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EXPERIENCE OUR STUDENT TAKEOVER WITH **UNDERGRADUATE CO-EDITORS**
LEARN HOW **KELLY HUNTER** ENGAGES AUTISTIC STUDENTS WITH SHAKESPEARE
JOURNEY TO ISRAEL WITH **NOURIT MELCER-PADON** TEACHING *ROMEO AND JULIET*
INVESTIGATE WHY **POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS** CHOOSE SHAKESPEARE



NOTICEBOARD

Photo © Rob Freeman



RSC INTERNATIONAL YOUTH ENSEMBLE PLAY WORLDS TOGETHER

In September 2012, Anmol Hoon from Kolkata, India, joined 18 other students from the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Oman, South Africa, USA and UK to form the RSC's International Youth Ensemble (IYE) for the Worlds Together conference in London. Together with director, Aileen Gonsalves, they had just two days to create their version of *King Lear*.

Excitement was at its peak when a bunch of teenagers from all across the globe entered the esteemed Tate Modern to start working on one of Shakespeare's classics. We were to interpret *King Lear* in two days, and perform in front of a global audience. It seemed impossible but all my apprehensions and nervousness disappeared as we warmed up to the beats of famous South African songs.

“most of us did not have a common language yet we did a play together and that made me realize the beauty of Shakespeare. It is not just about his words but the themes he explored and their relevance today.”

Shakespeare united us and although I couldn't understand much of what others said, I understood everything they expressed. I was overwhelmed to see how emotions cut across language barriers and *King Lear* came alive in Arabic, Czech, Hindi, Zulu and Chinese.

Exploring issues related to the play – of poverty, greed and family dynamics – brought us together as a group, trying to send a message to the world from a truly global platform.

I left India with a secret desire to play the lead role but as I delivered my line as the first *King Lear* of the play, at the Tate Gallery in London, thousands of miles away from home, representing my country, my city, my family and my identity, I was proud to be in the International Youth Ensemble. It's been one of those moments that I will never forget.

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE: *ROMEO AND JULIET*

Thanks to Professor Michael Cordner, Theatre, Film and Television, University of York and Ian Wall, from the charity Film Education, for bringing the editors' attention to *Shakespeare in Performance: Romeo and Juliet*. Film Education describes the resource as encouraging students 'to examine the text and to consider it as the blueprint for performance': The interactive CD-ROM resource features clips from four feature film versions of the play, spanning sixty years. It also contains footage from a specially filmed scene produced with the University of York, as well as interviews with the director and actors. Finally, the disc features an interactive edit suite where students can construct their own 'filmed' interpretation of the key scene from the specially created footage. The resource is available free of charge to UK schools and colleges. The DVD can be ordered from Film Education.

www.filmeducation.org/index.php

PUBLICATIONS IN BRIEF

Brush up your close-reading with *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts*, edited by Russ McDonald, Nicholas D Nace and Travis D Williams (Arden Shakespeare); discover John Fletcher's retelling of *The Tempest* in *The Island Princess*, edited by Clare McManus (Arden Early Modern Drama); debate Shakespeare's place in twenty-first century American education and culture with Denise Albanese's *Extramural Shakespeare* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Send your notices to teachingshakespeare@ymail.com as well as letters to the editor, ideas for articles, suggestions of contributors for features such as 'read on this book' and 'ask an expert'.

Welcome to the first 'Student takeover' issue of *Teaching Shakespeare*. In editing this issue, SARAH OLIVE has been joined by two students from the BA English in Education programme at the University of York: LISA SCOTT and AMELIA FAREBROTHER. As part of their second year volunteering and enrichment project, Lisa and Amelia helped plan and compile the issue as well as researching on-going concerns related to Shakespeare in education.



Photo © Sarah Olive

Lisa writes that 'being a student editor has been challenging but also extremely rewarding on a multitude of levels: soliciting contributions, finding suitable candidates and providing guidance on the focus of features. The final result is worth every ounce of effort'. Amelia describes a similar experience made all the more poignant by her experience in school 'as someone who hated and dreaded the Shakespeare class reader'. Their input is reflected in the emphasis on student experience of Shakespeare in a range of sectors: primary school, higher education and special educational needs as well as the recruitment of recently graduated contributors such as Laura Nicklin and Sarah Dustagheer. In the last issue of *Teaching Shakespeare*, teachers from Swavesey Village College shared their thoughts on Shakespeare and assessment, offering up some diverse opinions on the benefits and critiques of the UK assessment requirements.

On a recent visit to the University of Waikato's English and Education departments (funded by the York-Waikato exchange), I found New Zealand schools grappling with similar issues. In the past, year 13 English students taking level 3 of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) have been required to read and study a Shakespearean drama and develop a 500 word critical response during an exam. However, his works are now set to become optional and will face competition from a host of other authors. Cross-sector concern that by removing the current Achievement Standard 90722 (English 3.3) the New Zealand Qualifications Authority

may cause Shakespeare to be taught selectively, with authors of shorter texts or using more contemporary language being chosen for exploration with the majority of students, was apparent.

Yet Shakespeare's optional status does not always equate to the neglect of his texts. That Shakespeare is a popular option within the NCEA's drama course is attested to by New Zealand teachers' publicly-available lesson plans – which can be found at www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/arts/index_e.php – as well as the number of schools contributing to the Shakespeare's Globe Centre New Zealand's annual nationwide University of Otago Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival. Furthermore, it is apparent from Heather Edgren's article in our last issue and Kelly Hunter's account (see page 7) that Shakespeare is frequently being chosen for use with students with special educational needs, despite the fact that such classes may be exempted from curriculum requirements. The work of these educators demonstrates that their commitment, enthusiasm, and innovation are greater factors than policy in ensuring that Shakespeare really is available for all.

