

ISSUE 14

SPRING
2018

teaching shakespeare

POLICY • PEDAGOGY • PRACTICE

Spring 2018

ISSN 2049-3568 (Print) • ISSN 2049-3576 (Online)

EXPLORE STEINER SCHOOL SHAKESPEARE WITH MAJA PELIC-SABO
RELISH *TWELFTH NIGHT'S* GENDER PLAY WITH SAEKO MACHI
USE SHAKESPEARE TO COMBAT SEXISM WITH SARAH BROWN
EMBRACE SHAKESPEARE WITH EAL STUDENTS WITH CHRISTINA LIMA

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www.britishshakespeare.ws/education/

Image from *The Belfast Tempest* (dir. Andrea Montgomery, 2016). Terra Nova Productions. Courtesy of Neil Harrison (models Sean Brown and Louise Parker).



SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Shakespeare Association of America congress has a raft of education-related sessions in its programme for the LA meeting in Los Angeles. These include: the End of Education, Shakespeare Beyond the Research University, First-generation Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Service Courses, Teaching Shakespeare at the Performance, Connecting Faculty, Schools and Communities through Shakespeare, and Shakespeare in the Health Humanities. For further details see:

www.shakespeareassociation.org/annual-meetings/
www.shakespeareassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/June-2017-Bulletin-Final-w-Signature.pdf

BRITISH SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Don't miss our very own British Shakespeare Association conference in Belfast, 14–17 June 2018. As well as a dedicated education day, it includes UK premieres and director Q&As for *Veeram* (dir. Jayaraj, 2016), a South Indian film adaptation of *Macbeth*, and *Hermia and Helena* (dir. Matías Piñeiro, 2016), an Argentine adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as a Q+A with theatre director Andrea Montgomery (*The Belfast Tempest*, 2016). There are a number of bursaries available to assist teachers to attend (see the website for details).

www.britishshakespeare.ws/conference/

ASIAN SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION

Other relevant conferences in 2018 include the Asian Shakespeare Association meeting in the Philippines. It features papers on Shakespeare in education by contributors to the forthcoming Palgrave publication *Shakespeare in East Asian Education*, such as Li Jun, Adele Lee, and Kohei Uchimaru as well as a dedicated seminar on education.

www.asianshakespeare.org/conferences/

SHAKESPEARE FOR INCLUSIVE AUDIENCES

Actor, director, researcher, contributor to *Teaching Shakespeare*, Kelly Hunter continues to fundraise for her company, Flute Theatre's, work on Shakespeare for inclusive audiences: 'We are just about to go into rehearsals for our new production – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for children with autism at the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond. We tour round the world with our shows whilst relying entirely on donations and grants to keep us going. The Just Giving link is below. This is a brand new campaign – it would be wonderful to have you on board and please do pass it on to anyone you think may be happy to support us.'

www.flutetheatre.co.uk

www.orangetreetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/a-midsummer-nights-dream

www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/flutetheatre/journeycontinues



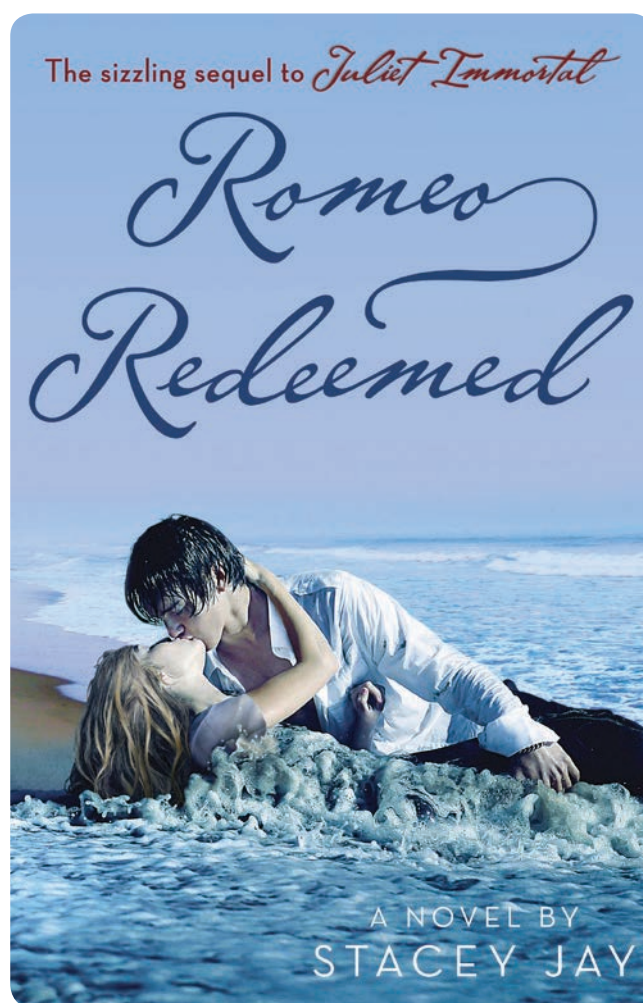
Photograph of Flute Theatre's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Tristram Kenton

PAIRING *ROMEO AND JULIET* WITH CONTEMPORARY VAMPIRE FICTION

RECENTLY, I supervised a couple of American and British teachers studying for masters degrees. As part of the process of refining the topics of their dissertations, they shared with me their concerns about the appropriateness of teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to teenagers (I immediately recalled the curious toddler counting primer seen in Stratford bookshops, *Little Master Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*, with its focus only on addition, never subtraction, in spite of the final body count).

One of their objectives was to find best practice approaches to teaching the play, with its representations of teenage suicide and violence between and within families, particularly given recent headlines about adolescent mental health, which estimates that a quarter of fourteen-year old girls have signs of depression and one-in-ten boys. Despite the emphasis in the prologue and Prince Escalus' closing lines on the waste of lives and the Capulets' distress at losing their only child, these teachers perceived a potential for the play to be misread by pupils as suggesting, or even condoning, suicide. I was surprised but could also relate to their trepidation. As a novice lecturer, I chose to put 4.48 Psychosis on a third-year, undergraduate module, but was acutely aware of mental health challenges among the student population. Each year, I am excited to teach it, to engage with Sarah Kane's humour as well as her despair and anger, committed to getting students talking about its critique of Thatcher's 'care in the community' policy and to provide a safe space to consider difficult topics. I am also freshly anxious each year to ensure that the way I teach it does not adversely impact on my students.

