SECTION IX: WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

The Writing Component in Shakespeare and Performance Courses: Generating Student Responses

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Since many of us were trained and continue to teach in traditional English Literature Departments, we may approach student writing in Shakespeare courses as we do any other course, assigning "close reading" or textual analysis essays--whether the old New Criticism or the more politicized approaches of feminism, Marxism, cultural materialism, and the new historicism. We ask students to read the plays and write essays with thesis statements which interpret such elements as character, theme, gender, class, race, etc. Once we allow the performance text into our account of Shakespeare, however, some of our expectations about writing assignments must necessarily adapt.

Whether our performance-based work uses student performance and directing, or reviews of live or film productions, or a combination of all, approaching Shakespeare via the stage requires some preparation different from traditional text-based pedagogy.

Still, some of the traditional questions and writing tasks remain relevant in performance-based classrooms. We are seeking students' response to and interpretation of texts, but in this case, the texts may include live performance (even their own) and films. For example, Geri Jacobs uses pre-writing heuristics as warm-ups for exploring character. Jacobs replaces conventional pre-writing questions with those addressing performance--for example, "What tension do I see in this character? Where is the source of energy in this character?" (These types of questions echo those of director Michael Shurtleff, but in this form, may be more familiar to Literature students.) Anne Cook requires her students to read and view a play twice before class discussion begins, the completion of which she tests through "inquiry-response" writings. These pieces of writing are informal yet comprehensive records of reader/viewer questions, problems, discoveries, and points for further investigation. Deborah Montuori assigns a performance critique, with foundation in the printed text, as well as comparative critique. She, like several instructors, offers the option of preparing a "director's conception," whereby students could argue for an original production of a play. To help such assignments materialize, students could read directors' and actors' commentaries, interviews, and printed reviews of productions. Inviting local actors, directors and set designers to talk to classes would expose student-directors to such practical concerns as slippery stage floors and excessively heavy swords.

Crucial to successful incorporation of performance issues into student writing is providing the class with some -- even primitive -- tools, terms, categories, issues which facilitate students' exploration of the visual and aural texts alongside the verbal. The best tools are questions, and we must work to foster in students confidence to ask the right questions. To that end, I attach some material which developed from the work of the Folger seminar and which I further adapted with my Shakespeare students. The following pages are annotated versions of handouts and assignments: A) a glossary of film terms, B) a performance questionnaire, C) suggestions for presenting video clips in class, D) sample approaches to

scene analyses, E) essay assignment, F)the syllabus from my course, "Reading, Viewing and Reviewing Shakespeare" (Spring 1993, University of Houston).

At the beginning of the semester, I gave my students this short list of fundamental film terms which I selected on the basis of our use of video tapes. I suggest that you illustrate the most basic terms with tapes in class to better ensure comprehension. You could use a "famous shot" approach with illustrations from popular movies they probably already know, e.g. Hitchcock.

Glossary of Selected Film Terms

(excerpted from How Movies Work. Bruce F. Kawin. New York: Macmillan, 1987.)

aerial shot: one in which the camera support (e.g. a helicopter) is off the ground blocking: the deployment of actors on a set and the planning of their movements boom or crane shot: any nonaerial shot in which the camera platform moves through the air; a crane is a vehicle equipped with a mechanically or hydraulically operated boom or arm at whose end is a camera platform that can be lifted and moved through the air camera angle: the tilt or inclination from which the camera views the subject; the angle between the camera's line of sight and the forward and/or lateral axes.

closeup: (CU) a shot whose field of view is very narrow; the camera appears to be near the subject. e.g. a face might fill the frame. cross-cutting or parallel montage: the art of cutting back and forth between recurring setups or independent scenes; the intercutting of ongoing actions cut: 1) an instantaneous transition from one shot (a visual cut) or track (a sound cut) to another; 2) the point at which one shot ends and another begins cutaway shot: a cut away from a setup, figure, or action to which the camera will soon return

cutback shot: a cut to a previously established setup, figure or action dialogue: words spoken in a film

dissolve: a superimposed fade-out and fade-in, whereby one image gradually vanishes while another gradually appears establishing agent: a shot that introduces or defines the location where an action takes place, usually a long shot

flashback: 1) a cut or leap from the narrative present to a direct view or an objective presentation of a past event; a flash forward cuts to the future; 2) loosely, the direct presentation of a memory framing: the act of determining the boundaries of the imagefreeze frame: a still image created by the continual reprinting of the same frame

jump cut: a disjunctive and often disorienting straight cut, especially within a scene; a sudden, illogical, or mismatched transition

leitmotif: a recurring musical theme associated with a particular character, object, idea, or other narrative element

long shot: (LAYS) a shot that vies a wide view of the visual field; the camera appears to be far from the subject. Typically a human figure will be less than half the height of the frame.

medium shot or midshot: (MS) a shot whose field of view is between those of the longshot and closeup; e.g. a view of human figure from head to waist or knees might fill the frame.

mise-en-scene: (pron. mez/on/sen) 1) French for "made into a scene" or "put in place"; the decor, layout, and theatrical and cinematic staging of a scene; 2) the general term for what has been arranged within a shot.

montage: 1) French for "mounting" or "raising"; the intensive, significant, and often abrupt juxtaposition of shots; 2) the synamic editing of picture or sound; 3) a series of superimposed or overlapping images

over-the-shoulder-shot: a shot or setup in which the camera has a view from behind and over the shoulder of one person to the face of another

pan, panning shot, or panoramic shot: to pivot or swivel the camera from side to side

point-of-view shot (POV) or subjective camera: a shot or setup in which the camera adopts the vantage point of a character's physical eye of literal gaze

prop or property: a physical object handled by an actor or displayed as part of a set; the term excludes costumes and set dressings (furnishings, fixtures, objects attached to walls or floor of a set)

realism: a representational style that attempts to present the world to an audience as they already see and normally conceptualize it (t.v.)

scene: 1) a complete unit of action, capable of being covered in a single shot; 2) a significant dramatic action taking place in a single location

sequence: a succession of coordinated elements; thus 1) any group of consecutive shots and/or scenes; 2) a series of tightly or necessarily interrelated scenes; loosely, an act sound effects: any sounds in a movie, excluding dialogue and music.

