

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the printing of William Shakespeare's First Folio. To commemorate the occasion, students in Professor Matthew Ritger's ENGL 15 Shakespeare class curated seven mini-exhibitions that look through a variety of lenses at the connections between Shakespeare and Dartmouth College. Their collaborative effort, titled "The Whirligig of Time: Shakespeare in the College Archive, 1623-2023," will be on display from November 20th, 2023, through March 15, 2024.

Mini-Exhibition 1 Legitimizing Black Shakespeare

Curated by Lucy Bybee '27, Alexandra Cadet '26,
Isabella Macioce '24, Connor Perrotta '27, Scott Sorensen '26

Errol Hill was the first Black professor to be awarded tenure at Dartmouth, and an outspoken activist for Black theater. Hill grew up in Trinidad, where people of color were systematically barred from performing in the two local Shakespeare companies. As the only Black student at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Hill had to wear whiteface in school plays. As a drama professor at Dartmouth, Hill taught courses on the history of theater and Black theater, acted as the college's first Affirmative Action Advisor, and published a number of books, including *Shakespeare in Sable* in 1984. This book, around which much of this collection is based, describes the long history of Black involvement in Shakespeare productions as well as many surrounding controversies.

In his research notes, Hill asks how Black Shakespearean theater should exist. Should new productions utilize colorblind casting, an all Black cast, or some mix? What new insights can be drawn from Black settings and histories set to Shakespeare? The artifacts that surround this note dive into the approaches Hill offers, as well as the backlash, racism, and cultural implications that arose.

The archival materials in this portion of the exhibit are drawn directly from the research papers of Professor Errol Hill. ML-77, Box 40, File 9; Box 35, Folder 13; Box 57, Folder 35; Box 78, Folder 21; and Box 78, Folder 23.

The marginalization of Black Shakespeareans

Should Black actors work within the confines of an industry that marginalizes them in order to gain access to larger roles and financial stability, or should they carve out their own space, as Errol Hill argues? Hill's papers reveal that those who took this advice were punished time and time again by scathing reviews in the newspapers and even raids on performances by police.

"When could they say, till now, that talked of Rome / That her wide walks encompassed but one man?" (*Julius Caesar*, 1.1.163-164). The New York-based African Company put on all-Black Shakespearean productions in 1826, including *Richard III* starring James Hewlett. However, the Company's members were arrested soon afterwards—likely because they began to challenge a local white troupe in popularity. Rome's "walks" apparently weren't wide enough for successful Black and white Shakespeareans to co-exist.

Black actors had to endure ridicule such as that from the New York Telegraph, which wrote in 1916: 'And now Darktown is to take a whack at the Shakespeare tercentenary thing... Razors may be checked at the door.'" Gary Jay Williams brought up this kind of discourse in an 1984 review of Hill's *Shakespeare in Sable*.

The Bravery of Black Shakespeareans

Veteran theater director Harry J. Elam, Jr. praised the "brave" Black actors who took the Shakespearean stage. In his 1992 review of *Shakespeare in Sable*, Elam echoed Hill's claim that Black actors' inclusion in Shakespeare reflected civil rights progression in larger society.

Take for example this 1943 production of *Othello* in Cambridge, Mass., starring Paul Robeson and Uta Hagen. The show saw a Black actor kiss a white actress for the first time ever on an American stage—and became a smash hit amongst audiences.

According to Elam's review, Hill claims that casting Black actors in non-racialized Shakespearean roles reminds us of "the common humanity of all." In *Twelfth Night*, Viola gains the acceptance and affection of multiple characters, despite being a shipwrecked "foreigner" to the land of Illyria. An actress of color in the role—desired by others, regardless of differences—would be a stark reminder indeed.

**"Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot that it do singe yourself."
–Henry VIII, 1.1.168-9**

In response to his criticism of the performance of two Black actors, Simon defends his initial argument with a long list of opinions that propagate racist ideologies. He implies that Black actors must conform to white performance norms or not be cast in traditionally white roles so as to maintain the "classical illusion" and not to complicate visual and historical "accuracy." But in the theater, where the suspension of disbelief is essential to every kind of performance, it hardly makes sense to insist on a normative "accuracy."

