

Introduction

Deriving a Dramaturgy of Value

On the night of May 10, 1849, an audience of working-class Americans bombarded the elite Astor Opera House. There, English actor William Charles Macready was giving his *Macbeth* in direct scheduled opposition to America's Edwin Forrest (performing at the nearby Broadway Theatre). Macready and Forrest had been taking open swipes at each other for some time; Forrest loudly hissed Macready midperformance during an 1846 tour of Britain, while Macready had publicly sneered at Forrest's lack of "taste."¹ Working-class American audiences identified with Forrest, the home-grown star whose muscular physique suggested health and rigor. They took umbrage with the Astor Opera House's audience dress code requiring "freshly shaven faces, evening dress, fresh waistcoats, and kid gloves," thus excluding any who were not of great privilege.²

Three days earlier, when Macready opened his performance, the audience hissed him wildly and pelted him with rotten eggs, potatoes, apples, lemons, and copper coins while shouting, "Down with the aristocracy!"³ Macready left the stage and purposed not to return. In the days that followed, threats were made publicly and privately to Macready, the mayor of New York convened a crisis meeting at City Hall, and the police chief warned that a serious riot would not be quellable, all while Macready's fans implored him to return to the stage.⁴ The ensuing riot lasted days, left at least 22 dead and about 240 injured.⁵

The story of the Astor Place Riots is one of theatre history's foundational legends. Here was a moment where the confluence of theatre, society, and economies collided across a veritable tectonic fault line to viscerally demonstrate theatre's power as a site of inscription for values; the force

of Shakespeare in America's imagination and the amount of dissonance this force could sow; the underlying roilings of class division in New York's nineteenth century; and (most pertinently to this work) the value of Shakespeare to his American audience.⁶ The central question of this book pertains to "value": What is it? How is it created by theatremakers and audiences? And how can scholars unpack its facets to understand it? Value is sometimes measured in dollars exchanged, but more frequently it is expressed with (and certainly nuanced by) social behaviors. In terms of the Astor Place Riots: it seems odd, nearly unfathomable, that a British playwright would be so strongly accepted into an American repertoire 233 years after the playwright's death and 66 years after a bloody war for independence from England that Americans would be willing to die for him. There are complicated layers to this value expression entwined with audiences, theatre, and a greater cultural zeitgeist. So how do we peel back these layers? How do we begin to understand this behavior as an expression of value?

I propose a methodology that I call the "Dramaturgy of Value." The dramaturgy of value is an envisioning of the social and economic systems that create value within its context. The dramaturgy of value understands value as a thing created and performed, very specifically, by the agents of a free market behaving in accordance with (or as a reaction to) established social codes. These behaviors shape the market on which items are bought and sold, and fluctuations in the market reflect fluctuations in these codes. This method proposes that by understanding one (market or social codes), you can better comprehend the other.

The dramaturgy of value is a form of critical thinking in which one engages with the idea that one's research object (be it a performance, a business enterprise, an object commodity, etc.) is first and foremost an economic exchange. Once this premise is accepted, the dramaturgy of value invites a user to closely consider how value is being created within this exchange. To construct an item's dramaturgy of value, the researcher needs to ask the following questions:

1. What is being sold?
2. What is being bought?
3. How are (1) and (2) different and/or the same?
4. Why is this thing being sold?

5. Why is it being bought?
6. How are (4) and (5) different and/or the same?
7. How is this thing being sold?
8. How is it being bought?
9. How are (7) and (8) different/the same?

These core questions will invariably provoke more situational queries that will require deft and creative methodological shifts to answer. By way of example: each of the following chapters works slightly differently to engage these questions, but the questions remain at each chapter's core.

“Dramaturgy” is a word so vast that when professional dramaturges are asked to define it they will often err toward discussing what dramaturges *do* rather than what dramaturgy *is*.⁷ Even the field's foundational text *The Hamburg Dramaturgy* (which introduced the word *dramaturgy* to written language in the late eighteenth century) doesn't define the term so much as demonstrate its methods.⁸ One of the better definitions of dramaturgy comes from dramaturge Mark Bly who writes: “When pressed for a definition of what it is that I do as a dramaturg, both in a rehearsal hall and in the theater at large, I generally answer, ‘I question.’”⁹ Dramaturgy is the art of asking and answering questions that will bolster the process of theatrical creation. Doing dramaturgy involves generating relevant and formative questions in the context of theatrical work, posing these questions to stakeholders in the theatrical process, and researching answers (or facts that can contribute to answers) that help support a theatrical product. Dramaturgy can be a method (the process of doing dramaturgy), a concept (the dramaturgy of *Macbeth*, for instance), or a product (“so-and-so's dramaturgy is clear in their performance of *Macbeth*”). The term “dramaturgy of value” can be applied in the same three ways: describing the method or process of constructing an item's value by understanding the social and market forces at play in performing that value; describing the concept of these social systems when viewed in conglomerate; or describing the product of this concept. Like its root term “dramaturgy,” sometimes the dramaturgy of value is doing the work; sometimes the dramaturgy of value is the work itself.

