

SHAKESPEARE AT VASSAR



SHAKESPEARE AT VASSAR



Casca. Bid every noise be still; peace yet again!

Caesar. Who is it in the press° that calls on me? 15

I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,
Cry "Caesar." Speak; Caesar is turned to hear.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.°

Caesar. What man is that?

Brutus. A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

Caesar. Set him before me; let me see his face. 20

Cassius. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon
Caesar.

Caesar. What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.

Caesar. He is a dreamer, let us leave him. Pass. *Caesar dismissed*

Sennet.° Exeunt. Mane[n]t° Brutus and Cassius. *prophecy*

Cassius. Will you go see the order of the course?° 25

Brutus. Not I.

Cassius. I pray you do.

Brutus. I am not gamesome:° I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit° that is in Antony.

Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires; 30
I'll leave you.

Cassius. Brutus, I do observe you now of late;

I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont° to have;

You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand° 35
Over your friend that loves you.

Brutus

I.ii.15 press crowd 18 ides of March March 15 24 s.d. Sennet flourish of trumpets marking ceremonial entrance or exit 24 s.d. Mane[n]t (they) remain 25 order of the course progress of the race 28 game-some (1) fond of sport (2) merry 29 quick spirit (1) lively nature (2) prompt obedience 34 wont accustomed 35 bear . . . hand treat too haughtily and distantly, keep at arm's length (the metaphor is from horsemanship)

Antony. You gentle Romans—

All. Peace, ho! Let us hear him.

Antony. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; 75

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. *f -> Cochrane's*

The evil that men do lives after them, *nd Brutus*

The good is oft interrèd with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus

Hath told you Caesar was ambitious. 80

If it were so, it was a grievous fault,

And grievously hath Caesar answered° it.

Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest

(For Brutus is an honorable man,

So are they all, all honorable men), 85

Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.

He was my friend, faithful and just to me;

But Brutus says he was ambitious,

And Brutus is an honorable man. *-7*

He hath brought many captives home to Rome, 90

Whose ransoms did the general coffers° fill;

Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?

When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff. *Am L Brutus*

Yet Brutus says he was ambitious; *vs*

And Brutus is an honorable man. *Honors 95*

You all did see that on the Lupercal

I thrice presented him a kingly crown,

Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?

Yet Brutus says he was ambitious; 100

And sure he is an honorable man.

I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,

But here I am to speak what I do know.

You all did love him once, not without cause;

What cause withholds you then to mourn for him? 105

O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,

82 answered paid the penalty for 91 general coffers public treasury

Shakespeare at Vassar

An exhibition

commemorating the 400th anniversary
of the death of William Shakespeare,
and celebrating his contributions to
our lives and letters.



The Frederick Ferris Thompson Memorial Library

August 29—December 16, 2016

The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

September 22—December 23, 2016

*Ignorance is the curse of God,
Knowledge the wing wherewith we
fly to heaven.*

Henry VI, Part 2, 4.7.73-74

SHAKESPEARE
AT VASSAR

2016

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CONTENTS

- 7 PREFACE
 ANDREW ASHTON
- ESSAYS
- 9 *Teaching Shakespeare At Vassar*
 ZOLTAN MARKUS
- 21 *Shakespeare in Special Collections*
 RONALD PATKUS
- 31 “*That which is finest and best*”:
 Performing Shakespeare at Vassar
 DENISE WALEN
- 45 *Shakespeare in Drawings and Paintings*
 from the Frances Lehman Loeb
 Art Center
 ELIZABETH NOGRADY
- 59 *The Vassar Shakespeare Garden*
 LESLIE DUNN
- 71 EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

PRE FACE

by ANDREW ASHTON

Director of Libraries

It is a pleasure to present the exhibition “Shakespeare at Vassar”, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare. This exhibition reveals how thoroughly Shakespeare’s work has infused Vassar’s academic and extra-curricular endeavors over the years. His dramatic works, poetry, and overall cultural significance have had a resounding and lasting effect on teaching, the arts, and life at the College. It is particularly gratifying to have this exhibition presented at Thompson Library, where so many readers have enjoyed meaningful and inspiring encounters with Shakespeare.

The impact of William Shakespeare’s work can be seen across life at Vassar—from the boundless exploration of Shakespeare in the curriculum, to the many vibrant performances staged at Vassar over the years, to the spaces on campus, including the Shakespeare Garden, which celebrates Shakespeare’s legacy. One need only to browse through the historical archives of Vassar’s student and alumni newspapers to see that the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare have been a common experience and source of inspiration for Vassar’s students since the founding of the College. Shakespeare’s appeal is timeless, intriguing scholars and students across generations. His endurance testifies both to the depth of Shakespeare’s work and to its unique suitability to the ever-evolving traditions of liberal education.

Our sincere thanks go to the many members of the faculty, librarians, and Vassar colleagues whose knowledge of Shakespeare and of Vassar’s history combine to tell the story of Shakespeare at Vassar. Special thanks go to Leslie Dunn (Associate Professor of English), Zoltan Markus (Associate Professor of English), Elizabeth Nogrady (The Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Academic Programs at the Frances

Lehman Loeb Art Center), Ron Patkus (Associate Director of the Libraries for Special Collections and Adjunct Associate Professor of History), and Denise Walen (Professor of Drama) for their contributions to the exhibition and catalog, as well as to Sharyn Cadogan (Digital Production Manager), Laura Streett (College Archivist), Julia Fishman (Media Relations & Social Media Coordinator), and George Laws (Director of Publications, Office of Communications) for their support in bringing this endeavor to life.

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE AT VASSAR¹

by ZOLTÁN MÁRKUS
Associate Professor of English

“Among teachers of English literature, there is a growing conviction,” claimed Truman J. Backus in his “Preface” to *Shaw’s New History of English Literature* in 1874, “that much time is wasted in the classroom by attempting to learn about too many authors. Such an attempt is dissipating to the mind of the student, and is most unsatisfactory to the teacher.”² Instead, Professor Backus recommended the study of a select few authors (especially, that of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Burns, Scott, and Byron). Shakespeare deserved particular attention since his works “show such stores of knowledge, such powers of discrimination, such rescues of wit, such pathos, such exhaustlessness of language, such scope of imagination, as can be found in no other English poet.”³

Truman J. Backus was Professor of Rhetoric, Belles-Lettres, and the English Language at Vassar between 1866 and 1883; he organized his teaching into four divisions: Rhetoric, Logic, Elocution, and English Literature.⁴ For the study of literary history, he used *Shaw’s New History of English Literature*, which he thoroughly revised and updated. As he put it in his Preface to the Second Edition (1884), “In the revision of this work, my recent assistants in the Department of English Literature at Vassar College have placed me under obligation for most valuable help in matters demanding careful and scholarly research.”⁵ During the first two decades of Vassar’s history, students studied Shakespeare with the aid of Chapter IX of *Shaw’s New History of English Literature*. The main topics of this chapter on Shakespeare were the following: “1. His Career as a Dramatist. 2. His Early Non-Dramatic Poems. 3. Classification of His Plays. 4. His Comprehension

of Nature. 5. His Delineation of Character. 6. The Origin of His Plots. 7. His Metaphorical Style. 8. His Influence in the History of our Language. 9. His Sonnets.”⁶

Backus’s successor, Manuel J. Drennan (Professor of Rhetoric and of the English Language and Literature, 1883-1894) took heed of Backus’s suggestion that students should study a limited canon of a dozen or so influential authors to develop a foundation for their understanding of literary history. In addition, however, Professor Drennan also introduced a new course that was first devoted to “The Elizabethan Era” and, later, to “Shakspere”:

During the first semester of the Senior year there is a Shakspere course of two hours. The purpose of this course is to give an introduction to the various lines of Shakspere study, historical, literary, philological. A single play—this year, Richard II.—is thoroughly mastered, and the student is then assisted to draw out analytically the laws of dramatic poetry. A few other plays, if possible one of each class, are similarly treated.⁷

Under Professor Drennan’s guidance, the instruction of English had three fields (they called them “departments” then): Rhetoric and Composition, English Literature, and Anglo-Saxon. Freshmen and sophomores had their courses prescribed, whereas juniors and seniors were able to enroll in elective courses. During sophomore year, students had to take a survey course on English literature beginning with Wycliffe. The elective courses included “Course D,” devoted to “Shakspere, Laws of Dramatic Composition.” The model of a required survey course and the elective study of Shakespeare was established at the end of the 19th century and remained in the curriculum of the English Department for a long time.

Another tradition that started in the 19th century and has survived even today is the Helen Kate Furness essay competition. The earliest record of this prize I have found is from the 1884-85 College Catalogue. Helen Kate (Rogers) Furness, an excellent scholar of Shakespeare

(and wife of Horace Howard Furness), passed away in 1883; the Prize established in her honor immediately after her death has been a laudable commemoration of her work ever since. (There is a Helen Kate Furness Prize at Smith College as well.) The first description of this Prize states that,

THE HELEN KATE FURNESS PRIZE FUND

furnishes annually two prizes, one of thirty and one of twenty dollars, which are granted to the writers of the two best essays on some "Shakespearian or Elizabethan subject," competition being open to all members of the Senior Class. The subject is assigned a year in advance, and essays must be presented at the opening of the second semester. The subject for the year 1885-86 will be, *The Will as illustrated in Shakespeare's Characters*.⁸

Later topics assigned for the Furness Prize included "Shakespeare's Delineation of Women as Compared with that of Thackeray" (1886-87); "Shakespeare's Delineation of the Workings of Conscience" (1887-88); "The Influence of the Miracle Plays upon the Shakespearian Drama" (1888-89); "Shakespeare's Representation of the Celtic Character" (1890-91); and "Some Uses of Shakespeare to the Modern Reader" (1910-11). Today, the Furness Prize is open to members of all classes; it awards only one prize, and that comes without any monetary bonus.

A pedagogical tradition that has not survived since the 19th century is the practice of awarding Master's degrees at Vassar. The early leadership of the College recognized that the graduating women had only limited options for continuing their studies at the graduate level and so made it possible for deserving students to pursue their studies further at Vassar. Working together with Vassar faculty members, students had to develop individual study programs (either in residence for one year or *in absentia* for two), pass examinations in the selected courses, and present an acceptable thesis. Vassar College awarded its first Master's degree in 1869; during the following decade, another dozen students received a "Second Degree in Arts (A.M.)," and the

number of awardees further increased by the end of the century. One of the more distinguished candidates, Emily Jordan Folger, class of 1879, co-founder of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. (and wife of Henry Clay Folger, Jr.) earned her Master's in 1896 (Figure 1). Her thesis, "The True Text of Shakespeare," posits and demonstrates two important arguments: 1) The First Folio (1623) of Shakespeare's plays is "the edition of authority" that later editors need to follow; 2) The First Folio is "not Shakespeare" on account of various mediating factors. Although the tone of the thesis is highly deferential to Shakespeare experts (and, most of all, to her thesis advisor, Professor Horace Howard Furness), the intellectual stakes of the thesis are clearly defined at the very beginning, as she argues for the "Appropriateness of study of verbal criticism of Shakespeare by an American-speaking woman."⁹ When she was invited to give a talk on the 50th anniversary of the College in 1915, Emily Jordan Folger, as "an American-speaking woman" and a fine expert of Shakespeare, made a powerful presentation on "Some Women Interpreters of

Fig. 1:
Emily Jordan,
VC 1879



Shakespeare,” with which she, as an article in 1990 put it, “threw down a feminist gauntlet.”¹⁰

Laura Johnson Wylie, class of 1877 (another student of Professor Backus) “threw down a feminist gauntlet” as well, when she became one of the first female graduate students at Yale, received her Ph.D. there in 1894, started teaching at Vassar in 1895, and became the first female Chair of the English Department in 1897 (Figure 2). She worked as Chair for over twenty years, during which time new courses on Shakespeare and English drama were introduced. The English Department started offering fewer required courses (mainly Expository Writing) and more elective ones. In 1910-11, along with the course on “Development of English Literature from *Beowulf* to Johnson,” students were able to elect courses such as Courses L and LL: “Shakespeare” (“Critical reading of a few plays, with special emphasis on dramatic technique, followed by careful reading of a number of plays as illustrating the development of Shakespeare’s dramatic art and his place in Elizabethan drama.”), Courses M and MM: “The development of the English Drama from the Miracle Play to the present time,” Courses N and NN: “Shakespeare” (“Lectures on the historical setting for the content and form of Shakespeare’s plays.”), Courses O and OO: “History of Shakespeare criticism from 1592 to the present time.”¹¹ Most of the Shakespeare courses were taught by Associate Professor Florence V. Keys (1900-1914).