At the beginning of the semester I provided my Shakespeare class with a skeletal version of this set of questions -- the Pavis Questionnaire designed for live performance. Since this course was set up to use videos, I wanted to tailor the format to help students in their analyses of this medium. I asked them to read and view a video version of our first play (in this case, Shrew) and to keep the questions handy as they watched, trying to answer them. In class, I put the students into groups of our or five and asked them to compare experiences of watching the videos, specifically attending to the questions they were given. Their assignment was to evaluate, expand, adapt the questionnaire based on their needs as viewers. What follows is the expanded version which I compiled based on the input of the students in English 3306, Spring 1993 at the University of Houston.

SHAKESPEARE: PERFORMANCE/FILM/VIDEO QUESTIONNAIRE
(modified version of "Pavis Questionnaire" designed by Patrice Pavis)

This list covers three separate, yet overlapping procedures: description, interpretation, and critique.

1. What were the stage space and audience space like (for film, type of theater -- e.g. Art, Cineplex, Museum, Film Festival or series; for video, framing and length of shots)?
2. What was immediately striking about the "look" of the production (for film, mise-en-scene)?
3. Was there a set? what was it like? if changed, how was this done?
4. What kinds of sound were you aware of? (include clarity, silences, and non-vocal noise)
5. Did you notice anything about the lighting?
6. Were there any costumes that stood out as especially significant? What was their shape, style, color? their relationship to actors' bodies? Can you characterize the 'period' conveyed? If so, was it consistently invoked?
7. How would describe the pace of the production? If there's an intermission, describe any differences between the parts (e.g. quicker before intermission).
8. What moments gave you particular pleasure or unease? (aesthetic and ideological)
9. In what ways, if any, did the director's interpretation differ from what you had expected? Which elements of the production did s/he most emphatically employ to convey that interpretation?
10. Did the audience reaction ever surprise you? How so? (You may want to talk with audience members, if you feel comfortable doing so.)
11. How would you sum up the production in a single photograph (a still from a film) or line? If this seems especially difficult, why?
12. How would you describe the use of space, including blocking and movement? (e.g. cramped, vast, busy, stark)
13. Comment on casting, including gender race, age, body types and agility. Consider connotations of actors' other roles and careers (where relevant); is the director working with or against these established "identities"?
14. Consider how the program (jacket on video; ads and trailers for films; commercials for TV) influences the audience. Do these materials accurately describe the work?
15. Describe the characteristic "tricks" of the film: mise-en-scene, striking camera work -- montage, flashback, dissolve, other.

This handout outlines the requirements for student presentations of video/film adaptations of Shakespeare plays. I allowed them to choose the film (based on my quick synopses of the choices available) and to work in small groups of up to three or alone; they developed the topics on their own. Some students provided handouts and others did rather extensive research on the director. Because the course was experimental, I did not grade these projects. The presentations were successful and audiences were usually rapt. The only problem is the peanut gallery effect which you might want to curb early or channel into more structured discussions after the report. Some examples of presentation topics: staging soliloquies in Zeffirelli's Hamlet; sexual violence in the wooing scene in Zeffirelli's Shrew; phallic imagery in--surprise!--Olivier's Hamlet; the ubiquitous Ross in Polanski's Macbeth; comparative Ophelias (Olivier, Richardson, Zeffirelli); opening sequence as exposition in Reinhardt's Dream; nature and civilization in the BBC Tempest.

Preparing Your Video Presentation

Purpose: To give presenters practice with close-reading and -viewing of a Shakespearean play text and a film adaptation; to give the audience both a good general sense of what the film does with the play, and an in-depth analysis of a major scene, idea, or character of the play/film; to compare the written text to the performance text; to get and give pleasure.

Preliminaries

Plan on (at least) two group sessions--one to watch the film and one to plan your class presentation. Ideally, you can each view the video once on your own before or after you see it together.

1. Read the play through and mark key scenes; record your imaginary staging of them (e.g., what is the context of the scene; who's on stage; what are they doing; where are they; what about costumes, music, lighting, blocking?). Keep careful notes of every stage [pun?] of work.

2. Watch the video through once without stopping; jot down notes in response to handling of major scenes, characters; notes any omissions, additions, surprises, questions, etc.

3. Discuss video; switch back and replay key scenes. You may find that people remember things they see differently. Try to separate content from interpretation. Assign a recorder and discuss: director's conception of the play; casting and acting; sets, costumes, lighting (effective, intrusive, confusing, busy, stark?); camera work (esp. closeups and noteworthy cuts, etc); deviations from Shakespearean test (major changes in speeches and character; additions; filmic forays); music, visual and sound effects.
4. Decide on a scene, idea, character, image that this version does interestingly, unexpectedly, successfully, terribly, problematically. View these sequences several times. (10-20 minutes in-class running time). Your work should be descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative; i.e. you should describe what the film does, analyze what it means (why it makes certain choices); and react to its effectiveness; did you like it; did it work; would you recommend it; why/not?

An Approach to What to do in Class: Division of Labor

1. Set up the movie for us; give an overview of the film, include specific details: date, director, cast, year produced; describe your group's reactions; lead up to your main point and the scene/character/effect, etc. you want us to notice. (Here, you may want to show some of the video to contextualize your topic.).

2. Refer to the scene(s), lines, etc. in the text and generate discussion before you show the segment.

3. Ask class to write or discuss a relevant issue.

4. Show video segment two or three times: describe, interpret, analyze, evaluate.

5. Provide class with outline, citations, further questions, comments, information reviews.

NOTE: To illustrate the various intellectual operations which enter into critical analyses of visual texts, I abstracted thesis statements from students' first short scene analysis and asked them to distinguish among description, interpretation, and evaluation.