**"... All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players..." –As You Like It,
2.7.146-7**

In 1957, Joseph Papp started Shakespeare in the Park, which offered free productions to the public in Central Park. Papp was a proponent of colorblind casting and other reinterpretations of Shakespeare. "Whenever you do a classic," he said, "you recreate life in the terms that now exist, both politically and socially. If you try to reproduce a play the way it was done originally ... it becomes a museum piece. You have to draw from what exists. What exists in New York, and all throughout the world are different colored people. And you can't deny their existence."

"Purpose is but the slave to memory." –Hamlet, 3.2.175

On the other hand, opponents of colorblind casting argued that Shakespeare was not meant to be transposed onto other cultural traditions and contexts. This review wonders whether Shakespeare's work would lose its meaning in new contexts. Prominent Black Shakespearean actress Veronica Redd expressed her discontent with Black transformations "just to break tradition." "The play's the thing," she said. "If the major purpose of the writer is not going to be impeded, then [such adaptation's] fine."

Mini-Exhibition 2
Othello Through the Ages:
Unpacking Shakespeare's Provocative Tragedy
from the First Folio to Dartmouth

Curated by Paget Chung '26, Owen Duncan '26, Carlo Guerrini-Maraldi '26,
Riley Haskell '26, Clay Socas '26

Othello is one of the most infamous tragedies in Shakespeare's First Folio. The play explores themes of jealousy and racism by tracking the psychological unraveling of Venetian military general Othello after his marriage to Desdemona. Despite Othello's military prowess and power within Venice, his racial identity relegates him to a position of "otherness" within his society—his friends and enemies alike refer to him as "The Moor." *Othello* is the only play in the First Folio that centers a Black character, but while the play subverts racist tropes in some ways, it is also marked by those same tropes in many others. The script of *Othello* is saturated with racialized language and derogatory descriptions of Othello, and makes a spectacle of the interracial relationship at the center of the plot. This case traces *Othello* from the First Quarto to theater productions at Dartmouth, examining the script in its different forms under the lens of different historical contexts. Contending with *Othello* requires curiosity and critical thinking. While taking in our exhibit, we ask you to consider these questions: Do you think *Othello* should be retired from the stage and/or in classrooms? Can *Othello* be taught, read, or performed in ways that do not perpetuate racist imagery? If so, how?

***Othello* in the First Quarto versus the First Folio**

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragoedy of Othello, the Moore of Venice*. London: Printed by A. M. for R. Hawkins, and are to be sold at his shoppe in Chancery-Lane, neere Sergeants-Inne, 1630. [Hickmott 41](#)

The First Folio version of *Othello* differs in several important ways from the First Quarto, published a year earlier in 1622. Although those differences may seem minute, scholar Leah Marcus argues that "most of the key passages critics have repeatedly cited to define the play's attitude towards Blackness, miscegenation,

and sexual pollution derive from the Folio version of the play, and do not exist in the quarto.” The section marked above in the 1630 Second Quarto of *Othello*—in which Roderigo describes Othello as classless and unclean—was not present in the First Quarto but appears in the First Folio.

**Elinor Hughes. “Webster-Robeson ‘Othello’ Above Expectations.”
Unknown Publication. Circa 1943. From the Edmund H. Booth
Papers. ML-54, Box 13, Folder 7**

Paul Robeson’s *Othello* holds the record as the longest-running Broadway production of a Shakespeare play, from 1933 to 1944. A graduate of Columbia Law, Robeson was a prominent Black actor in the mid-20th century. In the highlighted interview, Robeson asserts that the play was “important for the advancement of his race.” Errol Hill, Dartmouth’s first tenured Black professor who starred in the college’s only production of *Othello* in 1969, based his performance on Robeson’s.

The Persistence of Racism

In the same year that *Othello* was performed at Dartmouth, Stanford physics Professor Dr. William Shockley visited the college to deliver a speech asserting intellectual superiority of the white race. During his speech, a group of 25-30 Black undergraduate students stood up and began to clap loudly, successfully preventing Shockley from speaking. Despite protest from the Black community on campus, including Hill, the students were suspended. To read more about this incident, scan this QR code.



R. P. “At Hopkins Center: Alexander’s ‘Othello’ faithful production.”
***The Argus-Champion and Newport-Lake Sunapee Times*, July 24,**
1969. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6553, Folder
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The Sunapee Times outlines Othello’s successes through the metric of his “white wife,” defining his inherent value in proportion to his proximity to whiteness. Phrases like “magnificent, a bronze god” exoticize Othello’s character, visually accentuating his otherness. This image is reminiscent of the stereotypes of magic and witchcraft associated with Othello throughout the play.

