teaching shakespeare

POLICY • PEDAGOGY • PRACTICE

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SPRING INTO SHAKESPEARE WITH EDITOR AND ACTOR **BEN CRYSTAL**
DIG INTO EDWARD'S BOYS' *HENRY V* WITH THEIR DIRECTOR, **PERRY MILLS**
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BRITGRAD CONFERENCE

Britgrad is an annual conference by and for graduate students working in Shakespeare and Renaissance studies. Held in June, the 15th meeting featured plenaries by Catherine Richardson (University of Kent), Jonathan Slinger (RSC), and contributors to the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive, in addition to student papers. For an insight into 2013's conference, from committee member Kathryn Twigg, visit the British Shakespeare Association's Education Network website:
shakespeareineducation.com/2013/08/shakespeare-and-education-at-britgrad-2013-kathryn-twigg

For details of the 2014 conference see:
www. britgrad.wordpress.com

SHAKESPEARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Dr. Abigail Rokison is a Lecturer at the Shakespeare Institute. Her latest monograph, *Shakespeare for Young People: productions, versions and adaptations*, is published by Arden.

"It provides an invaluable consideration of Shakespeare beyond the classroom including film and stage productions devised for or well-received by young people as well as illustrated, graphic and novelised Shakespeare targeted at this audience."

SHAKESPEARE INSTITUTE REVIEW

Also coming out of Mason Croft is the *Shakespeare Institute Review*, whose student editors received a grant from the University of Birmingham to start up a freely-accessible online journal. Post-graduate students writing on Shakespeare are invited to contribute to themed issues. Past issues have focussed on death and the superhuman in his works. Find the latest call for papers on their 'news' page.
www.shakesreview.com/index.html

THE DUTCH COURTESAN

Those teaching non-Shakespearean Early Modern drama are in luck. Not only does this issue digest Bethanie Lord's research into these plays' presence in the classroom, but Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York, under the direction of Prof. Michael Cordner, staged a rare production of *The Dutch Courtesan* (pictured above). The project website captures the production on film (as well as that of *A Mad World, My Masters*). It bursts with specially-commissioned research essays and other resources.
www.dutchcourtesan.co.uk

Send your news items for issue 5, Spring 2014, to teachingshakespeare@ymail.com

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editorial

'Heritage' is the focus of this issue which includes articles on playing Shakespeare in the RSC's Swan theatre and the King Edward School, also known as 'Shakespeare's school', by Perry Mills; on teaching the works of other early modern authors by Bethanie Lord; and questioning whether the notion of heritage is a burden or a blessing for teachers and students of Shakespeare by Ben Crystal.

Photo © Sarah Olive

In this way, issue 4 considers heritage in terms of practices – educational and theatrical; places, including Stratford-upon-Avon as Shakespeare's hometown; and legacies, by considering his dominance in the classroom as the representative of early modern drama. Articles by Cathleen McKague and Matt O'Connor argue the importance of acting or playing Shakespeare with students as an antidote to off-putting perceptions of Shakespeare as part of a stultifying, literary heritage.

For many readers, the phrases 'heritage' and 'the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust' are inextricably entwined. Anjna Chouhan, Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies at the organisation, wrote to *Teaching Shakespeare* with the following information about Shakespeare Week: a campaign to encourage primary schools to introduce Shakespeare's stories, life and times to pupils between the ages of 9 and 11.

Photo © Shutterstock.com

She writes: not only is it committed to in-spiring children through interactive sessions at Mary Arden's Farm, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Hall's Croft, Nash's House and Shakespeare's Birthplace, but the campaign also invites teachers and pupils to explore many of their 70 cultural partners, including the British Museum, Bosworth Heritage Centre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The SBT strongly believes in the value of heritage education, particularly with regard to its five properties, because the Kinaesthetic learning experienced by visiting children imbues pupils with practical and social skills that enhance their understanding of the Tudor period and may benefit their study of his plays at Key Stage 3.

Shakespeare Week will hold its first annual event in March 2014 to mark the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. During this week, every primary school in Britain will have the opportunity to create and enjoy their own practical, experiential Shakespeare activities within the classroom using specially designed resources. With austerity measures hitting education, bringing the bard to schools is a way of inspiring children to care about Shakespeare at a time when outside the classroom learning is logistically or financially challenging.

For more information about Shakespeare Week and to access the SBT's free resources please visit the website:
www.shakespeareweek.org.uk

Sarah Olive

contents

girdle round the earth

HANNAH WHYMAN teaches English at the North Shore Academy in Stockton as part of the Teach First programme. She undertook research, using data from the RSC's Shakespeare wiki on their World Shakespeare Festival 2012 website, about learning and teaching Shakespeare globally towards her dissertation as part of her BA English in Education (York) in Spring 2013. In response to the editor's questions, she engages in some number-crunching below:

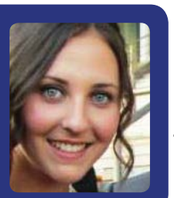

Photo © Hannah Whyman

Where is Shakespeare taught?

Thirty of the forty-five countries in the wiki identified Shakespeare as a compulsory or mentioned author on the school curriculum. Shakespeare was compulsory in twelve: South Africa; Sudan; Australia; Azerbaijan; China; India; Vietnam; Canada; USA; Czech Republic; Denmark; England. However, because many countries are divided into different regions and states (e.g. Australia; India; Canada; USA) it was anticipated that Shakespeare could be compulsory in some parts of a country and not in others. Additionally, fifteen countries mentioned Shakespeare in the curriculum: Nigeria; Uganda; Mexico; Peru; Russia; Uzbekistan; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Malta; Poland; Serbia; Slovakia; Spain; Ukraine.

