

8211680:Institution: University of Brighton		
Unit of Assessment: D34 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Changing the presentation of memory, gender and national identity in the commemoration of Shakespeare		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (eg job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Ailsa Grant Ferguson	Lecturer (2014 – 16), Senior Lecturer (2016 – 2019) Principal Lecturer (2019 – to date)	2014 – to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>University of Brighton (UoB) research into the rediscovered Shakespeare Hut (1916 – 23) - a commemorative building erased from public memory - has revealed forgotten histories of marginalised groups in Shakespearean heritage. The research into the Hut's female-led theatre, its use by New Zealand soldiers in World War One and subsequently by Indian students has acted as a catalyst for new creative practices in theatre and new interpretations of female theatre history. It expanded the scope and content of exhibitions and commemorative events curated by the National Theatre (NT), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) and YMCA. New research evidence has changed education programmes at SBT and led the NT to change the role of its archive, public engagement work and the presentation of its early history to international audiences.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Shakespeare Hut, a large mock-Tudor bungalow at the corner of Keppel and Gower Streets in Bloomsbury, London was built in 1916 on land designated to be the site of a new National Theatre but the land was then offered to the YMCA as a contribution to the war effort. The Hut was dedicated to the memory of Shakespeare and as the identified site for the National Theatre contained a purpose-built theatre. It also aspired to be a home from home for serving New Zealand Anzacs on leave from 1916 to 1919. It was then transformed after 1919 into the YMCA Indian Students' Hostel, a space for lively and radical debate and ground-breaking co-education for young Indian people, before being demolished in 1923. It was the only commemorative building constructed to mark Shakespeare's tercentenary in 1916. It was both idiosyncratically unique and a powerful space in terms of Shakespearean commemoration and performance affecting the expression and construction of national identity. The rediscovery of the purposes for, and uses of, the Shakespeare Hut by Dr Ailsa Grant Ferguson has provided a new tool through which Shakespeare can be read, understood and performed. Its story tells us of commemoration and of forgotten processes of cultural or collective memory formation, of gender and performance, of complex and dynamic national identities.</p> <p>Grant Ferguson first identified the existence of the Shakespeare Hut as part of a wider programme of research in the archives of the National Theatre with Kings College London and the University of Western Australia (2010 – 2013), funded by the Australian Research Council. Since joining the UoB in 2014, Grant Ferguson's ongoing research into the Hut has focused on its integral theatre, run as a feminist performance space by leading suffragists of the Actresses' Franchise League, its role in the formation of cultural memory for the New Zealand Anzacs and its significance for post-war Indian users. Grant Ferguson's monograph [reference 3.1] tells the forgotten story of the Shakespeare Hut revealing an intersection of</p>		

diverse uses and forgotten stakeholder histories including the performers of its feminist-led stage, a hub of Indian intellectual and political debate, a Shakespeare memorial and an Anzac social club. This research used neglected archive materials at the National Theatre Archive and in archives spanning the US, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, to build a rich history of the space, alive with diverse performances and audiences, generating a sense of place and belonging through the recovery of forgotten cultural storylines. Ultimately, the process of revival running through the research places emphasis on a space that should be active and performed, not just a site for remembrance.

Focussing specifically on the role of Shakespeare Hut performances and the Hut's crucial place in the history of women's theatre, Grant Ferguson uncovered the missing history of key members of the Actresses' Franchise League during the war. These actresses performed on what served, at that moment, as the stage of the nascent National Theatre [3.1, 3.3, 3.4]. The research also identified the role of performance in creating a cultural exchange and home-from-home for the New Zealand Anzacs [3.2, 3.3]. Between 2015 and 2017 Grant Ferguson extended her research to explore the role of the Hut in fostering Indian revolutionary culture, including the identification of the presence of several female Indian freedom fighters, with the Hut offering a space to challenge the broader establishment through more radical discussions on Indian independence [3.1]. Grant Ferguson's research on the immediate post-war period at the Hut, after it became the Indian Students' Hostel in 1919, identified that the income generated through rent between 1919 and 1923 was calculated and used to found the first national Shakespearean touring company - the New Shakespeare Company - which would, over time, evolve into the Royal Shakespeare Company [3.1].