Staff Reporter. “‘Othello’ at Hanover.” ***The Connecticut Valley Times-Reporter*, July 18, 1969. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6553, Folder 2**

In this review of the 1969 performance, the journalist interpreted *Othello* as “relevant to the civil rights and Black power movements.” This assertion of *Othello*’s modernity is offset by the emphasis on the play’s “insane violence.” While the plot of *Othello* is undeniably dark, asserting that the “power” of the play lies in its violence might also corroborate biases that associate Othello’s character with physical aggression and psychological ruin.

Samuel Hirsch. “Hirsch on Theater: ‘Othello’ Handsome Production – But Warps Tragedy’s Implications.” ***Boston Herald Traveler*, August 11, 1969. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6553, Folder 2**

Samuel Hirsch writes that Errol Hill becomes “magnificent” and “Shakespeare’s great Black hero” when he “howls and beats his chest in pain.” The emphasis on Othello’s physicality by way of animalistic descriptions flattens and objectifies Othello’s character. The complexity of Shakespeare’s protagonist lies within his unusual ascension to power, his torturous internal conflict, and his emotional isolation in a society that will never let him forget his otherness. Hirsch’s review distills Othello into nothing more than a stage-spectacle.

Survey Says...

Four hundred years after the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio, we read *Othello* in English 15. Afterwards, we asked our peers to fill out a survey about their opinions about the play. Almost every student believed *Othello* should still be taught, and approximately 70% of the class thought that *Othello* should still be performed. What do you think? To read more about the source material in this exhibit, please scan this QR code.



Photograph and Playbill from the 1969 production of *Othello* at Dartmouth College. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6553, Folder 2

In this production of *Othello*, the titular character is described in the playbill as “a noble Moor in the service of the Venetian state.” In the photograph, Othello (played by director and professor of theater Errol Hill) is talking to his White wife Desdemona (played by Ann Hackney).

Mini-Exhibition 3

Politics, Gender, & *Julius Caesar* at Dartmouth
Through the Ages

Curated by Leila Brady '27, Suzy Magill '27, Ava Razavi '27,
Sabrina Tiger '27, Katherine Troup '27, Phoebe Rotman '26

For their debut play, the Dartmouth Players chose *Julius Caesar*, the same play that many believe Shakespeare's company used to inaugurate their

new Globe Theater. *Julius Caesar* continues to be politically relevant from the time of the Roman Empire to Elizabethan England to today. At Dartmouth, the play has been produced four times: in 1886, 1936, 1966, and 2008. Each production provides an insightful political commentary on its time and place, especially concerning the politics of gender in the theater from the mid-19th to the 21st century.

Photograph and Program from 1886 production of *Julius Caesar* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6522, Folder 1

1886: The political relevance of *Julius Caesar* in the midst of the Gilded Age may have had to do with power and corruption; given the government's alliances with wealthy corporations, American citizens were beginning to question the role that government was playing in their lives. At this time the Dartmouth Players were also adhering to a norm not much different from Shakespeare's own original stage practices: no women were allowed to act. In these images, all the female characters are played by men. There are therefore several kinds of tension in the production, between the restrictions placed on women, the criticism of gender norms that cross-dressing might represent, and other moments of political acuity, for example in Antony's efforts to buy the public's favor with his reading of Caesar's will.

Photograph and Program from 1936 Production of *Julius Caesar* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6527, Folder 12

1936: This production was put on at the height of the Great Depression, a time during which people across America were questioning their faith in the government after experiencing firsthand the failure of the U.S. economy. The Dartmouth Players likely identified with *Julius Caesar's* sentiments of government distrust, as well as its criticisms of the material excess of Hedonistic Rome. Professor W.B.D. Henderson wrote in *The Dartmouth* about the play, "Caesarism, bigger than Julius Caesar, with all its costliness and cruelty, was the only cure for hide-bound materialism."

Unlike the 1886 performance, this production brought in local women to play the roles of Calpurnia and Portia alongside the Dartmouth students. However, their characters are listed last in the playbill, even below other minor characters with much fewer lines, thus reflecting the minimal recognition allowed to women actors at Dartmouth at the time.

Program and photograph from 1966 Production of *Julius Caesar* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6545, Folder 1

1966: The 60s began the Second-wave of feminism, in which women were advocating for equal treatment in the home and in the workforce. At all-male Dartmouth, however, women were given the backseat in productions of Shakespeare's plays, including the 1966 production of *Julius Caesar*. Like the 1936 playbill, Portia and Calpurnia are listed last, below even the servants, indicating a lack of belief in their importance.