Sarah Olive

Erratum: In the last issue we stated that Sarah Goldsby-Smith is a PhD student with Dr Kate Flaherty. Dr Goldsby-Smith in fact graduated with her doctorate from the same cohort as Dr Flaherty.

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dear editor . . .

It's always interesting when someone questions the sense of a phrase you take for granted: why is that cat in the bag? Can you be gormful? Jennifer Clements's article 'Against Ownership' in the last edition of *Teaching Shakespeare* questioned the oft-made assertion that young people should 'own' Shakespeare. Pondering her words, I looked in the RSC manifesto for schools, *Stand up for Shakespeare*, to see how we had contextualised the phrase there: "Active techniques ensure that experiences of Shakespeare are inherently inclusive . . . that Shakespeare is collectively owned as participants collaborate and build a shared understanding of the play." Collective ownership and shared understanding are what underpin the work of actors creating a performance of a play and it is that same sense of ownership that active approaches can give young people.

"all young people should have access to shakespeare and opportunities to find out what he offers and there is a value in wanting young people to feel ownership of a cultural resource which is common, global property."

Rather than acquiring Shakespeare as one "would acquire a new car or a house" as Jennifer Clements puts it, using active approaches allows students to own a text as actors do: developing personal understanding through shared exploration. In other words it is not a passive acquisition but is the result of a deep and collaborative engagement with the text. This sense of ownership, I believe, includes participation, as Jennifer Clements defines her preferred term, to "participate in the ongoing process of creating meaning out of the texts," but also adds in a *right* to participate. All young people should have access to Shakespeare and opportunities to find out what he offers and there is a value in wanting young people to feel ownership of a cultural resource which is common, global property. And let's not forget, in slang terms, 'I own that' means you've done it well!

TRACY IRISH

After working at the RSC for six years, Tracy has recently taken her research into Shakespeare in international education into a PhD at the University of Warwick.

Feature compiled by James Stredder

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SHAKESPEARE WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

RSC* Lead Practitioner, MILES TANDY, reports on Shakespeare in a Banbury Primary School. Miles's book *Beginning Shakespeare 4–11* (David Fulton, 2012) is co-authored with Joe Winston.

Dashwood Banbury Academy is a primary school in Oxfordshire. Despite the assumptions we might make about a town like Banbury, Dashwood faces challenges that will be familiar to many primary schools. It serves an area of high socio-economic deprivation, has very high levels of pupil mobility, and a significant proportion have English as an additional language. So how might the ambition to 'start it earlier' play out in a school like this? The staff decided to try it and see.

Amy Rogers, Acting Headteacher, stresses the impact that working with Shakespeare can have on one of the school's top priorities – children's language development:

🔊 *Children should learn to love language from an early age and this is something Shakespeare encourages.*

Yet for many who work in primary schools, the very idea of introducing Shakespeare so early is surprising. Ruth Rees, a teaching assistant at Dashwood, comments:

🔊 *I didn't think Shakespeare was so interesting! We all learned to understand it and love it.*

"we know that so many adults have not had great experiences of Shakespeare themselves, so introducing it in a primary school may be as much a journey of discovery for the staff as for the children."

As Ruth's comments reflect, the key is for everyone to do so in a spirit of openness, confidence and shared delight. But aren't there more important things for primary aged children to be doing, especially those for whom English is an additional language? Not at all, argues Amy:

🔊 *Shakespeare puts all children on a level playing field as those with EAL are in the same boat as all those for whom*

English is their mother tongue. It excites us all to learn new words and extend our own vocabulary and understanding.

And Ruth adds:

🔊 *Shakespeare has so much rich language to use and understand, it was interesting to learn how many quotes that we use today come from Shakespeare's plays.*

This is a school staff that knows very well the urgency of addressing the 'basics' with their children, setting and meeting the highest standards. But aspiration and ambition are fundamental to the Dashwood philosophy and they are very clear that introducing children to Shakespeare early can only help to meet their aims. So what might they say to another 'ordinary' primary school thinking of introducing its children to Shakespeare? Amy is unequivocal:

🔊 *Go for it! It generates excitement and love for language and learning. Don't be afraid to try something different and don't think the children will not understand, because you will be surprised!*

* Many readers will be familiar with the three principles of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Stand up for Shakespeare manifesto, launched in 2008. They are: do it on your feet; see it live; and start it earlier. The campaign has many legacies, not least the extensive Learning and Performance Network (LPN) which has reached around 400 schools across the country. For more information about the RSC's work in schools visit www.rsc.org.uk/education.

Feature compiled by James Stredder

Teaching Shakespeare wants to hear from educators in all sectors and all countries. If you would like to suggest a Vox Pop at your school or organisation, draw attention to a conference, event or project using our Noticeboard, or have ideas for an article please email us at teachingshakespeare@gmail.com

GIRDLe ROUND the earth

ROMEO AND JULIET'S WINTER TERM IN JERUSALEM

approached by LISA SCOTT to contribute to *Teaching Shakespeare's* international content, NOURIT MELCER-PADON describes the journey one of her classes made through *Romeo and Juliet* at The Hebrew University, in Jerusalem.

THE SETTING: Jerusalem, David Yellin Teachers' College.

THE TIME: Monday mornings, first term of the academic year 2011–2012.

THE PARTICIPATING CHARACTERS: Ten students of English: two from a French-speaking background, two from a Hebrew-speaking background, six from an Anglophone background (Australia, USA); of these students, three are religious students, seven are secular students; student's ages: from early twenties' to fifties'. One teacher (that would be me).

Studying a play by Shakespeare in 2012 represents a challenge, especially in a heterogeneous class made up of students from different personal backgrounds, different mastery of English and different levels of prior literary studies. As third-year students in the college, this is their last year before graduating and becoming English teachers themselves. As such, they will be responsible for teaching English as a second language, and those who teach in high-schools will also be required to teach literary texts in English.