In 1911, a former Vassar student and recent PhD from Columbia, Winifred Smith, was hired by Laura Johnson Wylie as an Instructor of English. Four years later, Henry Noble MacCracken, a professor of English and Drama, became the 5th president of Vassar College. These two appointments significantly influenced the study of Shakespeare—as well as many other aspects of college life. Professor Smith, who became Assistant Professor in 1916, Associate Professor in 1922, Professor in 1926, and Chair in 1929, emphasized that plays were created, first and foremost, to be performed. “Here was a woman,” Vassar Encyclopedia quotes Drama professor Evert Sprinchorn, “who knew that dramatic

William Shakspeare (1564-1616) born at Stratford-on-Avon in an humble station of life, was the greatest ~~best~~ dramatic writer of his age or nation. The plays of Shakspeare are thirty five in number, some of them being ranked as tragedies, some as comedies, and some as historical dramas, though, in many of them, the characteristics of these classes are not very distinct. According to Mr. Malone, they were produced in the following order, between the years 1591 and 1614.—
Shakspeare. *Love's Labor Lost, King Henry 6th, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Winter's Tale, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, The Comedy of Errors, Hamlet, King John, King Richard 2d, King Richard 3d, Henry 4th (first part), Merchant of Venice, All's Well that Ends Well, King Henry 4th (second part), King Henry 5th, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Merry Wives of Windsor, King Henry 8th, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, Cymbeline, King Lear, Macbeth, The Taming of the Shrew, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, Othello, The Tempest, What You Will.* The works of Shakspeare have been edited by Pope, Theobald, & Johnson, Reed, Steevens, and Malone. The best edition is Reed's,

Fig. 2: Laura Wylie's notebook, 1877

literature could not be fully understood and appreciated unless it was seen in its physical aspect and not simply as disembodied words. Drama could not be separated from theater.”¹² This recognition, already embraced by Professor Gertrude Buck’s experimental courses in dramatic writing and performance in the 1910s, shaped Winifred Smith’s “Development of the English Drama” courses in the 1920s. The realization that the primary form of dramatic works is not the printed text but the staged performance motivated the appointment of Hallie Flanagan as Associate Professor of English in 1925 as well as Professor and Director of the Experimental Theater in 1929. This recognition, moreover, led to the creation of the new subject “Drama” at Vassar in 1938. Winifred Smith, as Professor of Drama, was appointed to chair the new department. It is significant, although hardly surprising, that courses in Drama did not focus on Shakespeare: the Bard remained under the aegis of the English Department.

President MacCracken, who had been a Professor of Dramatic Literature at Smith College prior to his appointment as President of Vassar, supported these new developments. By cross-listing courses between Drama and English (and Comparative Literature), he made sure that as many students as possible would benefit from the new arrangements. In general, he created more flexible educational structures (fields and subjects) and a more informal, encouraging learning environment. Within the English Department, he approved of the course structure of four levels: 100-level: Introductory; 200-level: Intermediate; 300-level: Advanced; and 400-level: Seminars for Seniors. In 1938/39, for example, a course on “Periods of English Literature” was offered at the Introductory level (130: “An introductory course in the historical study of literature. Reading of poetry, drama, and prose from the middle ages to the eighteenth century. Practice in writing.”) and a similar one on “English Literature to the Close of the Eighteenth Century” (230: “The history of English literature from its beginnings to the death of Johnson. Reading of significant works that indicate the general characteristics of thought and form as they express the spirit of

the times.”). More defined surveys at the Intermediary level included 239: “English Literature in the Seventeenth Century,” 255: “English Drama,” and 265: “Shakespeare.” The senior seminars included 455: “Studies in Drama” and 463: “Studies in the English Renaissance.”¹³ This course structure—with minimal tweaking—survived well into the postwar period as well.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Shakespeare was primarily taught by President MacCracken and Helen Estabrook Sandison (1913-1950), who was also Chair of English. In 1945, a summer semester (term “c”) was introduced, during which President MacCracken taught English 266c: “Shakespeare: A Few Important Plays.” They read five plays: *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. President MacCracken described the main objectives of the 200-level Shakespeare course as the following:

The purpose of this course is the reading of five of Shakespeare’s plays selected as illustrative of his growth as a dramatist. It is hoped that the study of these plays will give some training in the imaginative reading of drama, and will introduce the student to the background of Elizabethan drama helpful to a student of conditions in which Shakespeare worked. Finally, the course may serve as a step toward critical appreciation of the dramatic art, enhancing the pleasure of the intelligent person in reading or attending plays.¹⁴

Apart from the somewhat cumbersome style, the main goals of this class were shared by later Shakespeare courses as well (Figure 3).

In the second half of the twentieth century, courses on Shakespeare and English Drama followed the curricular structures developed by the 1930s. Introductory level 130ab: “Periods of English Literature” survived until the late 1970s; a version of intermediate-level 230ab: “English Literature to the Close of the Eighteenth Century” exists even today. Various incarnations of the advanced level 367ab have existed from the mid-20th century through today: they have been called

“Literature under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts,” “Literature under Elizabeth,” “Non-Dramatic Literature of the English Renaissance,” and—more recently—“Studies in the Renaissance.” Multiple groups of 265ab: “Shakespeare” were offered in the course of the twentieth century; by the late 1970s, the yearlong Shakespeare courses had been

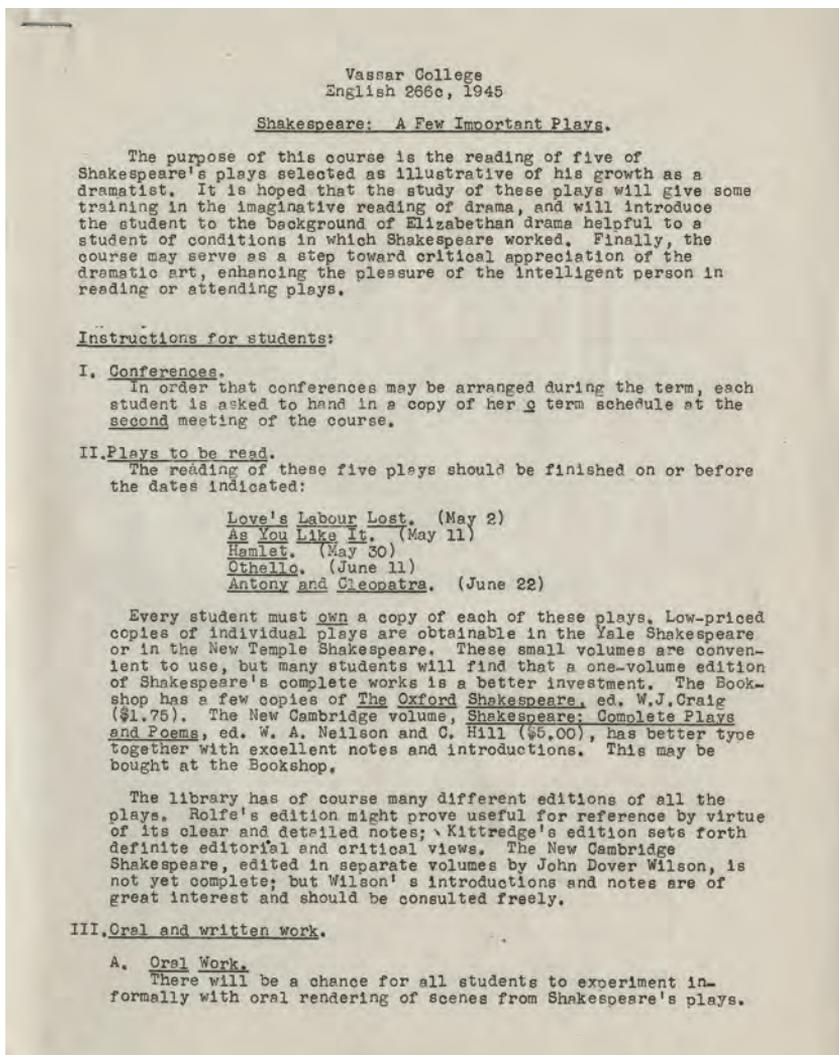


Fig. 3:
Henry Nobel
MacCraken's
Syllabus for
ENGL 266c

complemented with semester-long Shakespeare classes as well. At the more advanced level, however, there were no courses on Shakespeare. To rectify this, Professors Harriett Hawkins and Everett K. Weedon, Jr. started offering 300-level courses in the early 1980s in the experimental curricular rubric of “Special Studies in Language, Writing, or Literature.” In addition to Professors Hawkins and Weedon, Jane Jenkinson Swenarton, Richard A. E. Brooks, M. Jeane Humphreys, Lynn Conant Bartlett, Dean Tolle Mace, William W. Gifford, Julia McGrew, Ann E. Imbrie, and Eamon Grennan were some of the most memorable Shakespeare professors at Vassar in the second half of the twentieth century.

NOTES

- 1 I thank Ronald Patkus for his leadership and support in this endeavor as well as my research assistant, Lily Elbaum, for her help in conducting research for this article.
- 2 Truman J. Backus, “Preface to the First Edition,” *Shaw’s New History of English Literature* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1887), x-xi.
- 3 *Shaw’s New History of English Literature*, 114-5.
- 4 About Backus and the history of Vassar’s English Department, see Violet Edelman, “The History of English at Vassar College,” <http://150.vassar.edu/histories/english/>. A more detailed version of this article, “The History of the Vassar College English Department: Beginnings-Present,” is also available: http://150.vassar.edu/histories/english/english_dept_history_long.pdf.
- 5 Truman J. Backus, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *Shaw’s New History of English Literature*, xiii.
- 6 *Shaw’s New History of English Literature*, 115.
- 7 *Twenty-Fourth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1888-89*, 28.
- 8 *Twentieth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1884-85*, 37.

- 9 Emily C. J. Folger, "The True Text of Shakespeare," Thesis in application for the degree of Master of Arts, Vassar College, 1896. Emily Jordan Folger, Box 88.
- 10 Elizabeth Sussman Socolow, "Found: Some Women Interpreters of Shakespeare in Vassar's Folger Collection," *Vassar Quarterly* (Spring 1990): 18 and 21.
- 11 *The Forty-Sixth Annual Catalogue of Vassar College[,] Poughkeepsie, NY[,] 1910-11*, 70-1.
- 12 "Winifred Smith," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/prominent-faculty/winifred-smith.html>.
- 13 *Bulletin of Vassar College: Catalogue Issue 1938-39*, 85-90.
- 14 Henry Noble MacCracken's "English 266c, 1945" Course Description. MacCracken Folder 77.21.

SHAKESPEARE IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

by RONALD PATKUS

Associate Director of the Libraries for
Special Collections

One of the strengths of the rare book collection at Vassar is English literature. Users can access titles relating to many of the key figures in the literary canon, including, of course, William Shakespeare. A search of the Library's online catalogue yields over a hundred books by the Bard, and a similar number of books about him. The bulk of these items are housed in the Grille Collection, a general grouping of rare and valuable books. Though the extent of the holdings cannot compete with the large research libraries in the United States and abroad, they are nevertheless impressive, and there are many notable works in our collection. What is more, many of these works have interesting histories, and have come to the college through gifts, bequests, and purchases. Together the Shakespeare books form an important resource for students, faculty, alumnae/i, administrators, and outside scholars. Some highlights are noted below.

The first printings of Shakespeare's plays appeared during his lifetime as square-shaped "quartos;" these are quite rare, and Vassar holds only facsimiles, in the Main Library. The Special Collections Library does house, however, significant examples of the seventeenth century folios, large format books which collected together in one volume the works of Shakespeare.¹ The first item to note is an original fragment of the so-called first folio, the first collection of his plays, which appeared in 1623. The fragment includes the pages of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Of course facsimiles of the full first folio, printed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are also available, in the Main Library and Special Collections. Amazingly, Vassar also possesses full original copies of the second, third, and fourth folios,

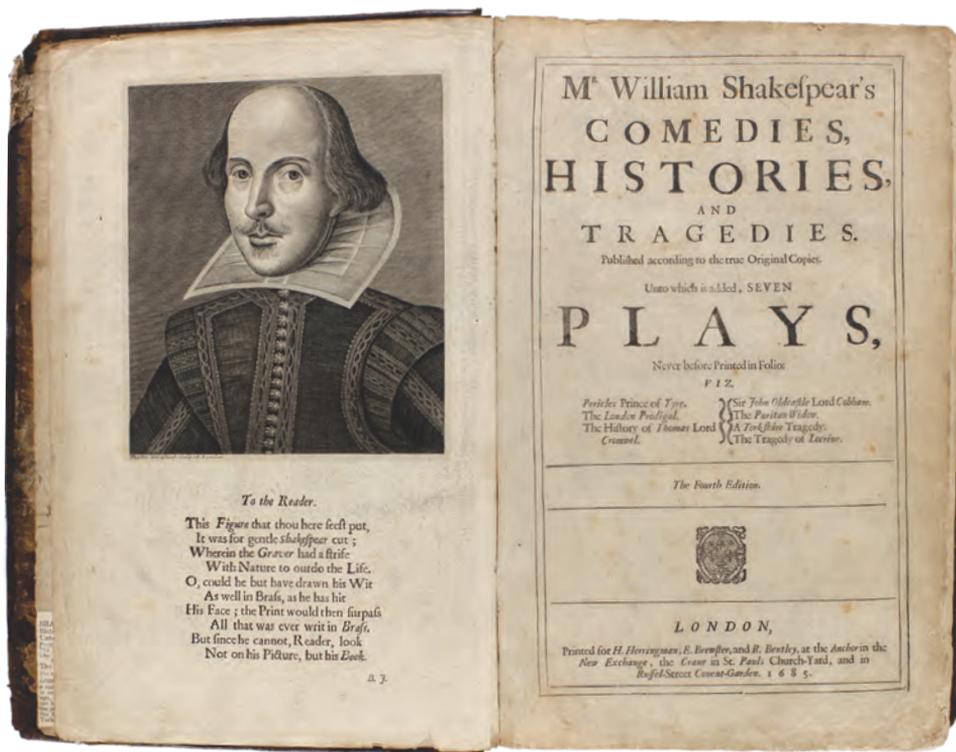


Fig. 4: The fourth folio, 1685

published respectively in 1632, 1664, and 1685. The fourth folio came first, in 1942, and was donated by Mary Crapo Hyde '34, "in recognition of the continuing significance of the work in play-writing and play production of the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College under the direction of Hallie Flanagan Davis." (Figure 4) Hyde, later the Viscountess Eccles, would become known for her scholarship and collecting, especially of Samuel Johnson and eighteenth century literature, but as noted in her obituary in *The Guardian*, she grew up reading Shakespeare and writing plays. Patricia L. Stewart '42 donated the second folio in 1944. This copy is especially interesting for its contemporary annotations and corrections. The third folio came to Vassar in the 1990s through the bequest of Ruth Sturm '32. It's an

untrimmed copy in old calf, with two bookplates, including one of Ruth's father Ernest, a lawyer and collector from New York. Since the four folios differ from one another in various ways (number of plays, changes in the texts, presence of paratexts, etc.), they provide crucial documentation of the early development of the Shakespearean canon.

