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Perry Guevara

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Toward Speech Therapy: Affect, Pedagogy, and Shakespeare in Prison

PERRY GUEVARA

I am a first-generation American who teaches Shakespeare to many first-generation students at a Catholic-heritage university in the San Francisco Bay Area. My students' experiences of reading Shakespeare—their frustration with unfamiliar syntax, confusing and overlapping plots, figurative language (lovely as it is bewildering), and the all-too-familiar paralysis of stage fright—were also once mine. I don't mean to suggest that non-first-generation students naturally possess the urbane talent to read Shakespeare with ease and aplomb; they don't. However, first-generation students are more likely to come from cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds in which Shakespearean literacy doesn't carry the same cultural capital. At least, this was true for me as the son of immigrants relocated to the American Southeast, a region of the country, which, in many ways, has become the proving grounds for the dignity of minorities. Shakespeare didn't mean much to my family, other than that his language sounded funnier than ours: too overwrought to bother with, too elite for our homely sensibilities, too superfluous for outsiders looking in on a dominant culture that values immigrant workers for specific types of labor. In many ways, these attitudes migrated with my family from the colonial-Pacific spaces they had previously inhabited and persisted as artifacts in our new American home, where Shakespeare was usually followed by “too hard,” “I don't get it,” and “boring.” My exposure was limited to Henry Mancini's “Love Theme” from Nino Rota's soundtrack to Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), a track that my mother lovingly played on Sunday evenings. To this day, my father jokingly recites lyrics to me from another song, Jamie Cullum's “Twentysomething” (2003), in which the jazz-pop crooner rasps: “I'm an expert on Shakespeare and that's a hell of a lot, but the world don't need scholars as much as I thought.”¹

I suspect that my early encounters with Shakespeare, as scant as they were, are not unusual, especially for first-generation Americans from cultures that don't “require” Shakespeare. His canonicity in the global West signaled unattainable prestige, nothing more than the impossible apex of the ivory tower. The high culture vs. low culture debates in Shakespeare studies could easily critique these perceptions, but the problem, in my estimation, is what Madhavi Menon identifies in *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*: “Being canonized [. . .] deprives a text of agency, containing what is potentially too disturbing to be contained. [. . .] The conservative impulse to venerate Shakespeare stems from the same source as the desire to ignore his queerness.”² I needed to

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hear this as a young, inexperienced reader. I needed to know that Shakespeare was a freak like me. Indeed, Shakespeare was of little personal interest until graduate school, when I studied his plays through the conceptual frameworks of critical race studies, queer and postcolonial theories in courses taught by a Chinese woman and a gay Caribbean man. Above all, they taught me two things. The first is the value of a diverse professoriate that better reflects the makeup of a pluralistic society. Throughout my career as a student, I found solace and strength in faculty mentors, especially those of color, women, or who were queer identified. The second lesson is that love of literature does not have to be cliché. The affective experience of reading can and should be fully felt, emotionally gymnastic, and muscular. Connection, even if only partial, is the goal. Their pedagogy attuned me to Shakespeare's stunningly singular outcasts: immigrants, African Moors, interracial couples, disobedient women, clowns and fools. It might seem simple—perhaps too simple—but what a difference it made to encounter characters whose lives resembled mine and through frameworks that not only restored but also insisted on their dignity. I felt a particular connection to Desdemona, a woman who, on the surface, is so much unlike me: white, European, aristocratic, the well-bred daughter of a very powerful man. However, in her tenacious desire for a dark-skinned African—her controversial devotion to Othello—I located something transgressive, something dangerous, that had the potential to upend the misogynistic norms of Shakespeare's Venice. I loved her for this, and this love sustained many years of graduate school and continues to sustain my early years in the profession. I want to make such love possible for my students.

Following Menon, my pedagogy takes cues from queer historiography and affect theory to intellectually ground this literary experience of love and kinship. Carolyn Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval: Sexuality and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* argues for strategies of reading premodern literature that confront "the afterlives of those abjected" in the pursuit of queer history: "It's about the ways in which some people in the ... West make relations with those very phenomena from the past in constituting ourselves and our communities now."³ For Dinshaw, "queer histories are made of affective relations" and reading is an affective experience that operates "by juxtaposition, by making entities past and present touch."⁴ It's how Bob, living in "late-twentieth-century gay male America," connects to the erotic excesses of a female medieval mystic in Robert Glück's 1994 novel, *Margery Kempe*.⁵ It's how Quentin Tarantino's cult classic, *Pulp Fiction*, "gets medieval," if you will.⁶ It's how I came to regard Desdemona as kin.