While some of the Anglophone students had read a few of Shakespeare's sonnets, the others had no acquaintance with Shakespeare. Choosing to study Shakespeare's play in its entirety may have seemed overly ambitious: Shakespeare is no longer part of the standard curriculum of Israeli high-schools, as it used to be over 30 years ago when the national curriculum in English included a Shakespeare play and a number of sonnets. Yet once Shakespeare's text became familiar and "manageable," I believed each of these future teachers would subsequently feel more confident in tackling any literary text with their students.

Love was the main theme we discussed at the onset, starting from a reading of Sylvia Plath's poem *Mad Girl's*

Love Song. Some of the questions we tried to answer were: Can one become mad with love? What does that mean, and what are the possible consequences of loving? Can one love too much? Next, we read O. Henry's story "The Thing's The Play." Aside from a humorous allusion to Shakespeare, this short story provided a chance to discuss the structure of the text, as well as its overt use of theatrical elements: staging considerations, visual characterization and actions constructing the reality of the theater. In addition, we discussed the main protagonists' expectations of each other and of the state of being in love, examining the basis for the decisions they made. The gaps of knowledge among the main protagonists helped introduce the notion of dramatic irony.

We were now ready to begin the journey to Shakespeare's Verona. We looked at several illustrated books about Shakespeare's life and his various plays, and discussed the advantages of the use of such books with young learners getting acquainted ourselves with Shakespeare's biography in the process. We looked at pictures of the renewed Globe to understand the staging and acting conditions in Shakespeare's era, in addition to a short introduction of the history of theatrical practices and constraints of the time. Before we started reading the *Romeo and Juliet*, we watched John Gielgud's rendering of the prologue. The first question we raised regarded Shakespeare's disclosure of the entire plot before the beginning of the play, a discussion that led to a consideration of Shakespeare's sources for the plot, as well as of the universality of the theme of the young, doomed lovers in its various manifestations, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to *Tristan and Iseult*.

Act I, scene I, allowed for a class discussion of the setting, the use of comedy and of secondary characters. Future discussions would constantly re-examine the setting, focusing of the difference between public and private spheres. The students were then assigned the reading of the play, while class discussions progressed at the pace of the assigned reading.

"the students were instructed not to Look up any words they did not understand, but rather to read without interruption, in order to get a grip of as much of the text as possible, based on a contextual understanding, subliminally aided by meter and rhyme."



Through a discussion of key scenes, such as Romeo's first encounter with Juliet, we were able to provide not only elucidations of vocabulary and word inventions, but also of complex uses of language, considering poetic patterns, such as enjambment, alliterations and so on.

Once the whole play had been read, we could consider wider issues, relevant to the dramatic structure of the play, such as the use of foreshadowing and the functions of sub-plots. We paid special attention to what could be seen by the spectators as opposed to what could not: Romeo's foreboding dream, described to his friends before entering the Capulets' ball, or the fact that Romeo and Juliet's secret marriage is not performed on stage. This led back to the discussion of the tension between public and private spheres, and to trying to establish the relation between the consequences of such a marriage, in essence a social act, and the interventions of the Prince. The role of the Friar and the responsibility of the older generation were also a part of this discussion. We had to overcome generational gaps, in order to understand the constraints faced by the lovers, and how this was interwoven into the text in such a way as to allow moral questions to remain as vividly relevant today as they had been at the time of the play's composition. The class discussions between secular and religious students regarding these issues were especially interesting, and did not always follow my own expectations.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the ensuing discussion of the main characters was the students' realization of the development of Juliet, a change clarified by Shakespeare at the end of the play, when he reverses the title and concludes with "Juliet and her Romeo." This was a welcome outlet for the students' feelings of frustration at the precipitous tragic outcome.

Reading the scenes from Juliet's first appearance on stage to her witty dialogue with Paris at the Friar's cell, allowed the depiction of her psychological development which struck the older students as a particularly apt description of their own teen-aged children.

We compared Franco Zeffirelli's (1968) adaptation of the last scene between the lovers to Baz Luhrmann's (1996), and discussed the different readings these interpretations provide in comparison with the original text. We concluded the journey by watching John Madden's film "Shakespeare in Love" (1998), for its beautiful rendering of the period, the acting, the inter-textual and biographical allusions (including to Marlowe and Webster). The scenes we watched on YouTube and the full-length film assisted in making the text become more alive and in conducting our final in-depth debate about issues Shakespeare's text raises. As the last class discussions clarified, they were now much more at ease with the text, and felt quite confident reading it over and over again with no inhibitions. After all the work and the various approaches we used, some of the gaps which initially existed between the students and the play had been bridged, and perhaps some of the differences among the students themselves as well.

Editors' note: Those teaching *Romeo and Juliet* might be interested to know that Rene Weis' edition of the play for the third Arden Shakespeare series has recently been released. You can listen to his eloquent paper, originally given at the BritGrad Shakespeare conference in June 2012, dealing with notions of time in the play at <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/06/rene-weis-romeo-and-juliet-and-the-shapes-of-time-2/> His discussion of the character of Juliet wonderfully complements points made in this article.

SHAKESPEARE AND AUTISM

KELLY HUNTER is an award winning actress. Her career spans West End musicals, classical theatre, film, TV and radio. Kelly also works as a director. The following article captures some of her work with Autistic children, being studied as a long-term research project at Ohio State University.

