

## **Teaching Shakespeare: digital processes (Editorial)**

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### **Teaching Shakespeare: Digital Processes. Editorial.**

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*Teaching Shakespeare: Digital Processes. Editorial.*

By Dr Henry Bell and Amy Borsuk

It is 2017, the two co-editors (Amy Borsuk and Henry Bell) and consulting editor (Christie Carson) of this journal meet, IRL (in real life), for the first time in a pub, in Bankside, London - a stone's throw away from the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe. Appropriately for the theme of this issue, the three of us had, prior to this gathering, met for the first time through digital processes, co-authored a call for papers, formulated a series of interview questions and successfully organised and co-ordinated a multi-venue interview day with three different large-scale cultural organisations. One form of interaction could not exist without the other and, from our perspectives, both our face-to-face meetings and digital conversations enabled the scope, focus and rigour of the journal to be augmented. In this sense, the experience of putting together this journal was a microcosm of the themes and issues contained within it.

***I'll teach you differences***

*(King Lear. I.iv.86-89)*

This special issue provides a survey and analysis of global pedagogical practices in relation to teaching Shakespeare with digital technologies in high school and university settings. William Shakespeare holds a unique position within education: few other cultural entities can claim to match the range of contact across ages, disciplines and countries that his work, life and cultural impact have produced. The diversity of pedagogical approaches to Shakespeare, therefore, is enormous -- a diversity which has become even more widespread with the quickening rate of digital proliferation in everyday life and pedagogy. More than ever, processes are quickly outmoded, updated, disseminated, requiring a constant state of critical reflection. Major publications including *Broadcast your Shakespeare Continuity and Change Across Media* ed. Stephen O'Neill (2017) and *Shakespeare and the digital world: redefining scholarship and practice* ed. Peter Kirwan and Christie Carson (2014) have significantly updated the discussions around the digital practices surrounding Shakespeare's work. But, as our themed issue title implies, teaching Shakespeare with digital technologies is an ongoing *process* always occurring in the present tense but responding to a rich and varied tradition. Through our authors' articles, individual pedagogical reports, and the editors' interviews with professionals in digital pedagogical Shakespeare resources, we aim to capture and document the current state of digital processes for teaching Shakespeare.

**We the globe can compass soon,**

**Swifter than the wand'ring moon.**

*(A Midsummer Night's Dream. IV.i. 96-97)*

### Methodology and Scope

The co-editors of this themed issue are teachers and researchers of drama education and, as such, we have used RiDE's consistently global outlook as a key methodology when exploring the systemic issues within the field in our own work. By bringing together teaching perspectives from a range of nations and institutions, we aim with this special issue to create space for more in-depth exploration of how digital practices are received and applied in a pedagogical environment, and how they are framed and applied as pedagogical processes. The issue is necessarily global in scope, as digital pedagogies are simultaneously influenced by globalised access to commercial digital resources and unique to the political and cultural contexts of the educator's geographical location. Our contributors have created a diverse and rich investigation and demonstration of the impact of digital technology on educational processes related to Shakespeare, on the reception of performances for people in a Shakespeare learning environment, and on the cultural exchange involved in studying Shakespeare in predominantly non-English speaking countries and educational institutions.

The majority of articles, interviews and case studies inside this issue refer to the teaching practice of the author. This active focus was encouraged by the editorial team to not only speak to the applied focus of this journal but also to function as a potential, usable addition to a Shakespeare teacher's toolkit. This approach, coupled with the global scope of the content of the journal, ensures that the diverse and multiple perspectives of learners in different countries and continents are given the same credence as those who are teaching them and those who write, analyse and provoke debate about the processes at play. In curating and editing these global contributions, we noticed three major commonalities across our authors' works, although each author addresses these themes in culturally and geographically specific ways: the role digital resources play in shaping global and culturally-specific pedagogical practices, the value of authentic student engagement in the classroom, and the realities of varied, limited access to digital technologies based on location, language and interface design. These topics and the authors within this issue who address them, are the subjects of the next three sections of this editorial.