“Value” is also a word with many shades of situationally created meaning. As such, both “dramaturgy” and “value” are moving targets understood variably in different contexts. The dramaturgy of value must,

therefore, be applied individually and situationally depending on the primary object of focus. The methodology is flexible and requires a broad understanding of “market,” “commodity,” and the social factors engaged with both in order to create a clearer picture of how and why something is valued. Social performances enact value.¹⁰ The dramaturgy of value offers a lens through which to understand how.

This book engages with my method by way of Shakespeare to help answer these questions as they relate to the nineteenth century: Where did Shakespeare’s value come from to his nineteenth-century American audience, and how was that value used, accepted, communicated, and invested?

“Masters, here are your parts.”

—Peter Quince, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I.ii

In the chapters that follow, I will explore six case studies showing how businesspeople in New York City engaged with Shakespeare to claim and use the social and cultural capital he represented. Each of these case studies shows businesspeople with monetary and cultural stakes in the Shakespeare market, and a different end goal that Shakespeare was used to accomplish. The first four case studies share one element: they all represent theatremakers in moments of crisis who looked to Shakespeare to gain something from him—they needed his help to achieve a desired end. The last two case studies mark a shift. In the wake of the Civil War, American invocations of Shakespeare involved a kind of giving back—the perception of giving to Shakespeare and honoring him through noble usage. While Shakespeare was still used as an authority of taste, refinement, and bourgeois values, these invocations become less desperate after Edwin Booth’s successful rebranding of himself through and via Hamlet (a phenomenon I explore in chapter 4). Each of the theatremakers I follow constructed Shakespeare’s value with and to their audience in different ways. Accordingly, each of the following chapters will take a slightly different approach to drafting Shakespeare’s dramaturgy of value within the various contexts they offer and will demonstrate how this process draws different facets of value into critical inquiry.

Chapter 1 examines William Brown's African Theatre as a site of Shakespeare-centric subversive performance and explores the theme of cultural legitimacy. At his theatre for Black audiences William Brown sought to claim a piece of cultural capital in order to prove his endeavor and (by extension) Black theatre in America legitimate. To Brown, Shakespeare's value is crafted via and for the purpose of constructing this legitimacy.

In mounting his productions William Brown faced struggles with the law that led to riots, arrests, and (eventually) the closure of Brown's theatre. In spite of these struggles, Brown continued to find ways to present Shakespeare to his target audience, the newly freed Black residents of New York City. In chapter 1, I explicate the social frameworks that made Shakespeare such a desirable commodity for Brown despite the legal battles he faced.

In chapter 2, I examine how American showman Phineas Taylor Barnum used Shakespeare as a cornerstone to constructing idealized middle-class American life in his American Museum and Lecture Room. Barnum's museum sought to present outward shows of respectability for wide swathes of audiences. Barnum was particularly sensitive to keeping entertainments affordable so as to attract as many costumers as he could. In so pricing his museum, Barnum kicked open his doors to a public close to the class line and otherwise unable to afford the trappings of the middle class. At his museum, Barnum presented an opportunity for audiences to participate in "conspicuous consumption"—outward shows of respectability and self-betterment, performances meant to create a specifically built image of middle-class life.¹¹

One of Barnum's major draws was his lecture room (actually a glorified nineteenth-century theatre), a place where Barnum vehemently declared: "No vulgar word or gesture, and not a profane expression was *ever* allowed on my stage! Even in Shakespeare's plays, I unflinchingly and invariably cut out vulgarity and profanity."¹² Chapter 2 examines Barnum's use of Shakespeare in constructing his middle-class American dream, and how and why Shakespeare was valuable to Barnum as part of this dream.

Chapter 3 examines the American reading career of Fanny Kemble and how Kemble was able to use Shakespeare as a vehicle to harness the publicity machine behind her extremely public divorce. In October of 1848, Mrs. Fanny Butler (née Fanny Kemble) returned to the stage as a matter of financial necessity. Mid-divorce from her abusive American husband (Pierce Butler), Kemble cashed in on the cultural capital of her theatrically

famous last name. She began a reading series of Shakespeare's works, first in Boston then in New York, which became a sensation. Through these readings, Kemble was able to carefully craft her stage image, select and edit her material, and gain essentially unfettered agency over her performance. With strategic use of the press, Kemble was able to harness the sensational journalism surrounding her divorce and turn a hefty profit from it without sustaining lasting character injury.

To Kemble, Shakespeare had value as a moralizing and empowering force. Reviews and audience diary entries confirm that the readings were viewed by audiences as wholesome entertainment, in keeping with moral and ethical standards of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. By creating a domestic setting for these readings, Kemble simultaneously subverted and affirmed traditional nineteenth-century values, particularly those linked to issues of femininity. She purposefully sidestepped conversations surrounding the morality of theatre and engaged with literary tradition as an economic tool to increase both her audience and her prestige. Kemble's American readings show how a nineteenth-century woman was able to use Shakespeare as legitimizing cultural capital to subvert gendered social expectations, even amid a very public exposure of her personal life. In this chapter, I will examine how Kemble was able to do so, how these readings enacted her ideas about the stage and lasting cultural significance, and why this was effective for a nineteenth-century American audience.

