Shakespeare and the Edwardian Turn of Mind: Textual Poaching and Mis-citation

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Abstract
The appropriation of Shakespeare in advertising has adopted varied forms and shapes, ranging from undisguised quotation to oblique allusion, rewriting and parody. In particular, the deployment of Shakespearean plays and characters, or of Shakespeare himself, to peddle the virtues of mass-produced products sometimes favours the "silent quotation", which foregrounds Shakespeare (the genius, the source of authority and cultural capital) and erases his works (the literary nature of his wisdom and the theatrical origin of his fame). This is not a recent development; but whereas Victorian advertising favoured the explicit reference to plays and characters, there seems to be a trend towards the use of the silent quotation during the first two decades of the twentieth-century. In this paper, I turn my attention to how quotations from the works of Shakespeare have been detached from their original contexts and inlaid in in Edwardian advertisements as part of a particular practice of "textual poaching" which inevitably promotes mis-citation and shares much with modern popular culture media – from t-shirts and tattoos to greetings cards and Pinterest. The use of quotations from the plays and poems in early twentieth-century advertising shows the emergence of Edwardian Shakespeare, with critical practices and premises quite distinct from those of Victorian Shakespeare.
Keywords: Edwardian Shakespeare, advertising, quotation, textual poaching, mis-citation.

In their 2014 winter collection, Stradivarius (one of the fashion retailers belonging to Inditex group, which also owns Zara) had a t-shirt with a quotation purporting to be by William Shakespeare: "The object of art is to give life a shape". The quotation sounds vaguely Shakespearean – one may feel it is semantically related to Duke Theseus' speech about the poet's imagination giving life a local habitation and a name in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Unfortunately, it isn't Shakespeare and it seems, in fact, a

loose translation from *The Rehearsal*, a famous play by French playwright Jean Anouilh (1910-1987)[1]. Today, this type of spurious attribution of all sorts of short pungent phrases to Shakespeare is, not surprisingly, a thriving activity on the Internet – and Pinterest, together with other social media, contributes to its global dissemination. The practice is partly enabled by the fact that these mis-citations never indicate the character to whom the words belong nor show the title of the play or poem they supposedly come from. The practice of the "silent quotation", which foregrounds Shakespeare (the genius, the source of authority and cultural capital) and erases his works (the literary nature of his wisdom and the theatrical origin of his fame) is not a recent development, as it has been used in advertising for a long time. The choice of promoting the author's name and eliding the work's title is no doubt a clear instance of how, as Paul Connerton says, societies remember and modernity forgets (Connerton 1989; 2009). Modern societies, Connerton argues, handle cultural memory selectively and the afterlives of Shakespeare in popular culture media often replicate what societies choose to remember and what they willingly forget.

The Inditex t-shirt's mis-citation of Shakespeare has a precedent in an Edwardian advert for Trimble Whisky Green Label, in which the words of another writer (eighteenth-century poet Mark Akenside) are attributed to Shakespeare – a practice which, incidentally, began in Shakespeare's own time with *The Passionate Pilgrim*. What lies behind this practice? Why is the name of the author as much part of the message as the quote itself? The appropriation of Shakespearean plays and characters, or of Shakespeare himself, to peddle the virtues of a mass-produced product relies on complex mechanisms and has adopted varied forms and shapes, ranging from undisguised quotation to oblique allusion, rewriting and parody[2]. Here,

[1] The Inditex misattributed quotation is a free translation into English from Anouilh's *The Rehearsal* (1950): "C'est très jolie la vie, mais cela n'a pas de forme. L'art a pour objet de lui en donner une précisément et de faire par tous les artifices possibles – plus vrai que le vrai (*La Répétition ou l'Amour puni*, Editions La Palatine, 1950)".