These touches across time, however, are not stable, nor are they complete. Following feminist science scholar Donna Haraway and postcolonial thinker Homi Bhaba, Dinshaw argues for "partial connections" that "[open] up 'new times' and new locations ... wherein other cultural meanings may be located, other histories found, and ultimately other modes of political and cultural agency sought."⁷ These transhistorical touches enable new forms of sociality among the living and the dead, the fictive and the flesh, across hundreds of years. Dinshaw proposes that the affective dimensions of reading make possible "pre- and postmodern" communities:

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My use of the term [community] draws on the concept of partial connection that I developed in regard to historical relations—thus I regard partial connections across time as constitutive of communities, and . . . organized around single issues, postmodern communities—and in this way attempts to allow for the possibility of competing and shifting claims on individuals.⁸

Here, communities are not only literary but also political. Dinshaw provides us with the theoretical resources to apprehend these relations as coalitions. How can medieval and early modern texts speak to, resonate with, and amplify the ethical and political demands of the present? Importantly, her conceptual apparatus is wide enough to include numerous subject positions across multiple axes of difference: “Let us imagine a process that engages all kinds of differences, though not all in the same ways: racial, ethnic, national, sexual, gender, class, even historical/temporal.”⁹ A distant historical period, she explains, “becomes itself a resource for subject and community formation and materially engaged coalition building. By using this concept of making relations with the past we realize a temporal dimension of the self and of community.”¹⁰

I import the principle of partial connection to the classroom because it helps orient students to literature in ways that we may now, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, identify as *reparative*. Whether teaching first-year writing or leading an upper-level seminar on Shakespeare, I begin each course with Barbara Johnson’s short essay, “Speech Therapy,” which describes her difficult experience of recovering from aphasia by reading aloud Shakespeare’s sonnets.¹¹ Her essay helps me accomplish many pedagogical goals, among them introducing students to the poetic conventions of the English sonnet, the formal strategies of essay writing, and the scrupulous practice of close reading. Most of all, Johnson affirms what every good speech therapist knows: putting thoughts into words is a highly cognitive process that requires care and sustained practice. Johnson narrates how therapy sessions, during which she practiced vocalizing sounds through Shakespearean verse, occasioned opportunities to teach her therapist about metaphors, quatrains, and couplets. As students work through Johnson’s reversals of therapist and patient, teacher and student, they come to realize that the clinical setting doubles as a scene of literary instruction. I tell students that “speech therapy” allegorizes the work we do together in the classroom, and like Johnson’s therapist says of Shakespeare—“I have to get used to this language”—we too must face the challenges of language through reading and writing.¹²

My goal as a teacher is to establish an ethos of care in the textual encounter. I do this by cultivating in my students the capacity to respond and by urging them to recognize the responsiveness of others. I remind them that response entails responsibility (“response-ability”) and that how we respond matters. As Johnson’s essay makes evident, not all responses are easily articulated. Inclusive pedagogy, while open to many voices, must also empower those without a voice, those who are struggling to find it, and those who are not allowed to speak. All too often, however, students are rendered speechless not by aphasia but by

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fear—Shakesfear, to be precise. The literary encounter is snarled by the pedagogical legacy of what Paul Ricoeur notoriously dubbed “the hermeneutics of suspicion.”¹³ In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Sedgwick laments, “The methodological centrality of suspicion to current critical practice has involved a concomitant privileging of the concept of paranoia.”¹⁴ In the aftermath of Marxist, Freudian, and New Historicist approaches, the critical orientation of paranoia has become a requirement for reading if not an institution in and of itself, dictating *how we feel*—or rather, how we are *supposed* to feel—in the literary encounter. What’s perhaps most disconcerting is the way in which paranoia has shaped pedagogical practice: specifically, how teachers of reading and writing instruct and even police affect, if not intentionally, then at least through the subtractive force of the emblematic red-inked pen.