One brand that was so economically powerful it could weather the high-profile murder of an American martyr was that of the Booth family. Chapter 4 delves into the careers of the American Booths (Edwin, John Wilkes, and Junius Brutus Jr.), how their brand was built, and the inclusion of Shakespeare as a key feature of the brand. I propose that a purposeful brand elision of Booth and Shakespeare allowed the Booth brand to soak up and retain both Shakespeare's legitimacy as a product and his value as a cultural object.

This is particularly fascinating in light of the brand literally coming under fire when John Wilkes Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln. Edwin Booth had never agreed with his brother's politics and the two debated so hotly that their mother forbade them from speaking on the topic in her house.¹³ John Wilkes Booth was an outspoken proponent of Southern values, including slavery; Edwin was a Lincoln supporter. This divide in the family and the ways it played out publicly means study of the Booth brand must also engage with how the brand constructed whiteness in relation to its reliance on (and support of) the institution of slavery.

The assassination and ensuing fallout kept Edwin from the stage, but after only nine months (at the strong behest of the public), Edwin returned to a packed house, rowdy applause, and ovations that interrupted his performance for five-minute-long intervals of stamping, clapping, and fervent handkerchief-waving.¹⁴ In his return performance, Edwin played Hamlet, which, while unsurprising given his fame in the role, is slightly curious given the play's subject matter in relation to an assassinated ruler. In chapter 4, I will examine the mechanisms that went into bulletproofing the Booth brand, how those mechanisms became synonymous with Shakespeare, and how the Booths' creation of value as associated with white Eurocentrism drafted American Shakespeare that compounded the value of both the Booth brand and Shakespeare's brand to American audiences.

Chapter 5 examines the statue of Shakespeare in New York's Central Park. In 1864, a gathering of actors, businesspeople, and critics came together to erect this statue in honor of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. In so doing, New Yorkers sought to claim Shakespeare as a cornerstone for American national identity as they struggled to create common American myths and historical memories, as well as form a common public culture. Considering the statue as a work of performative memory helps to unravel the ways in which its creators were able to craft a *lieu de mémoire* within Central Park via this Shakespeare.¹⁵ Though a British playwright provided surface inspiration for the piece, everything beneath this mask was thoroughly American: the sculptor, the body model, and the clothing inspiration. Performing Shakespeare as American and Americans as Shakespeareans through this statue allowed Americans to cement Shakespeare within their cultural heritage and link his presence to upper-middle-class sentimental values. While the statue was made for a public park as an outward show of magnanimity, delving into the cultural economics of park usage unveils deeper implications about Shakespeare's place in nineteenth-century class structures and the rhetoric of memorializers' performances.

At face value, the statue might be read as a genuine replica of its English subject placed in a populist locale freely available to audiences of all economic backgrounds. I propose that the work is (rather) an Americanized product of a growing Shakespeare industry, influenced more by native stars such as Steele MacKaye than "genuine" English representations of Shakespeare. The statue's placement is also a statement about its intended audience: the wealthy elite carriage riders of New York's nineteenth century rather than dusty plebeian pedestrians. Additionally,

the statue's creation on land seized by law of eminent domain problematizes the place of Shakespeare in Central Park. The law required all land-dwellers (including the residents of nearby Seneca Village, a Black settlement community with decades-old roots) to evacuate by the end of 1857.¹⁶ Chapter 5 examines the erasure of these histories in conjunction with Shakespeare's Americanization and interrogates value building as a violent force of destructive creation.

Chapter 6 examines a moment that represents a pivotal success in American commodification of Shakespeare: the May 21, 1888, benefit performance of *Hamlet* for Lester Wallack. In this performance, an assemblage of commercially thriving late nineteenth-century actors came together to support their well-known theatrical colleague: John Lester Wallack. This benefit was given at the New York Opera house with luminaries including Edwin Booth (*Hamlet*), Lawrence Barrett (*Ghost*), and Helena Modjeska (*Ophelia*) gracing the stage.

Several formal histories of the event were published by the benefit's participants and present simple linear narratives of the evening and the producers' preparations, but these histories are polished-for-publication tellings. In looking closer, I am able to offer a more nuanced version of the story. This study of the Wallack benefit explores the ever-shifting sands of Daly and Palmer's process in the context of its historical moment and uncovers step-by-step how these theatremakers were able to create value and commercial success from what they knew about the workings of nineteenth-century theatre and audiences.