GLEANINGS FROM ENGLISH 3306 SCENE ANALYSIS I

For homework, read these excerpts from your papers and try to identify the various modes of analysis working--descriptive, interpretive, evaluative. Mark each differently and comments on its effectiveness. Where there seems to

be description, ask whether it is sufficiently detailed; where interpretation, valid and founded and how the film compares to the text; where evaluation, supported and convincing. Note how some examples show the three modes overlapping.

"Kate and Baptista form a dyad, excluding Bianca who is offscreen. Kate pauses on the stairs, appearing startled as the assembled guests gasp. Instead of railing, she looks into Baptista's eyes, then smiles when the guests clap, signalling their approval" (Zeffirelli, Shrew).

"Throughout. . . the scenes . . . involving human characters, Moshingsky employs a pale, almost ghastly illumination, presumably to denote the bland humanity of these mortal characters" (BBC *MND*)

"The music [trumpets], the costumes [military uniforms], the crown all emphasize Theseus' role as public figure over his personal role as bridegroom about to wed" (Reinhardt, *MND*)

"There are elaborate costumes. Both women and men and dressed in finery. Women's headdresses vie for attention. Food and wine abound . . candles fill every available inch" (Zeffirelli, *Shrew*)

"Kate still by herself, locked in her room, lowers herself [from the window] to sit down on the crates on which she had been standing. Kate [physically] lowering herself can be interpreted as her having to lower herself because of the expected submission and lower status of women in her society" (Zeffirelli, *Shrew*)

"the camera is focused on Baptista . . . this forces the viewer to focus more on Baptista's reaction to Kate's obedience rather than the obedient [speech] itself. The director may have been using this to emphasize Baptista's change of heart toward his troublesome daughter" (Zeffirelli, *Shrew*).

"The banquet room is dark along the walls and light around the table in order to give the impression that the candles are providing the only source of light for the room The effect is to illuminate each actor's face equally" (Zeffirelli, *Shrew*)

"Hermia looks exhausted and sits down on the ground as Lysander says, 'Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood,' as though he is enlightening her to her own condition" (BBC *MND*)

"Baptista is in front of the house while Kate is inside, one story up, behind a shutter . . . She is very much removed from the others. This distance and the secretive way she observes the others sets her up as an outsider in her own family" (Zeffirelli, *Shrew*).

The mechanicals enter the forest playing musical instruments and singing, immediately introducing their roles as performers: this idea is enhanced by the appearance of several layers of fairy "auditors": delicately clad white fairy girls, grotesque fairy dwarf men, and, of course, Puck. The camera cuts to each of them, showing their observance of the "scene" to come. The layering works something like this: the inhabitants of the forest watch the workers rehearse their play, as the camera watches them watching the workers, and as we watch it all. As they enter, some of the men ride in a plain wooden cart pulled by a horse--a carryover from their work-a-day world of Athens and a reminder of the distance they have traversed to get to their "theater."

(Instructor: annotate the example to illustrate the modes of analysis and how they overlap; here, the underlined segments show interpretion)

Sample Syllabus:

English 3306/ Christensen//Final Essay Guidelines

Due dates:

Thesis statement due in class
Complete draft (not rough) due in class
Final typed copy due with all notes and drafts, and photocopies of secondary sources

Description:

This is a critical, argumentative essay in which you present a thesis and support it through logically organized, well-developed paragraphs using evidence from the texts (plays, films, secondary material [option
* *
We still want to spend more time in Lynch's mob. (2x)
In policy we'll term Kathleen a paragon H8? doubtful
At keeping darker purposes real difficult to con. LEAR 1.1.36
But so far will we trust thee, gentle Kate, 1H4 2.3.112
Since our time with you hath all too short a date. SON 18.4

We still want to work with Suzy Fox some more. (2x)
Another master-mistress of logistical control your own. Cite sources if you use them. Provide copies of any and all secondary materials to me. 6-8 pages double-spaced. NUMBER YOUR PAGES!!!

re/sources:

texts of plays, including introductions and notes; films; class notes; handouts; articles and book chapters from class and materials on reserve; MLA Style Manual.

Topic Choices:

1. Critical interpretation of a film adaptation of a Shakespeare play from our syllabus. (e.g. sort of an extended scene analysis, following one idea about the director's interpretation of the text)

2. Argumentative essay in response to the secondary readings--Berger, Coursen, Clamorous Voices, Reynolds, Partridge. (i.e. setting forth your ideas about the merits of reading and or viewing Shakespeare; use texts of plays for bases)

3. Analytical essay about the function of plays-within-plays in one or more Shakespeare plays, e.g Shrew, Dream, Hamlet, Tempest. How do meta-theatrical elements affect the larger work?

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER:

a. Remember your critical modes: description, analysis, and interpretation.
b. Avoid plot summary. Cite lines in the proper format (3.4.1-c. Avoid lengthy quotations; quote strategically and accurately; always set up and comment on the quoted bits.
d. When you discuss formal issues (e.g lighting, sound, meter) be sure that your argument connects to a larger point about meaning or content. Don't

inventory, analyze!

SOME SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS

Reinhardt's emphasis on Theseus' public roles as soldier and statesman establishes a framework for marriage as a political tool rather than a loving relationship.

Throughout Shrew, Miller contrasts Baptista's opulent and efficient household with Petruchio's spare and disorderly estate in order to call into question conformity to social conventions.

The players in both Shrew and Hamlet take direction from men of higher rank; their willingness to comply with the Lord's joke, in the former, and the Prince's revenge plot, in the latter, implies that plays can serve those in power.

The Christopher Sly framing device in Shrew sets up the notion that identity, like an actor's role, can be easily manipulated. Kate's development from shrew to wife parallels Sly's transformation from tinker to Lord.

The BBC animated Hamlet uses light/dark and inside/outside imagery to set up Hamlet as an outsider to Elsinore.

By "Interpreting the Silence" of Kate, actors reveal . . . . about performance.

F))
This is a description of the course and the syllabus.