[2] The deployment of Shakespeare in advertising constitutes, as Douglas Lanier says, "largely a history of wilful mis-citation" (2012: 514). I am very grateful

my attention is restricted to how quotations from the works of Shakespeare have been detached from their original contexts and inlaid in in early twentieth-century advertisements with varying success. The practice of attaching a Shakespearean quotation to the body of an advert had its heyday in the years between the late Victorian period and the end of the First World War – before 1890, quotations from the plays in adverts are practically non-existent and after 1920, their use declines. Between 1890 and 1920, the deployment of citations from Shakespeare in advertising is so ubiquitous, that in 1909 *The Times* was able to fill an entire page with a sample of products that had used Shakespeare's words in their advertisements (Fig. 1). As *The Times* shows, Shakespearean one-line quotes were used in Edwardian adverts to sell a very wide range of products – from whisky to cocoa and from soap and dog biscuits to luxurious woollen garments and EPNS (Electro-Plated Nickel Silver) tableware.

Although the way in which late Victorians and Edwardians employed Shakespeare in advertising shows a great deal of continuity, at the turn of the twentieth century the practice of quoting "Shakespeare" rather than his individual works becomes consistent and widespread. On the whole, late Victorian advertising preferred to specify the origin of a Shakespearean quotation, indicating the title of the play and sometimes also the act and scene, whereas Edwardian advertising increasingly discarded the play's title and gave pride of place to the author's name, *tout court*. This is a trend rather than a hundred-per-cent rule, as both practices coexisted to a certain extent. Over the Edwardian period, then, companies changed their advertising policy on the appropriation of Shakespeare. Adverts from 1891 to 1900 generally indicate the play, act and scene of their Shakespearean quotations, as the sample in Figure 2 shows: Brooke's Monkey Brand Soap (1887), Pear's Soap (1889), Anaglypta (1891), Elliman's Universal Embrocation (1891), Gurney Hot-Water Heater Co. (1891), Fry's cocoa (1897), Van Camp's Pork and Baked Beans (1897) and St Jacob's Oil (1900). Adverts dating from 1900 to 1909 show a change of policy; in the adverts collected in Figure 3 for President

to Douglas Lanier for allowing me access to his database of Shakespearean advertisements.

Suspenders (1900), Caw's "Safety" Fountain Pen (1903), Trimble Whiskey Green Label (1907) and Sanatogen (1909), play titles and references to characters are absent.

It seems that this change in advertising practice, from indicating the play to silently quoting Shakespeare, did not take place overnight. There are residual instances of the Victorian practice of citation by play title in the first decade of the twentieth-century, as the 1909 advert for Plantol Soap shows (Fig. 4); these residual instances, nevertheless, become increasingly rare after 1910. The alteration in advertising practice is probably an indicator of a generally perceived change in the reading public's familiarity with the plays of Shakespeare – in the 1880s and 1890s, readers of magazines and newspapers were assumed to be conversant with the titles of the plays, whereas in or around 1910, when according to Virginia Woolf human character changed (Woolf 1924), knowledge of the plays is no longer taken for granted, and the one-line quotations are no longer presented as literary citations capitalising on the receiver's literary competence but, instead, as the equivalent of early modern epigrams, as self-contained, free-floating maxims, as detached pearls of wisdom from the authoritative voice of a sage, i.e. Shakespeare.

A clear instance of this changing advertising policy is provided by the well-known luxury soap and cosmetics brand, Vinolia. In 1911, the year before the sinking of the RMS Titanic, Vinolia, the company that marketed the expensive soap bar issued to first class passengers on the ill-fated White Star transatlantic liner, ran a series of advertisements in *The Graphic*. At least four of these adverts dating from 1911 featured a silent, decontextualized Shakespeare quotation (Figures 5-8), linking the virtues of the high-end soap brand to the excellence of the national poet. A previous ad from 1907 for the same company also used a quotation from Shakespeare but indicated the play's title, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Fig. 9). There is of course a tradition of linking Shakespeare and soap in advertising. Besides Vinolia, the list of Victorian companies producing soap/cosmetics/cleansing products that have exploited Shakespeare and his plays in advertising includes Plantol, Pears, Hudson and Brooke's Monkey Brand Soap (Figures 4, 10, 11 and 12). As Douglas M. Lanier has argued, the deployment of Shakespeare in order to sell more soap probably grows from the

need to devise strategies to market products traditionally made at home. Shakespeare easily provided symbolic associations of quality, purity, and wholesomeness. Like Shakespeare, Vinolia soap is familiar and trustworthy:

> Because these industrially-produced goods sought to displace items that households would previously have made themselves (soap, biscuits, and clothing, for example), those new products needed symbolic associations and reassurances about quality that would encourage consumers to integrate them into their lives; Shakespeare – familiar, wholesome, superlative, trustworthy – supplied the need (Lanier 2012: 500).

