

Corinne Abate, Paramus Catholic High School

**Changing Shakespearean Studies and Tenure
'For present comfort and for future good'**

As the description of this seminar indicates, it is in fact not such a great time to be Shakespeareans. The study of Shakespeare plays is no longer required reading at many high schools or in undergraduate majors, tenure-track jobs continue to dwindle, and should a job be found, it is often tethered to a heavy teaching load and a schedule that does not account for the need to write and research in order to retain said job. Indeed, the future looks grim. Yet it needn't be if the SAA and those currently with tenure heed—nay embrace—institutionally what James Shapiro warned in a riveting article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* nearly 20 years ago:

Intellectual progress, I'm suggesting, depends on a complicated intergenerational exchange. It is predicated on the assumption that those who control the mechanisms by which scholarship is made possible—tenure, endowed chairs, service on editorial boards, fellowship and tenure-review committees, directorships of patronage-dispensing institutes—will turn them over to the next generation after an appropriate time, even as their mentors did for them. The end of mandatory retirement and the rising number of adjunct positions have meant that this carefully calibrated system is collapsing, along with the revitalization that disciplines depend on. Surely, the rights of the tenured must be weighed against those of scholars past and future.

This paper seeks to assess the current state of Shakespeare as it relates to teaching and curricular requirements, and attempts to offer some solutions to help secure a future generation of learned, eager, and tenured Shakespeareans.

Mark Bayer, University of Texas San Antonio

The SAA and the Rhetoric of Crisis

The basic premise of this seminar—and of many discussions in academia today—is that Shakespeare scholars, the SAA, and the humanities in general are in crisis. Suggesting that the discipline is in a period of crisis implies that this state of affairs is somehow new, a consequence of underfunding, low enrollments, a lack of institutional and political desire, or any number of other reasons. It also suggests that it might be remedied by a single heroic solution.

In my paper, I wish to argue that the rhetoric of crisis has been endemic to the SAA and Shakespeare scholarship for decades—probably since its inception. While I don't want to diminish current threats, I do want to show how the rhetoric of crisis, sometimes

verging on paranoia, we use to describe our profession has remained remarkably stable. Finally, I suggest that our internalized crisis mentality obscures larger systemic issues that threaten our discipline and impedes the large-scale changes that are probably required to remedy them.

Ambereen Dadabhoy, Harvey Mudd College

Shakespeare in the Margins

When we think of Shakespeare and margins, we might think of those pristine borders that surround the Shakespearean text, or the glosses that have filled those borders over centuries, or we might turn to other margins and borders such as textual and geographic. I would like to propose still another margin that seems to impress quite widely upon Shakespeare studies, the margin of academe. As our colleges and universities have turned to corporate models to inform their policies and outcomes and increasingly promoted the notion that degrees should be valued according to their return on investment, Humanities writ large and English departments in particular have felt the pangs of the resulting belt-tightening measures. Corporatization and the increased higher-ed focus on STEM training have succeeded in pushing our work to the periphery of our universities and publics. Where, then, do we locate ourselves, not only within English departments but within a larger university structure that is deeming our work irrelevant to the realities of 21st century neo-liberal education? Critically thinking about this question requires more than answering the somewhat simple notion of relevance, but rather investigating the swiftly disappearing terrain of our value and authority in the intellectual and academic life of our institutions and students. For organizations such as the SAA, this question requires a deep dive into its constituency and purpose: who are its members; what kinds of institutions do or don't they belong to; and how can we yoke our focus on scholarship not only with pedagogy but also advocacy. This paper will take up these questions and argue that the SAA and Shakespeare are precisely the right organization and author through which to respond to the scarcity and precarity that looms in the not too distant horizon.

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Shakespearean Publics: On Quality and Survival

What is the Shakespeare Association of America for? What purpose—and whom—does it serve? This paper argues that to strengthen its professional, institutional, and ethical position in the field of humanities and Shakespeare studies, the SAA must reorient toward a model of public partnership and away from the forms of scholarly silo-ization that give rise, however unfairly, to characterizations like “the Ivory tower.” This would involve reconsidering who counts as a “Shakespearean” and how we define “scholarship” and “research.”