Throughout this book, I understand "Shakespeare" through Robin Bernstein's paradigm of "repertoire." One of the biggest stumbling blocks in discussing "Shakespeare" is ambiguity in the word itself. It might refer to a historical figure—William Shakespeare—the man from Stratford. It might refer to the author of an oeuvre of plays and poetry that is a mainstay in Western literature. It might refer to the texts that comprise this oeuvre. It might refer to the idea of these things, and the cultural capital they represent. Bernstein's work on objects posits that a culturally significant piece of cultural capital might be best understood as a repertoire. To Bernstein, repertoire is (by definition) in constant flux, always being remade. "These re-formations occur deliberately, with the exercise of agency, as well as accidentally, on a small and large scale, through authored and unauthored actions. A repertoire is by definition relational; it exists among people."¹⁷ Bernstein's model makes it possible to encompass all of the aforementioned nuances in the word "Shakespeare."¹⁸ In so

understanding “Shakespeare” as a repertoire, one can begin to conceive of these ideas existing harmoniously and often simultaneously in each usage of the term.

I have chosen to focus on New York City as a useful microcosm. Because of its size; diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural population; and, perhaps most importantly, its prosperity as a theatrical community over the course of the nineteenth century, New York offers an excellent sampling of the multitude of issues entwined with nineteenth-century American theatre including Shakespeare’s place as a bastion of white Eurocentric authority and the ways buyers and sellers both played into and subverted this supposition.

“Value” and “Worth”

Exploring these case studies will require working definitions of several economic concepts that underlie them. If one is to undertake the labor of composing a dramaturgy of value, first one needs to comprehend the economic foundations of several basic terms. The most deceptively simple of these terms are “value” and “worth.” At their core, “value” and “worth” are the medial understandings that allow exchanges to occur on a market. They are the in-between communications that can take a buyer and seller from wanting/having something to a fair exchange of goods/services/capital that satisfies both parties. Generally speaking, “worth” is the countable “value” of something. Value is the thing, positive or negative, that renders worth.¹⁹ In essence: worth can be expressed most easily in a number, value must rather be considered by quality. Worth can be measured in dollars, value is much more difficult to ascertain. Since these are basic economic principles, most of the groundwork done to define them is quite old. For instance: economist L. M. Fraser breaks value down into four aspects or “senses of value” that he calls: “Cost-value” (what a thing costs to make), “Exchange-value” (the amount of stuff, generally money but not necessarily, one can acquire by selling an item and/or the amount of stuff one should be prepared to pay for it), “Use-value” (the thing referenced in speech when one says that something is “valuable” as an equivalent of “useful”), and “Esteem-value” (an item’s usefulness in conjunction with the ease with which one might acquire it).²⁰ In considering Shakespeare’s value on an intellectual market, essentially one must make a calculation to convert his use-value as an intellectual commodity into exchange-value by virtue

of audiences paying in time, money, or both to acquire an experience. From there, Shakespeare is converted into esteem-value. The esteem-value of Shakespeare on a nineteenth-century market creates one of the hotly contested historical issues with which this book will wrestle: Who “owns” Shakespeare, how did they acquire that right, and what happens when he is liberated from this ownership? Since esteem-value is market based (valuation in esteem-value relies on a commodity’s scarcity within a market), it behooves those who would like to maintain Shakespeare’s esteem-value to keep the resource scarce.

Lawrence Levine’s work on the transformation of Shakespeare during America’s nineteenth century from a “lowbrow” popular culture artifact to a “highbrow” mark of elitism clearly documents the middle- and upper-class desire to preserve Shakespeare’s esteem-value by creating market scarcity.²¹ In many ways, this drive is also at the heart of the Astor Place Riots. Putting Shakespeare behind cultural barriers increases his esteem-value and cements his place in a bourgeois sphere. Why and how this was done in New York’s nineteenth century will be driving forces in chapter 1’s discussion of the African Theatre, chapter 2’s exploration of P. T. Barnum’s use of Shakespeare as legitimizing capital, and chapter 5’s account of the Shakespeare statue in New York’s Central Park.

Use-value will also be important to this study. While Fraser has provided a preliminary definition, Karl Marx weighs in on an item’s “use-value,” arguing that “the utility of a thing makes its use-value.”²² Marx’s framing of use-value allows the reader to imagine that use-value can directly convert to cost on a market. If utility can be measured in numbers, those numbers provide a direct translation to exchange-value. Envisioning value as a market force also links a commodity into its consumption, which Marx argues plays directly back to its use-value: “Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption.”²³ That is: a thing can only have measurable use-value when it is consumed. It is impossible to assign use-value to a thing that has not or cannot be used. The consumptive act is a huge factor in considering value generally and use-value specifically.

Marx gives consumption even greater weight as a market force (especially in thinking about a cultural market) when he argues: “Consumption completes the act of production by giving the finishing touch to the product as such, by dissolving the latter, by breaking up its independent material form; by bringing to a state of readiness, through the necessity of repetition, the disposition to produce developed in the first act of production; that is to say, consumption is not only the concluding act

through which the product becomes a product, but also the one through which the producer becomes a producer.”²⁴ Considering a cultural market, the artistic act of production must be consumed both to give the cultural product value and to mark the artist as a “producer.” Art for art’s sake is not a market force; according to Marx, in order for a thing to have any value on a market, it must be consumed. In terms of the theatre, this resonates even more strongly. Audiences are vital to the very existence of the theatre as a commodity. In conceiving of theatre as a product, Tracy Davis remarks: “In between . . . performances, the show exists only in potential . . . theatre cannot be warehoused for later use, for it is expunged as it is performed: this liveness and inherent temporal fragility are what separates theatre from other arts. . . . It needs to be re-made for each performance, and fully exists only in the presence of consumers in the same space and time as the performers and operatives whose services are being expended.”²⁵ Consumers make theatre as much as theatremakers do and consumption, to Davis as to Marx, is what actually *makes* theatre.