This is surely so, as can be seen in the 1907 Vinolia soap advert, in which a parlour maid carrying a box of soap cakes on a tray is placed near a quotation from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (IV.iii): "Your servant and your friend" (Fig. 9). Together with gentleness and refreshing power, the two qualities of the product that are foregrounded in bold type are its "Purity and Perfection". An allusion to *Romeo and Juliet* ("A ROSE by any other name will smell as sweet. Call Vinolia Soap what you will, you cannot lessen its virtue") is used to endorse the qualities of the product further. The enlisting of Shakespeare's cultural authority only works here if the consumer associates *Two Gentlemen of Verona* with its author, and is familiar with the balcony scene.

Although citation and allusion to Shakespeare are primarily used in advertising to endorse the superlative nature of a product, it could be argued, nevertheless, that some Edwardian adverts for Vinolia products that feature Shakespearean quotations employ them in ways that point to other semiotic operations, operations that seem to reach beyond mere reassurance about quality. An old-fashioned semiotic reading *à la* Roland Barthes (1957) tells us that four of the 1911 Vinolia adverts in *The Graphic* (Figures 5-8) operate thanks to complex cultural mechanisms in which Shakespeare – or his symbolic capital – is a crucial element.

The Vinolia ads for toilet soap and talcum powder use Shakespeare to create images of domesticity: in one of them, an elegant Edwardian matron in a chaste peignoir who is about to take a bath tests the temperature of the water in the bathtub while a cake of soap on a dish awaits in the background (Fig. 5); in another,

a buttoned-up nurse with a modest coiffure and a friendly smile is comfortably seated beside a towel rack while gently sprinkling talcum powder over a naked baby lying contentedly on her lap (Fig. 6). Both images evoke feelings of bathroom warmth and intimacy, of happy and harmonious homes. The quotations, detached from their context and chosen for their resonance rather than their original meaning, speak of "quality" and "comfort": "Come, give us a taste of your quality" (*Hamlet*, II.ii) for the Royal Vinolia Toilet Soap and "Not another comfort like to this" (*Othello*, II.i) for the Royal Vinolia Talcum Powder. The effect they create is an illusion, as if Shakespeare himself were addressing the soap or the reader directly – it is not Hamlet or Othello who speak here, but Shakespeare, who, endowed with his authority, invites us to make his words ours and use Vinolia soap and talcum powder. It could be argued too that a direct allusion to the sources (*Hamlet* and *Othello*) would rob the quotations of their playfulness, since Vinolia would be associated with serious tragedies. This is particularly the case with very well-known works such as these, whose mention is bound to bring into play the reader's memory of the plot, triggering tragic associations.

The other two adverts, for scented sachets and face cream respectively (Figures 7 and 8), are rather different in scope and intention – quality and comfort are no longer what the products primarily offer. Instead, suggestions of sensorial and sensual pleasure are foregrounded. Exposed arms hint at sexuality and the scenes no longer point at domestic harmony and bathroom intimacy. Rather, the kind of intimacy implied in these images is tinged with overtones of bedroom secrecy – we are invited to visualise and share the secrets of two pieces of feminine furniture, the *chiffonier* (the high, narrow chest of drawers used to store anything from lingerie and gloves to *bric-à-brac*) and the dressing table. The Royal Vinolia Sachet is "Sweet as Summer" (*Henry VIII*, IV.ii) and the Royal Vinolia Cream will make the woman who uses it look as young as a lily and a rose in its prime: "Of Nature's gifts thou may'st with lilies boast, / and with the half-blown rose" (*King John*, III.i). The two female figures are elegantly eroticised, not only through the exposure of flesh but also by the display, or hidden presence, of the corset. In Figure 8, the corset is explicitly shown from the back and from the front with the help of a mirror.