I spent last summer working my way through a body of literature which retells or appropriates *Romeo and Juliet*



within the vampire genre (including, of course, the controversial but hugely popular *Twilight* saga, but also taking in Stephanie Meyer's subsequent adaptations and spin-offs of her own writing). This is working towards a paper on feminist responses to twenty-first century, Western zeitgeist around forbidden love, consent and force in vampire *Romeo and Juliet* texts. For educators

"there was a 'chasm between what I knew was right, moral, ethical, honourable, and what I wanted.'
Life & death

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“is that Love, do you think? . . . BEING crazy about someone NO matter HOW MUCH they HURT you? you know it’s not.” *Juliet immortal*

concerned about teaching a play with two young suicides, some of the contemporary, (often) young adult texts that I read might provide useful paired readings to Shakespeare’s text, to compare and contrast early modern and contemporary handling of similar themes. These twenty-first century texts unanimously problematise the desirability of escape, suicide, violence and coercion (including within relationships) and death, even as they are saturated with these themes and actions. Additionally, they have modern English and blockbuster popularity on their side.

The negative impact on family and friends of running away and/or suicide are usually discussed with some nuance in these books. Shakespeare’s Juliet imagines a horrific life after (her fake) death in the play’s philtre speech. Similarly, these novels avoid simplistic condemnation while exploring life after death as anything other than peaceful or a solution to troubles in life. Where a character intends to kill themselves because of a desire to join their partner in an afterlife (i.e. as one of the undead), the undead partner frequently lists the drawbacks, dissuades them, distracts them, blocks them or persuades them to put it off, soliciting a promise that their living partner will consider their actions from all possible perspectives. To boot, the texts problematise, rather than run with, the sexual coercion or violence which is a staple of much vampire fiction, though this is not to say they omit it (the vampires would make interesting foils for *Dracula*, for anyone teaching Stoker). So, these texts do not posit straightforward deterrents

or injunctions, perhaps aware of the complex causality of suicide and the unpredictable, sometimes rebellious, responses teenagers can have to being debarred activities. And not all of them will be suitable for schools (*Let the Right One In*, adapted into Swedish and American film versions, contains representations of graphic violence, drug use, paedophilia and sex trafficking, while Lori Handeland’s and Shiloh Walker’s works verge on the erotica side of the romance genre – more likely to be appropriate for those working with adult students). Rather, they provide a space in which authors, through their vampire creations, complicate rather than glorify suicide, death, violence, and non-consensual sexual activity. If nothing else, they are glorious leisure reading for Shakespeare and gothic allusion-spotterers.

“I CANNOT BEAR TO HAVE DEAD PEOPLE ON my CONSCIENCE.”
Let the RIGHT ONE IN

“CAN ANY REASON EXCUSE MURDER?” *Juliet immortal*

AUTHOR	TITLE	DATES
Claudia Gabel	<i>Romeo and Juliet and Vampires</i>	2010
Lori Handeland	<i>Shakespeare Undead</i> <i>Zombie Island</i>	2010 2012
Stacey Jay	<i>Juliet Immortal</i> <i>Romeo Redeemed</i>	2011 2012
John A Lindqvist	<i>Let the Right One In</i>	2008
Stephanie Meyer	<i>Twilight</i> <i>New Moon</i> <i>Eclipse</i> <i>Breaking Dawn</i> <i>Midnight Sun</i> <i>Short Second Life of Bree Tanner</i> <i>Life and Death</i>	2005 2006 2007 2008 2008 2010 2015
Shiloh Walker	<i>Blood Kiss</i>	2005

CHRISTINA LIMA teaches Shakespeare and English language to international undergraduate students in the Erasmus/Study Abroad programmes at the University of Leicester in the UK. Her research interests lie in the fields of teaching Shakespeare, literature and language, and the history of English language teaching.

Attitudes to Shakespeare in the field of teaching English as a foreign/second language have historically oscillated from giving him a prominent position in the diffusion of the English language overseas (Eagleton, 2008) to an almost total rejection of the possibility of teaching literature – and therefore, Shakespeare – to language learners (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Functional language syllabi and a focus on ‘communicative skills’ have often led to the perception that Shakespeare is of little relevance to language learners, both in terms of language and content. The widely spread view that Shakespeare is ‘too old’ and ‘too difficult’ is likely to lead to the notions that Shakespeare is beyond the linguistic capabilities of even more advanced language learners and/or largely irrelevant to the development of the skills they need, especially in the Higher Education context. My experience teaching Shakespeare and English language to international undergraduate students has taught me that this is a fundamental misconception.

‘WHAT DO YOU READ MY LORD?’

Hamlet’s answer to Polonius’ question (II, ii) leads to the conclusion that words can be easily used to slander. There are indeed my instances in Shakespeare’s plays in which characters suffer slander with devastating consequences: in *Othello*, Desdemona is murdered; in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hero has to feign death in order to regain her honour. In a certain way, in the English language teaching context, Shakespeare has also long suffered from slander himself.

There are some untruths about Shakespeare’s language that have been often passed on as facts among English language teachers, teacher trainers, and learners without being thoroughly checked. David Crystal summarizes the linguistic myths surrounding Shakespeare’s language: excessively large vocabulary; excessive inventiveness; excessively difficult and outdated language; convoluted and impenetrable style. Yet, in the last decades, the work of linguists (e.g. Blake, 2001; Crystal & Crystal, 2004; Hussey, 1992; Johnson, 2013) and Shakespearean scholars (e.g. Eagleton, 1986; McDonald, 2001; Smith, 2013) has greatly

contributed to a better understanding of Shakespeare’s language and how it has shaped the English we speak today in terms of the development of its grammar, vocabulary, and use of figurative language.

“shakespeare’s use of allusions, extended metaphors, and figurative language are indeed likely to pose a considerable challenge to speakers of any language – including those whose first language is english.”

