

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Sheffield Hallam University		
Unit of Assessment: UOA27 - English Literature and Language		
Title of case study: Creating John Ford's Contemporary Audiences: Old Plays on New Stages		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2000 to December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Lisa Hopkins	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of English	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact

Hopkins brought new awareness and understanding of the idiosyncratic theatre of John Ford (1586 to circa 1639) to contemporary audiences through performances, education, translation, and discussion. Her research influenced a wave of new performances of four Ford plays by the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Globe Theatre, London, and Edward's Boys (King Edward's School, Stratford-upon-Avon). The productions were part of the John Ford Experiment, which set out to



Scene from Edward's Boy's production of John Ford's *The Lady's Trial*, 2015

test on contemporary audiences and theatre spaces plays by Ford not performed since the 17th century. The twenty performances of the four productions attracted large audiences (collectively of around 7,500 people). Her research informed the first Russian translation of a Ford play, Perkin Warbeck, published by Andrey Korchesvskiy in *Sovremennaya Dramaturgia (Modern Dramaturgy)*, a journal subscribed to by Russian public libraries and theatres. She created new Ford learning-resources for A-level students and teachers (via *Massolit*). Finally, her work engaged a wider public with Ford at varied cultural venues.

2. Underpinning research

Ford is academically canonical, yet to a wider public overshadowed by Shakespeare, Johnson, and Marlowe, and with most of his plays having rarely been performed in modern times. This was the situation addressed by the distinguished companies participating in the John Ford Experiment (Globe and Edward's Boys) and in parallel by the RSC productions: would Ford's rarely performed plays work in the modern theatre? While sufficiently close in time to Shakespeare to be bracketed with him, Shakespeare is not a good model for understanding Ford. His theatre disconcerts by coupling an abstract, Latinate style with shocking violence, disturbing topics, highly implicit contexts, and ambivalent perspectives.

Impact case study (REF3)

Hopkins' research on Ford has changed the understanding of his biography and dramaturgy, including through work on his complex relationships to patrons, Catholic thought, politics, intertexts and contemporaries, all of which play a part in his oblique theatre (**R1, R2, R5, R6**). Hopkins also reinterprets him as a political dramatist as much as the psychologist he was once considered (**R3, R4**). The research began with a PhD thesis, 'John Ford and his Circle', which became a book, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester UP, 1994). Since then Hopkins has written eight book chapters, thirteen articles, and nineteen notes on Ford's plays. It was in the light of her expertise on Ford that she was invited by Professor Brian Vickers (editor of the Oxford University Press *Collected Works of John Ford*, 2012-17 and 2015 Sam Wanamaker Fellow) to support the John Ford Experiment, and independently the RSC productions.

The six underpinning outputs below advanced knowledge of Ford in the headlined fields.

R1. Dramaturgy. This article analyses the interpretation of Ford's drama in the exceptional number of productions of his work in a two-year window (2014-16), a phenomenon at the heart of this case study. It discusses how productions responded to Ford scholarship, including that of Hopkins, and highlights the strangeness of his theatre for contemporary audiences. It includes research on Ford and the Italian prince, wife-murderer and composer Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613), whose harmony was as idiosyncratic as Ford's dramaturgy. It revisits research first published in the RSC Programme Note for *Love's Sacrifice* in 2015, adding original insights into the relationship between Ford's aesthetics and Gesualdo's music to Hopkins' earlier discovery that the play was based on Gesualdo's life story (1988).

R2. Dramaturgy. This guide was edited by Hopkins and has her 'Introduction' and authoritative 'Critical Backstory' informed by her whole contribution to Ford scholarship and includes her original essay, ' *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Space of the Stage', which argues that Ford used stage-space/s to play off abstract and symbolic conceptions of life (theological, moral) against physical and material experiences (bodily, sexual, civic, household), with the latter subversively seen as the more compelling.

R3. Politics. This monograph explored the politics of drama dealing with the dangerous topic of monarchical succession between 1561 and 1633. The final chapter argued that Ford revived the Elizabethan history play in Charles's reign to question the relationship between legitimacy and authority, so that *Perkin Warbeck* (1634) may subversively invite the audience to imagine that the supposed pretender was genuinely one of the Princes in the Tower. **R4** continues work in this vein, arguing that Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* has intertexts with two plays by Massinger showing that these texts were models for Ford as ways of (survivably) dramatising the politics of succession.

R5. Intertexts. This is the first modern edition of *The Lady's Trial* (last substantive edition, 1811, lightly revised 1827 and 1870). There is a new corrected text and full modern editorial apparatus, which draws throughout on Hopkins' research on Ford's oeuvre. Hopkins' substantial introduction includes new material on the play's revisiting of Ford's own works and its rewriting of *Othello* to show its accused heroine, Spinella, vindicated.