In Figure 7, the narrow waistline and fashionable figure of the lady that holds the sachet suggest that she wears the prototypical Edwardian corset, which, as the image shows, forced the torso into an unnatural position.

In her cultural history of the corset, Valerie Steele suggests that the idea that this garment was merely an instrument of female oppression, imposed on women by a patriarchal society to restrict their freedom and exploit their sexuality until twentieth-century feminism brought its demise and liberated women from it, is a long-standing myth, supported by Victorian historians. Instead, she argues, the history of the corset shows it was a versatile object that was not always extremely uncomfortable or unhealthy. Although it is true that some women "did experience the corset as an assault on the body", the corset also had positive connotations of youth, beauty and sexiness, and more interestingly perhaps, of social status and respectability (Steele 2001: 1). In the two Vinolia adverts in Figures 7 and 8, the corset interacts with the Shakespearean quotations, which are no longer employed just to legitimise the quality of the products but to invoke their social and sexual connotations, their added value as status symbols, and their erotic appeal. "No aspect of human life", says Samuel Hynes, "changed more in the transition from Victorian England to modern England than the way Englishmen thought about sex" (1968: 171). Although Hynes had attitudes to homosexual love in mind when he wrote this, his reflection can be extended to Edwardian attitudes to heterosexual pleasure and female eroticism. In these two adverts, the Shakespearean citation is not merely undergoing a process of "probervialisation" and providing what Lanier has described as "a freely applicable cultural truism" (2002: 53) it is also endorsing and justifying both pleasure and vanity – and appeasing any sense of guilt that may stem from consuming these products.

Popular appropriations of Shakespeare, as Lanier has argued, usually "fasten on (and even embellish) some elements and ignore others" and "fragment the plays and reassemble what they select into something that speaks to their own sense of lived experience" (2002: 52). As such, they are instances of "textual poaching": adverts, postcards, posters and memes move across Shakespeare's Complete Works as if they were crossing "lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they

did not write" (de Certeau 1984: 174). The textual poaching found in Edwardian advertising is analogous to the textual poaching Henry Jenkins (1992) spotted in practitioners of fan fiction. Like some authors of fan fiction, adverts may quote and appropriate Shakespeare for his authority and capacity to legitimise the product advertised but they mostly capitalise on the power a Shakespeare quotation has to attract the attention of Shakespeare lovers.

In adverts and fan-fiction alike, Shakespeare's name is employed to peddle a product and both could be regarded as instances of what Mariacristina Cavecchi has called "Shakespeare in tatters", i.e., "dismembered and/or disfigured Shakespeare lines" (Cavecchi 2016: 149). As Cavecchi has noticed in her recent illuminating analysis of graffiti and street art, this is a "fragmented Shakespeare lurking in short but precise quotations from his plays, in desecrating and/or parodic echoes of his lines, or in lines which have been dismembered or slightly manipulated" (Cavecchi 2016: 152). Paradoxically, Shakespearean quotations in advertising share much with graffiti, street art and even tattoos, in spite of the capitalist and commercial essence of the first and the challenging, subversive, destabilising nature of the others.

Advertising policies that rely on Shakespeare to help market a product do so, like those Cavecchi defines as post-graffiti artists, on the assumption that Shakespeare has a large fan base out there. Victorian and Edwardian advertisements are thus indicators of the reading public's familiarity with Shakespeare, helping us to measure the reception of the plays in popular culture. Whereas Victorian adverts assume a familiarity with Shakespearean plays, the other, Edwardian adverts do not[3]. Advertising therefore works here as a yardstick, echoing what was happening on the English stage, where the waning popularity of Shakespeare, if compared to the late Victorian period, was becoming increasingly evident in the declining number of Shakespearean productions

[3] The advert in Figure 9 takes for granted that the reader will know that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a comedy by Shakespeare and it also assumes that the reader will be familiar with the "A rose by any other name…" speech and the balcony scene. Instead, the other four Vinolia adverts in Figures 5 to 8 do not take for granted any degree of familiarity with the plays of Shakespeare.

in London's West End. As Lanier has shown, each period uses Shakespeare differently and changes in media or advertising strategies alone do not explain the distinctive ways in which the plays are appropriated to market products. Together with this, as Lanier says, "Shakespeare's changing ideological valence and relationship to the public" (2012: 500) have to be taken into account.