3. References to the research

[3.1] Grant Ferguson, A. (2019). *The Shakespeare Hut: A Story of Memory, Performance and Identity, 1916-1923*. The Arden Shakespeare, London: Bloomsbury. [Quality validation: Significant monograph, published in the prestigious Arden Shakespeare Series].

[3.2] McMullan, G., Mead, P., Grant Ferguson, A., Houlahan, M., and Flaherty, K., (2018). *Antipodal Shakespeare: Remembering and Forgetting in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, 1916-2016*. The Arden Shakespeare, London: Bloomsbury. [Quality validation: International collaborative monograph, published in the prestigious Arden Shakespeare Series and reviewed in journals including *Shakespeare Quarterly*].

[3.3] Grant Ferguson, A., (2015). Entertaining the Anzacs: Performances for Australian and New Zealand troops on leave in London, 1916-1919. In Maunder, A. (Ed.), *British Theatre and the Great War 1914-1919: New Perspectives*. (pp. 115-129). Palgrave Macmillan. Basingstoke. ISBN 978-1-137-40200-4. [Quality validation: Chapter in a peer-reviewed edited collection].

[3.4] Grant Ferguson, A., (2015). Performing commemoration in wartime: Shakespeare galas in London, 1916-1919. In C. Calvo, & C. Kahn (Eds.), *Celebrating Shakespeare: Commemoration and Public Memory* (pp. 202-224). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107337466.011> [Quality validation: Chapter in peer-reviewed collection, published by CUP, reviewed in journals eg *English*].

4. Details of the impact

Grant Ferguson's research on the Shakespeare Hut uncovered a range of diverse stakeholders embedded in its heritage, which has made forgotten personal, cultural and political histories more visible. This has enabled the development of collaborations with varied organisations, including those with global influence, and in particular the SBT, NT and YMCA. These collaborations have focused on the development of cultural, commemorative and creative projects presenting previously forgotten histories of international interest. This has helped to preserve the heritage of the Shakespeare Hut and served as a catalyst for new creative works and methods of public engagement by these organisations. The impact is built upon the performative nature of the site and its history and how that can enable multiple representations. In the Foreword to Grant Ferguson's monograph, *The Shakespeare Hut: A Story of Memory, Performance and Identity, 1916 – 23*, partners at

King's College London and University of Melbourne, Australia attest to how Grant Ferguson *'makes us understand that Shakespeare's meaning within British culture across the period of the Hut's existence was both located and performed, not timeless or universal [...] Grant Ferguson immensely enriches our understanding of the complex meanings of Shakespeare in the late-war and immediate post war years'* [Source 5.1]. The research reveals hidden, neglected and silenced histories and uses this to draw together the diverse interests of different groups and individuals, both locally and globally, so that forgotten lives, campaigns, performances and activism are brought together to change representation in current creative practice and heritage.

4.1 Building recognition of neglected histories in Shakespeare's heritage

In 2016, Grant Ferguson's work underpinned an event commemorating the opening of the Shakespeare Hut on the site of the original Hut. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which now occupies the original site, collaborated with private company Digital Drama to produce a performance and exhibition to commemorate the lives of the servicemen who used, and the women who worked at, the Shakespeare Hut. The project *Resurrecting the Shakespeare Hut* used Grant Ferguson's research and introduced the public to the sites' hidden heritage for the first time, preserving its heritage for future generations to enjoy, with positive evaluations of the performative nature of the event [5.2]. The event and the narrative of the Hut were widely shared in mainstream media and through established blog sites to commemorate WW1, that testify as to how this project has lifted *'the lid on what life was like for those who used the building'* extending the audience reach in the UK and New Zealand and animating the space further [5.3a, 5.3b, 5.4].

4.2 Establishing a new role for women and suffrage in Shakespearean theatre history

Grant Ferguson's research on the role of the Actresses' Franchise League and the feminist-led stage at the Shakespeare Hut has opened up new avenues of creative enquiry into the role of women in Shakespeare's history, contributing to a contemporary international challenge of addressing gender bias in the history of theatre. Invited by the SBT to share findings with the public, Grant Ferguson presented a public lecture in Stratford in 2017. This led to the establishment of an ongoing partnership with SBT to explore ways in which to engage the public with the history of women in Stratford and in the Shakespeare 'myth' across the world. A current SBT project involving Grant Ferguson focuses on heritage site, Hall's Croft, a 17th century house in Stratford and one of its original occupants, Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna Hall. This project develops new approaches to mediating women in relation to Shakespeare and will create new ways for users and stakeholders in heritage sites to have autonomy in choosing their narratives via digital humanities in reconstruction and spatial archive. This project stems directly from the research, and Grant Ferguson's approach, to reveal the multiplicity of heritage by working with diverse organisations and individuals to explore the histories and counter-histories [5.5].