Of the fourteen countries where Shakespeare is not named on the curriculum, the teaching of Shakespeare was found to be highly dependent on the type of school pupils attend. In Argentina; Pakistan; Cyprus; Georgia; Greece; Puerto Rico the data suggested that pupils are unlikely to study Shakespeare unless they are in private education. Even in those countries where Shakespeare is named on the curriculum, the data for five of these – Nigeria; Peru; India; Sri Lanka; Canada – reveals privately educated pupils have increased access to Shakespeare, suggesting that study of his works is still sometimes reserved for the academic, economically and culturally elite.

"of the fourteen countries where shakespeare is not named on the curriculum, the teaching of shakespeare was found to be highly dependent on the type of school pupils attend."

When is Shakespeare taught?

Overwhelmingly, students in the wiki encounter Shakespeare between the ages of 14 and 16. The prevalence of this age group is not surprising given that reading Shakespeare (unless in translation) requires a high level of English language knowledge, likely only to be gained in later secondary schooling (Vince, 2005). Twelve countries – South Africa; Mexico; Australia; Canada; USA; Denmark; England; Malta; Poland; Slovakia; Spain; Puerto Rico – described teaching Shakespeare to both younger and older children. However, around half of these nations have English as a first or primary language, so that students' proficiency with English is established at a younger age. Eighteen countries were identified where Shakespeare was said to feature on university courses. Interestingly, the data for eight of these countries – Argentina; Brazil; Bangladesh; Pakistan; Yemen; Cyprus; Georgia; Romania – stated that Shakespeare does not feature on the school curriculum. This suggests that in these countries, young people are unlikely to study Shakespeare unless they enrol in relevant courses at university, where they may encounter him for this first time.

What language is Shakespeare taught in?

Forty-one countries provided information regarding the language used in students' encounters with Shakespeare in school, at drama clubs or university. Twelve countries were identified where pupils were said to study Shakespeare in translation to their first language. These were: Brazil; Mexico; Peru; China; Jordan; Oman; Thailand; Vietnam; Georgia; Hungary; Poland; Spain. Fourteen countries were identified where pupils study Shakespeare in 'original English' i.e. not translated into modern English: Nigeria; South Africa; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; India; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; Uzbekistan; USA; Germany; Italy; Malta. The countries indicated as studying Shakespeare in modern English were: Tanzania; Iraq; Kuwait; Romania. Uganda; and Puerto Rico. Serbia stated that pupils studied Shakespeare in English, but it was unclear whether this was in the 'original English' or as a modern English translation. Nine countries – Argentina; Russia; Canada; Czech Republic; Denmark; England; Greece; Slovakia; Ukraine – said that Shakespeare was studied in two or more language variations: for example, 'original English' and modern English or Ukrainian and Russian. So, not only is there variation between countries regarding what language Shakespeare is studied in, but variation exists within countries, especially those where educational provision is determined by state or region, rather than nationally.

What Shakespeare is studied?

With regards to which Shakespearean texts are studied in classrooms internationally, the data in the document indicated *Romeo and Juliet* as the most popular play. This can in part be attributed to the play's popularity as a result of Baz Luhrmann's film. As Kennedy & Lan (2010) note, major Shakespeare films produced in Hollywood, starring noted actors, and with subtitles available in many languages on DVDs, have vastly expanded audiences for Shakespeare. Another possible explanation is the perceived universality of the play's themes for young adults. A further twelve Shakespeare plays as well as the sonnets were named in the wiki. Comedy and tragedy are the dominant genres studied. The amount of the play-text studied varied between countries. Few pupils in India were said to study full-length plays, the reason for this being that 'Shakespeare is now considered more specialised' and expansive study of Shakespeare is reserved for students in Higher Education.

How is Shakespeare taught?

Nineteen of the forty-five countries state that they 'use a traditional, desk-bound approach' to teach Shakespeare. With just under half of the countries in the document said to use this approach in the classroom, the number was slightly higher than expected, especially considering the scale of literature available that champions the use of active approaches to teaching Shakespeare in the classroom. However, the majority of the literature available on active approaches to teaching is written by English speaking authors. Titles in the existing *Cambridge School Shakespeare* series, for example, can be purchased from outside the United Kingdom, but only in English. School Shakespeare series also tend to be oriented towards those studying GCSE and A-level examinations and may not be as useful to students in other countries, studying under different examination systems.

Active approaches to teaching Shakespeare are perhaps also side-lined in favour of desk-bound approaches by many countries because of a failure by its exponents to overcome trepidations surrounding the pedagogy internationally. Doddington (2007) recognises there are constraints in student-centred education, such as the amount of time needed in planning physical and creative activities, which appear to deter education practitioners from using them. Nonetheless, there are signs of change. In Uzbekistan, the wiki stated that 'a 2015 joint Government and UNICEF target aims to introduce new child-centred teaching technologies' in teacher training institutes. This could in time impact on how pupils learn Shakespeare.

"evidence in the document suggests that although desk-bound approaches dominate the wiki, elements of drama and performance feature significantly in some countries' schools."

Furthermore, a link can be drawn between the reasons *why* pupils study Shakespeare and the effect this has on pedagogies with which they are taught Shakespeare. The data provided for India states that English Literature – in which Shakespeare features heavily – 'is no longer considered an essential part of learning the English language' and the focus today 'is on learning functional contemporary English for use in the global marketplace'. Shakespeare is therefore more likely to be studied by those taking English Literature classes, where he continued to be seen as necessary 'reading' (Davison & Dowson 2009).

Evidence in the document suggests that although desk-bound approaches dominate the wiki, elements of drama and performance feature significantly in some countries' schools. Pupils in Tanzania; Oman; Georgia; Greece; and Romania have access to Shakespeare through non-compulsory, extra-curricular activities. In Oman, each of the eleven regions 'has specialist supervisors in theatre who support teachers in schools to deliver quality theatre activities'. In Libya, all schools host one week of arts and theatre work with theatre productions being performed in three major cities. Similar collaborations between educational and arts sectors were recorded in the entries for India, Australia and England.

