

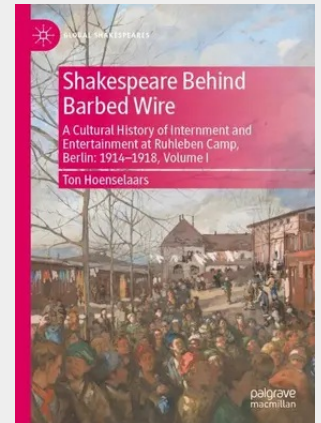
Shakespeare Behind Barbed Wire

A Cultural History of Internment and Entertainment at Ruhleben Camp, Berlin: 1914-1918, Volume I

Shakespeare was a vital rallying point for the 4,500 British internees held at the Ruhleben Camp (near Berlin) for the duration of World War I. This book now makes the internees speak through their engagement with Shakespeare. To do so, it examines in detail the collection of plays and poems in the camp library, analyses the surviving Shakespeare lectures at the camp school, and studies the multiple ways in which he was actively read, performed, cited, and rewritten by the internees.

reconstructs the first Shakespeare production of *As You Like It* in 1915 as a window on the camp theatre, its day-to-day practices, its directors, and their artistic views, as well as the divergent tastes of the audiences. The premiere of *As You Like It* started a theatre war bringing to the fore the internees' deepest ambitions and frustrations, but the men's differences did not affect the success of their Shakespeare Tercentenary festival in 1916. The men now displayed a great sense of unity, but as Hoenselaars argues, this attractive image fashioned by the sources should be recognized as part of a complex bilateral propaganda campaign. Exhaustively drawing on formal camp archives, the internees' diaries, their letters and creative writing, as well as the Ruhleben story that was fashioned in the camp's numerous magazines and in the press worldwide, for the first time reconstructs the profoundly individual side to Ruhleben's Shakespearean culture in both its local and global contexts, and grants the internees a unique voice that had remained silent for over a century.

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