

Abstracts for Part-Time Shakespeare
Shakespeare Association of America 2016
Gregory Foran, Nazareth College
Emily Ruth Isaacson, Heidelberg University

Meghan Andrews
Lycoming College
“Ambivalent Shakespeare”

This essay will reflect on my experiences during my first (recently concluded!) semester at a non-elite SLAC, during which I was fortunate enough to teach at least some Shakespeare in two classes: an upper-division Shakespeare seminar primarily for majors but also populated by Education students, and a lower-division, humanities distribution course titled Introduction to Literature. Those were very different experiences, but one thing that particularly surprised me in the Intro class was feeling pressured to defend Shakespeare’s prestige. The seminar description mentions Shakespeare’s cultural capital as something generally respected even in non-R1 settings, and that is what I expected from my Intro students; yet in the classroom, I found more students than anticipated seemed to want a rationale for reading his works beyond this cultural capital. So often at a research university the value of Shakespeare is taken as obvious, so feeling the need to justify the teaching of his works was unexpected but also, I think, pedagogically productive insofar as it asked me to consider what I really wanted the students to take from reading Shakespeare in particular. (Might this also function as an interesting metaphor for the “part-time” our seminar focuses on?) For me, it is the productivity of ambivalence and interpretation, which I take as crucial in any examination of literature. Beyond a consideration of the teaching, if space allows, I also will discuss my experience trying to finish an article on *The Malcontent* while also reading *Hamlet* for my majors class, and how the process of teaching an upper-division yet somewhat introductory course may have influenced my research pursuits this semester.

Annalisa Castaldo
Widener University
“Fluid Shakespeare: Assignments That Create Ownership”

Widener is a small university dominated by professional schools and the Arts and Sciences classes function mainly as general education credit; even in my 300-level Shakespeare class I will usually have more non-majors (taking the class to fulfill the “one upper level Humanities” requirement) than majors. In fact, sometimes I will have more nurses or engineers than all Humanities students combined. Students show up on the first day with equal parts dread and confidence—certain they won’t understand the “Old English” but also feeling that they survived Shakespeare in high school and if they just sit quietly and take notes they’ll get by in the class. My primary goal, therefore, has become designing assignments and classroom activities that disrupt that passivity and create, at the very least, engagement, but at best, actual ownership. I present the plays as fluid and unfixed, requiring a reader to give them a specific meaning. I do this in a variety of ways, but for this seminar I will focus on two assignments that

have had the most repeated success—editing and directing. Since performing Shakespeare in class has become a widely accepted and practice tool for engaging students, I will not discuss the specifics of that part of my pedagogy. But the idea of students acting as directors has not been explored, nor is textual editing often presented as a pedagogical tool, despite the rise of deconstructed texts like the Norton *King Lear* or the Arden 3 *Hamlet*. I have found these to be very fruitful assignments that not only engage the students, but help them recognize their role in creating the play's meaning.

Marisa R. Cull

Randolph-Macon

“Place and Privilege in Shakespeare Teaching and Scholarship”

Place is everywhere in Shakespeare—a seemingly fervent fascination of the playwright himself and of those critics who have studied his work. When I speak of “place” here, I am primarily speaking of geographic place, but so too in this word is the echo of Shakespeare’s other most frequent use of the term, to refer to one’s familial, political, or social stature. Indeed, characters in Shakespeare often connect their geographic place with the “place” they hold in the esteem of others: when, in the third act of *Cymbeline*, the disguised Innogen comes upon the home of her still-unknown brothers, living in rural Wales, their longtime guardian Belarius begs that she not “measure our good minds / By this rude place we live in.” While part of the goal of this SAA seminar is to examine the ways in which “part-time Shakespearians” enjoy a place of privilege within their respective English departments, I’m interested here in focusing specifically on how our geographical place influences our “place” within the firmament of Shakespeare teaching and scholarship. This is, of course, not a unique concern of Shakespearians; our academic colleagues everywhere wrestle with geographic circumstances. Yet within our corner of the scholarly community, have we considered the full impact of the kind of privilege that places a scholar-teacher within driving distance of prominent research libraries, of professional theaters, of other campuses with material and human resources? How do such concerns uniquely tax those of us who teach and study Shakespeare? I hope in this paper to think more completely about how our community wrestles with the issue of place and the privilege it affords, and how teaching of and scholarship about Shakespeare has been affected as a result.

