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SHAKESPEARE / SKIN

*Contemporary Readings in Skin Studies  
and Theoretical Discourse*

EDITED BY  
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## SERIES PREFACE

productive new ways to bring them into play and by juxtaposing concepts that are not only usually kept separate but may well be considered either irreconcilable or irrelevant. So, for instance, the intersection *Shakespeare/Money* might juxtapose playwright/investor, circulation/stasis, economy/nation, commerce/community, professional/amateur, growth/decline, greed/charity, sex/exploitation, credit/debit in ways that offer substantially to enlarge what we might think we mean by the study of Shakespeare and money. Such juxtapositions are designed to create productive friction, to provoke contributors to stretch boundaries, to go beyond their comfort zones, and thus – we believe – to begin to outline genuine new directions for criticism in the field of Shakespeare and early modern drama, both building on and reimagining our critical criteria.

*Farah Karim-Cooper, Sonia Massai, Gordon McMullan and Lucy Munro*

*Arden Shakespeare Intersections* seeks to prompt questions about the future shape of Shakespeare studies and to initiate new and innovative critical approaches. Our aim is not only to summarize and shed light on aspects of the critical field as it stands but actively to question received critical formations and offer exciting new directions for critical analysis by addressing a series of ‘intersections’ – developing lines of thought both cognate and disparate from a key word that invites contributors to leave the tracks and find out what happens when critical formations overlap in generative ways.

This innovative series of substantive collections of new essays is edited by leading and emerging scholars working at the cutting edge of the field of Shakespeare studies. The volumes will contain fifteen or so chapters by acknowledged experts in the field who have been invited to consider a given Shakespearean intersection – Shakespeare/Text, Shakespeare/Sex, Shakespeare/Skin – and bring to bear their own particular perspective on that intersection in the context of those of others in the volume. The intersections – and thus the titles of the volume – have been chosen to encourage genuinely inventive reflections on the field created by the juxtaposition of the word ‘Shakespeare’ with the particular terms, suggestions for future directions for the field, and engagements of a broader, more intra- and/or inter-disciplinary nature than is usual for ‘Shakespeare companion’ or ‘Shakespeare topics’ series.

The overarching aim of *Arden Shakespeare Intersections* is to propose and populate alternative configurations for the field of Shakespeare criticism that move beyond the standard categories, such as gender, race, class, language and performance. This is pursued not to reject or denigrate the value of these valuable concepts as ways to approach the Shakespearean text but to rethink and reinvigorate their significance for the study of Shakespeare by seeking

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# Introduction

## Skin deep

Ruben Espinosa

When Hamlet considers the materiality of the human body as he witnesses the Gravedigger hollowing out Ophelia's grave, he asks how long a man will 'lie i'thearth ere he rot?' (5.1.163). The Gravedigger answers: 'Faith, if he be not rotten before he die . . . he will last you some eight year – or nine year – a tanner will last you nine year' (5.1.164–67). The joke, of course, is that a tanner's skin would be able to keep the water out longer because, like the animal hide the tanner treats, the skin of the buried man is tanned. The scene, focused on death and decaying, draws attention to the permanence and impermanence of the human body and skin signifies the entry point to understanding these competing notions. In this collection, skin will also serve as the entry point to considering a host of social issues and ills that often define our own vulnerabilities and resilience.

To consider the many ways that we attend to the significance of skin is to recognize its prominence when it comes to our interrelatedness to the world and those around us. We conceive of our fortitude (thick skin), our insecurities (thin skin), our fragility (by the skin of my teeth), our alikeness (twin skin), our differences (skin colour), our commitment to something (skin in the game), our confidence (to feel comfortable in your skin), and our inhumanity (to skin someone) through imagined meanings of skin. The manifold and multivalent deployments of skin to symbolize aspects of our identities imbues