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Heritage Shakespeare?

PERRY MILLS – Deputy Headmaster of the King Edward School, Stratford-upon-Avon and Artistic Director of Edward's Boys – discusses the company's recent production of *Henry V* in relation to 'heritage'. September sees Edward's Boys' latest production – Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* – staged in their hometown and at Christ Church, Oxford. To discover more about the company visit www.edwardsboys.org

In 2003, the historian Michael Wood asked me if I would be interested in directing boys from King Edward VI School, Stratford-upon-Avon in a few short extracts from Early Modern plays to illustrate his forthcoming television series, *In Search of Shakespeare*. I accepted the invitation and over the next few months different groups of boys were filmed in brief pieces from plays such as Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, a translation of Seneca's *Hecuba* and Jonson's *The Poetaster*. The point was to see what might be revealed when boys took on female roles, as was the convention in that period.

Carol Chillington Rutter subsequently suggested we undertake an irregular schedule of workshops with groups of boys and bits of texts from that period in order to carry out some tentative research: how might this cross-gender casting have worked? Additionally, Carol was interested in the influence of the grammar school curriculum on playwrights, so we explored texts in both English and Latin. In 2005 'The Thisby Project' was presented before a small audience of parents, friends and academics in Big School ("Shakespeare's Schoolroom"). It comprised extracts from several plays by Shakespeare and from Jonson's *Epicoene*. Furthermore, there were readings of translations of Ovid, which Shakespeare would certainly have known at school, by Turberville and Golding, together with some of the original Latin.

Sometime afterwards I became interested in plays written for companies featuring *only* boys and decided to start exploring that largely ignored repertoire, including Marston, Lyly, Middleton. The majority of these plays have a pitifully thin performance history and yet, in our experience, audiences can still enjoy them. In 2009, I coined a name for the company. One of the original troupes, formed from the choirboys of St Paul's Cathedral, was commonly known as "Paul's Boys". It took little imagination to realise that a group from King Edward VI School could only be known as "Edward's Boys".

I should make it clear that we intend the plays to work for audiences of today. These plays are not museum pieces and should not be treated as such. I have never really understood the term "original practices" in relation to performance of this period since there is so little hard evidence about how the plays were first presented. And it goes without saying that we can never replicate the original performance conditions or expectations. An Elizabethan playgoer went to the theatre knowing that a boy would be playing the female role. That makes a crucial difference. However, I can report – based upon wide feedback – that an audience of 2013 can accept a boy playing a woman, and not simply as mockery or satire. Pascale Aebischer explains it in the following manner: *I keep being struck by the delightful appropriateness with which a lanky youth conveys the awkward desires of a young woman and by the disturbing thrill of hearing, as if for the first time, the erotic ambiguities and potential of lines written for adolescents.*

> "I should make it clear that we intend the plays to work for audiences of today. These plays are not museum pieces and should not be treated as such."

She is not alone in identifying an element of paradox in the experience: by attempting to bring these 'dusty old plays' into the twenty-first century there seems to be a sense in which we provide glimpses into the past. Tiffany Stern confirms this illuminating melange: *Skilful instrumentalists and actors, the boys also bring contemporary music and modern gesture to their performances, resulting in productions that are youthful, energetic and distinctly 'now' as well as 'then' . . . Edward's Boys combine the best of the past and the present to create a wholly new and extraordinary theatrical experience.* We experience something similar ourselves when it comes to performance spaces. We have some very old school buildings and sometimes we perform in them. Indeed the Guildhall in Stratford-upon-Avon (completed in 1417 and standing next door to KES) is the place where William Shakespeare first saw professional theatre. The boys are used to touring and have been fortunate to have been invited to strut their stuff in spaces such as Shakespeare's Globe and Middle Temple Hall, London.

In March this year we performed Shakespeare's *Henry V*, not a play written for a boys' company. I must allow Richard Pearson, the School Archivist, to explain:

Up a wooden staircase between the Lower Guildhall and Big School is the Muniment Room. Here the discovery in the spring of 2005 of a box of photographs of Henry V from 1913 was the first step in a plan for a commemorative production. There was the added poignancy that all the boys taking part were later involved in the First World War, including two sets of brothers, and seven of that cast were killed in conflict. Since a professional had played the Chorus in that production, it seemed to augur well that the distinguished actor, and Old Boy, Tim Pigott-Smith agreed with the idea of playing Chorus in 2013. The original Vaughan Williams score (believed "lost") was discovered in the Theatre Records at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; Perry Mills agreed to direct the production; the RSC's Swan Theatre was secured for one of the performances.

At first, I was unsure why I should direct *Henry V* with an all-boy group. The 1913 K.E.S. cast featured both sexes; indeed the Chorus was performed by a professional *actress*. Then I thought about that cast, and how all those Old Boys went off to fight in a real war within a few years. I imagined a couple of them meeting up by chance the night before the Battle of Ypres – or the Somme, a location mentioned in Shakespeare's play – and greeting one another as old friends. Old . . . boys. What would they talk about? Inevitably (I felt) they would swap memories of that production where they played at being soldiers who fought a famous battle in a field not many miles from where they were sitting. They might even quote a few half-remembered lines. Now they were supposed to be real soldiers. Had they now grown into the role? Does a soldier ever really feel he is doing anything other than playing a part? I could only surmise that meeting up with an old school friend at such a time would have been comforting.