English 3306-04013
Shakespeare's Major Works/ Spring 1993

"Reading, Viewing, and reviewing Shakespeare: Theory and Practice of Performance Criticism"

Virginia Woolf wrote: Shakespeareans are divided . . . into three classes; those who prefer to read Shakespeare in the book; those who prefer to see him acted on the stage; and those who run from book to stage gathering plunder." What kind of Shakespearean are you? This course will consider arguments from all three camps, and will ask students to commit eventually to one approach, defensible in a final paper. We will read, discuss, and write about 5 plays, focusing primarily (but not only) on issues of performance--theater and film/TV history, staging, casting,. reviewing Shakespeare. We'll watch excerpts from videos in class, but students will be required to do additional viewing/theater-going outside of class. Our discussions will be contextualized by recent theoretical and critical debates about performance, and by reviews of productions. Relevant materials will be on reserve in the library, but students will need to do some research on their own. One exam, three papers, in-class presentation.

1 PAGE VS. STAGE: LITERARY CRITICISM AND PERFORMANCE

T Introduction to the course
Th Shrew

T Shrew
Th Shrew

T Shrew

Th Shrew, Ch. 1 "Kate: Interpreting the Silence" in Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today. Faith Evans, ed. (1989). pp. 1-25.

T Ch. 1 "Preliminaries" in H.R. Coursen, Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation (1992). pp. 23-48. "Prologue" and "Introduction" (xi-xv, 3-7); Ch. 1 (pp. 9-24) and Ch. 2 (pp. 25-42) in Harry Berger, Imaginary Audition (1989).
Th Dream

T Dream, scene analysis due
Th Dream

2 VIEWING AND RE-VIEWING

T Hamlet
Th Hamlet

T Hamlet
Th Hamlet

T Hamlet
Th Hamlet, scene analysis due

Spring Break

T Macbeth; "The Visual Text" (pp 66-93) and "Theatrical Ephemera?" (94-104) Peter Reynolds, Shakespeare: Text into Performance (1991); Edward Partridge, "Re-presenting Shakespeare" in Shakespeare: The Theatrical Dimension (1979). pp 1-10.
Th Macbeth

T Macbeth
Th Macbeth; essay due

T Tempest
Th Tempest

T Tempest
Th Tempest

Required texts:

The Pelican Shakespeare. Alfred Harbage, ed. New York: Viking, 1969.
English 3306 Reading Supplement

Writing About Performance

Geri Jacobs
Jackson Community College

In the Shakespeare course or one where performance concerns are also addressed:
This exercise uses the Writing Process to examine the Performance Process.)

Prewriting or Warming-up
Aim: to Explore, to Examine, to Discover.

How has this character been presented in the past? What have I liked or not liked about these performances?
What are my chief concerns about presenting this character? What are some of my fears?
What do I look forward to most in presenting this character?
How do I see myself in this role?
What will I look like?
What type of clothing or colors will I wear?
How do I hear myself?
What tension do I see or sense in this character? How will this be resolved?
What is the point of interest in this character? Where is the source of energy in this character?
What is most significant or meaningful about this character?
How do I want the audience to see and understand this character?

Incubating
Aim: To Sort, Organize, Make connections, Find solutions or the starting point.
Allow unconscious synthesis to take place

Writing or Performing
Aim: To Arrive at the Product

A short narrative of the perspective adopted for the performance of the character.

Rewriting or Reviewing
Aim: To Evaluate
An analysis of the performance.

Writing in the Classroom: Three Teaching Strategies

Michael Shea
Southern Connecticut State University

I. DAILY WRITING

Probably my single most effective teaching strategy is the daily writing I have students do. I begin every class by asking the students an interpretive (and so open-ended) question about that day's reading. They then have the first five minutes of class to write clear, well-developed answers that are supported with textual evidence (they can use their books). Because I want a clear, well-reasoned, insightful paragraph that I can read quickly and comprehend easily, I encourage them to make a single claim, support the claim with evidence, and explain how the evidence supports their claim. I give these paragraphs back the next class graded E (excellent--100 pts.), S (satisfactory--85 pts.), or U (unsatisfactory--60 pts.). They get a 0 for ones that they miss or ones in which they say nothing. The average of these grades is 20% of the student's semester grade.

Benefits for students:
1. They very soon begin to read the entire assignment carefully and thoroughly and reflectively because they realize that they can't write satisfactory answers in five minutes unless they know the text very well.
2. After writing, each student usually has a substantial insight that she wants to contribute to class discussion, so I need

not rely on the same "good" students; indeed, I can even call on the quiet ones without fear of embarrassing them.
3. The constant repetition of claim/evidence/explanation helps their reasoning abilities and raises the level of critical inquiry.
4. The regular practice in writing not only helps them improve their writing, but also "naturalizes" it for them, removing the fear and strangeness of it; they find their longer papers easier to start and they know how to build an argument through claim/support/explanation.
5. They come to class, and they arrive on time.

Drawbacks:
1. Many students get a long string of U's for the first few weeks and can become demoralized.
2. A very few never do well on these the whole semester.
3. My grading load never lets up.

Variations:
1. Sometimes I have each student evaluate a classmate's paper (the grade is less important than the comment); both reading the answer and writing the comment can create awareness of the need for clear communication.
2. When I give papers back with no grade or comment and have them evaluate their own papers, sometimes students realize that they cannot figure out what they meant to say.
3. If I have the students use the five minutes to create an effective question, and then take it or another student's question home to write an answer, the importance of formulating clear questions can become apparent to them.
4. Often I ask students who are still having trouble in the middle of the semester to redo their answers at home.
5. This practice can be adapted to work other than reading assignments (e.g., a film viewing, a production assignment, a playgoing requirement, whatever).

II. DAILY MEMORIZATION

I ask students to memorize for each class a new speech or part of a speech from the play we are discussing. These start out short (3-5 lines) and gradually grow longer (20-25 lines) as the semester progresses. Sometimes I assign the lines, sometimes they choose them, but in either case they also have to explain how these lines relate interpretively to the rest of the play. On any given day, any student may be asked to recite the lines and expain their significance.