Sedgwick understands paranoia as a “theory of negative affects” but only one “among other possibilities” of “cognitive/affective theoretical practice[s].”¹⁵ She’s interested in alternative affective experiences, not only negative but also positive, that she regards as *reparative*, a concept she connects to the work of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. How do we apprehend readerly positions of joy, pleasure, comfort, arousal, surprise? “To recognize in paranoia a distinctively rigid relation to temporality,” she answers, “at once anticipatory and retroactive, averse above all to surprise, is also to glimpse the lineaments of other possibilities . . . [T]o read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination.”¹⁶ There are myriad ways to read and to feel about a text that need not be stifled by the tyranny of paranoia. In “Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid and Reparative Reading,” Heather Love explains, “This kind of reading contrasts with familiar academic protocols like maintaining critical distance, outsmarting (and other forms of one-upmanship), refusing to be surprised (or if you are, not letting on), believing in hierarchy, becoming boss.”¹⁷

Reparative strategies, Sedgwick further suggests, not only enable new critical practices but also have the potential to nourish and sustain us: “The reparative reading position undertakes a different range of affects, ambitions, and risks. What we can best learn from such practices are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of culture.”¹⁸ If such objects provide “sustenance”—a subtle and intellectually supple proposition—then perhaps reparative reading fortifies us in ways that are legible not only in the pedagogy of literature but also in the idiom of health and wellness; that is, in the very vicissitudes of the biological body. Following Sedgwick, I hope to articulate a position of reparative reading that is also therapeutic, much like Johnson’s readings of Shakespeare’s sonnets in “Speech Therapy” and the community-building possibilities of Dinshaw’s transhistorical affect. Partial connection does not require mastery. It does not demand perfection. Rather, it urges awareness of the feelings, impulses, and desires laden not only in the text but also in ourselves. My goal is to curate for students a Shakespearean encounter in which they’re not afraid to make mistakes; the pressure of “getting it” is lifted, and they’re free to explore the range of feelings that come with reading and making connections, however partial, between their own experiences and those of the text.

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At the 46th annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Los Angeles, I had the privilege of interfacing with talented teachers of Shakespeare, who, like me, share the responsibility of imparting early modern literature and its scholarly frameworks to first-generation undergraduates at institutions of higher learning across the country. Seminar conversations, emerging both in writing and in person, confirmed the need for customized pedagogical approaches and resourced institutional programming to support first-generation college students both inside and outside the classroom. Infrastructure is crucial. My colleagues, working from a number of theoretical perspectives, including critical race studies, postcolonial theory, and working-class studies, affirm that, in order to realize the lessons of speech therapy in the classroom, we must design at the level of curriculum and co-curriculum.

Cassie Miura calls into question the institutionalized role of the Shakespearean survey during an unprecedented historical moment marked by the political convulsions of the Trump presidency and the rising tides of nationalism. She advocates for instructing students in the institutional processes of canon formation: “[W]e begin with the premise that Shakespeare can teach us about our own institutional histories and the ways in which power and privilege inform aesthetic judgment, ideas about authorship, and the circulation of capital.”¹⁹ This approach, she argues, belongs in a reimagined Shakespeare survey that is “reception-based.” To demonstrate how meanings within a text are dynamic and contingent rather than absolute or fixed, Miura includes assignments in close reading and interpretation that urge students to consider how their own positions, identities, and lived experiences influence the ways in which the text is received. The writings of Black feminists, especially Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou, help her and her first-generation students do this, all the while combating the Bardolatry that tends to pervade the college literature classroom.

Kyle Grady, following suit, takes an intersectional approach by pointing out how first-generation students of color are all too often left out of scholarship on Shakespearean pedagogy. He elaborates the need for recognizing their non-traditional relationship to early modern literature: “Such students find themselves at a distinct disadvantage in classrooms that reinforce the notion that they—by virtue of their lived experience—are not suited toward the study of Shakespeare.”²⁰ By reinforcing more conventional approaches to reading, teachers might unintentionally ignore “different yet viable” modes of interpretation. Although Grady invokes Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* to make his point, he argues for a characteristically historicist approach to teaching Shakespeare to first-generation students, one which attends to emergent concepts of race and racism in the early modern period:

On the contrary, we might create more inclusive classrooms by complementing our focus on the aesthetic and cultural

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value of Shakespeare's works to the English canon with discussions of the ways in which early modern English literature contributed to the development of asymmetrical racialized cultural standards. Furthermore, we can make sure to invite a more robust sense of history into the Shakespeare classroom, emphasizing how racialized rhetoric—including representations of Africans and binaristic metaphors of black and white—draw, in part, from the presence of African and African descended people in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.²¹