In June 2012 my wife and I visited Westminster Abbey as tourists. We trooped past the tombs and sculptures, the plaques and portraits, and I looked hard at the tomb of Henry V. Disappointed, I felt no particular spark. Then, in a rather plain room below floor level within a dull glass case, we saw Henry V's "funeral achievements" – his shield, his helmet and his saddle. These were items touched by the man himself. I was struck powerfully. Later, I read that in 1599 Shakespeare would have attended the funeral of the poet Edmund Spenser at Westminster Abbey, and would probably have gazed at those very objects; perhaps he felt a similar sense of awe. It started to become clearer to me that this production had to embrace the whole idea of heritage: a sense of the importance of what has gone before and the similarities between then and now.

In the school's Memorial Library (built in 1923) there is a bronze plaque with the names of the Old Boys and Masters of the school who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. There is also a stained-glass

Photo © Perry Mills

window which commemorates two brothers who died in the earlier conflict, the Jennings Window. Both lads were in the cast of Henry V and so the window features an image of Shakespeare's king and a quotation from Act 4 ("O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts"). It is in ways like this that communities like schools memorialize their dead, thereby emphasising a sense of continuity. Our production would be another way.

Consequently we felt a great sense of responsibility because we wanted to do justice to our predecessors from 1913. There was a terrific poignancy surrounding that original production. As I prepared the text, considered cuts, set design, props and how to make best use of that RVW music . . . I was constantly drawn back to the image of those young boys in that extraordinary series of photographs "playing soldiers". I was particularly affected by a line of four young boys (a scrawl in pencil on the reverse suggests they were "French Heralds") who stand against a wall of the Guildhall puffing their chests out in pride clad in what looks like the 1913 version of tinfoil. The metaphor "All the world's a stage" becomes concrete. And the throat tightens.

However, we in no way felt daunted by the prospect of completing this project. We are used to high expectations of our work as we take on these rarely-performed plays. Challenge is part of the thrill – for the boys and for me – as well as the "job o'work" ethos of the company. If you're bothered by the pressure, don't come to the party. But if you're honest with yourself and work hard and support others and want to have fun – just do it!

I chose costumes, mainly military uniforms, from three periods: all-purpose medieval, 1913 and 2013. In addition to swords and rifles, letters and crowns many of the props were represented by sports equipment. The intention was that the cricket bats and stumps, tennis and rugby balls would provide constant reminders that the audience was watching mere *boys*, just as their predecessors were in 1913; and perhaps even in 1415. Tim Pigott-Smith's Chorus was a School Headmaster who marked books whilst recalling those boys who went off to the First World War. It was as though someone had handed us the best of all contexts: the continuity and change between four specific dates. 2013 – 1913 – 1599 (first performance) – 1415. This was perfectly expressed by Emma Smith:

Now that the last First World War veteran, Harry Patch, has died, our connection with those long-past events can no longer be through the memories of the old. Rather, this production suggests it should be . . . through the shared experience of the young: these generations of school students echoing back to their forbears in 1913, and beyond that, to Shakespeare's own schoolroom in the 1570s.

I became increasingly aware of the enormous emotional power of the resonances set up by this particular production of this particular play. In the event our production was accounted very moving: not a term I would often use to describe my feelings about *Henry V*. The atmosphere was deemed even more poignant on the evening of Monday 18th March when, for our final performance, in Big School itself, the role of the Chorus was taken by David Biddle, another Old Boy of the school, who is also a teacher at K.E.S. and a fine amateur actor. One of the cast told me in the interval that, when acting with Mr Biddle, "He looks at us differently." He is, after all, a teacher.

A few days later senior members of the cast gave a presentation in Final Assembly about their experiences of being part of this extraordinary production. Jack Fenwick, Deputy Head Boy – and Pistol, described the experience thus: *Metal swords are swung about the stage alongside cricket stumps, our school ties are clear beneath our army suits and sideburns stick out from under the wigs. Our goal is for the performance to transcend time, and consistency is thus irrelevant. On Monday evening we were twenty-first century schoolboys playing the room in which we're taught PSHE. We were trudging through the Agincourt mud of 1415. We were treading Shakespeare's floorboards of 1575. We were the boys of 1913 – who were blissfully unaware that the gleeful parents watching from the audience would, within a matter of months, be bidding them farewell. Edward's Boys attempt to transcend time. In this way, I hope that I can return in 6 or 7 years, still an Edward's Boy, and watch the younger lads from* Henry V *lead the next generation out onto the stage.*

"the reverberations echo across the years. and the throat tightens."

CATHLEEN MCKAGUE has been employed as a senior-intermediate teacher in southern Ontario, Canada, since 2006. She works primarily on a daily occasional (substitute) basis, but has held several longer-term positions teaching English, drama, sociology, religion, and French. She is now pursuing her PhD at The Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon, U.K.

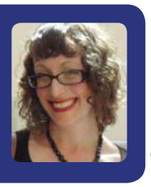

Photo © Cathleen McKague

THE TEMPEST IN PORTABLE TWO

It was a substitute teacher's nightmare. The class to which I was assigned compressed twenty-nine pubescent, hyperactive students, aged ten and eleven, into a rather stuffy 'portable' – a mobile, temporary building apart from the main school – which had sprung not one, but two, leaks in its roof. Naturally, the students found these leaks endlessly amusing, and ensuring that they remained in their seats was an exceedingly challenging task. The pupil body was a lively, talkative group, making instruction difficult and frustrating: indeed, the arts teacher confided to me that she often felt as though she 'wasn't even in the room', and the regular classroom teacher admitted, during a phone conversation, that most days she returns home exhausted. The room hosted an exceptionally high number of students with special needs and IEPs (Individual Education Programmes), and at least two gifted students whose voracious appetite for extra work seemed to outstrip pedagogical interventions. Conan, one of the gifted, took delight in locating errors in a children's text on Greek antiquity, for instance, but soon bored of this task (all students' names have been changed). Classroom management was a constant and often overwhelming task; in fact, at times the group was so unruly that I had to administer both individual and class detentions – on my first day with them, at that – and even the reality of parental contact did not seem a potent threat (or, in the end, an effective solution). To top it all off, I was given a single day's lesson plan for an entire week of programming. As a teacher certified to work with the intermediate/senior level (ages 12–18), and who had never been trained in primary/junior programming, I was at a loss.