Benefits for students:
1. Working closely with the text, they begin to notice the importance of each word, especially unfamiliar ones; this can lead to a discussion of the interpretive nature of dictionaries and editorial glosses.
2. As they change or substitute words, the notion of paraphrase arises; where does meaning reside--in the words themselves, or in some version of those words, or in some independent idea that those words point to?
3. They realize that the meaning of the speech changes as they understand different parts of the play in new ways, and so we can discuss formalism.
4. They eventually start to appreciate how rhythm and inflection

affects meaning, leading easily into a discussion of text and performance.
5. Some discover a new talent, or take an interest in acting; this can be particularly rewarding for students who haven't been especially strong academically on tests and papers.
6. They are better prepared for the group performances of longer scenes later in the course.

Drawbacks:
1. Almost all the students are afraid of this, especially in the first few classes.
2. The shy students are embarrassed.
3. Some of the students never can do it.
4. Students may focus too much on memorizing and not enough reading and thinking about the play.
5. Some of the students who are not so good at this can be intimidated by the more accomplished ones.
6. There's not enough time to get everyone to do this more than once a semester.

Variations:
1. After our class with Audrey Stanley, I want to have students play more with these lines, and to deliver their lines to each other in pairs or small groups.

III. CUMULATIVE PAPERS

There are usually four or five papers on my syllabus, and students know the due dates and the approximate lengths, but not the topics. They naturally assume they will be writing several different papers. Actually, the papers are part of a sequence which highlights rewriting and which builds toward a final long paper. This approach is especially useful for assignments in which they are to examine written and video versions of a play.

The first assignment is simply to choose a short scene from the written text (or part of a scene, or even just a speech), and explain, in a typical literary analysis about four pages long, what and how it means. When I get these graded papers back to them, I tell them that the assignment for the second paper is to rewrite the first paper (no matter how good or bad each paper is, I try to make my written comments extensive). The second paper, approximately six pages long, is usually a pretty decent literary analysis, and I return them with grades and comments.

By now it is close to the middle of the semester and we have been moving on to different plays. Only then do I tell them about the video assignment, paper three. I ask them to watch a video version of the same play and to write another analysis of the same scene they had chosen for the earlier paper, again explaining how and what it means in about four pages. (I tell them repeatedly to ignore the written version at this point and to treat the video as a new text that generates a new meaning in its own right.) Again, after handing it back with a grade and comments, I ask them to rewrite it in about six pages.

The final paper is an incorporation of papers two and four into a paper of 12-15 pages that compares and contrasts these meanings and comes to some significant new insight (perhaps about different media, about interpretation, about the nature of meaning, about the meaning of these particular meanings, whatever). This paper involves yet more rewriting to clarify further the analyses of each scene, as well as new writing to fit all the observations

together into some sort of new conclusion.

Benefits to students:
1. They necessarily begin their long paper early and work on it consistently throughout the semester.
2. They keep refining their understanding of how meaning is created in the scenes as they keep revising their papers.
3. Working in different media helps them learn how meaning is created in each.

Drawbacks:
1. It doesn't work. Many students still want to pass evaluative judgments based on external criteria ("I didn't like the film because it wasn't true to the text"--I try to keep asking them if the film was true to itself) or still insist on an absolutism in the very face of relative meaning ("I didn't realize that the character meant it that way until I saw this video").
2. Most students aren't able to manage well the unfamiliar and fairly sophisticated tools necessary to do a clear analysis of video. That can be a very unsatisfying and even frustrating experience (for both them and me).

Variations:
1. I need to accept the limitation of time that does not allow for the students to become as proficient in film studies as a course in film studies would.

Towards a Director's Conception: Writing Assignments in the Shakespeare Classroom

Deborah J. Montuori
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The scope and methodology of a course entitled "Shakespeare: Texts and Performances" seems apparent. It was, however, a relatively new approach for my department (English), one that scared off a number of traditional majors who promptly pronounced it "weird." Based on my belief that while Shakespeare's plays can be fruitfully read, they can better be understood and appreciated through performance, the course drew a varied enrollment: 11 undergraduate English Majors and 3 English graduate students; one Post-Bac double major (English and Theatre); 5 undergraduate Theatre majors; and seven students from miscellaneous departments (Education, Nursing,Journalism, etc.). My teaching was informed and influenced by my participation in a year-long Folger/NEH Institute on combining text and performance in the classroom experience. This article focuses on the semester-long movement towards a final writing assignment, a director's conception of *Hamlet* or *King Lear*.

I. SUMMARIES: Beginning

On the initial day of discussion for each new play, students were expected to submit a 1-2 pp. summary/response. Not a "Cliff's Notes-style" plot or theme summary, the exercise asked students to focus on a particular issue or question raised by their reading. For example, *Henry V* provoked topics including the lack of power in the female characters and the boy; parallels in the breakdown of body parts in Williams' fireside complaint and the bedroom scene between Alice and Katherine; Henry's definition of and

attitude towards friendship; the ambiguous concept of the Christian king; etc. Students were directed to demonstrate in their discussion a consideration of the play as a whole.

By asking students not only to read but also to think and write about the play *prior* to class discussion, their ideas and responses, independently formed, enhanced their sense of having a "handle" on the play, thus encouraging more of them to take part in the subsequent classroom discussion. Often the topics addressed in the summaries led to more sophisticated theses for formal papers. My comments on returned summaries addressed the potential problem that any interpretation is a valid interpretation; but the free-ranging scope of the summaries did help build students' confidence in trusting their own observations about difficult and unfamiliar material.

In the summaries, as in all written assignments for this class, students were advised to tie their ideas to the text itself. It may not be entirely valid, for example, merely to state that Iago has homosexual feelings towards Othello; but one may be able to support this claim by drawing on specific lines and considering how they might be delivered in performance. The intellectual and creative freedom of the summaries, enhanced by the return to textual "proofs" and the need to consider topics in relation to the text as a whole play and a performance, helped move students towards the semester's final project, a director's conception.