Kim Hall's *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* is, of course, critical to this approach, especially as she shows how “renditions of blackness” were structured, in part, on ideologies of cultural, geographic, economic, sexual, and religious difference.²² So too is Ania Loomba's *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* and her subsequent work with Jonathan Burton in *Race in Early Modern England*, both which historically situate early modern race in the contexts of colonialism, global capitalism, and nascent flows of racist discourse as Europeans widened their contacts, many times violently, with the outside world.²³

Bringing us closer to speech therapy is Dean Clement, who advocates for what some might perceive as “old-school” classroom exercises in memorization and recitation; that is, putting Shakespeare's words into the mouths of students in an effort to alleviate fear and to empower them with ownership of interpretation. Although, Clement admits, “the practice seems to have fallen out of favor,” he insists on its revival, not only for its pivotal role in the history of first-generation pedagogy, especially in “the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth,” but also for its potential to build community among students engaged in shared practices of reading, speaking, and, ultimately, performance.²⁴ Erin Kelly also sees the relevance of performance-based pedagogy when working with first-generation students in an upper-level Shakespeare course. She regularly asks them to form small groups and to stage in-class performances of scenes of their choosing. She believes that the dramatic processes of “interpretive staging” allow students to *feel* “cultural ownership over the course material through embodying characters”²⁵ The key word, for Kelly, is “embodiment.” She points to a growing body of research in performance studies, including work by Nathan Stuckey, Cynthia Wimmer, and Elyse Lamm Pineau, to show how embodied thinking—specifically, imagining and inhabiting the bodies of Shakespeare's characters through acting—cultivates creativity, empathy, and critical reflection, skills that will serve students well beyond the literature classroom.²⁶ With reference to Judith Hamera's “Performance Studies, Pedagogy, and Bodies in/as the Classroom,” she even goes so far as to consider how embodiment shifts and modulates under the theatrical gaze: “of looking and being looked at.”²⁷ What I find so useful in Kelly's approach is the linkage between affect and embodiment, which affirms, for me, the reparative goals of Johnson's version of speech therapy as literary practice.

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After the conclusion of the seminar and with these pedagogical principles freshly in mind—identity, positionality, the history of race, performance, and embodiment—I returned to my home institution to develop a new curriculum in which Shakespeare was more than just a requirement for a student population that, each passing year, comes to more closely resemble the diverse demographics of California. 23% of students count as first-generation, meaning that they are the first in their families to attend a four-year college, while 71% come from non-white backgrounds. To best serve our students, Shakespeare would have to step down from his pedestal as an icon of Western elitism and transform into a figure manifesting the promises and failures of our democratic society. The result of this curricular redesign is a service-learning course, part of the university's core curriculum, and which features distinctive partnerships with the Marin Shakespeare Company and the program in Community Action and Social Change. The course borrows its name from the theater company's arts-in-corrections initiative, Shakespeare for Social Justice. What does this course look like? To put it plainly, students study and perform Shakespeare's plays alongside incarcerated men in San Quentin State Prison.

In 1989, a small yet valiant troupe of actors imagined staging Shakespeare's greatest works in the Forest Meadows Amphitheater on the Dominican University of California campus in San Rafael. They called themselves the Marin Shakespeare Company and sought to revive the spirit of the then-defunct Marin Shakespeare Festival with innovative, outdoor performances of the Bard's plays. They succeeded. Now, Dominican is one of the few universities in the nation to house a professional Shakespearean theater company. Under the guidance of artistic director Robert Currier and managing director Lesley Currier, Marin Shakespeare annually mounts three mainstage productions in an open-air performance space featuring a graceful stage and reflecting pool surrounded by towering trees. In addition to live theater, the company provides free and low-cost educational programming to underserved populations in the local community. Among them are the incarcerated. Shakespeare for Social Justice combines drama therapy with Shakespearean performance in Northern California correctional facilities, including San Quentin, Solano State Prison, Folsom Women's Prison, High Desert State Prison, California Medical Facility, Deuel Vocational Institution, and Old Folsom State Prison. The program's stated mission is as follows:

We believe that the power of theatre can benefit just about anyone, from youth to adults to people with special needs. Theatre skills are life skills—the ability to focus, to work together as a team, to communicate expressively, to be in contact with our emotions, to combine discipline with creative inspiration, to problem-solve individually and as