However, I fell to my resources and dug up the most intriguing artefact in my collection of pedagogical materials: the Usborne Young Reading 2010 version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, retold by Rosie Dickins, in consultation with Alison Kelly of Roehampton University, and illustrated by Christa Unzner. What does one do with a class of energetic spotlight-stealers? Why, give them a stage, of course! I quickly fashioned a week-long lesson plan in which we would use an exploration of Caliban's 'enchanted isle' speech as a springboard to discussing and reading the Usborne version of the play. I planned to introduce Caliban's famous set-piece of nine lines in length from the original text at first in isolation, free from speech tags or surrounding text, and ascertain if the passage sparked any notes of recognition from its use in the 2012 London Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. This tactic, I thought, would engage the students by immediately underscoring the cultural relevance of the passage. Psychologically, introducing Shakespeare in tandem with an exciting, international sporting event would, I hoped, create positive associations with the former and offset some of the anxiety that students may experience when encountering what may be viewed as challenging or dry material for the first time.

"what does one do with a class of energetic spotlight-stealers? why, give them a stage, of course!"

Using the classroom's video projector and internet connection, I intended next to show a YouTube video clip of Kenneth Branagh reciting the speech at the Opening Ceremony. I would ask the students if they recognised the speaker, and explain that he is an actor famous for his involvement with the production of Shakespearean dramas. I would ascertain the familiarity of the students with Shakespeare and his works.

I then planned to reveal the preceding line, Stephano's 'No, monster, not I' (3.2.132), as well as Caliban's speech tag, using a print-out and the classroom's ELMO interactive document camera. I would ask the class what the speech tags indicated, and come to the understanding that the passage is from a play. Together with the class, I planned to then unpack the

passage, word by word, to ensure comprehension, glossing any particularly unusual or arcane terms. Utilising the Socratic method – that is, developing latent ideas through dialectic questioning – I would draw out from the students their interpretation of the speaker, Caliban, and his relation to Stephano. After providing a bit of contextual information about the scene, I would distribute copies of the passage to pair-groups and have them recite the passage, alternating delivery between Stephano and Caliban's lines. Finally, I would have the pair-groups present their passage to the class.

Following this active approach, I would, once again using the ELMO camera, read the story with the class over a series of sessions, chapter by chapter, showing illustrations and having the students recite the main text, while I would read the quote bubbles of original Shakespearean dialogue. We would discuss the progression of the story at each stage, having students paraphrase the action. I would then follow up by having the students complete a reflective activity, time-permitting.

When I put this plan into action, however, I quickly discovered that modifications were required. Despite the assistance of the most technology-savvy of the pupils, I could not seem to switch from ELMO to Internet, and so had to forgo showing the Branagh clip. Unpacking the passage, despite its short length, was also tedious – the students did not respond well to this sort of exercise, involve them as I might, and classroom management became an issue.

I was astonished, however, to discover that as soon as I had the students in their pair-groups and on their feet, the class became intensely focussed and self-regulating. Clearly enjoying this engagement with dramatic activity, the students immediately divided up role-tasks and began practicing their scenes, without any prompting or guidance on my part whatsoever. They had previously completed drama modules with their arts teacher, and had seemingly grasped the foundations and essentials of dramatic performance. I watched with delight as some pair-groups began experimenting with vocals and physicality, adding gestures and attempting to make their Caliban performances 'unique'. The only regulation required by me was ensuring that all individuals attempted both roles.

> "as soon as I had the students in their pair-groups and on their feet, the class became intensely focussed and self-regulating."

During the pair-group performances, much more classroom moderation was demanded. It was surprising that the students responded so positively to the opportunity to perform, and yet experienced so much difficulty in maintaining focus as audience members. Perhaps nerves were an issue here.

> "there is a place for shakespeare in even the most challenging of classes, provided the approach and materials used are customised for the needs of that particular student body."

Nevertheless, when the time arrived for us to read the story together, the students once again responded eagerly. They enjoyed reading aloud for their peers, and some, once again, adopted voices pertinent to the character impersonated. We managed to read a number of chapters but did not quite finish the text, preventing participation in reflective activities. Once again, I was thrilled by the positive reception the students demonstrated, several of them inquiring, 'When can we read more of the story?'

The question of Shakespeare's presence in the classroom – what age should introduction take place, which texts should be used, or even whether Shakespeare is appropriate at all – is a topical one with multiple perspectives advanced. My experience in Portable Two demonstrated that there *is* a place for Shakespeare in even the most challenging of classes, provided the approach and materials used are customised for the needs of that particular student body. In this case, textual analysis was a struggle, despite its importance; next time I would perhaps turn it into a game of sorts. The active approach was incredibly successful, and I would involve more of this technique in a future lesson plan with this type of group – perhaps by having the pupils individually creatively physicalize Caliban, or Ariel, or other characters, and then engage in a written reflection of how their physicalisation affected their understanding of the character. I would also establish audience behavioural requirements. Given more time I would use our textual examination as a springboard to having the students prepare their own collective creations, loosely based upon but extrapolating beyond the events of the play.

> "positive first engagements with shakespeare in the classroom are essential to developing a lifelong appreciation of his works."

Additionally, I would familiarise myself more intimately with the technology required, and perhaps avoid plans that would involve toggling between Internet and ELMO projection. The Usborne text, however, with its contemporary language and whimsical, colourful illustrations, proved an invaluable tool and seemed to be of an ideal register for a group of this type.

