Teaching Shakespeare
Contents

Notes on Contributors vii
Acknowledgments xi
Introduction: Passing it On 1
Skip Shand

Part I: Mentoring

1 Teaching Shakespeare, Mentoring Shakespeareans 11
Jean E. Howard

Part II: Text

2 Planned Obsolescence or Working at the Words 25
Russ McDonald

3 The Words: Teacher as Editor, Editor as Teacher 43
David Bevington

4 Questions That Have No Answers 61
Alexander Leggatt

Part III: Text and Performance

5 Teaching the Script 73
Anthony B. Dawson
### Contents

6  A Test of Character  
*Miriam Gilbert*  

7  The Last Shakespeare Picture Show or Going to the Barricades  
*Barbara Hodgdon*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part IV: Contexts (Institutional, Cultural, Historical)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8  Dancing and Thinking: Teaching “Shakespeare” in the Twenty-First Century  
*Kate McLuskie*  |
| 9  Communicating Differences: Gender, Feminism, and Queer Studies in the Changing Shakespeare Curriculum  
*Ramona Wray*  |
| 10  Teaching Shakespeare and Race in the New Empire  
*Ania Loomba*  |
| 11  Learning to Listen: Shakespeare and Contexts  
*Frances E. Dolan*  |
| 12  Divided by a Common Bard? Learning and Teaching Shakespeare in the UK and USA  
*Richard Dutton*  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part V: And in Conclusion . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 13  Playing Hercules or Laboring in My Vocation  
*Carol Chilington Rutter*  |

Index  

232
Notes on Contributors


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Shakespeare Association of America. Her most recent publication is *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (2008).

**Richard Dutton** has been Humanities Distinguished Professor of English at Ohio State University since 2003. Before that he taught for 29 years at Lancaster University, UK. He has published widely on early modern drama, especially on issues of censorship and authorship. His publications include *Mastering the Revels: the Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (1991), *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (2000), and the Revels Plays edition of Jonson's *Epicene* (2003). He is editing *Volpone* for the *Cambridge Ben Jonson*, and has a monograph on the Gunpowder Plot context of that play in press.

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**Barbara Hodgdon**, Professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations, The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History*, and numerous essays on Shakespearean performances. She is coeditor of *A Blackwell Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* and editor of the Arden3 *Taming of the Shrew*. While at Drake University, she twice received the President’s Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching.

Notes on Contributors

Alexander Leggatt is Professor Emeritus of English at University College, University of Toronto. His publications include Shakespeare’s Comedy of Love (1974) and Shakespeare’s Tragedies: Violation and Identity (2005). He is the editor of The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy (2002) and coeditor, with Karen Bamford, of Approaches to Teaching English Renaissance Drama (2002). In 1995 he was given an Outstanding Teaching Award by the Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto, and in 2005 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Ania Loomba is Catherine Bryson professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. She researches and teaches early modern studies, histories of race and colonialism, feminist theory, and contemporary postcolonial issues, often exploring the intersections between these fields. Her publications include Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama (1989) Colonialism/Postcolonialism (1998), Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism (2002) and (with Jonathan Burton) Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion (2007).

Russ McDonald is the recipient of multiple teaching awards, first at the University of Rochester and later at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2003 he was named Professor of the Year for North Carolina by the CASE/Carnegie Foundation. The author of The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, a book adopted in undergraduate and graduate classes throughout North America, he teaches now at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Kate McLuskie, Director of the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford upon Avon, has written numerous articles on the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and is author of Feminist Readings of Renaissance Dramatists and Dekker and Heywood: Professional Dramatists. She has edited Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi, and coedited collections of Plays on Women and essays on Shakespeare and the Modern Theatre. She has taught at the Universities of Kent and Southampton (where she was also deputy vice chancellor responsible for education and widening access), and as a visiting professor in the Universities of the West Indies, Colorado, and Massachusetts.