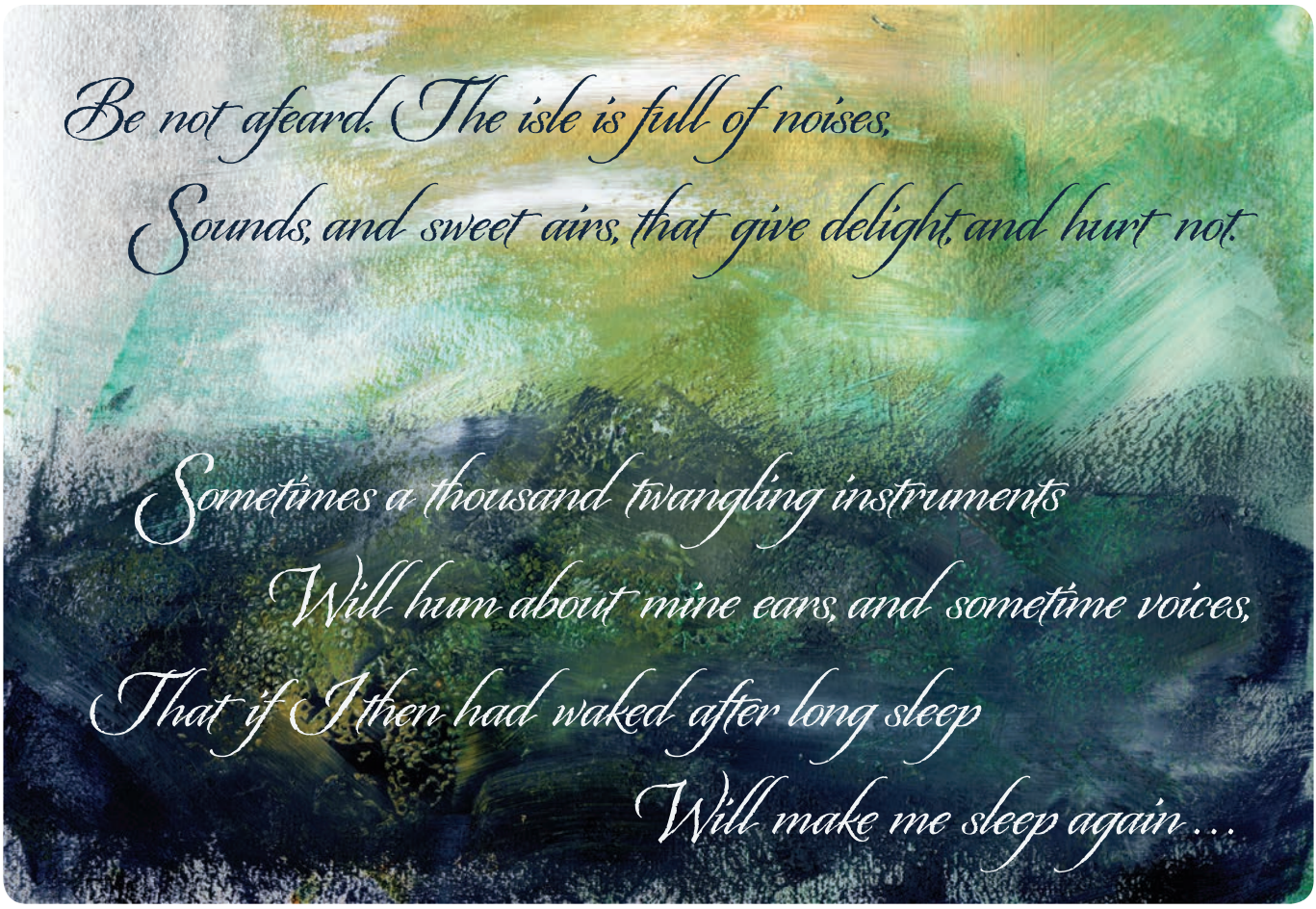
In spite of such advancements in our understanding, implying to language learners that Shakespeare’s language is unproblematic would be as much a lie as the words in Hamlet’s book. Shakespeare’s use of allusions, extended metaphors, and figurative language are indeed likely to pose a considerable challenge to speakers of any language – including those whose first language is English. Therefore, the anxiety such features of Shakespeare’s text may cause and the sense of bewilderment they may leave on language learners should not be lightly dismissed. Understanding, from the beginning, that Shakespeare’s language is neither ‘easy’ nor ‘difficult’ but that at different levels and in different passages it can present various levels of difficulty, is crucial to help students have a more realistic view of the linguistic challenges they will encounter during the term.

‘MANY AGES HENCE’

Throughout the centuries, universities have been the places where knowledge is advanced; where the political, cultural and scientific developments of societies have been shaped by those who teach and study there. In times like ours, where higher education is in danger of becoming just goods to be traded and where students are sometimes seen as clients rather than learners and thinkers, we may find that bringing Shakespeare to the university is more relevant than ever.

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By combining an attention to Shakespeare’s language with an analysis of what language is ‘doing’ in the text, the study of Shakespeare’s texts can become the catalyst that brings together language learning, cognitive engagement, and the development of high order thinking. Since language



*Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.*

*Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep
Will make me sleep again...*

is the vehicle for meaning, asking students to pay close attention to word choices, repetitions, affixation and verbs/ noun patterns cannot only lead to the development of language awareness and vocabulary acquisition but also help with interpretation and critique. Such structuralist/ formalist oriented approach may sound old-fashioned in our poststructuralist times. However, for those working with language learners, careful examination of language structures and lexis will always be of prime importance and is likely to figure high in the priority list of students and tutors alike.

“Shakespeare’s remarkable ability to create complex realities and situations that demand a cognitive, affective, and ethical response from readers and audiences is likely to promote the advancement of critical thinking skills.”

Processing Shakespeare’s language requires a certain level of linguistic control and, above all, capacity to think creatively and imaginatively. Imagination and creativity are generally deemed of high importance in the academic context as they are essential for the advancement of knowledge. For instance, when we read or listen to Caliban’s description of the isle (*Tempest*, III, ii), the whole picture of this magical and beautiful place is formed in our minds. Our brains naturally respond to the captivating

aural and semantic patterns of language (McDonald, 2001: 162). The power of our imagination is triggered by the poet’s words thus generating creative and imaginative responses. Creativity and imagination are understood to play a crucial role on all fields of knowledge, from the Arts to Sciences.

In particular, Shakespeare’s remarkable ability to create complex realities and situations that demand a cognitive, affective, and ethical response from readers and audiences is likely to promote the advancement of critical thinking skills. If Shakespeare believed in the positive and creative power of language, he also knew that language can be unreliable and inadequate to represent reality (McDonald, 2001: 180–188). Shakespeare knew words can be used to misrepresent reality, to give people a false sense of security and power, as the witches do in *Macbeth*. If words can build ‘brave new world’s, they can also destroy them. In times like ours when ‘facts’ are ‘alternative’, and knowledge and truth are dismissed as elitist concerns, studying Shakespeare can become not only an exercise in language awareness but also in criticality and in social-historical responsibility.