The 1960s was also a time of political and social turmoil across the United States. In 1966, the Vietnam War was rapidly losing popularity and protests were gaining national relevance. The sentiments of the time were reflected in the Dartmouth Players' 1966 production of *Julius Caesar*, as their interpretation depicted a world marred by skepticism and bloody warfare. According to Christian Science Monitor, the play's gruesome final battle was "dramatically set forth in front of a huge machine of war, draped with a corpse and swathed in swirling smoke."

Cast List, Handbills, Photograph, and CD-ROM from the 2008 Production of *Julius Caesar* at the Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6580, Folder 19

2008: In 2008, the key role of Mark Antony was played by Meghan Wendland ('08), in a casting decision that was likely meant to comment on the role of women in US politics. This was especially salient as the production in Hanover coincided with the Democratic primaries, at a time when Hillary Clinton was

competing with Barack Obama for the democratic nomination and a chance to be the United State's first female president.

The "Dramaturg's Notes" provide a political contextualization of *Julius Caesar* at the time. The director, Jamie Horton, brought in a U.S. soldier who had served in Iraq to talk to the actors playing Roman soldiers about what it means to be bound to serve your country. American fatigue from the Iraq wars made citizens question if the U.S. government was imperialistic. Moreover, support for the war had become a key issue between Obama and Clinton in their contest for the democratic nomination.

Mini-Exhibition 4

What You Will: Performing Gender in Twelfth Night During Dartmouth's Path Toward Coeducation

Curated by Hatley Post '23 and Lillian Sweeney '25

From 1899 to 2009, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* has been performed seven times at Dartmouth College. This century of productions also marks a pivotal change in Dartmouth's campus culture: the transition to coeducation. Famously, the plot of *Twelfth Night* revolves around changing gender identity and the subsequent romantic confusion. Shipwrecked and separated from her brother, Viola disguises herself as a man and takes the name Cesario to work for Duke Orsino in his pursuit of Countess Olivia's hand in marriage. But as the courting progresses, Olivia falls for Viola-as-Cesario and Viola for Orsino, raising thorny questions about the nature of love. The play ends with the world put back in order when Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, arrives and marries Olivia (who believes he is Cesario) and Viola is revealed as a woman, making her and Orsino's flirtation throughout the play more socially acceptable.

By placing highlights of Dartmouth's productions in tandem with reviews from *The Dartmouth*, questions about collegewide sentiments surrounding gender and the integration of women into the campus community are raised. What role should women play in the Dartmouth community? Do they play the role of actresses on the stage? As peers, or entertainment? Do they play the role of

leaders, both on the stage and behind the scenes? Tracking the change in attitudes toward women in *Twelfth Night* illustrates Dartmouth's complicated history with gender inclusivity and acceptance.

To travel through the century-long journey to gender parity at Dartmouth, read this exhibit clockwise, beginning in the top right corner in 1899.

1899

Playbill and photograph from 1899 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6522, Folder 11.

One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons.
A natural perspective that is and is not!

–*Twelfth Night*, 5.1.211-212

“The female characters were finely impersonated—surprisingly well. Mr. Hill as Olivia made quite a stunning girl, and Mr. Murray as Maria was vivacious and feminine.”

–*The Dartmouth*, "Dartmouth Dramatics," 3 March 1899.

1925

Playbill from 1925 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6524, Folder 4.

But come what may, I do adore thee so
That danger shall seem sport, and I will go.

–*Twelfth Night*, 2.2.43-44

In 1925, the greatest “danger” on Dartmouth’s campus was homosexuality. To avoid male actors playing female

characters, Dartmouth hired female actors for their 1925 production of *Twelfth Night*. To learn more about the history of sexuality and theater at Dartmouth, scan the QR code.

1958

Photograph from 1958 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6536, Folder 10.

“Taking no second to the comedians, the women of the cast are all delightful wenches...They are all experienced actresses, adapting easily to their roles, and giving the play a mature atmosphere and feminine grace which any college town is happy to find.”

–*The Dartmouth*, Nov. 7, 1958, “Inside Robinson: Twelfth Night”

The 1958 production featured a total of four women in the cast. These women were professional actors, not students. Not until 1963 did the first cohort of women take classes at Dartmouth, albeit during the summertime.