Carol Chillington Rutter, Professor of English at the University of Warwick, received a student-nominated Warwick Award for Teaching Excellence in 2007. She directs the CAPITAL Centre, a government-funded Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning that establishes a

**G. B. Skip Shand**, Senior Scholar at York University’s Glendon College, writes on teaching early modern drama, and on text and performance. He edited both prose and poetry for Oxford’s *Complete Middleton*. As text coach, he has assisted on professional productions in Canada and at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. His mentors in graduate school were the quietly gifted Guy Hamel, and Clifford Leech, whose personal generosity and formidable scholarship made him the definitive graduate supervisor.

**Ramona Wray** is Lecturer in English at Queen’s University, Belfast and a recipient of the 2005–6 QUB Teaching Award. She is the author of *Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century* (2004) and the coeditor, most recently, of *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century* (2006) and *Reconceiving the Renaissance: A Critical Reader* (2005).
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This book is for our mentors and for our students, with equal gratitude to all.
Lear is crying out “Oh sides, you are too tough!” The anguished speaker is small, grey-bearded, black-gowned, with intense kindly eyes. He perches at his lectern. His voice, light yet gravelly and resonant, takes intimate possession of Lear’s words and emotions, or they of him. As he reads, a roomful of third-year undergraduates at a small Canadian prairie college sits transfixed, even awed. Bob Hallstead is teaching Shakespeare, and I am hearing intimations of a vocation. To this day, despite the subsequent interventions of a dozen or more great Lears on stage and film, when I read the play I hear Hallstead. When I speak its words, as Barbara Hodgdon will put it in her essay, I am no doubt ventriloquizing him – as well as whichever professorial forerunner he himself was echoing.

Hallstead labored in relative obscurity at United College in Winnipeg, then a church-affiliated institution that rationalized the constraints of a small budget and an overloaded faculty by seeking to privilege teaching above all other academic arts. United College could afford little time for scholarship. Hallstead had one short research trip in his entire career, spent it in heaven at the Folger Library, where he wrote what I believe was his only scholarly article, a *Shakespeare Quarterly* argument for idolatrous love as the heartbeat of *Othello* (Hallstead 1968).

He lived, in the classroom, for the stories within the stories, the stories in the gaps and silences, the narrative and emotional subtext. And he took us through the texts scene by scene, moment by moment, in a progressive question-and-answer unpacking process he called Socratic. He would have loved David Bevington’s closely read contribution to this volume.
Hallstead’s interrogation proceeded up one aisle and down the next, so that you always knew when your turn with the words was imminent. As Dr Johnson said of the death sentence: “Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” Knowing that Hallstead’s next question would be yours had the same salutary effect.

He mentored by befriending – a hard kind of mentoring to practice in a large university, no doubt, and harder still to teach except by example. Nonetheless it can be superbly effective: it invites the novice into the inner circle, accepts her or him as potential equal, shares the joy of the subject and the humanity of the professor. Hallstead openly treated teaching Shakespeare as a privilege, as a calling to be cherished and to be passed on. Around the world, classrooms are peopled by women and men just like him – teachers who are reminded constantly of the many-faceted wonder that is the Shakespeare opus, and of their great good fortune to be spending a career sharing the plays with generations of new students. As Tony Dawson says, we would almost do it for nothing. Almost. This book is directed to all those many teachers of Shakespeare, and perhaps especially to those now preparing to carry on.