In the eighteenth century, the study of the corpus of works intensified, and editors looked more closely at the texts of Shakespeare.² Many multi-volume editions appeared, in formats smaller than the folios, and Vassar holds most of them. We have, for example, Nicholas Rowe's seven-volume *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, which appeared in 1709, and is noted for being the first work to feature illustrations of scenes in the plays, and a biography of the playwright. We also hold books written and edited by Lewis Theobald, who has been called "the first Shakespeare scholar."³ Among them is a 1740 edition of *The Works of Shakespeare*. In 1765 Samuel Johnson put out *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, with a famous preface, and explanatory notes throughout. Another editor, George Steevens, wrote or edited several books about Shakespeare; including *Twenty of the Plays of William Shakespeare, Being the Whole Number Printed in Quarto during his Life-time* (1766). Some eighteenth century editions featured comments and notes of multiple editors, and were quite popular. Vassar holds, for example, the third edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1785), which is comprised of ten volumes, and features notes of Johnson and Steevens, and corrections by others. Vassar also owns multiple printings of Shakespeare's works edited by Edmond Malone, who had collaborated with Steevens, but eventually produced his own editions.⁴

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a number of important illustrated works relating to Shakespeare appeared, and Vassar has key examples.⁵ Special attention should be given to the work of John and Josiah Boydell.⁶ John Boydell in 1789 opened a Shakespeare Gallery in London, which included paintings of scenes from Shakespeare by artists like Robert Smirke, Henry Fuseli, and James Northcote. He published two printed works based on the paintings. The first was a

nine-volume illustrated edition of Shakespeare, which had been edited by George Steevens, who died in 1800; it appeared in 1802, under the title *The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*. Then, in 1803, a large two-volume elephant folio of prints was published, titled *A Collection of Prints, from Pictures Painted for the Purpose of Illustrating the Dramatic Works of Shakspeare, by the Artists of Great-Britain*. Vassar is also pleased to house *The American Edition of Boydell's Illustrations of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, by the Most Eminent Artists of Great Britain*, published in New York in 1852. This two-volume work features 96 plates (produced from the London originals) and explanatory texts. In addition, Vassar owns *The Shakespeare Gallery...*, printed in 1792 and featuring illustrations by Henry Singleton and Robert Smirke, engraved by Charles Taylor and William Nutter. Vassar's copy is bound in a remarkable Cosway binding, with six vignettes on the front and back covers.

Besides works consisting primarily of illustrations, there are many other books in Special Collections from this period and later that are about Shakespeare. They date as early as 1693, when a work by Thomas Rymer—the Historiographer Royal of England—appeared, titled *A Short View of Tragedy: it's Original, Excellency, and Corruption: With Some Reflections on Shakespear, and other Practitioners for the Stage*. Books from the eighteenth century include *Shakespeare Restored*, by Lewis Theobald, and *Shakespeare Illustrated*, by Charlotte Lennox, an author and friend of Samuel Johnson. From the turn of the nineteenth century Vassar owns books by William Henry Ireland, the famed forger of Shakespeare documents; they testify to an intriguing chapter in Shakespeare studies. Around mid-century, lectures, notes, and prefaces on Shakespeare by major literary figures like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne were published; Special Collections has copies of these and other late nineteenth century works on Shakespeare. Vassar also holds books on Shakespeare by twentieth century writers, such as Robert Bridges, and Wyndham Lewis.

Some of the books in Special Collections from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal an interest in Shakespeare on the part of people at the college. One of the earliest is a ten-volume set once owned by Matthew Vassar: the 1823 New York printing of *The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*. The founder's name is stamped on the half titles, and some plays have early penciled notes, almost certainly by Vassar himself. Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Complete Concordance to Shakspeare* is a reference work published in 1860; it's noted as being one of the books used at Vassar from 1865-69, and we can assume early students leafed through its pages. There are also a few Shakespeare titles in the Faculty Collection, composed of books written or edited by people who taught at Vassar. These include *Ten Plays of Shakespeare*, edited by Henry Noble MacCracken, Tucker Brooke, and William Cunliffe, and *The Winter's Tale*, edited by Laura J. Wylie.

Surely the most famous early alumna of the college with an interest in Shakespeare was Emily Jordan.⁷ A graduate of the Class of 1879, she married Henry Clay Folger in 1885; in the course of their lives together, they created the world's greatest collection of Shakespearean works. Emily earned a master's degree from Vassar in 1896, writing her thesis on "The True Text of Shakespeare." Her advisor was Horace Howard Furness, a noted scholar who produced a variorum edition of Shakespeare. His wife, Helen Kate, produced *A Concordance to Shakespeare's Poems*. The collection of books and other items created by the Folgers formed the basis of the Folger Shakespeare Library, opened in Washington, D.C. in 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression and two years after Henry died. Though the bulk of the Folger collection stayed in Washington, Emily during her life also donated several key items to her alma mater; they include "Some Women Interpreters of Shakespeare," the text of a lecture she gave at the college in 1915, on the occasion of Vassar's fiftieth anniversary.⁸ (Figure 5) This essay is accompanied by a number of letters, photographs, and manuscripts written by prominent women of the day who shared a love of Shakespeare, scholars and actresses. Emily also gave to the college

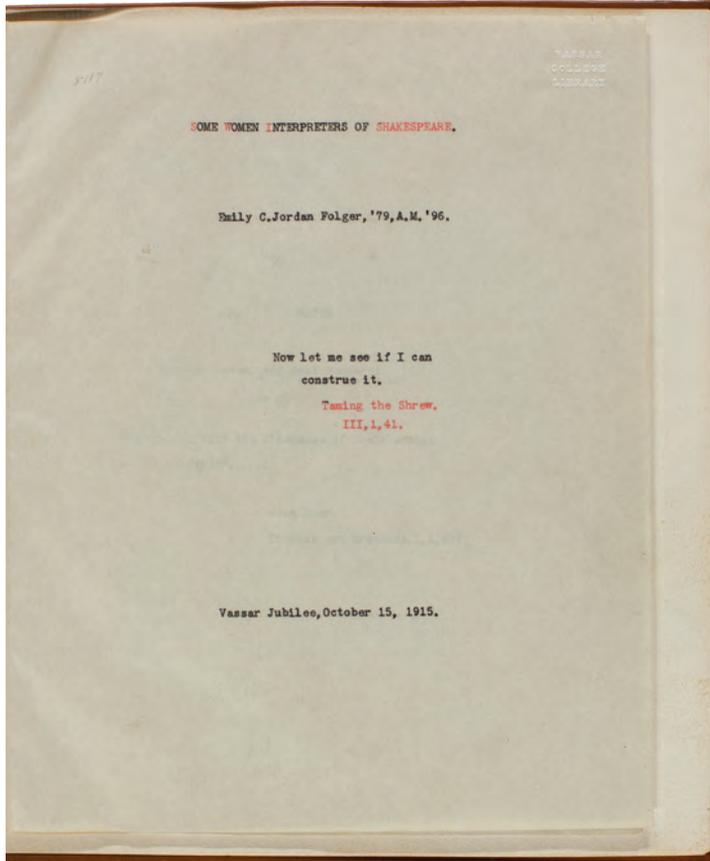


Fig. 5:
Text of
Emily Jordan
Folger
lecture, 1915

the manuscript of Helen Kate Furness' concordance to Shakespeare's poetry. A "Furness Fund" was established for the Library, and works of Shakespeare were acquired with it.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a great many English and American publishers issued private and fine press editions of Shakespeare, and Vassar is fortunate to have many of them, thanks especially to donors such as Mabel Rossbach, Rebecca Lowrie '13, and more recently, Charlotte Jones, and the Vassar Club U.K. These books are noteworthy for their aesthetic appeal; they often feature elements such as handmade paper, interesting typographic designs, illustrations

by renowned artists, and decorated bindings. The earliest example is a copy of *The Poems of William Shakespeare*, printed by William Morris's Kelmscott Press in 1893. We also have one of the twenty-six lettered copies of *The Comedies of William Shakespeare*, published by Harper & Brothers in 1900, and illustrated by Edwin A. Abbey. Other turn-of-the-century publications in Special Collections include the so-called *Vale Shakespeare*, a thirty-nine volume set put out by the Vale Press between 1900 and 1903, and three tragedies printed by the Doves Press: *Hamlet*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Julius Caesar*. The collection has six books printed by the Shakespeare Head Press, as well as *The Works of Shakespeare*, published by the Nonesuch Press from 1929-1933, with illustrations by artists like Eric Gill. Among the books by American private presses in the collection are works by the Roycroft Press, the Blue Sky Press, the Overbrook Press, and the Peter Pauper Press. *The Poems of William Shakespeare*, printed by the Overbrook Press in 1939, is a highlight: it's a large folio, issued in a slipcase, with a morocco binding and decorative initials by Bruce Rogers. The Library also holds Shakespeare titles published by the Limited Editions Club, including all thirty-seven volumes of *The Comedies, Histories & Tragedies of William Shakespeare*, designed by Bruce Rogers, the famous American type and book designer.

During this same time period, a number of Shakespeare-related books were produced for children.⁹ Some of Vassar's copies are from the general Grille Collection, but many are located in the Bechtel Children's Book Collection, formed by Louise Seaman Bechtel '15. The tradition of adapting the plays for a younger audience has a long history, and can be traced back at least as far as Charles and Mary Lamb, who in 1807 issued *Tales from Shakespear: Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. This two-volume work presented twenty tales, accompanied by engravings by William Blake, based on designs of William Mulready. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Tales* was continually re-printed, with illustrations by different artists, including Arthur Rackham (Vassar holds a 1909 American edition).

Rackham illustrated other Shakespeare books aimed at children that are in Special Collections: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1908), and *The Tempest* (1926)(Figure 6). One of the best-known English writers of fairy tales at the turn of the century was Edith Nesbit; she wrote adaptations of Shakespeare, and *The Children's Shakespeare* (189-) and *Twenty Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* (1907) are in Special Collections. Other examples of books for children from the mid-twentieth century include Anne Terry White's *Will Shakespeare and the Globe Theater* (1955) and Marchette Chute's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1956).

Many of the other twentieth century books relating to Shakespeare actually come from the library of Elizabeth Bishop, '34. Special



Fig. 6: *The Tempest*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham

Collections houses a substantial portion of the poet's own books, as does Harvard University. Among the Vassar holdings, almost twenty titles are either by or about Shakespeare. This is a substantial number, and it tells us something about the poet's reading habits, or at least something about the books that interested her. Dating from the middle of the twentieth century, none of these books are expensive or finely printed editions, but instead are scholarly or reading editions. Bishop had several editions of the works of Shakespeare in her library. The largest was the so-called "Arden Shakespeare," published between 1946 and the early 1980s by Methuen, in both hardcover and paperback. Various editors were responsible for the individual titles. Many of Bishop's copies retain the original dust jackets, and some have handwritten autographs or inscriptions by her. Bishop's library also includes a few books about Shakespeare, such as *Life in Shakespeare's England* (1954), *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1955), and *Shakespeare's Imagery* (1958).

