in *A Memorial Volume to Shakespeare and Harvey*. Ed. A. C. Judson, J. T. Patterson, and J. F. Royster, *University of Texas Bulletin*, No. 1701, 1 Jan. 1917. Austin, Texas, University of Texas, 1917, 47-67.

BURTON, Richard, "The Star System, the Entr'acte Convention, the Attempt to Treat Poetry as Prose, All Stand in The Way", *Tercentenary Shakespearean Supplement of The New York Times*, 2 Apr. 1916, RP5.

"Council of Jewish Women," *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 Jan. 1916, B3.

Drama League of America Monthly Bulletin, Special Convention Number, Apr. 1916, Vol. I, No. 1.

Drama League of America, *The Shakespeare Tercentenary 1616-1916. Bulletin No. 2*. Chicago, Drama League of America [1915].

GRANT, Madison, *The Passing of the Great Race*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

HASKIN, Frederic J, "Shakespeare Gets Vogue in This Year of Tercentenary," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Feb. 1916, 9A.

"The Great Tercentenary Celebration Shakespearean," "Shakespeare Tercentenary, 1864, Scrapbook" (B.122.2c), Folger Shakespeare Library.

"Houdini Escapes 40 Feet Up," *The Sun* (New York City), 30 Mar. 1916.

KAHN, Otto H, *Art and the People, Remarks by Otto H. Kahn at the Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Dinner in New York City, May 4, 1916*. New York City, Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee [1916].

MACKAYE, Marion, "Months of Ordeal," Cornish, N. H.: 1916, unpublished. "Papers of MacKaye Family", ML-5 (334), folder pencil-marked "Caliban - Miscellany", Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

MACKAYE, Percy, *Caliban by the Yellow Sands: Shakespeare Tercentenary Masque*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, Page & Co, 1916.

MOORE, Jere, "Third District Report." *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 Nov. 1916, A2.

New York City Shakespeare Celebration (leaflet). [New York]: New York City Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee, [n.d.], in "Papers of MacKaye Family", ML-5 (294), Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

"New York Gets Ready to Honor Shakespeare," *New York Times Magazine*, 19 Mar. 1916, SM12.

New York City Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration: Suggestions for Exercises in Elementary Schools, New York: Department of Education, 1916.

"Over 2,000 People Will Take Part in Elaborate Pageant on May 27, in Honor of the Shakespeare Tercentenary," *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 May 1916, C10.

PERIWINKLE, Pauline, "Tercentenary of Death of Shakespeare in April", *Dallas Morning News*, 3 Apr. 1916, 13.

"Plans Are Maturing in Butte for Shakespeare Tercentenary," *Butte Miner*, 26 Mar. 1916.

"Police Stop Houdini Feat," *The Sun* (New York City), 29 Mar. 1916.

POTTER, Vilma Raskin, "Percy MacKaye's *Caliban* for Democracy", *Journal of American Culture*, 1996, Vol. 19, issue 4, 71-79.

Program of the Community Masque Caliban by the Yellow Sands, by Percy MacKaye. New York: The New York City Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee, 1916.

ROBERTS, Mary Fanton. "Shakespeare – The Man of Wisdom: Our National Celebration in His Honor," *The Craftsman*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Jan. 1916, 347-63.

ROSS, Edward Alsworth, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People*, New York, Century Co., 1914.

"Says Ibsen Founder of the Modern Drama. Dr Archibald Henderson Delivers Brilliant Address to Librarians." *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 Oct. 1916, 4.

"Shakespeare Class," *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 Apr. 1916, E8.

"The Shakespeare Community-Masque," *Literary Digest*, 10 June 1916, 1700-01.

"Shakespeare in Dual Subway Shaft," *New York Post*, 28 Mar. 1916.

The Shakespeare Tercentenary: Suggestions for School and College Celebrations of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare's Death in 1916, Prepared by the Drama League of America, under the Editorial Direction of Percival Chubb, President, with the Collaboration of Miss Mary Porter Beegle, of Barnard College, New York, Miss Mary Wood Hinman, of the School of Dance, Chicago, Dr Wm. E. Bohn, of the Ethical Culture School, New York, Washington, D.C., National Capital Press, [1916].

"Sisters Shine on Two Stages," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 Feb. 1916, 11.