Running through all the essays in this volume is a thread of engaged pleasure – pleasure taken in the subject itself, in pedagogical process, in the students with whom that process is shared. Among them, the contributors have chalked up something close to five hundred years of experience in the Shakespeare classroom, and several shelves of teaching awards, but their idealism about the project continues undiminished; their engagement with student, text, and context seems unflagging. They are different personalities, of course; they differ in the manner of their teaching, in its emphasis, in their ways of talking about it. Some lecture, some prefer the seminar or tutorial, some treat the classroom as a kind of idealized rehearsal hall. Some are devoted to the text as aesthetic, linguistic, poetic object; others explore it as revelatory of interpretive or theatrical possibility; some focus on its links to historical and contemporary social issues such as gender, race, and religion; some explore the ways in which it is reshaped, illuminated, deployed, in film and television versions and adaptations. And of course, most of them actually juggle all these concerns and strategies as they accompany students on the journey through the plays. Ania Loomba's chapter on Shakespeare and race ends with her students creating their own adaptations. Ramona Wray, focusing on gender and difference, offers multiple readings of Shakespearean film. At the foundation of their teach-
ing activities, all the contributors are consumed with transferring critical and reading skills from themselves to their students, with empowering the “clientele,” with making themselves, in Russ McDonald’s happy formulation, obsolete. But the wonderful difference between pedagogical obsolescence and that of last year’s automobile or cell phone, is that we get to do it all over again, semester after semester, term after term. With a little thoughtfulness and a lot of luck, we even get to do it better. The Shakespeare vocation is organic and ongoing, more like sourdough starter than like a dead computer – the absolutely essential catalytic ingredient in every new student’s fresh encounter with the plays and the playwright.

Reading these teachers one after another, my strongest recurrent wishes are to be a fly on the wall in their classrooms (which, happily, their essays frequently permit), and to have the impossible opportunity to start over myself, to return to the outset of this career – if I had known then what I have been lucky enough to learn since! In a sense, the contributors were invited to mentor their readership, and to be as candid, as reflective, even as anecdotal, as they saw fit, to highlight something of the personal side of the endeavor. Noted practitioners were asked to speak to their experience of teaching Shakespeare: what they do, why they do it, why they do it their way, why it’s worth doing at all. The results are frequently courageous. I sought distinguished scholars, well known for their books and editions, their essays and conference papers, but not so well known – except by hearsay, and sometimes among their immediate colleagues – for their undergraduate and graduate teaching. It’s a curious fact that although teaching and supervision occupy the greater part of any Shakespearean’s day-to-day life in the profession, and reach many more people over the course of a career than does the whole of one’s scholarly output (David Bevington’s ubiquitous Shakespeare editions probably make him the exception here), they are the area of most people’s practice that we tend to know least about. This collection offers a look in.

Although attention to a variety of approaches was built in to the range of scholars invited, classroom reputation always trumped any particular critical angle on the discipline, and so the coverage is inevitably partial. The essays fall loosely into several broad and quite permeable categories: text; text and performance, including film and adaptation; text and contexts – history, gender, race, nation, systems of education; and mentoring the teachers of the future. Most essays, though appearing in one category in the Table of Contents, nonetheless have much to say about or to other categories. Kate McLuskie’s chapter, for example, was originally imagined
as part of a section on graduate education, but it speaks more broadly to many issues in Shakespeare teaching, in particular the potential friction between academic rigor and the now not so new orthodoxy of performative reading and experiential teaching. So her thoughtfully overarching exploration appears here as a kind of crossroads, picking up and assessing concerns implied in the sections on text and on performance, but moving forward also into the ensuing essays on Shakespeare and contexts cultural and educational.

Many universities are beginning – my own certainly is – to be systematic and attentive when it comes to the professional mentoring of graduate students and junior faculty, but it is still frequently the case that such activity on the part of senior scholars goes largely unacknowledged – and most often uncompensated. And it is also the case, as we are all aware, that some unfortunate students proceed unassisted and unaccompanied through their graduate experience, their survival and even success something of a miracle for which the university deserves no credit. With luck, however, even the most isolated graduate student has been fortunate enough to witness excellent teaching in action. I’d argue (with Russ McDonald, I believe) that good teaching is in itself a form of positive mentoring, and one hope is that these essays, in their wisdom about teaching and their committed demonstrations of strategies and emphases, might even stand as attitudinal and actual models, and so invite readers to renewed idealism about the possibilities of the vocation. Logically, then, Jean Howard’s careful reflection on the desired supportive professional relationship between senior faculty and graduate students opens the collection. Her sense of graduate study as a kind of apprenticeship in the scholarly craft, and of herself as bearing solemn professional responsibility for overseeing that apprenticeship, defines a context for the subsequent essays, which might be seen as mentoring by example, if not always by direct intent. At the other end of the collection, Carol Rutter’s essay, virtually a Shakespeare teacher’s credo, embraces so many of the pleasures and privileges shared by teachers of Shakespeare, and in such a forward-looking fashion, that it cries out to conclude the volume. As Howard is eloquent about the nuts and bolts of the mentoring process, so Rutter is eloquent about how well guided she was as teacher, as scholar, as theatrical witness. She pays lively tribute to her academic predecessors, to her students, and to the educational and institutional culture that currently links her academic department to the RSC, and enables her to live her professional life in a classroom that is theatre, a theatre that is classroom. Her commitment, shared by all contributors
to the volume, is to pass it on. “I was well taught,” she says. “I was left an inheritance that I must leave as a legacy.”

