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Community-engaged learning is a rising feature of a wide variety of higher education institutions, from community colleges to private liberal arts colleges to large public universities. Everyone, it seems, is getting in on the act, and as a result, the amount of scholarship published on service-learning continues to multiply. There remains, however, curiously little scholarship published on the intersection of service-learning and literary studies. Almost no published scholarship exists on how courses on Shakespeare – a staple of nearly every college English department – might engage with the community through service-learning that provides a genuine community benefit while simultaneously deepening undergraduate students' engagement with and understanding of Shakespeare. This essay seeks to address that absence by describing a program for utilizing service-learning in a Shakespeare course and offering a discussion of the learning outcomes of the project for its central constituencies.

Service Learning and Literary Studies

Service-learning in literary studies has a history that stretches more than a century. In her article "Service-Learning, 1902," Julia Garbus (2002) traces the influence of Vida Dutton Scudder on current community engagement and service-learning initiatives. Garbus sees room for growth in service-learning's role in literature classrooms and argues that Scudder provides an example of how to bring "the outside world into the literature classroom." Scudder taught literature that dealt with poverty and class, while living in a "settlement"—a group of educated elite women that lived alongside the poor and helped immigrants gain access to literature and art in an attempt to "foster national unity" (550). Garbus acknowledges the problems with the settlers' emphasis on assimilating activities, which critics have called a "mechanism for the reproduction of ideology" (550) but maintains that the efforts of these women provide an example of an honest attempt to stimulate class equality while urging "personal growth and self-discovery" (551). One hundred years later, the problem of what Ellen Cushman (1999: 331) labels "top-down" hierarchies continue to present problems in contemporary service-learning models.

Cushman argues that learning is one of the primary aspects for service-learning interaction; however, the emphasis has to be on learning together, rather than viewing the "intellectual" as the sole teacher. The learning does not just take place between the student and the community partner; rather the instructor must be involved in the learning process. She emphasizes terms such as "with" — serving "with" others — and argues that instructors and professors must engage with students in service-learning, actively participating, in order for community alliances to develop productively (330). Lasting community relationships bridge the gap between the community and the university and play a significant role in removing the image of the ivory tower. This also helps prevent "hit-it-and-quit-it" types of service in which a project takes place one semester but with no subsequent follow-up between the instructor and the agency served or the individual students engaged in serving that agency as part of a service-learning course.

Cushman's theoretical perspective is echoed and enriched by the work of Pattie Cowell and Linda Flower. Cowell (2005: 365) refutes claims that service-learning is volunteer work or that it should be sold as a line on a résumé— "as important as that may be for liberal arts students." The benefits of service-learning should go beyond that: "Service-learning encourages students to give up the myth of their powerlessness" (365). This empowerment, she argues, will help students forge productive pathways into their communities and the "messy, material world" (368). But for the integration to be successful, students have to be ready to inquire. Flower (2003: 181) observes that projects run the risk of reinforcing "the distance between the giver and receiver, especially if the contact is superficial." She argues that professors have to play an active role in the service-learning process to make sure that students are not just reading to act, but also reading to participate and to learn. Questions have to be asked. She agrees with Cushman that community partners need to be acknowledged as "agents in their own right, rather than the recipient" (184).

Despite these theoretical insights, the challenge of actually generating such outcomes in a service-learning context is considerable. For example, Laurie Grobman (2005: 129) frames her essay "Is There a Place for Service Learning in Literary Studies?" with Cushman's claim that service-learning offers an opportunity to "'link the love of art and

human decency' with the larger community." Grobman explores the benefits of community engagement as a component of a multicultural literature class, claiming that the service-learning project helped her students develop "more complex multicultural understandings" (129) but at the same time observes significant problems, most notable the tendency among her students to see themselves as "savior" to the less fortunate despite the emphasis Grobman as instructor placed on mutual learning and partnership (130). Grobman concludes that "pairing service-learning and literature is still in its infancy" but believes that there will be progress as the possibilities continue to be explored (137).

In summary successful service-learning must involve instructors/professors, it should avoid "hit-it-and-quit-it" scenarios, and above all, it must recognize the value and role of community partners. Recognizing the relationship between service-learners (including the professor) and the clients they serve as symbiotic is necessary to avoid the "savior" mentalities that plagued Scudder's work a century before and that continue to be problematic; it also helps students remember that they are participating in service-learning not just to teach or to "give back" but, most important, to learn. The emphasis has to be on the word "learning" as much if not more than on the word "service."