"... the tightrope you walk with these children, and the one I felt I was balancing on, is of mutual exposure, mutual revelation of the unadulterated you... mutual because in those moments, framed by the timeless landscape of Shakespeare, you need each other in your wanderings and your discoveries... the hidden mystery of those children is the gift for the adult... Second by second, I was provoked and enchanted and to a great extent revealed through their presence and constantly surprised which is the key to progress..."
Greg Hicks, RSC

I'm an actor. I've played major roles at the RSC over the last twenty years and I started working with children with autism in 2002. A season in Stratford had left me with the desire to explore Shakespeare on my own terms and I set up a company, Touchstone Shakespeare Theatre, offering Shakespeare to children who had no access to the arts. We – four actors and myself – began a long-term project at a special school in Bromley, which included working with children with autism, initially for just one hour a week. I was inspired by Louis Zukofsky's *Bottom: On Shakespeare* in which he makes a beautiful case for defining Shakespeare's poetic essence as being based on four words; Eyes, Mind, Reason, and Love. "Shakespeare speaks and sings of a proportion: Love is to reason as the eyes are to the mind..." (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987 266). I began to invent games for the children to play, focusing on moments where Shakespeare's characters use their eyes and mind to find reason and love, the precise things which children with autism find so difficult to do. The games fell into place almost immediately as the children began to respond.

Photo © Nick Spratling



Autism is a disorder of neural development; impairing the ability to communicate, express thought and experience empathy, whilst Shakespeare's plays can be defined as a poetic exploration of human communication. At the heart of my work is the meeting of these two worlds: Shakespeare's eloquent soulfulness colliding with the locked away world of autism. The games are fun to play, I've been creating and playing them with children for a decade and out of this of playfulness has grown a methodology: *The Hunter Heartbeat Method*. This forms *The Shakespeare and Autism research project*; a collaboration between Ohio State University's Theatre Department and research scientists at OSU's Nisonger Center. The project engages with the question of whether drama – particularly Shakespeare – can break through the communicative blocks of autism and whether my therapeutic intervention has long-term benefits.

“I began to invent games for the children to play, focusing on moments where Shakespeare's characters use their eyes and mind to find reason and love, the precise things which children with autism find so difficult to do.”

The collaboration between arts and science for the benefit of those with autism would seem to be unique. During my workshops I've witnessed children play for the first time; losing themselves in a transient moment of acting in front of amazed parents who say they've never seen their child play before. These moments have always been relatively private but now that research scientists are evaluating groups of children as they play the games, and I am in the process of writing a book defining the methodology, the work seems destined to reach further afield.

And what is the work? What are the games? A key Shakespearean concept that supports the start of every session is the iambic beat, the importance of which I have first hand knowledge of from many years of performing Shakespeare. An iambus takes the form of a heartbeat, making it arguably the first rhythm we hear in the womb. When I use it with the children – we begin each session with a '*Heartbeat Hello*': sitting in a circle, beating out the rhythm of a heartbeat whilst saying 'Hello' – I've found it can have a profound therapeutic power. Non-verbal children have begun

to form the word 'Hello' and make sustained progress toward speaking.

Recognizing facial expressions is an established difficulty associated with autism. During the *Heartbeat Hello*, I introduce the notion of different expressions, beginning with *happy*, *sad* and *angry*. The expressive *Heartbeat Hellos* provide a platform from which to introduce the characters of Shakespeare. His characters are never 'in neutral', remarkably they are always active and have an immediate connection to strong primary expressions – Bottom and Titania's fear and joy from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can begin to be accessed by children with autism through initially practicing the facial expression whilst saying 'Hello'.

The games are devised solely to benefit the children's communicative processes, whilst employing Shakespeare's highly physicalized definitions of communication, a perfect example of which is '*Throwing Bottom's surprised donkey face*'. In demonstration, an actor makes the facial expression of a surprised donkey and 'throws' the face to someone in the circle who 'catches' it, with the immediate and comic effect of becoming Bottom with his donkey face for a few seconds before the game continues and the face is 'thrown' again. The game has proved very popular with children and whilst they are having 'fun', they are doing the very thing they find so difficult – being expressive. Any facial expression may be thrown as a means of bringing a character to life and over the years I have played the game within the context of many different plays. Throwing the angry face of Caliban around the circle, for example, has become a powerful and intense experience when working on *The Tempest*.

“WHILST they are having 'fun', they are doing the very thing they find so difficult – BEING expressive.”

From Zukofsky's four keywords comes the phrase *The Mind's Eye*, which appears to have been coined by Shakespeare (see *Hamlet* 1.2.184) and is a primary theme throughout the plays as characters are driven to action and distraction by their minds eye images, a certain dagger comes to mind, as does Helena's 'triple eye'

*He bade me store up as a triple eye
Safer than mine own two, more dear
(All's well that ends well 2.1.716)*



For the first year of working in Bromley, I used *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to invent the games, not because it is "suitable for children" but rather because at the heart of the play is an exploration of how seeing and loving may be connected:

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.231)

Making eye contact is a major stumbling block for a child with autism and my *Games of Eye Contact* seek to directly address this issue. The game of Titania locking eyes with Bottom as she falls in love with him has remained a firm favorite over the years; children who would otherwise never make eye contact, are happy to do so when the touching humour of the Donkey and the Fairy Queen are involved.

The games always begin with actors demonstrating the physicality of particular characters for the children to copy. The whole methodology can be seen as working from the exterior to the interior, from the body to the mind – in terms of actor training and direction, a Brechtian approach as opposed to one derived from Stanislavsky. The games can be developed with as much detail as the child is capable of comprehending, using text, action and narrative. Ultimately the games progress toward the child being able to express their own mind's eye images. This process is a long one.

"NICOLA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH HIS OWN MIND'S EYE WAS FOR ME A TRUE REVELATION OF THE POWER OF SHAKESPEARE."