In advocating for broader inclusivity and a revision of institutional principles, this paper looks to The Public Theater's core community partnership program, Public Works, as a model for reimagining the SAA's mission, composition, and organizational structure. Public Works rejects the concept of public "outreach" in favor of mutual partnership between the theater and local community members. Driven by a governing philosophy of "radical hospitality," Public Works offers an example of community partnership—not simply "engagement" or "outreach"—that elevates and transforms assumptions about "quality" and "rigor" vis-à-vis "professional" Shakespeareans. I argue that by reimagining the relationships between audience and expert, scholar and performer, institution and individual, Public Works provides a flexible, useful model for recalibrating the SAA's mission and structure to ensure the organization's survival in a changing academic, professional, and public landscape.

Leticia Concepción García, University of California, Irvine

Shakespeare's Making of the World

What can Shakespeare do for the world? What can Shakespeare do for us? What can Shakespeare do for me? Throughout my academic career, I have experienced the dislocation of minorities within the institution, as well as the discipline of Shakespeare studies. As a first-generation Latina navigating the exceedingly white world of Shakespeare, my experiences within the discipline differ from the traditional. This paper will focus on the historical and hegemonic connections that allow Shakespeare to function as a stable mainstay of globalization, and of artistic initiatives around the world, by providing a nominally universal cultural capital that transcends temporal and spatial limitations, regardless of its original location. That is, this paper will consider what it means to locate and understand the global capacity of Shakespeare to illuminate the potentiality of now, and what he might make for our future world. My aim is twofold: to historicize the issues surrounding representations of Shakespeare's 'globability' in the discipline and to use contemporary theories and experiences as a lens to read this trajectory.

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Beyond Individualism: Putting Theory Into Practice, Again

The SAA's institutional lifetime coincides with a time when the shaping power of larger cultural forces has been understood as essential to the study of literary texts, and when there has been increasing attention (in both academia and professional theater) to performance processes as collaborations. The organization helped model these realities in what was a paradigm-shifting innovation away from hierarchical norms: the creation of seminars with pre-circulated papers by graduate students and senior scholars alike as the

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predominant mode of conference participation. Nonetheless, the 21st century has seen renewed focus on the author figure and increased self-protectiveness among scholars as individuals, in great part as a result of institutional precariousness and perverse incentives such as the advertised wooing of professors as "stars." Elsewhere I have sketched out goals for more collaborative, interdisciplinary and equitable models of work; this essay is pragmatically focused in a narrower sense, sharing some specifics I learned in leading the SAA, as a step towards more collective, realistic understanding among the membership of the challenges and possibilities for the organization. I see this as a preliminary step towards realizing the utopian vision of SAA as a place for joy and collective innovation rather than (primarily or directly) careerism and self-advancement, but with keen awareness that many if not most of our membership do not feel that they can think, much less act, this way at present

William M. Lee, United States Air Force Academy

Shakespeare's Enduring Ethos

The Western Literary Tradition has oft been accused of being exclusive, misogynistic, and even irrelevant. The canon's lack of inclusiveness led to a (necessary) backlash in the latter half of the twentieth century to introduce literary voices that better captured the diversity of culture in Western society. Out with the old; in with the new. Suddenly, to be part of the old-dead-white-guys' club was to be a literary pariah, tossed in the dustbin of history. Shakespeare, for the most part, avoided that fate. But the continued movement away from the "classics" approach to literary immersion has encouraged a number of voices, both cultural and academic, to openly ask the question, "Should we continue to teach Shakespeare?" This paper will address some of the commonly held arguments against teaching Shakespeare in higher education and then rebut them by closely examining several key texts and their application to issues that were not only relevant in The Bard's time but ours as well. I will conclude by putting forth the counter-argument that Shakespeare's writing has an enduring ethos that necessitates its continued study.