Shakespeare’s value on the American market is therefore as much created by the Americans who bought him as it is by the Americans who sold him. In this relationship, value is a function of both producer and audience and creates an important dialogue between the two. This dialogue will be cornerstone to my discussions of brand building in the context of both Fanny Kemble (chapter 3) and Edwin Booth (chapter 4).

Ralph Barton Perry proposes a slightly different theory of “value,” engaging with the notion that it can be individual:

That which is an object of interest is, *eo ipso*, invested with value. Any object, whatever it be acquires value when any interest, whatever it be, is taken in it. . . . The view may otherwise be formulated in the equation x is valuable = interest is taken in x It follows that any variation of interest or of its object will determine a variety of value; that any derivative of interest or its object will determine value in a derived sense; and that any condition of interest or its object will determine a conditional value.²⁶

Perry’s theory of value presses further what Fraser established in that value has shades of meaning. Different from Fraser, Perry’s shades of meaning derive from interest rather than economic use. Philip Mirowski agrees that value is equal to interest but specifies that this interest must

also be large scale (that is: social rather than individual). He proposes a “social theory of value.”²⁷ The sense that value is constructed by consumer forces continues to establish the nuanced space audiences have in creating theatrical value. In these models, consumers create derivative value and new meanings of value itself. As I have already acknowledged, the many permutations of Shakespeare on a market are often conflated. I will demonstrate how this conflation conglomerates value in my discussion of P. T. Barnum’s American Museum and Lecture Hall (chapter 2), New York’s Shakespeare statue (chapter 5), and the 1888 benefit performance of *Hamlet* to Lester Wallack (chapter 6).

The concept of value stemming from interest is nuanced by other economists, including John Laird who contends that “value in economics is essentially utility.”²⁸ Laird continues to argue that “interest” does imbue items with value, but “interest” should be considered as a function of what humans want and need to survive rather than what their personal preferences are. This sense of value will be deeply important to chapters 4 and 5 as I consider Shakespeare’s value to a brand in crisis and his value amid a war-torn America.

Thinking specifically about the value of literary works, Barbara Herrnstein Smith notes that “value” is a moving target: “Evaluation is always compromised because value is always in motion . . . it is constantly variable and eternally indeterminate.”²⁹ Smith reminds us that long-lasting literary works have been valued and revalued by the generations that inherited them: every time they are printed, saved, reprinted, edited, or preserved, they are evaluated. When something is determined “worth keeping,” its value is reestablished and affirmed. Literary value, therefore, is the product of a dynamic system and “our experience of the ‘value of the work’ is equivalent to our experience of the work in relation to the total economy of our existence.”³⁰ With so many variables in the value equation for a piece of literary work, “value is radically contingent, being neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of things but, rather, an effect of multiple, continuously changing, and continuously interacting variables or, to put this another way, the product of the dynamics of a system.”³¹ Smith notes that the supposed “products” of this system are actually symptoms of it: “The value of a literary work is continuously produced and re-produced by the very acts of implicit and explicit evaluation that are frequently invoked as ‘reflecting’ its value and therefore are being evidence of it. In other words, what are commonly taken to be the signs of literary value are, in effect, its springs.”³²

Value, in Smith's terms, is an intrinsic, created form. It is neither static nor predetermined but a constant negotiation that is highly socially regulated. Looking at why something is valued and how that value is created by both producer and audiences reveals deep things about not just the value of the item but also the society that created this value. In peeling back the layers, one can begin to create the dramaturgy of value, envisioning the social systems that create a thing's value within its context. These systems are constantly changing and shifting, and thus constantly requiring reevaluation. In thinking about value as Smith does, there remains some contingency of social expectations to create this value. Because value is the symptom of a social condition, ever-evolving as it invents and reinvents itself, a thing must be imbued with value by the society surrounding it. Nineteenth-century Americans were simultaneously generating value for Shakespeare as they were generating the market commodity of Shakespeare. In essence, they were marketing a product to each other while also marketing the idea of a market. This dual system is an Ouroboros that feeds even as it expends itself. Because of this paradigm, some of the specific arguments in this book (particularly in chapter 5 concerning Shakespeare's statue in Central Park) may seem circular—but that in itself is telling of a market condition. A self-referential idea of value indicates either an inability or unwillingness to explore where this value originates, or a self-consciousness about this value (and possibly both). These qualities make value difficult to ascertain without an attachment to a historical moment: value is not created in a vacuum and the variation of value trends with the variation of society itself. The dramaturgy of value is a necessary construction for deriving any sense of value at all.