This essay has touched on a few examples of the volumes in Special Collections that relate to William Shakespeare, but they could not be described in detail, due to a lack of space. Moreover, there are many other volumes that deserve attention. Still, I hope I've been able to suggest some of the areas where we hold real treasures at Vassar, and that in the future, students, faculty, graduates, and others, will be inspired to examine some of our holdings and delve further into this important area of study.

NOTES

- 1 In recent years several books on the first folio have been published. See Anthony James West, *The Shakespeare First Folio: the History of the Book* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2001-2005); Paul Collins, *The Book of William: How Shakespeare's First Folio Conquered the World* (New York : Bloomsbury, 2009); and Emma Smith, *The Making of Shakespeare's First Folio* (Oxford : Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2015).

- 2 See Colin Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated: the Eighteenth Century Editions* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scholar Press; Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing Co., 1991).
- 3 F. E. A Halliday, *Shakespeare Companion 1564–1964*. (Baltimore, Penguin, 1964), p. 148.
- 4 Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean Scholar: A Literary Biography*. Cambridge University Press.
- 5 Stuart Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 6 See *The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery*. Eds. Walter Pape and Frederick Burwick. Böttrop (Essen: Verlag Peter Pomp, 1996). For the background to the printing of the books, see Rosie Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness: John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Formation of a National Aesthetic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- 7 Stephen H. Grant, *Collecting Shakespeare: The Story of Henry and Emily Folger* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).
- 8 Elizabeth Sussman Socolow, "Found: Some Women Interpreters of Shakespeare in Vassar's Folger Collection," *Vassar Quarterly* (Spring 1990), 18-21.
- 9 See, for example, Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Shakespeare as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland & Co., 2008).

**“THAT WHICH
IS FINEST AND BEST”:
PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE
AT VASSAR¹**

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“Vassar,” according to former college president Henry Noble MacCracken, himself a fine thespian, “has always been stagestruck,” and Shakespeare has figured prominently in the theatrical life of the college.² The Philaetheis Society, founded as a literary and debate society in 1865, began presenting plays as early as 1869 and produced the earliest Shakespeare productions on campus. In the 1870s, the various chapters of Phil began presenting “Hall plays,” which were productions put on in Society Hall, the stage and small auditorium in the Calisthenium and Riding Academy (later renamed Avery Hall and now the Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film).³ The Delta Chapter of Philaetheis presented *Twelfth Night* in Society Hall in spring of 1872, and despite “deficiencies of scenery and costume” the *Vassar Miscellany* praised the excellent cast for presenting such a “pleasant” entertainment.⁴

Records of Shakespeare productions through the early twentieth century are incomplete, although the college supported at least four Shakespeare plays through 1896, including a second production of *Twelfth Night* during the 1893-94 academic year. Photos of this production indicate that Phil was able to surmount the deficiencies of costume if not scenery, and while rather fanciful and flouncy, the costumes suggest that Vassar women put a great deal of energy into their productions. All the women involved in the performance were members of various chapters of Philaetheis, and several of the leading actors were also members of the Shakespeare Club, a social organization active through the early twentieth century.⁵

Beginning in 1900, Philaetheis produced one Shakespeare play each year through 1911. These were the comedies *As You Like It* (twice), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew* (twice), *Twelfth Night* (again), and *Much Ado About Nothing*, along with the late comic romances *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Philaetheis favored Shakespeare's comedies because, as the president of Phil wrote in the 1907 *Vassarion*, his comedies were not "vulgar, disagreeably suggestive or insipid," and therefore were some of the only comedies suitable for performance.⁶ The 1904 *Taming of the Shrew* is well documented in photos, some of which show a large audience of Vassar women sitting and standing in the open-air theatre near Sunset Lake, still a popular site for performance. A cast of twenty-four, richly costumed in Victorian ideals of renaissance fashion, demonstrate that Phil must have had a healthy budget. Winifred Smith directed this production of *The Taming of the Shrew* and also helped in the direction of the 1903 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁷ Smith entered Vassar as a student in 1901, was inspired by faculty in the English Department like Florence

Fig. 7: *Romeo and juliet*, 1906



Keyes and Laura Wylie, earned a Ph.D. in English from Columbia University, and returned to teach at Vassar in 1911.⁸ She would be instrumental in founding the Department of Drama.

The notable exception to the comic tendency during the first decade of the twentieth century was a production in 1905-06 of Shakespeare's tragic *Romeo and Juliet*, starring Inez Milholland ('09) as Romeo during her first year at Vassar (Figure: 7). Before the 1920s women played all the male roles in Vassar productions, and while cast lists in the *Vassarion* yearbook provide full names for students playing female roles, they only provide first initial and surname for those playing male parts. Milholland made a dashing Romeo and went on to star in many other productions. She was extremely active both in theatre and sports at Vassar and became an activist, social reformer, and noted suffragette after college.⁹ The review in the *Vassar Miscellany* praised her acting, especially her "unrestrained passion" in the scene where Romeo learns of his banishment. The review also praised the interaction between Milholland as Romeo and the Juliet of Emily Ford, who were "especially commended for the development from the playful tenderness" of their first balcony scene "to the tragic sorrow and passion of the second."¹⁰

Unfortunately, Phil did not capitalize on the success of Shakespearean productions at Vassar in the first decade of the twentieth century, and after 1911 they ceased to produce Shakespeare regularly, to the "profound regret" of some alumnae.¹¹ So noticeable was the absence that in 1922 the "English Speech class in dramatic technique" took it upon themselves to present a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, again in the open-air theatre, in part "because of the recent agitation" at Vassar, "in favor of a Shakespeare play."¹² While the acting left a little to be desired, the school paper concluded that continued productions of Shakespeare would be "quite worth while."¹³ English Speech was a new subdivision in the Vassar curriculum. In 1916, Gertrude Buck of the English Department began teaching classes in playwriting and developed the Dramatic Workshop. Both Professor Buck and her

colleague Winifred Smith believed strongly that drama did not exist only as literature but must be examined through practical production, and founded the new subdivision. The curriculum consisted of courses in playwriting taught by Buck, Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists taught by Smith, and a course on “the development of European drama” taught by the college’s new President MacCracken.¹⁴ Professor Buck died in 1922, but her replacement was the equally progressive and innovative Hallie Flanagan who worked closely with MacCracken and Smith.

During her time at Vassar, generally 1924-41, Flanagan developed courses in Dramatic Production and founded the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College in the English Department. Unfortunately, she only produced one Shakespeare play while she worked at the college. Thankfully, that production was one of the highlights in her amazing career. Flanagan began thinking critically about *Antony and Cleopatra* in the spring of 1934, while in North Africa, Greece, and Paris and kept notebook entries about her thoughts on the play and its characters, which eventually found their way into the production.¹⁵ Set and light designer Lester Lang created a modular, constructivist inspired set that featured a sweeping curved ramp on stage left to represent Cleopatra’s sultry and sensual Egypt, and a level triangular unit pointing toward the audience stage right to indicate Antony’s severe, militaristic Rome. Vassar Professor of Music, Quincy Porter, composed a score for full orchestra that included an “erotic” Egyptian motif to contrast with “discordant” Roman music.¹⁶ On the simple, functional platforms Flanagan staged the many short scenes of the play without interruption, having Lang use lights to indicate shifts in time and place, consciously creating a cinematic effect.¹⁷ The exhaustive review of this production by Professor Helen Sandison in the *Miscellany News* praised the scenery: “The indefiniteness of the scene was its success; we were never at a loss to know where we were when it mattered; and never troubled by a thought of where we were when it didn’t.”¹⁸ (Figure:8)



Fig. 8: *Anthony and Cleopatra*, 1934

Sandison also praised the acting, finding the Cleopatra of Kalita Humphreys ('35) superior to Jane Cowl's 1924 New York performance. Professor of Political Science, Gordon Post, who appeared in many Vassar Experimental Theatre productions, played a commanding Antony, "with his splendid figure."¹⁹ And President MacCracken, in the "pivotal role" of Enobarbus, expertly used his "arresting voice" to enliven Shakespeare's description of "Cleopatra on her barge."²⁰ In fact, he writes in his memoir, *The Hickory Limb*, about forgetting that speech one fateful night in performance.²¹ Sandison concludes her *Misc* review writing "the community owes a debt to director and cast alike, for planning and carrying through this task which critics have declared impossible and producers have evaded."²²

Records of productions are sparse between the remainder of the 30s through the 50s, which is not surprising given world events at the time. Philaletheis continued to include Shakespeare in its extra-

curricular theatrical offerings. In the late 40s through the mid 50s they produced *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*.²³ The 1951 "Third Hall" Phil production of *Twelfth Night* included an all-female cast, which was still typical of student plays. This production is notable in that Frances Sternhagen, who would go on to a prolific and award-winning career on stage and in film and television, starred as Viola.²⁴ Vassar also continued to produce Shakespeare as part of the curriculum, but not through the English department. After multiple proposals by Flanagan and Smith, Vassar founded a Drama Department in 1938, while Flanagan was in Washington directing the Federal Theatre Project, and appointed Winifred Smith as chair. The department's first Shakespeare offering was a production of *The Tempest* in 1944 with President MacCracken as Prospero and Professor Post as Caliban.²⁵ The department followed this with productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1950), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1955) and *The Winter's Tale* (1957). The last was an ambitious production with "fifty-seven actors," including male faculty from the Drama, English, Political Science, and History departments, and fourteen men from IBM.²⁶ The sound scape included sixty-five sound cues of both live and recorded renaissance music, and the production incorporated a number of songs called for in the script.²⁷ The design elements of set and costumes were inspired by Botticelli paintings and Italian neo-classical art.²⁸ By all accounts, the production was "a performance of superb technical achievement," "beautifully mounted," "a wondrous and fragile Shakespearean fantasy that moved majestically, airily across the Avery stage."²⁹

Between the 60s and the 80s the Vassar Drama Department produced few Shakespeare plays, but began to expand the repertoire of Shakespearean selections.³⁰ They offered *Pericles* on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964, a *Pippin*-inspired and "thoroughly entertaining" production of *All's Well That Ends Well* in 1974, and *Cymbeline* in 1981 in the "stylized and colorful manner of the Peking Opera."³¹ However, since the 90s, productions

of Shakespeare have proliferated. Again, Vassar added new plays to its list of productions. One of these was *Macbeth*, directed by Norse (Beowulf) Boritt, now a Tony-award winning set designer, in 1993. In fact, the tragedies and histories have begun to appear on Vassar stages with some regularity, including productions of *Hamlet* (the last play on the old Avery stage) and *Othello* in 2000, and an all-female (now the exception rather than the rule for casting) *Henry IV* in 2001. Surprisingly, the Drama Department devoted the entire 2000-2001 season entirely to Shakespeare in an experiment at bringing more focus and unity to production work, but there really can be too much of a good thing. Over the past sixteen years, the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College has typically offered a Shakespeare production, or a Shakespeare inspired production, every two or three years.

Adaptations of Shakespeare are not a purely contemporary phenomenon. In 1887-88 Philaletheis presented *Katherine and Petruchio*, a popular revision of *The Taming of the Shrew* written by David Garrick in 1754. The “fair and fiery” Miss Walworth played Katherine and the “dark and dashing” Miss Ward played Petruchio in a highly praised production.³² The Experimental Theatre has also produced Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1974), *Dogg’s Hamlet*, and *Caboot’s Macbeth* (1986), along with Paula Vogel’s *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief* (1999). In 2000 the department produced *Ophelia*, an original play written by Professor James Steerman. In 2003, for the dedication of the new Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film, the department produced an original student-written and composed music drama titled *Hamlet Symphony*, with text taken from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Another fascinating Shakespeare-inspired play was *The Rose of Youth*, a fictional backstage examination of Hallie Flanagan’s 1934 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*.³³ A recent senior project in the Drama Department, titled *Here Lies the Water / Here Stands the Man*, focused on the role of Ophelia and cultural representations of female “madness” and the situation of women more generally. The script,



Fig. 9: *Here Lies the Water / Here Stands the Man*, 2014

devised by the ensemble, made use of over thirty source texts ranging from Handel’s “Lascia ch’io pianga,” to Sonny Bono’s “Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down),” with *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello* all providing inspiration. This completely student-driven project offered a beautiful deconstruction of *Hamlet* and the literary construction of female characters.