Inspired by Grant Ferguson's research, a leading Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) actress undertook further research into the history of female-theatre intending to develop new work on female-led performance and the suffragist leadership of the Hut. A new play based on this project is now in development, funded by Arts Council England, led by Lucy Phelps (performer) and Zoe Ford Burnett (Director). Grant Ferguson's research has had an impact on Phelps as both a performer and a writer, by providing insight into a previously hidden story that has *'emboldened my desire and commitment to supporting more women taking on key roles within theatre, both offstage and on'* [5.6]. The development of this play has sparked ideas for further creative projects related to the Hut, now under development, including an audio recording of Ellen Terry's *Four Lectures on Shakespeare*. This range of new creative practices led Phelps to found a new production company (2020) focussing on forgotten stories of women in history, with Zoe Ford Burnett: *'Ailsa's work on the Shakespeare Hut has opened up a whole plethora of new creative opportunities and collaborations for me as an artist.'* [5.6].

Grant Ferguson's research unearthed forgotten archive material that brought to life past performances led by women. This has spurred the development of several new creative pieces. In 2016 Grant Ferguson collaborated with actress, director and academic, Dr Naomi

Paxton and the production company Scary Little Girls on an immersive theatre production for the *Being Human Festival of the Humanities*. This was part of a programme of events within the UK Parliament *Vote 100* project celebrating the centenary of the granting of the limited franchise to women in 1918. This production invited participation in an active and dialogic way to experience heritage, history and performance where the public encountered performances and performers in a 'living literature walk'. The public response was positive particularly around the microhistories of those involved through a vividly animated user experience [5.7, 5.8] The performance was covered by BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking* programme in which the presenter visits little known locations in London to meet researchers drawing on archives of the past to cast new light on the present.

4.3 Building new material histories and audiences for major organisations

The SBT manages the world's largest publicly accessible library and archive relating to Shakespeare. As part of their commitment to accessible materials the SBT has a core aim to introduce audiences to 'innovative and creative' scholarship connected to Shakespeare. Hearing of Grant Ferguson's research, SBT invited her to share this research at their Winter School as part of their strategy to engage public interest in their education programmes. With repeat visits and lectures in 2017, 2018 and 2019, addressing ~100 'leisure learners' at each event the dissemination of this research had a '*significant impact*' on the wellbeing of attendees who engage with the Winter School. These events were extended to staff from SBT's Education, Library, and Archives Department to build on internal beneficial CPD opportunities. This has enabled the SBT continuing strategy to target specific demographics seeking intellectual engagement and community, helping them to build new audiences. Grant Ferguson's research was significant in terms of '*the specialist focus they have given to archival research*' [5.5]. This learning has now moved beyond public engagement and teaching spaces and influenced discussions at an organisational level about how SBT's properties could benefit from re-presentation inspired through collaborative research projects. It has prompted internal discussions about the ways in which research could not only shape future exhibitions, but also refashion educational and touristic narratives to help reach wider audiences [5.5].

Grant Ferguson's research into Indian revolutionary culture at the Hut, including the presence of several female Indian freedom fighters, has contributed to the YMCA's understanding of the early years of its Indian branch in London. During WW1 the YMCA established Huts across the UK to benefit soldiers that used the services. There is little material evidence remaining relating to the individual Huts and the impact that those facilities had on the lives of those who accessed them. The Head of International Affairs at the YMCA has spoken in support of this research and how it has influenced this global youth organisation. He confirms that the research has thrown new light on the purposes for which the Shakespeare Hut was erected, including recognition that the Shakespeare Hut was specifically for people mainly from New Zealand and Australia. In 2019, YMCA celebrated its 175th anniversary and this research contributed to the content of a commemorative exhibition, giving a new focus to the approach taken by the YMCA as '*to how we learn from our history and how that shapes who we are today as the largest Youth Movement in the world*' [5.9]. The exhibition travelled around the UK during 2019/2020 engaging thousands of young people, with a number deciding to explore how YMCA had impacted their own communities during time of war. In addition, the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Indian YMCA in London referenced the Shakespeare Hut at the core of the celebrations; this would not have been a prominent feature had the research not been undertaken [5.9].