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Identity Crisis: the SAA and "Me"

Our Seminar leaders have directed us to envision our own private utopian SAA. With so much consciousness now from SAA Officers and Trustees to improving inclusiveness and widening embrace, I'm optimistic. But.

We used to practice an inclusiveness different from the way we now understand the term. It wasn't based on a specific kind of identity politics except in so far as some people were young and rudderless and mentor-less and maybe a little breathless, and others were seasoned and often generous and thrilled to know that anyone was still

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reading them, even if only in a graduate seminar. SAA Seminars were functional occasions for mentoring and for trans-generational connections, mainly but not always or only top-down. These often yielded the following benefits: good counsel, encouragement, publication opportunities, networks, the sense of being absolutely included, and a developing sense of community—and that was just the newbies. As I recall, we felt we had something to *learn from* each other, and that reciprocity was crucial. As I further recall (I'm pretty sure this is accurate), every paper I published in those days had its start in an SAA seminar and got mentored into a publishable shape. That support was of paramount importance to ... an outsider.

I don't see anything like this happening in seminars (or even plenaries) in the past few years. A recent one violated every principle and practice of SAA Seminar procedure, and those violations came from people who certainly knew better, starting with the seminar leaders. And that's as far as my rat-resistant instincts will let me go. Trust me when I say that there would have been absolutely no point in complaining aloud or publicly, but if it ever happens again I will vote with my feet and my membership dues. The one I was in the year before that was more productive, but fragmented by some aggressive individual agenda-pushing. We fracture and break when we split into an archipelago of competing critical emphases, reiterating what one former mentor referred to as "My Theme Can Beat Up Your Theme," meaning not just different emphases, but literally (and combatively) competing ones. It may be that opening up one end of the rainbow dynamically and practically requires shutting off another, but I hope not; I hope instead that we will be very careful before throwing out babies with bath-waters. Been there; done that. My question for the seminar is: how do we honor and activate "inclusion" while still respecting an instructive range of critical and interpretive positions and perspectives?

Jessica McCall, Delaware Valley University

Let's Talk About Lit Theory, Let's Talk About You and Me

For this year's SAA paper I would like to do something truly idiotic: I would like to argue that we're doing the humanities wrong. I'm not sure I can posit a solution to this issue; in fact, what I propose is much closer to a thought experiment than an argument.

I think, individually, we do the humanities great. I think as teachers and thinkers many people smarter, cooler, and better than me are changing the world and lives. However, as a culture and a field, I think those amazing people succeed in spite of academia not because of it. Journalists and bloggers are at the forefront of cultural criticism rather than trained, educated, cultural critics. We have jobs as Shakespeareans because we have ensured Shakespeare matters—not because our thoughts, our skills, and our abilities matter. As a society we value scientists and are impressed by their science, and we value language but we put up with English professors.

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There are many professional dangers here. If Shakespeare doesn't inherently matter then why study him? Is it possible to interpret Shakespeare in ways not bound to European patriarchal colonialist ideals of art, intelligence, and humanity? We have crafted an academic discourse that actively attacks essentialism while simultaneously maintaining its viability and capitalistic value through the essentialist belief that some literature is just... "great." Any attendee of the SAA can explain why the humanities matter, especially in the wake of Charlottesville, the 2017 election, and the loss of shared truths across our larger cultural consciousness; but is there a disconnect between what we know the humanities *can* accomplish, and what we realistically encourage and allow each other to accomplish?

The fall of the humanities is not entirely our fault, but our hubris hasn't helped. And the fall of academia isn't entirely our fault, but our ruthless competition hasn't helped. I think Shakespeare, and any text, has value first and foremost in what it makes us feel—what thoughts, imagination, and questions it inspires us to consider. And I think what we need more of is not rigor of thought or approach, but rigor of self-awareness.

I want to end on a “to be or not to be” pun of the future of the humanities, but that feels like it's going too far. Whew, glad I held back.