Michael Flaherty

Triton College

“The Fall of Laertes: Teaching Shakespeare in an Urban Community College”

My paper will not be a research paper on the pedagogy of teaching Shakespeare in a community college. While I am thankful for all of the training from my teaching mentors, when moving from the standards of composition and American short stories and poems I have found only continued experimentation and assessment has led me to be a teacher of serious drama and, especially, Shakespeare in community college Honors classes. My college is located in suburban Cook County, just a few miles from the border of Chicago’s west side. Certainly, the economics and diverse population found in our district plays a part in my teaching, but less so in

Shakespeare than in modern drama. The first step is explaining the universal importance of the texts, and finding the plays that best prove this claim. From here, I have developed methods of bringing Shakespeare to the students, while refusing to in anyway dumb-down the text, or pretend they are not of their time.

The paper will not only deal with the classroom. Simultaneously, an instructor in a community college must deal with the (never direct, but always clear) question of “why do they need Shakespeare?” This question comes in curriculum design, transfer sessions, and even meetings with faculty from other departments.

Far from a paper celebrating a string of victories, I will show what has succeeded, what has failed, and the continued struggles within the classroom and (even more so) outside it.

Cory L. Grewell
Patrick Henry College
“Integrating Shakespeare”

This paper will attempt to articulate what “part-time” Shakespeareans can offer the field of Shakespeare scholarship given our unique vocational experiences. As Eddy and Hart note, many of us are of necessity generalists (760), assigned to teach courses in what might at a larger institution be considered a bevy of literary specializations. What I want to explore is how that steeping in a broader range of literary texts brings an integrative context to bear upon drawing meaning from Shakespeare. Boyer’s comments about a “Scholarship of Integration” will be foundational here, as the real benefit I think a generalist brings to Shakespeare studies is the benefit of a broader perspective, literarily speaking. To quote Boyer quoting Van Doren, “the connectedness of things” is something valuable that the generalist Shakespearean can bring to the scholarly table, and I will attempt to articulate what that connectedness might look like in Shakespeare scholarship and how it might prove valuable to scholarly conversation in the field. Moreover, I will note that while the interdisciplinary approach that Boyer advocates in scholarship has been fairly widely employed in Shakespeare studies – cf. critical uses of history, economics, cultural anthropology, historical theology, etc. in scholarly study of Shakespeare’s work – there has been comparatively less attention paid recently to scholarship that examines Shakespeare in the widening contexts of English literature, literature in English, and finally imaginative literature. I will argue that such a contextual examination – one perhaps best supplied by the generalist – would be an invaluable contribution to Shakespeare scholarship in terms constructing meaning.

Michael Hall
Virginia Wesleyan
“Wise Saws and Modern Instances”

I’ve been at the same small, Southern, barely-selective liberal arts college for 36 years, and over that time I’ve experienced the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of institution, the usable power of Shakespeare’s cultural capital, and the changing nature of that capital inside my department. Like I expect most of us in this seminar, I’m not only the sole Shakespearean in

my department, but the only one with significant training in any area of earlier literature in English. So English majors mostly learn only what I teach them in these periods, which makes choosing my courses important and difficult. My office is right beside the Theatre faculty member who does a Shakespeare play every two years, and she and I talk almost every day about theatre, a huge benefit for both our students. I often work with the other Theatre person to plan trips and events. The fact that Shakespeare seems to everyone on the faculty and in the administration both culturally unassailable and in most cases impenetrable has given me status that I have used throughout my tenure, in many ways. When I came to Virginia Wesleyan in 1980, I was the decidedly junior member of a department in which only four men taught literature courses, with women, either permanent or adjunct, restricted to composition. When the other three faculty eventually retired, I took the opportunity to reshape the department in a fairer and more modern way, and this has led to a very different department in general as well as in relation to Shakespeare.