I worked with a Romanian boy, Nicola, back in Bromley. A classic teenager with autism, he made very little eye contact, was obsessed with bus routes and had minimal verbal skills, compounded by English not being his first language. He displayed little empathy, and aside from detailing the bus routes of South London he initiated little conversation. Toward the end of my time there, after nearly three years of developing these Shakespeare-based games with the group, I cautiously introduced the idea of acting out our own mind's eye images. I had no idea if the children would access anything. Without prompting Nicola vividly and carefully acted out a funeral service, from his distant childhood back in Romania, with physical accuracy, delicacy and emotion. It lasted a good 15 minutes and everyone was spellbound. I've experienced many breakthroughs with children as they become more confident, make more eye contact, even speak a word for the first time but Nicola's engagement with his own mind's eye was for me a true revelation of the power of Shakespeare. The key to this work is to employ the great human concepts of Shakespeare (and especially the ways in which these are embodied, at once intellectual and physical) to their best use – waking us up to ourselves.

What began ten years ago as a passionate interest to explore the power of Shakespeare outside its usual confines is now being evaluated by research scientists – I've recently seen the first results of the pilot project and the graphs and statistics are all looking extremely positive. Handing my work over has not been without its anxieties, but it is at the same time flattering and exciting, and since I desire that the work be taught more widely, I need the world of science to give it validation. I have had profound experiences witnessing the children's progress, but what will the scientists' tests finally prove? The next three years will tell.

Follow Kelly's work with OSU at www.kellyhunter.co.uk/index.php. Contact the National Autistic Society to obtain a DVD of her work with students, *Dreams and Voices*, publications@nas.org.uk.

master shakespeare!

WHY DO POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS CHOOSE TO STUDY SHAKESPEARE?

LAURA NICKLIN is a student on the MA Shakespeare and Education at The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham. This article summarises the findings of her previous research in the Department of Education, University of York.

Since the National Curriculum made Shakespeare compulsory for all school children in 1989, there has been a steady stream of texts published in which arts professionals, teachers and lecturers share their experience of and thoughts on how to teach Shakespeare. Usually these publications will address cursorily and positively the reasons *why* they believe it is important to study Shakespeare. Anyone seeking a more detailed discussion of his value in schools is advised to start with the National Curriculum for English's chairman's account of his committee's decision-making process in 1988–89, C.B. Cox's *Cox on Cox: The Battle for the English Curriculum*. Additionally, a handful of academics have dealt in extended way with the issue of his value, including Jonathan Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Catherine Belsey's *Why Shakespeare?*, and projects such as 'Interrogating cultural value' at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, which investigated constructions of his value in publicly-funded theatre, schools and tourism.

Notably absent from the available literature are discussions of why postgraduate students choose to take master's or doctoral degrees specialising in Shakespeare. G.B. Shand's collection of essays relates only to undergraduates – even then it focuses on teachers' pedagogy over students' motivations. In 2009, however, *The Guardian* published an article examining Shakespeare-based master's courses as part of a series profiling postgraduate courses. The article was published at a time when universities were particularly alert to the possible effect of the recession on postgraduate enrolments. At the same time, the value of master's degrees, particularly in the arts, was being frequently debated in the press. Many articles were overwhelming positive about the benefit of master's degrees in English (perhaps this is not surprising given that education supplements have a strong

advertising function). In 2008, Corinna Wagner, a lecturer in English at the University of Exeter, argued in an article on English degrees in the same *Guardian* series that the notion that it is difficult to gain employment from an English MA is a 'myth', while others claimed that skills obtained from an MA in English will prepare students for multiple professions, asserting that many businesses seek English graduates. Beyond English, it has been argued that recruiters are "impressed" by those with master's level qualifications, suggesting that they enhance employability. Readers will notice that the existing literature quoted in this article is primarily taken from newspapers' education supplements and online Shakespeare forums. These are among the few places one can reliably turn to for debate around the value of specific master's degrees, although Brian Heap's book *Choosing your degree course and university* is now in its thirteenth edition and the Times' *Good University Guide* its nineteenth.

"BEYOND ENGLISH, IT HAS BEEN ARGUED THAT RECRUITERS ARE 'IMPRESSED' BY THOSE WITH MASTER'S LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS, SUGGESTING THAT THEY ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY."

Given these underlying concerns, the *Guardian* article, 'So You Want To Study . . . A Master's in Shakespeare', attempted to counter perceptions of Shakespeare studies as a remote and impractical area of endeavour. While declaring that 'it's one of those MAs you can get away with doing for the sheer love of the subject', it gave serious attention to the value of a Shakespeare-related master's degree in enhancing graduates' employability. In *The Guardian* article, Katie Shimmon interviewed Camilla Hayne, an MA graduate from a Shakespeare studies programme who described the course as a way to show employers that you have "advanced knowledge", having specialised in something quite specific and gained additional skills. In addition to Haynes' success in obtaining a teaching position at a prestigious school, Professor Kate McLuskie, then Director of the Shakespeare Institute, listed a handful of sectors her graduates had successfully entered.

In addition to employability, existing attempts to explain why Shakespeare should be studied also frequently employ a discourse of enlightenment, elucidating his ability to develop an individual's knowledge of the world and themselves. Shimmon writes of students left 'hankering for more on the work of the enigmatic

Bard', a reason for postgraduate study echoed in her interviews with an MA Shakespeare student and alumna. Bloggers and authors such as Amanda Mabillard and Theodore Dalrymple argue that study of Shakespeare "illuminates" the human experience, human nature and human values; that they stimulate our empathetic abilities. Others point to Shakespeare as key in understanding the development of the English language and literature. Richard Wilson, Catherine Belsey and Kate McLuskie have all suggested that postgraduate study of Shakespeare offers an extension of knowledge and about and understanding of Shakespeare (and historical developments in Shakespearean scholarship) which it is simply impossible to provide to students at undergraduate level, where they need to survey a range of writing in English. Those interviewed by Shimmon also speak of choosing a Shakespeare MA not 'really for academic reasons, more for pleasure'. The potential for experiencing enjoyment and entertainment through working with Shakespeare, through engaging with constant re-working of his texts on the page or stage, triangulates the dominant discourses espousing his study.