***The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language!***

*(The Tempest. I.ii. 364-365)*

The issues of digital access and linguistic access in the secondary and higher education classroom, as our contributors demonstrate, are often related to the ongoing impacts of imperialism and colonialism in the global south. As Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard and Jennifer Lavia write,

Postcolonialism's contentions surrounding the relationship between knowledge and power are linked directly to education, both as an institution where people are

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3 inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and as a site where it is possible to  
4 resist dominant discursive practices. In this way, education has a systematically  
5 ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. On the one hand, it is an object of  
6 postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and  
7 practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal  
8 and resist colonialism's continuing hold on our imagination. Education is also a site  
9 where legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of globalization  
10 intersect (2006, 257).  
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15 At a time, in the UK at least, when departments across Higher Education Institutions are  
16 rightly going about the process of decolonising and repositioning white canonical authors  
17 and practices within their curricula, this journal can provide resources and perspectives to  
18 encourage and guide these processes in regards to Shakespeare with research based-in or  
19 speaking to practice in Canada (Lior), Cyprus (Bell), Greece (Logotheti), Mauritius  
20 (Hookoomsing and Oozerally), Singapore, China and Japan (Li Lan and Yip), South Africa  
21 (Thurman), Turkey (Ogutcu), UK (Bell, Borsuk, Carson) and USA (Turchi, Hamill, Marlatt). We  
22 aim to illustrate the cultural hegemonies present in teaching Shakespeare on a global scale,  
23 and how digital technologies potentially maintain these hegemonies, or confront them. All  
24 three members of the editorial team sought, therefore, to enable a semi-curated  
25 juxtaposition between the global contributors to the journal (all themselves teachers of  
26 Shakespeare) and the perspectives of key producers and publishers of Shakespeare  
27 educational materials. This, to some degree, informed the editorial decision to place  
28 articles, interviews conducted by us for this themed issue and case studies next to each  
29 other, rather than in sections dependent on type.  
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38 In many ways, Christopher Thurman's contribution to this journal is a microcosm of this  
39 process - placing resources such as Digital Theatre+ and Drama Online in conversation with  
40 South African digital Shakespeare resources such as <http://shakespeare.org.za/>. Thurman  
41 demonstrates how a combined approach responds to the unique challenges and needs of  
42 each culturally specific classroom. His article also serves as an excellent contextual piece in  
43 respect of the history and issues surrounding the cultural and colonial position of  
44 Shakespeare in South African drama education. These reflections are made more vivid by a  
45 detailed reflection on his own teaching practice and the expectations and assumptions of his  
46 students in respect to their learning.  
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51 Yong Li Lan and Roweena Yip Leileng's article focusses on the Asian Shakespeare  
52 Intercultural Archive (<http://a-s-i-a-web.org/>) similarly presents digital archives as a means  
53 for teaching students about mediation and digital curation. Presented with clarity in an  
54 interview form between the General Editor of the resource (Li Lan) and a former student  
55 and current teacher of it (Yip), the pedagogical processes of teaching digital archiving is  
56 presented as more than a skill-within-itself, rather as a key to a multi-moded inter-cultural  
57 Shakespeare education experience that is self-reflective for the learner. This self-reflection  
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3 is enabled by exposure to the multiplicities of Shakespearean text across Asian performance  
4 cultures, captured in digital form. On a pragmatic level, the article provides expert insight  
5 into how pedagogical processes can be created and curated from this large and free-to-  
6 access resource which provides an alternative, or complementary, approach to the fee-  
7 based subscription services, Digital Theatre+ and Drama Online.  
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11 In contrast, the three editors conducted four interviews, with Robert Delamere (Digital  
12 Theatre+), Margaret Bartley (Drama Online/Arden), Tom Bird (Shakespeare's Globe) and  
13 Emily Hockley (Cambridge University Press), which illuminate the industrial, commercial and  
14 pedagogical aims of these international digital platforms and resources, and deconstruct  
15 their limitations. Amy Borsuk's response to Robert Delamere draws attention to the  
16 differences between his expectations for the platform and the realities of its application and  
17 use; Henry Bell response to Tom Bird highlights how the use of non-English speaking digital  
18 Shakespeare resources can emphasise pluralities of interpretation and challenge concepts of  
19 authenticity; and Christie Carson looks ahead to consider the potential consequences of the  
20 current, privatised systems for creating digital Shakespeare platforms, namely through the  
21 issue of copyright. The interviews themselves, run by all three members of the editorial  
22 team but individually written-up, give first person and candid perspectives of the ambitions,  
23 realities and people behind these companies with multi-national reach. It has been  
24 fascinating, from an editorial perspective, to place the aims of these individuals - and the  
25 institutions they represent - next to the practicalities and pedagogies of our article and case  
26 study contributors who use, or try to access, these resources 'on the ground' in educational  
27 settings.  
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36 **Is not the truth, the truth?**  
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39 (Henry IV pt1. II.iv.226)  
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41 Authenticity is a key concept in this themed issue and, from an editorial perspective, it is  
42 interesting to note how digital technology can be a key provocateur in de-centring this  
43 pedagogical conversation. Whilst the majority of the content of this issue touches upon  
44 these issues to some degree, Helina Hookoomsing and Shameem Oozeerally's article tackles  
45 these concepts through a unique lens. Their piece explores how an Altero Reflexive  
46 approach can be enhanced by, and speak to, digital technologies within Mauritian  
47 educational contexts and, in doing so, provides a concrete philosophical framework for this  
48 debate. Hookoomsing and Oozeerally's belief in the transductive potential of learner  
49 (bringing their own culture to the learning experience) and the relationship between  
50 introspective personal engagement and externalised reflection raises important questions in  
51 relation to meaning-making in a post-digital, and in this case, post-colonial and multilingual  
52 educational landscape. Moreover, like Thurman's descriptions of his experiences of teaching  
53 Shakespeare in South Africa, or Lin Lan and Yip's experiences in Singapore, Hookoomsing  
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3 and Oozeerally's article also provides a rigorous contextual framework to the cultural and  
4 colonial position of Shakespeare as an educational tool in a specific cultural context.  
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7 **Here's ado, to lock up honesty and honour from**  
8 **Th' access of gentle visitors!**  
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10 (The Winter's Tale. II.i.9-11)