II. CHARACTER ANALYSES

The course included a presentation component: either a summary and evaluation of a performance-oriented critical essay, or a prepared scene, followed by a panel discussion. Students opting to perform a scene were also required to submit a written character analysis, focusing on the choices they made in rehearsal and the textual sources supporting those choices and the overall interpretation. Again, the performance and character analysis exercises reinforced the links between page and stage.

III. CRITICAL REVIEW

The first major writing assignment (4-5 pp.) offered two critical review options. Students could select one aspect of performance and explore its use throughout a videotape production of one of the three plays studied (*Henry V*, *Othello*, or *Macbeth*); or they could focus on a single scene, analyzing the various choices made by the director, actors, and technical crew. At this point in the course (the paper was due six weeks into the semester), students had gained a basic technical vocabulary through discussion sessions critiquing videotaped performances. They were reminded not only to observe what was done in a particular performance but also to consider how and why: Can the choices made be justified with Shakespeare's text? What was the desired effect? How did it relate to the director's overall concept--to theme, message, tone, etc.? An expanded and adapted version of the Pavis Questionnaire was distributed as a suggested guideline.

The assignment was generally successful; even in cases where faulty directions were taken, students gained a greater understanding of the ways in which a performance emerges from a text.

IV DIRECTOR'S CONCEPTION

The final project of the semester was a full director's conception of either *Hamlet* or *King Lear* (8-10 pp.). The assignment was designed to demonstrate the students' understanding of the text, of the components of production, and of the links between text and performance. On the day the assignment sheet was distributed, students engaged in a brainstorming session to remind them of the possible facets they might consider. Among the items

generated:

--production media (film, stage, TV, cartoon, etc.)
--audience (age, income, etc.)
--"message"
--characterization
--setting (time period, place)
--costuming (including color)
--casting (non-traditional: gender, age, race, body type;
specific actors may be suiggested)
--camera (angles, scope, cuts)
--lighting
--musical score
--sound effects
--textual cuts, additions, transpositions
--visual parallels

Students were instructed to begin with a general statement of concept, averaging 2-3 pp. Then, by focusing on two or three scenes, they could develop their conception by detailing directional choices and technical strategies.

My hope was that, as opposed to the critical review, the director's conception would offer students a chance to develop a more personalized, creative and (frankly) fun piece of work, allowing them to apply as well as reflect upon what they had learned during the semester. The results far exceeded my expectations. The students' enthusiasm for the assignment was obvious: papers averaged 4 pp. longer than the assigned length, and many appended additional materials, including costume and set designs, audiotapes of music and sound effects, cast lists, programs, posters, and edited script pages. Among the more intriguing and creative titles:

Hamlet The Tortured Youth of Denmark, Indiana
To Sleep? (With the Fishes) Perchance to Dream: An
Italian-American *Hamlet*
Hamlet: A Western Called Roscoe
Portrait of the O'Leary Sisters
As I Like It, or, *Hamlet the Musical
A Kurosawan Vision of *Hamlet*
Hamlet, Clown Prince of Denmark

Clearly, the students had carefully and thoroughly read, absorbed, and thought about the text at hand. Their papers demonstrated their understanding of the ways in which texts and performances can successfully collaborate. Let me conclude with the best evidence of the kind of excitement this assignment provoked and its success as a learning experience--a few excerpts from my students' work.

From the first time I read the play, I imagined Hamlet as a young man who didn't know what the world was all about, and he was scared by the prospect of impending adulthood. As he says in Act I, scene i, "How weary, stale, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world." Conflicted by his desire to remain a child and his need to be an adult, he looks inward for guidance, as the two people he could have looked to (his mother and his father) are no longer there, one lost to death, the other to marriage . . . For this production, I have chosen to set the action in a small town in the American Midwest in the early 1950s. The '50s were a time of innocence, at ime free from the post-war turbulence of the '40s and the radical tensions of the '60s.

(*Hamlet*: The Tortured Youth of Denmark, Indiana)

I believe that many of the ideals and attitudes of westerns are parallel to those present in Shakespeare's plays. The attitude towards women is usually sexist: women are treated as fragile possessions and serve mainly to be seduced by the studly hero. Shakespeare's plays nearly always deal with women as property, as they were looked upon in his day. However, his plays always seem to show an undercurrent of female knowledge and power just below the surface. People may think his women are ignorant or naive, but they are really the ones with the ultimate power.

(The Tragedy of Roscoe, a Small-Town Sheriff)

The idea of Hamlet as a comedian is not far removed from the original text. In *Hamlet*, the hero's father was away most of the time, his son growing to manhood in the care of others. One of his role models would have been someone he kept in constant contact with, the jester Yorick. As an adult, Hamlet fondly remembers Yorick as "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy"; it is from Yorick that Hamlet received his own sense of humor. Throughout the play he engages in word-play with those around him, from his first line at the play's beginning, in his conversations with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and before and during the duel . . . In my version, I will take this idea one step further. Hamlet delivers many of his lines from onstage, in a stand-up comedy act, and his interactions occur with the other characters, who are seated in the audience. This both separates Hamlet from the rest of the characters and places him physically (and metaphorically) above them.

(Hamlet, Clown Prince of Denmark)

In delivering the famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy, we never know whether Sonny is mad or not--what we do know is that he drinks too much. The soliloquy is delivered in 1950s vernacular; perhaps Sonny can ponder the Cold War Bomb fear--"We're already dead, so what does it matter?" Sonny is totally alone when reciting his soliloquy. It is for no one's benefit but his own, and it may perhaps seem like the ramblings of a drunkard. Sonny wonders if he should accept what has happened (his "outrageous fortunes") or act ("take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing, end them").