"BLOGGERS AND AUTHORS . . . argue that study of shakespeare 'iLLuminates' the human experience, human nature and human values; that they stimulate our empathetic abilities."

With the exception of Shimmon's article featuring one current student and one recent graduate, the reasons given for studying Shakespeare in the existing literature overwhelmingly represent academics' ideals for it. They do not seek to ascertain the reality of the decision-making process behind students' choices. Seeking to redress this, Laura Nicklin, studying English in Education at the University of York, chose to research the decision to study Shakespeare at postgraduate level with twelve students at two UK HE institutions as part of her dissertation. Having initially asked students to produce a short document describing why they chose a Shakespeare-related master's, the conversations continued via email to collect further data. During the process of coding their writing, she found that the students' rationales for their choice of study largely fitted with those ideals evident in the existing literature: employability, enlightenment and enjoyment. Students rarely gave a single reason, a combination of the three prevalent discourses usually being evident in any one of their rationales. Overall, a total of 141 explanations were collected. The 'enlightenment factor' was the most-often invoked, occurring 61 times, followed by enjoyment (39), employment (25) and other miscellaneous factors (16).

"the potential for experiencing enjoyment and entertainment through working with shakespeare, through engaging with constant re-working of his texts on the page or stage, triangulates the dominant discourses espousing his study."

Contrary to Shimmon's article, one participant demonstrated that perceptions of studying Shakespeare as negatively impacting on employability are still in evidence: 'Several people tried to dissuade me from studying a Shakespeare based course, warning that it was out-dated, impractical and would render me unemployable'. However, the participant goes on to demonstrate their belief in the misguided nature of this advice: 'The opposite has proved to be true: within my first year of studies I had worked for two top Shakespeare based, world-class organisations, as well as my university'. The participant's confidence in employability as a reason for, and not against, studying Shakespeare is echoed by others: 'I wanted to gain an MA to give me greater opportunity in the job market'. Some mention that the MA will stand out on their curriculum vitae, while those already in employment as teachers felt that the MA could aid their progression to roles such as Head of Department. Indeed, half the participants asserted their conviction that the MA would develop their ability to work, teaching Shakespeare, at school and university level. In terms of other sectors, one respondent declared that 'the global and creative technology economy cries out further for creative thinking and adaptability' provided by their programme. Overall, those who had a career as an educator, regardless of sector, gave more attention to and placed more faith in the employment benefits of an MA on a Shakespeare-related topic than others, whose discussion of it was fleeting. This may be explained by the fact that those already in employment have a clearer idea of what they need to demonstrate to achieve promotion. Unlike Hayes, the majority of students did not stress the benefit to their employability of generic skills gained from postgraduate study of Shakespeare, suggesting their main motivation lies elsewhere.

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Enjoyment of Shakespeare as a reason for studying his works at postgraduate level was mentioned by every

respondent and was the second most prevalent reason given, after enlightenment. All respondents used the words 'love' and / or 'enjoy' to describe their feelings about the works of Shakespeare, with most using both at least once, e.g. 'I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't enjoy it and profit from it'. Statements such as 'Shakespeare is my passion' also appeared consistently throughout the data. Along a similar line, all responses described in some way a 'need', 'thirst' or 'desire' to learn more about the works of Shakespeare. Much of the discussion in this area suggests that students choose studying Shakespeare for personal satisfaction or pleasure, as well as emotional growth: 'Certain plays / poems speak to me at certain times in my life, and help me to deal with the crises or celebrate the joys', wrote one participant. In a follow up conversation with the student, they highlighted how this personal and psychological use of Shakespeare had promoted their passion for his works: 'I was first introduced to Shakespeare as a psychologist in high school . . . I have always looked to art to help me understand my world, and certainly Shakespeare's abilities here have fostered my love for him – and my commitment to studying his works'. This explanation was striking as it was unique among the data in outlining a role for Shakespeare in developing self-discovery.

“enjoyment of shakespeare as a reason for studying his works at postgraduate level was mentioned by every respondent and was the second most prevalent reason given, after enlightenment.”

Enlightenment was the most strongly represented discourse, occurring at least once in every participant's correspondence with the researcher. One participant commented that 'Enlightenment, I think, is the biggest factor in my decision to study Shakespeare at this level'. Others reached for a discourse of expansion and extension corroborating Wilson's and McLuskie's assertions that students relish the opportunity to go deeper into Shakespeare, and to focus narrowly on him, that a master degree provides. Reasons included wanting to 'widen' subject knowledge, to 'study Shakespeare in greater depth, 'to know and understand more about it'. One participant wrote of wanting to 'stretch' her mind along with those of the students she will return to after the programme. Another related idea that resonates throughout the data was the need to expand one's knowledge to keep pace with the flux and accretion of knowledge about Shakespeare. Twenty-five per cent of participants stated that their interest in studying Shakespeare at this level is born out

of its constant evolution. Sometimes students explained that they had not felt sufficiently stretched in this area of study as undergraduates: 'Shakespeare was taught very badly' and I was 'rather short-changed by the teaching of Shakespeare'. Such statements are interesting as they suggest, rather counter-intuitively that, for these students, a lack of good previous experiences with Shakespeare fuelled rather than weakened their subsequent interest.