Since 1999, campus productions of Shakespeare have been supplemented by performances from a professional troupe known as the Actors From the London Stage (AFTLS). Co-founded by actor Patrick Stewart, AFTLS is “one of the oldest established touring Shakespeare theater companies in the world.”³⁴ The group brings classically trained British actors for one-week residencies to US colleges and universities. With residencies organized by members of the English and Drama Department here at Vassar, the company spends a full week offering workshops in classes that include a wide range of disciplines across

the campus. They conclude their week with three performances, and have offered *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Macbeth* to enthusiastic audiences. This too is not a contemporary phenomenon. The great Broadway director Margaret Webster brought her company to campus twice, in 1948 and 1950. On both occasions they presented two Shakespeare plays, first *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and then *Julius Caesar* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.³⁵ After a successful career on Broadway, Webster “decided to make her dream of bringing ‘live’ theatre to audiences in small communities, colleges, and schools across the country a reality.”³⁶ That dream proved difficult at times, for example, at Vassar the company found Avery’s lack of wing and shop space and electrical current inadequate on their first visit and performed in the Students’ Building for their second.³⁷

Student productions have continued to include Shakespeare, with Philaethis offering sometimes challenging plays. In 2009, Phil mounted a production of *Titus Andronicus*, one of Shakespeare’s earliest, bloodiest, and less frequently performed plays. Presented in the Shiva on an empty white set, the company used paint to represent the various bloody acts of death and dismemberment, so that by the end the performance smeared the white stage with color. The production also used “race- and gender-blind” casting and costumed all characters in uniform, non-gender specific clothes.³⁸ Other student theatre groups have also offered Shakespeare plays. Unbound, founded as a political theatre group, presented *Twelfth Night* in 2005 to bring “many gender identity issues to the forefront.”³⁹ “Some of the main characters” in this production were “presented as trans-gendered rather than simply cross-dressed” in order to explore “gender-related issues” in the play.⁴⁰ As the twenty-first century began, two student groups have made Shakespeare their primary focus. One is Shakespeare Troupe, created in 1999 they audition students into the group each year and work as an ensemble. The Troupe’s first production was *Macbeth* performed on the lawn by Blodgett.⁴¹ Since then, Troupe

has presented one Shakespeare play each spring in an outdoor space somewhere on campus. These have ranged from a whimsical, 50s inspired *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the orchard, to a chillingly intense and beautifully lit *Richard III* in the space between the Old Laundry building and the Computer Center. In the spring of 2015, Troupe presented an Appalachian influenced *King Lear* on the farm, and this spring they offered a brilliantly comic *Winter's Tale*, again in the orchard. Merely Players is the second new theatre group performing Shakespeare on campus. Founded in 2009, they presented *Measure for Measure* as their inaugural production.⁴² Players present one to two productions a year, including other early modern and ancient dramatists along with Shakespeare. They see their mission as educational, both for the audience and the cast and crew. The group also writes its own plays on occasion, offering a play they titled *Merely [Bitches] [?]* that focused on Juliet, Rosalind, and Lady Macbeth and explored how literary characters that transgress traditional female gender roles are presented and perceived.⁴³ Over the summer months since 1985, the Powerhouse Theater Training Program, an apprentice program for aspiring actors, directors, and writers, has offered one or two Shakespeare plays outside on the Vassar grounds. These free performances have included a Wonderlandesque *As You Like It* on the Blodgett lawn, a lovely *Twelfth Night* in the outdoor amphitheater, and even the harshly political *Coriolanus*.

Shakespeare has enjoyed a long and vibrant history of production at Vassar. Often challenging social, artistic, or political perspectives and assumptions, the productions always strive for creative integrity and innovation. They have attracted a wide segment of the Vassar community. In recent years, especially with two student theatre groups dedicated specifically to Shakespeare, the number of productions has exploded. Student audiences are flocking to these performances, proving that even 400 years after his death Shakespeare still has relevance in our community.

NOTES

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- 3 "Philaetheis," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu>, accessed 19 April 2016.
- 4 "Home Matters," *Vassar Miscellany* 1.2 (1 July 1872), 60.
- 5 *Vassarion* (1894), 44, 91.
- 6 Mary Borden, "The College Dramatic Society," *Vassarion*, Vol. 19 (1907), 106.
- 7 *Vassarion*, Vol. 17 (1905), 116 and *Vassarion*, Vol. 16 (1904), 112.
- 8 "Winifred Smith," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu>, accessed 21 April 2016.
- 9 "Inez Milholland," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu>, accessed 20 April 2016.
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- 13 "Romeo and Juliet Presented," 4.
- 14 Evert Sprinchorn, "Stagestruck in Academe," *Vassar Quarterly* 87.2 (Spring 1991), 22.
- 15 Hallie Flanagan, *Dynamo* (NY: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 70-80.
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- 17 Flanagan, 74.
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- 19 Sandison, 3
- 20 Sandison, 3.
- 21 MacCracken, 79-80. See also Flanagan, 75.

- 22 Sandison, 3. See also, "Experimental Theatre Stages Antony and Cleopatra in Technically Simple Production Following Original Version," *The Vassar Miscellany News* (15 December 1934), 1 and 6.
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- 24 "V.C. Third Hall Promises A Starlit "Twelfth Night," *Vassar Chronicle* (26 May 1951), 1 and 7.
- 25 See Winifred Smith, "*The Tempest* at Vassar," *Vassar Alumnae Magazine* (15 March 1944), 22; "Stump Experts, Win Not Encyclopedias But *Tempest* Seats," *Vassar Miscellany News* (27 January 1944), 1; "Tempest Fugit Is Pass Word Of Hard Working DP Group," *The Vassar Chronicle*, (10 March 1944), 3; Elizabeth Anne Packard, "'Tempest' Grows as Tonight's Opening Approaches," *The Vassar Chronicle* (17 March 1944), 1.
- 26 "Experimental Group Plays Shakespeare," *Vassar Miscellany News* (11 December 1957)), 1. The program only lists forty-four actors.
- 27 Carla Poletti, "Sound Report," *The Winter's Tale*, Box 37, Series 8, Drama Department Production Material, Special Collections, Vassar College, and sheet music.
- 28 Liz Smith, "Theatre to Set *Winter's Tale* With Botticelli Inspired Scenes," *Vassar Chronicle* (7 December 1957), 1 and 6.
- 29 Tessie Dolan, "Theatre Group Achieves Technically Perfect Play," *Vassar Miscellany News* (18 December 1957), 2; Dorothy Serlin, "Review of 'The *Winter's Tale*,'" *The Vassar Chronicle* (14 December 1957), 2; and Elizabeth Klosty, "Vassar Sponsor Variety of Lectures, Dramatic Productions During College Year," *Vassar Miscellany News*, Freshman Issue (Summer 1958), 1. See also, William R. Rothwell, "Year's Work in the Experimental Theatre," *Vassar Alumnae Magazine* (October 1958), 14.
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- 36 "Noted Dramatic Troupe Offers Two Shakespeare Productions," *Vassar Chronicle* (22 April 1950), 1 and 4.
- 37 Barbara Lechtman, "Lechtman Interviews Margaret Webster; Hears Experiences of Traveling Company," *Vassar Miscellany News* (3 May 1950), 3 and "Margaret Webster's Players to Perform at V.C. Tomorrow," *Vassar Miscellany News* (26 April 1950), 1.
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- 40 Berger, 15.
- 41 Joanna Johnson, "Troupe will work under Improv," *The Miscellany News* (3 December 1999), 3 and 6.
- 42 Thea Ballard, "Rebranded Shakespeare group to debut with new 'Measure for Measure' rendition," *The Miscellany News* (10 December 2009), 15
- 43 Adam Buchsbaum, "Devised play explores Shakespearean female archetypes," *The Miscellany News* (19 April 2012), 15.

**SHAKESPEARE IN
DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS
FROM THE
FRANCES LEHMAN LOEB ART CENTER**

by ELIZABETH NOGRADY

The Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Academic Programs

Writing to her father on October 24, 1865, Vassar student Helen Sylvester complained, “I am sure I do not know what we have to use Shakespeare and Milton for, but I suppose they will come in time into use.”¹ Helen’s opinion aside, she wrote her missive a month after Vassar opened its doors to students, revealing that, from the outset, Shakespeare was an integral part of the curriculum. Tracing the thread of Shakespeare woven through the fabric of Vassar’s intellectual and cultural life leads to a consideration of the college’s art collection. Drawings and paintings related to Shakespeare, housed today at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, date primarily from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Shakespeare subjects in fine art proliferated in the wake of the Jubilee of 1769 in Stratford-upon-Avon commemorating the bicentennial of Shakespeare’s birth. The trend continued into the mid-nineteenth century, when a number of such works came to Vassar as part of the founding gift presented by Matthew Vassar, and continued to enter the permanent collection in subsequent years.² These drawings and paintings can be used to explore the phenomenon of Shakespeare in art as it originated in Britain and spread to the United States, eventually becoming a vital part of the Vassar College art collection.

One eighteenth-century scene from Shakespeare in the Art Center’s collection is *Joan of Arc and the Furies* (Figure 10) by William Hamilton (1751–1801). This painting belonged to Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery, the seminal exhibition of Shakespeare-inspired paintings held at 52 Pall Mall in London’s West End beginning in 1789. The project was the



Fig. 10: William Hamilton, *Joan of Arc and the Furies*

brainchild of publisher, engraver, and alderman of the City of London John Boydell, who commissioned works by celebrated artists living in Britain such as Benjamin West, Angelica Kauffman, and Henry Fuseli.³ Boydell popularized the imagery through the publication of corresponding prints by professional printmakers.⁴ According to him, the undertaking was not simply a business proposition, but also a means to elevate the arts in Britain. Boydell contended that in his home country, “Historical painting is only in its Infancy” and that he sought “to advance that art towards maturity, and establish an *English School of Historical Painting*.”⁵ Shakespeare, by this time England’s most celebrated literary figure, proved the ideal nucleus for such a project.⁶

William Hamilton, a key participant in the Shakespeare Gallery venture, contributed twenty-six paintings.⁷ Vassar’s work, from *Henry VI, Part 1*, depicts Joan of Arc (or Joan La Pucelle, as she is called by Shakespeare) extending one arm upward towards a cloud-filled, almost black sky, a row of blue-tinged furies, nude and sinewy, by her side. Her ornate helmet, billowing red cape, and sparkling armor recall Bellona, Roman goddess of war.⁸ Listed as Hamilton’s work when auctioned in 1805, this painting bore later attributions to Fuseli and the Irish artist Henry Tresham before being purchased by Vassar College in 1966.⁹ Thomas J. McCormick, Director of the Vassar College Art Gallery in the 1960s, connected this composition to a Boydell engraving, securing the attribution once again to Hamilton.¹⁰

Also belonging to Vassar is a number of British drawings with subjects from Shakespeare formerly in the collection of Elias L. Magoon. Magoon was the Baptist minister, Vassar trustee, and chairman of the Art Gallery Committee who amassed a considerable art collection that he sold to Matthew Vassar, who in turn gave it to the college in 1864.¹¹ This group includes a number of Shakespeare works on paper. One is *Hamlet and the Ghost of his Father* from around 1799 (Figure 11) by James Northcote (1746–1831). Northcote, a student of Sir Joshua Reynolds, belonged to the cadre of younger artists who flourished as



Fig. 11: James Northcote, *Hamlet and the Ghost of his Father*

contributors to the Shakespeare Gallery.¹² In this pen and ink sketch, Hamlet locks eyes with the decidedly non-ethereal ghost, who turns away, gesturing in an entreaty for Hamlet to follow him. A round full moon and hatching indicating a dark sky lend drama to the scene, as do the intent gazes of onlookers at left, Horatio and Marcellus. Also from Magoon are two highly theatrical drawings of *The Marriage of Romeo and Juliet* by George Cattermole (1800–1868), a watercolorist who mined British history for subject matter, and the historicized *Shakespeare in his Study* of 1854 by J.E. Buckley (active 1843–1861), an artist from whom Magoon directly commissioned works.¹³

American-born artists took up the Shakespeare theme as well, as is evidenced by *The Death of Hotspur* (Figure 12) by John Trumbull (1756–1843). Born in Connecticut, Trumbull traveled to London in 1780 to study with Benjamin West. In this finely wrought ink drawing, also from the Magoon collection, Henry, Prince of Wales, kneels in armor beside the wounded Harry Percy, called Hotspur. Text below the drawing in the artist's hand excerpted from *Henry IV, Part 1* confirms the scene.¹⁴ The work is dated 22 November 1786,

a key moment in Trumbull's career. Earlier that year, he had begun his celebrated painting *The Declaration of Independence* based on the account of Thomas Jefferson.¹⁵ In November, according to Trumbull's autobiography, he returned to London and,

...went on with my studies of other subjects of the history of the Revolution, arranged carefully the composition for the Declaration of Independence, and prepared it for receiving the portraits, as I might meet with the distinguished men, who were present at that illustrious scene.¹⁶

In this period, Trumbull also repeatedly depicted Revolutionary-era battles, whose fallen figures recall the wounded Hotspur.¹⁷

Another Shakespeare-themed work by an American artist who spent time in England is *Titania's Fairie Court* (Figure 13) by Washington Allston (1779–1843). Allston, who owned an eight-volume set of