(To Sleep? [With the Fishes] Perchance to Dream:
An Italian-American *Hamlet*)

Hamlet, although the son of a *daimyo* (provincial lord), does not fully accept his place--a cardinal sin in this rigid hierarchy. His exposure to various philosophies in his studies in Kyoto has caused him to reconsider many of the basic tenets of *bushido*, which requires that one accept one's lot in life and always seek out a way to die for one's lord. (Death is the core of *bushido*; all other aspects of it lead to that death.) He has begun to think of death as undesirable and bad, and thus he becomes a coward in his own eyes. Here, then, his desire *not* to die results in conflict. This cultural difference lends a wholly different tone to speeches such as that in II.i. In the *bushido* death- culture, "who would fardels bear," indeed? The socially accepted course would be to instantly resolve Hamlet's dilemma with a drawn sword, first cutting down the usurper, then cutting open his own belly in a stoic act of *seppuku*. Yet a fear, or, better yet, a hatred of death prevents him from killing his foe without proof.

(A Kurosawan Vision of *Hamlet*)

Obviously, the tendency to shift time, place, and position is strong. Nevertheless, the creative freedom of the director's conception assignment engages students with the text in ways they both comprehend and find stimulating even as they seriously consider the essential elements of performance.

SECTION IX: MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES

Expanding cultural horizons through classroom performances and workshops: Two case studies

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One revisionist position on Shakespeare's plays assumes his role as the dramatist of the "master race," the spokesman for a budding imperialist, chauvinistic nation. *The Tempest* is ordinarily cited as the exemplary play. It is true that, more than any other dramatist or British writer of any kind, Shakespeare has become a staple household name in cultures on every continent: from Asia, where the Kurosawa productions of plays like *Macbeth* and Kabuki productions of many plays complement the continuing popularity of more traditional Shakespearean productions [Lois Potter saw her first Shakespeare play in Japan at an early age]; Africa, where Shakespearean lines appear, as they do throughout the Caribbean, in folk celebrations; South as well as North America. And on and on. The revisionist reading would say that such widespread adaptation of Shakespearean drama is a way of assimilating and identifying with the language of the imperial "conqueror." It is not my purpose to enter into that intellectual debate here, though I am prepared to do so elsewhere. What I want to offer, instead, are two classroom case studies of Shakespearean drama as an effective vehicle for widening the cultural horizons of British literature. In this sense, teaching Shakespeare can become a complement to the now popular process of canon revision and can fit into the recent patterns of literary analysis, particularly in the Renaissance, which focus on British expansionism.

Case Study One: *Othello*

In the fall of 1989, I decided to stage a dramatized reading of *Othello*, cast from a special seminar to be taught on the play and directed by Charles Keating, a former member of the Royal Shakespeare Company (Aumerle in the BBC *Richard II*), now living in southern Connecticut. The reading/cum production was to be presented in the spring term, as the culmination of the special seminar. By attempting initially to solve one classroom problem, I created a far worse difficulty for myself, which took the better part of a month to resolve. The initial problem was the small number of non-white students who ordinarily enroll in my Shakespeare course. In a college that is bent on diversifying both the faculty and the student body, my Shakespeare course, which ordinarily draws between 40 and 65 students, usually includes one or two African-American or Afro-Caribbean students. These numbers result in these one or two students being implicitly expected to speak, not just for themselves, but for their entire culture (often carelessly assumed to be homogenous). To counter this expectation, I actively recruited non-white students for the special *Othello* seminar. The result was that I had 10 black students in a class of 30, or one-third of the class. Success! Then

trouble....

As Charles had conceptualized the "reading" of *Othello*, it would be enacted in a stylized, symbolical setting: a black and gray raised platform flanked by two black kitchen stools, centered between a three-sided set of black boxes and platforms for the cast of "readers" to watch the central action. A reversible black and white curtain shielded the Senate at the beginning of the play, served as the wall of Brabantio's house, and the staging device creating the storm. Apart from Othello and the three women playing Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca, players were costumed in black tuxedo pants with white shirts; the three women wore long black skirts and white blouses; Othello began the play in tuxedo pants with a gold shirt and changed to a white shirt as the play progressed. The "readers" held black, choirbook-style binders as they sat on their boxes. In short, costuming, setting, even playtexts all fit a stylized production concept that symbolically contrasted black and white ~ dramatizing the story of ONE black man alone in white culture. Okay. The problem.

I had lured ten black students into a course with a promise of acting. But I had a play with only one black role. Colorblind casting was out of the question. Color WAS the question. And even the one black role was effectively pre-empted by an African-American associate dean, slightly older than the students, who could bring the weight of his age and the bulk of a powerfully mature, athletic body to the role of Othello, the aging black general. So, NO roles for 1/3 of the class. The students mutinied immediately. And they were justifiably mad! Delegations were sent to me to explain that they would, if necessary, play in whiteface to be in the play. They felt used and, thus, abused by me. The result was a series of meetings, the final one of which was held in my absence (by request, though I paid for the food!) at midnight in the room of my teaching assistant, a beautiful senior also playing Desdemona. This meeting lasted from midnight to 5:00 in the morning, with tempers flaring and with a final reconciliation of students who discovered that they could air their differences and emerge the better for it.

Meanwhile, Charles and I had devised a concept that did allow all the students who wanted to act to be in the show: apart from three central couples (Othello and Desdemona; Iago and Emilia; Cassio and Bianca), all the other actors wore ice-white half-masks. The result was very powerful, as these white masks watched the action of a play that dramatizes the demeaning transformation of a black man at the hands of a brutal white manipulator in a totally white environment. In the end, for the first show [we produced the play twice in two successive years] we cast the entire Venetian Senate as black students who watched from a raised upstage platform ALL the action, both in Venice and Cyprus, after the initial "entrance" of the Senate [enacted by lowering the curtain hiding them]. These students' head movements were synchronized so that their white masks turned simultaneously right and left. The effect was powerful; the problem was solved.