Quotations in Edwardian advertising should be seen in relation to a wider cultural context in which allusion and citation of Shakespeare and his plays were widespread. At the turn of the century, Shakespearean quotations adorned postcards, birthday cards, Christmas cards and even souvenirs from the coronation of Edward VII (Fig. 13). These forms of popular appropriation of Shakespeare generally shared the "silent quotation" practice increasingly preferred by Edwardian advertisements. Both Edwardian advertisements and postcards explain why it was so easy to deploy Shakespeare for war propaganda. The appropriation of the plays and poems in patriotic postcards and recruiting posters at the onset of the Great War is often attributed to a sudden enlisting of Shakespeare in the war effort, but the ubiquity of Shakespearean quotations in Edwardian advertising, greeting cards and coronation souvenirs paved the way for the patriotic appropriation of Shakespeare's plays as soon as England declared war on Germany.

This approach to Shakespearean quotations in Edwardian advertising shows that we should historicise our study of Shakespeare and popular culture and that, as Lanier has argued, advertising "can illuminate how Shakespeare's cultural power has been reconceptualised over time" (2012: 514). It also suggests that it might be worthwhile to examine Edwardian Shakespeare as a distinct period in the study of Shakespearean afterlives. The decade of the history of Great Britain referred to as the Edwardian era, which includes the reign of Edward VII (1901-1910) and the period until the end of the First World War (1918), are often quickly dismissed and easily swept aside in both historical and Shakespearean studies in order to leave room for what preceded and followed them. Trapped between the Victorian period and Modernism, the first two decades of the twentieth century are often perceived as the years of opulence, hedonism and vulgarity (summarised by the image of the Edwardian afternoon garden-

party) before the arrival of Armageddon with the Great War. In the late 1960s, in his well-known study, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Samuel Hynes drew attention to how this restrictive image of these two crucial decades of the twentieth century leaves out the anxieties and changes that gave shape to life in the British Isles before the onset of the First World War in August 1914, such as, for example, the need for parliamentary reform and the questioned role of the House of Lords, the condition of women and their demand for suffrage, the question of Home Rule for Ireland, the threat posed by Germany to Britain's industrial and imperial power, the campaigns for Tariff Reform and against free trade, and the evidence of new social attitudes in matters of sexual behaviour. To these political, social and economic tensions one must add the changing landscape of the arts in Britain: the arrival of the *ballets russes* and Roger Fry's post-impressionist shows in 1910 and 1912 are only two indicators of how pre-modernist British culture was already discarding its insularity. In the theatre, the collapsing barriers between the "legitimate" theatre and the music-hall, the question of censorship, the new developments in stage sets and lighting, the lack of a National Theatre and the almost moribund system of the actor-manager suggest how the old ways were giving way to the new.

Difficult to define as it is, the Edwardian age is increasingly being approached not as the last gasps of the formidable Victorian era but as the beginning of modernity. Wrenched out of its liminality, the first decade of the twentieth century has recently become a growing focus of attention for the study of performance and the arts in Britain (O'Neill and Hatt 2010; Trumble 2013). Nevertheless, Hynes's reappraisal of the Edwardian turn of mind still has to be fully absorbed by British cultural historians and reach Shakespearean studies. Is there a distinctive way of approaching Shakespeare that we may call "Edwardian"? Is "Edwardian Shakespeare" as useful a label as "Victorian Shakespeare"? And if so, what are its singular features? How did the alteration of "human character" that Virginia Woolf perceived as taking place around 1910 leave its mark on the way Shakespeare was read, edited, performed, discussed and celebrated? Changes in how Shakespeare was appropriated in advertising in the so-called Edwardian decades were part of the tensions and transformations that Britain and its