Service-Learning and Shakespeare

As limited as the exploration is of the fruitful possibilities of incorporating service-learning as part of a literature course, explorations of service-learning in Shakespeare courses is even more limited. In a now twelve-year-old survey of service learning from "Shakespeare to Chemistry", Mark Langseth (1996: 22) briefly mentions a project in which students in a Shakespeare class who worked in a homeless shelter for elderly men "suddenly could comprehend the lessons about power, physical decline, and redemption in the story of King Lear" although he does not explain how or why such understanding was achieved nor does he detail the exact nature of the service students provided and how that related – if at all – to course content. Eric Daigre and colleagues (2006: 494) offer a slightly camp attempt to encourage community outreach with a "dramatic" version of service-learning efforts at "Whatsamatta U" where "heroes" "dare to dream that reading's more than just an academic act, but who, with all their books, do yearn to serve, perchance to learn." Graduate assistants explore successes and failures in their service-learning classes in an attempt to find ways to make student writing more productive than "five-page papers that only circulate around the classroom" (496). As the students help produce a version of *Hamlet* at a school they simultaneously explore the importance of "being" both as presented in the play and as functions in the real world. They discover service is not just about being the authority but relinquishing authority in order to learn. Unfortunately, Daigre and colleagues do not provide any real details of how the *Hamlet* project was either theoretically conceived or practically implemented, nor do they provide any kind of sustained analysis of how the project seeks to address the balance between service and learning except to suggest that the learning is almost exclusively happening for the undergraduates while the service provided – a production of *Hamlet* - is unexplored. In short, extant work on Shakespeare and service-learning does not appear to address any of the issues highlighted by the extensive theoretical work underpinning service-learning pedagogy.

"Shakespeare for Kids": Theory and Goals

A significant motivating factor in my decision to implement a service-learning component in the 300-level Shakespeare courses that I teach is my interest in the intersection of Shakespeare as a cultural commodity and social justice. Undergraduates in my Shakespeare course participating in the service-learning project improve access to Shakespeare for young students (fourth through sixth graders in a partner elementary school), especially those students of a social and economic background who are generally assumed to be less familiar with Shakespeare and his works. Because Shakespeare holds such a prominent position in English-speaking world culture, it is important to open and expand access to understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of Shakespeare to a constituency as wide-ranging as possible. To achieve this, undergraduates from my Shakespeare course and I go into elementary schools, especially schools serving economically struggling populations (Title I designation), to guide elementary students through the reading and performance of Shakespearean playscripts specially edited for younger performers.

I frame the collective exploration of Shakespeare at the undergraduate level around his contemporary and rival Ben Jonson's claim that Shakespeare "was not of an age but for all time." Together we explore the validity and legitimacy of this claim. We explore the artistic achievement Shakespeare's plays represent and the potential immediacy of the issues, ideas, characters, and situations his plays portray. If Shakespeare is indeed "our contemporary" and a voice that speaks to all historical epochs, how, specifically, does Shakespeare still matter

today, nearly four hundred years after his death? Undergraduates in my 300-level Shakespeare courses address these questions both for themselves and for younger consumers of Shakespeare through service-learning. In doing so they necessarily confront and seek to understand and then explain the complexity of Shakespeare's language and its elevated place in the English-speaking world.

The project I have designed is fundamentally concerned with civic education and social justice because improving access for all to Shakespeare as cultural capital (not only of high or elite culture, but also of youth, popular, and even low culture) is an issue of social justice. I follow Sherry L. Hoppe's (2004: 139) definition of social justice as "bringing about a more equitable distribution of society's wealth." Indeed, the motivation that underpins my use of service-learning in a Shakespeare course is a synthesis of the possible theoretical models that have frequently been invoked in support of such a pedagogical approach and that Hoppe and others have usefully and critically surveyed. By removing barriers to access the means of literary production, we enable a more informed, critically thinking citizenry. This can and indeed should begin early in one's life and education.[1] Specifically, familiarity with Shakespeare is seen as arrival at higher levels of cultural awareness, sophistication and, by extension, power. The reality is that Shakespeare and knowledge of Shakespeare are entrenched parts of educated, elite culture – in Lisa Delpit's (1995: 39) terms, Shakespeare is a "gatekeeping point": "Pretending that gatekeeping points don't exist is to ensure that many students will not pass through them." Improving access to Shakespeare does not challenge the perceived cultural capital associated with the playwright and his works, but rather seeks to share the wealth and by doing so enhance the individual.

I understand – and seek to help my undergraduate students to understand – that while knowledge of Shakespeare is revered by elite culture, Shakespeare is ultimately a commodity that is owned, appropriated, enjoyed and exploited across all levels of English-speaking world culture.[2] In seeking to improve access to Shakespeare for students in Title I elementary schools, I do not intend to engage in a kind of charitable act motivated by a sense of *noblesse oblige*.[3] Rather, as I tell the elementary school students in "pitching" the project to them, I am offering them the chance to play around with and lay claim to Shakespeare in ways that let them own something that many people think is really sophisticated and important. The process of aiding these ten, eleven- and twelve-year-olds in understanding the language, themes, and issues of one of Shakespeare's plays demystifies "Shakespeare" and gives them a sense of mastery over complex material that some might argue (falsely in my opinion) is too sophisticated for them. Indeed, the elementary students' first encounter with me is typically when I go to the schools and make a kind of "sales pitch" for the program at a school assembly. I suggest in that presentation that I am offering the opportunity for them to experience a writer who some people think ought to be held in reserve until they are older, thus establishing the appearance of a (limited) conspiracy against larger powers-that-be. Since these same elementary students will, in short order, transition to middle and high schools where Shakespeare of course appears on the curriculum, I offer an earlier, hands-on introduction to Shakespeare, a foundation on which subsequent knowledge can be built.