1968

Photograph from 1968 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6551, Folder 1.

Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are.

–*Twelfth Night*, 2.4.33-36

In 1968, co-education was a hotly debated topic on Dartmouth's campus, as letters to the editor dotting the pages of *The Dartmouth* attest. "End to Monasticism" (April 15, 1968) advocated for a nearby women's college, while just three days later, "Equal Representation for Women" rebutted: "we should not have as our only goal the procurement of more convenient weekend dates." Amidst this, the newly formed Drama Department admitted 7 women as "special students" for the 1968-69 school year, including summer ensemble member Carol Dudley and Meryl Streep among the first Dartmouth female transfers. Coeducation did not occur until 1972 when 177 female first-year students and 74 transfers matriculated.

1987

Playbill and cast photograph from 1987 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6577, Folder 7.

...Cesario, come,
For so you shall be, while you are a man,
But when in other habits you are seen,
Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen.

—*Twelfth Night*, V.1.378-81

According to *The Dartmouth*, the graduating class of 1987 was 40% female, while the matriculating class was just 39% female. Although substantially greater than the 11.1% of women in the inaugural female class of 1972, it was not until 1995 that women outnumbered men in the matriculating class.

Mini-Exhibition 5

Women in Shakespeare: *As You Like It*,
Twelfth Night, *King Lear*

Curated by EllaMae Fitzgerald '27, Jade G. Haakonsen '25,
Faith Koontz '27, Emily Schuster '24, Carolyn Shepard '27, Dulce Silva '25

AS YOU LIKE IT: RESPONSES TO PERFORMANCE

William T. Huyck. “Inside Robinson: Twelfth Night.” *The Dartmouth*, November 7, 1958. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6536, Folder 10

In this review of the 1958 production of *As You Like It* from *The Dartmouth*, the female characters are described as “cute” and “dumb” and their appearances are sexualized. This is very different from the way the male characters are described, as they are seen as “powerful” and “cleanly.” This shows that women weren’t taken as seriously as men in the theater. The female actresses are also listed at the very bottom of the program, almost as afterthoughts, despite that they are playing the most crucial characters, such as Rosalind and Celia.

AS YOU LIKE IT: DARTMOUTH POSTCARD

A postcard from the 2001 production of *As You Like It* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6579, Folder 32

In our Shakespeare course, we discussed the politics of gender in a variety of plays, especially comedies such as *As You Like It*, where Rosalind woos Orlando while dressed as a boy named Ganymede. This postcard was delivered to residents in the area as a way of promoting Dartmouth’s Theater Department 2001 version of *As You Like It*. The image printed on the card has half a man’s face and half a woman’s face, perhaps representing both the Ganymede and Rosalind side of the character. Intriguingly, the woman’s side of the face is still more hidden in shadow than the man’s side.

AS YOU LIKE IT: A SHAKESPEAREAN LOVE QUIZ

Program insert from the 2001 production of *As You Like It* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6579, Folder 32

Audience members filling the theater in 2001 were each given a program, inside of which they could find this pink slip. This mini-quiz allows guests the opportunity to find out their “love style.” Looking closely, the concept and the answers seem more targeted towards women, and imply certain norms around ways of being in love.

AS YOU LIKE IT: DARTMOUTH REPERTORY THEATER

Contact Prints of the Dartmouth Repertory Theater Company’s adaptation of *As You Like It* taken by Joseph Mehling, College Photographer. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6540, Folder 9

These images come from *The Dartmouth Repertory Theater Company’s* 1964 adaptation of *As You Like It*. A young actress plays a man at a time when women were just beginning to be brought to campus as students in the summer, and still had not been fully admitted at Dartmouth.

TWELFTH NIGHT: RESPONSES TO PERFORMANCE

Richard M. Rogin. “Twelfth Night’ is Happy Broad Comic Production.” *The Valley News*, November 6, 1958. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6536, Folder 10

William T. Huyck. “Inside Robinson: Twelwe Night.” *The Dartmouth*, November 7, 1958. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6536, Folder 10

The first play we read this term was *Twelfth Night*, a comedy of veiled identities which prompts a reconsideration of gender norms. These two articles were posted, one in *The Dartmouth* and the other in the *Valley News*, after a 1958 production of the play by the Dartmouth Players. Both articles degrade and hardly mention the women in the performance while showering praise upon the

men. They rave about the men in the productions. The women, on the other hand, are accorded scant attention. While they are praised in *The Dartmouth*, it's only in a few lines. In the *Valley News*, the women are said to have "some engaging moments."