R6. Patrons and Contemporaries. This article explores Ford's interest in Italy and Venice, constructing new understandings of how his treatment of those places links to a complex circle of patrons and contemporary personalities (including Philip Sidney, Kenelm Digby and Venetia Stanley) and literary texts (especially by Jacopo Sannazaro). While focusing on *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, it also refers to the four plays at the heart of this case study: *Love's Sacrifice*, *The Lady's Trial*, *Perkin Warbeck*, and *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble*.

3. References to the research

Impact case study (REF3)

All outputs were produced by Professor Lisa Hopkins and were rigorously peer-reviewed prior to publication. **R3** received numerous positive reviews in *Notes & Queries*, *Theatre Research International*, *TLS*, *MaRDiE*: for example, 'Its strengths lie in Hopkins' laudable command of the historical context ... the decision to examine plays across the reigns of three successive sovereigns certainly enriches our view of the cultural impact of the question [of succession]' (Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Renaissance Quarterly* 64.4 [Winter 2011]: 1315-16).

R1, **R4** and **R6** are available online, copies of **R2**, **R3** and **R5** can be provided on request.

- R1.** 'Introduction: John Ford in Performance 2014-2016', *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 26 (2017): John Ford
<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/issue/view/12>
- R2.** *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, in the Continuum Renaissance Drama Series (Continuum, 2010)
- R3.** *Drama and the Succession to the Crown, 1561-1633* (Ashgate, 2011)
- R4.** 'Perkin Warbeck and Massinger', *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 26 (2017)
<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/286>
- R5.** *The Lady's Trial* (Revels Plays, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011)
- R6.** 'Venice in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', *Early Theatre* 13.2 (2010): 79-88
<https://earlytheatre.org/earlytheatre/issue/view/45>

4. Details of the impact

New knowledge and understandings of Ford have had benefits for theatre directors, audiences, a translator, Russian readers of drama, A-level pupils and teachers, and a wider public, changing perceptions and giving new contexts through the activities described below.

Generation of New Understandings of Ford for Theatres and Audiences

The RSC drew on Hopkins' research on *Love's Sacrifice* for the production itself (12 performances, 21 April to 24 June 2015, overall audience of around 5000), as well as in her commissioned RSC Programme Note. The director and programmes editor requested 'something that touches on Gesualdo – both something about him and his life/work, but also of course how it might fit in with the themes and characters of the play' (**E1**). The note argued that the story and themes of *Love's Sacrifice* are rooted in the story of Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, composer and wife-murderer. This was the first performance of the play since 1631, and the director's vision was influenced explicitly by this origin story, which was also noted in reviews, while the video trailer for the play emphasised this angle in its sub-title: 'based on a true story' (**E2**). Hopkins' work on Ford's Catholic sensibilities also influenced the production style: 'steeped in ritual and patterned movement in a way which is profoundly Catholic'. Reviewers, including The Telegraph, The Independent and The Guardian, thought the play a notable revival for the stage canon: 'eminently stageable'; 'nuanced take on a difficult play' (**E3**).

Hopkins' research was also used in Globe Education's Rarely Played programme note and public seminar for their Read Not Dead reading of *Love's Sacrifice*, at Gray's Inn (15/02/2015; audience of circa 200). The programme note has now been included in the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre archive created and marketed by Adam Matthew digital resources. The cast included senior members of Gray's Inn and raised their awareness of Ford's own legal training and his dedication of this play to his cousin, also John Ford, a member of Gray's Inn. Hopkins led the Rarely Played seminar for Globe Education's Read Not Dead reading of *Perkin Warbeck* in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (28/06/2015), and wrote the programme note which argued that the play saw Henry VII as de facto king, but Warbeck as de jure monarch. She led the Rarely Played seminar for Globe

Impact case study (REF3)

Education's Read not Dead reading of *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (6/9/2015; audience of circa 50), which used her work on the idiosyncrasy of Ford's theatre to account for this particularly oblique play, with its exceptionally laconic style.

