

Teaching Shakespeare and the Big Stuff

Posted on Tuesday 29th October 2013

The way to 'get' Shakespeare is to read him with imagination and intensity. Given the chance, many students are very good at this. To exemplify the kind of thing that can be done in class, [Professor Ewan Fernie \(/staff/profiles/shakespeare/fernie-ewan.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/shakespeare/fernie-ewan.aspx), Shakespeare Institute, asks why, when her husband-to-be walks on stage in *The Tempest*, Miranda says, 'What is it?'

Ewan plumbs the deeper meanings of Iago's most troublingly resonant utterance: 'I am not what I am' and faces up afresh to the difficulty and danger of Hamlet's famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy.

The talk ends with *Measure for Measure's* Angelo and his agonised recognition of the 'sin in loving virtue'. This brings it into conjunction with Professor Fernie's recent book '*The Demonic: Literature and Experience*', but it also helps to emphasise that in reading Shakespeare we equally are - or should be - journeying into the perils and promise of our own lives.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)