Other reasons given by some participants for studying Shakespeare included his continuing relevance today. This was mentioned by half of the students, with one participant asserting that: 'Ben Jonson was right – Shakespeare truly is not of an age, but for all time'. Others demonstrated the intersection of multiple motivating factors: 'I began the postgraduate course out of pure enjoyment and for the fun of it but since embarking on further studies I've realised just how relevant Shakespeare is within our lives and how prevalent his influence is within our society'; one student described 'the enjoyment factor' as their main reason for study but also made a summing-up statement that her decision was 'definitely a combination of ideas'. Students also invoked his global popularity, accessibility, adaptability and the high-level of exposure the students had had to him through either academic or personal experience through their lives prior to their postgraduate study. The data also raised as important in students' decision-making process the impact of the institution, and their courses, on the decision to study Shakespeare: individuals did not choose to study their specific programme on Shakespeare's merits alone. The convenience of the location, teaching style and content (such as a theatre studies element), and flexibility of the course – such as the option to study via distance learning – were mentioned by more than half the participants. One participant described being 'thrilled to find an institution that specialized in the subject' and to become 'part of an academic community who revel in Shakespeare'. This suggests the importance of institutions marketing their distinctive approach to Shakespeare, through articles such as Shamoon's.

“INDIVIDUALS DID NOT CHOOSE TO STUDY THEIR SPECIFIC PROGRAMME ON SHAKESPEARE'S MERITS ALONE. THE CONVENIENCE OF THE LOCATION, TEACHING STYLE AND CONTENT . . . AND FLEXIBILITY OF THE COURSE . . . WERE MENTIONED BY MORE THAN HALF THE PARTICIPANTS.”

Although this study was small-scale, the fact that the responses from participants were saturated, with

the same group of reasons for choosing Shakespeare coming up repeatedly, suggests that similar results could be replicated by future, larger scale studies. While the students were asked about their decision to study Shakespeare in the UK, a quarter of respondents are international students or work/have worked outside the UK, so that the factors in their decision-making do not manifest a purely UK phenomenon, influenced by the unique place of Shakespeare in British society and culture. The students also came to postgraduate Shakespeare studies from a range of disciplines at undergraduate level. Thus, the results demonstrate that study of Shakespeare at this level is not dominated by students from any one academic area. Those marketing such programmes may wish to consider his appeal to students beyond English and Drama. One group definitely missing from this research is students who had considered but decided against studying Shakespeare at post-graduate level. Having opted for their degree, the students who participated clearly had an interest in expressing Shakespeare's enjoyableness, relevance, and contribution to their enlightenment and employability.

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In summary, while the strongest motivation given by students for studying Shakespeare at postgraduate level is enlightenment, evidence of students being inspired to choose this pathway for employment and enjoyment were also present to varying degrees in

the responses. It was striking that certain reasons, such as enjoying or loving Shakespeare, were not only recurrent in all responses but were articulated in a virtually identical way, in terms of the turns of phrase for which participants reached. It is also apparent that every student identified multiple reasons behind their decision. The implications of this study for universities offering Shakespeare-related courses in the current economic climate are that students either do see their study as positively contributing to their employability or (sometimes 'and') do not focus on this as the determining factor in their decision to pursue further study. Institutions should continue to demonstrate the ways in which skills in and knowledge of Shakespeare at master's level will enhance students' future careers.

“institutions should continue to demonstrate the ways in which skills in and knowledge of Shakespeare at master's level will enhance students' future careers.”

However, they could consider putting greater emphasis on marketing the ways in which students will have their minds broadened, dwelling on the content of the course, the constant evolution of knowledge about Shakespeare, and embrace the potential of their courses for personal growth and enjoyment – stemming from the course content and the atmosphere of the institution – as these are the foremost factors influencing potential students. Institutions should also demonstrate reflexivity about Shakespeare's relevance today. The lower importance of employability relative to the two more prevalent reasons proffered for studying a Shakespeare MA suggests that students are primarily motivated intrinsically in making their choice, rather than looking to external factors such as the economy and employment market. Interestingly, this study foreshadowed (possibly even influenced) Laura's own experience several months after it was undertaken. She is now studying for an MA in Shakespeare in Education at the Shakespeare Institute, not an easy choice after also being offered a place on a PGCE English course. Why did Shakespeare win? Because after completing an undergraduate degree in education perceived as 'sensible' by family and teachers, which fortunately turned out to be also enjoyable, 'I want to take this year to stop doing what I *have* to do, and start doing what I *want* to do'.

Photo © Laura Nicklin



read on this book

Here, experts in Shakespeare from various fields share their recommendations for inspirational reading, with a view to helping those preparing to teach his works. DR SARAH DUSTAGHEER is Lecturer in Early Modern English at King's College London. She is working on her first book: *Shakespeare's Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599–1613*. Before joining King's English Department, Sarah has been a Globe Education Lecturer and an associate lecturer at the University of Kent and the Central School of Speech and Drama.



The opening pages of *The Two Merry Milkmaids* (1620) tells us that 'Every writer must govern his Pen according to the Capacity of the Stage he writes to' – or, in other words, playwrights shaped their plays in response to the performance conditions of the early modern playhouse. My approach to researching Shakespeare is focussed on this dynamic interaction between writing, performing and theatre space. In particular, I'm interested in the two venues associated with Shakespeare's theatre company: the outdoor Globe and the Blackfriars, a smaller, indoor candlelight hall. In my teaching, I encourage students to consider how the material environment of the playhouse – from the architecture, to the audience, to the props on stage – are evident in and influential on the plays they are reading.

Several theatre history studies have collated the existing evidence to provide a surprisingly detailed insight into the conditions for which Shakespeare wrote. Andrew Gurr's scholarship in this area is second to none, and *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) marks an especially useful entry point for students. Appendix 2 'References to Playgoing' provides a treasure trove of anecdotes, snippets of play text, legalisation, letters and all sorts of other documents that shed light on all aspects of performance and even early modern life. Vivid descriptions of the well-dressed 'gallant' playgoers or the 'garlic-breathed' groundlings spark students into thinking about the characteristics of the early modern audience and, in turn, to consider how Shakespeare's plays appeal to, challenge or engage that audience.