Fig. 12: John Trumbull,
The Death of Hotspur



Shakespeare plays from 1799, borrowed subjects from Shakespeare throughout his career.¹⁸ He began this large-scale, unfinished canvas, based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, around 1836 for Lord Morpeth (later the Earl of Carlisle) on behalf of his sister, the Duchess of Sutherland, for the outstanding sum of £5,000, or \$25,000. In this work, Titania reclines languidly at left, identifiable through her crown and attendants, watching as her retinue dances and frolics in intertwined, almost weightless circles.¹⁹ Allston was apparently proud of the work, for he showed it regularly to visitors in his Cambridge, Massachusetts studio and spoke of it highly.²⁰ Left incomplete at his death, the canvas provides a glimpse into Allston's notoriously time-consuming working process of outlining his figures and then blocking in areas of wash.²¹ The work remained with Allston's family after his death and hung in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for many years, before being given by the Washington Allston Trust to the Vassar College

Fig. 13: Washington Allston, *Titania's Fairie Court*





Fig. 14: Charles Loring Elliott, *Falstaff*



Fig. 15: Sanford Robinson Gifford, *The Shrine of Shakespeare*

Art Gallery in 1955.²²

Later in 1856, New York artist Charles Loring Elliott (1812–1868) painted *Falstaff* (Figure 14).²³ The subject is Sir John Falstaff, comic companion to Prince Henry, with roles in *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. A favorite in paintings of this period, Falstaff appears with drink in hand, his ruddy face turned to cast a lascivious smile at Mistress Quickly, proprietor of the Boar’s Head Tavern.²⁴ Formerly in the Magoon collection, this work has a literary subject, a rarity in Elliott’s portrait-dominated oeuvre. In 1867, Henry T. Tuckerman opined of this painting: “What an incarnation of jolly epicurism! How complacently his hand rests on his distended paunch, as if indicating the seat of the soul; what animal delight in the eye, what thorough sensual philosophy in the whole expression!”²⁵ Elliott, who had studied with John Trumbull, strengthened his connection

to Vassar in 1861, after the Board of Trustees commissioned him to paint a full-length portrait of Matthew Vassar, now a mainstay of the collection.²⁶

Also common in nineteenth-century works of art are representations of Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon, a popular tourist destination in the 1800s.²⁷ The most compelling example at Vassar is *The Shrine of Shakespeare* of 1859 (Figure 15) by Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823–1880). On the small-scale canvas is a view of Holy Trinity church nestled in the trees beside the glittering River Avon, populated by a white swan as a woman in a red shawl promenades nearby. Gifford, born in Greenfield, New York, visited Stratford in July 1855 and provided a dramatic account of visiting Shakespeare's grave.²⁸ He also recounts recording the site, writing: "This Church is beautifully situated on the banks of a small river. It is large and handsome and is shaded by noble elms, I made a sketch from a further bank."²⁹ Presumably, he later used this sketch to create the painting, dated 1859, for Magoon, who collected multiple works by the artist.³⁰

In the earliest days of the college, Matthew Vassar wrote to Magoon articulating their shared belief that the "special purpose" of Vassar's art gallery, "should be to elevate and involve the minds of the pupils. . ." ³¹ Works of art with Shakespeare subjects fulfill this aim, aligning as they do with other aspects of the curriculum. More broadly, identifying this group of works in the Art Center's collection demonstrates how art, alongside literature and drama, helped to root Shakespeare so firmly in American education and at Vassar College in particular.

I would like to thank Jason LaFountain, G. Joseph Bettman, Margaret Vetare, and Patricia Phagan for their assistance in researching and editing this essay.

NOTES

- 1 Helen Sylvester (Seymour), 24 October 1865, Student Letters, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.
- 2 For information on Shakespeare in fine art, see Jane Martineau et al., *Shakespeare in Art*, exhibition catalogue, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 2003; and Richard Studing, *Shakespeare in American Painting* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses), 1993.
- 3 See Rosie Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness: John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Formation of a National Aesthetic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- 4 For Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery prints in the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, see accession numbers 1968.25.1–.6; 1969.10.1.1–.99.
- 5 John Boydell, *A catalogue of the pictures, &c., in the Shakspeare Gallery, Pall-Mall* (London, 1793), v. See also Dias, "Creating a Space for British Art," Chapter 1, in *Exhibiting Englishness*, 17–63.
- 6 In the words of William L. Pressly, Shakespeare was for eighteenth-century British artists "proof that original genius was native to the soil." See Pressly, *The Artist as Original Genius: Shakespeare's "Fine Frenzy" in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 30.
- 7 Hamilton was second only to Robert Smirke in completing paintings for the Gallery. See William L. Pressly, *A Catalogue of Paintings in the Folger Shakespeare Library* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 69.
- 8 Depicted in this work is Act V, Scene 3, when Joan La Pucelle declares, "See, they forsake me! Now the time is come/That France must vail her lofty-plumed crest/And let her head fall into England's lap/My ancient incantations are too weak,/And hell too strong for me to buckle with:/ Now, France, thy glory droopeth to the dust." In 1795, Boydell published an engraving of this work by Anker Smith after Hamilton. See also John Christian, *Shakespeare in Western Art*, exhibition catalogue, Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1992, no. 30.
- 9 Boydell suffered a bankruptcy in 1803 and the gallery disbanded in 1805, which he attributed to the contracting print market in continental Europe due to the Napoleonic wars. The paintings were subjected to a lottery, then sold at auction. For *Joan of Arc*, see Boydell Gallery sale, Christie's, London, 17 May 1805, lot 29.
- 10 McCormick thought this painting "...would add a certain distinction and

- character to our collection.” See Correspondence, Thomas J. McCormick to Mrs. Archie Botson, 7 June 1966, Object Files, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center.
- 11 See Matthew Vassar, *Communications to the Board of trustees of Vassar College. By its founder* (New York: J.A. Gray & Green, 1869), 28; Patricia Phagan, “Drawings at Vassar to ‘Illustrate the Loftiest Principles and Refine the Most Delighted Hearts,’” *Master Drawings* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 133–144.
 - 12 Boydell commissioned eight paintings from Northcote, none of which correspond to this drawing. See Martineau, *Shakespeare in Art*, 99; and Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness*, 110.
 - 13 Cattermole worked with John Britton, the antiquarian and publisher from whom Magoon acquired many drawings for his collection (see accession numbers 1864.2.2951 and 1864.2.2952). Themes related to Shakespeare fit squarely with Magoon’s taste, which gravitated toward scenes of an idealized Christian and Anglo-Saxon past, prevalent in the United States before the Civil War. See Francesca Consagra, “The ‘Ever Growing Elm’: The Formation of Elias Lyman Magoon’s Collection of British Drawings 1854–1860,” in *Landscapes of Retrospection: The Magoon Collection of British Drawings and Prints, 1739–1860*, exhibition catalogue, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Poughkeepsie, 1999, 91–92.
 - 14 The text below the drawing reads: “But let my favours hide thy mangled face,/Adieu! And take thy praise with thee to heaven,/Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave/–Prince of Wales (Henry IV, Part I).” After the first line, the following has been skipped: “And, even in thy behalf, I’ll thank myself/For doing these fair rites of tenderness.” On the verso are additional pencil sketches by Trumbull.
 - 15 *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, 1786–1820*, oil on canvas, 20 7/8 x 31 in., Trumbull Collection, Yale University Art Gallery, 1832.3.
 - 16 John Trumbull, *Autobiography, reminiscences and letters of John Trumbull, from 1756 to 1841* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), 147.
 - 17 See *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker’s Hill, 17 June, 1775, 1786*, oil on canvas, 24 5/8 x 37 in., Trumbull Collection, Yale University Art Gallery, 1832.2.

- 18 William H. Gerdtz and Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., “*A man of genius*”: *The Art of Washington Allston*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1980, 54; 154–157. Allston was also a teacher of Vassar charter trustee Samuel F.B. Morse (1791–1872).
- 19 Allston’s work represents Act II, scene 2, when Titania says, “Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;/Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;/Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds, Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,/To make my small elves coats, and some keep back/The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders/At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;/Then to your offices and let me rest.”
- 20 See Nathalia Wright, ed., *The Correspondence of Washington Allston* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 404, n. 5; 415, n. 2.
- 21 This work was particularly well known thanks to its reproduction in John and Seth W. Cheney, *Outlines and Sketches by Washington Allston* (Boston: Stephen H. Perkins, 1850).
- 22 See Thomas W. Leavitt, “The Disposition of the Washington Allston Trust,” *Art Quarterly* 19, no. 4, (Winter 1956): 416.
- 23 *Falstaff* was also exhibited in 1856. See Theodore Bolton, “Charles Loring Elliott, An Account of his Life and Work,” *Art Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1942): 80.
- 24 For Falstaff in painting, see Pressly, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Folger*, 29–37.
- 25 Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists* (New York: G. Putnam & son, 1867), 302.
- 26 Charles Loring Elliott, *Portrait of Matthew Vassar*, 1861, oil on canvas, 96 x 63 in., Gift of the Board of Trustees, 1861.1.
- 27 In his albums, Magoon amassed a number of prints of Stratford. See accession numbers 1864.2.1626–.1631. See also Julia Thomas, *Shakespeare’s Shrine: The Bard’s Birthplace and the Invention of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3.
- 28 “I walked slowly and silently up the aisle in watchful expectation, until in the further corner, next to the chancel, I came to the well-known bust. The clerk quietly rolled aside some matting on the floor below it, and on the worn stone that covers the sacred dust I read those lines which will forever protect that dust and that stone from being distressed, ‘Good Friend, for Jesus’ sake forebear/ To dig the dust enclosed

here./Blessed be the man that spares these stones,/And cursed be he that moves my bones.” Sanford Robinson Gifford, *European Letters, Volume I, May 1855–February 1856* (Washington, D.C.: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution), 50.

- 29 Gifford, *European Letters*, 50.
- 30 Ila Weiss, *Poetic Landscape: the Art and Experience of Sanford R. Gifford* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1987), 203.
- 31 Matthew Vassar to Elias Magoon, 15 January 1864, *Matthew Vassar Letter Book (1860–1868)*, 80, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

FIGURES

- Fig. 10 William Hamilton, English, 1751–1801, *Joan of Arc and the Furies*, oil on canvas, 31 1/8 x 21 7/8 in., Purchase, Betsy Mudge Wilson, class of 1956, Memorial Fund, 1966.12
- Fig. 11 James Northcote, English, 1746–1831, *Hamlet and the Ghost of his Father*, ca. 1799, pen and brown ink, 5 3/8 x 4 3/4 in., Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.261
- Fig. 12 John Trumbull, American, 1756–1843, *The Death of Hotspur*, 1786, brown ink and pencil, 9 x 7 1/4 in., Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.216
- Fig. 13 Washington Allston, American, 1779–1843, *Titania’s Fairie Court*, before 1837, pen and umber ink with wash and traces of graphite on tinted ground on canvas, 48 5/8 x 72 3/4 in., Gift of the Washington Allston Trust, 1955.4.2
- Fig. 14 Charles Loring Elliott, American, 1812–1868, *Falstaff*, 1856, oil on canvas, 12 7/16 x 10 1/4 in., Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.28
- Fig. 15 Sanford Robinson Gifford, American, 1823–1880, *The Shrine of Shakespeare*, 1859, oil on canvas, 9 x 15 1/2 in., Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.35



Fig. 16: Shakespeare Garden, spring 2015.

THE VASSAR SHAKESPEARE GARDEN

by LESLIE C. DUNN

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On April 24, 1916, one day after the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, students from Winifred Smith's Shakespeare class and Emmeline Moore's botany class planted pansies—the flower of thoughts—in the old botanic garden behind New England building.¹ This was the beginning of Vassar's Shakespeare Garden. As the second-oldest Shakespeare garden in the United States, and the only one at a liberal arts college, it has a special place in Vassar's history, as well as its own distinctive relationship to Shakespeare.² In fact, as the documents in this exhibition show, Vassar's Shakespeare Garden has always been as much about Vassar as the Bard.