empire were undergoing between the death of Queen Victoria and the Armistice. This study has shown that Shakespeare's cultural power, which has never been monolithic or permanent, experienced a particular transformation in the Edwardian period, before the onset of literary modernism. Quoting Shakespeare silently, poaching from his texts without acknowledging the play, exposing his characters' words in decontextualized tatters were different manifestations of a change of paradigm in Shakespearean reception. Shakespeare's cultural authority was reshaped around the first two decades of the twentieth century, so the author and the cultural resonance of his name became more important than the works themselves. Edwardian Shakespeare marks the moment in which it is no longer Shakespeare's characters who speak – it is Shakespeare himself.

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FIGURE 1
Shakespeare and Advertising, The Times, 2 October 1909

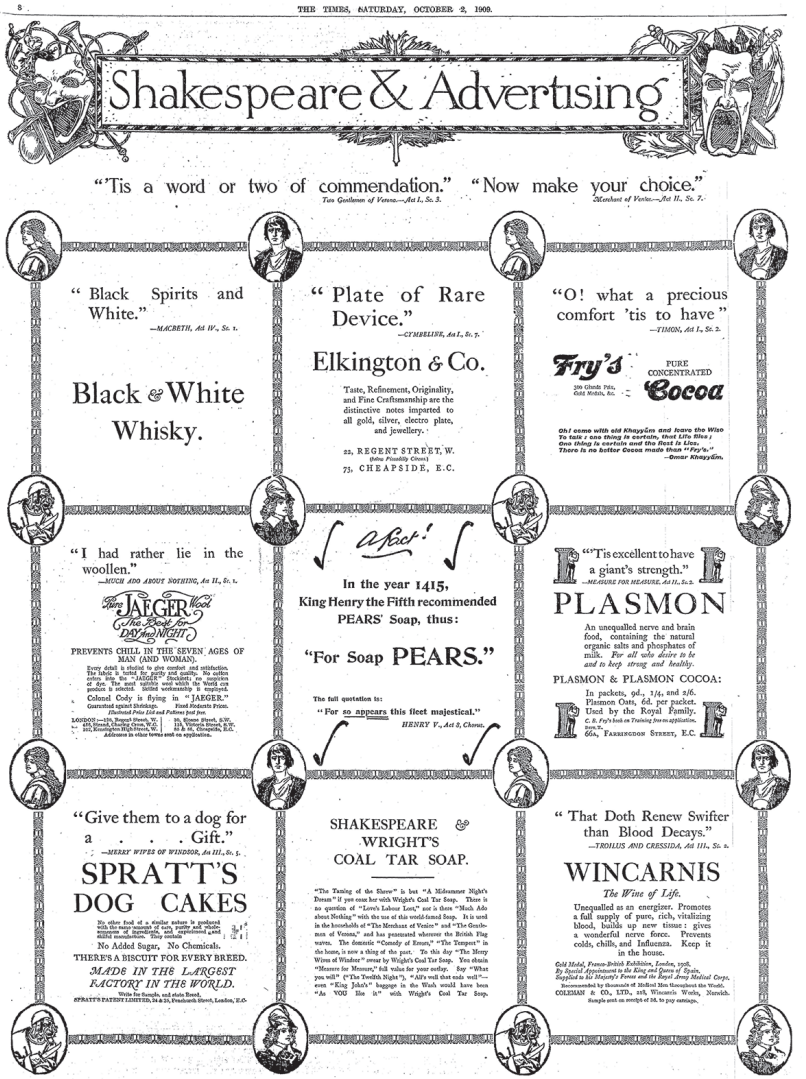
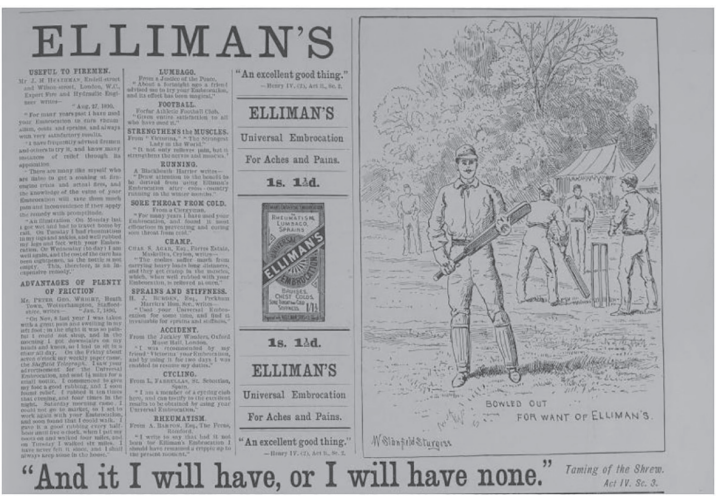
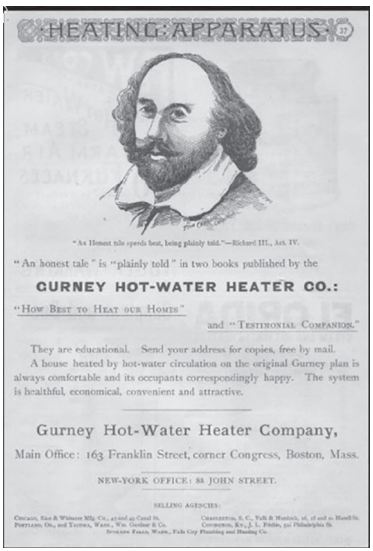