Sara Saylor, University of Texas Austin

'I shall study deserving': Shakespearean Stewardship

In our profession's present moment of vulnerability, many commentators have proposed an ethic of stewardship to guide transformations in higher education. Drawing on traditions of ecclesiastical formation and environmental activism, the concept of stewardship challenges educators to work toward ever more responsible cultivation of the resources, scholarly disciplines, and human lives entrusted to our care. According to Leonard Cassuto, this ethical orientation is especially urgent for graduate programs: universities must demonstrate better care for their graduate students in order to “regain [public] trust, and more importantly, to deserve it.” Within Shakespeare studies, writers including Paul Yachnin and Julia Reinhard Lupton have highlighted Shakespeare's distinctive potential to inspire publicly engaged scholarship, which might also help to restore trust between humanities scholars and the broader publics who sustain our work.

My paper explores how the SAA and the broader community of Shakespeare studies might embrace this ethic of stewardship. I turn to scenes that foreground questions of moral obligation and “deserving” in order to frame Shakespeare's plays as a provocative resource for today's debates in higher education. What can each of us do to support our most vulnerable colleagues, including contingent faculty, independent scholars, and those driven from the profession by abuse and misconduct? Many of us have expert knowledge of the material conditions of labor in early modern England, but have we done enough to inform ourselves about the working conditions of the adjuncts who staff our own

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departments? What recognitions might prompt us to acknowledge, “I have taken too little care of this”? These questions have no definitive answers, but I suggest that Shakespeare’s meditations on trust and responsibility provide a rich resource for ongoing reflection as we consider how to care for those closest to us and how to preserve our discipline as a whole.

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A Caesar for All Seasons

Recent productions of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* have (somewhat refreshingly) made Shakespeare and “art” the topic of fierce mainstream public debate. Most notably, Oskar Eustis’s Trump-inspired production of *Julius Caesar* for the Shakespeare in the Park elicited praise, censure, and even tangible backlash, culminating in Bank of America, Delta Airlines, and American Express rescinding sponsorship for New York’s Public Theater. Eustis’s production also brought new and renewed attention to Robert Melrose’s *Julius Caesar* from 2012, a production that featured an Obama-like Caesar. Rather than attempt to defend, justify, or endorse these productions and the reactions (and actions) to them, this paper uses the wealth of popular conversation that these productions elicited in order to analyze what we hope and expect Shakespeare as canonical literature and art to do for us today. Vacillating between claims of the absolute clarity of *Julius Caesar*’s anti-violence and the expectation of perfectly nuanced and “respectful” presentations of Shakespeare’s work, assessments of these productions suggest that we are eager for Shakespeare to serve as a touchstone of moral and historical certitude but also resistant to the ambivalence that his work may fruitfully produce.

Christopher Shirley, University of Illinois

Shakespeare and/as Service: Librarianship and the Early Modern

Modern librarianship pivots around providing service to patrons. Though various thinkers—from S. R. Ranganathan to the America Library Association—describe service and its responsibilities variously, it nevertheless constitutes the core of librarianship, and has often been linked to progressive ideals of providing social uplift, facilitating equitable access to information, and promoting the well-being of individual patrons. While service constitutes one of the three tent-poles of professorship, it has not traditionally been considered crucial to academic advancement among university-level scholar. However, trends in hiring practices for early modernists since 2008 arguably have begun to reposition the teaching of Shakespeare as a form of professional service (and this paper will examine the concept of teaching in general as service at length) in that Shakespeare might not occupy a given scholar in her research and publications but that she is expected to teach Shakespeare regularly. In fact, this positioning of “Shakespeare” (quotation marks indicate the academic subject rather than the writer himself) as service draws on a

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longer tradition at smaller colleges and universities in which faculty with *any* research specialty might be expected to teach Shakespeare. This paper argues that intentional interaction between librarians and professors around the question of “Shakespeare,” in counterpoint to each profession’s tendency to silo their individual insights, can provide crucial tools for conceptualizing “Shakespeare” as service, especially given the increasingly precarious financial situation of both. Specifically, it suggests that the SAA should include the social science work of practicing librarians—alongside their more humanities-inflected research—into annual sessions dedicated to the question of providing access to Shakespeare.