Because this project is a collaboration between multiple constituencies – most prominently between undergraduate students and elementary students – the goals are likewise multiple. For the elementary students, my aim is to provide a practical, useful, and fun introduction to Shakespeare that starts to demystify and derarify a monolithic cultural icon. My aim for my undergraduate students is that they actively engage with Shakespeare's texts, wrestling with the meaning of particular words, lines and passages and teasing out the relationship of individual roles and scenes to the larger significance of a particular play. Their work directing and coaching elementary performers is thus an extension of the reading and performing they do as components of the course in which they are enrolled.[4]

"Shakespeare for Kids": In Practice, 2006

The program I describe here may have some particularities that are unique to the location and demographics of the university where I teach and the community of which it is a part. My hope here is to describe a program that can have broader implications and applications, however. Boise State University (BSU) is a public university located in a medium-size metropolitan region (a city of approximately 200,000 within a larger metro area of approximately 550,000). We are somewhat isolated from other urban centers: the next nearest – and larger – population centers (Salt Lake City, Seattle, and Portland) are five plus hours driving time away. Boise State University has a student population of approximately 19,000. Having grown and expanded from its junior college roots in the 1920s, BSU

now aspires toward research status and has grown exponentially, alongside the city/metro area, in the past two decades. The region is predominantly white, although those demographics are rapidly changing. The city's population has recently been significantly affected by a growing influx of refugees. Many of these families reside in the neighborhoods served by the schools we target for "Shakespeare for Kids." A high proportion of students at BSU are first-generation college students; many are also "nontraditional" students who have sought out a college education after beginning careers and/or families. As a result, their attitudes toward their own education are often deeply pragmatic. They do not see this service project as a required giving back as a result of their own privilege. Rather, as they reveal in their reflections, many are motivated by projecting their own educational history onto the elementary students with whom we work and imagine what an opportunity our program would have been for them if available.

In the spring semester of 2006, I first planned and implemented a service-learning project as an optional component for a 300-level Shakespeare class. Undergraduates electing to pursue the service-learning option worked with students at a local Title I designation elementary school on an after-school Shakespeare program in which the undergraduates taught a group of fourth through sixth graders about Shakespeare primarily through directing the elementary-school students in a shortened version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. During the initial "Shakespeare for Kids" production, four very devoted undergraduates embarked on an ambitious project and brought Shakespeare to an elementary school stage with approximately fifteen fourth, fifth, and sixth graders performing the roles and attempting to make Shakespeare's language their own. Initially designed to be a five-week program, the undergraduate service-learning students extended the length of the project (with the approval of their instructor and the elementary school principal) by two weeks and added two all-day Saturday rehearsal sessions. We met with the elementary students four days a week (Monday through Thursday) from 3:15 until 5:00 p.m. The culminating activity of the project was a performance in front of the school's fourth- through sixth-grade classes as well as parents and other family and friends. The project was a success insofar as the elementary students had a fabulous time, put on a great show, and came to realize that Shakespeare was not so much daunting and incomprehensible as fun and relevant to their own emerging interests in the opposite sex and frustration over parents and authority figures who stand in the way of their desires.

To get there the undergraduates had to do a lot of work, editing the script, planning lessons and rehearsal sessions, designing costumes and sets, and directing, supervising and at times entertaining a handful of energetic elementary students. While they had enthusiastic support from their undergraduate Shakespeare instructor and from the school principal and faculty and staff, they had a miniscule budget and serious time constraints. We met regularly as a group – and the undergraduates met frequently without me – to discuss progress, challenges, and details. The students also kept journals and produced a reflective essay at the end of the project in which they analyzed the project both in practical terms (what worked, what did not, how could the project be improved) and in terms of how the experience of editing the text for performance, blocking the scenes, and helping young actors learn the language and develop character enhanced their own understanding of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* specifically and of Shakespearean comedy (the focus of the course) more generally. In still broader contexts, the students also assessed the validity of their collective efforts and their contribution to an effort to make a rarefied cultural commodity like Shakespeare familiar to younger students whose socioeconomic background was such that they likely had had little to no significant knowledge of Shakespeare prior to participation in the program.[5]