A similar treasure trove of surviving documentation is represented by Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry and William Ingram's *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Henslowe's Diary*, edited by R. A. Foakes (Cambridge University Press, 2002). The 'diary', or rather, account book of Philip Henslowe, owner of the Rose playhouse, has an inventory of costumes and props which never fails to capture students' imaginations – the 'robe for to go invisible' is often a

talking point. Discussion inevitably leads to the realisation that early modern audiences were especially skilled in recognising and reading props and costumes, perhaps in ways more sophisticated than modern audiences. Opening up the aesthetic and visual world of the plays offers a different way to approach characterisation, those pivotal scenes in a play or its central themes. For example, students might consider what novice nun Isabella wears in *Measure for Measure*, or the emotional effect of Desdemona's 'unpinning' in *Othello*, or the symbolic value of the crown and the sceptre in *Richard II*.

Online resources also bring the world of Shakespeare's playhouses to life. The 'Discovery Space' from Shakespeare's Globe offers a mix of writing from academics and practitioners who have worked at the reconstructed theatre. Actors' accounts of performing on the Globe stage are a fruitful way to examine the differences between early modern and contemporary Shakespearean staging practices. After 1609, Shakespeare's company performed at the Blackfriars in the winter – this indoor candlelit playhouse was a very different environment to the Globe and we can trace its influence in Shakespeare's later plays. The Chamber of Demonstrations explores the University of Bristol's reconstructed Jacobean Indoor Playhouse and its accompanying DVD is something I show in seminars regularly (Ignition Films, 2009). The Chamber of Demonstrations allows students to experience a well-researched version of what an early modern indoor space may have been like. The magic of Hermione's statue coming to life in *The Winter's Tale* or Prospero's storm in *The Tempest* has a different performance dynamic in a small candlelit space where audience members paid more to sit closer to the stage. Whilst writing, Shakespeare always had his theatre in his mind's eye and a range of resources can ensure that students stay similarly alert to the conditions of early modern performance.

www.shakespearesglobe.com/education/discovery-space
www.bristol.ac.uk/drama/jacobean/project1.html

top tips for teaching shakespeare

OUR UNDERGRADUATE EDITORS' TOP TIPS FOR TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

Lisa and Amelia have only been out of the school classroom themselves for three years – although they have kept in touch with it through volunteering activities and modules involving studying policy, pedagogy and producing resource packs for A-level Shakespeare students. They cast their minds back to think about what worked for them.

AMELIA: It is a commonplace that too many fifteen year olds are more interested in their Xbox than reading. In reality Shakespeare's work is not only relevant to the modern day but also relatable to the Xbox games on which they spend hours a day playing. Take the popular game *Final Fantasy*, where Shakespeare is hidden at the root of the game with characters and quotations from the plays present throughout game play. Introduction to studying Shakespeare could begin by collecting, confirming or (gently) challenging students' knowledge of his biography and works from their encounters with him in popular culture.

LISA: As a student, I was fascinated to find out that Disney appropriated Shakespearean archetypes in *The Lion King* and then followed that film with a sequel that closely resembled the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. Facts like this will demonstrate to students the influence of Shakespeare and his plays. Additionally, students will begin to understand that they have been exposed to Shakespeare and his ideas before they began to study them in depth and will, as a result, be more willing to attempt to understand how his ideas are still relevant and applicable. I also found it absorbing, especially when looking at Shakespearean tragedy, to look backwards to the tragedies of ancient Greece. Such teaching enabled me to recognise the themes that are present in Shakespeare, but also in Sophocles and Euripides; to further engage with the idea of the human condition; but also to highlight some key features of tragedy.

AS

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INTERESTING THOUGHTS

Notice that while Macbeth does still use thou to her, Lady only uses you to him. A continuation of the change in their relationship, which began in 1.7.

SPEECH LADY MACBETH

Lady asks a Servant for some time with the King, an unusual turn to their marriage. She then immediately turns to us with a beautifully sad speech of two rhyming couplets, the first time she's spoken directly to us since her opening scene:

LADY
Say to the King I would attend his leisure
For a few words.

SERVANT
Madam, I will.

LADY
Naught's had, all's spent, *1
Where our desire is got without content:
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

She ends her next speech to Macbeth with what's done is done – a phrase that has since come into popular modern English use – note the finality and spare simplicity of the four sounds. Lady is being as pragmatic as she can:

Enter Macbeth

How now, my lord? Why do you keep alone,
Of worst fantasies your company making?
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all
remedy
Should be without regard; what's done is done. *2

MACBETH
We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it; (*1)
She'll close and be herself; whilst our poor malice *3

CHARACTERS The MURDERERS

From what he says to them, it's clear this isn't the first time Macbeth has spoken with the Murderers. Having apparently been very careful and persuasive beforehand, he's very direct in this scene. These men don't seem to be hardened or even competent professionals, as they're easily convinced that Banquo has persecuted them for years.

It's interesting that Macbeth dismisses Lady before conspiring with them; there's an element to Macbeth's character and the terrible things he's planning that no longer needs her support. Or perhaps he's trying to protect her; shield and keep her relatively innocent? Does he foresee her later confession-ridden breakdown?

WORDS

- an **unlike** hand = not of the same family; of different descent
- mine **eternal jewel** = my soul
- the common **enemy of man** = Satan, the Devil
- leave no **ruins** nor **botches** in the work = no inequality or mistakes; the murderers must kill Fiancee too

Act: 3:2

Location: The Royal Palace, Forres

Characters: Lady Macbeth, Servant, Macbeth

Action: The first time we encounter Macbeth and Lady Macbeth alone since the murder. Both have changed, candidly. Having made her husband King, she seems far less powerful despite now being Queen; while Macbeth takes the initiative, we witness his developing paranoia; but apparently both of them are having fearful dreams.

Macbeth
BEN CRYSTAL

King Lear
BEN CRYSTAL

Hamlet
BEN CRYSTAL

A Midsummer Night's Dream
BEN CRYSTAL

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teaching shakespeare 3 Spring 2013