TWELFTH NIGHT: ITEMIZATION OF WOMEN IN THE TEXT

"... I will give out divers schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried and every particle and utensil labeled to my will: as, *item*, two lips indifferent red; *item*, two gray eyes with lids to them; *item*, one neck, one/ chin, and so forth."

–*Twelfth Night*, 1.5.243-248

This quote comes from a scene in which Olivia is talking to Viola, who she believes is a man named Cesario, sent to woo her on behalf of Orsino. While making fun of the common trope of the *blazon* in love poetry, she itemizes her own features, creating both self-deprecating humor ("indifferent red") and a comment on the objectification of women.

KING LEAR: NAHUM TATE'S 1681 ADAPTATION

William Shakespeare and Nahum Tate. *The History of King Lear: Acted at the Duke's Theatre*. London: Printed for E. Flesher, and are to be sold by R. Bentley, and M. Magnes in Russel-Street near Covent-Garden, 1681. [Hickmott 76](#)

In this version of *King Lear* (1681), Tate redesigns a completely different play, switching it from *The Tragedy of King Lear* to *The History of King Lear*. This restoration of *King Lear* includes a happy ending, where Cordelia and Edgar fall in love, Cordelia survives, and Lear is redeemed. Whereas Shakespeare's Folio is known for its apocalyptic, tragic ending, Tate's revision includes a depth to Cordelia that continues through the epilogue, which is marked by victory and felicity. This makes for a stronger depiction of Cordelia and gives more storyline to enhance the presence and agency of women in the play, in an later age when women actors such as "Mrs. Barry" were allowed to play their own parts. The restored *Lear* offers hope for recovery and redemption that counter the devastating ending in Shakespeare's original.

KING LEAR: CHARACTER SKETCH AND COSTUME DESIGN

**Character/costume sketch from a 1949 production of *King Lear*.
From the Henry B. Williams papers. ML-69, Box 34**

The portrayal of women in the plays can be brought to life through costumes and stage presence. In ENGL 15 this quarter, we discussed how differences in interpretations often depends on whether we are thinking about the page or the stage. Here, the artist's drawing is not labeled for a specific character, but an analysis of the text would suggest that it must be Cordelia. The blue and gold dress connects her to the design for King Lear (see case on your left) and may allude to her marriage to France. The blue may also be rooted in the Christian symbolism of the Virgin Mary.

“Now, our joy, / Although our last and least, to whose young love / The vines of France and milk of Burgundy / Strive to be interested...” –*King Lear*, 1.1.91-94

Mini-Exhibition 6

Lest the Old Traditions Fail: Campus Traditions and the Dartmouth Players

Curated by Luke Dehmel '26, William Delaney '26,
Daisy Dundas '25, Henry McElhaney '25

As we mark the First Folio's 400th anniversary, Shakespeare's legacy has only grown in influence. Over the years, groups and communities such as the Dartmouth Players, Dartmouth's first student acting troupe, have approached these time-honored texts with their own ideas and interpretations. But what happens when these classic texts come into contact with the specific traditions of a college like Dartmouth?

Photograph and biographical updates of Harvie Zuckerman, member of Dartmouth's class of 1922. From the Harvie Zuckerman 1922 Alumni File.

Harvie Zuckerman, a member of the Dartmouth Players and the class of 1922, was an avid performer who often played female roles. But his inclination toward these parts became of concern for Dartmouth's eleventh president, Ernest M. Hopkins, who believed Zuckerman's portrayal of female characters might be encouraging homosexuality, which in Hopkins' words did not fit the "values of the College."

"The boy's name is James H. D. Zuckerman, and he is a junior in College and comes from Harrison, New York..."

President Ernest M. Hopkins to Doctor Charles Bancroft. March 26, 1921. Carbon copy. From the Office of the President records (1916-1945: Ernest Martin Hopkins). DP-11, Box 6764, Folder 2

During Zuckerman's junior spring at the College, Hopkins began to correspond with psychiatrist Dr. Charles Bancroft, one of Dartmouth's consultants in the field of "Mental Hygiene." In his initial letter, Hopkins reported being "exceedingly anxious" regarding Zuckerman's cross-dressing in campus theatrical productions, and mentioned a pattern of "exotic and unnatural tendencies" surfacing in young male actors who took on such parts. Bancroft responded with similar sentiments, expressing his willingness to work with Zuckerman in reversing the student's "abnormal sex deviations." Part of this plan involved informing Zuckerman's parents of his purported homosexuality, urging him to spend time away from the College, and cutting short his course of study.