The undergraduate students reported that they saw the program as valuable as they watched shy students become more confident and forge new friendships, as they witnessed a struggling reader work through the difficulties and challenges reading at his own grade level, let alone reading and memorizing Shakespeare posed for him, as they fostered a disparate group of individuals into a collaborative and supportive team. They also identified a number of ways in which my very preliminary efforts in putting together the program could be expanded, revised, and improved upon in subsequent iterations. I also learned a tremendous amount through the process, and I incorporated many of my students' suggestions into my approach for reimplementing the program in 2008. While the first version of the student-edited text of the play was workable and the experience of editing the text was valuable, the students felt the text could have benefited from still further editing and condensing. In addition, more planning in advance needed to be devoted to set and costume design even if these elements were to remain relatively simple and budget constraints dictated that they most certainly would be.

I also witnessed first-hand how this project was valuable for the undergraduates both in non-content-related ways, as it fostered effective collaboration and critical and creative thinking among the four undergraduates working together on the project, and in the students' engagement with Shakespearean comedy. In her final assessment of the project, one student wrote at length about how the conflicts at work in the play between forms of parental authority and youthful desire were sometimes mirrored in the process of producing the play. Just as Egeon and Oberon must let go of some of their parental (or parent-like) authority, so too did the undergraduates need to realize a balance between maintaining discipline or authority and loosening the reins on the chaotic energy and imaginations of the young actors they were directing. Pauline observed,

> I had a much clearer sense of what Shakespeare may have been saying about theatre magic through Puck as a result of working on this project. Puck makes a huge mess by confusing Lysander with Demetrius because all he is told is what costume to look for. He then has to clean it all up and "make amends" in order for the play to get to its happily-ever-after ending. There were times where I thought we would never pull this off but I kept reminding myself of Puck's lines at the end about how the whole play is like a dream so we should either enjoy the dream or forget about it when we woke up."[6] Pauline goes on to suggest that the real magic of the play was in transforming her classmates and the elementary students into fans of Shakespeare by providing them all with an experience they would "never forget."

"Shakespeare for Kids": In Practice, 2008

In the spring of 2008, my service-learning Shakespeare students worked with elementary students at an inner-city (in a medium-size metropolitan region), Title I designation elementary school of 375 students; 103 of these students are English language learners. In the spring of 2008 I also offered a small-group graduate-level practicum course and recruited five graduate students to participate in that separate project to serve as support and supplement to the undergraduates electing to participate in the second offering of this program. One of those students had been involved in the previous implementation of the Shakespeare project and agreed to take on the role of producing director for the project – a monumental task. Already experienced with working with fourth through sixth graders and specifically with the Shakespeare program I had designed, this student still found the practical challenges and long list of day-to-day tasks extensive. I assigned the task of editing the play text – we returned again to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* feeling it to be an accessible and enjoyable text – to one of the graduate students. We were able to return to the same play in part because we partnered with a different school. (I had hoped to return to the school where we had worked in 2006 – thus avoiding the "hit-it-and-quit-it" problem that can arise in the use of service-learning discussed above – with the lofty goal of running two productions at two different sites, but I could not recruit enough undergraduate participants in the optional service-learning component for this to happen.)

Other graduate students took specific responsibilities for planning short lessons that provided background on Shakespeare's language, on the reign of Elizabeth I and aspects of life in Elizabethan England (education, dress, food, wealth and status). Collectively we also identified theater games that would be both fun and useful as part of the process of introducing the fundamentals of performance and eventually casting the play for performance. The program itself was to last nine weeks, starting with more background on Shakespeare and the play before moving into production and rehearsal mode. The relative balance of these tasks (four weeks of background followed by five weeks of rehearsal) was still not quite right; we found that the background could have been effectively covered in two weeks and that casting and rehearsal could (and perhaps should) have started sooner.

While the graduate students prepared a good deal of the materials for practical use in advance, there remained a great deal of work for the undergraduates who elected to participate in the program as part of their work in the 300-level Shakespeare class to do. We set up a blog and I assigned individual undergraduate participants specific weeks for which they would write up a recap of the week's events and post it to the blog. Not all undergraduate students could be at the elementary school every day, so the blog provided an effective vehicle for keeping people largely up-to-date on what was happening. This could conceivably be reconfigured as a daily recap assignment. We also used the blog as a space to post lesson plans and other resources. Students again kept journals, and either we met to discuss their reflections or I simply asked them to share their journals with me every two weeks.

As we moved into production mode, I divided the undergraduates into teams of two or three, assigned them particular groups of characters from the play, and charged them with aiding the actors in their group with learning and memorizing lines and blocking the action of their scenes. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* divides relatively easily into three character groups: the mechanicals, the faeries (including Oberon and Titania), and the lovers (including Theseus and Hippolyta). As an extra-credit project, a group of undergraduates came together to record our shortened version of the play, and we provided our elementary student performers with CDs of that recording to aid them with line comprehension and memorization although a good deal of rehearsal was, naturally, devoted to working with the elementary students to ensure that they understood their lines.