Cyndi Headley

California State University

“Scheduling Sanity: Balancing Scholarship, Shakespeare and Teaching as an Adjunct”

The reality is that as an adjunct, I need to teach 6 courses to have financial security. The other reality is that I do not get to choose the courses I teach, so the question becomes, how do I balance these realities with my research interests: early modern drama and medicine? My paper explores the pedagogical possibilities and limitations of adjunct faculty, specifically my attempts to incorporate early modern drama into my assigned courses in ways that meet the institution’s description and learning outcomes of the course. The goal is to continue to research and contribute to the field as well by finding pedagogical methods that allow me the time to do the research. Right now, I will focus on *Twelfth Night*, but I would like to eventually include female closet dramatists and their works into my courses.

Elizabeth A. Hutcheon

Huntingdon College

“Shakespeare Now and Then: Literature and Cultural Capital in Early Modern and Contemporary Pedagogy”

This paper argues that being a “part-time Shakespearean” is to be a figure especially well positioned to theorize what our seminar description calls Shakespeare’s “massive cultural capital” more dialectically than has typically been the case; from this vantage point, cultural capital is not merely a discourse that legitimates social domination, but also provides students from working- and lower-middle-class backgrounds with the tools to critique that discourse.

My argument has two components: first, I argue that teaching Shakespeare – often in the context of survey courses -- at a small, lower-tier institution, brings instructors into continual contact with first-generation students who would not have attended college fifty years ago. For such students, the study of Shakespeare is part of a curriculum that enables them to identify and name the power relationships that structure their world.

Second, I suggest that the example of Shakespeare himself provides a case-study of exactly this point. Then, like now, pedagogues were expanding their definition of who qualified to attend school. Writers like Shakespeare, Dekker, and Webster benefited from an increased access to education in the late 16th century; 50 or 100 years earlier none of these writers would have attended grammar school. The grammar school system imagined themselves as embarking on a project of subject-making that depended, it turns out, on a version of early modern cultural capital. Yet, even while benefiting from this cultural capital, Shakespeare and others used the rhetorical tools they learned in the early modern classroom to critique the system of power under which they were formed. Over and over again in the Shakespearean corpus we find places where Shakespeare reflects on and critiques early modern pedagogical practices and, by extension, the social order of early modern England.

Heather Murray

Coastal Pines Technical College

“‘Words can wield the matter’, or, Nursing students meet Shakespeare at a small technical college”

This past year I incorporated Shakespeare's *King Lear* into a unit on narrative and storytelling in several sections of my Fundamentals of English course (English 1010) at Coastal Pines Technical College, which is located in a very rural part of southeast Georgia. Many students who take this particular course are working toward a degree or certificate in one of our Allied Health programs, and so *Lear*, which is often read as a meditation on aging and mental illness, connects thematically to their other studies. This play provides models of writing skills (organization, transitions, word choice, clarity, supporting claims with evidence) and rhetorical strategies (audience, purpose, exigence, ethos, kairos) for students to incorporate in their own papers; at the same time, the play is sophisticated enough to engage them intellectually and emotionally, and students read more of it (and read it more willingly) than their textbooks. While most students have heard of Shakespeare, this is often their first time reading his work for themselves, which leads to conversations about the value of literature and the place of the humanities in education. Students understand the concept of cultural capital, even if the phrase itself is unfamiliar, and they understand that language has power. Overall, this experience was both more challenging and more rewarding than I had anticipated, but I am convinced that there is a place for Shakespeare (and for the humanities more broadly) in all levels of post-secondary education.