Between these bookends, Russ McDonald lays out vivid thumbnail rules for fostering close appreciation of the text’s artistry, along with a celebration of the lecture, and a call to the professoriat to embrace and exemplify its own authority. McDonald’s stress is on imitatio: the student is tacitly invited to emulate, and then to refine and transform, the example of the teacher. To teach otherwise, he argues, is “to deny the value of our own education.” Fittingly, David Bevington mines his vast editorial experience to model the textual teacher at work, taking us through the same meticulous exercise in close reading that informs the best editorial commentaries and that launches the most attentive explorations in the rehearsal room. Like the editor and the actor, he says, “The teacher in the classroom . . . is passing along the same pleasure and the same intimate relationship with the playwright’s words in action.” And then Sandy Leggatt, seeming almost to respond to Russ McDonald’s take on authority, presents an exploratory and rehearsal-like teaching strategy, based on posing questions about text and action and interpretive possibility, questions open to so many answers that in the end, as he suggests, they have no answer at all. The instructor is to be ready for the unexpected, indeed to invite it. Leggatt’s approach honors and engages the student’s best curiosity, seeking always to send that student away hungry for more, to be like one of Carol Rutter’s students who reports that Rutter often ends a seminar with a great question. “We then spend the rest of the day thinking about it.”

Bevington and Leggatt anticipate the series of essays describing the pleasures of performative teaching. Increasingly, these essays speak with and to one another. Tony Dawson’s engagingly personal treatment of “script” dovetails with the linguistic emphasis of the more purely textual essays, as he addresses a current need to recuperate literary/textual work and merge it with theatrical reading. His undergraduates, creating their own adapted performances, are invited to learn about multiple texts and textual instability, for instance, and to cope practically with them. (Richard Dutton laments that the majority of his American students have their first encounter with these issues only in graduate school.) Dawson stresses the mutual learning that goes on in his best classes: a student performance throws emphasis on a particular gesture at a particular moment in the play; together class and instructor are led to assemble a pattern of related gesture invited by the playtext, building finally to an exemplified reading style that recapitulates those image-hunting strategies we once considered
purely literary. Fran Dolan’s students are likewise alerted to meaningful patterns of gesture, prop use in this case, invited by the playtext, and Barbara Hodgdon describes a comparable formalist reading process when she and her students “follow the noose,” seeking out and assessing imagistic visual patterns in Shakespearean film. The best performative teaching often does not lie far from the literary training of most of its practitioners.

We teach constantly in unacknowledged traditions, and we are busy scavengers when it comes to the techniques of others. Crediting Miriam Gilbert as the source of one of her opening classroom gambits, Barbara Hodgdon speaks of the oral tradition in teaching. Indeed, it would be hard to quantify the positive impact, through personal contact, that Gilbert has had on the teaching of all who know her.\(^1\) Her contribution to this collection, actorly as always, begins with the value of student questions and first responses, and goes on to speak directly to the basic student interest in character and motive. Gilbert honors that interest, using it, as Fran Dolan also suggests in her chapter, to lay down an organic pathway toward more sophisticated critical skills, such as more precise descriptive categories and vocabulary. Gilbert’s chapter, bolstered by her encyclopedic knowledge of Shakespearean performances, offers a recuperation of the place of character in our studies: she says, in essence, to those who would dismiss character study as an interpretive pursuit, “Tell it to the actor.”