Yet, questions are often raised about language learners’ and international students’ ability to read Shakespeare critically beyond the linguistic level since reading Shake-

Shakespeare historically and theoretically requires more than just language fluency. It requires some understanding of allusions to people, places and historical events, as well as understanding of complex religious, political and philosophical concepts. For instance, lecturers would not normally need to 'teach' domestic students about the Gunpowder Plot or the ideas about witchcraft in Renaissance England while working with *Macbeth*. This is largely implied knowledge that was covered in the school curriculum. However, tutors working with international students will want to make sure their learners acquire some background knowledge to be able to critically examine certain aspects of the play. Here is where the concept of independent learning – also highly cherished in academic circles – becomes particularly relevant. Shakespeare can thus be a driving force behind the development of students' independent research skills and extensive reading. Instead of seeing the knowledge gap as a deterrent to the teaching of Shakespeare to international university students, such gap can be used as a trigger for the development of autonomous learning and transferable skills.

DOING THE DEED

Studying Shakespeare in most university contexts almost inevitably equals working with written texts: the plays are approached primarily as texts rather than performance. Students are also required to read a fair amount of criticism to be able to write essays that typically constitute their assessment in the modules. Unlike what happens in schools, performance-based approaches are hardly feasible. Typically, academic terms in the UK run for only 10 weeks and students have few contact hours a week. Moreover, there are no stable learning groups as students usually just meet for the lessons and then disperse to attend different modules. In such circumstances, putting on a play is hardly an option. Neither is going to the theatre a usually viable option, as it is a rare coincidence when one of the plays in the syllabus is actually running nearby at the same time as the modules. Even when it happens, we cannot force students to pay for tickets and universities are unlikely to budget them.

"THIS PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO WATCH THE PLAY IN PERFORMANCE, WHICH HELPS WITH UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT AND SERVES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTISE THEIR LISTENING SKILLS."

The option is to adopt practices borrowed from film and drama studies and work with the written texts alongside analysis of stage recordings and film adaptations. Students are asked to analyse filmed scenes and compare/contrast them with a text version of the play they are studying. They are also asked to consider different productions/film

adaptations and critically comment on them. This provides students with the opportunity to watch the play in performance, which helps with understanding the context and serves as an opportunity to practise their listening skills. Moreover, watching trailers, selected scenes, and soliloquies usually helps overcoming the perception that Shakespeare is inaccessible and largely unavailable if you do not live in an English-speaking country.

In conclusion, attitudes to teaching Shakespeare in the field of teaching English as a foreign/second language in general, and to teaching Shakespeare to international students coming to UK universities specifically, are hopefully changing, even if this is a slow process. International students have much to gain by engaging with Shakespeare. By combining reading, the study of literary criticism, and critical analysis of recorded performances and film adaptations, we can promote the development of language awareness, independent learning, knowledge construction, and creative /critical thinking.

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USING FEMINIST CRITICISM IN THE CLASSROOM

SARAH BROWN wrote her dissertation on ‘Using feminist criticism in the classroom to enable a greater appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare’s female characters’ as part of her MA Shakespeare and Education at the University of Birmingham’s Shakespeare Institute in 2017. She has taught English in secondary schools since 2011 and is currently acting Head of English at St Bernard’s Catholic Grammar School in Slough. Sarah is thrilled to be able to share her passion for Shakespeare with her students.

Are the claims in the 1623 Folio that Shakespeare’s plays are suitable for a ‘great variety of readers’ and ‘not of an age but for all time’ still applicable in twenty-first century Britain? Shakespeare occupies an unparalleled position in the English National Curriculum as the only compulsory author, a position justified in 1992 by the Education Secretary John Patten who claimed it was ‘essential that pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding and appreciation of our country’s literary heritage’ (Irish, 2008). Yet the issue of whether these plays, which arguably ‘disseminate and project the historical and conventional perception of woman, as lesser and negative’ (Ayub Jajja, 2014) would therefore exclude women from accessing their literary heritage, was not addressed. Is it possible then that Shakespeare’s plays are for a great variety of readers, but not women, and suitable for most times, but not this one? This paper will argue instead that Shakespeare’s works should be taught from a feminist perspective in order to combat any sexism that students may encounter (Novy, 1990).

“ARE THE CLAIMS IN THE 1623 FOLIO THAT SHAKESPEARE’S PLAYS ARE SUITABLE FOR A ‘GREAT VARIETY OF READERS’ AND ‘NOT OF AN AGE BUT FOR ALL TIME’ STILL APPLICABLE IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BRITAIN?”

Despite occupying a privileged position of power, the *Hamlet* character Gertrude has attracted mostly disapproval from literary critics. Mrs Jameson labelled her as a ‘wicked queen’ (1879), Suzman contended the ‘first thing to say about Gertrude is that she’s a bad mother’ and Wright argued that she shows ‘disrespect for her deceased husband’, thereby attacking the three roles she occupies in the play. Gertrude’s reputation is similarly disparaged by the opinions of her three male relations in *Hamlet*. Although first introduced by her new husband as ‘Th’imperial jointress of this warlike state’ (1.2.9), Claudius is quick to highlight her passivity in

“arguably, the critical reception Gertrude has received has been shaped and influenced primarily by what these characters have said about her, rather than the words and actions of the character herself. We must urge our students to decide for themselves how they wish to judge Gertrude, rather than have views imposed upon them by popular opinion, certainly a pertinent lesson for secondary school students.”

their relationship as she has been ‘Taken to wife’ (1.2.14). Old Hamlet insults Gertrude as ‘my most seeming-virtuous queen’ (1.5.46); her own son deems her a ‘most pernicious woman!’ (1.5.105) and compares her to ‘a beast that wants discourse of reason’ (1.2.150). Arguably, the critical reception Gertrude has received has been shaped and influenced primarily by what these characters have said about her, rather than the words and actions of the character herself. We must urge our students to decide for themselves how they wish to judge Gertrude, rather than have views imposed upon them by popular opinion, certainly a pertinent lesson for secondary school students. It is unsurprising that her character has been shaped by the words of others as, despite appearing in many of the play’s scenes, Gertrude speaks even less than Ophelia (McManaway, 1964). Nonetheless, the lines she does deliver arguably reveal a deep concern for her son Hamlet. From the onset of the play, she expresses anxiety over his continued mourning, ‘Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly colour off,| And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark’ (1.2.68–69) and longs for him to ‘stay with us, go not to Wittenberg’ (1.2.119). Her need to be near her son is again demonstrated later in the play as she beseeches him to ‘Sit by me’ (3.2.98). Indeed, Gertrude’s concern for Hamlet’s welfare is so extensive that she even beseeches his two friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to ‘visit| My too-much changèd son’ (2.2.35–36). From what we witness Gertrude both say and do it is difficult to condemn her as a bad mother as she principally shows affection and concern for her son Hamlet. The criticism she has attracted, however, stems arguably not from her actions in the play, but from those that precede it: her marriage to Claudius.