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Positive first engagements with Shakespeare in the classroom are essential to developing a lifelong appreciation of his works. Introducing Shakespeare at age ten or eleven, which is several years earlier than is habitual in the school board for which I am employed, seems both appropriate and desirable, as the students at this stage of development are developing a curiosity about their world, while also wishing to initiate themselves into the sphere of adult culture. I was delighted to discover that, though never having been formally instructed about him or his works, several students knew a fair bit about Shakespeare; in fact, Melissa, a student who struggled to maintain focus in class and performed at a sub-standard level in certain subjects such as mathematics, knew the most about the playwright, reeling off an impressive number of his plays. Encouraging interest in and engagement with Shakespeare with this liminal age-group seems an ideal strategy, providing the groundwork for a positive and successful secondary-school experience with Shakespeare's texts.

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Shakespeare's Contemporaries

This article deals with issues of literary heritage surrounding the teaching of Shakespeare's contemporaries. BETHANIE LORD, a recent PGCE English graduate from the University of Cambridge shares the findings of her research project into teachers' perceptions of non-Shakespearean early modern drama at A-level.

In 2012, I conducted questionnaire and focus group research with seven English teachers delivering A-level English literature classes at a school in North Yorkshire. The participants' average overall teaching experience was between six and ten years. The research aimed to uncover answers to three questions:

How do teachers decide what non-Shakespearian early modern drama to teach and why?

Do they prefer teaching Shakespearian or non-Shakespearian early modern drama at A-Level and why?

Do teachers have access to resources which enable them to teach non-Shakespearian early modern drama to a standard they deem suitable as well as both confidently and comfortably?

The impetus for the project was my interest in teaching English as a career as well as my discovery early on in the research process that the position non-Shakespearian early modern drama occupies within the curriculum is a topic largely absent in academic research. This is despite ongoing debate about canonical literature, set texts and English qualifications triggered by government curriculum reforms (Dickinson, 2012). In policy, this body of drama is similarly neglected: witness Shakespeare's place as the sole compulsory author in the National Curriculum for English – with teachers in the 1999 version additionally asked to cover drama by other major playwrights (e.g. Marlowe), one of whom must have been writing between 1300 and 1800 – and the paucity of suitable teaching resources or approaches. Literature which mentions the benefits of teaching Early Modern Drama tends to use Shakespeare exclusively as an example (Leech, 1995) and this is also largely true of pedagogic writing and resources beyond the curriculum.

I found that although teachers viewed non-Shakespearian early modern drama positively and described enjoying the prospect (and more rarely, the experience) of conducting lessons on it, several issues reduce their confidence on this subject causing them to prefer teaching other topics. The most recurrent of these were the absence of supporting resources, the language barrier, teachers' feelings of lack of experience and training for teaching this topic, and the need to combat students' negative perceptions of these texts. Throughout the study teachers expressed concern about the difficulty of teaching these complex texts within the time frame allowed by the qualification and their belief that the structure of the syllabus restricts their choice of early modern drama. The research suggested that the fact that 83% of participants agreed that they preferred to teach Shakespeare than his contemporaries – and a high majority of the total teachers surveyed felt more confident teaching Shakespeare – related to these challenges.

The gargantuan role possessed by Shakespeare within the literary canon is both a blessing and a curse for Early Modern Drama. Although his manifestation within the domain ensures that study of the genre will continue, Shakespeare's presence can overshadow his contemporaries and blot out the literary culture from which he has emerged. Consequently, one of the issues which arises for teachers wanting to promote non-Shakespearian literature of the English Renaissance is the general unavailability of texts themselves, their status in the curriculum and the ways in which they have been edited. All but one of the teachers agreed that they found it difficult to access resources on the texts and related topics. Most of the participants argued that there was a 'limited range of copies of the texts which are accessible for kids' and that 'it is more difficult . . . finding useful and reliable sources for us teachers'. In contrast, teachers are able to access reasonably priced Shakespeare texts. These are often modernized and standardized for ease of classroom use. They also contain abundant apparatus for helping students understand his language. Editions of other early modern drama suitable for schools contrast this entirely in their appearance and, if insufficiently glossed, the inaccessibility of the original language can be off-putting for teachers and students alike. As a result 'instead of enabling teachers to introduce students to a new and exciting world of original texts' Shakespeare's contemporaries become 'obscure and actually restrict the teaching canon to what could be easily understood' (Huebert 147). Hadfield (2011) argues that, as a result, many students avoid early modern courses during further education because 'they are frightened of studying older

"one of the issues which arises for teachers wanting to promote non-shakespearian literature of the english renaissance is the general unavailability of texts."

texts, because the language is unfamiliar and they feel out of their depth, and because they have not studied enough relevant or challenging material at school' (147). Additionally, this situation,male-authored Hubert (2003) suggests that 'the pleasures offered by most Renaissance playwrights will always elude us if we are unwilling to see the plays in their own brightness' (179). This is a notable point as many of Shakespeare's contemporaries or subsequent writers are overshadowed by, compared to, or made supplementary to Shakespeare's plays (Cave, Schafer and Woodland 1999, Williams 1990). Non-Shakespearean early modern drama's secondary role is further illustrated by the general lack of resources available for teachers and the general public. For instance, the majority of online resources and educational classes, offered by theatre companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and Renaissance Theatre Company, revolve around Shakespeare. The majority of theatre productions students of English are taken to are also Shakespearean, offering limited exposure to the contextual and generic qualities of revenge tragedy more widely (McEvoy, 2006).

The amount of resources offered on early modern dramatists clearly corresponds to their respective positions within the National Curriculum. For instance, non-Shakespearian plays which feature more often in the A Level Syllabus, such as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, have more available resources than other non-Shakespearian renaissance literature. This perpetuates teachers selecting the same play, often repeatedly (Cheney 2004, and Maclure 1996).