In setting out to define cultural production, Pierre Bourdieu links the creation of value by works of art to their ability to be known and recognized. Art can only hold value if a society recognizes the symbols it represents. As such, valuation of works of art must consider not just material production but also symbolic production.³³ To Bourdieu, the object may hold value only if it is recognizable by an audience and, therefore, evaluation must take into account the systems that make it so. Uncovering and examining these systems is the work of a dramaturgy of value. This does not begin and end with an artwork itself but rather must be constructed from the network to which the piece of art belongs. Key to understanding these systems is the movement of what Bourdieu calls "producers of meaning" (he cites critics, publishers, gallery directors; I add marketers and businesspeople) and how these folks leverage the net-

work's central nodes to create market capital from cultural objects. These actions reveal what marketers believe is "sellable" about a commodity, and this belief unveils the pulse of a social system. I will explore the links between producers of meaning and the social systems they feed in chapters 1 (regarding the African Theatre), 2 (looking at P. T. Barnum), 3 (considering Kemble's readings), and 6 (unraveling Daly and Palmer's benefit to Wallack).

In describing the spheres that interact with and influence value, Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is useful. "Habitus," according to Bourdieu, is the system of "durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends of an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them."³⁴ In other words, habitus is the set of guidelines that the individual subconsciously or consciously uses to structure their interactions with the world around them. Habitus formation begins in childhood and continues through a protracted inculcation process over a person's lifetime. It is not a conscious adherence to a set of rules but rather a general feeling about how one should react in specific situations. It is a set of dispositions that influence behavior. Bourdieu claims that habitus is created by "the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment."³⁵ Bourdieu further claims that the material conditions of a person's environment create their ingrained mental and physical habits and form the way a person interacts with the world. Habitus is the sphere from which people interact with things around them, and to Bourdieu it is heavily mediated by the objects of capital that surround a person, suggesting that social class has a huge impact on habitus.

Because "value" is culturally created, habitus forms the space from which value is judged by an audience. Since habitus is so tightly linked to class, Bourdieu senses a struggle of power relations in literary and artistic fields, represented by a "struggle between the two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, favorable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g., 'Bourgeois art') and the autonomous principle (e.g., 'Art for art's sake')."³⁶ In essence, the struggle that Lawrence Levine describes in *Highbrow/Lowbrow* was not just a struggle relevant to Shakespeare in America's nineteenth century but rather a symptom of a greater struggle within literary and artistic fields.³⁷ Bourdieu points out that bourgeois grip on cultural capital is a power struggle; and so the

producing and reproducing of dominant economic capital by those outside of the dominant cultural group is an act of rebellion. I will examine this act of rebellion in chapter 1 as I discuss the African Theatre's productions of Shakespeare and their struggles with legitimacy, and in chapter 3 as I discuss Fanny Kemble's liberation of herself via her Shakespearean readings.

The dramaturgy of value is a method of unpacking and understanding the systems at play that create value. Cultural theorist John Frow describes these systems as "regimes of value": "[A] regime of value, [is] a semiotic institution generating evaluative regularities under certain conditions of use, and in which particular empirical audiences or communities may be more or less fully imbricated."³⁸ In other words, a regime of value is a sphere from which evaluation can be made and, since value is relative, that value will change as one changes which regime they evaluate from. Frow contends that Bourdieu's theories are not sufficient to explain this phenomenon since (among other complaints) Bourdieu's theories position the relationship of culture and class as too fixed and the positionality of the value analyst / objectified space uncontextualized and unaccounted for.³⁹ To Frow, Bourdieu does not go far enough toward preventing the observation of a phenomenon to impact the phenomenon. Theorizing regimes of value means that the positionality of the evaluator (a person external to the value equation, that is, neither the buyer nor the seller but rather someone looking to describe the exchange they are making) can also be accounted for in the value equation. By theorizing value as a performance, the dramaturgy of value understands Frow's regimes as fundamental—positionality of commodity, producer, consumer, and evaluator are all critical to value conclusions.

"Commodity," "Brand," and "Market"

With all this talk of "value," my implication is that Shakespeare was a commodity worth buying and selling in the nineteenth century, and that Shakespearean economy was big business monetarily as well as philosophically. Fraser offers a simple-enough definition of four main senses of "commodity": "Either it is anything which has utility: or anything which has exchange value; or any material thing which has utility or exchange value; or any directly consumable thing which has utility or exchange value."⁴⁰ Marx defines "commodity" as "an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another."⁴¹ Both

Fraser and Marx lean into the idea that a commodity is a “thing” or an “object,” some kind of physically transferable good. In the case of Shakespeare, these items exist in abundance. Take, for instance, the volumes of Shakespearean books and materials that were collected by English people and Americans alike throughout the nineteenth century.⁴² Alongside the books were the paraphernalia, the souvenirs and tchotchkes that range from “genuine” items crafted from Shakespeare’s mulberry tree in Stratford to the many busts and china sets that featured Shakespearean inscriptions or images.⁴³ Consider also the value of the intellectual commodity. Shakespeare is more than an object or series of objects, and the buying/selling of Shakespeare-centric objects is driven by his value as an idea. This sense of non-thing commodity, the commodity of ideas, propels all the chapters of this book.