Due to her second marriage, Gertrude is condemned as an incestuous adulterer, a defamation largely responsible for readers’ negative perception of her. Yet, Hunt claims that ‘no detail in Gertrude’s characterization indicates that she is so brazen, so hardened in sin, as to have committed adultery’. Blincoe attests that the accusation

of incestuous adultery rests on the English Protestant principle that ‘the widow was considered to be one flesh with the dead husband, at least until she remarried’. Gertrude is consequently innocent of the assertions cast against her and is instead a victim of a libellous and rather worrying fascination with her sexuality. This anxiety over the female libido is most evident in the closet scene in Act 3 Scene 4, where despite the female environment, Gertrude’s presence is framed by commands from men. The scene opens with Polonius’ commands for Gertrude to ‘lay home to him. | Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with’ (3.4.1–2) and concludes with Gertrude assuring Hamlet that she will not only abstain from sexual contact with her husband, but also keep his secrets from him, ‘I have no life to breathe | What thou hast said to me’ (3.4.182–183). During this scene, Gertrude suffers from Hamlet’s excessive condemnation of her supposed sexual appetite as he patronisingly informs her ‘at your age | The heyday in the blood is tame, it’s humble’ (3.4.67–68) then contradictorily pleads with her ‘go not to mine uncle’s bed | Assume a virtue if you have it not’ (3.4.150–151). Hamlet is only pacified once he has displaced Gertrude’s actions onto Claudius and rendered her an inactive victim of Claudius’ lust, ‘He that hath killed my king and whored my mother’ (5.2.65). Critics have asserted that the price of Gertrude’s redemption is ‘a complete capitulation to masculine terms as well as the resurrection of the faulty structure of sexual dualism’ (Barker and Kamps). Surely Shakespeare is prompting us to question Gertrude’s dutiful acquiescence to such extensive male authority? Laura Bates the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project and Sarah Green the co-director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, co-wrote an article in 2016 on the importance of sex education in school. Their article featured testimonies from students who were victims of sexual harassment, yet at the time, accepted it unquestioningly. By linking our teaching of *Hamlet* to modern concepts such as ‘slut shaming’ (insulting women for engaging in sexual behaviour), a stigma Gertrude is an early victim of, we could encourage students to consider the improvements that still need to be implemented in society today in order to ensure sexual equality.

Although Gertrude remains silent whilst others misappropriate her sexuality, there are instances in the play where she is able to demonstrate real power using language. Montgomery compellingly argued that Gertrude’s power lies in her role as an interpreter of the play’s events and as an ‘astute *in situ* reader of Hamlet’s patterns’. We first witness

this in her succinct and pragmatic understanding of her son’s misery which is refreshingly contrasted to Polonius’ verbosity as she comments, ‘I doubt it is no other but the main—| His father’s death and our o’er-hasty marriage’ (2.2.56–57). Gertrude’s clear distaste for prolixity demonstrated by her impatience with Polonius, ‘More matter with less art’ (2.2.96), reveals that although she may not say much, her speech is deliberately purposeful and concise. She later shapes Claudius’ understanding of her son’s madness and exhibits her loyalty to her son when she describes Hamlet as ‘Mad as the sea and wind when both contend | Which is the mightier’ (4.1.6–7). Her interpretation of her meeting with Hamlet is so convincing, that it compels Claudius into decisive action, ‘The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch | But we will ship him hence’ (4.1.28–29). Gertrude’s interpretative powers are perhaps most powerfully displayed in Act 4 Scene 7 as she delivers the news of Ophelia’s death to Laertes and Claudius. Her description is so powerful that it moves Laertes to tears, a momentary escape from the gender binaries he so rigidly adheres to throughout the rest of the play, ‘When these are gone, | The woman will be out’ (4.7.160–161). The importance of this speech lies not simply in Gertrude’s descriptive power but also, as Stephen Ratcliffe has argued, in her ability to expand the ‘theatrical dimensions of *Hamlet* by moving centrifugally outward, away from the physical action being performed on stage toward action that is not performed except in words’. It is especially interesting that Shakespeare grants this ability to Gertrude, a character who is largely judged on events that precede the play and which she fails to comment on. Using feminist criticism therefore enables students to develop a greater understanding of Gertrude’s power as we witness her use language to shape our perception of events. As Montgomery argues, ‘Shakespeare plainly trusts Gertrude with the responsibility of shaping and analyzing the plot’. Therefore, feminist criticism can effectively elevate Gertrude’s status and demonstrate the importance of a voice that is otherwise often overlooked or disregarded.

Indeed, feminist criticism in the classroom is essential as ‘if students become skilled at reading between the lines . . . women can develop into the most interesting characters in *Hamlet*’ (Fisher and Silber). Gertrude’s demonstrations of power may be subtle, but they are important, and teachers must allow students the opportunity to investigate them fully. One such example is Gertrude’s staunch defence of Claudius upon Laertes’ return. When reading the play, it is easy to overlook her bravery as she delivers only two, very brief interjections during the conflict. Both, however, demonstrate her desire to defend Claudius as she attempts to pacify Laertes, ‘Calmly, good Laertes’ (4.5.113), and protect Claudius from blame for Polonius’ death, ‘But not by him’ (4.5.124). What is arguably most

“SURELY SHAKESPEARE IS PROMPTING US TO QUESTION GERTRUDE’S DUTIFUL ACQUIESCENCE TO SUCH EXTENSIVE MALE AUTHORITY?”