There is a dramatic difference in the number of active publishers for both Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean early modern literature: there are at least twelve publishers in the United Kingdom producing modern copies of Shakespeare's work; the most well-known of these include the Arden Shakespeare, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, and Penguin books. Many of these editions not only provide contextual information about the play but also clearly illustrated activities and translations for students as well as useful teaching resources. In addition, there are worldwide translations of Shakespeare's work including sign language video editions and braille copies of his plays making them widely accessible. In contrast, I was able to find just three publishers of non-Shakespearean drama suitable for classroom use, all of which also publish Shakespearean texts: Blackwell Publishing, Penguin books and Methuen Drama. Despite Methuen's New Mermaid series, edited by experienced teachers who provide clear copies with a comprehensive introduction to aid both teachers and students, other editions published by Methuen and Oxford World Classics are often too long or complex for school use.

Moreover, the majority of resources available for teaching renaissance drama as a whole set their focus on Shakespeare. One example is Hiscock and Hopkin's (2007) 'Teaching Shakespeare and Early Modern Dramatists' which has three chapters dedicated to Shakespeare's plays, whereas other Renaissance playwrights are examined in single chapters. Although this perhaps simply symbolises the sheer volume of Shakespeare's work, his contemporaries secondary place to him in most anthology contents pages are arguably reflective of their inferior position within the curriculum. *Early Modern Drama Online* (2011) has recognised the absence of non-Shakespearean renaissance literature and has provided a website which makes both editions of the play and literary companions available. However, this resource is still under construction and is dwarfed in comparison to the digital editions of Shakespeare's plays which are available online (digitalrenaissance.arts.uwa.edu.au/index.html). The lack of resources accessible to teachers in this area affects teacher's opinions of non-Shakespearian drama and their desire to teach it.

"the research also demonstrated the influential nature of prior learning and teaching experience of non-shakespearian renaissance drama on teacher's confidence and ability with this genre."

The research also demonstrated the influential nature of prior learning and teaching experience of non-Shakespearian Renaissance drama on teacher's confidence and ability with this genre. For instance, the questionnaire showed that 83% of the participants had studied some form of non-Shakespearian early modern drama prior to beginning their teaching career. The one participant who had not studied it before felt her lack of experience limited her ability to teach non-Shakespearian early modern drama and preferred to teach Shakespeare. One participant argued 'confidence comes from knowledge and I definitely don't have enough knowledge.' Another commented, 'I don't really know that much about early modern drama, apart from Shakespeare.' The relationship between experience and confidence was also shown in a pilot questionnaire with ten students on an English

PGCE programme in the same region where all participants who had not studied such drama at school or university felt lower in confidence and under-prepared on this topic, preferring to teach Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, in the pilot, even those who had studied non-Shakespearean early modern drama prior to their teacher training either felt unconfident teaching it or insufficiently prepared to teach it.

"other playwrights are often seen as an alternative to shakespeare, when, as a matter of fact, should be studied alongside him."

Another of the challenges facing teachers in delivering non-Shakespearean early modern drama was their own and their pupils' negative preconceptions of these plays. One argued that there is 'a kind of stigma' around the texts 'which makes you feel less prepared and therefore makes you less confident.' This could be due to its position within the A Level syllabus as well as its inferior position to Shakespeare in schools: 'other playwrights are often seen as an alternative to Shakespeare, when, as a matter of fact, should be studied alongside him.'

The participants also raised concern over possible texts' positioning within the curriculum; it was suggested that they are 'being neglected' and remain 'secondary to Shakespeare.' One participant argued that its position within the curriculum and the classroom was threatened by the perception that it could be 'more relevant' to young peoples' lives today. Teachers also commented on the impact of students' perceptions of the plays as linguistically difficult: 'When pupils struggle to follow the language . . . there is a general resistance to the texts'. The perception that non-Shakespearian early modern drama works if 'you have a more advanced, more able class' was widespread and explicitly related to teachers' beliefs that the available editions were 'more suitable for A Level students. Despite the previous discussion of challenges which face teachers using Shakespeare's contemporaries several participants commented that they 'enjoy the challenge' and that 'it is good to teach the pupils something original, even if the language is challenging.' Furthermore, when asked, they did argue for its retention within the curriculum suggesting that its benefit outweigh the disadvantages: 'it should definitely be kept in the syllabus.' All participants agreed that there was vast academic value for students in 'preparing students for further study at university'. They were also portrayed as being enjoyable, as 'great for class discussions and inventive and creative

"it is good to teach the pupils something original, even if the language is challenging."

performances', when well taught and well resourced. Popular texts included *Doctor Faustus* and the *Duchess of Malfi*, because teachers had prior knowledge of these works. Several teachers stated that they had selected these texts to challenge themselves, implying that these texts remain 'challenging' regardless of experience.

In conclusion, the teachers involved in this research expressed a desire to retain non-Shakespearian early modern drama within the syllabus, and an enjoyment in the plays, but often felt under prepared or unconfident teaching them. This highlights the need to increase training and supportive material for teachers on this subject if non-Shakespearian early modern drama is to remain within the A-level syllabus.

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Do you teach non-Shakespearean Early Modern Drama? Does this article reflect your experience? Email: teachingshakespeare@ymail.com

active macbeth

MATT O'CONNOR is an English and Drama teacher at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield. He has attended courses on active approaches to Shakespeare at the Royal Shakespeare Company and is studying for an MSc in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University. He can be contacted at moconnor@qegsss.org.uk. Here he offers a lesson plan for active Macbeth with year 8 students.