The consideration of Shakespeare’s commodity as something that has 1) endured, 2) been valuable to cultural producers and audiences, and 3) been ubiquitous as a means of moneymaking for various businesspeople is not a new phenomenon. Michael Bristol took up these issues up in *Big-Time Shakespeare*, wherein he concluded (among other things) that “the Shakespeare of the culture industry is neither more nor less essential to consumers than Bugs Bunny.”⁴⁴ Bristol clearly articulated Shakespeare’s durability as a commodity and how fame interacted with the Shakespearean product over time, but this conversation leaves more room for engagements with the how and why.

It’s worth noting that I’ve already used the term “brand” to reference the value that Shakespeare imbues on things. Pramod Nayar defines “brand” as “a set of relations between products and services. It is intangible and non-corporeal but it is never immaterial.”⁴⁵ As I consider the things bought and sold in and around Shakespeare, the term must apply to at least some of these products. Nayar argues that a brand, like value, is coproduced by its users across the many domains that a product is consumed (rather than solely controlled by a corporation), and because of its positionality can function as a quality-testing device for users engaging with the brand.⁴⁶ Shakespeare, for instance, might serve as the medium through which Shakespeare-branded products (syllabi, literary theory, pedagogy, etc.) can be gauged qualitatively since, to Nayar, Shakespeare is a fixed standard. Certainly the businesspeople in this book took advantage of this qualitative state associated with Shakespeare and the different ways they engaged with it are explored in the various chapters.

Nayar pushes against the ideas of Kate Rumbold, who argues that to say Shakespeare is a brand is to erase the nuance with which Shakespeare participates in an open market.⁴⁷ Rather, Rumbold urges that deeper consideration of Shakespeare's construction on the marketplace is necessary. Since Shakespeare is not a corporation engaging consciously with the usage of itself as a product (like Coca-Cola, for instance, or even Madonna), to Rumbold Shakespeare creates "the impression of a brand" rather than a literal brand.⁴⁸ While this nuance is important semiotically, this book will fall more in Nayar's camp. The audiences who used Shakespeare for commerce clearly interacted with his products as branded commodities and it was that brand that helped them to create value. And how do brands create value? Douglas B. Holt theorizes that "cultural brands" (like Nike, Apple, or Budweiser) position themselves as agents of identity upon which consumers can construct their own identities.⁴⁹ For many of these brands, consumers value what the commodity *does* rather than what the commodity *is*—what story of themselves can they tell that is engaged with this commodity and that the commodity assists them in telling? This book considers Shakespeare's implementation as a cultural brand across broad spectrums of nineteenth-century American society.

When considering the thing that is bought/sold at the theatre, one considers what Derek Miller calls the "performance-commodity": the thing protected by law that is performed onstage in front of an audience (and, importantly to Miller, does not include the pieces of this thing that are *not* protected by law).⁵⁰ While the performance-commodity of Shakespeare is certainly at stake in my examination of the cultural market, Shakespeare's value extends beyond the performance-commodity in all of my case studies.

Commodities are exchanged on a market. In the case of traditional material commodities, this market can be a physical location—a store, a street, a marketplace. In the case of intellectual commodities, the market is more nebulous. Markets for intellectual commodities can come by way of experiences—lectures, classes, readings, theatre performances, and so forth. They can also come by way of demonstrated attachments to the ephemera associated with a cultural object—collections of images, texts, or other items of visual art, for instance. The market as an institution can be helpful in tracing the movement of commodities, as Jean-Christophe Agnew notes in his readings of Marx: "The more frequently commodities are consumed and thereby removed from an expanding circulation, the farther money, as the durable token of equivalence, seems to move away

of its own accord from its point of departure in the marketplace. As a result, what begins as a bounded process of the circulation of commodities through the medium of money (C-M-C) ends as the boundless circulation of money via the medium of commodities (M-C-M).⁵¹ The C-M-C/M-C-M models of circulation are taken directly from Marx and can help unpack the “what” of a Shakespearean marketplace.⁵² As Shakespeare-the-commodity is consumed and distributed, he becomes further abstracted from the currency that purchased him. In a way, this book expresses the shift in the Shakespearean market from C-M-C to M-C-M as Shakespeare becomes the vehicle for, and impetus of, the exchange of currency on a sentimental market. Agnew continues on to trace the development of the marketplace and, through this, the development of commodity exchange. He claims: “This historical shift in the market’s meaning—from a place to a process to a principle to a power—suggests a gradual displacement of concreteness in the governing concept of commodity exchange.”⁵³ In other words, examining the shifting concept of “market” can help better conceptualize the shift I outlined earlier in what a commodity is and how that commodity is exchanged. Agnew’s work tracing “market” from a physical place to a philosophical concept underlies the abstraction of commodities themselves.