All this had, however, taken weeks. Thus, to get the show ready for its April production date, we had to keep students on campus during their spring break. The dean playing Othello cooked their meals; they lived, ate, and rehearsed together 14 hours a day for two weeks. In the end, this group bonded very tightly together. At a symposium which the students themselves organized to discuss issues of race and gender in the play, one black student told the story of the casting problem. She ended by saying, "At last, I realized that if I had been good enough to play Desdemona, Charles would have found a way to make it happen." The result of this experience was an exploration both of racial and of gender issues that could not have happened in an ordinary classroom. It was immensely painful. It took education outside the classroom, into the midnight dormitory setting.

The students themselves came up with the reading of the play that the production enacted: we played Othello as an assimilated Christian, modelled on the iconographical stereotype of the medieval black king [or saint] ~ e.g., Prester John or Saint Maurice. One who had absorbed the Christian hierarchical values absolutely so that he was at the beginning of the play their most powerful spokesman. Iago plays on other stereotypes ~ particularly the stereotype of the black man as lascivious animal ("an old black ram is tupping your white ewe") and as devil. As we portrayed Othello, he begins to internalize these darker stereotypes in the course of the play and, finally, to act them out. Non-white students in the course felt that Shakespeare had an extraordinary insight into the process of racial assimilation and the difficulty of encountering negative stereotyping of this kind. In the course itself, we read *Titus Andronicus* along with *Othello* and discovered through reading scenes aloud the powerful moment in Act IV when the moor Aaron sees his miscegenous baby for the first time and decides that he will kill to protect this baby's life. In the mid-1590's Shakespeare has dared to put a black child on the stage, have its father turn to two white boys and ask them if they would kill their "brother" and then protect the baby's life, even as he portrays the father himself as an almost comic villain. In contrast, the moor in *The Merchant of Venice*, a more problematic play with regard to ethnic and racial differences, is portrayed in purely satirical, stereotypical terms, akin to the satirical descriptions of English and German suitors of Portia.

With regard to gender: the class decided to portray the three women in specific ways. Desdemona was portrayed as a strongly independent, though young woman at the beginning of the play, one who wants [Hedda Gabler fashion] to live a life of adventure vicariously through her husband, to share it with him. In the course of the play, under the unexplained and increasing abuse of her husband, this idealistic young woman is reduced to almost childish pleading. She says that she is a "child to chiding," and she pleads to be allowed to live just one half-hour. In contrast, our Emilia was an abused wife, an older woman who found her voice quite powerfully in Act V when she resists both Othello's sword and her husband's threats; she formally divorces Iago, speaks against him, and gives up her life in an honorable confrontation. We played Bianca as the honest whore, a better character than the effete and snobbish Cassio she loves, a woman who could sincerely say, "I am of life as honest as you that thus abuse me" as her final words.

This production of *Othello* was so successful that we re-staged it the following year and took scenes from the play into inner city schools in Hartford, Windsor, and New Britain, Connecticut where my students, our dean, and I conducted workshops on race and gender issues focused on the performance of scenes from the play. We have program notes derived from the student conception of the play which are available upon request from Professor Milla Riggio [see address below].

Case Study Two: *Julius Caesar Set in Africa*

Whereas *Othello* had engaged students themselves in performance, my next project centered on a New York production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* entitled *Julius Caesar Set in Africa*. The production, which I saw at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in the lower village, on third street between B and C Avenues, was directed by Rome Neal. It placed the play in 1242 at a point at which Ghana and Mali combined under the leadership of a king named Sundiata, to form the Malian Empire. The production created what I call "adaptation through addition." The play itself was intact, with only the kinds of interlinear cuts that virtually every producer of Shakespeare uses to

shorten the plays to a manageable playing time. But the cast featured 33 black actors, dancers, and drummers. It was placed in a specific African setting. Costumes were brilliantly colored African textiles. Three extraordinary African drummers began the play with solos and provided the rhythmical foundation for the entire production. African face painting differentiated the characters. African chants were added to the play, and name references to characters outside the play were taken from Malian history. The play began in an African marketplace, rather than the Roman forum. The marketplace scene culminated in brilliant African dancing. A war dance replaced the battle scene in Act V; the ghost of Caesar was accompanied by a feathered African jinn, or spirit of the dead. The effect was an extraordinary production which captured the effect of the Shakespearean play but with an entirely new cultural configuration, proving, as one of my students put it in the words of Lorraine Hansbury, that the universal is in the particular. That is, the play captures a quality of experience that though not in itself "universal" does recur in the particulars of many different kinds of cultural settings.

After seeing this show in New York, I arranged to bring it to Trinity. Again, I taught a Shakespeare course centered on the production. The cast was in residence in Hartford for a week, leading dance and acting workshops for 300 area middle school and high school students, as well as for Trinity students. They ate in our cafeteria. Our students served as technical assistants for the show. One particularly gifted student joined the dancers in the final production. We sold out a 400 seat auditorium for every one of the five shows the cast performed. The play ends with a half-hour of danced curtain calls (in which each actor, in African style, dances across the stage to bow to the drummer). On one particularly charged occasion, I was ~ to my total surprise ~ brought up on stage to dance during the curtain call. Faced with 400 of my fellows (students, community members, friends), I was forced to forget all ideas of self-consciousness and simply dance. It was an extraordinary experience, but in a production like this which demands a commitment on the part of the audience as well as the actors, withholding oneself would have been disastrous.

In the Shakespeare course itself, I taught a Malian prose epic entitled *Sundiata*, about the king who was implicitly associated with Caesar in the production of the play. Adding this text to the course allowed me to discuss generic differences between Shakespearean tragedy and oral epic narrative, as well as focusing on thematic distinctions in the works, differences in the ways characters are created in dramatic tragedy and oral epic, and some differences in the originating cultures, Elizabethan England and Mali. The effect was a better understanding both of Shakespeare and of the implications of placing Shakespearean drama in a new cultural setting. Rome Neal is a resident director at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. He is willing to re-stage *Julius Caesar set in Africa* for college productions. Information may be obtained from Milla Riggio, Trinity College, Hartford, Ct. 06106.