

Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 27: English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: "The Story Shall be Changed": supporting the rehabilitation of women in prison		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 02/2007 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Charlotte Scott	Professor of Shakespeare Studies	2006-
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 12/2018 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>This work demonstrates a significant impact in promoting the rehabilitation of women in prison, and a corresponding benefit to staff involved in the penal and criminal justice system. Engaging with compassion-led practices of story-telling and role-play of the self as story-teller, Scott's literary-critical work has enabled the gaps and silences in the Shakespearean text to accommodate the untold, hidden and unsaid stories of marginalised and vulnerable women, prison inmates and ex-offenders alike. Inmates, ex-offenders, and staff who participated or witnessed the project all recorded (for the immediate beneficiaries) reduced substance abuse, self-harm and suicidal thoughts, as well as positive promotion of familial and institutional relationships, transferable skills and self-respect. Some women were released on temporary licence following the projects; others gained work placements both within and outside the prison community.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Scott's research engages with the social and historical opportunities that Shakespeare's work offers for the better understanding of how cultures develop and organise communities. Her first monograph (R6) explored the dynamic between material book history and Elizabethan theatre, with focus on the development of early modern 'media'. Scott continued to develop her prevailing interest in the dynamic between social process and literature through a focus on the key terms and concepts which underpin society's views of itself, notably 'nature' in her second book, and 'children' in her third. In <i>Shakespeare's Nature</i> (R5), Scott traced the beginnings of the language of management, self-discipline, productivity and husbandry to the sixteenth century and revealed Shakespeare's fundamental role in the creation, and dissemination, of the terms through which social groups define their value and values. Analysing the semantics through which Shakespeare identifies and explores culture as a network of belonging, Scott's work has developed to interrogate the intersections through which excluded, protected or marginalised groups are offered opportunities to disrupt traditional power structures. Uncovering the formative role that empathy plays in Shakespeare's exploration of social value (R3, R6, R5), Scott has developed a critical methodology that uses models of alienation and empathy to analyse social structures of power (R3, R5). Developing this work away from its traditional models in the study of classical rhetoric, where an exemplar reaffirms prevailing power structures, Scott has pioneered a new approach to Shakespeare's work in which she opens up the gaps, silences and spaces in the drama as opportunities rather than endings (R5, R4, R2). Especially attentive to cultural constructions of protected groups (women and children) (R3) alongside the political</p>		

discourses of power (in terms like 'nature' and 'natural'), Scott has developed a critical apparatus for the analysis of the arts in culture that is both historically sensitive but culturally relevant.

The implications for this work emerged through an interrogation of the effects of empathy in Shakespearean constructions of choice. Scott's focus on narrative allusion, silence and aposiopesis, the unfinished sentence (R5, R4, R2, R6), revealed that Shakespeare consistently signposted opportunities for change or transformation in his drama and that many of these instances were especially directed to women. Taking Shakespeare's work into non-traditional spaces, Scott began to explore the moments that are made available beyond those of lavish metropolitan productions and the hegemonic appropriation of Shakespeare's work. Focusing on the opportunities in the texts to create new stories – continuing or finishing the unfinished sentence, inserting a speech for the silenced, traumatised or criminalised woman (R4), disrupting the pernicious effects of institutionalised identities, or contesting homogeneous claims to shared feelings -- Scott's work began to open up the Shakespearean text to new, diverse and disenfranchised groups and to offer spaces into which marginalised and vulnerable women could begin to represent themselves. Developing this work with women in crisis, Scott took her work to the Prison Education Trust, the Prison Reform Trust, and Women in Prison, where she developed weekly projects with incarcerated and recently released women.

3. References to the research

R1) Charlotte Scott, 'Talking back to Shakespeare: Theatre in Women's Prisons', *Red Pepper* (2020) [Article] Full text available: <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/shakespeare-womens-prisons/>

R2) Charlotte Scott, "'The Story Shall be Changed": Antique Fables and Agency in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 73, Cambridge, 2020, pp. 119-128. [Article] <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108908023.009>

R3) Charlotte Scott, *The Child in Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2018) [Monograph] (Submitted to REF2)

R4) Charlotte Scott, "'Incapable and Shallow Innocents": Grief and Mourning in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Richard III*', *Childhood, Education and the Early Modern Stage*, eds. Preiss and Williams (Cambridge, 2017) [Book Chapter] (Submitted to REF 2)

R5) Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare's Nature: from Cultivation to Culture* (Oxford, 2014) [Monograph] (Submitted to REF 2)

R6) Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford, 2007) [Monograph]

*All outputs available on request, unless otherwise stated

4. Details of the impact

This is a story about Shakespeare in women's prisons, and about spaces in texts uncovered in research that open creative opportunities (R6, R5, R3). Scott won an Arts Council England grant to develop this work with Women in Prison, the Prison Education Trust and the Venus Centre. Shakespeare's drama provides a powerful model for exploring incarceration because it is fascinated by repressive power structures, the limits of humanity and the social construction of selfhood (R3, R5, R6). Beginning with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where a central character, Helena, declares, 'The story shall be changed', Scott began to explore what role, if any, Shakespeare's women have in disrupting established power hierarchies and uncovering hidden voices of change and how this might relate to women's experiences of being incarcerated. As one staff member observed of the project's impact: "Being understood is how they get support,

it's how we can recognize what's really going on and ultimately it is a way for these women to begin to heal. It is a really powerful and important tool for the women to be able use" (S3).