SNIDER, Denton Jaques, *The Shakespeariad: A Dramatic Epos* [1916], 2nd edn. St Louis, William Harvey Miner, 1923.

"Thousands Witness Beautiful Pageant," *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 May 1916, D1 +.

"To Commemorate Shakespeare," *Dallas Morning News*, 2 Apr. 1916, 5.

WILSON, Woodrow, Letter to Percy MacKaye, 22 May 1916. "Caliban Scrapbook III," in "Papers of MacKaye Family," ML-5 (72), Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

Secondary sources

BLAIR, Karen J, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994.

BRISTOL, Michael D, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990.

CARTELLI, Thomas, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations*, London: Routledge, 1999.

DUTTON, Richard and Jean E. HOWARD, eds, *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2006.

GREEN, William, "Caliban by the Yellow Sands: Percy MacKaye's Adaptation of *The Tempest*", *Maske und Kothurn*, 1989, vol. 35, 59-69.

HENDERSON, Diana E, "The Tempest in Performance," Dutton and Howard 216-39.

HIGHAM, John, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, New York, Atheneum, 1955; repr. 1963.

KAHN, Coppélia, "Caliban at the Stadium: Shakespeare and the Making of Americans," *Massachusetts Review*, 2000, Vol. 41, issue 2, 256-84.

LEVINE, Lawrence W., *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1988.

SMIALKOWSKA, Monika, "Shakespeare in History, History through Shakespeare: *Caliban by The Yellow Sands*," *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 2007, Vol. 4 (19), 17-27.

STURGESS, Kim C, *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

TAYLOR, Gary, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*, London, Hogarth Press, 1989.

NOTES

1. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Folger Shakespeare Library for the generous grant which helped me to conduct this research, and to the staff both at the Folger and at the Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, for their kind assistance.
2. While the Drama League of America established a special Tercentenary Committee and a Tercentenary Bureau which could be contacted for advice and materials, it was clear that the League was "acting only as an initiatory and co-ordinating agency" (*Shakespeare Tercentenary 1616-1916* 7) and the preparation of particular events fell to local organisations.
3. For a more extended and nuanced discussion of the issues surrounding the "new immigration", nativism, and Americanisation see Higham (esp. 87-193, 234-242).
4. These debates were embodied in the bitter conflict between the supporters of two eminent Shakespearean actors – the populist Edwin Forrest and the elitist William Macready – which came to a head in the Astor Place riot of 1845. The conflict had an added nationalistic dimension, as Forrest was American and Macready English (Levine 63-69, Sturges 41-43, Cartelli 42-45, Taylor 201-04).
5. One critic who challenges this view is Diana Henderson: "Cartelli accentuates the predictable Anglo-American biases of MacKaye (who is, in fact, more broadly Eurocentric and critically informed than Cartelli implies)" (Henderson 225).
6. "Police Stop Houdini Feat." *The Sun* (New York City), 29 Mar. 1916. This article refers to a planned performance of 28th March, which was prevented at the last minute by the police. However, the act was successfully carried out two days later, and the same newspaper quoted

Kingsley as calling it a "vaudeville's contribution to the Shakespeare tercentenary" ("Houdini Escapes 40 Feet Up." *The Sun* (New York City), 30 Mar. 1916).

7. The exceptions are the Free Synagogue of New York, which hosted an address by the renowned British actor, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, and Temple Emanu-El, which held a talk by Miss Evelyne Hilliard of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee. There is no indication, however, that either speaker was forced on these congregations, rather than selected by their members.

8. The controversy about the use of Central Park was widely covered by the press. See, among others, *New York Times*, 12th, 13th and 15th January 1916; *New York's Eagle*, 12th January, 1916; *New York Herald*, January 13th, 1916; *New York City Press*, 13th January, 1916; and *New York's Tribune*, 15th January, 1916.

9. A cutting from an unidentified and undated newspaper in "Shakespeare Tercentenary, 1864, Scrapbook" (B.122.2c) at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Even though the scrapbook's title refers to the 1864 celebrations, the cutting clearly belongs to 1916, the article beginning with 'Three hundred years ago – April 23, 1616, William Shakespeare died at Stratford-on-Avon', and mentioning MacKaye's masque.