As the first edition of his play *The Malcontent* was being published in 1604, Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Marston wrote of his concern that the exercise might take away something vital:

"i would fain leave the paper; only one thing afflicts me, to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be enforcively published to be read. . ."

For Marston, reading the play text is a shadow of the active collaboration possible in the theatre, where lines are spoken and scenes realised physically before an audience. The following is an account of one attempt to introduce Year 8 students to Shakespeare in an active way, informed by rehearsal room practices, while working in a conventionally-sized classroom. We explored several scenes from *Macbeth*, and extracts from the opening scenes of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. I hoped that doing the scenes on their feet would increase students' confidence to approach the writing as playful, physical and open, where there is not a fixed meaning or answer to be received. Lessons such as this are focused primarily on questioning, on explorations of scenes that attempt to use instinctive thinking by working physically and often quickly, but do not seek quick answers. In this context, the teacher repositions herself or himself as a co-learner, as meaning is questioned and co-constructed amidst an ensemble of learners.

The lesson outlined here focused on exploring the immediate effect on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth of their murder of King Duncan, a monarch and friend staying at their castle 'in double trust':

In groups of four, students were given five minutes to produce a freeze frame using the prompt 'Double Trust'. The group could choose how many of its members were in the frame, offering a way for any who preferred not to perform to hold other important roles in the group, devising or helping to direct the visual presentation of the idea.

One group's freeze frame showed two men shaking hands, whilst the left arm of each reached round to the other, creating a physical connection on each side of the body. After several freeze frames had been viewed, the class was asked to discuss the question: 'What does Macbeth have to break through in order to stab Duncan?'

The intention of this exercise was to encourage all the students, as actors and directors in the rehearsal room, to think about what Macbeth has just faced offstage in the moments when he stabs Duncan: the moments that led into Act 2 scene 2, the focus of our work. The short time limit and use of an abstract phrase are intended to encourage the students to work instinctively, to value their initial ideas and their physical ability to represent them.

Working within the whole group for the next exercise, two students were asked to read the parts of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in 2.2, with everyone else listening for words or ideas that are repeated in the scene, especially by Macbeth. Some of these words chosen were: sorry sight, murder, sleep / sleep no more, deed, cry / cried.

These words or ideas gave us something to discuss, ways into the psychology and emotions of Macbeth especially during this short scene where the brave warrior of Act 1 disappears. Discussions of these words and phrases led to the raising of another direct question that students were asked to use as a way of focusing their rehearsal of the scene in groups by paying special attention to where words like 'murder' or 'sleep' are used: 'What does Macbeth fear he has lost?'

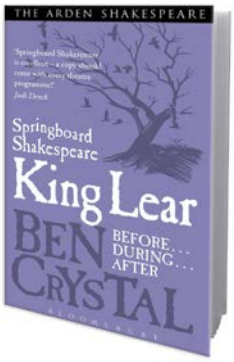
After 15 minutes of rehearsing the scene – with two members of each group of 4 performing whilst the others watched and offered direction or listened, before swapping over – one group volunteered to perform. In the time immediately after this performance, students were asked to raise further questions that intrigued them about this scene or the version of it they'd just witnessed e.g. 'How many questions don't have answers in this scene?', 'Why does he answer some things over and over?'

Did you try this activity with your students? Let *Teaching Shakespeare* know about your experience at teachingshakespeare@ymail.com.

practitioner interview

BEN CRYSTAL is an actor and writer best known for making the works of Shakespeare accessible to all. He has co-authored books with his father, the linguist David Crystal, and was the sole author of the very successful *Shakespeare on Toast* (2008) and *The Shakespeare Miscellany* (2005). This was warmly received and continues to sell well. His first non-Shakespeare book, *Sorry, I'm British!* (2010), was co-written with Adam Russ. Here, he answers the editor's questions about the pleasures and challenges of editing the Springboard Shakespeare series.

This is your first time editing Shakespeare's plays for publication, can you tell us about the particular pleasures and challenges which this presented you with?



I suppose it is my first time editing, but don't think of myself as an editor, only an actor that's good with words. As the 'During' section of each book only looks at two or three moments from each scene in a play, choosing which bits to write about – or more, which bits to leave out! – was hard. Pleasures – spending every day looking at four of the most famous plays by my favourite writer, and forcing myself to look at them laterally.

Prior to writing on and editing Shakespeare, you had gained experience of his works as an actor. How do these two roles inform each other?

I'm still an actor. If I didn't get to act Shakespeare, I wouldn't feel comfortable writing about him. I started writing about him while performing at the Globe, and now everything I write comes from having worked the plays in a rehearsal room, or on stage in front of an audience. This is where the plays belong. Then it's a question of cramming those ideas onto the page.

"some think of them as books to read. I prefer to think of them as manuals on how to perform."

Several publishers have editions of Shakespeare aimed at schools' use, what's Springboard's unique selling point?

There aren't any short, useful guides to the plays out there that don't spoon-feed the reader. Springboard gives the few pieces of information you really need to get into a play. Then it breaks the speeches down as an actor might do in a rehearsal script, reminding that they're dynamic things that need work in order to speak them out loud. This hasn't been done before, and the books are designed to be attractive to an adult play-goer as much as a school student.

This issue of* Teaching Shakespeare *has several articles on Shakespeare as 'heritage'. Are notions of Shakespeare as part of Britain's literary and theatrical heritage helpful or inhibiting in your work as an editor, trying to make him accessible for school students?

I'm asked into schools fairly regularly to give talks and workshops, and I find there's a pressure on students to appreciate and understand Shakespeare 'Because He's Good', and such a central part of our literary culture. I always tell the students I work with that he started out as a penniless actor, and he wrote scripts for his actors to speak. Some think of them as books to read. I prefer to think of them as manuals on how to perform. That was my approach in writing Springboard, too – to explain how the manuals work.

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