Still other undergraduate students took on the tasks of costume and scene design and the acquisition and construction of costumes, sets, and props. Through a series of face-to-face meetings and e-mail exchanges, we maintained communication about the overall design approach and materials collected. Another student compiled a CD of basic sound effects for the production, including a handful of songs to be used during scene transitions (we elected to costume the show with a 1950s look and the music thus was a collection of early to mid-1950s rock, jazz, and folk music); still another student composed music for the "faerie's roundel" in act 2, scene 2. Because a production requires a great deal of collaboration and teamwork, as well as a wide array of individualized tasks, there are ample opportunities to get students involved in thoughtful ways that elicit and draw on their own talents and interests and bring those unique aspects of the student to bear on understanding Shakespeare.

Measuring "Success"

The spring 2008 project started out with an almost overwhelmingly positive response from interested elementary school participants: at our first session nearly thirty children showed up to participate or at least to see what it was exactly that we were offering. Those numbers dwindled over time to leave a core group of fifteen elementary students. Attrition could be attributed to a wide array of factors: when the track program started (about four weeks after our program), several of the participants (especially the boys, sadly) opted to pursue that rather than Shakespeare; others left after not being cast in a particular part, despite our best efforts to keep them involved and feeling valued. In the final weeks of the program, some of our dropouts asked if they could return, and other students would ask me if there was a part for them: "Sorry," I said. "Not this time. But we'll be back again next year, so be sure to join us then." They assured me they would. Clearly, word of mouth had spread that what we were doing was fun, and others wanted to get involved. I take that as one hopeful measure of the program's success.

How precisely we measure the success of a project like the one I outline above remains a difficult challenge, however. Conceivably, over time, we could chart data from the now ubiquitous, required, statewide standardized tests to measure a discernable growth in the vocabulary or reading comprehension of the elementary students involved in our program. Ultimately, I measure success in less quantifiable ways as I observe that a program such as this – although any program that uses performance and theater arts as its base would accomplish many of the same goals – empowers the "clients" to gain greater confidence in public speaking, exposes them to "classics" of Western culture, and provides an opportunity for teamwork and collaboration that is neither valued nor measured by individual standardized tests. Rachel Zaslow (2008), education director of the Shakespeare Society in New York, argues that the Shakespeare Society's performance-based program "Shakespeare in Schools" "nurture[s] skills that serve students throughout their lives; these include listening and responding, public speaking, self-presentation, diction and enunciation, relaxation techniques, physical and emotional self-assessment, self-discipline, and teamwork." For my undergraduate students I can likewise only measure things in relatively qualitative ways although I can also allow them to speak for themselves by quoting from their own reflections. What follows are relatively detailed reports of the experiences of several undergraduates involved in the 2008 project. I include these perspectives because they uniquely illustrate major aspects of the complex learning experience the project enables.

In his concluding reflection on the service-learning project, Brandon articulated a clear understanding of the larger goals of our collaborative work with the elementary students, observing that "by exposing the kids at Walker [Elementary School] to a completely different and unique cultural language that is William Shakespeare, their understanding of the world cannot help but be broadened."[7] Successful service-learning projects, as noted above are more about learning than they are service, and one of the great benefits – I argue – of the particular program I outline here is that learning is taking place at multiple levels. Brandon likewise commented on this aspect of the project, noting that "on many occasions I asked various children what they thought a particular line or passage meant. I was amazed at some of the responses which were things I hadn't even noticed myself!" He concludes

from this that "the mutual exploration of the literature with others and remaining open to different interpretations [is what] made this a successful enterprise." Brandon very effectively drew on the experience of the after-school program and the close reading of Shakespeare in his biweekly reading responses for class. Over the course of the semester I could see him growing as a close reader as he wrote increasingly sophisticated analyses of character and language.

Anna similarly saw the work of teaching Shakespeare as a powerful extension of the discussions and activities of the undergraduate classroom, writing,

> I was able to take the knowledge that I learned from the classroom experience and share this with the children who were also struggling with Shakespeare's play. The children and I worked together to figure out how each character should be portrayed depending on what we thought Shakespeare was trying to demonstrate within the larger context of the play. As the children delved into their characters I gained more insight into each person's personality and how they would best perform their character. I also found myself learning more about different areas of theatre performance …. The [elementary school] students struggled with the same issues and complications concerning the play that we dealt with in our English 346 classroom. I was able to use the information that I gained in our in-class discussions to help the children work through these problems.