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part of a group, to celebrate our victories, and learn from our mistakes. Theatre breaks down social barriers, creates friendships, reduces stress, and builds bridges between people who might not otherwise have had reasons to interact and learn about each other.²⁸

With guidance from a certified drama therapist, the actors, technicians, and volunteers of Shakespeare for Social Justice use theater techniques—vocalization, improvisation, memorization, gesture, staging—to recast the role of prisoner as actor because, as they say, “[t]he study of acting is the study of choices we make—who we choose to be, how we choose to act in the world, how we choose to spend our time.” In these ways, theater participates in the larger project of restorative justice.²⁹

Drama therapy, defined by Renée Enumah in *Acting for Real: Drama Therapy, Process, Technique, and Performance*, “is the intentional and systematic use of drama/theatre processes to achieve psychological growth and change.”³⁰ Its strategies require confronting and coming to grips with negative affects in the name of eventual wellness. As early as the mid-twentieth century, psychologists used imaginative theater techniques to treat inmates in prison. An individual with a drug addiction, for example, might act or perform sobriety as a creative exercise—even if he or she is not sober—thereby reducing the cognitive space between self and desired clinical outcome. Robert Landy elaborates in *Drama Therapy: Concepts, Theories, and Practices*, “Most theatre workshops for prisoners stay within the parameters of reality-based enactment, with some distance provided by an improvised or scripted role in a play.”³¹ The acclaimed podcast series, *This American Life*, brought public attention to a similar strategy used by the late actor and director Agnes Wilcox, who directed *Hamlet* at the Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, a high-security prison near St. Louis. “Act V” tells the story of incarcerated men preparing to perform a production of Shakespeare’s most renowned play. In the prologue to the episode, Ira Glass asks, “The main conflict of the play is a guy debating, in long, complicated monologues, whether or not he should kill somebody ... And what would the play be like if it were actually performed by murderers and other violent criminals?”³² While the podcast narratively answers Glass’s question from the motley perspectives of an inspired cast of characters, his question gets at something more fundamental: how the performing arts compress critical distance, the space between self and other, actuality and imagination. Affect is embodied, and as Kelly emphasizes the centrality of embodiedness in first-generation pedagogy, so too does Enumah in drama therapy for patients: “The experience is not so much fantasy as one of embodying an untapped part of themselves. On some level they sense, rightfully, that the character improvised in the scene has emerged from their own being ... [T]he role is now a part of themselves which can be accessed in real life.”³³

What’s more is that Shakespeare-in-prison programs seem to work, at least in terms of sociology and public health. The recidivism rate for Shakespeare Behind Bars—another arts-in-corrections program that seeks to societally reintegrate the incarcerated and previously incarcerated with newly equipped life

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skills taught through theater—is a mere 5%, compared to the national average of 50%.³⁴ A study in the *International Journal of Prisoner Health* from a team of researchers led by Emma Marie Heard shows that, at least for one Shakespeare-in-prison program, inmates acquired critical communication skills that went a long way in developing trust with others and forging social support networks both inside and outside the prison environment.³⁵

That's not to say, however, that Shakespeare reform programs are above scrutiny. In *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America*, Ayanna Thompson criticizes some of these programs, including the one featured on *This American Life*, for failing to adequately take into account the politics of race, especially in a criminal justice system that disproportionately incarcerates men of color, and for falling into similar pitfalls as colorblind casting; that is, the recurring logic of “the actor best fit for the role” is the one whose life experience best matches that of the character. Those serving time for murder are the Macbeths.³⁶ Shakespeare is treated as a universal solvent for past wrongs regardless of individual context or circumstance. Race and racial histories are masked. Instead, Thompson looks to the Los Angeles Will Power to Youth program, which encourages young people “living at the poverty threshold” to interpret, appropriate, adapt, and revise Shakespeare from their own perspectives and positions in the community.³⁷ Shakespeare at San Quentin, which serves a group of mostly non-white men, follows a similar formula. The men read through a play and, together, make sense of the language through discussion and critical reflection, notably pausing over textual moments that deal with themes of justice. They are then given the time, of which they have plenty, and space to interpret Shakespeare in creative ways and to bring their own experiences to bear upon the text. Many have written poems, some which were collaboratively composed and inspired by Shakespearean plots. Others have adapted his verse to spoken word or rap. One that stands out from a past workshop features lyrics putting Shakespeare in conversation with Black history and major historical figures like Harriet Tubman and Barack Obama. A songwriter in the group was compelled to draft lyrics about his personal history and his newfound perspectives on justice set to acoustic guitar. By bringing forward their own stories through performance, the men spur difficult conversations about the sociopolitical realities of race in contemporary America and, specifically, in prison.