In HMP Styal, Scott collaboratively introduced women prisoners to stories from Shakespeare's plays and encouraged them to talk back to specific characters, to fill in the silences of their stories, and to continue the conversations beyond the imaginary scaffold of the theatre. Many women were shocked at Shakespeare's "reliability", at their understanding of the stories, and their abilities to collaborate with compassion and pride. The women explained they "have grown in confidence, as a direct result of this project It was mentally / emotionally beneficial to be completely absorbed in the project. I feel the huge gains in confidence and personal development will bring enormous benefits in all areas of my life" (S1).

Developing a model focused on the hidden voices, and aftermaths of, many of Shakespeare's plays, Scott devised stories, spaces and prompts that allowed incarcerated individuals to explore selfhood, agency, responsibility and culture for themselves. Demands of the project and space required Scott continually to adapt aims and means, as well as text, and to evolve the project in response to the individuals involved and their ambitions as well as objectives. Women involved, from lifers to those on remand, rewrote Shakespeare's play for performance to other inmates and owned it by changing characters' names, playing multiple roles, adapting place names and translating it into modern English. Many women noticed a marked increase in their self-confidence; others also found something new in themselves: "I really thought I couldn't do it. So it was amazing to find that I could. As a direct result of this I am being considered for ROTLs [release on temporary licence]. It has opened doors for me and given me a potentially different future" (S1).

The impact reflects opportunities for the assertion of personal psychologies, for the theatrical imagination that supports the shifting of individual mindsets, and for countering the institutional dehumanisation of women seeking self-representation. Collectively creating the space to retrieve their hidden voices is fundamental to women's rehabilitation: "I felt less oppressed, which is a really big thing for me: when we were all working together, I felt normal and like myself. I was transported and somewhere else" (S1). Perhaps most significantly for staff, the Governor of Styal noticed the immense resilience the women demonstrated in performing within the prison community and the empowering effects for peer relations: "It's a powerful thing, seeing the women work so closely as a team, supporting each other along the way and building strong friendships as a result. To witness such resourcefulness and watch as they slowly "set the scene" props and costumes start to appear staggered and impressed me" (S1).

Alongside HMP Styal, Scott ran weekly sessions with charities for ex-offenders, including Women in Prison and Venus Centre: one woman recorded that "as a direct result of this project I have joined the Freedom programme" (a rehabilitation programme for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse) (S2). The women staged a rendition of their stories via Shakespeare, described by many of the audience members as "deeply affecting", "changed the way I felt about Shakespeare as well as criminality" and "astonishing", especially regarding the women's new-found confidence, relationships and abilities (S2). The CEO of Women in Prison described the event as a "staggering achievement" in eliciting the work from women with complex needs, in the improved relationships it promoted, and the reduction in substance abuse, self-harm and aggression [S3]. Numerous women involved brought their children to the performance, some of whom had been in care, and were unaware of their mother's stories. One mental health officer

stated: “you gave the women a voice for the first time in their lives and the skills to make themselves heard in their community as well as their culture” (S2). One prisoner governor described the event as the “best she had been to in 9 years” (S3).

Developing her ACE-funded project in the Venus Centre in Bootle, a centre supporting women at risk of domestic abuse, drug addiction, incarceration, relocation, child separation and poverty, Scott developed and adapted Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* for a community performance on 12th December 2019. One participant observed that she “became the person she used to be; before violence and abuse changed” her (S2). This project formed part of the charity’s 25-year celebration and was a flagship event in promoting their work and attracting sponsorship. Over 100 people attended, including many of the centre’s sponsors, shareholders, and outreach workers. The head of the Venus Centre observed: “I personally think the whole project was a huge success, such a fantastic opportunity for the people we support to be able to access. I felt very humbled to be able to attend and watch the final performance, also with knowing the struggles some of the individuals have faced to then have the confidence to perform to an audience with newly learnt skills and humility” (S2). Consequently, they have extended their work to over 100 families and a film of the performance is privately available on Vimeo (S2).

At HMP Eastwood Park, Scott devised a project focused on women and monstrosity in *Macbeth*, which put Macbeth ‘on trial’: not one woman convicted him, but instead explored how transgression takes hold, and the repressive psychologies which suppress women’s sense of humanness. Some participants have gone on to complete their NVQs; others have reported that “it totally demystified and made sense of Shakespeare” and made them feel part of a culture they had been excluded from, and “opened doors” (S4). All the women recorded a substantial increase in confidence, and prison officers and support workers noticed “the huge impact that it had on the women’s ability to work together, deal with conflict and resolve complex issues with respect” (S4).

Scott has sought to establish projects that can become sustainable in the prisons and offer on-going opportunities and impacts for the women beyond her involvement. The positive impact of Scott’s work has led HMP Styal, HMP Eastwood Park and the Venus Centre to adopt in-house models for rehabilitation of their women (as confirmed in S1, S2, S3, S4). Most recently, she has created courses on Shakespeare and women, in conversation with the participants, now OCR accredited, which she set up to deliver at Styal in lockdown. This was crucially timely for the prison as the women had no other access to educational resources. These courses and workshops will offer support and collaborations across the women’s time in prison, and beyond.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1) Collated feedback + testimony from participants, governors and prison officers at HMP Styal Prison, Cheshire, originally recorded August, December, 2019.

S2) Collated feedback + testimony from participants and centre managers at the Venus Centre, Bootle, originally recorded December 2019.

S3) Collated feedback + testimony from the CEO Woking branch of Women in Prison, originally recorded April 2019.

S4) Testimony from Learning and Skills Manager, HMP Eastwood Park, South Gloucestershire, originally recorded June 2019.