"Sometime I want to talk with some of your authorities on mental hygiene in regard to the general problem of whether playing girls' parts in the dramatic performances makes a man effeminate..."

"...Cesario, come,
For so you shall be, while you are a man,
But when in other habits you are seen,
Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen."

–*Twelfth Night*, 5.1.378-381.

At the end of the play, Orsino suggests he will continue to treat Viola as a man when dressed as a man and a woman when dressed as a woman. Similarly, President Hopkins feared that men dressing as women on stage could have off-stage repercussions.

Photograph from the 1925 production of *Twelfth Night* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6524, Folder 4

Beginning with their first Shakespearian production, *Julius Caesar*, in 1886, the Dartmouth Players filled all their roles with male student actors, as Dartmouth did not admit women until 1972. This image from the Players' spring 1925 production of *Twelfth Night* features male students Harold Trefethen and Chet Wilson playing the roles of Viola and Olivia, respectively.

Despite keeping with tradition — after all, Shakespeare's own company, the King's Men, featured an exclusively male cast — Hopkins saw an issue with this cross-dressing. In being “unduly concerned” over the “problem” of effeminizing his male students, Hopkins reveals a blatant homophobia and a narrow-minded adherence to “traditional” College values.

Photograph from the 1936 production of *Julius Caesar* by the Dartmouth Players. From the Dartmouth Players records. DO-60, Box 6527, Folder 12

The Players began casting women by the end of 1925, under pressure from the administration. Their next Shakespearian production in 1936, *Julius Caesar*, included women in its cast. This image from that performance features Emily Merrill and Marian Greene playing the roles of Portia and Calpurnia, respectively.

“We have developed a tendency among a considerable number of the men who have played the so-called leads in girl characters to develop exotic and unnatural instincts which are

thoroughly out of keeping with what the College means to stand for.”

**“Dartmouth’s New President.” Unknown Publication, June 14, 1916.
[Alumni H774al](#), Box 1929-1958, Folder “Through 1929”**

Dartmouth takes pride and derives its identity from its history. Often it seems that Dartmouth’s leadership prioritizes the school’s perceived values and traditions; President Hopkins himself was praised for keeping Dartmouth a college that “correctly valued Dartmouth’s birthright” - a rather revealing phrase. On closer examination, the ideals that “the College means to stand for” are not as inflexible as we might think. The appointment of Hopkins himself was “untraditional” in many ways. He was not an educator and lacked “nearly all of the ‘book values’ which customarily go to determine a choice of this kind.”

Although we consider Shakespeare part of our English literary canon, his works often questioned the conventions of his own time and place. It seems Shakespeare’s plays prompted similar questions about customs on campus. Dartmouth’s all-male stage caused similar anxieties to those experienced in Shakespeare’s own time, even while the cross-dressing comedies, such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, take delight in highlighting the internal contradictions within a culture that devotes itself to enforcing such strict norms concerning gender and sexuality.

“In one case, three years ago, the boy wandered off from Hanover and safeguarded the College reputation to the extent that he committed suicide in New York rather than here.... We have had one other case in which I would good deal rather the boy would have committed suicide.”

Hopkins’s letter reveals a rigid adherence to values over the well-being and even the lives of his students. His letter repulsively claims that a student suicide, committed off-campus, “safeguarded the College reputation.”

While the Dartmouth community is still reeling from the loss of multiple students in recent years, this language not only highlights the change our community has

made in facilitating discussions about suicide and mental health, but also reminds us that we still struggle with the same problems have pained the Dartmouth community for over 100 years.

Mini-Exhibition 7 The Many Lives of *King Lear*

Curated by Laurel Lee Pitts '24 and Evan Barrett '24

What will *King Lear* be next?

This term in ENGL 15, we have discussed how political forces shaped Shakespeare's plays from their earliest history on stage and in print, and continue to affect our interpretations today. Each play charts a unique course in public opinion, rising and falling in popularity with changes in the culture, politics, and tastes of the time. In this sense, the plays take on a life of their own that reflects these contexts.