interesting here, however, are Gertrude's actions, which are only alluded to through Claudius' instructions, 'Let him go, Gertrude' (4.5.119); a command he needs to repeat twice (4.5.123). This clear demonstration of Gertrude's bravery displays her devotion to Claudius as she attempts to protect him without any concern for her own welfare. A later and often overlooked example of Gertrude's bravery and defence of those she loves occurs in her final moments in the play. Feminist critics have interpreted Gertrude's drinking of the poisoned wine, contrary to her husband's explicit command, 'Gertrude, do not drink' (5.2.233), as a defiant act of rebellion (Suzman). In disregarding Claudius' instructions, 'I will, my lord, I pray you pardon me' (5.2.234), she becomes one of the play's heroes, as only by drinking the poisoned wine and sacrificing herself, can she expose the villainy of her husband and in so doing attempt to protect her son. Nonetheless, many critics discount this feminist interpretation of her final act, 'I can see no justification whatsoever for the view . . . that she, suspecting the wine to be poisoned, drank it to protect Hamlet and to atone for the wrongs and sins of her past' (McManaway). Other interpretations of Gertrude's actions have also been negative, some deeming it a clear indication of the punishments awaiting those who transgress patriarchal expectations (Rogers) or as an example of female stupidity as she unwittingly poisons herself (McManaway). The teacher's role here is not to dictate meaning, but rather to allow students to determine their own response to Gertrude's actions. As Barker and Kamps rightly observed, students deserve 'a fuller consideration of gender', a feat which can be accomplished by using feminist criticism in the classroom to stimulate discussions about Shakespeare's characterisation of Gertrude and other female characters.

Using feminist criticism in the classroom prevents students from making dangerously superficial assessments of Shakespeare's characters and instead encourages a deeper understanding and appreciation of gender dynamics. It can provoke our students to discuss restrictive and arguably outdated gender expectations, enabling them to in turn challenge prejudiced outlooks as they learn to value and appreciate the significance of equality. It is here, Wray argues, that the use of feminist criticism may have a transformative function, as encouraging our students to question the construction of gender in canonical literature, 'is to make the system of power . . . open not only to discussion but eventually to change'. The plurality of interpretative possibilities of Shakespeare's plays demonstrated by the different schools of feminist thought, allow our students to 'reinvent . . . [the plays] by reacting or responding in terms of their own cultural and personal predispositions' (Vaughan and Cartwright).

"USING FEMINIST CRITICISM IN THE CLASSROOM PREVENTS STUDENTS FROM MAKING DANGEROUSLY SUPERFICIAL ASSESSMENTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHARACTERS AND INSTEAD ENCOURAGES A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF GENDER DYNAMICS. IT CAN PROVOKE OUR STUDENTS TO DISCUSS RESTRICTIVE AND ARGUABLY OUTDATED GENDER EXPECTATIONS, ENABLING THEM TO IN TURN CHALLENGE PREJUDICED OUTLOOKS AS THEY LEARN TO VALUE AND APPRECIATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EQUALITY."

This empowers our students, as they are able to make Shakespeare's plays personally meaningful. Thus, using feminist criticism in the classroom can truly enable Shakespeare's plays to be pertinent 'not for an age but for all time.'

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mAJA PELIC-SABO wrote her dissertation on 'Teaching Shakespeare at Steiner Schools: How are aims and methods of teaching English as a foreign language perceived to influence the teacher's strategy in implementing Shakespeare in the Steiner Curriculum?' as a part of her MA Shakespeare and Education studies at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham in 2017. In the appendix, she drew up plans of how Shakespeare could be taught in class 5, using a children's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Stuttgart, she also has backgrounds in Chemistry and Ballet Education. Maja is inspired by her students' curiosity and very interested in widening their horizon by introducing Shakespeare's work to lower classes of foreign language learning students.

Shakespeare's plays usually enter the classroom near the end of the pupils' educational careers, especially when they learn English as a foreign language. Steiner-Waldorf schools, even with their very different educational approach compared to mainstream schools, make no exception to this fact. During my ten year teaching career, I had never thought of Shakespeare to be a possible alternative for the younger students, because in the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum, Shakespeare is traditionally introduced to foreign language learners in class 9. After attending the RSC Education Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 2015, my interest awoke to the fascinating possibilities of how Shakespeare could be taught differently. In utter astonishment, I recognized Steiner's ideas in what we did with the education team of the RSC.

"the aim of foreign language teaching... is to encourage a positive attitude towards people of other cultures and languages, as well as foster human understanding generally through establishing the ability to empathise with another person's perspective and way of seeing the world."

As stated in *The Tasks and Content of the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum*, "the aim of foreign language teaching . . . is to encourage a positive attitude towards people of other cultures and languages, as well as foster human understanding generally through establishing the ability to empathise with another person's perspective and way of seeing the world." Moreover, it is argued that "learning foreign languages offers the individual other perspectives on his or her own tongue, culture, attitudes and mentality

. . . one of the major aims of foreign language teaching in Steiner-Waldorf schools is to expand self-knowledge and the knowledge of the world" (Dahl, 612, my translation). In other words, Steiner foreign language teaching aims for students to not only learn vocabulary, but also to deal with customs and traditions, culture and literature, history and geography typical to people who speak the language, and ultimately, to practice 'active tolerance'. This is more important nowadays than it ever was before. Apart from that, the pupils' senses are cultivated because learning a foreign language demands more attentiveness on the unique articulation and, often, on the differences in meaning. As Steiner argued only teachers, who are "artists," have the capability to understand the creative-mental character inside the speech origin fully. What is more, Steiner emphasised the importance of early exposure to other languages on several occasions. He believed it not only extends the individual child's horizon but also enriches and diversifies its inner life.

To give an overview of the elements of Steiner's schooling which work well with teaching Shakespeare in Steiner-Waldorf Schools, pupils not only remain with their class teacher for eight years but the 'class community' stays together for about twelve years; for most of them, that is nearly their whole school career. In other words, in the 'class community' in Steiner-Waldorf schools, there are "children with very different talents, gifts, intellectual capabilities, religion, gender and stratum of society learning together in one classroom and, what is more, not separated into homogeneous learning groups" (Rauthe 13, my translation). After nearly a hundred years, the experience of Steiner-Waldorf Education shows that various gifts and intellectual abilities in a 'class community' improve the eagerness to learn and also the success of the individual. In addition, the approach of the Steiner-Waldorf educational program can be defined as a 'child-centred' pedagogy.