Students who enroll in Shakespeare for Social Justice are included in these conversations about race, but before entering the prison, they must learn about mass incarceration, the school-to-prison pipeline, and its outsized effects on communities of color. Lesley Carrier leads a preliminary workshop, which not only covers the rules of visiting of San Quentin (i.e. what to wear, how to get through security, appropriate interactions with officers and with inmates) but also introduces students to what many find to be surprising statistics about mass incarceration in the United States, especially when compared to those of other industrialized nations. Subsequent meetings present core principles of drama therapy and how it is used to address the cognitive and emotional health of inmates as well as cultivate essential life skills for those who eventually join us on the outside after serving their sentences. Furthermore, the program in Community

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Action and Social Change highlights community voices by organizing panels, including one on “Policing, Prisons, and Marginalized Communities,” for students to hear the stories and perspectives of previously incarcerated men and women in the California prison system. Community-engaged learning experiences like these enable students to regard the incarcerated and previously incarcerated as authentic storytellers and purveyors of knowledge with specific frames of reference from the inside. In fact, even before we talk about the men at San Quentin as prisoners caught in the American criminal justice system, we first acknowledge them as actors developing their craft, honing their talent, and rehearsing for a performance of one of Shakespeare’s plays, which, we can all agree, is no small feat. We start from a place of excellence rather than one of stigma or pathology that stereotypically portrays prisoners as hardened criminals or failed citizens. Doing so democratizes the experience for students and allows them to apprehend their situatedness in the community by challenging received narratives of prison life from popular media and culture. In a reflective essay, one student wrote that studying Shakespeare this way helped him “to see these men not as violent or dangerous criminals, but as the men they are.”

The lesson comes to life perhaps most vividly when students witness a previously incarcerated actor play a leading role in a public, professional performance. In 2016, after twenty-three years in Solano State Prison, Dameion Brown was cast in the title role of Marin Shakespeare’s mainstage production of *Othello*. He was primed and readied for the role, having previously portrayed Macduff of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* in his final year of incarceration, but this was his first time in the proverbial spotlight. In an interview with KQED, a public media outlet based in San Francisco, Brown had this to say about connecting with a character written four hundred years ago:

Life experiences prepare you for the ebbs and flows of emotion. I understand betrayal. I understand confusion. I understand jealousy. I understand the pain of harming someone you love. I don't have to dig deep to get in touch with those things, because they make up who I am ... There was a time when I thought that I would never be out of prison. There was a time when I thought that I would never be married. But none of those things have lasted. And Shakespeare allows me to remember, and to be OK with, the ins and the outs. The rises and the falls of things.³⁸

Audiences and critics took notice of how intimately he connected with *Othello*, receiving numerous awards and accolades from the likes of the Bay Area Critics Circle and Theater Bay Area. Brown is now an artist-in-residence with the theater company, and students will have the opportunity to work with him in a classroom setting as well as see him again on stage in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Because the course is designated as “service-learning,” students split their time between the classroom and on site with the community partner. (And because some students may have past negative or traumatic experiences with law

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enforcement and/or the criminal justice system, they may opt to work with a community partner other than Marin Shakespeare.) Time in the classroom is devoted to reading and interpreting the same plays that the men are preparing in San Quentin but through critical frameworks that emphasize race, class, and gender. Because students take their knowledge of Shakespeare and his works into the prison to help the men mount a full-fledged production, they're more likely to take ownership of the material and to figure out, on their own terms, how it relates to their service-learning experience. It's deeply personal. Through exercises borrowed from Theatre of the Oppressed—performative processes elaborated by Augusto Boal in the 1970s and deeply indebted to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—I work with students to deconstruct the binary of actor and spectator through the figure of the *spect-actor*, one who both acts and witnesses as the performative basis of equitable praxis.³⁹ Activities in movement, articulation, and improvisation compel students to consider principles of equity, justice, access, and collaboration through their bodies and voices. Moreover, this work prepares them for the drama therapy strategies that they'll encounter inside the prison, where students see the lessons of Johnson's "Speech Therapy"—an essay they'll have read at the start of the semester—actualized in person, as the space of the classroom becomes coextensive with that of the prison. Here, the study and expression of literature is also the work of wellness.