FIGURE 2
Adverts for Anaglypta (1891), Elliman's (1891), Gurney's Hot-Water Heater Co. (1891), Fry's cocoa (1897), Van Camp's Pork and Baked Beans (1897) and St. Jacob's Oil (1900)

Anaglypta (1891) "For this RELIEF much thanks! *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene



Elliman's Universal Embrocation (1891) 'And it I will have, or I will have none' *Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scene 3



Gurney Hot-Water Heater Co. (1891) 'As honest tale speeds best, being plainly told, *Richard III*, Act IV

Fry's Cocoa (1987) 'Perfect – and so peerless', *The Tempest,* Act III, Scene I

Van Camp pork and baked beans (1897) 'What epicurean rascal is this?' *Merry Wives*, Act II, Scene 2

St. Jacob's Oil (1900) For this relief, much thanks' Hamlet, Act I

FIGURE 3
Adverts for President Suspenders (1900), Caw's Fountain Pen (1903), Trimble Whiskey Green Label (1907) and Sanatogen (1909)

President Suspenders (1900) 'Fair thoughts and Happy Hours Attend on You' Shakespeare

Caw's 'Safety' Fountain Pen (1903) 'Write till your ink be dry' Shakespeare

Trimble Whiskey Green Label (1907) 'We attend thy reverend length of days With benedictions and with praise, And hail thee in our public ways, Like some great spirit fam'd in ages old.' Shakespeare

Sanatogen (1909) 'I see a friend will save my life' Shakespeare

FIGURE 4
Plantol Soap (1909)

FIGURE 5
Royal Vinolia Toilet Soap (1911)

FIGURE 6
Royal Vinolia Talcum Powder (1911)

FIGURE 7
Royal Vinolia Sachet (1911)

FIGURE 8
Royal Vinolia Cream (1911)

FIGURE 9
Vinolia Soap (1907)

FIGURE 10
Pears' Soap (1909)