Eric likewise saw the students gaining insights that many in the undergraduate classroom were perhaps only recently awakening to: "I had the chance to watch kids gain a new understanding of gender and gender roles and others triumph over dyslexia and the idea that Shakespeare is 'too smart' for them." Eric also wrote compellingly about issues of authority and collaboration from a unique perspective. Midway through the rehearsal process, the elementary student cast as Peter Quince had to drop out of the program. Eric agreed to play the part and thus took on, within both the fictional playworld and the rehearsal space, a kind of leadership role among the Mechanicals. He, among other students, had to help the young woman playing Tom Snout find confidence in playing a male part. He suggested that there was an opportunity for her to really grab hold of authority by pretending to be someone else, channeling his understanding of our discussions in class of the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of Shakespeare's England.

Elizabeth, an English and education major, participated in the project as part of her own career development and also because she was motivated by what she feels is the diminishing presence of "The Classics" in school curricula. While already predisposed to see Shakespeare as valuable in her own studies, she also observed first-hand how a project like ours, which actively engages students in reading, understanding and performing Shakespeare could give her even more evidence in support of her argument for the inclusion of "Classics" like Shakespeare:

> During rehearsal one day I was chatting with the group of faeries I was rehearsing with when one asked me, "Have you read this play?" Of course I answered "yes," and we entered a discussion of why I like it and why I read it and so on. I never quite got the point of her inquiries; however, the rest of the students were very engaged in our conversation. Another day when I asked whose parents were planning on attending the performance, we entered a discussion on whether or not our parents like Shakespeare and a young fairy, Taylor, informed me that her parents now want to read the whole play with her since she has enjoyed the production so much. It was easy to see through these conversations how Shakespeare has bridged a gap between generations – not only between me and the [elementary] students but even between the two of us and our parents, and from there, the possibilities are endless, and this is what makes the classics worth putting in schools: the ability for a piece of literature to be beneficial to people from all walks of life, from all generations and from all diverse educational backgrounds.

While I don't fully embrace Elizabeth's notion of the classics – and in fact try to suggest that Shakespeare is also owned by popular culture in ways potentially far more interesting than the version promoted by elite culture – her sense that Shakespeare can bridge gaps between generations is an important one. This point was made especially clear early in the process for as we explained the plot of the play to the elementary students they immediately recognized it as central to an episode of the Disney Channel show "The Suite Life of Zach and Cody." My undergraduate students knew the show (I did not) but not the specific episode. In showing us how Shakespeare and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was already a part of their world, the elementary students became our teachers,

illuminating for us a specific example of Shakespeare in contemporary popular culture. A few weeks later, we watched this episode with them as a kind of reward for their hard work in rehearsals. As other students observed in their written analysis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the other Shakespearean comedies we studied, the happy resolution of conflict between generations is key to the resolution and closure of Shakespearean comedy.

Meredith, a nontraditional student (a mother of grown children) wrote powerfully about how her experience with this project connected the dots of her own difficult childhood after her mother died in an automobile accident, a childhood in which she felt disconnected, hungry – physically and emotionally – and never as smart or well adjusted as all the other kids. She saw the shadow of her younger self in the experiences of the children at Walker Elementary School, one of whom in particular she coached extensively in her reluctant performance of Tom Snout, the Tinker. Like many students, Meredith first encountered Shakespeare in high school, but "it wasn't until I went to college that I started to read and discuss Shakespeare and it wasn't until this year that I saw Shakespeare's plays in action…. I always felt that to know Shakespeare meant you were smart. In many ways, I feel like I have finally become a part of my educated society." Meredith thus affirms what I see as some widespread assumptions about Shakespeare as cultural capital and as a commodity owned first and foremost by educated elites. While this is part of the reality of how Shakespeare functions as cultural capital it is not the whole story. Meredith is clearly sensitive to the notion that ownership or knowledge of Shakespeare is a form of power. She continues, "Service-learning helped me to understand that children could feel empowered by performing. I found out that I could be a partner in overcoming obstacles and make Shakespeare relevant to these kids' modern day world, like I understood him to be."

Meredith was especially aware of the disproportionate allocation of resources that our project was working in part to rectify:

> As we got closer to production, I thought about these kids; I realized they didn't have parents coming every afternoon to watch them rehearse like the school where my kids attended. No doting parents fussing and fixing their hair and makeup. I noticed how the library was small, the stage was never cleared off, the PE instructor had an office in a closet and many other inequalities regarding resources compared to my own kids. It was alarming for me to see…. Overall these kids may not have been well behaved, polite, or affluent, but they were good kids. They expressed potential and intelligence throughout our time together which I believe is their cry for social justice. In effect, their Shakespeare production screamed, "We're smart too! Give us a chance!"

While Meredith's reflections veer dangerously close to voicing a "savior" complex, her own openness in other writing for the course about her initial insecurity reading and performing Shakespeare combine with her reflections to demonstrate the complex ways in which she viewed the opportunity to study, teach, and direct Shakespeare as valuable--if at times daunting--learning.

