

The Professor Sir Richard Trainor PhD Scholarships 2015-16

Project Title: Royal Shakespeares: Responses to the National Playwright in the Royal Collections, 1714-1901

Partner Organisation: The Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle

King's is now inviting applications for one of the Professor Sir Richard Trainor PhD Scholarships in the Department of English at King's College London in collaboration with the Royal Collection Trust. The scholarship will commence from October 2015 onwards and is open to new incoming PhD students only.

Project Description:

The project is an interdisciplinary investigation into royal responses to Shakespeare, 1714-1901, examining the role the Shakespeare canon has had – through its place in the education, upbringing and personal and official lives of members of successive royal families and through the particular responses of individual royals to Shakespeare – in the construction of royal identity and royal ideology from the beginning of the Georgian to the end of the Victorian eras. The project would involve the student in an assessment of the substantially untapped Shakespeare-related holdings in the Royal Collections at Windsor as the basis for his/her study: these include documents, memoirs, printed books, paintings, drawings, photographs, records of performance, and objects. This collection offers an unparalleled resource for the writing of an original thesis blending archival research with the critical and cultural analysis of a very particular culturally powerful set of local responses to Shakespeare that has neither been previously studied in any significant depth nor systematically situated in relation to larger accounts of Shakespearean reception in the periods in question. In the process, the student would tangibly help improve access to and understanding of the collection and enhance the ongoing partnership between King's and the Royal Collections.

The development opportunities for the student will be considerable. He/she will work from the outset not only in the context of the London Shakespeare Centre and Department of English at King's and the normal (yet nonetheless extraordinary) local resources available to all doctoral students in arts and humanities at King's, notably the British Library, but also in the particular context of the Royal Library and Royal Archive, gaining from the superb practical resources and environment at Windsor, from the unique collection, and from top-level curatorial advice. Access to the Royal Library and Royal Archives collections will be granted and the student will be provided with guidance and support as appropriate from curatorial colleagues, as well as desk space and associated equipment during research visits.

The Department of English achieved a power ranking of 8th in the UK and 2nd of those within the Russell Group as part of the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF). It is a research-led department with a strong reputation for contribution to scholarship, teaching and practice. The Department is located on the Strand Campus of King's College London where the studentship will be based.

Supervisors:

- Lead Supervisor: **Gordon McMullan, Professor of Shakespeare Studies**
- Second Supervisor: **Lucy Munro, Lecturer in Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama**
- Partner Organisation Supervisor: **Oliver Urquhart Irvine, The Librarian & Assistant Keeper of The Queen's Archives**

Application documentation: applicants must complete and submit:

- a CV
- writing sample (of 3000 words e.g. a complete essay or part of an MA dissertation)
- personal statement identifying which project they would like to be considered for explaining why they would be suitable

to gsfunding@kcl.ac.uk by 12pm (UK BST) on 20 May 2015. The subject line of the email should read RT Scholarship 1516.

Two academic references **must** be received by the deadline for the application to be eligible. Candidates are responsible for instructing referees to submit their references to gsfunding@kcl.ac.uk using the subject line RT Scholarship 1516.

Selection: Please note that as part of selection, short-listed candidates will be invited for interview.

Funding Details: The scholarship will provide an annual payment of £15,000 which can be used to cover tuition fees and/or living costs. In addition, the partner organisation will meet reasonable travel costs as agreed at the start of the studentship.

Length of Award: 3 years (PhD)

Detailed project description

Royal Shakespeares: Responses to the National Playwright in the Royal Collections, 1714-1901

The project is an interdisciplinary cultural investigation into royal responses to Shakespeare, 1714-1901, examining the role the Shakespeare canon has had – through its place in the education, upbringing and lives of members of successive royal families and through the responses of individual royals to Shakespeare – in the construction of royal identity and royal ideology from the beginning of the Georgian to the end of the Victorian eras. The project would involve the student in an assessment of the substantially untapped Shakespeare-related holdings in the Royal Collections at Windsor as the basis for his/her study: these include documents, memoirs, printed books, paintings, drawings, records of performance, and objects. This collection offers an unparalleled resource for the writing of an original thesis blending archival research with the critical and cultural analysis of a very particular, culturally powerful set of local responses to Shakespeare that has neither been previously studied in any significant depth nor systematically situated in relation to larger accounts of Shakespearean reception in the periods in question; in the process, the student would tangibly help improve access to and understanding of the collection and enhance the ongoing partnership between King's and the Royal Collections Trust.