Kelly M. Neil

Spartanburg Methodist College

“‘Ratched’ Plays: Teaching Shakespeare in General Education Courses”

In an Introduction to Literature course that I taught this past fall – my first semester at a small, private, residential, two-year college – I learned the word “ratched” (a word, according to the website *Urban Dictionary*, meaning old, funky, busted) from my students. They were

astonished that I had never heard that word before; I was astonished that they didn't grasp the irony of this moment as they were simultaneously struggling to understand Shakespeare's "old" English in our reading of *Othello*. This exchange prompted me to think more deeply about why and how we might teach Shakespeare to students in general education courses. Faculty and administrators often insist that Shakespeare's plays are a necessary component to general education literature classes, resting their argument on the notion that Shakespeare's plays hold up a mirror to life, transcending cultural and temporal difference in order to elucidate the universal human condition. Yet, this notion often becomes the principle object of critique in arguments against teaching Shakespeare to non-traditional, minority, first-generation, and/or under-prepared college students. In this paper, I consider the mimetic value of Shakespeare not as a gateway to the human condition but as a framework revealing how human conditions are constructed. More specifically, I explore how Shakespeare's flexible, innovative language and the very process of early modern performance align with current creative practices, artistic movements, and forms of technology in order to question how such practices reveal and shape students' political and social identities. By conceiving of Shakespeare's plays as "ratched," we may prompt students to interrogate the boundary between old and new and to investigate how creativity and aesthetics structure political relationships then and now.

Rochelle Smith
Frostburg State University
Shakespeare in the Mountains

Allegany County, one of the poorest counties in Maryland, lies in the western part of the state, folded into Appalachian Mountains that roll from southern Pennsylvania through Maryland on their way to West Virginia. This was coal mining country, and Frostburg State University, where I teach Shakespeare, was built on land purchased by donations from Frostburg's coal miners. The university, founded in 1898 as State Normal School Number Two, has a strong presence in a community that, in so many other ways, is sorely lacking in resources. Our local students grow up largely isolated from the vibrant Shakespeare culture that enriches the lives of so many of their peers downstate. We are 150 miles from the nearest metropolitan area—too far for a casual visit to the Pittsburgh Public Theater, the Baltimore Shakespeare Factory, or the Shakespeare Theater Company in D.C. This may not seem like the best place for a strong community Shakespeare program. Nevertheless, about 10 years ago I began organizing a local Shakespeare Festival, a cooperative project involving both our university and the area high schools. In this essay, I will explore what it means to teach Shakespeare in a rural community, and what it is about Shakespeare, both the plays themselves and the role "Shakespeare" has played in American life, that makes a community such as mine the perfect place for Shakespeare to thrive.

David Swain
Southern New Hampshire University
“Big Man on Campus: Shakespeare and the (Endangered) Single-Author Course”

In its infamous 2015 Birth Day report on the “exile” of Shakespeare at elite colleges, “The Unkindest Cut,” the American Council of Trustees and Alumni decried an erosion of the traditional curriculum by the usual suspects: cultural studies, theory, emerging authors, and film. The ACTA authors conclude that “college students who are fed a diet of pop culture and film and cutting-edge theory in the English department are discouraged from developing criteria for determining greatness and worth in literature, and they are likely to carry their limited vision with them.” While students at elite schools are high-value targets for conservative responses to curricular change, what of students at small colleges and regional comprehensive universities who are also, presumably, victims of curricular change? This essay tests the proposition that quite a different set of factors are influencing change in traditional curricula—including the hallowed Shakespeare requirement—factors including new General Education models; competency-oriented assessment; changing enrollment patterns; and the scaling and modification of residential courses for online delivery. Because small schools may more nimbly be able to respond to these pressures, they also reveal their effects in sharp relief. As a teacher of currently required Shakespeare and Literary Theory courses, I offer a case study of my department’s successive attempts to reform our course offerings—particularly historical surveys—and adapt to new enrollment patterns with innovative courses and more choice, including our current proposal to offer Shakespeare (and Literary Theory) as options to majors. Personal qualms aside, this is far from an identity crisis entailing cultural loss, but rather a pragmatic shift away from a single-author paradigm that might enable (as a student put it) “reading Shakespeare alongside the other stuff.”