Hopkins' Revels edition of *The Lady's Trial* was used by Edward's Boys for their performance of the play (the first known since 1638), seen by circa 1500 people across its six performances at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, King Edward VI School, Stratford, Queen Mary Grammar School, Walsall, and the Globe's Wanamaker Theatre. A recording is available on DVD (47 copies sold in the UK, 8 overseas). Audience feedback included: '*my answer to your invitation to consider ... whether this play is worth reviving is an emphatic "yes"'*. The director said: '[Hopkins] *edition is exemplary in its authoritative detail and clarity; the introduction and notes proved particularly valuable ... since it was no longer possible to ask questions of Ford, the next best thing was to email Lisa after many rehearsals*' (E4). Hopkins wrote the programme note for this production and gave a talk at a Globe Education Study Day on Ford linked to the performance at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, September 2015. The Head of Globe Education acknowledged Hopkins' contribution: '*Thank you for all you did in support of the Ford season, culminating in your brilliant lecture ... It was packed with information and ideas*' (E5). Audience feedback through questionnaires included: [liked]: '*the Gesualdo connection*'; '*clear explanation of problems to be addressed in performance*'; [liked]: '*elucidation of political elements*', '*the placing of Perkin in the context of Shakespeare's history plays and Scottish history*' (E6). Hopkins wrote up both the John Ford Experiment and the Edward's Boys' *Lady's Trial* in a piece called 'Body and Soul' for *THE Culture* to share insights yielded by these stagings with an audience beyond Renaissance scholars (E7).

Making Ford available to Russian Readers

Hopkins helped bring Ford to Russian readers by advising on the first Russian translation of *Perkin Warbeck* and writing an introduction giving a context for this new audience, particularly relating her work on Perkin Warbeck to the contemporary Russian pretenders (the three False Dmitris). The translator said that research by Hopkins 'revealed the wide historical and cultural context of the play, allowing for better stylistic decisions in the translation. I also greatly benefited from the personal communication with Hopkins who helped me setting up the overall understanding of the play and the epoch of Perkin Warbeck'. The translation and introduction were published in "*Sovremennaya Dramaturgia*" ("*Modern Dramaturgy*"), a quarterly magazine focusing on the theatrical repertoire. Many Russian public libraries subscribe to this journal, as well as theatres nationally, and a wider public interested in drama (E8).

Enhancing A-level Learning Resources on Ford

The inclusion of *'Tis Pity* on the A level syllabus led Hopkins to record a new lecture on the play for Massolit, which provides online A-level learning resources (2016). The lecture drew on her work on stage-space and on analysis of the recent Ford productions. The lecture has been watched 2,037 times since 2016, making it the second most popular non-Shakespeare play on the site, and a number of log-ins represent teachers showing the lecture to a class. (E9).

Introducing Ford to a Wider Public

Public engagement included three talks which introduced Ford's plays in the context of local and particular interests (*Perkin Warbeck* at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, the Lit and Phil in Newcastle; *The Witch of Edmonton*, part-authored by Ford, to the 1152 Club, Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds; total audiences of circa 100). Questionnaire responses praised material: '*about relationship between Scotland and England*', [historical] *attitudes towards the border*'; '*Ford's attitude to the monarchy*', '*history of Perkin Warbeck*' (E10).

This overall programme of public engagement brought about a wide new awareness and understanding of the significance and value of Ford's theatre on stage and page for varied

Impact case study (REF3)

contemporary audiences and helped fulfil one of the aims of the John Ford Experiment and RSC productions: to show that his plays could and should be part of the contemporary theatrical as well as academic canon.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1.** E-mail, Programme Editor, RSC, 02/03/2015
- E2.** RSC trailer: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/loves-sacrifice>
- E3.** Reviews: (i) N. Clark, Independent, 03/09/2014; (ii) D. Cavendish, Daily Telegraph, 21/04/2015; (iii) M. Billington in the Guardian, 21/04/2015; (iv) Bardathon blog, 18/05/2015.
- E4.** Perry Mills, Edward's Boys, Director of The Lady's Trial, Early Modern Literary Studies 11/09/2020; and Edward's Boys web-site: <http://www.edwardsboys.org/product/the-ladys-trial-dvd-2015/> and interview with Perry Mills and Peter Spottiswoode which describes the collaboration with Professor Hopkins <http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/ford-experiment-shakespeares-globe/>.
- E5.** E-Mail 5/10/15, Head of Globe Education confirming contribution to Study Day
- E6.** Questionnaires: Love's Sacrifice workshop, 15/02/2015; Perkin Warbeck workshop, 28/06/2015.
- E7.** Evidence of THE article from 23 July 2015: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/culture/body-and-soul-the-globes-john-ford-experiment>
- E8.** (i) E-mail from Russian translator, 04/06/2020, (ii) Translation by Andrey Korchesvskiy at: <http://around-shake.ru/versions/translations/5353.html>
- E9.** E-mail, Director of Massolit (26/9/2020) confirming viewing figures for A-level learning resources.
- E10.** Audience questionnaires: (i) Lit & Phil, 12/03/2019; (ii) Kirkstall Abbey, 10/05/2018; (iii) Tullie House Museum, 06/08/2019.