I also emphasize to students that this is about community formation and, following Dinshaw, coalition building around pressing and timely issues vis-à-vis Shakespeare. Yes, transhistorical affect enables partial connection across time—and no, students don't need complete or masterful understanding of Shakespeare to do this work—but this method of learning demands responsibility ("response-ability") to others in local proximity. San Quentin is located a mere five miles from campus, its historical edifices rising from the shores of San Francisco Bay. It looms large on our landscape, a grave and constant presence in our daily lives, yet most locals will never see inside. However, those that do enter with Shakespeare for Social Justice are transformed by the experience, or at least they claim to be. Workshops tend to follow a common pattern. After making our way through the prison's East Gate and then through security, we are led through the yard to an activity space where students first meet the men. After brief introductions (in the form of a rousing and often comedic name-game), we commence with acting and improvisational exercises, several of which require gesture and movement. A junior dance major reflected, "Our visit ... deepened my understanding of the healing power of movement. From the first exercise onward, we used our bodies as tools for expression, reaffirming our identities and physicalizing our narratives in one of the few spaces the men had to reclaim their agency." A senior, who was completing a thesis on art therapy and trauma, added, "It was amazing to see the men relax, their spines straighten, their shoulders drop, their eyes more open as the class progressed. It wasn't long before I forgot I was in prison." Another dance major even took the time to instruct the men on ballet basics: "I found myself teaching some of the men the positions of ballet and helped one do an *entrechat*, a type of jump."

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Afterward, we dive into Shakespeare, usually into excerpts from his plays—last time, we focused on *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar*—to cold read and then discuss in small groups. Based on one of these conversations, a senior English major came to the realization: “Shakespeare wrote in detail about the nuances of human character and how no one is either faultless or completely evil.” Group discussions then lead to staging and, inevitably, those tricky decisions about where to plant one’s feet, this mark or that, hand gesture, posture, and voice inflection. Students work closely with the men to create tableaux that capture key concepts or themes from the text. Teamwork, creativity, and managing group social dynamics are required to execute these tasks successfully. One student with an extensive background in community theater put it best: “Actors take care of each other on stage. We bond intimately, yet know where the boundaries lie. Actors learn empathy, how to read the subtle clues a scene partner gives. Theater develops trust, serves as a platform for creative expression and, most importantly, enables our vulnerability to become our greatest strength.” The bulk of the workshop is dedicated to understanding Shakespeare’s language and to figuring out how to embody it in a performance. Of the rehearsal process, another student observed, “To hear the prisoners recite passages of Shakespeare, not just by heart, but as if they have mulled over them and the passages have become part of them, it’s wonderful.” It’s no surprise because, since 2003, the men of Shakespeare for Social Justice have staged plays as varied as *Measure for Measure*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Compared to most, they’re relatively experienced purveyors of Shakespeare.

At the end of each workshop, we save time for a creative showcase. The men perform whatever it is they’re working on, no matter if it’s roughly conceived or polished over months and months of rehearsal. We watch dramatic scenes, singing, rap, spoken word, and sometimes even dance, demonstrating the hard work, talent, and artistry that’s locked up when the men are. Leaving the workshop might be the most difficult part for students, having bonded with the men and, in some cases, having started friendships. A sophomore English major vividly described the scene:

The inmates were mingling with the students as we walked to the entrance in one big group. Then, they stopped, and we kept going. They waved goodbye, smiling, telling us to have a good day and to be their voice in society. They turned and walked away, deeper into the prison, as we walked to the entrance, able to leave. I will never forget watching them walk away together, talking and joking around. We were allowed to come and go so easily, yet that moment reminded me that they weren’t just there for a class. The prison is their home, and they cannot leave freely.

When I see students the following week in the classroom, I give them time to write, discuss, and critically reflect on their experience in the prison. At times, I find that their reflections capture the work we do together better than I ever could.