The nineteenth century was an important moment in the development of the US marketplace. Ronald Takaki traces America’s “market revolution” during this time: the transformation of the American economy from a simple agrarian model into a complex interdependent relational economy with regional specializations.⁵⁴ This shift was because of many factors: the increase of urban population (which went from 5% in 1800 to 20% in 1860), the increase in the country’s land mass (acquired by imperialistic conquering) and subsequently settled areas of the United States (between 1800 and 1860, the settled area of the United States increased 500%), technological advances in transportation that deisolated farmers from the commercial sector, and all of this resting on the expansion then subsequent abolition of Black slavery as well as the exploitation of Native peoples and their land.⁵⁵ These shifts in the very fabric of the United States throughout the nineteenth century had profound impacts on what constituted a market during this time. This book spans almost a century of changes when the United States itself wasn’t a settled concept; from chapter 1 to chapter 6, it’s important to remember that the market develops along with the nation.

“Capital”

One last key term to understand before undertaking the work of a dramaturgy of value is “capital.” Marx equates “capital” with value, and his “general formula for capital” is heavily reliant on money as a symbol of value.⁵⁶ Indeed, “capital” and “value” are nearly synonymous. In explicating “capital,” Fraser finds that a “sense” of capital is easier to come to than a definition and notes three senses in which it might be used in economic discussion: “It may stand for productive equipment, for the use of purchasing power and the control over resources, and for claims to, or expectation of, that kind of income which goes by the name of ‘interest.’”⁵⁷ Essentially, “capital” can be used in any moment where the exchange of value is happening. It is the noun that symbolizes value, and amassing capital is equivalent to amassing power (be it spending power or social power, as Bourdieu establishes that the two are very closely linked).

Discussions of capital in this book will oscillate between the acquisition and trade of monetary capital, and the way that interacts with cultural capital. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a series of social codes, internalized by society, and used to encode works of art with significance and relevance.⁵⁸ Possessing knowledge of these codes indicates a person’s possession of cultural capital. The ability to decode these social codes is learned throughout life from a person’s habitus, institutionalized education, family, and society. Miller hypothesizes the following equation for evaluating cultural capital: “The cultural capital of performance is the surplus value from the production of the performance-commodity.”⁵⁹ Miller’s framing of cultural capital requires an ability to conceive of value simultaneously in multiple forms: money forms, social forms, and intellectual forms; it is therefore key to derive a thing’s dramaturgy of value in order to apply Miller’s equation to an object of cultural capital.

Returning to Bourdieu, he moves on to argue that there are different forms of capital and that the most unequally distributed form is symbolic capital.⁶⁰ He argues, “Symbolic capital . . . is not a particular kind of capital but what every kind of capital becomes when it is misrecognized as capital, that is, a force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation, and therefore recognized as legitimate. More precisely, capital exists and acts as symbolic capital . . . in its relationship with a habitus predisposed to . . . know and recognize it on the basis of cognitive structures able and

inclined to grant it recognition because they are attuned to what it is.”⁶¹ All capital, according to Bourdieu, is or can be symbolic capital depending on its relation to the predominant habitus in the field where it is being used. Cultural capital’s transferal to symbolic capital thus depends upon its usage and the people who shape this usage. By linking the definition of symbolic capital to use, Bourdieu also recognizes that symbolic capital is a product of the market that sells it. In other words: as soon as the piece of cultural capital comes to be recognized as a legitimate market force, it becomes symbolic capital.

As hinted by his emphasis on symbolic capital requiring a certain audience interaction paradigm, Bourdieu explicitly theorizes power in recognition. To Bourdieu, “to be known and recognized also means possessing the power to recognize, to consecrate, to state, with success, what merits being known and recognized, and, more generally to say what is, or rather what is to be thought about what is, through a performative act of speech (or prediction) capable of making what is spoken of conform to what is spoken of it.”⁶² In Bourdieu’s model, the power of recognition not only endows a thing with value but also with the capacity to endow other connected things with value by association. Shakespeare’s value to the nineteenth-century businesspeople discussed in this book does not end with the product of Shakespeare but rather extends to the mouthpiece of Shakespeare. It allows them the agency to, using Shakespeare, create the very market upon which they could sell and use the recursive qualities of Shakespeare’s value to sell himself and the items he touched.

Building the Nation

These are the terms of buying and selling that will guide this book. There still remains the question of “why.” Why would Shakespeare serve as such an important market force, coin-of-the-realm perhaps, for American businesspeople in the nineteenth century? One vital key to answering this question lies with the creation of an American national identity. A great deal of America’s attachment to Shakespeare stems from a burning nineteenth-century desire to establish a distinctly American national and cultural identity, and to incorporate Shakespeare into that identity.⁶³ Theatre has been well expounded as a means for doing so.⁶⁴ Earlier American theatres dealt with the fluidness and foreignness of national identity, and the perceived place theatre had in a burgeoning republic.⁶⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, Americans had begun to grapple with under-