Deborah Uman
St. John Fisher College
“Shakespeare to the Rescue?”

A recent effort to address the stark racial segregation that marks the city and suburbs of Rochester requested proposals for activities to “unite Rochester.” “Shakespeare on the Streets,” was a plan from the Rochester Latino Theatre Company to recruit urban and suburban high school students for an after-school theater residency, where they will study Shakespeare and write modern revisions. The idea of using Shakespeare to address problems of racial and economic injustice reminded me of “Cora Lee,” from Gloria Naylor’s *Women of Brewster Place*, in which the single mother of seven is persuaded to attend a local multi-ethnic performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by her activist neighbor. “Cora Lee,” like “Shakespeare on the Street,” provide examples of the widespread belief that “Shakespeare” can rescue us, and that this category of “us” crosses racial, economic, and national boundaries. In this paper, I propose another model of Shakespeare to the rescue, though I do so with great ambivalence. I’m writing

this paper both as my department's Shakespearean and its Chair, who spends a great deal of time devoted to recruiting students to the major and to our classes. Enrollment in Shakespeare courses has remained relatively strong but we have seen a dramatic drop in our ethnic literature courses. Our suspicion is that students at a school like ours—a small, private, liberal arts-ish college with a student body comprised primarily of white, middle class students from about a 100-mile radius *surrounding* Rochester—are hesitant to take courses that do not relate to their career goals or reflect their own racial and cultural identities. This is a campus where white students have yet to realize their privilege, as Kim Hall puts it, to not speak about race, ethnicity or class difference. In one department conversation we considered doing away with stand-alone ethnic literature courses and instead more deliberately integrating writers of color into our other courses. Although I do not necessarily agree with this solution, I did realize that by including works such as Naylor's "Cora Lee" and Toni Morrison's *Desdemona* in my course on Shakespeare & Adaptation, I have at the very least begun to address the multicultural holes in our students' education in an unexpected place. This paper will discuss briefly my teaching unit on *Desdemona* and try to tease out some of the benefits and drawbacks of giving writers of color a ride on Shakespeare's coattails.

Jessica Winston

Idaho State University

"*Richard III*: Performance History and Critical Interpretation in the Shakespeare in Performance Classroom"

I routinely teach a summer class, "Shakespeare in Performance," in which students read three Shakespeare plays and then take a four-day trip to see professional productions at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. The class poses a challenge, since many students have not taken a course on Shakespeare (the class is open to non-majors and Shakespeare is not required for the major), and many students have never seen a live play. The mission, then, is to introduce students to the three plays, help them to understand the assigned plays, and ready them to view professional productions with understanding and critical acumen by the time they see it. Over the years, I have developed an approach to teaching this class that appears to have met these challenges. In this approach, I introduce performance history, and major issues in the performance history, as a way to open up critical questions about a particular play, and to help students to understand stagings of Shakespeare's plays as existing in particular traditions of performance and interpretation.

This paper will explain this approach, taking Shakespeare's *Richard III* as an exemplary case. As many of us will know first-hand, when many students first encounter this play, they are confused and intimidated—it's the second longest Shakespeare play, it deals with unfamiliar historical events, and there's huge cast that even advanced readers of Shakespeare have difficulty keeping straight. Yet performance history helps to put many of these problems in perspective, since the history of *Richard III* in performance is a history of cutting the numerous minor

characters in order to streamline the story of Richard himself. Such cuts, however, also have thematic implications, since they emphasize Richard's agency in his rise and downfall, downplaying the role of fate in the outcome of the play, although the extent of these emphases depend on how many and which characters are cut. When I teach *Richard III*, I introduce this performance history since it opens up a critical question – why are there so many characters in Shakespeare's play? – and it helps to introduce the themes of fate and personal agency. By the time students see a performance of *Richard III*, they are able to view it with an eye to how it deals with its many characters – which ones are present and which are absent? – and thus to analyze how a particular production interprets Richard's autonomy.