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Interrogating cultural value in the 21st century: the case of 'Shakespeare'

Prof Kate McLuskie, Director of the Shakespeare Institute, leads this project funded by a research grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council of £358,435.00. The project began at the Shakespeare Institute in October 2006. Funding includes provision for a Post Doctoral Research Fellow and two PhD studentships.

This study will bring together the different ways of talking about the value of Shakespeare in literary criticism, educational and cultural policy and theatre practice. It will disentangle aesthetic values from those of heritage culture, and educational and social inclusivity, while demonstrating how those different meanings of value became entangled at different historical moments. Using the Royal Shakespeare Company's Complete Works Festival as a test case, it will explore the potential of English literary heritage to meet the diverse (and possibly conflicting) social and commercial demands made of it and will inform future cultural policy in this area. Its aims are:

1. To achieve a sophisticated and historically informed understanding of the value of Shakespeare in 21st-century culture in the UK
2. To develop a language with which to articulate competing definitions of cultural value
3. To articulate the relationship between discourses of value as they apply to literary and material heritage
4. To inform cultural and educational policy with regard to the support for Shakespeare
5. To develop a training programme for PhD students that will inform the interface between arts management and literary and theatrical criticism.

Project team:

Project Leader: Prof Kate McLuskie **k.mcluskie@bham.ac.uk (mailto:k.mcluskie@bham.ac.uk)**

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and Project Co-ordinator: Dr Kate Rumbold **K.L.Rumbold@bham.ac.uk (mailto:k.l.rumbold@bham.ac.uk)**

Interrogating literary heritage, cultural value and the Shakespeare industry.

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Researching the value of "Shakespeare" in publicly-funded theatre in the 21st century

PhD Student: Sarah Olive **seo778@bham.ac.uk (mailto:seo778@bham.ac.uk)**

Researching the value of "Shakespeare" in 21st-century arts and education policy

The work of the Post-doctoral Research Fellow, together with the research of the two PhD students, will provide a comprehensive account of the value of Shakespeare in 21st century culture in England.

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1. Cultural Value Reading Group

The team hosts a regular cultural value reading group for interested students and staff, exploring the history, theory and practice of literary and cultural value.

2. Collaborations
The team is pleased to be building connections with the English Language Department of Birmingham and the Arts Council England, while drawing on the Institute's established links with the RSC, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Ironbridge Institute.

3. The Language of Value
The annual Shakespeare's Birthday celebrations in Stratford-upon-Avon are an opportunity for the team to collect examples of the language of value that surrounds Shakespeare. This spring, Kate Rumbold led a camera team that captured the thoughts and perceptions of locals and visitors as they attended birthday events. The edited video, along with other written and spoken materials, will be analysed with the help of the English Language Department.

4. Is Shakespeare Good for You?

The Shakespeare Institute hosted one day of the 2007 British Shakespeare Association Conference. A dedicated international panel entitled 'Is Shakespeare Good for You?' 1st September 2007 brought together academics, policymakers and practitioners in conversation with Kate McLuskie to discuss the cultural value of Shakespeare.

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