Barbara Hodgdon’s essay on the uses of film is, as it happens, exemplary of McDonald’s “planned obsolescence” in action: beginning self-mockingly with her own first tentative classroom experiences, she moves on to embrace the support available to the teacher from the world of film and adaptation, but by the end the filmic adaptations of her students have completely taken over the essay. In the process, Hodgdon starts this collection’s response to one of our most persistent questions about teaching Shakespeare, and indeed about the usefulness of teaching the humanities: what earthly contribution can we possibly be making to a world torn apart by difference, hatred, fear? Russ McDonald has earlier observed that while the humanities are anything but worthless, they are nonetheless useless in any public sense. Shakespeare’s texts, he asserts, are “a source of limitless pleasure” to be shared through teaching – but they will not cure illness nor drive arrogant political leaders from office. In the end of Hodgdon’s chapter, as her students speak to these issues, they are clearly seeking a more politically engaged form of outreach from their encounter with Shakespeare, creating new and responsive work that does at least have the barricades in sight.
Kate McLuskie revisits and redirects the issues of performative and academic/scholarly reading, opening them out into a rich assessment of the contours of Shakespeare teaching at all levels in the wake of England’s Bardbiz controversy and Rex Gibson’s *Teaching Shakespeare* (1998). Drawing on Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, she uses the hapless Lucky’s conflicted roles as dancer and thinker to stand in for the gulf that has opened up between the performative readers – now demonstrably in official institutional ascendancy – and those whose critical and classroom emphases might be called intellectual, a gulf she characterizes as “the comic misalignment between the experience of the physical arts and the discursive meanings that we demand of them.” She points to the “contest over pedagogic practice that polarizes reading the plays and performing them,” that contest between the exciting world of plays experienced on one’s feet and the supposedly dull dull world of plays thoughtfully studied in (or on) one’s seat. There is, as she implies, a potential trivializing of the subject in the new pedagogical world of playing with plays, where characters can be “hot seated,” their complex and profound questions about ethical and behavioral choices “easily answered by engaged and enthusiastic eight year olds.”

Carrying on into the rich question of the uses of Shakespeare are the several essays that advocate confronting a troubled world and teaching toward awareness and enlightened change. Writing from Northern Ireland about teaching gender, Ramona Wray points to the potentially transformative benefit of a pedagogy that moves from definitions to redefinitions of basic social and critical assumptions, awakening students to “a fresh sense of their agency [and] a consciousness about their own positions in a society that has historically traded upon fixed roles and that has often elected to judge on the basis of predetermined affiliations.” One of the initial aims of the meticulously cumulative undergraduate English/Shakespeare program at Queen’s University Belfast is, in Wray’s words, unteaching the student, “disabusing him or her of assumptions culled from high school” – “unpicking bad habits,” as one of Kate McLuskie’s sources puts it. Fran Dolan, too, speaks of “challenging, perhaps even confiscating, some of their assumptions” about the truths of history. And Ania Loomba addresses the racial, religious, and national dimensions of the issue even more insistently, pointing to all the traditionally racialized appropriations of Shakespeare worldwide, and stating flatly, “We must necessarily either challenge these histories, or rehearse them. There is no middle ground.” These are essays with a heartening sense of transformative purpose, and implicit valuing of the Shakespeare project.
Loomba’s essay weaves together three narrative strands. She takes the reader through a delicate analysis of the complex hidden intersections, historical and current, among Shakespeare, race, and colonialism, and through the immense challenge of sensitizing students, particularly in the United States, to the insidious depth and force of these tacit conjunctions. As with McLuskie in England, Loomba is intensely aware of the project of the dominant culture in America, seeking to remake Shakespeare in its own voice and to universalize that voice, to claim it as the voice of the nation. She grounds her argument in an engagingly candid rehearsal of her own personal journey from “unracialized” and privileged beginnings in India, through her abrupt discovery of Black Sisterhood as a doctoral student in England, and now to her still-growing understanding of the complicated heterogeneity underpinning early modern and contemporary issues of race and nation. And she ends by taking us into her classrooms at the University of Pennsylvania, where the daily task of fostering heightened awareness goes on.