11 Throughout the journal, the varying teaching contexts presented highlight the lack of a level  
12 playing field in relation to the accessibility and functionality of digital resources. Access to  
13 Shakespeare through digital platforms, and their functionality, are major topics in the wider  
14 context of digital Shakespeares: the edited collection, *The Shakespeare User* (2017) explores  
15 theories and politics of access; Geoff Way's article 'Peeking Behind the Digital Curtains:  
16 Shakespearean Performance institutions, Social Media and Access' (2016) emphasises that  
17 access is determined by a wide variety of structural and institutional as well as design  
18 factors. In this issue, Noam Lior brings this conversation to the classroom by providing a  
19 thorough and comprehensive analysis of seven prominent multimedia digital applications  
20 and resources for teaching Shakespeare, focusing on their 'intellectual accessibility'. He  
21 positions his analysis of these resources in comparison to his own work for the platform,  
22 *Shakespeare at Play*. All of these platforms, he argues, have mixed success in their efforts to  
23 make Shakespeare intellectually accessible - that is, approachable, comprehensible, and  
24 engaging to modern users.  
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32 Lior also offers a key distinction between the pedagogical function of digital performance  
33 and digital text - a theme which appears throughout all of the articles. Having students  
34 perform and produce Shakespeare (Hamill), versus read and interpret (Logotheti) yields  
35 fundamentally related but different modes for understanding Shakespeare. They also teach  
36 students the pedagogical potential of each medium. Our contributors, particularly Anastasia  
37 Logotheti, discuss how these digital platforms can help to challenge students' understanding  
38 of Shakespeare as one single, canonical text, or one performance as *the* conclusive,  
39 definitive iteration of a playtext. The platforms, including Digital Theatre+ and Drama Online  
40 as discussed by Robert Delamere and Maragaret Bartley respectively, provide an enormous  
41 variety of performances, and/or the different historical quartos and folios of Shakespeare's  
42 plays. Besides providing variety which can be applied to different pedagogical contexts, the  
43 volume of materials helps to reinforce the dialogical nature of text and performance.  
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50 There are six teaching case studies placed in response to articles throughout the issue  
51 conduct similar work as personal pedagogical accounts. Together, they provide a global  
52 survey of different digital tools and how they do or do not meet the specific needs of the  
53 educator's cultural context. It was rewarding to see accounts of practice from a diversity of  
54 institution type and geographical location and we hope that current teachers of  
55 Shakespeare can be inspired by this work currently being undertaken in response to the  
56 digital resources available. Laura Turchi provides a case study on using Shakespeare eBooks  
57 in the US university classroom; Rick Marlatt focuses on connected learning as a mode for  
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3 promoting student autonomy, self-direction and engagement through the use of video  
4 production; Murat Ogutcu documents his methods for promoting student engagement in  
5 Turkish higher education by using digital technology to appeal to individual connection;  
6 Anastasia Logotheti discusses how she uses digital footage of Shakespeare as means for first  
7 engagement with students and as a means of teaching about editorial choices in curating  
8 Shakespeare folios in Greece; and Thomas Hamill documents the use of video for in-class  
9 assessment to encourage student production and ownership of performance via digital  
10 media at Wilkes University. These case studies also demonstrate that the core function of  
11 these digital tools is to create a mode of engagement with students which meets their  
12 specific needs and hopefully, their interests. As such, the digital tools and the educators'  
13 practices are always in dialogue, responding to and with the students as they tell us what is  
14 effective, and what is not.  
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### 21 **The future comes apace**