The history of production at the NT had previously been accepted to have started in 1963 with the first productions at the Old Vic. Grant Ferguson's discovery of the production culture of the Shakespeare Hut, including evidence of leading practitioners describing the Hut as the first National Theatre has led to a new and much longer history of National Theatre performance emerging and being presented to national and international audiences. This has enabled the NT organisation to place greater emphasis on the history of the theatre throughout the public and educational programming [5.10]. Grant Ferguson added an earlier *Hamlet*-based performance to those the NT were at the time presenting in their exhibition materials (Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Shakespeare Hut, 1917+). As a result,

Shakespeare Hut performances have been added to the database of NT productions, changing the timeline of historical events and the information shared with their publics [5.11]. This has enabled the re-animation of the early NT history, making connections to materials held elsewhere in the NT Archive and in other archives internationally [5.12]. This has had a subsequent effect on the public and research profile of the NT Archive, helping the organisation to develop a new strategic direction, positioning the archive as more integral to the institution's public engagement work. This new knowledge has raised awareness with audiences that the organisation would not normally reach inside and outside the UK [5.12]. The research findings led directly to the NT agreeing to fund the archive's full cataloguing, which has opened up the archive for research into previously hidden documentation of late 19th and early 20th century British theatre history and practice. Overall, the research has made a 'vital contribution to the institution's understanding of its own history' the effect of which has enacted a positive culture change which has been sustained [5.10, 5.12].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Foreword: *The Shakespeare Hut: A Story of Memory, Performance and Identity, 1916 – 1923*. The Arden Shakespeare, London: Bloomsbury (PDF available). This includes evidence of the impact on the understanding of the history of Shakespeare performances.

[5.2] Revealing the history of the iconic Shakespeare Hut (June 2016) <https://ww100.govt.nz/revealing-the-history-of-iconic-shakespeare-hut> [Accessed 18th January 2021]. This includes audience feedback LSHTM event and NZ coverage by NZ100 the first world war centenary programme

[5.3a] Kennedy, M., (11th August 2016). Shakespeare Hut: the London refuge from the horrors of first world war. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/11/shakespeare-hut-london-first-world-war> [Accessed on 18th January 2021]. Media coverage of the event and commemoration of the Hut in WW1.

[5.3b] Dex, R., (18th July 2016). Shakespeare Hut used to entertain returning First World War troops is brought back to life in Bloomsbury. *The Evening Standard* <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/arts/shakespeare-hut-used-to-entertain-returning-first-world-war-troops-is-brought-back-to-life-in-a3298041.html> [Accessed on 18th January 2021] Media coverage of the exhibition with a focus on the forgotten histories.

[5.4] Morris, S., (August 8th 2016). World War 1 Shakespeare and the Anzacs. <http://theshakespeareblog.com/tag/ailsa-grant-ferguson/> [Accessed: 18th January 2021]. Blog post that confirms the UoB contribution to the 'Resurrecting the Shakespeare Hut'.

[5.5] Testimonial from Shakespeare Courses Development Manager, at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust that confirms the impact on gender influence and the Winter School.

[5.6] Testimonial from an RSC actress on the impact on practice and on her as a performer.

[5.7] Shakespeare, suffragists and soldiers. Interview with Dr Naomi Paxton. <https://www.sas.ac.uk/public-engagement/case-studies/shakespeare-suffragists-and-soldiers> [Accessed: 18th January 2021]. This confirms the impact of the events as part of the UK Parliament Vote 100 project.

[5.8] Audience feedback: Scary Little Girls production. This confirms the positive experiences of members of the public involved in the event.

[5.9] Testimonial from the International Relations Director, YMCA, that confirms how this research has helped to inform the understanding of the organisation's history.

[5.10] Testimonial from the former Head of Archives at the National Theatre that confirms the new strategic direction of the NT and the incorporation of evidence of early NT history into educational programming.

[5.11] National Theatre. Stage by Stage. The beginning: 1848 – 1962. This report confirms the addition of the Shakespeare Hut as an NT theatre in 1914.

[5.12] Testimonial from the Head of Archives at the National Theatre that confirms the impact on audiences that would otherwise be hard to reach.