Steiner drew attention to the fact that "learning foreign languages in this approach also is combined with emotional perception and with active experience. It is the teacher's task to make that possible for the children." Or, to be more precise, grammar has to be experienced first and, after that, brought into awareness. While it is of immense importance that the teacher deals with language artistically, grammar must not be taught in a pedantic way. It only has to be a 'tool' that helps to create a feeling and awareness for the inner rhythm and 'soul' of a language.



However, practical experience of teaching foreign languages at Steiner-Waldorf schools has shown that when this approach is handled successfully, pupils naturally gain a different relationship with the foreign language and suffer less from a dislike for it. This likely happens when they are forced to ‘dissect’ grammar structures without a living, truthful connection to the language. Steiner also warned his first teachers in his lectures in 1919 against “finished definitions” that usually can be found in the standard grammar books, because he thought these to be the “death of a lively teaching”.

Children learning foreign languages at Steiner-Waldorf schools in classes 1 to 3 connect themselves with the language with their mind, body, voice, and soul. As Templeton points out (2007 73–74), “very little is explained in the mother tongue and much is learned through acting and movement. The children absorb the language subconsciously by dreaming themselves into the ‘subject matter’.” Steiner teachers “take advantage of the child’s remarkable facility to imitate (. . .). Children have the ability to ‘move’ in a foreign language without having to know the meanings of the words intellectually.” From class 4 and throughout the middle school pupils still recite poetry and do speech exercises, but what is new is that they devote themselves to reading. According to Steiner (12th lecture 1922, 190–92), “the child in his or her 12th year of life should have developed the feeling for the beauty of language, an aesthetic sense.” In addition, the teacher has to add grammar to his language lessons to support the development of the thinking process. Steiner mentioned the importance of the high quality of the class reading material more than once. Moreover, Steiner never spoke of “learning vocabulary,” neither in his lectures nor in his written work. He was rather very interested in convincing

his first teachers to use “estimable,” genuine narratives from famous authors, to learn words while working with and examining the text and, last but not least, to create “word images” for and together with the pupils. After having chosen the reading material very carefully, Steiner advised his language teachers to introduce the pupils to the story of the reading material by telling the plot in advance. By discussing all the images and important terms with the children beforehand, they then can understand the essence of the story, while all details of the story stay trivial. Steiner declared himself vehemently against translating the text; in his opinion, this would be a ‘waste of time’. This is in agreement with the today’s mainstream curricula in Germany, as articulated by Bogdanski (1997, 375–76) and Haß (2016).

Class plays, one of the main columns of the Steiner-Waldorf education and usually given as a “large theatrical project” in class 8, bear many diverse facets that contribute to the development of a child; one of these is “getting the youngsters working together in a social way on a work of art involving language” (Avison et al. 76). This view can be extended to foreign language lessons. While grammar, vocabulary, and reading, in many aspects, also affect the cognitive side of man, drama and performing arts have an impact on the emotions (Denjean, 7–10, my translation). Pupils become “less dependent on written activities during the lessons” (Robert Sim in Templeton, 2000, 72–73), working together as a group, moving and simultaneously practicing longer speeches, reciting these from memory, and finally becoming more self-confident after having performed a class play. Furthermore, Steiner argued, nearly a hundred years ago, while responding to the questions of his first teachers, that the “passive reading process” has to accord with an active and independent

“poetry recitation can help because poems are rich in words expressing thoughts and emotions. the speech sounds, the rhythm, and the metre of the spoken lines subtly mould the children’s interest for literature.”

conversation. These are the two main pillars of the foreign language teaching approach in middle school. This way children gain confidence in their speaking ability. Besides, most pupils who have reached puberty “have trouble expressing their thoughts, opinions and feelings openly” (Templeton, 2000, 28–29). Poetry recitation can help because poems are rich in words expressing thoughts and emotions. The speech sounds, the rhythm, and the metre of the spoken lines subtly mould the children’s interest for literature. Steiner held the view that reciting in a chorus shapes the “group soul” and helps children who are shy or even not so gifted to gain more security.

The “active approach” to Shakespeare is characterized by making “the classroom more like a rehearsal room,” with the students “working as an ensemble”, in a “learner-centred”, “text-centred,” and “classroom as stage” environment, by “using rehearsal and performance techniques” (Winston, Stredder, Gibson). After having developed ‘the ensemble spirit’ in the classroom, every child understands that only working together creates something special and valuable and that no individual is more important than the others are. Moreover, by incorporating Shakespeare’s words, rhythm, and images, the students get to be deeply connected with the world, the timeless humanity, and the good and evil sides of human nature. When the teacher offers them a balanced variety of tasks involving listening, reading, talking and playing, children become mentally connected with the “heartbeat of the plays” (Winston et al., 21). In line with Steiner thought, Shakespeare’s language here can be as delightful as nursery rhymes and chants, as it involves, for example, imagery, repetition, verses, and the matching sounds of rhyming lines.

“the communicative, vivid, and creative ‘learning by doing’ character is the fundamental way to work on Shakespeare’s plays.”

In my attempt to respond to the question of whether and how the aims and methods of teaching English as a foreign language perceive to influence the teacher’s strategy when Shakespeare is implemented in the Steiner Curriculum, the following factors are of high relevance. The investigation into Steiner’s explanations of how language lessons have to be taught at Steiner-Waldorf schools demonstrates how creative, child centred and ahead-of-its-time Steiner’s “Education towards Freedom” really is. The fact that the methodic and didactic approach is still implemented

in today’s Steiner-Waldorf schools is shown by the impressive number of published books and essays written by Kiersch, Denjean, Jaffke, Templeton, and others. It has to be mentioned that today’s learning of foreign languages is still a longing for intercultural competence and community and, not to forget, has as its goal the enabling of young adults to socialize with other nations. Several practitioners, such as Gibson, or Shakespeare education institutions, such as the RSC, Shakespeare’s Globe, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and others, have published a great variety of material for teaching Shakespeare for the primary and secondary school levels. The communicative, vivid, and creative “learning by doing” character is the fundamental way to work on Shakespeare’s plays and matches the Steiner-Waldorf approach to teaching foreign languages, as shown in this work. In light of these results, the active methods of teaching Shakespeare can be seen to be in agreement with the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum. Anyway, time will tell whether Shakespeare may have a place in foreign language teaching in class 5/6.