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23 **(*Timon of Athens* II.ii.153)**  
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26 As an editorial team, we believe our issue speaks to a sub-genre of the journal's varied and  
27 historic output: issues which address wider systems at play within the field of drama  
28 education. In doing so, past issues in this mould have broadened the focus to consider the  
29 conversations between drama and other subjects as well as the structures in which the  
30 discipline is taught and, perhaps more importantly, how the discipline can challenge these  
31 structures. We have taken inspiration from Kim Solga's recent 24(3) 2019 special issue of  
32 *RiDE* which focuses on crises in the humanities, defined by the often suffocating pressures  
33 of the neoliberal, privatised, quantified and monetised university system. Solga observes, 'If  
34 neoliberalism is no single thing, not just an economic model but a socio-political system, a  
35 paradigm for organising human living, perhaps the tools to combat it will need to be  
36 paradigmatic, too' (255). Our issue picks up the threads of such observations and anxieties  
37 through the lens of applying digital technologies in the classroom. Perhaps, we can hope,  
38 these digital pedagogical tools which are often developed to comply with such neoliberal  
39 politics and policies can be used to offer students and educators modes of engagement with  
40 Shakespeare, theatre and performance in modes outside of this paradigm. Digital  
41 technologies in the classroom, offered as both a site of crisis and solution, often walk the  
42 line between supporting and breaking from this paradigm, which the articles in our themed  
43 issue bring to the forefront.  
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52 Altogether, the issue demonstrates the breadth, scope, strengths and pitfalls of global tools  
53 like Digital Theatre+, Drama Online and Cambridge University Press, which must balance  
54 between casting a wide net and supporting specific institutional, cultural-pedagogical needs.  
55 Moreover, the articles demonstrate that the role Shakespeare plays in the classroom  
56 extends beyond an introduction to his history, and his plays as text and performance. Digital  
57 engagements with Shakespearean text not only serve as a gateway into interest in digital  
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production and performance but also as an entry-point for studying the English language (and culture). Parallel to this, Digital Shakespeare resources can serve as a vector for provoking student introspection about their position in their specific cultural and sociopolitical contexts that can challenge authoritative readings and meaning-making processes within education systems.

To echo the conclusions of Emma Cox and Caroline Wake's themed issue of RiDE 23 (2) *Envisioning asylum/engendering crisis*, we "hope that 10 years from now, some of the trajectories identified here might have shifted course". We envision, in a similar mould, that the digital processes explored in this issue will change yet again. Our aim is to have influenced this development through this themed issue and to help maintain and create collaborative global networks linked by digital Shakespeare.

**I can no other answer make but thanks,  
And thanks;**

*(Twelfth Night, III.ii. 14-15)*

### **Acknowledgements**

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