The origins of the Shakespeare Garden can be traced to New Place, Shakespeare's last home in Stratford-upon-Avon, which had a large garden, including a mulberry tree said to have been planted by Shakespeare himself. By the 18th century this tree had become a shrine for Bardolators; the young David Garrick paid homage by sitting under it.³ In 1756 New Place's owner, Reverend Francis Gastrell, tired of having so many visitors coming to see it, chopped it down. He sold the wood to Thomas Sharpe, who fashioned it into souvenirs that according to Sylvia Morris “almost assumed the status of holy relics.”⁴ Hence the Reverend Gastrell, vilified by posterity for his act of cultural vandalism, may have been the inadvertent inspiration for the modern “Shakespeare Garden”—a place where, in the words of Rebecca Bushnell, “we sense that through the substance of the plants themselves that we may touch the past.”⁵

19th-century visitors to Stratford collected botanical mementos of Shakespeare's birth-place: daisies from Holy Trinity churchyard, flowers from the banks of the river Avon, rosemary from near Anne

Hathaway's cottage. Emily Jordan Folger, Class of 1879, and her husband Henry (founders of the Folger Shakespeare Library) sent seeds from New Place to an American friend.⁶ At the same time, the Victorian revival of gardening coincided with a growing interest in the cultivation of flowers mentioned by Shakespeare. Illustrated books of "Shakespeare's Flowers" became popular, serving both as entertainment and as resources for gardeners. Two such books from Vassar's collections are included in the exhibition. Artist Walter Crane dedicated his *Flowers from Shakespeare's Garden: A Posy from the Plays* (1906) to the Countess of Warwick, who had a "Shakespeare border" in her garden in Essex; the title page shows her kneeling



Fig. 17: Students working in the garden, circa 1916

before a bust of Shakespeare with a floral tribute.⁷ Esther Singleton's *The Shakespeare Garden* (1922) is a more scholarly work, containing a history of Renaissance gardens as well as essays on Shakespearean plants arranged by season, and "practical suggestions for making a correct Shakespeare garden" of one's own.⁸

As Singleton's reference to horticultural correctness implies, by the early 20th century the defining elements of a modern Shakespeare garden had been established. Garden designs varied. Some were historical reconstructions of a formal Elizabethan garden, enclosed by walls or hedges, with terraces, gravel walks, and beds laid out in geometrical patterns called "knots."⁹ Others created a romanticized Shakespearean plantscape in the form of a Victorian cottage garden or a "wild bank."¹⁰ All featured flowers and herbs mentioned by Shakespeare, sometimes grown from seeds from Stratford-upon-Avon, each labeled with a quotation from the works. Most gardens included a sundial, and some had a statue of the Bard. The result was "a panoply of Shakespearean vegetative associations."¹¹

The construction of Vassar's Shakespeare Garden was part of its tercentenary celebrations. The first planting of pansies was followed by marigolds, valerian, and rue, "all from Shakespeare's garden in Stratford-upon-Avon. . . presented by Mrs. MacCracken, Dr. Thelberg, and Mrs. Folger respectively."¹² In the July 1916 issue of the *Vassar Quarterly* Winifred Smith wrote about a series of events that "have kept the poet's name before us throughout the year," culminating in a "formal festival" on Founder's Day with a performance of *The Tempest* "by moonlight and torch-light."¹³ Of the garden Smith wrote that Shakespeare "could only rejoice in another honor we are about to pay him":

On a beautiful hillside, sloping westward toward the brook, plans are being laid out for many plots of homely English herbs and flowers neatly ordered around an old sun-dial and a "pleached bower," within an English hedge. Bacon's essay on Gardens offers suggestions for arrangement, Elizabethan

plays furnish the names of the plants and trees to be set out, students of Shakespeare work out a complete catalogue of desiderata, which it is hoped alumnae and friends of the college may provide, the instructor in botany and her class provide the necessary special knowledge of the earth, and time . . . will bring the scheme to completion.¹⁴

Smith's description captures what was uniquely "Vassar" about the Shakespeare Garden: it was conceived as an integral part of the curriculum, a site for both scholarly research and hands-on learning. It was also a multidisciplinary project, uniting knowledge of Shakespeare with "knowledge of the earth." And since it involved faculty and students working together, it was a forerunner of the collaborative research projects that are an important part of Vassar education today. Finally, the garden's creators reached out to involve the larger Vassar community; their donations of funding, plants, and labor over the years would make it even more of a Vassar Shakespeare garden.

Documents in the exhibition testify to this vision. The first is a letter dated May 8, 1916 from Emmeline Moore to G.E. Dimock, Chairman of the Executive Committee, reporting on the garden's construction and requesting further funds; she also reassures Dimock that "[the] transformation of the character of the garden should not lessen its worth as an adjunct to the botanic equipment."¹⁵ Also included are early photographs of students working in the garden and a copy of the November 1916 issue of the *Quarterly*, in which alumnae were invited to contribute plants from a list presumably based on the "catalogue of desiderata" mentioned by Winifred Smith.¹⁶

From its earliest days the garden was also used as an outdoor theatre. For the first anniversary on April 22, 1917, members of the Shakespeare class performed a scene from Act 4 of *The Winter's Tale*—probably Perdita's "flower speech," which mentions many of the plants on the 1916 list. The performance was described in the *Miscellany Weekly* as an embodied synthesis of "Shakespeare" and "garden:"

The scene was given very informally, the players reading their lines, and wearing simple impromptu costumes. The whole effect was a very pleasant one, the sighing pine trees on the slope behind, the amusing speeches of the players, and the garden below, literally growing before one's eyes.¹⁷



Fig. 17: Students reading in the Shakespeare Garden, circa 1945

In 1922 a “large and enthusiastic audience” came early on a Saturday morning to see a production of *A Winter’s Tale* given by students of Miss Sandison’s Shakespeare class, who had “rehearsed the play only in class-time, aiming at a full interpretation and ‘local color’ rather than technical perfection.” Like Professors Smith and Moore, Professor Sandison engaged her students with Shakespeare as both scholars and creators: they performed the play uncut and included “old Elizabethan songs wherever research could unearth them.”¹⁸

The 1920s saw the first revisions to the garden’s design. In October 1923 the *Miscellany News* announced that the “flower beds are to be entirely remodeled,” with a “round plot of rose bushes on each side of the central path...framed on three sides by long beds which are to contain flowers of old English literature such as marigolds, primroses, and violets.”¹⁹ The newspaper continued to print articles about the garden throughout the 1920s, suggesting strong student interest and affection. A May 1930 article began: “There is hardly a girl with soul so dead that she has not watched spring in the Shakespeare garden with a certain thrill.” It described the garden as “a charming old-fashioned one in which there are flowers mentioned by Shakespeare,” adding that “Mr. Downer [the college horticulturist] has a plan of labeling those flowers with their respective quotations.”²⁰

Between the 1930s and the 1970s the Shakespeare Garden largely vanished from Vassar publications, though photographs in Special Collections show how it continued to be used for class meetings, performances, study, and relaxation. The garden did receive some press attention in 1961, when the Sunday *New York Times* mentioned it briefly: “A striking feature at Vassar’s garden are the stylized statues depicting characters from some of the plays.”²¹ Three of those statues are still in the garden today, and have become one of its most iconic features (a recent photograph of them is included in the exhibition) but any connection with Shakespearean characters is, alas, only in the mind’s eye. In the mid 19th century Matthew Vassar brought twenty-six statues from Italy to adorn his Poughkeepsie estate, Springside. By

October 1918 at least five of them were on the Vassar campus: two at the entrance to The Circle (where Noyes now stands) and three in the garden. The *Miscellany News* identified them as “‘The Old-Clothes Man’ with a nose straight from the Vassar Brewery, and two of his cronies, one of them minus an eye, the other with an empty sleeve and a suspiciously German looking war cross on his proud though patched person.”²² The 2016 group includes a female figure, perhaps the “Bride” that stood in The Circle in 1918, but the one-eyed figure has been lost.

Over the years both statues and other garden ornaments appeared, disappeared, or were moved. In 1951 Emily R. Poucher, a local artist, wrote to ask about the statues that appeared in her painting of the garden: “Have those two little stone figures at the top of the steps—near the big trees—have any story or significance? Do you know where they came from?”²³ By April 1976, according to *The Miscellany News*, those statues had gone missing, along with an “ivy-covered sundial surrounded by marigolds in the center of the garden,” a Grecian urn, and a brass globe. The article further lamented the overall deterioration of the garden: “Plain grass grows in the old flower beds where daffodils formerly grew in the upper terraces. The stream is eating into the southern portion of the garden where two more flower beds have become overgrown with neglect.”²⁴

The 1970s were a low point in the garden’s history. Temporary pipelines crossed it during the construction of Olmsted in 1973, and the markers identifying the plants mentioned in Shakespeare’s plays were moved. In January 1974 Secretary of the College Lynn Bartlett wrote to a concerned alumna, assuring her that “now that the building has been completed, we can start improving the garden, and I shall ask our horticulturist, Mr. Sven Sward, what can be done about labeling the plants.”²⁵ But Mr. Sward, who had cared for the garden for decades, died in 1975 and was not replaced due to a financial crisis.²⁶ In November 1976 *The Miscellany News* reported on student efforts to save the garden: the Vassar Horticultural Society announced its

intention “to institute a five year plan to make the gardens as authentic as possible.”²⁷

In the fall of 1977, Vassar students and faculty joined with members of the Poughkeepsie Vassar Club to restore the garden.²⁸ Biology professor Lawrence Halfen and his botany class worked to clear debris and planted 3700 new bulbs; in the spring, according to *Vassar Views*, another student team would complete this task, overseen by Dean T. Mace, Chair of the English department, whose scholarship would “make certain that only genuine ‘Shakespeare flowers’ make up the unique floral display.”²⁹ Sara Boonin ’78, a biology major, did an independent research project on the garden, advised by Professors Halfen and Mace. She recommended twenty-four herbs and flowers, chosen both for their Shakespearean associations and for their suitability to the climate of the American Northeast. Her project also included plans for the various beds, designed by members of the Class of 1979.³⁰

In 1981 the garden was threatened again when the Master Planning Committee announced that a new chemistry building would be built either on or near its site. Sara Richardson, who ran the greenhouse behind New England Building (now demolished), was charged with removing all the plants and bulbs from the garden in anticipation of the construction. Eventually Mudd was built on a different site, but once again students rallied in support of the garden, leading to a dramatic and mysterious act of protest. Early in the morning of February 2, 1982, approximately 6000 books were removed from the Library’s reserve room. A note attached to the door read: “If you ever want to see these reserve books again, you will begin planning the complete restoration of the Shakespeare Garden immediately;” it was signed “Timon of Athens.”³¹ The books were discovered in a nearby room, but the perpetrator was never identified.

By the fall of 1983 the restoration was again underway, thanks in part to a senior gift from the class of 1983. Computer science professor

Leila DeCampo revived the tradition of using the garden for education by creating a multidisciplinary project for students in her course, “Computers in the Nonnumerical World”: they each wrote programs to store information about the plants they were researching, including botanical descriptions, folklore, uses, and Shakespearean references. “Because the garden was in such disarray,” Professor DeCampo said, “we felt a kind of missionary purpose.”³²

The celebrations of 2016 recall those of 1916, with some contemporary touches. On April 24th students celebrated both the garden’s 100th birthday and Shakespeare’s “400th ‘Death-a-versary’” with a festival that included performances, short talks by faculty members, sword-fighting lessons and other Shakespeare-related activities. The festival poster depicts a Zombie Shakespeare leaning on the garden’s sundial, a witty 21st-century play on the “immortal Bard.” Another highlight of the centenary celebration was the Merely Players performance of *Arden of Faversham*, an anonymous Elizabethan play of which Shakespeare is believed to have been a co-author. Directed by Rob Leinheiser ’16, the production made imaginative use of the garden’s topography (much of the action took place around the sundial), and incorporated original music, including new settings of a 17th-century ballad and songs from Shakespeare’s plays.

As for the garden itself, it has become less “Shakespearean” in recent years; the original hemlock hedge has grown into a row of giant trees, and only two of the beds are still devoted to plants mentioned by Shakespeare. But plans are being made to restore the garden once again, while across the Fonteyn Kill another major restoration project is underway. The Edith Roberts Ecological Laboratory, a “unique outdoor classroom” founded in the 1920s by the pioneering Vassar ecologist, is being brought back to life by a group of faculty and students led by biology professor Margaret Ronsheim.³³ Perhaps, then, we can look forward to new collaborations between Shakespeare and science by the willow that grows aslant a brook.

NOTES

- 1 In Act 4 scene 5 of *Hamlet* Ophelia says, “There’s pansies; that’s for thoughts” (TLN 2929). For a concise history of the Shakespeare Garden see the article in the Vassar Encyclopedia: <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/buildings-grounds/grounds/shakespeare-garden.html>
- 2 The first American Shakespeare garden, in New York’s Central Park, was created in 1913, and officially renamed the Shakespeare Garden in 1916 to commemorate the tercentenary of Shakespeare’s death. Wellesley College held inaugural ceremonies for a Shakespeare garden in 1916, though it apparently no longer exists. See Nicola J. Watson, “Gardening with Shakespeare,” *Celebrating Shakespeare: Commemoration and Cultural History*, ed. Clara Calvo and Coppélia Kahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 321-24.
- 3 Watson, “Gardening,” 302.
- 4 Sylvia Morris, “Shakespeare’s mulberry and New Place,” *The Shakespeare Blog*, July 31, 2014, <http://theshakespeareblog.com/2014/07/shakespeares-mulberry-and-new-place/>
- 5 Rebecca W. Bushnell, “Gardens, Memory and History: The Shakespeare and Modern Elizabethan Garden,” *Change Over Time* 3.1 (Spring 2013), 66.
- 6 Watson, “Gardening,” 304.
- 7 Walter Crane, *Flowers from Shakespeare’s Garden: A Posy from the Plays*, [London]: Cassell, 1906.
- 8 Esther Singleton, *The Shakespeare Garden* (New York: William Farquhar Payson, 1931), 41.
- 9 Watson, “Gardening,” 313.
- 10 Bushnell, “Gardens,” 68.
- 11 Winifred Smith, “The Shakespeare Tercentenary at Vassar,” *Vassar Quarterly* 1.3 (July 2016), 202. Vassar Newspaper Archives, <http://newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/> All citations from Vassar publications are taken from this database.
- 12 Smith, “The Shakespeare Tercentenary,” 202.
- 13 Emmeline Moore, typescript letter to G.E. Dimock, dated 8 May 1916, Vassar College Library Special Collections, Shakespeare Subject File 7:14.
- 14 Ellen B. Finley ’16 and Miriam M. Marsh ’16, “For the Shakespeare Garden,” *Vassar Quarterly* 2.1 (November 1916), 61-62.