The best teaching of many of these contributors centers on asking or entertaining great questions. Fran Dolan comments that “The untutored or unedited question has the most in common with the best criticism because eye-opening essays begin when a critic asks a great question or takes a fresh look or notices something strange.” Her piece on locating Shakespeare in an early modern context and encouraging students to produce historical knowledge speaks to the pleasure and revelation that so often spring from fresh student observations and responses. Embracing the unanticipated moments of improvisation and discovery celebrated by Sandy Leggatt and Tony Dawson, she defines a dull class as “one in which no student was able to throw me off my charted course.” This is not the inchoate diffidence of the unfortunate instructor experienced by Russ McDonald in his student days, but the openness and flexibility of a rigorous authority who is also requiring her students to immerse themselves in early modern pamphlets and homilies in their entirety, and insisting yet again on close engagement with Shakespearean text. Dolan is not prescriptive about historical learning. She is implicitly in accord with Leggatt when he observes that while history is rightly to be acknowledged, “there are times when it should be thanked and sent on its way.” And Dolan herself sends on their way those performance-based voices (happily not represented in this collection) who would argue that there is no time for closely historicized reading. As she says, “Nobody ever ruined anything by looking at it more carefully. Critique is pleasure.”
Introduction: Passing it On

The Shakespeare experience in the northern hemisphere has frequently been transatlantic. Russ McDonald and Carol Rutter are Americans ensconced in English universities, McDonald fairly recently, Rutter for many years. Miriam Gilbert divides her teaching time among Iowa City, Stratford-upon-Avon, and the Bread Loaf program in Oxford. And after what must have seemed a whole lifetime at Lancaster University, Richard Dutton has now set up Shakespeare shop at Ohio State, from which vantage point he looks back on the recent history of the national system he left behind. As does Ania Loomba in her account of the Indian experience, Dutton tunes in to the impact of class and privilege on higher education and the English study of Shakespeare, and situates himself autobiographically in the story. In the process, and in concert with Kate McCluskie and Carol Rutter, he provides North American readers with a vivid picture of academic life in England for the student and teacher of Shakespeare. In the end, he assesses his move to North America in terms of professorial autonomy. At Ohio State, he says, “I was, for the first time ever, absolute master of my own classroom. I set my own syllabus, chose my own plays, the order in which to study them, and the perspective from which they would be studied; I chose and set my own forms of assessment – all freedoms which US professors take for granted, but which are still rarities in England.” Taken as a whole, the contributors to this collection seem to bear out this distinction, in that while no one from North America discusses the university or governmental systems (whether of constraint or opportunity) within which their Shakespeare teaching happens, all the British contributors – and Ania Loomba, whose voice is the most international of all – are concerned to place their teaching in its institutional contexts, from the individual department up to the impact of governmental policy and public attitude.

I’m drawn repeatedly to an observation made by Anne Michaels in her beautiful novel, *Fugitive Pieces*, that “The best teacher lodges an intent not in the mind but in the heart” (1996: 121). Leaving aside the debatable binary of mind and heart, the idea of “lodging an intent” is arresting: to lodge something is both to fix it firmly and to give it a dwelling place; intent is inner thoughtfulness and purpose moving forward, issuing in action. The best teacher does indeed lodge an intent in the minds and hearts of her or his students. From Jean Howard’s specific embrace of the high calling of mentor, through the 12 subsequent essays exemplifying something of the range of long and fulfilling pedagogical experience, this collection (yet
another manifestation of the many books called Teaching Shakespeare) seeks to communicate some of the pleasures and satisfactions of life in the Shakespearean classroom. Lodging Shakespearean intents in our students and our successors, reshaping and passing on the legacy we’ve received, is the hope we all share.