FIGURE 11
Hudson's Soap

FIGURE 12
Brooke's Monkey Brand Soap

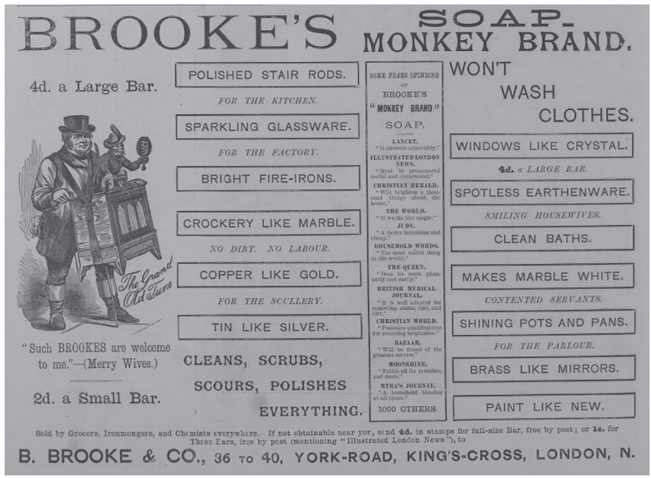
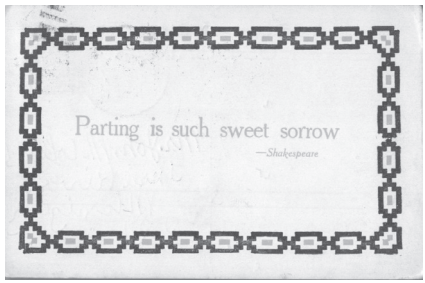
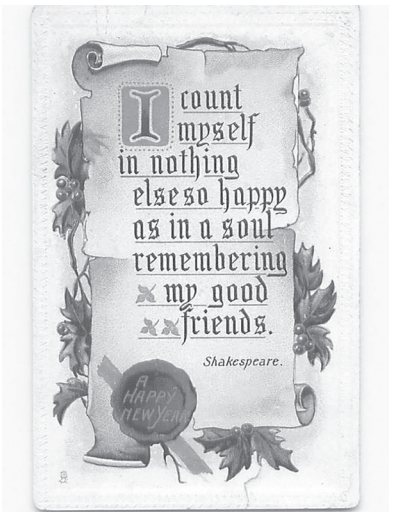


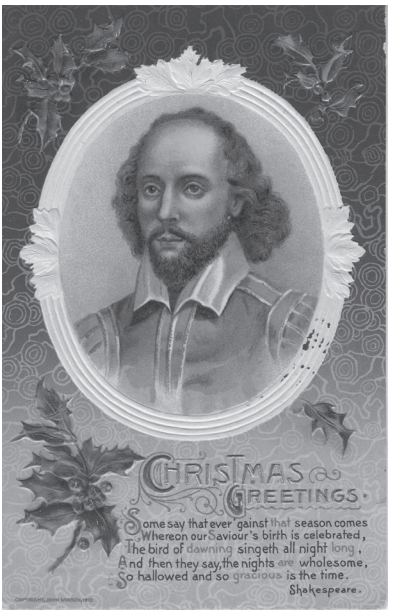
FIGURE 13
Edwardian Postcards, Christmas Cards, Birthday cards and Coronation Souvenirs



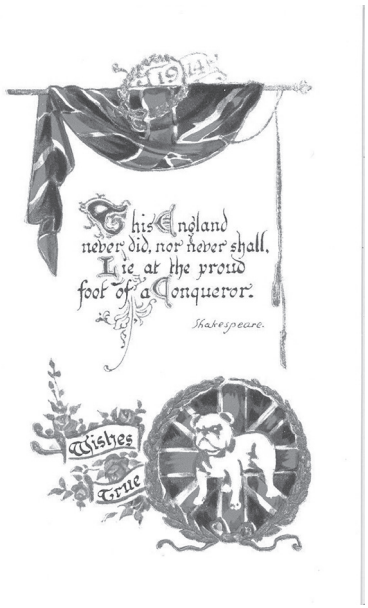

I count myself in nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering my good friends.
Shakespeare.
A HAPPY NEW YEAR


Good morrow, to my sovereign King and Queen.
Shakespeare.
CORONATION SOUVENIR
1902
Union Jack
Royal Standard
South Africa
Australia
New Zealand
Canada
India


WITH BEST BIRTHDAY WISHES
"If we could all go out of flower; as gracefully; as pleasingly; as we come into blossom."
"To me, fair friend, you never can be old."
Shakespeare.


CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
Some say that ever gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long,
And then they say, the nights are wholesome,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.
Shakespeare.


BIRTHDAY
GREETING
GOD be
with you
with all my heart.
SHAKESPEARE.


This England
never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud
foot of a Conqueror.
Shakespeare.
Wishes
True