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Looking back, a student studying dance said, “I was struck by the openness, vulnerability, and truth that was shared in the room by both the prisoners and the students.” She later added, “[T]his trip strongly reaffirmed for me how powerful movement is as a unifier. It showed me again how dance can bring us all together, and to create understanding and promote compassion. It was so powerful and moving. I wanted to experience that again.” The conflict of inside and outside, who’s allowed to traverse boundaries and who’s not, stands out to students. A junior in the program for Community Action and Social Change followed up:

It was one of the most significant and most challenging opportunities I’ve had. My initial feeling . . . was excitement and curiosity, but it changed by the end of the journey to feeling empowered, but also sad. After spending this time getting to know these men, I felt that I wanted to act on their behalves. I also felt so sad that I was the one who had the privilege to leave.

I’ll end with one more reflection from a student—this time, a senior chemistry major—who, I feel, accesses the intensely affective, irreconcilably difficult, and perhaps even ineffable dimension of Shakespearean speech therapy: “It satisfied a need that I was not aware I even had. It is hard to think of a time in my life when I had been surrounded by such intense yet somehow gentle energy.”

Notes

1. Jamie Cullum, “Twentysomething,” *Twentysomething*, UCJ, Candid Records, Verve, 2014, track 4.
2. Madhavi Menon, “Queer Shakes,” in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.
3. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.
4. *Ibid.*, 12.
5. *Ibid.*, 165.
6. *Ibid.*, 185.
7. *Ibid.*, 14, 16, 21.
8. *Ibid.*, 21.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Barbara Johnson, “Speech Therapy,” in *Shakesqueer*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 328.
12. Johnson, “Speech Therapy,” 332.
13. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

First-Generation Shakespeare

14. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 125.
15. *Ibid.*, 130, 126.
16. *Ibid.*, 146.
17. Heather Love, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52 (2010): 236.
18. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 150-1.
19. Cassie Miura, "Empowering First-Generation Students: Bardolatry and the Shakespeare Survey," in this volume.
20. Kyle Grady, "'The Miseducation of Irie Jones': Addressing Stereotype Threat in the Shakespeare Classroom," *First-Generation Shakespeare*, Shakespeare Association of America Annual Meetings, Los Angeles, CA (2018), 4. See also Grady's essay in this volume, "'The Miseducation of Irie Jones': Representation and Identification in the Shakespeare Classroom."
21. Grady, "'The Miseducation of Irie Jones': Addressing Stereotype Threat."
22. Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1995), 112.
23. See Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton, "Introduction," in *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, ed. Loomba and Burton (New York: Palgrave, 2007); and Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
24. Dean Clement, "L(E)arned Empowerment: Memorizing Shakespeare for First-Generation Students," in this volume.
25. Erin Kelly, "Mutual Meaning Making: Dramatic Staging and Student-Led Discussion in the Shakespeare Classroom," in this volume.
26. For more, see Nathan Stuckey and Cynthia Wimmer, "The Power of Transformation in Performance Studies Pedagogy," in *Teaching Performance Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 1-29 and Elyse Lamm Pineau, "Critical Performance Pedagogy," in *Teaching Performance Studies*, 121-130.
27. Judith Hamera, "Performance Studies Pedagogy, and Bodies in/as the Classroom" qtd. in Kelly, "Mutual Meaning Making," in this volume.
28. "Shakespeare for Social Justice: The Power of Theater," Marin Shakespeare Company, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://www.marinshakespeare.org/shakespeare-for-social-justice/>.
29. According to the Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, a program of Prison Fellowship International, restorative justice is "a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behaviour. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities." For more, see <http://restorativejustice.org/>.
30. René Enumah, *Acting for Real: Drama Therapy, Process, Technique, and Performance* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1994), 3.
31. Robert Landy, *Drama Therapy: Concepts, Theories, and Practices*, 2nd ed. (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1994), 230.
32. Jack Hitt, "Act V," *This American Life*, 218, 2002, podcast audio, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/218/act-v>.
33. Enumah, *Acting for Real*, xiii.
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36. Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 125.
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38. Sasha Kokha, "One Year Out of Prison, Actor Takes On Othello," *The California Report*, KQED, September 5, 2016, accessed on January 2, 2019, <https://www.kqed.org/news/11070937/one-year-out-of-prison-actor-takes-on-othello>.
39. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985).
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Perry Guevara is an assistant professor of English at Dominican University of California, where he directs the program in Performing Arts and Social Change. He is currently at work on a book, *Inhuman Depressions*, which brings together early modern literature, cognitive science, and ecology. Publications have appeared or are forthcoming in *Early Modern Culture* and *Lesser Living Creatures*.