King Lear stands out as the subject of not just changes in opinion, but also large-scale epistemological shifts. We set out to follow *King Lear*'s major categorical shifts over time and understand where its life has taken it. With this exhibit, we hope to raise questions about the role of audiences and readers in the interpretation of canonical works, the tension between page and stage in Shakespeare's works especially, and the cyclical nature of public opinion. We hope you enjoy!

Life #1: The "True Chronicle Historie"

William Shakespeare. *M. William Shake-Speare, His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear, and His Three Daughters.* London: Printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1608. [Hickmott 38](#)

The first quarto of *King Lear* advertises the play not just as an interpretation of history, but as a "True Chronicle History," despite its departure from the story of the medieval King Leir.

Life #2: Tragedy

William Shakespeare. *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: Published According to the True Originall Copies.* London: Printed by I. Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623.

[Hickmott 1](#)

In the 1623 First Folio, *King Lear* undergoes a category shift. The folio, organized into comedies, tragedies, and histories, groups *King Lear* into the tragedies, no longer claiming the historical truth of Shakespeare's play. With this change comes a slightly different version of the text of *King Lear*, with more character development and interpersonal drama.

Life #3: The “Reviv’d” Romance

William Shakespeare and Nahum Tate. *The History of King Lear: Acted at the Duke's Theatre.* London: Printed for E. Flesher, and are to be sold by R. Bentley, and M. Magnes in Russel-Street near Covent-Garden, 1681. [Hickmott 76](#)

Deeming *King Lear* a “A heap of jewels, unstrung and unpolished, yet so dazzling in their disorder, that I soon perceived I had siez'd a treasure,” Nahum Tate decides to republish *King Lear* with significant edits, including introducing a love story between Edmund and Cordelia and giving the play a happy ending. This “reviv'd” version of the play was performed from 1681-1838, meaning that for over a century, audiences watched a *King Lear* that was closer to romantic comedy than tragedy.

Life #4: Page Over Stage

Charles Lamb, Mary Lamb, William Blake, and William Mulready. *Tales from Shakespear: Designed for the Use of Young Persons.*

**London: Printed for Thomas Hodgkins, 1807. [Rare PR2877 .L3 1807](#)
Volume 1.**

***The Spirit of the Plays of Shakspeare: Exhibited in a Series of Outline Plates Illustrative of the Story of Each Play.* Volume 23. London: T. Cadell, 1833. [Illus H699sp](#)**

As *King Lear* entered the 19th century, the written text became more relevant for several reasons. Firstly, *King Lear* was seldom performed out of politeness during King George III's madness, and even banned between 1810-1820. Several critics at the time considered the play unperformable because of the text's complexity and the "bathetic" nature of its finale. Charles Lamb, who edited family versions of all Shakespeare's plays, called *King Lear* "essentially impossible to be represented on stage." At the same time, Romantics such as Keats lauded Shakespeare as the "Chief Poet!" in regards to *Lear*. Lastly, several censored, edited, or otherwise family-friendly works emerged, such as this narrative version of the play, such as in *Tales from Shakespeare Designed For Use Of Young Persons* and series of plates titled *The Spirit of the Plays of Shakespeare*, both of which are heavily abridged.

Life #5: Postwar "Theatre of the Absurd"

**Character/costume sketch from a 1949 production of *King Lear*.
From the Henry B. Williams papers. ML-69, Box 34**

**Photograph of Peggy Ashcroft as Cordelia opposite John Gielgud's
King Lear in a 1950 production by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.**

**Photograph of the Hendricks family in costume for the first
all-Aboriginal production of *King Lear* in 2012 by Canada's National
Arts Centre. Image courtesy of the Metis Nation of Ontario.**

**Staff Reporter. "Shakespeare Classic To Hit Center Stage," *The
Dartmouth*, May 6, 1974. [Ref LH1.D3 D2](#)**

As the world of theater emerged from WWII, *King Lear*, previously rarely performed, rose to a newfound fame for many of the same reasons for which it

was once derided. Existentialist and absurdist movements found resonances in the play's apocalyptic ending as well as its tragicomedy. An article from *The Dartmouth* preceding a 1974 production directed by Errol Hill states that *King Lear* is "claimed to be the greatest of all the plays of William Shakespeare." Additionally, in recent years, the play has garnered special interest in its relation to land rights, especially in Native American and other indigenous communities. The first all-Aboriginal production of *King Lear* occurred in 2012 and was set in 17th century Canada.