Meredith's description of the concluding performance of the play in front of parents, family, and friends is a particularly compelling encapsulation of the project as a whole:

> As I watched their final play I felt very proud of them. I watched them try their hardest to say their lines with vigor for their parents. I watched their parents, many who could not speak English, intently watch their children who, dressed in full makeup and costume, said their lines boldly and with confidence. I watched little faces seem to get a little older and a little wiser and I felt happy as they came to center stage for the final closing bow. I watched Snout smile and run to her mother. I watched Bottom's family giggle as the faeries scratched behind his ears and as he whispered sweet words to a girl he truly loved. I watched Lion have her picture taken with her mother with a rose in her hand. In a way these kids met Shakespeare at Walker Elementary school. After the play they spoke his centuries old lines to each other and their parents. They argued and ran around putting love potions on each other. It seemed that England's greatest writer had inspired them. And for that moment these kids didn't belong to anyone, they were his.

Meredith's description of the culminating performance affirms my sense of what this project can do in terms of social justice. Being able to quote some lines from Shakespeare is certainly not going to solve all the social or educational challenges faced by the students in the Title I schools in which "Shakespeare for Kids" operates. But it may well help them to feel a bit smarter, a bit more confident, and a bit less scared. My own sense is that these students, when asked if they know Shakespeare, can provide a quite detailed and enthusiastic affirmative response in which they go on to describe *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and animatedly recount their part in performing in it.

Nearly all of the undergraduate students commented on the ways in which this project was valuable both to them and to the elementary students whom they served. Anna commented, "Through the various aspects of rehearsal and the performance process the children were able to feel like they were accomplishing something that would have lasting effects in their lives. Other volunteers and I were able to give these students a glimpse at what they could be studying in college and the work ethic that is needed to accomplish a college degree." Laurie saw the program as one that not only took down barriers to educational access but also worked to erode stereotypes and assumptions about ability:

> The need for service learning projects is increasing in our communities. As our country struggles with racism and struggles with making diverse sub-cultures feel as though they are a part of the community, the interaction between different groups becomes vital to breaking down walls and stereotypes for everyone involved. The kids may have had a snobbish or nerdy impression of what college students may be like, the college students may have underestimated the age group they were working with, and the community may have questioned our ability to work with these kids because of stereotyped weaknesses perceived from both sides that were incorrect and ultimately shown to be so.

But, as Bruce Herzberg (2001: 436) has observed, "It is all too easy to ask students to write journal entries and reaction papers, to assign narratives and extort confession, and to let it go at that." In other words, this project clearly engages in meaningful service (or student narratives give the impression that they believe it does), but does it also engage in meaningful *learning* of Shakespeare?

Student response papers and essays lead me to believe that the process of directing, teaching, and producing a Shakespeare play with elementary students enhances undergraduates' close-reading skills and critical understanding of Shakespeare. As a result of deep engagement with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* students wrote with increasing sophistication as the semester progressed about issues of hierarchy and gender; as a result of performing in class and working on the after-school project, the undergraduates took on a deeper and more nuanced appreciation for how gender can be a performance and how authority or submission is likewise, at least potentially, an action performed according to a predetermined script. They became evermore ambitious in seeing Shakespeare from multiple angles, as literary text, as material for performance, as source material for subsequent appropriation, adaptation, and allusion. Most impressive of all was the growing sophistication in writing and discussion about Shakespeare's effective manipulation of metadramatic effects.

Learning experiences can be significantly enriched by the number of constituencies involved in the experience and by the complexity of the roles played by those constituencies. In adding a service-learning component to my undergraduate Shakespeare class the learning experience moved beyond a standard two-constituency (student, teacher), two-role (student, teacher) learning structure and into a five-constituency (professor, undergraduate student, elementary school student, elementary school principal/teacher, elementary school parent) and three-role (student, student/teacher, teacher) structure.

In sum, even at this early stage of development, this project displays considerable success both in terms of the service it provides and in terms of the learning realized by the principal participating constituents (undergraduates, elementary students, professor).

Regrets, Revisions, and Next Steps

The preceding should not be taken as a triumphal pronouncement that the implementation of a Shakespeare and service-learning program has now been handily solved if one simply follows six simple steps. Brandon rightly observed that "one semester is not nearly enough time to make a lasting and deep impact on the kid's lives. I felt like I had just started making a connection with the kids about the excitement of Shakespeare's language and the

myriad of possibilities within when it was suddenly over. Still, in the limited time we had I nonetheless felt a lot was accomplished and that they learned a lot about the possibilities of art and what different cultures can offer." Laurie raised concerns in her reflection about the extent to which our after-school program was treated by some parents as glorified day care. But she ultimately concludes (and I strongly agree with her) that even this is a valuable service for the particular population we chose to serve even if no other benefit was derived.