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the appeal of gender crossing in *twelfth night*

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In May 2017, the Department of English Language and Literature at Japan Women's University (JWU) had the honor of hosting a performance by TNT Theatre Britain (also known as the International Theatre Company London, or ITCL in Japan) of *Twelfth Night*, one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies. This was the second opportunity for our department to invite the company to perform a Shakespeare play, following the success of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2014 (see Machi's article in issue 7 of this magazine). As background information, in Japan, Shakespeare is not as familiar as in English-speaking countries or in Europe. Japanese people, in general, do not have many opportunities to see actual Shakespeare plays either in the original language or in a Japanese translation, and this is also true for the students majoring in English at our university. In addition, Japanese people's knowledge of *Twelfth Night* is very limited. According to my research, while about 70 percent of our English majors know about *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* as Shakespeare plays, only one third of them have even heard of the title of *Twelfth Night*, and less than 10 percent of all the students think they know the gist of the story. Apparently, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* are Shakespeare's "Big Two" in Japan. However, *Twelfth Night*, one of Shakespeare's famous romantic comedies, is unfamiliar.

Despite the low level of familiarity, the show was highly successful and popular, and we received much positive feedback from the audience. While many of the students named as their favorite the comical scenes in which Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste fool around with bottles of alcohol, one of the prominent feedback remarks was that they enjoyed watching the cross-gender characters in the play. One of them, obviously, is the protagonist of the play, Viola, who disguises herself as a man called Cesario. Another cross-gender character the audience mentioned was Maria. In TNT's production of *Twelfth Night*, Maria was portrayed by the same male actor who played the role of Duke Orsino. Hence, there were two cross-gender characters with secret identities on stage: Viola, a female character who pretends to be a man and who was played

by a female actor, and Maria, who is a female character but was played by a male actor. Both made strong impressions on the audience.

Why were these two cross-gender characters so appealing to the audience? How did they attract people's attention? There is no doubt that the audience enjoyed seeing the actors' transformation on stage. Seeing charming Viola wearing a man's clothing and a fake mustache, or the actor who, in one scene, played manly Orsino appear, in another scene, as Maria in a big dress and a wig was certainly amusing. Aside from this element of visual transformation, it seemed that the two characters created a bond with the audience. How? The actor who played Orsino and Maria, Jean-Paul Pfluger, commented that the characters' vulnerabilities played an important role. "I believe the quality of relationship between an audience member and character can be measured by the depth of empathy one feels for that character. Because of this, as an actor, I believe it's important to find out what a character's vulnerabilities are," he said.

It is easy to imagine how Viola gained sympathy from the audience. Not only was she shipwrecked and separated from her brother, but she was also involved in a very complex love triangle. It seemed that the latter point especially allowed the audience, of which the majority were female university students, to feel sympathy and empathy, as some students commented "I can imagine how hard it has been for Viola to see the man she secretly adores being in love with someone else," and "There are many scenes where I can sympathize with her feelings." Seeing Viola suffering the pang of unrequited love for Orsino or being confused when Olivia confesses her love for Viola, the students could easily relate to the character and create a bond.



Photograph © Saeiko Machi

As for Maria, played by Pfluger, the actor said that it was her imperfect features as a woman — she was too muscular in her dress and her voice was too deep — that allowed the audience to feel sympathy and laugh, and consequently created a bond. “When I step onto stage as a man portraying a woman I am immediately embraced by an audience for all my flaws and all defenses are dropped. For this reason, I adore my relationship with the audience whilst playing Maria,” said Pfluger.

Another interesting point that Pfluger raised regarding the appeal of cross-gender characters in the show was the characters’ secret identities. “I think that all the other characters treating me as a real woman, in the world of play, also increases the special bond I have with the audience. To the audience, I am clearly a man playing a woman, and that’s our little secret — the audience is my unspoken confidant,” he said. The same goes for the character Cesario, who is actually Viola. Her vulnerabilities as a woman in a complex situation were visible only to the audience, while the other characters did not notice anything until the very end of the story. Because of the shared secret regarding Viola’s identity, in addition to empathy, the audience members felt like backing her up, which created a bond between the audience and the character.

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It is incredible to think that an English play that was written more than 400 years ago is still well-received and appreciated by university students in modern Japan. Many students appreciatively commented that the show was “much more fun and exciting” than they had expected, and they were “totally absorbed” in the story. This is, in part, the result of the production’s staging. TNT’s *Twelfth Night* incorporated singing and live performances of violin, trumpet, and other musical instruments. Moreover, one character, Feste, played an interactive clapping game with the audience, which made them feel as though they were participating in the show. Because of these tactics, the show was accessible and entertaining for our students who are, so to speak, beginners of Shakespeare’s plays. In addition, it was the universality of human nature that Shakespeare depicted that makes the play timeless and, therefore, accessible. “I would say that his true longevity lies in his brilliant observation of human nature,” commented Pfluger. “Four hundred years is a long time with many advances in science and technology, but the advances we have made in matters of the heart and controlling our emotions and



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feelings towards ourselves and others seem nominal.” While the way of expressing love might have changed over time (we send “texts” instead of personal attendants like Cesario), how love makes us feel and how stupidly people may behave when they are in love have been common phenomena anytime, anywhere.

It is uncertain whether Shakespeare could foresee it, but the world has entered a new phase in terms of the concepts of gender, sex, masculinity, and femininity; their definitions are becoming more varied and flexible than they used to be. Unfortunately, LGBT rights and understanding of transgender issues in Japan are relatively behind compared to the US and some countries in Europe. As of the end of 2017, the Family Register Law allows transgender people who have gone through sex reassignment surgery to change their legal gender, and only people aged 20 or older can undergo the surgery. The students’ extra attention to the cross-gender characters in *Twelfth Night* may indicate their high level of awareness of these new concepts. JWU was Japan’s first women’s university to start a serious discussion on the definition of a woman and the possibilities of accepting male-to-female transgender students in the future. The gender issue is certainly a popular topic here. I hope that the opportunity to watch *Twelfth Night* has not only inspired the students to learn more about the English language, culture, and plays, but has also given them the chance to question our notions of gender, humanity, and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: *I would like to express my very great appreciation to the actor, Jean-Paul Pfluger, for his valuable insights regarding the character he played. His willingness to give his time so generously during the company’s world tour of Twelfth Night has been very much appreciated.*