- 15 "Sweeter Than the Lids of Juno's Eyes," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 27 April 1917.
- 16 "Shakespeare Students Present Winter's Tale," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 10 May 1922.
- 17 "College Grounds Show Improvement," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 6 October 1923.
- 18 "Drama Class Instituted the Shakespeare Garden," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 21 May 1930.
- 19 Ruth Alda Ross, "Gardens to See: Shakespeare Memorials Are Located in Urban Areas from Coast to Coast," *New York Times*, 3 September 1961, X25.
- 20 "Our Quaint Visitors," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 5 October 1918.
- 21 Manuscript letter to D.A. Plum from Emily R. Poucher, dated October 16, 1951. Vassar College Special Collections, Shakespeare Subject File 7:14.
- 22 Deborah Thomson, "In Limbo Between Old and New, Garden Erodes," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 16 April 1976.
- 23 Typescript letter from Lynn Bartlett to Marjorie Davenport Casselman '13 dated January 4, 1974, in response to her letter of November 5, 1973 (copy in file). Vassar College Special Collections, Shakespeare Subject File 7:14.
- 24 "Vassar Greenhouses," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, <https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/buildings-grounds/grounds/greenhouses.html>
- 25 Judiann Walter, "Gardens May Grow Again," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 19 November 1976.
- 26 Headnote to Sara Boonin '78, "Planning and Planting a Shakespeare Garden," *Vassar Quarterly* 75:2 (Winter 1979), 28.
- 27 "Flowers that Bloom in the Spring," *Vassar Views* 50 (December 1977), 2-3.
- 28 The *Quarterly* printed extracts from Boonin's research project, including some of the plant descriptions, but did not include the designs; I found these in a typescript that Margaret Ronsheim, Professor of Biology, shared with me.
- 29 Matthew Kaufman, "Reserve Books Removed," *Miscellany News*, 5 February 1982.
- 30 "The Shakespeare Garden as you like it," *Vassar Quarterly* 80.1 (Fall 1983), 34-35.
- 31 Larry Hertz, "Reclaiming the Edith Roberts Ecological Laboratory," Vassar College URSI website, July 14, 2016. <http://ursi.vassar.edu/about/stories/features/2015-2016/160714-ursi-restoration-ecology.html>

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

At the Thompson Memorial Library

Teaching Shakespeare

CASE 1:

Backus, Truman J. *Shaw's New History of English Literature. Prepared on the basis of "Shaw's manual."* New York: Sheldon & Co., 1874.

Wylie, Laura Johnson. Vassar College, 1877. Student notebook.

CASE 3:

Folger, Emily C. J. "The True Text of Shakespeare." M.A. thesis, Vassar College, 1896.

Photograph of Emily C. J. Folger in her senior year at Vassar College, 1879.

CASE 5:

Rickert, Edith. "Shakespeare's Delineation of the Celtic Character." Winner of the Helen Kate Furness Prize, Vassar College, 1891.

Reed, Elizabeth B. Thompson. Vassar College, 1903. Student notebook.

Shakespeare, William. *The Winter's Tale*. Edited by Laura J. Wylie. New York: Macmillan, 1912.

CASE 7:

MacCracken, Henry Noble. Syllabus for English 266c, Vassar College, 1945.

Photograph of Henry Noble MacCracken, circa 1945.

Smith, Winifred. Examination Questions and Syllabus for Comparative Literature 355. Vassar College, 1942 and 1943-44.

Photograph of Winifred Smith, 1951.

CASE 9:

Hawkins, Harriett. *Poetic freedom and Poetic Truth: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

Witmore, Michael. "Men Do Their Broken Weapons Rather Use: The Science of Vision in Shakespeare's *Othello*." Senior Essay, Vassar College, 1988.

Photograph of professors who currently teach Shakespeare at Vassar College: Leslie C. Dunn, Donald W. Foster, Zoltan Markus, Karen Lee Robertson, Denise A. Walen.

Shakespeare in Special Collections

CASE 2:

Shakespeare, William. *Mr. William Shakespear's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies: published according to the true original copies: unto which is added, seven plays never before printed in folio.* London: printed for H. Herringman, E. Brewster, and R. Bentley, at the Anchor in the New Exchange, the Crane in St. Pauls Church-Yard, and in Russel-Street Covent-Garden, 1685.

CASE 4:

Shakespeare, William. *The Plays of William Shakespeare in eight volumes, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators; to which are added notes by Samuel Johnson.* London: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, etc., 1765.

Shakespeare, William. *The Shakespeare Gallery; containing a select series of scenes and characters, accompanied by criticisms and remarks... on fifty plates.* London: C. Taylor, 1792.

CASE 6:

Furness, Horace Howard, Mrs. *A Concordance to Shakespeares Poems: an index to every word therein contained, by Mrs. Horace Howard Furness.* Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1874.

Folger, Emily C. Jordan. *Some Women Interpreters of Shakespeare.* 1915.

CASE 8:

Shakespeare, William; Moore, T. Sturge; Ricketts, Charles S. *The Vale Shakespeare.* London: Hacon & Ricketts, 1900-1904.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke.* Hammersmith: Printed by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson at the Doves Press, 1909.

CASE 10:

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest.* Ill. Arthur Rackham. New York: Doubleday, Page; London: W. Heinemann, 1926.

Shakespeare, William. *The Comedies, Histories & Tragedies of William Shakespeare.* New York: Limited Editions Club, 1939-1940.

Case in Special Collections:

Boydell, John. *The American Edition of Boydell's Illustrations of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, by the Most Eminent Artists of Great Britain...*(New York, 1852).

Performing Shakespeare

CASE 11:

Photograph of performance of *Twelfth Night*, Vassar College, 1894.

Cast list *Twelfth Night*. *Vassarion*, 1894.

Photograph of performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, Vassar College, 1906.

Cast list for *Romeo and Juliet*. *Vassarion*, 1907.

CASE 13:

Photograph of Experimental Theatre performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Vassar College. Photographer: Margaret DeM. Brown, 1934.

Program and manager/director's script from Experimental Theatre performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1934.

MacCracken, Henry Noble. Autograph letter signed to "Director" refusing the role of Enobarbus, 23 October [1933].

CASE 15:

(all items courtesy of the VC Drama Department)

Photographs of Experimental Theatre performance of *The Winter's Tale*, Vassar College, 1958.

Stage manager's script from Experimental Theatre performance of *The Winter's Tale*, Vassar College, 1958.

Sheet music from Experimental Theatre performance of *The Winter's Tale*, Vassar College, 1958.

CASE 17:

(all items courtesy of the VC Drama Department)

Photograph and program from Experimental Theatre performance of *All's Well That Ends Well*, Vassar College, 1974.

Photographs and program from Experimental Theatre performance of *Twelfth Night*, Vassar College, 1990.

Photographs and advertising card from Experimental Theatre performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Vassar College, 2001.

Photographs and advertising card from Experimental Theatre performance of *Henry IV, Part 1*, Vassar College, 2001.

Program from Experimental Theatre performance of *The Hamlet Symphony* on the occasion of the dedication of the Center for Drama and Film, Vassar College, 2003.

CASE 19:

(all items courtesy of the VC Drama Department)

Photographs and program from performance of *Here Lies the Water / Here Stands the Man*, Vassar College, 2014.

Rehearsal report #2 for *Here Lies the Water / Here Stands the Man*, 2014 November 7.

The Shakespeare Garden

CASE 12:

Crane, Walter Crane. *Flowers from Shakespeare's Garden: A Posy from the Plays*. London: Cassell and Co., 1906.

Singleton, Esther. *The Shakespeare Garden*. New York: Century, 1922.

CASE 14:

Typed letter signed from Emmaline Moore to George E. Dimock, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, 1916 May 8.

"For the Shakespeare Garden," *Vassar Quarterly*, 1916 November.

CASE 16:

Photograph of students working in the garden area. Photographer: Margaret DeM. Brown, circa 1916.

Photograph of students preparing the ground for the garden, circa 1916.

Photograph of women working in the Shakespeare Garden, Vassar College, circa 1950.

Photograph of women with plant boxes helping with the Shakespeare Garden restoration, Vassar College. Photographer: Dixie Sheridan, 1978

Photograph of Shakespeare Garden pre-restoration, Vassar College.
Photographer: Dixie Sheridan, 1978

CASE 18:

Photograph of students dancing in the Shakespeare Garden,
Vassar College, circa 1925.

Photograph of class in Shakespeare Garden, Vassar College.
Photographer: Henry E. Brown, circa 1940.

Photograph of students reading in Shakespeare Garden, Vassar College,
circa 1945.

CASE 20:

Posters from the Merely Players production of *Arden of Faversham*
and the 2016 Shakespeare Festival.

Photographs of the Shakespeare Garden, Vassar College.
Photographer: Tamar Thibodeau, Spring 2015

At the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center
**“For through the painter you must see his skill”:
Shakespeare in Art from the Permanent Collection**

Washington Allston (American, 1779–1843)

Titania’s Fairie Court, before 1837

Pen and umber ink with wash and traces of graphite
on tinted ground on canvas

48 5/8 x 72 3/4 in. (123.51 x 184.79 cm)

Gift of the Washington Allston Trust, 1955.4.2

J. E. Buckley (English, active 1843–1861)

Richard III and the Murderers and the “Princes”

Watercolor

6 5/8 x 4 3/4 in. (16.83 x 12.07 cm)

Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.2.2945

Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798–1863)
The Murder of Polonius from Hamlet, Treize Sujets Dessinés
(*Hamlet, Thirteen Subjects*), 1834–1843
Lithograph
11 3/16 x 8 13/16 in. (28.42 x 22.38 cm)
Purchase, 1967.10

Charles Loring Elliott (American, 1812–1868)
Falstaff, 1856
Oil on canvas
12 7/16 x 10 1/4 in. (31.59 x 26.04 cm)
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.28

Sanford Robinson Gifford (American, 1823–1880)
The Shrine of Shakespeare, 1859
Oil on canvas
9 x 15 1/2 in. (22.86 x 39.37 cm)
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.35

William Hamilton (English, 1751–1801)
Joan of Arc and the Furies
Oil on canvas
31 1/8 x 21 7/8 in. (79.06 x 55.56 cm)
Purchase, Betsy Mudge Wilson,
class of 1956, Memorial Fund, 1966.12

Francis Legat (English, 1755–1809) after
James Barry (Irish, 1741–1806)
King Lear and Cordelia, “*King Lear*,” Act V,
Scene iii from Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery, 1792
Etching and engraving
19 9/16 x 25 in. (49.69 x 63.5 cm)
Purchase, Matthew Vassar Fund, 1968.25.1

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)
L’acteur tragique (The Tragic Actor:
Philibert Rouvière in the role of Hamlet), 1866
Etching
11 3/4 x 6 5/16 in. (29.85 x 16.03 cm)
Purchase, 1968.3

James Northcote (English, 1746-1831)
Hamlet and the Ghost of his Father, ca. 1799
Pen and brown ink
5 3/8 x 4 3/4 in. (13.65 x 12.07 cm)
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.261

Benjamin Smith (English, active 1786-1833) after
George Romney (English, 1734-1802)
The Enchanted Island, Before the Cell of Prospero, "The Tempest,"
Act I, Scene i, from Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 1797
Stipple engraving and etching
19 1/2 x 24 13/16 in. (49.53 x 63.02 cm)
Purchase, Matthew Vassar Fund, 1968.25.4

John Smith (British, 1751-1812) after
Henry Fuseli (Swiss, 1741-1825)
The Weird Sisters, 1785
Mezzotint
Image: 17 1/4 x 21 3/4 in. (43.82 x 55.25 cm)
Purchase, 1967.17

Robert Thew (English, 1758-1802) after
William Hamilton (English, 1751-1801)
Paulina's House, "Winter's Tale," Act V, Scene iii from
Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 1793
Engraving
19 13/16 x 25 1/16 in. (50.32 x 63.66 cm)
Purchase, Matthew Vassar Fund, 1968.25.2

John Trumbull (American, 1756-1843)
The Death of Hotspur, 1786
Brown ink and pencil
9 x 7 1/4 in. (22.86 x 18.42 cm)
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.216

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