Note

1 My own first encounter was in a 1976 conversation arranged by Malcolm Scully of The Chronicle of Higher Education, a conversation which led to her sharing exercises and practical strategies on which I have never stopped relying in the years since.

References and Further Reading

Part I
Mentoring
Teaching Shakespeare, 
Mentoring Shakespeareans

Jean E. Howard

In an average week during a typical semester, I will spend at least 10 hours in activities related to the mentoring of students, mostly graduate students who hope to make a career teaching Renaissance literature in a college or university. This is one of the most pleasurable, delicate, and complex activities of the many that comprise my life as a Shakespearean. So what is it that we do when we mentor those who will go on to become our professional colleagues and successors? Is it a teachable skill, a highly individual art, or simply a duty? What do we mean by mentoring, anyway? I welcomed Skip Shand’s request to think about these issues in print because I realize that though by my own lights I have been an active mentor of graduate students for nearly 30 years, I have not ever formally put to myself the questions I just posed. This essay is therefore an attempt to reflect, in a nonprescriptive way, on my own practice and to invite others to similar reflections. As with so many aspects of academic life, there is much that is deeply intuitive and individual about many of the activities – teaching and research, as well as advising and mentoring – that fill our days. And yet there is sometimes something to be gained from thinking more systematically about aspects of our daily practice. It is in that spirit, then, that I put forward these reflections on mentoring.

Of course, the Shakespearean’s first move is typically to think about what Shakespeare’s plays offer by way of ruminations on a given topic. Unfortunately, those plays are not a sufficient guide to academic mentoring, any more than to fly fishing. In a few, something resembling a mentoring relationship is portrayed, but usually in a way that shows how
Jean E. Howard

misguided, comic, or irrelevant the mentor can be; or how intractable the mentee. Young women in Shakespeare’s plays, for example, are often given the benefit of their elders’ wisdom, and usually to bad effect. One can think of the nurse, counseling Juliet to marry the County Paris and forget Romeo since the second match “excels your first; or if it did not, / Your first is dead, or ‘twere as good he were / As living hence and you no use of him” (Romeo and Juliet, 3.5.223–5). Judging only by expediency, the nurse fails to understand what Juliet really values and so makes herself irrelevant and Juliet hopelessly isolated. Polonius and Laertes, giving advice to Ophelia, do no better, treating her as incapable of independent judgment, turning her into an object into which they pour their maxims and positioning her as a counter in their plots to unravel Hamlet’s mystery. A dutiful daughter who heeds the advice she receives, Ophelia eventually goes mad.

In the history plays, older men sometimes give young men the kind of counsel we now associate with mentoring. In Henry VI, I and II the Duke of Gloucester, assigned the position of Lord Protector to the young Henry VI, tries to teach his charge how to govern wisely. But the Duke’s authority is undermined by his wife’s treasonous activities, and the young King is in thrall to his French spouse and swayed, by her and a court faction opposed to the Lord Protector’s power, to remove Gloucester from office. In this case, good counsel is not enough to rescue a weak man from his own folly and the bad advice of others. The Duke of Gloucester is murdered in his bed, and Henry VI goes on to have a disastrous reign. These examples should all be a warning to those who feel that giving counsel is an easy, automatically efficacious endeavor. The literature on mentoring is full of warnings about mentors who are tone-deaf, inattentive, or smothering, and of mentees who feel, alternatively, neglected or bullied by those positioned to mentor them.

Perhaps the most complex relationship analogous to mentoring that we find in the histories involves Prince Hal, Falstaff, and King Henry. The King is also a father who periodically and without much success tries to teach his son, Hal, how to be a prince and future king. With considerable acuity, the plays devoted to the reign of Henry IV probe the complexities of succession and the psychological barriers that prevent a son from accepting the advice of a father whom he will follow upon the throne. The paradoxical cry, “The King is dead; long live the King,” pinpoints the ideology of replication that lies at the heart of the succession process and goes some way to explaining the reasons one so destined might fall out of love with