More needs to be done to aid students to connect content learning in the course to the service work. For example, Brandon's observation that the elementary students awakened him to ways of reading the text he had not previously seen himself would be significantly enriched with a specific example or explanation. The use of triple-entry journals may be an effective way to improve this aspect of reflection.

Better integration of elementary school teachers is also an important enhancement for future iterations of this project. As this project is again underway I am working to address that. I have had brief meetings with fourth-through sixth-grade teachers and have provided them with resource suggestions for introducing Shakespeare and the play under production (*Macbeth*) to their students. In part I held off on doing so because I did not want to add additional, uninvited demands on the teachers. My own learning will certainly continue to be enhanced as I work to further develop this component of the project.

I regret that we were unable to return to the school with which we partnered in 2006, but my hope is that this program will expand in coming semesters and that we will return there. One way in which I now intend to make certain that the program does reach out to more schools (while returning to previous partner schools) is to make the service-learning component a required rather than optional component, of the Shakespeare courses that I teach. I do not regret having implemented the program in its first two iterations as an optional component as the first two rounds afforded me the opportunity to pilot the program with generally very willing (and accommodating) volunteers whose good will was most certainly tested although I hope not exhausted. Together we learned a great deal.

I have learned that two weeks (approximately eight 1.5-hour sessions) is sufficient time to introduce basic contextual background on Shakespeare's "Life and Times" along with an introduction to the play to be performed and initial icebreaker and name games. More time for rehearsal, with specific goals for line memorization and learning blocking will streamline the process. A lead director, working in collaboration with a producer/stage manager, is likewise a necessary component. Having a clear and centralized leader for the project will minimize at least some personality conflicts and alleviate potential problems in communication. The instructor can potentially take on one (or both) of these roles, but mentoring a theater arts or education student in that capacity has significant teaching and learning potential. The use of regular reflection will continue to allow me to monitor the progress of the projects both in practical terms and regarding the project's pedagogical value for undergraduates. The current iteration of this program (under way at the time of writing) enjoys collaboration with the education arm of our state Shakespeare festival. Given the ubiquity of Shakespeare festivals across the United States, most instructors interested in implementing a project similar to the one I have described here will likewise have potentially ready collaborators in their own communities. This collaboration provides easier access to experienced directors and theater arts educators (as well as materials such as costume pieces and props), enhances the perceived value of the project in the community and for the schools, and provides another vehicle to aid in the eventual expansion of the project to multiple school sites.

I have little doubt that others could take the basic details of the project I outline here and find a multitude of ways to improve upon it. I would welcome that and hope that the ideas offered here do indeed spark a more widespread implementation of collaboration between undergraduate Shakespeare classes and community schools.[8] The benefits to be realized are potentially significant, both as valuable service to our undergraduate students and to the communities in which we reside and as a powerful and valuable vehicle for enhanced learning and understanding of Shakespeare's playscripts and of Shakespeare as a cultural commodity that students, particularly those students who are not obligated to take an undergraduate Shakespeare course, are already in a position to appreciate as valuable. By challenging undergraduates to open up and share with elementary students the "brave new world(s)" of Shakespeare and performance just as the undergraduates themselves are discovering them, we enable a rich and complex collaboration to take place, a collaboration that achieves multiple goals of service and learning.

Notes

[1] In this belief I am sympathetic to the efforts of England's Royal Shakespeare Company and in particular their "Stand Up for Shakespeare" initiative that stems from their relatively recent enhanced focus on learning and education. On that enhanced focus see Bate and Brock 2007. Details of the RSC's "Stand Up For Shakespeare" initiative are available at http://www.rsc.org.uk/standupforshakespeare/content/Home.aspx

[2] And arguably beyond. A growing area of Shakespeare scholarship in the recent past has been on Shakespeare in translation both in linguistic and cultural terms.

[3] For an especially useful critique of the theoretical justification of service-learning as philanthropy or charity, see Abel 2004 and Sementelli 2004.

[4] Incorporating performance in teaching Shakespeare is widespread. Indeed, Martine Van Elk (2007: 2) observes, "The subfield of teaching Shakespeare has been, since the early 1980s, overwhelmingly oriented towards performance." See also Gilbert 1984, Riggio 1999, Lichtenfels 2005, Loehlin 2005, and Rocklin 2005.

[5] This assumption is typically affirmed by my first encounter with the elementary students at which I describe the program and attempt to pique their interest in it. I ask if they have heard of Shakespeare; they usually have and can rattle off a few titles of plays, perhaps even place him in the context of the sixteenth century. But they do not know the specific details of any particular plays; at the outset they have only an outsider's knowledge whereas by the end of the program they have gotten inside Shakespeare (and Shakespeare has gotten inside them).

[6] Student names used here are pseudonyms. I am grateful to my students for their permission to quote them.

[7] Like student names, "Walker Elementary" is a pseudonym.

[8] Theatre and education students at Dartmouth College engaged in a similar program in 2003 (See Chang 2003).

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