10. The pamphlet was published as *The Shakespeare Tercentenary: Suggestions for School and College Celebrations of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare's Death in 1916, Prepared by the Drama League of America, under the Editorial Direction of Percival Chubb, President, with the Collaboration of Miss Mary Porter Beegle, of Barnard College, New York, Miss Mary Wood Hinman, of the School of Dance, Chicago, Dr Wm. E. Bohn, of the Ethical Culture School, New York* (Washington, D.C.: National Capital Press, [1916]). *Caliban's Program* (6) mentions that the Board of Education published and distributed to all schools a 'Shakespeare Bulletin', but this was a small (15-page long) booklet, entitled *New York City Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration: Suggestions for Exercises in Elementary Schools* (New York: Department of Education, 1916).

11. This three-page unpublished typescript with pencil annotations is not signed, but the content (including first-name references to Percy and the children) strongly implies that it was written by Marion, Percy MacKaye's wife.

ABSTRACTS

This article looks beyond Percy MacKaye's *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* – the best known American contribution to the Shakespeare Tercentenary of 1916 – to reconsider the nature and the functions of the Tercentenary commemorations in the U.S.A. The recent, almost exclusive, critical focus on MacKaye's New York centrepiece has produced a view of the jubilee as participating in "an internal or domestic colonizing venture that seeks to enlist the consent and participation of the masses in their enforced acculturation" (Cartelli, 1999:75). However, the celebrations throughout the U.S.A. were too widespread and popular to be dismissed offhand as an affair staged by the members of the elite in order to force the masses to accept their vision of culture. A stunning range of large and small-scale Tercentenary projects were carried out across the country, including plays, masques, pageants, festivals, musical and dance tributes, lectures, sermons, exhibitions, courses, tableaux, planting of trees, and developing of Shakespeare gardens. This article demonstrates that public interest and participation extended beyond the narrow circles of Anglo-Protestant elites. Moreover, most American Tercentenary initiatives did not originate from governmental institutions and bodies, but rather from the grassroots:

members of the public, clubs and associations, individual educationalists, churches, schools and colleges. Consequently, the American Tercentenary celebrations acquired a strong local focus, engendering communal involvement and civic pride, rather than becoming a state-sponsored affair, an official "diet" of Shakespeare fed to the populace by the central government.

Cet article cherche à aller au-delà de l'étude de *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* de Percy MacKaye, la pièce la plus connue des cérémonies du tricentenaire de la mort de Shakespeare (1916), afin de repenser la nature et les fonctions des commémorations du tricentenaire aux Etats-Unis. La critique fait porter son intérêt quasi exclusivement sur l'œuvre centrale de MacKaye jouée à New York, laissant à penser que les célébrations participent d'une "tentative de colonialisation interne ou domestique qui cherche à forcer les masses à participer et à accepter l'acculturation qu'on leur impose" (Cartelli, 1999 : 75). Toutefois, les commémorations américaines étaient trop populaires et larges pour ne penser, un peu rapidement, qu'elles n'avaient été l'affaire que des membres de l'élite cherchant à forcer le peuple à accepter leur vision de la culture. Un nombre étonnant de projets de grande ou de moindre ampleur furent mis en œuvre pour le tricentenaire qui allaient de pièces, masques, défilés, à des festivals en passant par des hommages musicaux ou dansés, des conférences, sermons et autres expositions, cours, tableaux, sans oublier la plantation d'arbres et la création de jardins à la mémoire de Shakespeare. Au moyen d'études de cas, cet article démontre que l'intérêt et la participation du public allèrent au-delà des cercles étroits des élites anglo-protestantes. De plus, la plupart des initiatives prises dans le cadre du tricentenaire ne furent pas décidées par les institutions et agences gouvernementales, mais par la population: depuis de simples citoyens jusqu'aux clubs, associations, pédagogues, en passant par les églises, écoles et universités. Ainsi, les fêtes du tricentenaire américain eurent une importante dimension locale, impliquant la base de la population et leur donnant une fierté, au lieu d'être avant tout étatique et un "régime" shakespearien officiel que le gouvernement central aurait donné à la population pour qu'elle s'en repaisse.

INDEX

Mots-clés: cohésion sociale, commémorations de la mort de Shakespeare, démocratie, ethnicité, identité nationale, Tricentenaire de Shakespeare

Keywords: democracy, ethnicity, national identity, Shakespeare celebrations/commemorations, Shakespeare Tercentenary, social cohesion

AUTHOR

MONIKA SMIALKOWSKA

Northumbria University