Literary critics have argued fiercely over Shakespeare's own attitude to the royal families and myths of his day, but contemporary cultural and performance histories of Shakespeare rarely address subsequent royal responses to the plays and poems except as anecdote or by way of fictional representations such as Alan Bennett's highly successful *The Madness of George III*. Yet Shakespeare's cultural role as national 'authenticator' of subject positions assumed by individuals and groups has been repeatedly attested – from the work of Julia Briggs on Virginia Woolf's use of Shakespeare in establishing her own literary identity to that of Andrew Murphy on the fondness for Shakespeare of those involved in the Easter Rising of 1916 – and it is thus surprising that no scholar has yet offered a sustained critical account of royal interactions with Shakespeare, despite the obvious place of the Shakespeare canon in the interpellation of royals, individually and collectively, within royal ideology and in the establishment of the cultural edifice of monarchy. When critics use the term 'Royal Shakespeare', they are usually referring either to the relationship Shakespeare had with Elizabeth I and James I or to the history of performance by the Royal Shakespeare *Company*, not to responses by the royal household across subsequent centuries to the works of William Shakespeare. Yet active engagement with the Shakespearean text by royals has been a consistent, personal (or quasi-personal) phenomenon from the first Elizabeth to the second, and these responses form a body of material that bears a fascinatingly oblique relationship to responses to Shakespeare at other levels of society across the periods in question.

After the disposal of the Royal Library by George IV, the re-acquisition of Shakespeare-related materials was a key element in William IV's rebuilding of that collection: his buying back of the royal copy of the Third Folio was a significant marker of his success. Involvement with the performance of Shakespeare's plays – from Princess Victoria's sketches of *Romeo and Juliet*, to the screening of Olivier's *Henry V* in the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor, to Prince Charles' acting the title role in a private performance of *Macbeth* in 1965 – has been a significant element in royal education, yet no full annotated record of Shakespearean performance at court in the eighteenth and nineteenth century exists and there is no critical account of royal interaction with Shakespeare across a range of materials from commemorative objects to early performance photographs. The Royal Collections at Windsor remains a largely untapped resource in this respect, offering clear potential for an original archival/critical doctoral project on the role the Shakespeare canon has had in the construction of royal identity and royal ideology.

King's has a developing relationship with the Royal Collections on two fronts: for a project on the reign of George III, focussing on previously unstudied personal and political papers, and as a partner in the Shakespeare400 consortium, a collaborative project led by the London Shakespeare Centre (AHRI) and

Cultural Institute. Shakespeare400 has over twenty partners, all major London cultural organisation planning activities to mark the Shakespeare Quatercentenary in 2016. The Royal Collections plans a Shakespeare400 exhibition, and it is the astonishing materials they hold in respect of royal responses to Shakespeare – viewing, reading, collecting, creating – that prompt this proposal. These include a copy of the Second Folio with Charles I's holograph annotations made shortly before his execution; a collection of images and texts relating to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; paintings and other records of performances of Shakespeare within Windsor Castle; watercolours and etchings of Shakespearean scenes by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; a particularly full collection of early photographs, many Shakespeare-related; and a series of objects presented to royals in relation to theatrical openings and centenary events. For the PhD student, this offers an unparalleled resource for a thesis blending archival research with critical analysis of a particular set of local responses to Shakespeare that has not been previously studied in any significant way; for the Royal Collections, it offers an opportunity to improve public understanding of, and access to, the collections, to develop knowledge of context and provenance in the collection, and to enhance records and metadata of the relevant holdings.

The proposed studentship would thus focus on the materials available in the Royal Collections, Library and Archives to establish a sense of the shape and cultural implications of royal response to Shakespeare during the period of the fullest documented engagement, that is, from the beginning of the Georgian era to the end of the reign of Victoria. The student would make full use of the materials in the Royal Collections to establish a) the history of royal responses to Shakespeare in a range of forms – learning, acting, drawing, collecting, annotating – and b) a cultural analysis of the relationship of these responses to the current state of understanding of the place of Shakespeare in British culture during the Georgian and Victorian periods. The work would consist, broadly speaking, of three phases: i) the investigation of the collection and the ordering, recording and annotation of materials; ii) contextualisation of the collection in relation to other relevant collections and critical histories, all within the context of the history of cultural-studies-based analysis of books and art objects; and iii) the writing up of a thesis that develops a clear argument about the nature of royal interaction with Shakespeare and both records and explores the results. Dissemination would have clear potential to go beyond the normal output of a monograph resulting from revision of the thesis, and would include assistant curation of the Royal Collections' 2016 Shakespeare exhibition and various forms of engagement with the public visiting Windsor Castle.

References

Alan Bennett, *The Madness of King George* (London: Faber, 1993)

Julia Briggs, *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006)

Andrew Murphy, 'Shakespeare's Rising: Ireland and the Tercentenary', in Clara Calvo and Coppélia Kahn (eds), *Shakespeare and Commemoration* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2016)